



NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY  
HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

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**THE DOCTRINE OF PUBLIC  
EDUCATION OF CONDORCET IN  
LIGHT OF THE DISCUSSION ON  
WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND SLAVERY  
AT THE BEGINNING OF THE  
THIRD REPUBLIC**

BASIC RESEARCH PROGRAM

WORKING PAPERS

SERIES: HUMANITIES  
WP BRP 94/HUM/2015

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## **THE DOCTRINE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION OF CONDORCET IN LIGHT OF THE DISCUSSION ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND SLAVERY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE THIRD REPUBLIC**<sup>2</sup>

This paper offers an analysis of the public education project proposed by Nicolas de Condorcet (1743-1794) which appeared to be too modern for the late XVIII century but extremely vital for the last three decades of XIX century. His ideas were taken and made foundation for the reforms proposed by Jules Ferry and Ferdinand Buisson, whose names are traditionally linked with the formation of the “republican school” in France.

**JEL Classification:** Z

**Keywords:** enlightenment, public education, republicanism, school, equality, social progress

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<sup>2</sup> This study (research grant No. 14-01-0190) was supported by The National Research University–Higher School of Economics Academic Fund Program in 2014-2015.

*«Our hopes, as to the future condition of the human species,  
may be reduced to three points: the destruction of inequality  
between different nations; the progress of equality  
in one and the same nation;  
and lastly, the real improvement of man...  
actual equality is the chief end of the social art»<sup>3</sup>*

## **Introduction**

Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas de Caritat de Condorcet (1743-1794) a French philosopher, politician, scientist, member of the French Academy since 1782, anticlerical and abolitionist. In 1791 he was elected into the National Convention, than he became secretary of the National Legislative Assembly and later its president. Condorcet presented the Girondin constitutional project<sup>4</sup> in February 1793, but the Convention rejected it and accepted the Jacobin one designed by Héroult de Séchelles. Then Condorcet issued the address to the nation owing to which he was announced out of law by the Convention. He had to hide in Paris at Mme Vernet whose protection enabled him to finish his *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*. After that Condorcet left Mme Vernet's house and wandered around Paris outskirts for several days. He was arrested soon due to the Convention order and imprisoned at Bourg-la-Reine where he was found dead several days later.

A few decades after his death *Esquisse* by Condorcet was acknowledged as one of the major texts about social progress in history. F. Buisson (1841-1932), director of primary education in France in 1879-1896, wrote in his article about Condorcet: "His reputation and talents, his liberal spirit and longing for public good underline his important role in the great cause of national progress that was ahead"<sup>5</sup>. Indeed, marquis de Condorcet is one of the most representative figures of the Enlightenment. He happened to be, perhaps, the only Encyclopaedist surviving the end of the Old Regime, sharing the principal ideas of the Enlightenment and at the same time severely criticizing its restricted rationalism and theoretical nature.

Condorcet formed a bridge between Enlightenment and the nineteenth-century attitudes. With Voltaire defending "enlightened despotism", justifying anti-semitism and racism, Diderot celebrating a "natural man" and studying the scientific basis of modernity, Physiocrats concentrating on agriculture and commerce in the Enlightenment epoch, Condorcet was the only one, not taking into account Rousseau, who undertook a deep research of social inequality and

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<sup>3</sup> Condorcet, A.-N. (1988), *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*, Paris: GF Flammarion, 1988, pp. 265-266.

<sup>4</sup> Condorcet, A.-N., "Projet de Déclaration des droits", in Condorcet, A.-N. (1847-1849), *Œuvres*, Paris: F. Didot, tome 12.

<sup>5</sup> Buisson, F. (1911), *Condorcet*, <http://www.inrp.fr/edition-electronique/lodel/dictionnaire-ferdinand-buisson/document.php?id=2424>

developed reforms aimed against it. The situation was due to the absolutism regime that set the framework for the XVIII c. French thought. The Enlightenment philosophy was based on two theses: “the progress of human capacities has not reached its apogee yet” and “nature has inseparably linked the enlightenment progress with the progress of moral”<sup>6</sup>. While developing universal moral discourse the Enlighteners had to insert it into present political and social conditions since the universal nature of the discourse without political activity corresponded with the political structure of absolutism itself, and the latter put a sovereign into the center of political life<sup>7</sup>.

Condorcet was the author of the project of “progressist” reforms that he had to pay for later with his life. At his time they were not carried out completely because of their novelty but they found support among reformers in the last three decades of XIX c. Condorcet’s ideas about public education were of particular importance then. Public education was linked by the French thinker with the progress of human civilization considered as perfection of laws and moral<sup>8</sup>. Progress is only possible on the term of freedom of peoples, participation of great personalities in history and foundation of a republic<sup>9</sup> as the form of political life. In this case the system of public education becomes extremely significant. Long lasting progress would hardly have been possible if scientific research had been serving only the interests of a narrow professional circle.

Scientific and cultural progress does not cause people’s unhappiness in itself (the idea one can find in Rousseau), human good, Condorcet affirms, depends directly on availability of new knowledge. Moreover, when knowledge is claimed by someone for personal use it creates the danger of new slavery. In his *Esquisse* Condorcet gives an example of Chaldéens priests who were the first scientists and religious figures at the same time. They were eager to keep their knowledge for themselves thus obtaining great power. When knowledge is concealed and access to it is hindered for majority of people it is, as Condorcet shows, obscurantism. Furthermore, the true progress of humanity should not be reduced to the simple accumulation of information, there also has to be the progress of moral. The moral basis defines subject’s autonomy which is the foundation for republic<sup>10</sup>. C. Kintzler notices fairly in her comment to Chapter 8 of *Esquisse*,

it is one thing to indicate that some civilized peoples live in terms of despotism and it is another thing to state that uncivilized people does not know anything about human rights. One may say that some knowledge is useless but it is different to question what ignorance is for, who it is

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<sup>6</sup> Condorcet, A.-N. (1988), *Esquisse...*, pp. 81, 86.

<sup>7</sup> Pranchère, J.-Y. (2004), *L'autorité contre les Lumières*, Genève: DROZ, p. 122.

<sup>8</sup> Compare Rousseau, J.-J. (2008), *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, Paris: Flammarion, p. 227.

<sup>9</sup> Say, J.-B. (2003), *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 5, *Oeuvres morales et politiques*, Paris: Economica, p. 201.

<sup>10</sup> Michaud Y. (2009), *Qu'est-ce que le mérite?*, Paris: Gallimard, coll. «Folio/essais», p. 112.

profitable for? Finally, one can point out the harmful consequences of progress but it is far more important to inquire about the problems that an ignorant person has inevitably to face<sup>11</sup>.

