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## The Reception and the Fear of Kant in the Late Eighteenth Century<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** Through a wide range of sources, this study reveals the non-philosophical spread of the ideas of Immanuel Kant in the Slovak regions of Hungary. The flow of philosophical ideas can be demonstrated not only in the works of the Hungarian followers of Kant, but also in censorship sources documenting the import of Kantian texts in the 1790s. The critical debates in correspondences and published texts reveal anti-Kantian argumentations. Information about the advertisements of Kant's works and subscriptions to them also help form an idea about their popularity. Research on private albums reveals how the philosophical legacy circulated, despite bans and repressions, in non-public communication networks and how its social area extended beyond the sphere of philosophy and education.

**Keywords:** Hungary – Kant Immanuel – 18<sup>th</sup> century – eighteenth century – censorship – history of philosophy – transfer of ideas

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## Introduction

Concerning methodology, the history of reading is one of the most problematic zones of culture history. The available sources – library catalogues, notes in books, and excerpts – do not enable us to thoroughly understand the readers' skills and interests and do not lead to solid conclusions about the influence of reading on the minds of individuals. One of the possible approaches is supervision and discipline. The need for the political powers to control reading stems from the idea that reading causes or facilitates the spread of dangerous ideas and is based on the metaphor of infection by texts. However, we are still unable to give an unambiguous answer to the question of whether literature is a symptom or a factor of social development.

Analytical views of the indices of books banned in the Habsburg Monarchy provide much more than just an overview of the banned and the permitted books. They help us understand the transfer and reception of philosophical ideas, their acceptance, or rejection. They show that changes in the attitude to these ideas go hand in hand with changes in the socio-political situation. In the statistics of bans from 1792 to 1820, the name of Immanuel Kant appears fifteen times, whereas in the previous decades it appeared only once – in 1776, the committee of the Viennese court banned the import of his book *Träume eines Geistersehers*<sup>2</sup>.

Kant's teachings experienced a timely and positive reception in the Theresian and Josephine periods, and his works were not only tolerated but were implemented into the official education policy when school reforms (1752–1774) paved the way for replacing the Aristotelian-Thomistic system with the Leibnizian-Wolffian one. Gottfried van Swieten's reform plan, gradually changing school philosophy following the thesis that the youth should not only learn philosophy but should philosophize, too, was enforced in the eighties<sup>3</sup>.

Kant was popular among the freemasons and later also among the followers of the Hungarian Jacobin movement. The philosophical system he introduced began to be considered as the bearer of revolutionary trends especially thanks to aprioristic constructivism that supported the growing emancipation of the citizens through critical reflections. With its question of *quod iuris*, it posed a threat to the well-established order which now had to withstand reason, not only status laws. Such understanding of teachings as a political philosophy

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2 N. Bachleitner, *Die literarische Zensur in Österreich von 1751 bis 1848*, Wien-Köln-Weimar 2017, pp. 153, 157.

3 A. Wilfing, *Die frühe österreichische Kant-Rezeption – Von Joseph II. bis Franz II.*, [in:] *Umwege: Annäherungen an Immanuel Kant in Wien*, in *Österreich und in Osteuropa*, ed. V.L. Waibel, Wien 2015, p. 27.

was in fact a justification of social upheaval<sup>4</sup>. The French Revolution was perceived as the freemasons' conspiracy because ideas about freedom were figured also in Kant's works, which were positively received and widespread among the Hungarian freemasons. In this climate, Enlightenment, freemasonry, revolution, and Kantian philosophy began to be viewed as synonyms. Moreover, Kant counterposed revealed religion and natural religion. The main idea of his philosophy of religion is the thesis that morals are not based on religion and they do not need the idea of a god, since a thinking person subordinates his action to ethical norms and his reason. At that time, therefore, he became an enemy to religion and morals and synonymous with attacks on the throne and religion, and his followers were suspected of atheism although, in fact, his philosophy was not atheistic and did not overlap with deism, either<sup>5</sup>. Consequently, Kant repeatedly appeared in 1794–1799 in the above-mentioned catalogues of banned books. In 1798, a general prohibition was issued on spreading his works<sup>6</sup>.

The nineties, however, were a period when Kant's philosophy was introduced into education at Lutheran lyceums and later also at royal academies and the university in Pest. For the above-mentioned reasons, this was a "silent" introduction. At Catholic schools, it was banned from 1795 onward. Its reception culminated in the philosophical disputes that were led at the turn of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries<sup>7</sup>. These disputes give us an idea about its reception in the academic milieu, in the milieu of the intellectual elite, among those who shaped school legislation and curricula. However, research on a wider range of available sources reveals that below this tip of the iceberg there was a wider social basis for the diffusion and popularity of philosophical ideas.

Correspondences and manuscripts reveal that despite his official rejection, Kant drew attention and was admired, and this resulted in his repression in the given social climate<sup>8</sup>. Indeed, repression and disciplining are productive approaches to understand the width of his reception.

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4 A. Wilfing, *Die staatlich erwirkte Kant-Zensur – Von Franz II. bis Graf Thun-Hohenstein*, [in:] *Umwege...*, pp. 33–34.

5 E. Andreanský, *Kantova filozofia náboženstva z hľadiska praktickej racionality*, "Filozofia" 2012, Vol. 67, No. 3, pp. 195–207; O. Mészáros, *Prvý verejný spor v maďarskej filozofii: spor o Kantovu filozofiu na prelome 18. a 19. storočia*, "Filozofia" 2010, Vol. 65, No. 10, pp. 968, 972.

