



INTRODUCTION

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Since the second half of the 19th century, the human condition, in the cultural-civilisational and in the individual sense, has increasingly been seen as undergoing changes resulting in an all-encompassing crisis. Some non-theoretical manifestations of this crisis have been the two twentieth-century world wars, the rise of totalitarian regimes, genocide and war crimes, or – more recently – the unchecked growth of mass culture, consumerism, and the wane of the primacy of higher spiritual values. Recent political developments show a return to violence and aggression as a means of conducting politics, even amongst European countries, until recently hoping that politics of this kind was merely “a matter of history”. Similarly, we have seen an increase in terrorism-related threats. Great is the distance between our times and the optimism of nineteenth-century positivists, as is that between us and Jules Verne’s optimistic faith in the predetermined progress of humanity, aided by science and technology.

This thematic issue of „Culture and Values” therefore examines issues of progress and crisis in culture. Polish scholars from various academic institutions have prepared the texts for this issue, which is based on papers presented during the conference „From the idea of progress to the idea of crisis”, organised on 27-28 January 2014 by Maria Curie-Skłodowska University’s Department of Philosophy and the quarterly „Culture and Values”.

Andrzej Niemczuk outlines the theoretical problems and hurdles in which the category of historical progress is entangled. Sławomir Raube’s text traces the thought of Ernst Cassirer on the cultural role of myth. Adam Nobis takes a cultural studies perspective on the notion of globalisation, asking valid questions on what causes some to view globalisation as a sign of progress, while others regard it as a symptom of crisis. Three

subsequent texts (by Michał Bohun, Halina Rarot and Cezary Jędrysko) take up the issue of progress and crisis in theoretical concepts grounded in Russian philosophy. The final text, by Barbara Grabowska, transposes the notion of progress and crisis onto the relation between human beings and animals.

The issues analysed in each text are thus very diverse, which is indicative of the diversity of contexts in which philosophy and cultural studies place the notions of progress and crisis.

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