It is Condorcet with his “progressist” intentions, which reflected not just about theoretical explanation of reformation of the French society but projected a number of essential reforms, being a true representative of the Enlightenment. In his prophetic thinking he foresaw the intrinsic problems of XIX-XXI cc. such as nation-building and cosmopolitanism<sup>12</sup>. Human rights, universal equality, freedom were not just theoretical postulates for Condorcet but the target of his political and social activity. He did not evade the issues of colonial slavery and social inequality of sexes. Universal equality is only possible, Condorcet insists, when the value of a particular individual is absolutely recognized as well as uniqueness of particular cultures that should be the foundation of universal cosmopolitan moral. One can observe here the parallel between Condorcet and Herder. The latter asserts in his *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of mankind* (1784) that the progress should not be absolutized, and there are no historical epochs superior to other ones. He states that “civilization is in progress without obtaining final perfection” (chapter XV). In the second part of his work he argues with Kant when he underlines the advantages of each particular culture. In 1784 Kant published his work *The Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose* in which he considers the successive historical epochs as an endless process on the way to the ideal, that is, a republic. Leaving behind the details of this philosophical argument, it should be said that the “civilizational” universalism can bring both recognition and rejection of human individuality<sup>13</sup>. During the Third Republic, a universalism was discussed in terms of homogenization of human differences in the colonial context<sup>14</sup>. It sounded explicitly in the rhetoric of J. Ferry (1832-1893), minister of national education and fine arts in France in 1879-1893. Ferry promoted the idea of superiority of particular cultures or “races” that should be entitled to colonize and “enlighten” other cultures and “races” in the course of formation of a united civilization<sup>15</sup>. The social education and school being the guides of the progress should be put to the purpose, according to Condorcet and Ferry.

The project of the new Constitution prepared by Condorcet as well as his ideas about civilization and enlightenment did not find support among his contemporaries. Most public attention was drawn to Rousseau’s thought<sup>16</sup>. However, at the end of XIX c. his work got into

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<sup>11</sup> Kintzler, C. (1984), *Condorcet, l'instruction publique et la naissance du citoyen*, Paris: SFIED, p. 71.

<sup>12</sup> Renaut, A. (2011), *Quelle éthique pour nos démocraties?*, Paris: Buchet/Chastel, pp. 58-114.

<sup>13</sup> Wiewiorka, M. (2001), *La Différence. Identités culturelles: enjeux, débats et politiques*, Paris: Ballard, pp. 56-57;

Schnapper, D. (1998), *La Relation à l'Autre. Au coeur de la pensée sociologique*, Paris: Gallimard, pp. 37, 180.

<sup>14</sup> Pels, P., “The Anthropology of Colonialism: Culture, History, and the Emergence of Western Governmentality”, in *Annual Review of Anthropology* (1997), n° 26, pp. 163-183.

<sup>15</sup> Renaut, A. (2009), *Un humanisme de la diversité. Essai sur la décolonisation des identités*, Paris: Flammarion, p. 139.

<sup>16</sup> Ястребцева, А.В., (2014), “Дискуссии об общественном образовании во Франции в эпоху Революции, in *Философские науки*, n° 9, с. 114-128.

the focus of public interest. Thus Condorcet was an eager advocate of feminism; he claimed the equality of men and women particularly in the sphere of education and its availability for both sexes (*Sur l'admission des femmes au droit de cité*, 1790). Following this model Ferry signed on 21 December 1880 the law about secondary education for women. Condorcet was the first and only Enlightenment who defied slavery not just in theory. He became a member of the Society of the Friends of the Blacks that fought against slavery in French colonies for the sake of their economic development and promotion of republican ideas – freedom, first of all that leads to the education of freed slaves and establishment of non-clerical school. Echoing mostly Condorcet's plan Buisson, who worked under Ferry, founded in 1898 the French League of Human Rights. As a member of the French Association of public non-clerical education he designed a project of non-clerical school canceling teaching of religion from school curriculum.

The article aims at the analysis of the public education doctrine designed by Condorcet in the context of social and political reforms of postrevolutionary period. It means to show Condorcet legacy working in particular political reforms of the Third Republic that carried out a “republican school” model. The article sees its task, first, in stating the importance of Condorcet's ideas for Enlightenment, for further development of European civilization. Second, it explores the solutions offered by Condorcet regarding female education and eradication of slavery that signify the apogee of Enlightenment thought.

### **The principles of Condorcet's doctrine of national education**

“*Emile ou de l'Éducation*” (1762) by Rousseau changed the nature of philosophy and education. It focused on the ideas of the anthropological status of childhood, dominance of human experience, and inalienability of human freedom<sup>17</sup>. The three principals were accepted by the postrevolutionary philosophers, including.

Condorcet considers the idea of the national unity as the basis of the public education doctrine, as it is stated in Rousseau's theory<sup>18</sup>. Apparently, the idea of the national unity apprehended as the result of a new legibly planned model of education belonged not just to the French authors at the Revolution time<sup>19</sup> but also marked the way of thinking in the German idealism. Fichte asserted that from now on education should be conceived in terms of “transcendental deduction of intersubjectivity as the condition of possibility of self-

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<sup>17</sup> Rousseau, J.-J. (1969), *Émile ou de l'éducation*, Paris: Gallimard, coll. «Folio-Essais», pp. 650, 653-654.

<sup>18</sup> Rousseau, J.-J. (2001), *Du contrat social*, Paris: Flammarion, p. 59.

<sup>19</sup> See Palmer, R.R. (1985), *The Improvement of Humanity: Education and French Revolution*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

consciousness” and “in the frame of history of philosophy”<sup>20</sup>. Hence, the national education for Fichte should form patriotism and cosmopolitanism<sup>21</sup> – the objectives of the new educational ideology founded on universal equality and freedom.

Another German thinker, pedagogue and reformer, the heir of both German idealism<sup>22</sup> and French revolutionary thought was Wilhelm von Humboldt. In his book *On the Limits of State Action* (1792) he proclaimed that any state was necessary evil. Therefore, he wanted to replace the contemporary Prussian state based on the theory of “paternal care” proposed by Frederick II, where the key principal was “everything is for the people, nothing is by means of the people”<sup>23</sup>, with a new one built on principles of reason and to minimize the influence of historically-formed statehood. Humboldt was an individualist and saw a true aim of human existence in harmonious development of all aspects of individuality that depends on personal freedom. When the latter is available one is able to develop his/her original qualities, and even shape his/her physical nature according to personal needs and disposition. From Humboldt’s point of view, the only thing that man cannot set up for himself is security. The state should care about the security for it is a necessary term of individuality progress as well as the security is mandatory for freedom. Resulting from this thesis was a major statement of Humboldt state theory about individual freedom not constrained by the state. It meant that the state is not to interfere into public upbringing and education, otherwise public education is under threat of being transformed in some certain form or direction<sup>24</sup>. Since a person is already born in a certain state and brought up as a future citizen it is necessary, Humboldt says, to create such a model of public education in which the status of citizen does not particularly differ from the one of an ordinary person, that is, the state should not impose particular civil forms on its people<sup>25</sup>. Otherwise, one should look back at the history of ancient democracies when the civic education model dictated by the state lead finally to a general disruption and collapse of a republic. In other words, the state turned into an evil force, for every time when a new social group got to power it assumed the right to dictate a certain order or a particular form of a national character.