6 N. Bachleitner, *Die literarische Zensur...*, p. 157; A. Wilfing, *Die staatlich erwirkte Kant-Zensur...*, p. 38.

7 O. Mészáros, *Prvý verejný spor...*, p. 967; O. Mészáros, *Dejiny maďarskej filozofie*, Bratislava 2013, pp. 65, 79–93; E. Deák, *Kant-Rezeption und Kant-Kritik in Ungarn am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts – Die Lehrtätigkeit Anton Kreils*, [in:] *Umwege...*, p. 55.

8 D. Tinková, *Jakobini v sutaně: Neklidní kněží, strach z revoluce a konec osvícenství na Moravě*, Praha 2011, pp. 84–92, 130–131, 254.

## Kant and Hungarian Censorship

In 1788, Filip Ulrich Mahler, a bookseller and publisher in Pressburg, published a dictionary of philosophical terms used in Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. It was compiled by the director of the *Kurfirt Institute for the Mute in Leipzig*, Samuel Heinicke (1727–1790)<sup>9</sup>. This is the only registered edition of this dictionary and we will probably never find out why it was published in Pressburg. Nobody has questioned the authenticity of the editor yet and the book was never added to the index of banned books. It promotes the idea of the free circulation of Kantian thinking in Europe. However, the situation changed after the revolutionary events of 1789.

Censorial records and reviews may provide a basis for detecting a “fear of Kant”. They help understand the argumentation for his rejection and the effort to eradicate him from the public area and private reading. This fear begins to be demonstrable in the early 1790s.

In September 1791, the county administration council granted permission to print Štefan Tichý's manuscript *Philosophische Bemerkungen über das Studienwesen in Ungarn*<sup>10</sup>. Tichý (1760–1800), a professor at the Academy of Law in Košice, is considered to be the first follower of Kant in the Hungarian lands mainly thanks to this discourse, in which he advocates the introduction of Kant's philosophical system into higher education<sup>11</sup>. This did not escape the attention of the censor Mathias Riethaller, who produced a lengthy essay on the attitude of the author to issues like the existence of god, the immortality of the soul, or human freedom. According to Riethaller, among the students this promotes intolerance, courage to judge anything, and intellectual obstinacy. In the censor's view, Tichý “acts as a patron of naturalism”. He does not believe in eternal punishment and ultimately supports sectarians, atheists, and materialists. He asks whether such views are tolerable in the case of an ordained professor. He also notes that Tichý supports the unlimited freedom of the press and this should not be ignored by the county administration which should draw the consequences of it. Despite this standpoint, the county administration permitted to print the manuscript<sup>12</sup>. A turning point came in 1794–1795,

9 S. Heinicke, *Wörterbuch zur Kritik der reinen Vernunft und zu den philosophischen Schriften von Herrn Kant*, Pressburg 1788.

10 Š. Tichý, *Philosophische Bemerkungen über das Studienwesen in Ungarn*, Pest-Ofen-Kaschau 1792.

11 M. Oravcová, *Štefan Tichý – prvý stúpenec Kanta na Slovensku*, “Filozofia” 1986, Vol. 41, No. 5, pp. 588–602; A. Wilfing, *Die frühe österreichische Kant-Rezeption...*, p. 30; S. Zákutná, *Stephan Tichy on Incorporating Kant's Philosophy into University Education at the End of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*, “Contextos Kantianos” 2016, No. 4, pp. 138–146.

12 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár – Országos Levéltár (hereinafter referred to as MNL – OL), C 60, bundle 78, 18380; I. Kollárová, *Freedom of the Press in Hungarian Late Enlightenment Discourse*,

which entered history as the revelation of Martinovič's conspiracy. The lawsuit of Ignác Martinovič and other Hungarian Jacobins, members of secret societies, led to the execution and imprisonment of several members of the Hungarian elite. Those who sympathized with the movement were denied access to administrative and professorial positions<sup>13</sup>. The demonstrable links of Š. Tichý to the Hungarian Jacobins resulted in his retirement in 1795. He was not the only one to be dismissed from his post, however. The dismissal and the lawsuit against Anton Kreil and Johann Delling, professors of philosophy from Pécs, was based on charges that they had been spreading a "dangerous system which leads to scepticism", trained atheists and enemies to the religion under the influence of Kant's philosophy, and Enlightenment was for them a way to eliminate religion and undermine the foundations of the state<sup>14</sup>.

In the autumn of 1795, Tichý sent his manuscript *Hauptmomenten der Kantischen Kritik der reinen Vernunft, in fünf Abhandlungen* to Móric Sahlhausen, a censor in Košice, for approbation. The censor forwarded the manuscript to his superior, the study director Ľudovít Török, with commentaries on the contents of the ideas influencing morals and religion. From the local censor, Sahlhausen, the manuscript travelled to the superior censorship authority in Buda<sup>15</sup>. A few weeks later, in December 1795, Tichý wrote a letter to the county administration demanding that they returned the manuscript because he no longer wanted to publish it in Hungary. This time, too, the review was written by the censor Matthias Riethaller. In his view, the manuscript was not dangerous and could be returned to the author. Moreover, he stated that it was very different from the philosophical reasoning censored back in 1791. Tichý did not defend the widespread Kantian principles but confuted them<sup>16</sup>. The manuscript is not available today, but we may assume that Tichý wrote it in those turbulent times to clear his name from links to Hungarian Jacobins and escape problems.

