

TOPICAL ISSUES OF PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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Enlightenment Thought and the Characteristics of Its Contemporary Transformations

The purpose of this research is to carry out a comparative analysis of the proposed variants of Enlightenment ideals in order to demonstrate the complexity of this problem and the diversity of approaches to its resolution. It aims to clarify the boundaries of classical Enlightenment thought and its explications, the Second Enlightenment and the New Enlightenment in particular, and to identify the points at which a transition into a new qualitative stage becomes possible. **Theoretical basis.** The analysis deals with conceptual approaches that need paradigmatic shifts in the fundamental orientations of humanity. The study draws on interpretations of the classical paradigm of Enlightenment ideals, particularly those by Immanuel Kant, as well as contemporary attempts to support or rehabilitate these ideals under present-day conditions (S. Pinker). **Originality.** The growing technological and sociocultural transformations have reached a level at which the idea of humanity's linear development appears increasingly untenable, thereby intensifying the demand for new basic principles of development. The expansion of what may be described as a Nietzschean "Age of the Will" calls into question how the ideals of classical Enlightenment can be implemented in contemporary realities. As there is a substantial shift toward authoritarianism and the decline of liberal democracies, the threat of destabilizing the global international order is becoming increasingly evident. The philosophical analysis therefore focuses on possible strategies for counteracting the rise of authoritarian tendencies, understanding the prospects for combining the volitional dimension with a rational approach. **Conclusions.** Any assessment or reassessment of the Enlightenment legacy must primarily take into account the current radical transformations in the modern world, including changes of a wide range of fundamental concepts. On the one hand, the values of the Enlightenment is a civilizational achievement that humanity cannot reject, on the other hand, each historical phase requires its own values, regulative principles, and worldview orientations. This gives rise to an urgent question: do contemporary global crises signal a qualitative shift in the interpretation of human value, rationality, and progress, or are they merely temporary obstacles within a potentially progressive trajectory of human development? A fundamental dilemma emerges – either to preserve earlier values or to renew by creating a new set of virtues that could serve as guiding principles for the future development of humanity.

Keywords: human being; values; humanism; Enlightenment; New Enlightenment; Age of the Will; social change; science; rationality; progress

Introduction

From the perspective of common sense, it is not clear why the contemporary conditions of existence on the European continent, after two world wars, are increasingly confronted with problems that should not have resulted in humanitarian, economic, and political degradation.

Philosophical thought is increasingly focusing on the deeper theoretical causes underlying the present crisis. In recent years, the theme of intellectual legacy of the Enlightenment has gained its relevance due to a growing number of global risks, most of which are related to human

activity. Over the past 200–250 years, the effectiveness of human activity has reached its threshold, where the characteristic features of this new period are the problems directly related to the survival of humanity. To some extent with humanity's transition into the Modern era, we observe a large-scale and irreversible impact of human activity on the natural environment. However, everything that was perceived as undeniable achievements of this era for a certain period of time, such as entrepreneurial freedom, scientific and technological progress, the creation of new institutions and regimes of order, and individual development, have become objects of concern and critical re-evaluation. One notable recent contribution of this kind is the extensive article by M. Minakov (2025), "Freedom and Progress at the Dawn of the Age of the Will: The Struggle of Two Enlightenments in Contemporary Euro-Atlantic Debates", which argues that the western world is entering a new epoch in which the established orientations of classical Enlightenment thought are undergoing radical transformation.

In Ukraine, the theme of a "New Enlightenment" has also become the subject of active debate in recent years (Muliarchuk, 2024; Yermolenko, 2019). These works raise questions both about the continuity of Enlightenment ideas and about their break with the previous historical period, or even their radical renewal. There are substantive grounds for such divergent interpretations. In particular, if we assume that even today some of the fundamental ideas of the Enlightenment have not yet been brought to successful completion, it is possible to conclude that efforts toward their further implementation should be continued. Since this process concerns the ongoing "project of the Human", it appears to be infinite: it begins with a struggle against religion and mythology and aspires toward the establishment of a rational social order with a governable and morally formed human being.

