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THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE JESUIT ORDER  
TO THE PROPAGATION OF THE  
ENLIGHTENMENT IDEAS IN LITHUANIA

The Enlightenment came to Lithuania in the second half of the XVIII century, at the time of economical and political disorder. The Lithuanian establishment treated the ideas of Enlightenment as the means against the degradation of the country. The Jesuit Order responded to the influence of the Enlightenment reshaping its educational programmes, first of all in the Vilnius University, which they had established a century ago. The studies of philosophy lasted for three years. The degree of the Doctor of Philosophy was established instead of the degree of the master of the liberal arts and philosophy. They opened the departments of the modern philosophy and natural sciences. As a result the pro-scholastic and anti-scholastic factions arose. The latter wanted to get rid of scholastics completely, the former demanded to adjust the modern disciplines to the scholastics. In the studies of philosophy a kind of compromise was reached. Philosophy was taught in Latin; its division into the logic, physics, metaphysics, and ethics remained; but the content of studies was significantly modified. The logic was followed not by physics, as earlier, but by metaphysics, which was divided into the ontology, psychology, and natural theology. The physics consisted of the general and the special parts and of the cosmology.

The most popular was the system of Christian Wolff, but the teachings of Descartes, Bacon, Lock were studied. The less renown Italian philosopher Fortunatus a Brixia was also popular. The most modernized discipline of philosophy was physics. Works of Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Newton were studied. The mechanistic explanation of the world prevailed. Nevertheless some university professors, as, for example, Ioannes Chevalier, maintained that the mechanical causes

and laws give no sufficient explanation of nature's movement. Therefore they were interested in the divisibility of matter, in the mutual dependence of all natural phenomena. Chevalier thought that the divisibility of matter is infinite. These and alike ideas were seeds of the modern dialectics in Vilnius university.

Ioannes Chevalier was born on June 23, 1732, most probably in Warsaw in a family of French emigres. After graduating from Warsaw Jesuit College, he entered the Jesuit order. In 1751-1754 he taught poetics, rhetoric, French and German in Gardinas College (now Grodno). In 1759 he graduated from the Department of theology of Vilnius University and became professor at Slonim College. In 1763 he received the degree of doctor of liberal arts and philosophy from Vilnius University and became its professor. In 1770 he received the degree of doctor of theology and in 1773 – doctor of canonic law. From 1767 to 1773 he was dean of the Department of Theology and Philosophy. After the ban of the Jesuit order in 1773 he left for Warsaw. There he worked as an inspector for the Lithuanian schools and as a private teacher. From 1779 until 1780 he was rector of the Principal Lithuanian school.

The Manuscript department of Vilnius University has three copies of 'synopsis' of his lectures on philosophy made by his students. As it is mentioned above Chevalier regarded the mechanical explanation of nature's movement insufficient. Nevertheless, as his introduction to the physical chapter of his lectures shows, he accepted the same rules of reasoning in natural philosophy as Newton did:

„Regula prima: Effectum naturalium causae in plures sunt admittendae quaeque et vere sunt et effectibus explicandis sufficiunt.”

„Regula secunda: Effectum naturalium eiusdem generis eadem sunt causae.”

„Regula tertia: Qualitates quae in omnibus corporibus in quibus experimenta numero licet sine nullo earundem qualitum incremento vel decremento observantis pro universalibus corporibus qualitatibus haberi debent.”

„Regula quarta: In Philosophia experimentalis propositiones et phenomenis in inductione collectae, in obiectibus contrariis pro veris aut accurate, aut qua proxime haberi debet, donec alia occurrat phenomenena, quippe aut accuratis redat aut exceptionibus obnoxiae.”

These are the rules we find in „Institutiones Physicae. Praeliminaria” of Chevalier. (Some Latin improprieties are due to the student's manuscript of the synopses.)<sup>1</sup> It is obvious that they are the same ones which

the third book of Newton's *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*<sup>2</sup> contains. In English rendering they are as follows:

- „Rule I: We are to admit no more causes of natural things than such as are both true and sufficient to explain their appearances;”
- „Rule II: Therefore to the same natural effects we must as far as possible, assign the same causes;”
- „Rule III: The qualities of bodies, which admit neither intensification nor remission of degrees, and which are found to belong to all bodies within the reach of our experiments, are to be esteemed the universal qualities of all bodies whatsoever;”
- „Rule IV: In experimental philosophy we are to look upon propositions inferred by general induction from phenomena as accurately or very nearly true, notwithstanding any contrary hypotheses that may be imagined, till such time as other phenomena occur, by which they may either be made more accurate, or liable to exceptions.”