Interest in Kant can be documented by surviving import reports<sup>17</sup>. The censors used to record the published philosophical works, especially in the case of students returning to their homeland from their studies. Under the rules in force, they registered at the customs offices each consignment of books and took them to their office, where they checked them against the list of banned books. The unproblematic books were then returned to their owners. The problematic ones

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"Historický Časopis", 2016, Vol. 64, No. 5, pp. 803–804.

13 E. Kowalská, K. Kantek, *Uhorská rapsódia alebo tragický príbeh osvietenca Jozefa Hájnyho*, Bratislava 2008, pp. 137–201.

14 M. Oravcová, *Štefan Tichý...*, pp. 588–589; O. Mészáros, *Prvý verejný spor...*, pp. 967–968.

15 MNL – OL, C 60, b. 90, 21211.

16 MNL – OL, C 60, b. 91, 3112.

17 I. Kollárová, *The Secret Book Trade after the Outbreak of the Great French Revolution*, "Historický Časopis" 2018, Vol. 66, No. 5, pp. 815–848.

were divided according to the prohibition categories. Books with the strictest degree of prohibition, *damnatur*, were not allowed to be imported. Books with a limited degree of permission (*toleratur*, *admittitur*) could be imported but were not allowed to be advertised, displayed in reading rooms, or reviewed in periodicals. The *erga schedam* degree of permission meant that the owner had to gain permission from the county administration to import the book for exclusively private use<sup>18</sup>.

This is how, in the 1790s, copies of *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*, and also e.g. Gottlob Christian Storr's *Annotationes quaedam theologicae ad philosophicam Kantii de religione doctrinam* were registered<sup>19</sup>. The censor explained that it was an academical writing on Kant's banned book *Theorie der reinmoralischen Religion* and that is why he had seized it<sup>20</sup>. The book could be returned to its owner based on his application sent to the county administration and there were cases when this really worked. The return, however, was not unproblematic even in these cases. According to the censor's statement, a theologian or future priest from whom such a book was seized should not have access to such works because, as a priest, he would lead the plebs wrongly.

Everything that drew on Kant or responded to his teachings was suspected of spreading improper doctrines. In March 1798, a textbook of logic, *Handbuch der Logik*, by the above-mentioned follower of Kant, A. Kreil, accused of atheism, was seized from Ladislav Ribay. Kreil's book appeared in 1789 and was not banned, but, nevertheless, the county administration requested the censor to write a report on it<sup>21</sup>. According to the censor's statement, Ribay had to return the twenty seized copies to the Viennese printer. The book was not allowed to be distributed or used in schools because of its scepticism towards the foundations of the Christian religion and its dogmas. Kreil's textbook did not figure in the index but was based on these principles and this explains the censor's efforts to prevent it from reaching the youth "who are inclined to search for novelties and build improper inclinations"<sup>22</sup>.

In 1797, Ján Horváth (1732–1800), a professor of physics and philosophy, applied for permission to issue his manuscript containing a polemic on *Kritik der reinen*

18 I. Kollárová, *Freier Verleger, denkender Leser*, Gera 2017, pp. 25–39; idem, *Tajne: nebezpečná myšlienka a netransparentnosť komunikačných sietí v čase nepokoja (1789–1799)*, Bratislava 2020, pp. 75–78.

19 G.Ch. Storr, *Annotationes quaedam theologicae ad philosophicam Kantii*, Tubingae 1793.

20 MNL – OL, C 60, b. 91, 22642.

21 A. Kreil, *Handbuch der Logik*, Wien 1789, MNL – OL, C 60, b. 93, 7387. In 1798, i.e. ten years after the first edition, this could have been a reprint or a second edition of which bibliographies are unaware yet.

22 Database of books banned in the Habsburg Monarchy: *Verpönt, Verdrängt – Vergessen?*, [online] <http://www.univie.ac.at/censorship/info.html> [accessed 30.04.2021]; MNL – OL, C 60, b. 93, 17052.

*Vernunft* and the above-mentioned textbook of logic by Kreil. Horváth attacked mainly Kant's subjectivism and agnosticism. He probably received the permission immediately, because his book entitled *Declaratio infirmitatis fundamentorum operis Kantiani Kritik der reinen Vernunft* appeared that very year and determined the basic tone of the reception of Kant in Hungary from then onwards<sup>23</sup>.

### Kant in Critical Debates

The Lutheran periodical *Novi Ecclesiastico-scholastici annales* published an extensive review of *Dubia de initiis Transcendentalis Idealismi Kantiani*, a book written by József Rozgonyi, one of the main critics of Kant in Hungary. The anonymous author of the review, probably a Lutheran follower of Kant, systematically and contextually refuted Rozgonyi's criticism of the teachings of "immortal Kant"<sup>24</sup>. The above-mentioned education at Lutheran lyceums and this polemic point to a positive reception of Kant among the Lutherans on the one hand, but also his rejection on the other. In his letter to Michal Inštitutoris-Mošovský, Pavol Tešlák notes:

Infelix Cantianismus, cui Gallia publice applausit, vix non pejora in Patria quoque nostra produxit. Ex pulchra illa vitae accomodata Philosophia, Transcendentales Spinae et Speculationes ortae sunt, et quod fatale est, ad ipsam Theologiam translatae, maxima malo tam verae eruditionis, quam tranquillitatis Ecclesiarum, hoc praesertim periculoso aevo, ubi nobis attenditur, plusque quam alias unquam struuntur insidiae. Abstracta cognitio Egoitatis, Ichheit vocant, supplet logicam etc. Piget et pudet audire neo-philosophos frequentius huc ad me venientes, Vix unus redit, qui hac labe, plane ad enthusiasum infectus non est<sup>25</sup>.