A. Yermolenko at the roundtable discussion of the journal "Philosophical Thought" advanced the idea of an "'unfinished Enlightenment', which presupposes the permanent production of reflective capacities in the institutions of society" (Raynaud et al., 2017, p. 18). In his view, "the Enlightenment is a meta-institution of society, its legitimating instance, oriented to the affirmation, justification, and grounding of the norms, values, customs, traditions, and institutions of society" (Raynaud et al., 2017, p. 18). He does not interpret classical Enlightenment as a fixed set of themes, ideas, or values that function as a driving force of development for a particular historical epoch. Consequently, for him, no transformations of social reality can undermine faith in the universal capacity of Enlightenment.

Purpose

To understand the theoretical problem focused on evaluating the legacy of the Enlightenment as an issue that has become urgent for the development of contemporary existence. If classical Enlightenment is understood as an unfinished civilization project, then its value ideals should not be rejected, alternatively, the subsequent phase of social development may be seen as annulling the original Enlightenment project, introducing new principles of regulation and a transformation of values that require new social orientations, above all, as a means of counteracting the growth of authoritarian tendencies.

Statement of basic materials

There are diverse grounds for making conclusions about the necessity of the emergence of a New Enlightenment, as well as different connotations of this concept. In order to examine this issue more closely, it is advisable to turn to the foundational principles of the first Enlightenment

to determine the type of values with which we are dealing and to identify the qualitative changes that characterize our present era. Accordingly, it should be noted that although the Enlightenment has relatively well-defined chronological boundaries (late seventeenth to eighteenth centuries), its ideas, principles, and orientations influenced the development of western societies. In this sense, the Enlightenment appears as a distinct phase of the Modern era, during which specific ideas and normative orientations were realized, corresponding institutions were established in the sphere of social life, and innovations were introduced in culture, methods of scientific inquiry, etc. These developments were directed both toward a rejection of earlier normative frameworks and toward new foundational principles intended to correspond to the demands of a new reality, where the person could feel confident about a happy future under the ideals of freedom, equality, and fraternity. The person feels as the creator of a harmonious form of life governed by the laws of goodness and justice. Thus, the Enlightenment emerges as a set of events, institutions, cultural orientations, and social regulators that shaped a particular development trajectory of the socio-economic orders of the Modern era, including the rise of capitalism and the processes of bourgeois transformation.

However, it is necessary to return to the origins of this phenomenon in order to identify more precisely the key ways its ideas were realized. One of the earliest attempts to understand and explain the phenomenon of the Enlightenment is presented in Immanuel Kant's (2003) essay "An answer to the question: What Is Enlightenment?". In this work, the philosopher writes: "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another. This immaturity is self-imposed when its cause lies not in lack of understanding, but in lack of resolve and courage to use it without guidance from another. Sapere Aude! [dare to know] "Have courage to use your own understanding!" – that is the motto of Enlightenment" (Kant, 2003, p. 158). Thus, the "central point" of the enlightenment is in an "exit" from a prior state of immaturity and in an attempt to determine what the condition of maturity, toward which human beings ought to strive, means for humanity. Kant is fully aware that this transition is difficult, since people have already become accustomed to their former immaturity which became an ordinary state. Nevertheless, Kant believed that by taking a step toward freedom, people would be able to attain the desired goal. "That the public should enlighten itself is indeed possible; in fact, it is almost inevitable if only freedom is granted to it" (Kant, 2003, p. 159), he wrote. Ultimately, this concerns liberation from the dominant influence of prior authoritarianism or dogmatism. In response to critics who argued that such freedom might prove harmful in spheres of social life where unconditional adherence to certain rituals, standards, or rules of conduct is required, Kant stated that there is a distinction between one's own duties and the position of the scholar, who is guided by his own reason. The scholar's position, he insisted, cannot be harmful, since restricting cognition "would be a crime against human nature, whose original vocation lies precisely in this progress" (Kant, 2003, p. 160). Accordingly, priority should be given to the position of the scholar (the mature person). In this context, Kant is not particularly concerned with the existential contradiction that arises in human existence from the conflict between socially sanctioned, imposed, or regulated norms (externally determined) and the inner vocation of the scholar with its commitment to critical thinking.