R. Guyme in the introduction to the Russian translation of the above mentioned Humboldt work from German (1898) marked some contradictions in his theory. Humboldt shares the main intuition of the Enlightenment concerning negative affect of the state-teacher and tutor on the people’s progress, but he only says about limiting state’s power leaving the essential

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<sup>20</sup> Lamarre, J.-M., “Philosophie et pédagogie: Fichte et la Méthode de Pestalozzi”, in Soëtar, M. (2012), *Méthodes et philosophie. La descendance éducative de l’Emile*, Paris: L’Harmattan, p. 87.

<sup>21</sup> Readings, B. (1998), *The University in Ruins*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 65.

<sup>22</sup> Renaut, A. (1979), *Philosophies de l’Université. L’idéalisme allemand et la question de l’Université*, Paris: Payot, p. 30.

<sup>23</sup> Фридрих II (1780), *Письма о любви к отечеству*, Санкт-Петербург: Императорский кадетский корпус, с. 42.

<sup>24</sup> Compare Kant, I., “The Contest of Faculties”, in Reissed, H. (ed.) (1991), *Kant: Political Writings*, 2 ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>25</sup> Curtius, L. (1950), *Deutscher und antiker Geist. Lebenserinnerungen*, Stuttgart, pp. 332-335.

idea of state unchanged. The state for Humboldt is but a barrier or enemy for human freedom. On the one hand, Humboldt defends individual freedom, on the other, he is for the state's absolute authority, though the latter means actual unfreedom of its citizens.

The convinced individualist, Condorcet also followed the same way in his reflections about state's influence on public education which he considered as undesirable and extremely dangerous<sup>26</sup>. But as far as the contemporary social condition could not be reformed overnight he looked at the state as inevitable evil. Thus Condorcet escaped Utopianism and detected some opportunity to reform the present state of things. It can be seen in the last lines of his *Rapport et projet de décret sur l'organisation générale de l'instruction publique*, presented in the Public Education Committee at the Convention in 1792,

Doubtless the time will come when all scientific societies established by the state become useless and hence dangerous, when any state organization for public education<sup>27</sup> is unnecessary. It will be possible when disappear all popular delusions, when all causes for self-interest and passions being at service to prejudices lose their power, when learning is evenly spread around a certain country and within all social layers, when all sciences and scientific applications are equally free from the influence of prejudiced ideas and false doctrines, finally, when every person is sufficiently learned and morally prepared against various deceits. Though that time is far away yet and our duty is to make ready and hasten its approach<sup>28</sup>.

In other words, Condorcet aimed at establishing the state school that would free people from the authorities' surveillance<sup>29</sup>.

The doctrine of the public education by Condorcet outlined in his work *Cinq mémoires sur l'instruction publique* (1790) and in the *Report* attempts to solve two tasks. First, it is the state's duty before every citizen and people in whole to set up a system of public education in accordance with the Declaration of human and civil rights that established the equality principle. Every citizen should be able to satisfy one's material needs as well as the necessity of the complete development of one's natural talents; also, to be able to learn and carry out one's rights and duties according the law. Second, Condorcet defined the responsibility of the state for providing unhindered access to facilities and pleasures regarding art. The learning should encourage the growth of individual welfare and citizens' successful fulfillment of their public

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<sup>26</sup> Condorcet, A.-N. (1994), *Cinq mémoires sur l'instruction publique*, Paris: GF-Flammarion, p. 65.

<sup>27</sup> The term "public education" was first used in the speech of Mirabeau in 1790 (Baczko, B. (2000), *Une éducation pour la démocratie. Textes et projets de l'époque révolutionnaire*, Genève: Droz, p. 71). About this concept see Chisick, H. (1981), *The limits of Reform in the Enlightenment. Attitudes toward the Lower Classes in Eighteenth-Century France*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

<sup>28</sup> Condorcet, A.-N. (1792), *Rapport et projet de décret sur l'instruction publique*, Paris: L'Imprimerie nationale, pp. 75-76.

<sup>29</sup> Carlet, J.-P. (2009), "La laïcité et la question de la vérité", in *L'enseignement philosophique*, n°4, p. 32.



functions. The complex individual development, including the physical, moral and mental abilities is to contribute to universal social welfare and human progress.

To carry out the program it is necessary to observe the following fundamental principles:

1. *Universal equality.* All citizens without exception should have an opportunity to get education. For this purpose the public education should be evenly distributed around the country in accordance with the state treasury's capacity. It is necessary in order to overcome inequality that is frequently caused by territorial heterogeneity. The state is to promote universal education and provide the access to higher education for representatives of lower classes. Primary education is essential because it helps to fulfil efficiently one's civil functions. Higher education is necessary because it is useful even for those who do not actually get it. Condorcet underlines that the universal equality in education is impossible because getting higher degrees in education is directly linked with natural abilities of an individual. Hence Condorcet's idea to turn the natural inequality into public profit. But if an individual does not get elementary education and is not able either to read, or write and calculate he/she would inevitably become dependent on other educated people, so the equality principle would be violated.

2. *Free education at all levels.* Condorcet states that education has to be free to level property inequalities. Subsequently, the state will have more citizens able to exercise their civil rights, and the science will get more of those who are able to make discoveries and run scientific and technical progress.

3. *Permanent education.* A person always needs to renew and extend one's learning. But practical skills without theoretical knowledge are dangerous, a pedagogical theory aiming at training such skills proves bad policy since it ruins mind by making it incapable to control the application of knowledge. That is why Condorcet offered to lay technical learning at the basis of universal education, "if we do not want the profession to be useless it is mandatory to concentrate on theoretical principles"<sup>30</sup>. The state is to provide its citizens with the access to technical discoveries that make practical life of people easier and variegated. It has also to inform citizens about legislative modifications and a citizen has to understand them and be able to apply.

4. *Sexual equality.* The aim of education is to bring the truth. There is no any reasonable basis for impending women getting it on equal level with men.

5. *Multileveled education.* Educational system has to contain several levels due to the difference in natural abilities of pupils, their financial means and different spare time available for studies.

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<sup>30</sup> Condorcet, A.-N., *Cinq mémoires...*, p. 124.

6. *Singularly educational disposition of learning.* The educational system is not to interfere into the upbringing system because, firstly, the upbringing should be integrate and cannot be split between different levels. Secondly, family is responsible for upbringing, nature itself entrusted family with this task and none of the institutions can be entitled to appropriate it for itself<sup>31</sup>. Thirdly, upbringing pursues not just moral education, but freedom of consciousness as well, that is, the right to choose religion and political convictions. As soon as the state takes upon itself the right to rule upbringing it deprives its citizen of freedom, because it imposes its own choice and thus develops the qualities of tyranny. Therefore, it has to be admitted that the principles of education in a particular family cannot be unified and become universal.