The Lutheran minister and writer Pavol Šramko (1743–1831) commented in the foreword of his unpublished Greek-Czech dictionary on the infiltration of Enlightenment ideology as follows: „You will hear, dear readers of this dictionary, at learned gatherings that you are an old loafer, that you do not follow any new fashion, that you do not mention any Kantian or Republican principles”<sup>26</sup>.

In 1797, the anonymous author of the manuscript *Der Patriot aus den Grundsätzen* was given printing permission by the censor Riethaller. Issuing

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23 J. Horváth, *Declaratio infirmitatis fundamentorum operis Kantiani*, Budae 1797, MNL – OL, C 60, b. 92, 18130; O. Mészáros, *Školská filozofia v bývalom hornom Uhorsku*, Bratislava 2008, pp. 149–150.

24 J. Rozgonyi, *Dubia de initiis Transcendentalis Idealismi Kantiani*, Pest 1792; “Novi Ecclesiastico-Scholastici Annales” 1793, 2nd Trimester, pp. 60–89; B. Mester, *Die Kant-Kritik der Ungarn József Rozgonyi*, [in:] *Umwege...*, pp. 196–208.

25 Central Library of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (CL SAS), Manuscript Collection of the Lyceum Library, Ms. fasc. 362, 29/11/1798.

26 CL SAS, Manuscript Collection of the Lyceum Library, Ms. fasc. 362, 29/08/1799.



a work without stating its author was illegal, but it looks like the censor did not mind that in this case. The author wanted to protect his readers against the improper theses of philosophical reformers and innovators at a time he labelled as disastrous for religion, for rulers, and for subjects. The censor suggested a single modification and announced that the work was suitable because it refuted “*perversa pseudophilosophorum*”<sup>27</sup>. Today, this writing may be viewed as anti-revolutionary propaganda about the adverse influence of the revolution and its ideas. In its Chapter Ten, it talks about the influence of Christianity on the common good and notes that deism leads to pride, egoism, and independence from god and the laws – man using his reason as his only guideline cannot know anything higher than himself<sup>28</sup>. Deism leads to pride and to what he calls, just like Teschlák, “*Ichheit*”. “*Vernunft*” becomes the commander, deity, and lawmaker. This is clearly a response to Enlightenment rationalism and Kantian philosophy. In Chapter Eleven, he answers the question of whether philosophy may be spread generally and whether it may be misused and, consequently, detrimental. He explains that, under the disguise of philosophy, modern philosophers spread immorality, impiety, and a rebellious spirit. He sees the misuse of philosophy primarily in accentuating reason and Enlightenment which, he says, gave birth to the revolution in France<sup>29</sup>. In his Chapter Twelve *Ueber die Aufklärung*, he openly criticizes the corruptive influence of rationalism and Kantianism which he previously alluded to. He talks about a “higher philosophy of pure reason” and regards practical philosophy, which walks in well-tried paths without any risk of losing one’s way in the labyrinth of supersensible metaphysics, as its more beneficial equivalent<sup>30</sup>. Reading Kant and similarly oriented modern philosophers reminds him of the fashion of reading novels that had appeared a few years before. This simile was to question the reception of philosophical thinking by creating the image of a temporary, superficial trend that would be soon replaced with something else. The anonymous author, however, did not exaggerate the position of Kant’s works on the book market. When *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* appeared in 1785, it was sold out almost immediately and its second edition was published as early as the next year. In Vienna, Kant’s books were available in the eighties in most bookshops, and some viewed this as a flood of texts with references to Kant. This enthusiasm is said to have culminated in 1795–1797 when its reprint by a printing house in Graz appeared in the market<sup>31</sup>.

27 *Der Patriot aus den Grundsätzen*, Pest 1797, MNL – OL, C 60, b. 92, 10026.

28 *Ibidem*, p. 129.

29 *Ibidem*, pp. 135–137.

30 *Ibidem*, pp. 144–145.

31 A. Wilfing, *Die frühe österreichische Kant-Rezeption...*, p. 31.



In his simulated Hungarian travelogue *Freymüthige Bemerkungen*, Jakub Glatz describes the condition of the reading culture and the reception of European philosophy in the country. He devotes special attention to reading rooms in Pressburg.

Hoci som to nepredpokladal, našiel som v bratislavských čitárňach Kantovu kritiku čistého rozumu, ktorá je ale veľmi málo čítaná a ešte menej pochopená, čo v Uhorsku vcelku platí takmer o všetkých, ktorí predstierajú kontakty s kritickou filozofiou.

[Although I did not expect it, I found in the reading rooms in Pressburg Kant's Critique of Pure Reason which, however, is little read and even less understood, and this applies in Hungary to almost all who pretend to have contact with critical philosophy].

Glatz, however, looked mainly at the reception of the so-called practical philosophy. The Pressburg audience reportedly read, and even understood, e.g. Peter Villaume's *Über den Ursprung und die Absichten des Uebels*, and was familiar with the works of the radical followers of Enlightenment, Carl Friedrich Bahrdt, Christian Fürchtegott Gellert, and others<sup>32</sup>.

### Anti-Kantian Propaganda and Reservoirs of Argumentation in Kristián Genersich's Apologiae

Historians have demonstrated a positive reception of Kant in Lutheran schools, traditional bearers of philosophical thinking in the Slovak regions of Hungary. Followers of Kantian philosophy included the professors at the Lutheran Grammar School in Levoča, Johann Samuel Fuchs (1770–1817) and Johann Samuel Toperczer (1770–1815). However, in-depth research on the manuscript collection preserved in the library of the Lutheran Lyceum in Kežmarok has revealed that conservative, anti-Kantian sentiments were also voiced among Lutheran teachers, and not only in Kežmarok.