One may agree with M. Foucault's assessment in his essay "What Is Enlightenment?", where he notes that Kant does not, in fact, provide a definition of the Enlightenment as a historical epoch. Moreover, he identifies its central point: to grant a person the right to freely use his own

reason and to enable to transcend a condition of ignorance and illusion. In this way, responsibility is effectively placed upon the human to properly use their own ability for judgment. However, Foucault also draws attention to Kant's distinction between the spheres in which reason is to be exercised, namely its private and public uses. In the private sphere, the use of reason is constrained, whereas in the public sphere the individual possesses an unrestricted right (even a duty) to employ reason freely. For Foucault, a crucial aspect of Kant's position lies in his emphasis on critique, understood not as a form of necessary limitation, but as practical critique, which is oriented to the possible transgression of limits. Here, Foucault almost modernizes Kant's position. In his position, he discerned the possibility of raising the question of "possibility of existing, acting, or thinking differently from the way we exist, act, or think" (Foucault, 1994, p. 574). In other words, he invokes a kind of genealogy of critique, where it assumes a transformation of the current state of affairs aimed at fulfilling a particular human mission: "to advance as far and as broadly as possible the infinite work of freedom". Foucault also raised the issue whether the work of the Enlightenment can be regarded as completed. In Kant's view, it was in a person's maturity and coming of age. Yet, as Foucault (1994) observed, "I do not know if we ever become adults. Much in our experience persuades us that the historical event of *Aufklärung* did not make us more mature, and that we are not so even now" (p. 574). This is an important conclusion, because it makes possible to understand the weakness of certain Kantian judgments concerning the advent of a future "perpetual peace", as well as his appeal to a universal moral law that is supposed to be in every human being. In other words, Kant may be criticized for assuming that a rational and self-sufficient human being already exists, that is, one who has already attained maturity. This is the most vulnerable point in Kant's arguments regarding the role of the Enlightenment, since the existing reality does not correspond to these declared assumptions.

Today, the ideas of the Enlightenment have been supported by the cognitive psychologist and psycholinguist Steven Pinker. In his book "Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress", he identifies four themes that mark the principal achievements of this epoch: reason, science, progress, and humanism (Pinker, 2019). By focusing on these fundamental themes, the Enlightenment set the direction for the further development of the western world. Therefore, it generated a complex of values that help shape a particular type of society and make it successful across various dimensions of social existence – economic, worldview-related, cultural, educational, etc. The ideals of the Enlightenment contributed both to the formation of "imagined communities" (Anderson, 2001) and to a new set of values, orientations, and regulative principles that ensured the functioning of a new type of state. Undoubtedly, the contribution of the Enlightenment to the further development of western European societies can hardly be overstated. However, as the author emphasizes, "today, more than at any other time in human history, the ideals of reason, science, humanism, and progress".

It should be noted that at the early stages of the Modern era there were attempts to challenge the significance of such Enlightenment themes as reason, science, progress, and related ideals. In particular, the ideas of the Enlightenment were criticized by such representatives of Romanticism as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Johann Gottfried Herder, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, and others. They emphasized that rational thinking creates a homogenized world that obscures hopes and aspirations of human beings which were shaped over centuries in religions and traditions. For these thinkers, reason, rational rules of coexistence, and new values were not the guiding principles that ought to direct human activity. Instead, they privileged traditional values and a

sense of belonging to a transcendent unity, often associated with culture itself. Consequently, rationality and progress were perceived as forces that distort the natural course of things and are incompatible with the vital forces of nature.

In his book, Steven Pinker (2019) emphasizes that these arguments have renewed in the twenty-first century, at a time when criticism of rationality, humanism, and progress has only intensified (p. 44). He notes that the Enlightenment ideals are criticised from both the right and the left. Some uphold traditional values of a religious or nationalist nature, and therefore view science and progress as destructive processes. Others argue that Enlightenment ideals have become obsolete and must be radically rethought or reformulated.