7. *Independence of public education from political authority.* Education should not aim at imposing a single truth on everybody, it should not pass certain opinions and beliefs for truth but it has to impart all possible truths to people<sup>32</sup>. There are three ways to keep education independent from the state. First, the state should not have monopoly in the educational sphere, citizens should have not just full access to all levels of education but also an opportunity to explore and teach scientific truth themselves. Second, the state should not be entitled to thrust some single idea or theory on people as a true one, that is, it is not to build up a “political religion”. School has to encourage reasonable behavior of citizens capable of acting in accordance with his/her own mind.

Hereby, Condorcet’s educational project aimed at creating a “public mind”<sup>33</sup>, that is, enlightenment of the people and nation in terms of reason, formation of the subject by developing his/her intellectual abilities and vesting the subject with freedom. The key thought by Condorcet is to consider a child as the rational and legislative subject. School does not have to limit an individual in the framework of empirical reality, terms of birth, parental religion and demand a total submission to the law. As a social institution, school is a means of introduction to rationality, without which it is impossible to establish a civil society but only tyranny feeding on popular ignorance, because “education inequality is one of the main sources of tyranny”<sup>34</sup>. And Condorcet offers the idea of public education instead of national upbringing and develops a revolutionary project different from educational plans of Rousseau followers Rabaut Saint-Étienne and Le Peletier de Saint-Fargeau<sup>35</sup>. Education should be under reason’s auspices. Condorcet cannot be only referred to scientism, though he believed constant exercise of mind (philosophy), art and physical training to become the basis of education.

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<sup>31</sup> Condorcet, A.-N. (1883), *Rapport et projet de décret sur l’instruction publique*, prés., notes et comment. par Ch. Compayré, Paris: Hachette, p. 145-146.

<sup>32</sup> Condorcet, A.-N., *Cinq mémoires...*, p. 261.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>35</sup> Le Peletier, L.-M., “Plan d’éducation nationale”, in Baczkó, B., *Une éducation pour la démocratie...*, p. 374.

Applying the above mentioned principles Condorcet set up a five-step educational model in which the first three corresponded to primary, secondary schools and institutions. Secondary school was, as Condorcet meant, a “district” educational organization “for the children whose families can remain without their work for a lengthy period of time, dedicate several years to their education and even bear some expenses”. The third step – “institutions” – “prepares for fulfilment of public duties that require serious education or for further scientific research”. In the institutions those “are educated whose nature is destined for the improvement of humanity by means of new discoveries”<sup>36</sup>. The fourth step – lyceums – “train scientists”. Condorcet offered to create 9 lyceums in different departments of France in order “to decentralize science”. He voted for dissemination of sciences in provinces and creation of local educational organizations to train future teachers and researchers, while President of the Constituent Assembly Ch.M. de Talleyrand said in his *Rapport de l'éducation publique*<sup>37</sup> about centralization of science in Paris at Institute national.

The top of the educational pyramid drawn by Condorcet is «crowned» by the National society of science and art, that manages the whole process of education, outlines programs and methods of education, surveys personnel policy at all levels, encourages the development of talents by creating and providing necessary institutional facilities<sup>38</sup>. Condorcet thought scientific language the most perfect, scientific truths most simple. Due to this factor sciences can eradicate prejudices more efficiently than philosophy. Therefore the National society of science and art received in Condorcet's concept a particular status, it combined educational and scientific functions<sup>39</sup>. It appears in the pyramid of school education some teleological dimension *curricula*, created by the control principle from the “top”. At the same time Condorcet warned against identifying the National society with scientific corporations since the former is based on principles of free opinion, equality and work division.

### **On women's right to education. Republican schooling**

One of the most remarkable features of Condorcet's doctrine of social enlightenment was its democratic character, radical even for post-revolutionary France. Condorcet's project could hardly be described as utopian, although the difficulty in realizing it in the tumultuous conditions of ever-changing political regimes and underdeveloped political and social systems explains the

<sup>36</sup> Condorcet, A.-N., *Cinq mémoires...*, p. 74.

<sup>37</sup> Talleyrand-Périgord, M. de (1791), *Rapport sur l'Instruction publique, fait au nom du Comité de Constitution à l'Assemblée nationale, le 10, 11, et 19 septembre 1791*, Paris.

<sup>38</sup> Condorcet, A.-N., “Essai sur la condition et les fonctions des assemblées provinciales”, in Condorcet, A.-N., *Œuvres*, tome 8, p. 482.

<sup>39</sup> Compare Dumont, L. (1983), *Essai sur l'individualisme. Une perspective anthropologique sur l'idéologie moderne*, Paris: Le Seuil, p. 257.

French people's preference for Gabriel Bouquier's alternative<sup>40</sup>, which aimed only at the establishment of a system of free universal primary schooling and showed contempt for intellectual work and abstract sciences<sup>41</sup>. The academic emphasis of Bouquier's system was on the classical disciplines, as well as the development of a sense of patriotic duty and social responsibility in the spirit of the Enlightenment. The first steps towards the education of women were taken in the eighteenth century, although that education was typically based on religious principles and kept separate from the education of men; for women, thus, access was available only to the bare minimum (the Catechism, reading, writing, arithmetic, and French oratory). The next phase of educational reform was linked with Francois Guizot, who, as minister of education, issued a law in 1883 that required every commune to open and support a school. Consequently, by 1848, nearly 75% of boys and 50% of girls were enrolled as students. In 1881, Jules Ferry promulgated a law requiring mandatory universal free education for children between the ages of 6 and 13, while maintaining the separation of boys and girls. The content of the educational program, however, by this time, was subject to contemporary changes. Under the influence of scientific progress and the doctrine of positivism, increasing attention was paid to the natural sciences, and the study of God's Law ceased to be considered a mandatory part of the secondary school curriculum.

On the face of things, it would seem as though the principle of equality, which had been enshrined in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, had come to serve as the foundation of educational reforms. In the literature, it is typically assumed that Condorcet, author of the doctrine of social enlightenment based on the principle of universal access to education and of secular schooling, wielded a defining influence on Ferry<sup>42</sup>. In fact, Ferry himself, in his famous speech on the 10th of April, 1870 *De l'égalité d'éducation*, directly mentions Condorcet as the "inspiration" of his reforms. However, as Christian Nique and Claude Lelièvre convincingly demonstrate "republican school" of Ferry, in actuality, turned out quite far from the democratic ideal of Condorcet<sup>43</sup>. They call Ferry's project "holistic", and locate it on the opposite end of a spectrum from Condorcet's "individualist" model. As an alternative theoretical source for Ferry's reforms, Nique and Lelièvre identify Auguste Comte's positivism. "The myth of Ferry" has, thus, been rejected. Ferry's originally declared pedagogical aims were equality and liberty, the exclusively secular character of schooling, scientific training, and strict

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<sup>40</sup> Guillaume, M.-J. (1891-1908), *Procès-verbeaux du Comité d'instruction publique de la Convention*, Paris: Imprimerie nationale, tome 3, pp. 97–105.