At the turn of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, a teacher of the lyceum in Kežmarok, Kristián Genersich (1759–1825), wrote several manuscripts with a common denominator, the defence of Christianity against Enlightenment philosophy, freethought, libertinism, and even naturalism and deism. Some of these could have been concepts for his lectures, but some consistently appear to have been texts written to be published. They reveal the unnoticed aspects of the personality of this teacher in Kežmarok, etched on historical memory so far as a historian and natural scientist. They exhibit his extensive knowledge of Enlightenment philosophy and his theological erudition oriented towards defending Christian dogmas against

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32 J. Glatz, *Freymüthige Bemerkungen eines Ungars über sein Vaterland*, Teutschland 1799, pp. 331–332.

destabilizing influences. The extensive body of apologetic and discursive manuscripts surviving in the collections of the lyceum in Kežmarok reveal a concentrated reservoir of arguments to defend the fundamental articles of the Christian religion.

“Philosophie? in Dunkelheit gehüllt? die, wenn sie entlarvt wird, Atheismus ist”.

Modern philosophical trends have played a more prominent role among students than historians have thought so far. Genersich called this “*Neuerungs-sucht*” and referred to this climate in one of his apologiae as that of “general scepticism, widespread to the entire field of religion”. “Enlightenment is mixed with darkness” and is a “very harmful torch”<sup>33</sup>.

The assiduous theological defence mirrors the popularity of Enlightenment philosophy, including its radical currents such as atheism. Genersich was aware of, analysed, and with theological arguments disputed the entire rationalistic and atheistic tradition from its Epicurean roots onward. In his eyes, Spinoza, Locke, Hobbes, Voltaire, La Mettrie, and, first of all, I. Kant were enemies of Christianity. Although Kant “did not want to completely eliminate religion”, by his philosophical postulates he refuted its principles, and this ultimately leads to atheism. He counted among atheists not only those who rejected the existence of God (*existentiam Dei negant*), but also those who disputed the pillars of faith (*praecipua ejus attributa evertunt*)<sup>34</sup>.

The manuscripts do not appear to have survived in their complete form as Genersich wrote them<sup>35</sup>. In seven of his approximately twenty-five shorter or lengthier texts – lectures, excerpts, essays – thematically oriented towards moral theology, he responds to Kant in a wider context of criticism of Enlightenment philosophy.

In his manuscript *Apologie oder Betrachtungen über die Wahrheit der Religion*, he links Enlightenment to the absence or decline of faith in society. According to him, Enlightenment introduces chaos into traditional religious notions. Earthly reason questions revelation and opposes religion. He talks

33 Lyceum Library in Kežmarok, Manuscript Collection, Ms 889 b: K. Genersich, *Apologie oder Betrachtungen über die Wahrheit der Religion überhaupt und der christlichen Religion insonderheit... Erster Theil*.

34 Lyceum Library in Kežmarok, Manuscript Collection, Ms 1229 a: K. Genersich *Religionis cum respectu philosophiae Kantianae. In lyceo Evangelicorum Kesmarkiensis 1802 proposita*. The text has earlier modifications in terms of contents and language (German). His other surviving manuscripts are variations of this defence: Ms 1234 a: *Partis I. Sectio I. De ascesi pietatis et impietatis ac Libertinismi*; Ms 889 a: *Apologie oder Betrachtungen...* etc. Genersich’s surviving excerpts and notes reveal that he had worked with the texts of philosophers (Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Karl Leonhard Reinhold, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, and others).

35 E.g. Lyceum Library in Kežmarok, Manuscript Collection, Ms 1234 a: *Partis I. Sectio I. De ascesi...* Some survived only as fragments consisting of a few sheets.

about Kant's and Fichte's philosophical systems as philosophical sects. In his view, the French Revolution was the consequence of such philosophizing<sup>36</sup>.

His Latin manuscript *Apologia christiana Religionis cum respectu philosophiae Kantianae* defends the fundamental theses of the Christian faith. It deals with the definition of the term atheism and its philosophical roots (Spinosa, Locke, Hobbes). Here, too, he notes that it is Kant who ultimately leads to atheism with his reasoning. The Christian religion, however, must be defended against the Epicurean tradition, naturalism, deism, and other systems. Genersich cumulates arguments and creates a basis for the defence of the fundamental articles of Christianity (the existence of god, revelation, etc.)<sup>37</sup>. Today, we can ponder what might have led to this cumulation of arguments in a series of texts. Probably it was not only a philosophical discourse of the teachers but a response to the social climate and, quite likely, to the popularity of modern philosophical currents among the students of the lyceum. It is now relatively hard to demonstrate their readings and their interests in philosophical trends. There are indirect references to responses to Genersich's writings and activities perceived as an effort to immunize the youth who jeered at religion and preferred "modern philosophers"<sup>38</sup>.

### Subscription to *Die Allgemeine Religion* in Hungary

Incompletely surviving bookseller's catalogues and other sources about the history of the book market enable us to see how the offer of Kantian philosophy by Hungarian booksellers looked like. We can learn some facts from the advertisements that appeared in the *Pressburger Zeitung*, too. From 1793 onward, sets of Kant's books appeared in the advertisements, especially those placed by Andreas Schwaiger, a bookseller in Pressburg, sometimes along with other philosophical works or books by his critics<sup>39</sup>. They also appeared in the offer of Leonhard Leeg<sup>40</sup>, a trader in arts and books, until 1798 when a general ban was issued on his works.