Nevertheless, the existence of such criticism indicates that there is a problem. It is not always explicitly articulated, but even undeniable prior achievements over time require clarification or the introduction of certain mechanisms. Steven Pinker (2019) cites the words of Friedrich Hayek (an advocate of liberalism), who noted that these ideas "may not have lost their relevance, but words, even when they address problems that remain unresolved, are no longer so persuasive" (p. 21). However, it should be observed that the issue is not only in the obsolescence of language, but also in contemporary trends and the "texture" of modern reality. The elevated ideals of the Enlightenment have resulted in a loss of cultural orientations, aims, and meanings, in violations of social justice and human dignity, and in a diminished sense of individual significance. All of this encourages a closer look at the arguments of Pinker. Addressing all four themes, he consistently clarifies their concepts and meanings. With regard to reason (rationality), he emphasizes that Immanuel Kant, Baruch Spinoza, and other philosophers of the period by no means assumed that human beings are bearers of perfect rationality. Thus, reason and rationality are indisputable achievements of the Enlightenment – achievements that cannot be called into question. Any attempts to undermine the significance of rationality, he argues, are based on ideological, religious, or romantic foundations.

In fact, some of Steven Pinker's observations are justified, and humanity continues to rely on a certain set of rational *a priori* assumptions. However, it should be noted that since the Enlightenment, numerous philosophical investigations into the problem of rationality have revealed its complex structure and the existence of multiple forms of rationality. Not all of these forms have demonstrated their emancipatory potential. In particular, Max Horkheimer (2006), in his book *Critique of Instrumental Reason*, argued that in modern times reason has been transformed into an instrumental type of rationality oriented toward calculation and domination. Reason thus becomes an instrument of domination rather than liberation. As Horkheimer (2006) observes, "having relinquished its autonomy, reason has become an instrument... Reason is wholly harnessed to the social process. Its operational value, its role in the domination of human beings and nature, becomes the sole criterion" (p. 36). The author shows the process of total rationalization and orientation to maximum efficiency that characterized mid-twentieth-century industrial society, along with all its negative consequences.

It appears that similar observations can be addressed to science as well. In the early stages of its development, science was a powerful instrument for overcoming ignorance, superstition, and false beliefs but later it came to function as an autonomous force oriented to self-reproduction rather than being subordinated to human needs. Thus, it must be acknowledged that science, initially conceived as an unconditional pursuit of truth and its beneficial applications, subsequently transformed into a self-sufficient discipline that lost the ethical and moral dimension linking it to the human world.

Science did not function as the highest expression of the human spirit and spirituality any more. The effects of universal rationality have negatively influenced the cultural specificity of nations and the contradictory nature of human experience.

In philosophy, this tendency has been represented by scientism. Mykhailo Boichenko (2025), in his article "*The virtue of the New Enlightenment reason*", notes that "it is science and education themselves that increasingly generate sophistry, making the creation and application of various false perlocutions ever more refined and effective: science operates against the interests of society no less successfully than in their favor" (p. 6). In fact, this points to a divergence between scientific and technological progress, on the one hand, and the progress of humanity itself, on the other.

As for Steven Pinker's position regarding science and progress, he adopts the broadest possible understanding of scientific knowledge as a transition from ignorance to understanding. For this reason, he finds unacceptable the idea that science could be abandoned or that some alternative foundation for the development of humanity and society might be proposed in its place. Thus, from his perspective, attacks on science are perceived as a manifestation of obscurantism.

Today almost no one proposes to reject science as such. However, calls for its limitation, or for banning certain areas of scientific research, are becoming increasingly frequent. Moreover, there are specific domains of inquiry in which bare rationality appears cynical and incompatible with the moral orientations of humanity. Mykhailo Boichenko (2025), in his article, emphasizes the need to seek a "virtuous Reason", which can be created "only in a shared and consciously shared mode of inalienable being. These are multiple shared practices that repeatedly discover new and own paths to achieve pragmatic effectiveness and pragmatic normativity" (p. 15). Thus, this is a problem that presents itself as a task to be accomplished rather than as an accomplished fact.