<sup>41</sup> Julia, D. (1981), *Les Trois couleurs du tableau noir*, Belin, p. 347.

<sup>42</sup> Compare Baker, D.N., Harrigan, P.J. (1980), *The Making of Frenchmen: Current Directions in the History of Education in France, 1679-1979*, Waterloo (Ont.): Historical Reflections Press; Cadilhon, Fr. (1995), *De Voltaire à Jules Ferry. L'enseignement secondaire en Aquitaine aux XVIIIème et XXème siècles*, Talence: Presse universitaire de Bordeaux; Chapoulie, J.-M. (2010), *L'École d'État conquiert la France. Deux siècles de politique scolaire*, Paris: PUF.

<sup>43</sup> Nique, Ch., Lelièvre, Cl. [1993], *La République n'éduquera plus. La fin du mythe Ferry*, Paris: Plon.

adherence to the ideals of the Enlightenment<sup>44</sup>. In actual practice, Ferry conducted his reforms not with the goal of emancipating the individual, but rather in the name of the spiritual unification of the nation<sup>45</sup>. His law on universal free primary schooling put schools under the direct and total control of the government<sup>46</sup>. Condorcet, in contrast, supported, first, free education at every level, and second, the introduction not of a unified system of upbringing, but a system of social enlightenment, that is, a way of freeing the educational system from government oversight. Ferry was convinced, along with Comte, that “science was created for education”<sup>47</sup>. Comte, in his *Course on positive philosophy* proclaimed the thesis of the “great unity of method”<sup>48</sup>, in which he took the purpose of positivist science to be that of providing a way to unify humankind. Scientific civilization itself, in Comte’s opinion, requires continual study from its members. Here Comte does not undermine Condorcet’s view, although they reach different conclusions. Condorcet was convinced that a truly universal science was impossible, since science amounts essentially to the search for the fundamental reasons that underlie worldly phenomena, while education must not submit to a monopoly of analytic method or the logic of signs. Comte himself took “not only mathematical and natural science, but moral science modeled on the scientific program of the positivism”<sup>49</sup>.

In his *Cours de la philosophie positive* (1830-1842), Comte unreservedly endorses the opinion of the rationalist thinkers of the Enlightenment, for whom “moral progress will always accompany intellectual progress”. For this reason, every attempt in his work to base education on science is accompanied by moral rhetoric, since, according to Comte, “science is the only spiritual foundation” of society, and scientific rationality represents the highest form of spiritual development. Science permits, on his view, the restoration of discredited forms of social unity and the construction of a “societas à l’universitas”, or in other words, the passage from scientific universalism to universalism of a human sort. To put things colorfully, therefore, we might think of Comte’s discourse as concerning the scientific equivalent of the Catholic reincarnation.

We can no longer be rationalists in the manner of Condorcet and other Enlightenment philosophers”—wrote Comte—“we can no longer be rationalists, failing to critically rethink the concept of rationalism itself. We simply cannot continue to believe that the liberation of humanity by way of the achievement of knowledge of the laws of nature will proceed, and we cannot be

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<sup>44</sup> Guillaume, M.-J., *Procès-verbeaux...*, tome 1, p. 122.

<sup>45</sup> See Weber, E. (1976), *Peasants into Frenchmen. The Modernization of Rural France 1870-1914*, Stanford CA.

<sup>46</sup> Ferry, J., “Lettres aux instituteurs”, in Ferry, J. (1996), *La République des citoyens*, textes édités par O. Rudelle, Paris: Imprimerie nationale, tome 2, p. 109.

<sup>47</sup> Comte, A. (1851-1854), *Système de politique positive ou traité de sociologie instituant la religion de l’Humanité*, Paris, tome 1, pp. 542-543

<sup>48</sup> Comte, A. (1998), *Cours de philosophie positive*, 46 leçon, Paris: Hermann, vol. 2, p. 14.

<sup>49</sup> Ferry, J. (1870), “Discours du 10 avril 1870 à la Société pour l’Instruction élémentaire”, in Robiquet, P. (éd.) (1893), *Discours et opinions politiques de Jules Ferry*, Paris: A. Colin, tome 1, pp. 291-293.

content in the conviction that positivist knowledge will always afford us its inherent educative moral virtues”<sup>50</sup>.

Thus, Comte’s aim was to overcome, in school, the “paradoxical synthesis of Catholic culture and the culture of the Enlightenment”, and his ideas, in a unique synthesis with the ideas of the Enlightenment thinkers, were taken up as ammunition by the reformists of the Third Republic.

In this connection, it is especially interesting to note how attitudes towards women and women’s rights in education field began to change. Ferry said: “Woman should belong to science, not to the Church”<sup>51</sup>, and the education of women should serve to nurture their “sympathetic instincts” and inculcate those skills that fit most naturally with their nature (i.e., the skills that would be developed by professional formation in medicine, pedagogy, music, and so forth). Clearly it makes sense to talk here of the equality of men and women only in conditional terms; the relevant notion of equality was based on a differential approach to men’s and women’s fundamental natures, which might make sense on Comte’s model, but not on Condorcet’s. Condorcet took as his point of departure a general conviction to the effect that the principle of universal equality, enshrined in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, requires the equal empowerment of women and men, in terms of legal rights, and in terms of their access to education: “We can accept only a constitution based on the recognition of the natural rights of man... infringing on the natural right of any conscious creature would be neither right nor fair”<sup>52</sup>. “The unification of children of both genders in a single school is practically necessary for primary education; it would be unfeasible to found distinct schools in every village and to find a sufficient number of teachers, especially in these early days...”. On Condorcet’s view, gender-segregated schooling was the result of Church politics, based on the idea of “disingenuous moralizing”. Segregated schooling should be “overcome in those countries in which the legislative officers aim to follow the course of nature, obey reason and conduct themselves in accordance with the principle of justice”. If boys and girls are educated in different conditions, according to Condorcet, “the spirit of inequality will spread quickly to both genders”<sup>53</sup> and will be impossible to uproot.

Condorcet took the education of women to be necessary for several reasons. First, it is the natural obligation of women to raise their children. Second, a wife should be the equal of her husband, a dignified partner, so that their mutual happiness will be possible. Third, a man’s wife

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<sup>50</sup> Bernard, J. (2004), *Auguste Comte. L’éducation positive*, Paris: L’Harmattan, p. 11.

<sup>51</sup> Robiquet, P. (éd.), *Discours et opinions politiques de Jules Ferry*, tome 2, p. 305.