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36 Lyceum Library in Kežmarok, Manuscript Collection, Ms 889 b: K. Genersich, *Apologie oder Betrachtungen...*

37 Lyceum Library in Kežmarok, Manuscript Collection, Ms 1229 a: K. Genersich, *Apologia christiana Religionis...* German version: Ms 1029 a: K. Genersich, *Apologie des Christenthums auch mit Rücksicht auf die Kantische Philosophie*. See also: Ms 1212 a: K. Genersich, *Apologie der Christenthums*.

38 Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, Spiš Archives, Spiš County. Correspondence of deputy county administrator Imrich Horváth-Stansith 1785–1801, 2356, 17/01/1800, Ján Ambrózi to Imrich Horváth-Stansith.

39 "Pressburger Zeitung" 1793, No. 87, 29 October, p. 1104; 1795, No. 91, 13 November. Schwaiger advertised Kant's books in the subsequent years, too.

40 "Pressburger Zeitung" 1796, No. 87, 28 October, p. 1119; 1797, No. 46, 9 June, p. 556.

In May 1795, a *Notice for Friends of Philosophical Literature* appeared in “Pressburger Zeitung” with a call to a subscription before the publication of the series of philosophical works *Deutsche philosophische Bibliothek*. The Graz-based publisher Johann Andreas Kienreich, the initiator of the above-mentioned reprint, tried to attract subscribers in the Hungarian lands, too. The notice mentions the intention to publish high-quality philosophical works. The first three titles planned included *Kritik der reinen Vernunft and Grundriss der Erfahrungs-Seelenlehre* written by a follower of Kant, Ludwik Heinrich von Jakob. The subscription fees were collected in Pressburg by the above-mentioned Andreas Schwaiger<sup>41</sup>. We have no information about the success, or failure, of the subscription campaign, but another case documents that there was interest in the Slovak regions not only in Kant but also in his follower L.H. von Jakob.

In November 1797, Ignác Revický, a censor in Pressburg, reported to the county administration that the Pressburg bookseller A. Schwaiger had received several copies of Jakob’s book *Die Allgemeine Religion*, published with the help of the subscriptions. In the list of subscribers printed on the last pages of the book, he found the names of persons from Hont County. He pointed out that the book contained Kantian ideas that had already been banned and should therefore be banned, too<sup>42</sup>. The county administration acted on this report and began investigating. Shortly afterwards, the superintendent of the mining district, Martin Hamaliar (1750–1812), wrote a letter to the county administration, emphasizing that Jakob’s work did not contain any prejudice against religion and the state, but summarized the teachings about intellectual religion. The undersigned subscribers who signed the letter wanted to make use of the lower price of the copies but did not assume that the book might have been suspicious to the censors. The ban causes harm to those who intend to use it only for their private needs<sup>43</sup>. The list was signed by twenty-six other priests, who were probably also among the subscribers. However, it turned out that, in the meantime, *Die allgemeine Religion* was in fact added to the list of banned books compiled by the Viennese censorship committee. They ordered the copies to be returned beyond the border and they probably never made their way to the subscribers<sup>44</sup>. The edition of the book contains an “Addendum to the List of Subscribers. Hungary” with twenty-eight names under the headings

41 “Pressburger Zeitung” 1795, No. 37, 8 May, pp. 450–451; A. Golob, *Der Grazer Buchhandel und seine Beziehungen zu den ungarischen Länder um 1800. Ein Überblick auf der Grundlage von Anzeigen in Grazer Zeitungen*, “Magyar Könyvszemle” 2010, Vol. 126, No. 1, p. 89.

42 L.H. von Jakob, *Die allgemeine Religion: ein Buch für gebildete Leser*, Halle 1797. MNL – OL, C 60, b. 92, 24352.

43 MNL – OL, C 60, b. 92, 25677.

44 MNL – OL, C 60, b. 92, 26992; b. 93, 5368.

*Šariš County* and *Spiš County*, but they contain subscribers from other counties, too. Together with the priests who signed the letter and who came mostly from Hont and Zvolen County, there were fifty-six subscribers in total. We may assume that other people, from other counties, also showed interest in the book, but we have no information about them.

If we look at the social and occupational background of the subscribers, we can find names of well-known professors at lyceums (K. Genersich's brother Ján Genersich, Žigmund Karlovský, and others), teachers in aristocratic families, and priests in rural areas. The question arises of how the information about the subscription from a remote publisher reached them. We are unable to confirm that it was from the notice in "Pressburger Zeitung", but they might have learnt about it from other newspapers that were read in the Slovak regions or from the numerous periodicals meant for Lutheran ministers that appeared at that time. The notice on the subscription might have spread through correspondence, too. Subscription to a German publication by such a high number of Hungarian customers is quite unusual as far as we know. In similar cases, the subscribers consisted of priests or major booksellers who were selling the copies.

### Rationalists and Followers of Kant in Private Notes and Albums

Subscriptions, publishing success, deterrence from reading, and questioning the understanding of the philosophical system lead us to wonder what the true reception of Kant's works was like and whether what could be called consequences truly existed. Research on readership in its historical dimensions is one of the major methodological problems of research on the history of book culture and what we can demonstrate today leads us to conclude that collecting prevailed over fully-fledged reading. This is the situation we find ourselves in when we probe into the active reading of Kantian production, too. It is quite amply represented in historical book collections, but rarely shows marks of use. On the pastedowns, the owners of the books used to add other texts by Kant or copy reviews (e.g. from "Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung") or passages from related works by Kant. Notes sporadically appear in the text proper, too.