Steven Pinker (2019) also interprets the idea of progress in a broad sense, defining it as "the Enlightenment belief that through understanding the world we can improve the conditions of human existence" (p. 53). At the same time, Pinker (2019) acknowledges the complexity of this process, noting that "progress is not an escalator that steadily raises the well-being of every person in every corner of the planet. That would be magic. Progress is not the result of magic, but of problem-solving" (p. 69). In his view, the accumulated experience testifies to its positive effectiveness and inevitability. In this regard, it should be noted, first, that certain scientific research may entail negative (or even catastrophic) consequences for humanity, and therefore some attempts at the interstate level are being made to restrict or prohibit such research. Second, there is another aspect of progressive scientific and technological development connected with its acceleration, which raises the question of technological singularity and, consequently, the need to bring this process under control. However, the principal weakness of Steven Pinker's general progressivist position lies in his tendency to view contemporary development as a straightforward continuation of the previous stage, whereas philosophers and leading sociologists have already identified paradigm shifts in the development of the western world during the 1970s and 1980s. Today, we are facing a choice: to what extent we can unconditionally trust scientific forecasts, especially in connection with the development of artificial intelligence and the rapid temporal acceleration of the contemporary world.

Humanism by Steven Pinker (2019) is interpreted in the broadest possible sense, as "the goal of maximizing the flourishing of humanity" (p. 408). He also refers to the Humanist Manifes-

to III (2003), which affirms that humanism is closely connected with scientific inquiry; that human beings are recognized as part of nature; that ethical values are shaped on the basis of human needs and interests; and that human beings, as social creatures, find the meaning of life in relationships and in work carried out for the benefit of society (Pinker, 2019, pp. 408-409).

In this way, he implicitly assumes that humanity has already completed its formation and it remains to arrange its comfortable existence. However, in the Enlightenment one of its core orientations was not only to transform the surrounding world, but the human being itself (it was necessary to clarify in which context the human being was understood). Human beings increasingly began to transform themselves in order to "define the limits of their freedom", emancipating themselves from the pressure of supra-individual social structures in which they functioned as objects of moral norms and codes. This fully corresponded to the heteronomous understanding of the sources of morality found in the thought of John Locke. The ideologues of the Enlightenment assumed that human nature contains a wealth of admirable and positive dispositions. Therefore, it was believed that it was enough to propose a scientifically calculated plan for creating a new society, and human beings would immediately begin to implement it. The human being was regarded as rational by nature, and thus all negative passions inherent in human nature were thought to be overcome or ennobled through systematic state governance, where the public and private life with its goals, meanings, and intentions are.

As Michel Foucault once observed,

In any case, beginning from the seventeenth century, what has been called humanism was compelled to rely on certain conceptions of the human being borrowed from religion, science, or politics. Humanism serves as a kind of embellishment and justification for those conceptions of the human being to which it has been forced to appeal. (Foucault, 1994, p. 573)

This means that we must determine the conception of the human being upon which our humanism is grounded. Either the human being is understood as a bio-social entity with natural rights (considered "self-evident"), developing toward an expansion of freedom and the satisfaction of needs; or we assume that the "Project of the Human" remains unfinished, and that the human being continues to evolve not only on the personal and social levels, but also within bio-existential dimensions (Schuler, 2023).

Pinker's arguments concerning the humanistic perspective are based on the claim that, in recent times, the overall number of deaths worldwide both as a result of violence and military conflict has decreased. However, this thesis does not withstand critical scrutiny, since the historical process is not linear. It is characterized by periods of flourishing as well as by periods of decline and even collapse. Only eight out of thirty-one civilizations that once existed (according to Arnold J. Toynbee) have survived. As Nassim Nicholas Taleb (2017) has observed, "history does not crawl, it jumps" (p. 30). He relies on the argument that social change in all its dimensions is not necessarily linear: upon reaching a certain threshold, it may suddenly

generate fluctuations. Consequently, one cannot rely on previous stable development, since the next step in the same direction may prove fatal.