These rules reflect the principal galileo-newtonian attitudes to physical phenomena, the radically antischolastic attitudes, which are as deadly to the aristotelian-thomistic system as the wooden horse is to Troy. Nevertheless the Jesuit Professor Chevalier accepted them.

There is further investigation necessary to answer the natural question, what was his real intention in doing this. Did he want to absorb them somehow into the scholastic system or did he intend to destroy that system by means of them?

In 1773 the pope banned the Jesuit Order. Although the Russian Tzarina Catherin II gave permission to the Jesuits to remain and operate in some regions of the Russian Empire, including Lithuania, nevertheless the Jesuit administrators of the Vilnius university were submitted to the Tzar's Educational Committee. Under the pretext that the professors of philosophy had no sufficient qualification and the textbooks were bad the Committee ordered to stop teaching all philosophical disciplines except logic. Logic was left alone in the curriculum and the University was degraded to the so called Main School. Philosophy had disappeared from the schools for thirty years. When later the school regained its status of a university and the studies of philosophy were restored, there was nobody to teach philosophy therefore professors from abroad were invited.

First came the German prof. Johann Heinrich Abicht (1702-1816). He studied philosophy and theology in Erlangen University. After the graduation he became professor at the university. Under the influence

of the Professor of Jena and Kiel universities Karl Leonhard Reinhold (1758-1823) he became an adherent of the Kantian philosophy. During his work at Erlangen University Abicht wrote twenty four works.

In 1804 he was invited to Vinius University at the Department of philosophy, which was reopened then. Here he spent the last twelve years of his life teaching kantian philosophy in Latin. He was not very popular among nationalisticly-minded students. These years were not prolific to him. He published only one work: „Initia philosophiae sic dictae”<sup>3</sup>. His other works of that period remained manuscripts. The reason was, perhaps, the influence of the university rector Jan Sniadecki (1750-1830), an adherent of the Scottish common sense philosophy, who opposed the idealism of German philosophy, the kantian idealism especially.

Several years after Abicht's death, in 1821 J. Galuchowsky (1797-1858) was elected professor of philosophy of Vilnius University. He was born in Poland, graduated at the Teresia College of Vienna and studied law at Warsaw University and philosophy at Erlangen University and Heidelberg University. He befriended Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854) and was influenced by his ideas. Galuchowsky got his Ph.D. from Heidelberg University and published his main work „Die Philosophie in ihrem Verhältnisse zum Leben ganzer Völker und einzlner Menschen” (Erlangen, 1822) in Erlangen. Poles regard Galuchowsky the first Polish romantic philosopher.

In his treatise „Rozprawa konkursowa” he maintains that philosophy has to play the principal role in society being the main means of moral renaissance and of peoples' union around the great ideas.<sup>4</sup> Galuchowsky opposes panlogism saying that it is intuition as a unity of intellect, emotions and will which gives us an integral and direct insight into the world. The treatise granted him the professorship at Vilnius University. He started lecturing in November 1823 and soon became very popular: at times the number of his audience reached six hundred. It was not only the university students but also the city intellectuals who came to listen his lectures. He appeared very successful in propagating the ideas of Schelling and Hegel, those akin to nationalism especially. The Tzarist administration of the university could not tolerate this and on January 29, 1824 Galuchowsky was forced to resign. After the resignation he never taught again.

Tzarist despotism increased. The administration persecuted the most progressive professors and students, and finally in 1832 Vilnius University was closed.

My short historical review shows not so much what was done in the field of philosophy by the Jesuit Order in Lithuania, but explains why it was done so little. On the background of the indicated reasons it becomes clear that this little is not so small.

**Quotations:**

1. The Synopsis of the Lectures on Philosophy by Ioannes Chevalier, The Manuscript department of Vilnius University Library, F3-561, F3-776, F3-1251.
2. Isaac Newton, *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, translated by Andrew Motte and revised by Florian Cajori, William Benton, Publisher, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., Chicago, London, Toronto, 1952, p.270, 271.
3. Ioannes Henricus Abicht, *Initia philosophiae proprie sic dictae, Liber I, psychologiae partem primam continente*, Vilnae, 1814.
4. See: Jozef Galuchowsky, *Rozprawa konkursowa*, 1821, the Manuscript department of Vilnius University, F18-90.

**The Sources Used:**

1. R. Pleckaitis, *Feodalizmo laikotarpio filosofija Lietuvoje*, Vilnius, „Mintis”, 1975.
2. *Filosofija Vilniaus Universitete 1579-1832*, Vilnius, „Mintis”, 1979.
3. A. Pirockinas, A. Fidlauskas, *Mokslas senajame Vilniaus universitete*, Vilnius, „Mokslas”, 1984.
4. Georgio Forsterio laikai i Vilniaus, Vilnius, „Mokslas”, 1988.