Although the absence of readers' notes does not completely rule out that they worked with the text actively, neither does it enable us to confirm or disprove the statements of contemporaneous commentators about enthusiasm or a lack of understanding, and forces us to look for other traces. In isolated cases, these can be found in correspondences. In 1792, F.U. Mahler, a bookseller in Pressburg, was looking for the next volume of "Reinhold", a work by Carl Leonhard Reinhold (*Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie* or *Beyträge zur*

*Berichtigung bisheriger Missverständnisse der Philosophen*)<sup>45</sup>, a follower of Kant, for the Lutheran minister Ján Karol Osterlamm in Levoča.

A more solid hint can be found in another type of source – in private albums or so-called Stammbuch. Albums with dedications from friends, authorities, and personalities from one's study stays are unique sources, in a sense. In the stereotypical flood of sentences on friendship, happiness, and wisdom, taken from the classics, the Bible, or anthologies of aphorisms compiled for this particular purpose, non-standard entries, like a philosophical legacy with a rationalistic message, sometimes appear, too. Albums circulated in private circles and were not subject to censorship. Consequently, they may contain sincere political statements or quotes that did not comply with the official, approved ideologies and religious traditions. Banned or problematic authors and their ideas figure in them, too. Albums are therefore a treasure trove of unapproved ideas and topics excluded from public discourse. A glimpse at the analytical databases of albums from the latter half of the eighteenth century reveals an obvious frequency of statements from the works of Voltaire, Rousseau, Kant, Lessing, Hume, Holbach, and other Enlightenment philosophers. Albums appear to be useful sources for research on the diffusion of Jacobin ideas in the post-revolutionary period and on worldviews that differed from the standard and approved Christian tradition<sup>46</sup>.

The album of Gabriel Machula from Abrahámovce, who later became a Lutheran minister in Nitrianska Streda, Békés, and Szarvas, is a prototype of the albums of the period, where classic entries inspired by the Bible and by ecclesiastical and classic authors intertwine with inspirations from modern literature and philosophical trends. In 1791, Machula studied in Jena and, as some of the dedications in his album reveal, he spent some time in Erlangen and Nuremberg (1793), too. In 1792, a friend from his studies, Jakub Schmidák, entered a quote for him from Christoph Martin Wieland's article *Über den freien Gebrauch der Vernunft in Glaubenssachen* ("Der Weise duldet die Thoren, weil er weise, die Schwachen, weil er stark, die Bösen, weil er gut ist"). Wieland was a frequently quoted author in the albums of the latter half of the eighteenth century, with most of the quotations taken from his literary works. The article quoted in Machula's album appeared in 1788 in the newspaper "Der Teutsche Merkur" established by Wieland after the model of the French social gazette "Mercure de France". The newspaper was banned in 1794 for its articles questioning religious teachings in a materialistic and atheistic spirit<sup>47</sup>. In 1791,

45 Archives of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Levoča, letters to J.K. Osterlamm, 10.12.1792.

46 I. Kollárová, *Historická pamäť v pamätníkoch*, "Pamiatky a Múzeá" 2015, Vol. 64, No. 4, pp. 25–26.

47 N. Bachleitner, *Die literarische Zensur...*, pp. 263–264.



during his studies in Jena, Ján Samuel Toperczer wrote an entry to Machula's album as a "friend and brother". He quoted the above-mentioned Kantian philosopher L.H. von Jakob ("Vernunft prüfet alles, auch sich selbst") and from the book *Über den moralischen Beweis für das Dasein Gottes*<sup>48</sup>. Like many others, Machula was collecting dedications for quite a long time. The last entries in his album are dated 1802. In this way, we can trace not only the interests and orientations of his friends at the time of his study peregrinations, but also at a later period, after he returned to his homeland. In 1797, in Nitrianska Streda, he received a sentence inspired by Kant's metaphysics of morals ("Nichts ist absolut gut als der gute Wille")<sup>49</sup>. Machula's album with its hundred and five dedications reveals how Enlightenment, rationalism, and Kantian philosophy entered the awareness of the intellectual elite. In the seventies and the eighties, this trend was not yet discernible in albums. The first such quotes are documented from the end of the eighties<sup>50</sup>. Ján Zachariáš Veszter in Kežmarok quoted from the article *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* about whether the will elevates man above animals and morals elevate him to divinity<sup>51</sup>. The categorical imperative appears in several quotations. The above-mentioned statement "Nichts ist absolut gut, als der gute Wille" appears in the albums repeatedly; it was used e.g. by Daniel Sonntag from Hungary studying in Jena who wrote it in the album of his Hungarian classmate in 1793<sup>52</sup>. Another student in Jena, Pavol Maretsek from Vrbovce, used a passage from *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* ("Zwei Dinge sind gross. Der gestirnte Himmel über mir, und das moralische Gesez in mir") in 1796<sup>53</sup>. Albums suggest that the campus in Jena played a certain role in contact with Kantian philosophy. The numerous censored import cases reveal that the students used to carry this "infection" in the form of banned books to become part of their life.

In 1794, an album was started by Jonatán Lauček (1775–1806), probably the son of the church writer Martin Lauček. We have little information about his life and education; we only know that he was a botanist. The title page reveals that the

48 Accessible in the database *Inscriptiones Alborum Amicorum*, [online] [http://iaa.bibl.u-szeged.hu/index.php?page=browse&entry\\_id=10604](http://iaa.bibl.u-szeged.hu/index.php?page=browse&entry_id=10604) [30/04/2021].