In general, Steven Pinker's position on humanism deserves respect and support, as it is concerned with extending the achievements and standards of the developed countries of the world to those regions of the planet that continue to suffer from deprivation, poverty, and discomfort. Thus, the principal objection that may be raised against Pinker is that, under conditions in which a transition from Modernity to Postmodernity has taken place, the core themes of the Enlightenment have themselves undergone transformation. Science has become more value-laden, its truths more ambiguous; progress is increasingly associated with risks; new perspectives are opening within humanism; and rationality admits possibilities that do not always yield positive outcomes in their application. For Pinker (2019), this transition to a new phase of development does not occur (p. 448). It is possible to understand that he favors gradual, cumulative change over transitions involving qualitative transformations. For him, history appears as a linear process.

In fact, Pinker overstates existing expectations regarding the positive outcomes of science, progress, humanism, and related ideals. In his view, if these concepts are understood reasonably, they are justified and quite effective in the contemporary world. He believes that reason, science, humanism, and progress have all the necessary grounds to be regarded as already realized. Moreover, they are presented as guiding principles for the further development of humanity. The rehabilitation of these themes is based on the assumption that they retain their contextual scope despite the transformations occurring in the surrounding social reality and in individuals' subjective orientations.

A different approach is demonstrated by scholars who support a transition to a New Enlightenment, assuming that the transformative power and scale of modernization create the impression of the inevitability of a planetary catastrophe. In the report to the Club of Rome *Come On! Capitalism, Short-termism, Population and the Destruction of the Planet* (Weizsäcker & Wijkman, 2019), the need to create a "New Enlightenment" is articulated precisely in these terms, where value orientations for overcoming the contemporary crisis could be outlined. As noted in the Preface to the Ukrainian edition, "a qualitatively new paradigm is required" (Weizsäcker & Wijkman, 2019, p. v), a paradigm that the book explicitly designates as the "New Enlightenment". The Report emphasizes that, due to a distinctive "revolution of consciousness" in western European countries, considerable results in socio-economic, sociocultural, and humanitarian spheres were achieved over the course of two centuries.

However, a qualitative transformation of reality subsequently occurred: namely, a transition from an "empty world" to a "full world", that is, a situation in which all of the planet's natural systems became overloaded. From this, the authors conclude that "in view of the actual state of ecology and the economy, the time came to demand a New Enlightenment suitable for the conditions of a 'full world'" (Weizsäcker & Wijkman, 2019, p. 12). In this book, Weizsäcker and Wijkman summarize the contemporary situation as follows:

Current urgent needs are unavoidable: we must develop new types of human goals and, if possible, a new social Enlightenment. One of the defining characteristics of such an Enlightenment is balance. Our aim is a

balanced world, with a realistic harmonization of the current set of economic and environmental Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

(Weizsäcker & Wijkman, 2019, p. 247)

The Report points to a significant contradiction between the United Nations programme *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and the authors' recommendations for saving the planet, since "successful implementation of eleven socio-economic goals of the Agenda is likely to jeopardize the achievement of three environmental goals – climate stabilization, ocean restoration, and halting the extinction of biological species" (Weizsäcker & Wijkman, 2019, p. ix).

There is one more aspect of this issue in the context of the acceleration of technological development. In particular, as Slavoj Žižek argues in his work "The Dialectic of the Dark Enlightenment", progress especially in the field of artificial intelligence leads to a situation in which there may no longer be a place for humanity. Referring to Nick Land's work "Fanged Noumena", Žižek contends that the logic of technological progress leads humanity to self-destruction or self-overcoming. In other words, it is suggested that, over time, humanity may not participate any more in further evolution, as technological development will eventually make the political process redundant. Nevertheless, Žižek emphasizes that before humanity reaches the point of Singularity with its apocalyptic implications, there are alternative scenarios for the destruction of the planet, either through ecological catastrophe or as a result of global war. In these cases, the decisive role belongs precisely to politics and to actions aimed at preventing such negative outcomes. Yet, Žižek (2023) concludes, humanity continues to live as though these threats did not exist.