<sup>52</sup> Condorcet, A.-N., “Lettres d’un bourgeois de New-Haven a un citoyen de Virginie”, in *Œuvres de Condorcet publiées par A. Condorcet O’Connor et F. Arago* (1847), Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, tome 9, p. 14.

<sup>53</sup> Condorcet, A.-N., *Cinq mémoires...*, pp. 101-103.

must support him; he depends greatly on her support, both in applying previously-acquired knowledge and in developing to his fullest potential. Finally, men and women are equal where natural rights are concerned, which means they ought not to be made unequal in terms of their right to education, which is required to live and flourish.

Ferry - very much in the spirit of Condorcet - in his speech *De l'égalité d'éducation*, justified the feasibility of the creation of a program of secondary education for women in the following terms:

Today in many families that appear harmonious from the outside, there exists a gulf between the man and the woman, between husband and wife, which is due to deep differences of opinion, of taste, of sensibility, a gulf so great that it undermines the very idea of family, insofar as a true marriage is one in which two souls are united... Today a silent, but stubborn battle is taking place, between the old society, the old order, with its peculiar regrets, orthodoxies, and institutions, between a society that fails to acknowledge contemporary democracy, and the society born of the French Revolution... In this battle, women cannot remain neutral; those who would prefer not to gaze into the depths of the matter might think that the role of the woman is insignificant, that there is no place for her in the fight, but they fail to see that hidden and unflagging support which she provides the future society that we hope to irreversibly achieve... the Reverend knows this well: he who has a wife controls the rest, first, because he has a child, second, because he is made a husband<sup>54</sup>.

On the 21th December, 1880, following a proposal by deputy Camille Sée, a law was passed on women's education<sup>55</sup>, aimed at the bourgeoisie and designed primarily to train future wives and mothers. The proposed program involved the study of literature and French oratory, and covered natural science, but omitted Latin, Greek, and philosophy<sup>56</sup>. Access was available to the daughters of aristocratic families between the ages of 12 and 17. Upon completion of the course, girls received a diploma, which allowed them to teach in educational institutions for women. Upon opening state-run secondary schools for girls, Ferry's ministry maintained the tradition of not allowing mixed-gender study, which demonstrated his unreadiness to set the "republican school" he created on a credible democratic trajectory.

Despite the limited nature of Ferry's reformist tendencies, it would be impossible to underestimate the significance of his thinking. In large part due to the decisive steps taken by republicans in the time of the Third Republic, by the beginning of the twentieth century illiteracy was largely eradicated in France, and the first half of the century was marked by the creation of a

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<sup>54</sup> Ferry, J., *Discours du 10 avril 1870...*, pp. 304-305.

<sup>55</sup> On the development of the institution of women's secondary education up to 1924, see Mayeur, Fr. (1977), *L'enseignement secondaire des Jeunes Filles sous la Troisième République*, Paris: Presses de la FNSP.

<sup>56</sup> Chapoulié, J.-M., *L'École d'État...*, p. 160.

single unified educational system. The passage of a 1934 law making study mandatory for students until the age of 18 was a landmark moment in that process. Between 1929 and 1933 free collegiate schooling was established, which also served as an antecedent to the creation of the kind of unified system about which Condorcet had first spoken at the end of the eighteenth century.

### **On the civilizational aims of Condorcet's empirical conception of education**

In Condorcet's works, which weave a range of reformist threads around the idea of popular enlightenment, a theme that was at the forefront of Enlightenment thinking, and indeed, of thought through the nineteenth century generally, can be discerned: the eradication of slavery<sup>57</sup>. The wave of abolitionist sentiment that swept through Europe, dramatically changing the world's social landscape, coincided with the development of national governments. Together with governments, nations, and educators, a new political subject emerged— Europe herself— which forced European rulers to consider the question of their political identity without reference to the peoples that fell under their jurisdiction. In this context, a new call went out to schools, which were seen as a way of forming a civic mentality independently of the question of nationality. Any pretense of uniformity, including of discrete races, foundered on the shoals of the new political reality. Humanist demands of respect for human dignity and the recognition of differences ran afoul of the colonial discourse of national governments that strove to establish their own exceptionalism.

The Enlightenment laid the foundations for a search for a compromise between the principle of meritocracy and genuine equality<sup>58</sup>. Thus, according to Condorcet, spiritual and intellectual progress turns out to be one and the same phenomenon, based on the individual capacity for judgement<sup>59</sup>. The essence of progress is to be found not in the transformation of reason itself, but in the changes scientific advances visit upon the organization of knowledge. Spiritual development is possible even when the development of reason itself, as a capacity for judgement, is not. The person who is born to educated parents is likely to enjoy circumstances that are more conducive to the development of her rational faculties, but no more than that. Those capacities themselves turn out to be natural in man, although they conceal within themselves the seed of natural differentiation among people, a differentiation that is manifest in

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<sup>57</sup> On the 4th of February, 1794, the French National Convention abolished the practice of slavery in all French colonies, although by a decree from the 30th Floreal of the year X, (20 May 1802), Napoleon reestablished the practice. In 1834, the Society for the Abolition of Slavery, was founded in France, in which Tocqueville, Victor de Broglie, and Schoelcher all participated; on the 27th of April, 1847, a decree was passed by the transitional government to abolish slavery again in all French colonies.

<sup>58</sup> See Bernard, M. (2010), *La méritocratie française. Les élites françaises*, Paris: L'Harmattan.

<sup>59</sup> Condorcet, A.-N., *Cinq mémoires...*, pp. 88, 129-130.



terms of people's varying intellectual capabilities and suitability for education. Progress, then, refers to the origin of knowledge and the conditions of experience, in other words, to the system of education, which forms knowledge inside a person. This raises the question, how does reason, which persists on its own across different historical epochs, turn out to be capable of contributing to the acquisition of knowledge about physical phenomena, ethics, the nature of man himself, and so on?

Condorcet's theory responds to that non-trivial question with a thoroughly universal answer. In his work *Esquisse*, he writes:

Man is born with the faculty of receiving sensations... This faculty is developed in him by the action of external objects that is, by the presence of certain complex sensations, the constancy of which, whether in their identical whole, or in the laws of their change, is independent of himself... Sensations are accompanied with pleasure or pain<sup>60</sup>.

Sensation, in other words, is the single source of all our knowledge and of all of our capacities, including our rational faculties. This allows us to maintain, first, that Condorcet is a direct follow of Condillac's empiricism, and second, that reason for Condorcet is a passive capacity, the result of a transformation of sensory impressions into ideas. Consequently, historical progress is directly linked to the progress of science and the continual work of reason, which analyzes, abstracts, combines, and works upon the incremental accumulation of knowledge. Moreover, reason takes on a certain symbolic activity, directed towards the processing of sense data. It was evident, to Condorcet that this human capacity deserved to be developed by someone. That is the role of the educational system, which provides different disciplines at different levels, sharpening the work of the human mind.