49 Albumtulajdonos: Machula, Gábor, Bejegyző: Karló, György, [online] [http://iaa.bibl.u-szeged.hu/index.php?page=browse&entry\\_id=3261](http://iaa.bibl.u-szeged.hu/index.php?page=browse&entry_id=3261) [30/04/2021].

50 Ján Musculi from Liptov used the quotation "Mutmasslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte", see: Albumtulajdonos: Schmidt, Mózes. Bejegyző: Musculi, Johann, [online] [http://iaa.bibl.u-szeged.hu/index.php?page=browse&entry\\_id=8064](http://iaa.bibl.u-szeged.hu/index.php?page=browse&entry_id=8064) [30/04/2021].

51 Albumtulajdonos: Ónady, Sámuel. Bejegyző: Veszter, Johann Zacharias, [online] [http://iaa.bibl.u-szeged.hu/index.php?page=browse&entry\\_id=6322](http://iaa.bibl.u-szeged.hu/index.php?page=browse&entry_id=6322) [30/04/2021].

52 Albumtulajdonos: Molnár, Sándor. Bejegyző: Sonntag, Daniel, [online] [http://iaa.bibl.u-szeged.hu/index.php?page=browse&entry\\_id=10490](http://iaa.bibl.u-szeged.hu/index.php?page=browse&entry_id=10490) [30/04/2021].

53 Albumtulajdonos: Kőrmöczi, János. Bejegyző: Maretsek, Pál [online] [http://iaa.bibl.u-szeged.hu/index.php?page=browse&entry\\_id=9641](http://iaa.bibl.u-szeged.hu/index.php?page=browse&entry_id=9641) [30/04/2021].



owner of the album sympathized with Enlightenment traditions in the broadest sense of the word. The motto "Horacius, Wieland, Kant" points not only to antique traditions in which Horace might have been a representative of Epicureanism and materialistic ethics. Wieland's philosophical views, subjected to natural religion and his admiration for the revolution, resulted in a ban on some of his works. Both were quoted in his album, in addition to sentences by Voltaire on tolerance and religious prejudices, quotations from a work by the Enlightenment rationalist Lessing, and the repeatedly mentioned radical follower of Kant, L.H. von Jakob<sup>54</sup>. We admit that, in some cases, the dedications and the entries represented only a formal task without any deeper enthusiasm for the chosen text and did not mean that the ideas and messages had any resonance apart from certain popularity of the philosophical trend, as the anonymous author of *Der Patriot aus Grundsätzen* pointed out. In a certain way, his viewpoint on superficial popularity and temporariness is confirmed also by the fact that quotations from Kant's works were frequent in a certain period but gradually disappeared from the dedications and became quite rare by the early nineteenth century.

### Transfer of Ideas, Reception, and Philosophical Reflection

I. Kant died on 12 February 1804. On this occasion, Žigmund Karlovský (1772–1821), a professor of philosophy at the Lutheran college in Prešov, wrote a poem entitled *Epitaphium in obitum Imanuelis Kanti*. He noted it down in his collection of occasional poems and it was printed a few years later in the "Musenalmanach für das österreichische Kaiserthum"<sup>55</sup>. Karlovský symbolizes an ambivalent Kantianism – Kant influenced him, but he disputed him in several instances, as ultimately did some other Enlightenment teachers of philosophy<sup>56</sup>. Philosophical reception can be traced not only in treatises and textbooks but, in the first half of the nineteenth century, also in works dedicated to ethics and aesthetics, or history. Many of these remained manuscripts, some of them preparations for lectures or private notes.

Rationalistic, Enlightenment, and Kantian concepts were not circulated and did not resonate only in the academic circles. A wider inventory of the

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54 CL SAS, Manuscript Collection of the Lyceum Library in Bratislava, *Pamätník Jonathana Laučeka*, A 15299.

55 CL SAS, Manuscript Collection of the Lyceum Library in Bratislava, Ms. Vol. 207, pp. 109–110; Ž. Karlovský, *Epitaphium in obitum Imanuelis Kanti*, "Musenalmanach für das österreichische Kaiserthum" 1808, Vol. 1, pp. 71–72.

56 S. Zácutná, *The Reception and Criticism of Kant's Philosophy in the Region of Today's Slovakia at the Turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and in the First Half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, [in:] *Kant und seine Kritiker – Kant and his Critics*, ed. A. Falduto, H.F. Klemme, Hildesheim-Zürich-New York 2018, pp. 236–237.

sources facilitates multispectral perception and changes the schematic image into a vivid intellectual culture with its enthusiasm, debates, rejections, or condemnations. “Republic of letters”, the intellectual community shaped by the flow of ideas through correspondences, the press, the political circles, and debates in cafés and salons, reveal a social area of reception that reaches beyond school environments. It points to a multidimensional communication sphere of text acquisitions, reading, private sharing of philosophical messages, reception, and disputes. It helps perceive the history of philosophy from an “outside perspective”, as material history in a non-philosophical context, subject to the interdisciplinarity of the history of science and the transfer of ideas. It opens the door to understanding the influence of Kant’s teachings not only on the development of philosophical and theological thinking in the late Enlightenment period, but also to understanding the process of the modernization and secularization of the society.

Fig. 1. Title page of Jonatán Lauček’s Album  
(Central Library of the Slovak Academy of Sciences)



## Records

Central Library of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Manuscript Collection of the Lyceum Library in Bratislava:

- A 15299, *Pamätník Jonathana Laučeka*.

Lyceum Library in Kežmarok, Manuscript Collection:

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