M. Minakov (2025), in his publication, characterizes this situation as a struggle between the Light and the Dark Enlightenment. He defines the Dark Enlightenment as an "intellectual, political, and corporate revolutionary movement". The author emphasizes the radical divergence between these two Enlightenment orientations. Their difference is fundamental: classical Enlightenment is regarded as an autonomous rational subject endowed with freedom, balanced within the relationship between negative and positive liberty, ultimately secured by the institutions of liberal democracy. By contrast, the Dark Enlightenment, according to Minakov (2025), "reinterprets freedom primarily in terms of will, modeled on the figure of the corporate CEO, technological progress, and possibilities of 'exit' rather than democratic participation, while promoting hierarchical efficiency over egalitarian processes" (p. 135). Under such an interpretation, the foundations of liberal democracy are undermined, and the question of its future is raised more broadly. Thus, the Dark Enlightenment poses a challenge to liberal democratic governance, and this challenge is so significant that it allows one to hypothesize the advent of another historical epoch, which Minakov, following Maija Kūle, refers to as the Age of the Will. This age is characterized by the fact that

It appears that the Age of Reason (based on Enlightenment) is coming to an end, and we are being drawn, perhaps without full awareness or consent, into the Age of Will, which can continue for decades or even longer. This shift

is not the result of a deliberate choice by European citizens or global actors but rather resembles the emergence of a new spirit – an epochal mood that displaces peaceful coexistence with conflict, replaces law with command, and transforms communication into aggression. (Kūle, 2025, p. 5)

However, it should be emphasized that within the context of the proposed hypothesis of the Age of the Will, what becomes more significant is not the struggle between two Enlightenment ideals, but rather the transgression to which Slavoj Žižek refers. The new age establishes an agenda that effectively abolishes the previous one. As M. Minakov (2025) notes, "we observe the increasing agency of will, specifically associated with Herder's cultural will, Schopenhauer's irrational will, and Nietzschean transgressive will" (p. 135). As a result, the Age of Reason gives way to the Age of the Will.

It is evident that there is a struggle between authoritarianism and liberal democracy, as well as between values and interests, however, it does not determine the primary vector of action. For further analysis, it is crucial to focus on the context that shapes the perspective: the New Age abolishes the framework within which previous developments unfolded. Moreover, it establishes a new framework or modality that structures future socio-political events. Thus, unlike approaches that propose various ways of improving the ideas and principles of classical Enlightenment or updating them in response to growing global risks, there are some ideological and political movements with a philosophical foundation that radically transform the fundamentals of classical Enlightenment by reinterpreting its core values, such as freedom, human rights, and progress.

Originality

Since the emergence of technological and sociocultural changes has become so intensive that the notion of humanity's linear development appears to have been removed from the agenda, there is a growing demand for the search for new socio-ontological foundations appropriate to an era of phase transformations. The study concludes that humanity is approaching a threshold of a form of transgression that entails a departure from the fundamental principles underpinning liberal society and a transition to a new phase of development – one that requires the active involvement of society in the creation of new socio-ontological foundations for the future socio-political. The growing manifestations of the Age of the Will call into question the possibility of realizing the ideals of classical Enlightenment in contemporary conditions. Due to a significant shift toward authoritarianism and the decline of liberal democracies, the threat of destabilizing the global international order is increasing. Accordingly, philosophical analysis must focus on strategies for counteracting the rise of authoritarian tendencies, while identifying ways to reconcile the volitional dimension with a rational approach oriented toward the survival of humanity.

Conclusions

Thus, it may be stated that the value orientations of the Enlightenment played a significant role in the socio-economic development of the western world, as a wide range of the proposed

ideas helped create a social mechanism that ensured both the establishment of social institutions and the long-term sustainable development of society. In fact, the orientations and ideals of the Enlightenment provided a powerful impetus for the socio-economic development of modern societies, generating substantial shifts across all segments of social existence and securing a relatively stable trajectory of development. However, today we observe profound transformations in all the themes identified by S. Pinker in his work. Rationality periodically reveals its limitations; science increasingly loses its unquestioned utility and demonstrates problematic consequences of its application; the idea of progress requires clarification or revision; and *humanism calls for reformulation or for a reassessment of its guiding principles and spheres of application*. In this sense, the motivating force of earlier Enlightenment ideas has weakened and, in some cases, now encounters considerable resistance. Nevertheless, in general there are different grounds for assessing the consequences of the process of implementing the ideas and orientations of the Enlightenment. Since several themes of that era remain priorities in most countries of the world, they appear to make a civilizational legacy that humanity cannot abandon, as the Enlightenment represents an "unfinished project". Therefore, on the one hand, it may seem that we are dealing with a linear process and that the future promises only a further expansion of this trajectory. On the other hand, the transformations in the contemporary world provide compelling reasons to assume that "history jumps" rather than develops linearly, and that each subsequent phase of development therefore requires its own specific set of values and regulative principles in order to remain viable.