In 1781, Condorcet wrote *Refléxions sur l'esclavage des nègres*, in which he declares himself a friend of abolitionism and criticizes the prejudices of those who defend slavery. Written at the dawn of the Enlightenment, this work did not originally so much propose a concrete program of liberation of slaves, with the goal of introducing them into a new civil status, as it did serve as its own sort of manifesto against the ignorance of 5 French society itself, for allowing the practice of slavery to exist in the first place. The greatest significance of the work was that it created a space for public discussion<sup>61</sup>, a space that the absolute monarchy did not abet. France in the time of the Revolution had hardly set foot on the path that would lead to the creation of such spaces, of a free press, of parliamentary debate. Condorcet, who before the Revolution was situated amongst the powers of the "enlightened despot", directed his book

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<sup>60</sup> Condorcet, A.-N., *Esquisse...*, p. 79.

<sup>61</sup> Derrida, J. (2001), *L'Université sans condition*, Paris: Galilée, p. 16.

towards a hypothetical influential ruler, who could count on the support of public opinion and serve as a counterweight to the parliamentarians.

Condorcet's stance on slavery was laid out in a discussion with Enlightenment philosophers (e.g., Voltaire, Montesquieu, Diderot, Helvetius), who took up the question of the possibility and desirability of abolition, lamenting slavery's injustice and apparent inevitability. Condorcet criticized the passive approach these intellectuals adopted towards the institution, the essential character of which seemed to him to be fly in the face of reason. Slavery for Condorcet was not simply evil; it was also the result of the mistaken idea that it was essential to providing for the common good. A well-ordered society, on Condorcet's view, simply could not possibly tolerate slavery. This judgment was shared by Locke and Rousseau<sup>62</sup>, and it is no accident that their belief in the continual betterment of society served—and continues to serve today—as the foundation for the liberal democratic structures they championed, as well as the theory of universal human rights.

L.S. Mercier and Abbot Raynal exerted a strong influence on Condorcet's view of slavery. Mercer, in his novel *L'an 2440* (1770) imagined a future without slaves or colonies, which would be eradicated once and for all during the course of revolution. Abbot Raynal, in the same year, published *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*, in which he spoke at length of the necessity of liberating slaves and of establishing a legal framework that guaranteed universal freedom: "The great good of freedom must be preserved for future generations"<sup>63</sup>. Condorcet was no utopian, and had little truck with calls for the eradication of slavery by violent means. He defended the gradual freedom of slaves, on the basis of three theses. The first is a universal equality, as the key moral virtue of civil society. Equality for Condorcet was an exclusively rational understanding, based on freedom and the unrestricted possibility for self-realization. The unity of "equality" and "freedom" in his work prevents us from treating Condorcet as one of the egalitarians, since he allows for social differences on a single basis—the recognition of the uniqueness and exceptional nature of the capacities of every individual<sup>64</sup>. Second, since progress requires the incremental development of human reason, the eradication of slavery ought not to proceed overnight, but should unfold gradually, with an emphasis on the children of slaves, instead of the older generations, whose mental faculties are already formed and would unlikely, lend themselves to teaching. Children are not born educated, but over the course of time, the operation of reason may shape the face of future generations. Education will not change the

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<sup>62</sup> Rousseau, J.-J., *Du contrat social*, pp. 50-54.

<sup>63</sup> Raynal, G. (1770), *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*, Amsterdam, 6 vol.

<sup>64</sup> Kintzler, C. (2010), *Condorcet, l'égalité et les différences*, <http://www.mezetulle.net/article-condorcet-l-egalite-et-les-differences-46733501.html>

exterior image of a person, but it may influence his way of life, and even the character of an entire race<sup>65</sup>. Of course, not everyone, according to Condorcet, will succeed academically, but universal equality is certainly ruled out when a certain segment of the population enjoys the advantage of primary education. For this reason, basic universal education ought to aim, above all, at the cultivation of the senses. It should also teach students to read, write, and count; as well as provide a basic introduction to the law - in short, it should cover what Milner called “savoirs stratégiques”<sup>66</sup>.

Condorcet arrives at a paradoxical conclusion. If equality is an elevated above the other social virtues, then the most capable members of a society will be left without access to the highest levels of education. And if freedom is absolute, then only a few will be able to achieve that access, and the probability that those with access to knowledge install a tyrannical regime over those without such access becomes great. According to Condorcet, there can be no denying the fundamental lack of equality among people in the face of knowledge, a natural fact that cannot be overcome by any amount of political or social reform, since inequality among people is not the same as legal inequality. How, though, might it be possible to prevent natural deficiencies from turning into social inequality. In his *Rapport*, Condorcet declares that in fact, those who know more and who are more capable academically are in just as great a need of their less capable brethren than those brethren are of them. Thus, Condorcet reproduces the Enlightenment idea that there are two basic sorts of knowledge—higher and lower—that establish a corresponding natural hierarchy. The task of schooling, according to Condorcet, is that the education made available to all should be universal not by being elementary, but insofar as it grant every person the chance to learn about the foundations of science, to distinguish knowledge from chicanery (and thereby, to avoid tyranny). Then, the new social hierarchy will be understood not as a burden, but as the right way to organize society; “the project of shaping individual reason by education goes hand in hand with the project of general spiritual emancipation”<sup>67</sup>.

But is there a way to teach slaves, such that they might become fully-fledged European citizens? Abbot Raynal, for example, categorically rejected that possibility, writing: “these fools, who will never be able to prepare themselves for any change in their situation, will never be able to govern themselves. Their lives would be nothing but a manifestation of indolence and an unending procession of criminal acts”<sup>68</sup>. Condorcet’s own view on the matter was less radical. Having spoken at a 1788 meeting of the Brissot’s Girondist Society of the Friends of the Blacks,

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<sup>65</sup> Condorcet, A.-N., *Cinq mémoires...*, p. 70.

<sup>66</sup> Milner, J.C. (1984), *De l'École*, Paris: Le Seuil, p. 141.

<sup>67</sup> Trouvé, A., “Condorcet, Pestalozzi et la quête de la simplicité élémentaire”, in Soëtard, M., Trouvé, A. (2012), *Méthodes et philosophie. La descendance éducative de l'Émile*, Paris, L'Harmattan (Éducation et philosophie), p. 27.

<sup>68</sup> Raynal, G., *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*, in-8°.

of which he became president in 1789, Condorcet released a second edition of his *Refléxions*. If the first edition was directed towards an enlightened ruler, the second, in the new political context, was aimed at an entirely different audience. *Refléxions* became the first true abolitionist manifesto in France, and opened a broad discussion on the topic of slavery, with the aim of exerting a concrete influence on the political decisions of the political leadership.