On this basis, if the hypothesis of the Age of the Will is accepted as an accomplished fact, this implies that we are currently facing a paradigmatic shift in a range of defining characteristics of contemporary existence. Thus, recognizing the advent of the Age of the Will signifies a complete change of "scenery on the stage" of the global order. Just as the Enlightenment emerged as a set of events and processes that transformed society, institutions, technologies, education, and the human condition, the Age of the Will transformed the entire preceding configuration of the world order. Moreover, the extraordinarily rapid development of artificial intelligence undermines democratic processes from another direction, offering purely technological solutions in domains where deliberative democracy previously played a decisive role. This tendency ultimately leads either to techno-fascism or to techno-authoritarianism. Thus, we have two overlapping processes: a trend toward authoritarianism and an increasing reliance on technological solutions to existential problems. Consequently, a question re-emerges that was already posed during the era of classical Enlightenment: to what extent have we *matured* enough to provide an adequate response to this challenge? The answer to this question will shape the agenda for the future.

We cannot claim that the analysis of the Enlightenment and its various interpretations can be fully carried out within the scope of this article. A more in-depth examination of the human being of that era from the perspective of philosophical anthropology is required.

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Ідеї Просвітництва та особливості їх сучасних трансформацій

Метою даної розвідки є здійснення порівняльного аналізу запропонованих варіантів ідеалів Просвітництва з тим, щоб показати багатошаровість даної проблеми і способів її розв'язання. З'ясувати межі класичного Просвітництва та його експлікацій, зокрема, Друге Просвітництво, Нове Просвітництво, де існують можливості його переходу в нову якість. **Теоретичний базис.** Розглянуто концепції, які вимагають парадигмальних змін у базових установках людства. Дослідження спирається на аналіз концепцій, в яких представлена класична парадигма настанов Просвітництва, зокрема, І. Канта, та спроби їх виправдати в умовах сьогодення (С. Пінкер). **Наукова новизна.** Оскільки емерджентність технологічних і соціокультурних змін стала такою інтенсивною, що питання лінійного розвитку людства, здається, знято з порядку денного, то цілком правомірно зростає запит на пошук нових базових принципів розвитку. Зростання ознак ніцшеанської "Доби Волі" ставить під сумнів можливість подальшого втілення ідеалів класичного Просвітництва в сучасні реалії. Оскільки маємо відчутний зсув в бік авторитаризму і занепад ліберальних демократій, то зростає загроза руйнування світового міжнародного порядку. Філософський аналіз зосереджується на засобах протидії зростанню авторитарних тенденцій, осмислюючи можливості поєднання вольової компоненти з раціональним підходом. **Висновки.** При оцінці/переоцінці спадщини Просвітництва потрібно враховувати насамперед чинник тих радикальних змін, які мають місце у сучасному світі і які пов'язані із загальними трансформаціями змісту цілої низки понять. З одного боку, цінність ідей Просвітництва є тим цивілізаційним надбанням, від якого людство не має права відмовитися, а з іншого – кожна фаза потребує певного набору цінностей, регулятивних принципів і світоглядних орієнтиру. Відтак, постає нагальна проблема – з'ясувати: чи позначають сучасні глобальні кризові явища якісну зміну в тлумаченні поняття цінності людини, раціональності, прогресу, або ж вони є лише тимчасовими труднощами в потенційно прогресивному поступі людства. Звідси постає дилема: або підтримка попередніх цінностей, чи оновлення, виробленням нового набору чеснот, що мають стати новими дороговказами для подальшого розвитку людства.

Ключові слова: людина; цінності; гуманізм; Просвітництво; нове Просвітництво; Доба Волі; соціальні зміни; наука; раціональність; прогрес

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