Without getting bogged down in the details, let me note that the arguments offered by Condorcet's opponents were largely designed to play on the fear of massive protests in the colonies, and on the possibility that force would be required to avoid disorder, a possibility that might lead to the situation against which Hobbes warned, the "war of all against all". Condorcet, however, maintained that the very idea of slavery contained within itself deep contradictions, of the sort that ought to have been overcome on the historical path towards the progress of reason. The fact that such significant obstacles remained on that path was a result of the ignorant state of the metropolis, a result due, on Condorcet's view, first, to the preponderance of the prejudiced view that slavery was bound to be a permanent institution and was the natural state of at least a certain segment of humanity; second, to the aristocratic hunt for economic advantage; third, to the desire to maintain the peace in places where there was little appetite to rely on force to guarantee stability. To dissolve slavery it would be necessary to uproot prejudice in the minds of the European people themselves. Condorcet took the primary merit of the Enlightenment to be that it promised to reveal the nature of justice, slavery and freedom, and thereby to offer the French a new point of support for the purging of the stain of the old regime.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, who took a dim view of the prospects of the abolitionist movement, Condorcet was convinced that what makes humans exceptional is precisely the fact of continual improvement, a process manifest in the fight against prejudice, in the rejection of mistaken convictions. He recognizes that freeing the human spirit is not so much a process of legal change as it is a pedagogical and moral process. For that reason, Condorcet held that to grant slaves freedom from the bondage of habit and servitude would require the conditions of a long-term process of enlightenment. To frame the idea in the terms of the American sociologist and philosopher John Rawls, we might say that Condorcet held a variety of "intuitionist rationalism", as he was convinced that people's sense of right and good springs from reason.

However, at the end of the day, Condorcet's discourse did not extend quite to the complete enlightenment of slaves, but instead, focused on the idea of their affective education, a gradual training process designed to put them in a state from which they would be able to make use of the freedom granted them. As Jean-Paul Doguet accurately notes in his introduction to *Refléxions*, insofar as the doctrine of social enlightenment in Condorcet's work is the product of

his post-revolutionary thinking about the independence of the colonies, his position appears somewhat abstract<sup>69</sup>. Condorcet's abolitionism was linked in large part to his economic liberalism and his conviction about the harm visited on the metropolis by the institution of slavery. Nevertheless, the French philosopher's merit consists in the fact that his colonial discourse took on a "civilizational" character, which in many ways affected the world view of the reformists of the Third Republic.

After the "twin conquests of the century: labor freedom and universal suffrage"<sup>70</sup>, it was necessary, according to Ferry, to set about establishing "educational equality": "with regard to inequality in education, I, as never before, call upon you not to undertake labors that aim at the supposed equality of the theoretician, but at real and genuine equality; equality in the face of the law is the essence of democracy"<sup>71</sup>. This equality was intended to form "truly democratic customs", relationships of mutual respect between citizens, and obedience to the law. On Ferry's view, Condorcet's program of universal free education involved "the only system that could fit harmoniously with the ideals of a democratic society". In the time of the Revolution it was impossible to realize this "utopia" due to economic pressure, war, and the chaos of regime change<sup>72</sup>. The Third Republic, then, Ferry held, should aim to turn Condorcet's thinking into reality.

It is important, however, to neither embellish nor diminish the extent to which Condorcet influenced Ferry's outlook. The aim of Ferry's reforms, fundamentally, was to unify the people of France and establish conditions that would allow them to be liberated. It is generally accepted that each thinker approached his reformist goals with different criteria in mind. Condorcet's key goal, for example, was the progress of reason, without which it would be impossible to achieve universal equality. At the same time, he took the role of government to be minimal, concerning only the establishment of conditions that would allow for the equality of opportunity. Ferry, like Buisson, on the other hand, emphasized personal moral and spiritual development, the responsibility for which belonged in the end to the national government. Republican universalism entailed a political project, directed at elevating the population through the inculcation, in each citizen, of a sense of individual human dignity. The system of "republican schools" was meant to serve that aim.

Later, having become citizens, perhaps they will depart from one another, following their own dogmatic convictions, but at a minimum they will each agree that there are higher goals in life, they will reject base and repulsive influences, they will admire the good and selfless, feel the pull

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<sup>69</sup> Condorcet, A.-N. (2009), *Réflexions sur l'esclavage des nègres*, prés., notes et dossier par J.-P. Doguet, Paris: GF Flammarion, p. 46.

<sup>70</sup> Cit. by Dubreucq, É. (2004), *Une éducation républicaine. Marion, Buisson, Durkheim*, Paris: VRIN, p. 131.

<sup>71</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>72</sup> Ibidem.

of obligation, and strive towards moral development at any cost, so as to feel united before the common good, before beauty and truth, which take the ideal form, and not only from religious sentiment<sup>73</sup>.

Curiously, the formation period of the French Third Republic (1880s-1890s) was marked by processes similar to those that characterized the establishment of republican government after the Revolution. Thus, a new program of colonialist expansion and the creation in 1894 of a ministry of colonies was accompanied by the recreation in 1896 of a university system after a nearly 100 year lapse<sup>74</sup>. Once again, calls for the abolition of slavery came to be a part of political rhetoric, along with calls for the creation of a secular school system. Colonialism and education once again became the symbols of the epoch, having played a key role earlier in the formation of the nation state under the Old Regime (compare the ban on Church teaching and imperialist expansion). Ferry's doctrine of colonialism can fairly be summarized by the following slogan: "The higher races enjoy special rights, since the burden they bear is itself special"; the burden he has in mind is the burden, of course, of "enlightening" the lower races<sup>75</sup>. As Condorcet spoke of the way natural differences issue in differences of social standing, so Ferry took the idea of differences across races to be the natural foundation of the European superiority<sup>76</sup>.

### Conclusion

It should be noted that Condorcet was, certainly, the first thinker who demonstrated the anti-rationality and illegitimacy of the idea that one person could have property rights over another. The view of the philosophy of history that Condorcet developed, which rests on the idea of civilization progress in the form of the development of the rational faculties of individual people, is a testament to the pronounced realist tendency that marked his thought, and of the distance that separated him from any sort of prophetism. The incorporation of colonial societies, for Condorcet, would be a required step on the path of universal human progress, even if that history had not yet begun in those societies that maintained the practice of slavery. This conviction clearly marks out an exceptional space for Condorcet among the Enlightenment philosophers, and underscores the significance of his role in the development of French republicanism at the end of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>73</sup> Buisson, F. (dir.) (1878-1887), *Dictionnaire de Pédagogie et d'Instruction Primaire*, Paris: Hachette, vol. 4, 1353b.

<sup>74</sup> See Verger, J. (1986), *Histoire des universités en France*, Toulouse: Privat.

<sup>75</sup> Renaut, A., *Un humanisme de la diversité...*, p. 132.

<sup>76</sup> In 1881, that idea served a very concrete purpose in the justification of the establishment of protectorates in Tunisia and Madagascar.

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