



The Development Of Socio-Philosophical Thought In Western Europe On The Eve Of The End Of The Renaissance

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ABSTRACT

The 16th century was a time of great political and religious change in European life. Hence, the article examines factors that typical of the Renaissance and Reformation period. The paper also analyzes the collapse of feudal relations and the emergence of the first capitalist relations.

KEYWORDS

Society, activity, civilization, the truth, science, citizenship, culture.

INTRODUCTION

Significant events that occurred in Western European countries at the end of the Middle Ages are related to the Renaissance and Reformation (Latin reformatio- change, reform). The Reformation was a socio-political, religious and ideological phenomenon in Western Europe in the 16th century as well as oriented against the domination of the Catholic

Church and the Pope. It became apparent by the same period that the feudal system was in crisis. A system of norms, a radical new way of life in society, began to take shape. This is the basis of the Renaissance and Reformation. The onset of the Renaissance was the start of the crisis of the Roman Catholic Church and the rise of culture, art as well as a free worldview.

Factors distinctive to the Renaissance and Reformation are marked by such aspects as the collapse of feudal relations and the emergence of the first capitalist relations, a critical revision of religious doctrines. As a consequence of the struggle against the conservative ideology of the Middle Ages, a qualitatively new system of socio-philosophical views was created. The base of such a system of views is the growth of human dignity, the creation of conditions for the free growth of man. In accordance with the ideologies of the Renaissance, the destiny of man is determined not by his nobility, background, rank, but by the selflessness, activeness, generosity and conscience of the individual.

MAIN PART

At the meantime, the existing contractual theory in the views on the origin of the state during this period acquired a somewhat new content. This theory provides an explanation of the reasons for the existence of the state, the events determining the nature of the state, for instance, the legitimacy of state power.

In the Reformation approach, however, these views take on a somewhat different character. The Reformers also relied on sacred books (the Bible, particularly the New Testament) as the primary source of their views, without rejecting the significance of individual freedom and secular institutions. Hence the strong influence of religion is clearly felt in the political and legal thinking of the Reformation.

Here we should note a number of aspects that determine the content of the political and legal views of the early bourgeois authors of the Renaissance and Reformation. They manifest themselves in the denial of the feudal economic order, the existing institutions of state power and the system of spiritual values

based on feudal society, the mutual compatibility of relations of different social strata with the feudal system.

It is known that any new system differs from the previous one in its positive aspects. It should be noted that the progressive views of the authors of the Renaissance and Reformation on various aspects of social life, the status of the individual, the relationship between the individual and the state were of particular importance in the further development of political and legal thought in Western Europe. For "Any changes in the development of society, innovations, especially those processes and discoveries that give great impetus to the development of humanity, do not occur by themselves.

It requires centuries of tradition, an appropriate environment, a school of thought as well as a cultural and spiritual environment"[1, 189].

The 16th century is characterized by a century of great political and religious changes in European life. Strong noble monarchies began to form in France, Spain, Austria-Germany, England and Russia. As a result of feudal disintegration, large feudal lords began to lose their privileges and power. The Catholic Church lost its spiritual and political orientation and was replaced by the ideas of Hus and Wycliffe. The denunciation of the church was a period not only for heretics, but also for some Catholics themselves, who began to express their critical attitude toward religious organizations.

In the late fifteenth century Erasmus of Rotterdam' (1469-1536) and John Colet's (1467-1519) established a circle at Oxford University that led to the further rise of the humanities movement in England. The circle analyzed the

works of the Florentine Platonists and conducted interviews on the texts of the Torah and the Bible. Members of the circle studied with great interest the ideas of Christian humanism based on social equality. Erasmus of Rotterdam was notable among them for his devotion to the ideas of humanism.

The original name of Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam was Gerhard Gerhards, born in 1469. Erasmus, an illegitimate priest and his housekeeper, became a monk in a Dutch monastery in his youth. Due to his acquired a philological and humanistic background that was to be envied because of his diligence and patience. At the end of the 15th century Erasmus of Rotterdam came to London and began to participate in the circle of Colette. From this period until the end of his life the thinker lived in Paris, Leuven, Cambridge, Brussels, Antwerp, Bruges, Mainz, Freiburg, and Basel. However, he did not return to his homeland.

According to the recollections of his contemporaries, Erasmus was industrious. He would leave his pen and book to sleep for only a few hours and devote the rest of his time to reading and writing. By the early 16th century, Erasmus of Rotterdam had risen to become the leader of a humanitarian movement that flourished throughout Europe. His reputation was so strong that the Holy Roman Emperor and King Charles V in Spain, his rival, King Francis I in France, King Henry VIII of England, and the popes sought to impress him. Pope Paul III even offered Erasmus of Rotterdam the mantle of cardinals.

Erasmus of Rotterdam expressed his social and philosophical views in Handbook of a Christian Knight, written in 1501-1503. Erasmus called his teachings the Philosophy of Jesus. Naturally,

the term had been used before Erasmus, but he gave new meaning to the concept of the Philosophy of Jesus. According to Erasmus of Rotterdam, the Christian culture embodied in the philosophy of Jesus draws its strength from the pagan culture of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Unlike the Italian humanists, Erasmus, with his powerful intellectual capacity, formulates his humanist views on the basis of remarkable and undeniable evidence. Erasmus, who interpreted Christian culture as a product of ancient culture, places Socrates alongside Jesus.

In order to return people to the original humanistic Christian ideas, the false conclusion that “man is an inherently sinful slave” must be abandoned. Anyone can follow in the footsteps of Jesus and internalize the ideas put forward in the Bible. It requires not only the Torah and Bible passages quoted in the church, but also careful study of them. In order to realize his views, Erasmus of Rotterdam in 1517 translated the text of the New Testament from Greek into Latin and wrote commentaries on it.

Apparently Erasmus of Rotterdam was an enlightened philosopher in his views and practices. Nevertheless, the thinker is well aware that it is impossible to enlighten people by Torah and the Bible alone. He concludes that without rationalism, without the participation of reason, there is no enlightenment and there can be no enlightenment. Therefore, the thinker is forced to express his views from a rationalistic point of view, thus going against centuries of scholastic knowledge as well as highly dogmatic Catholic theology. The thinker's rationalist outlook is reflected in his most famous work, The Praise of Folly. This work, written by Erasmus in 1509-1511, was so satirical that its author was later called “Voltaire of the 16th century.” Through the

work one can also learn the essence of the philosophical doctrines of the time. The author constantly criticizes the peculiarities of his time on behalf of the nobility “Mr. Fool”, who never tires of praising himself.

“Because most people are stupid, and everyone is crazy”[2, 137] “Stupidity is found in society as much as one wants, everything is done by fools for fools”[2, 142] Moreover, just as people are insane individually, they also act foolishly together. Erasmus gives the example of war.

The implication is that people, no matter who they are, from kings to popes to cardinals, behave foolishly. Most surprisingly, the author even considers the activities of Jesus and his apostles to be foolish because “the Christian faith seems to resemble a kind of foolishness and is totally incompatible with wisdom”. “It is not for nothing that God needs idiots”[2, 200-201] Certainly, after reading these verses, one might conclude that the thinker completely rejected Christianity. In fact, he did not, or else he would have spoken out against the “philosophy of Jesus” he preached. It is not a question of the essence of the Christian faith (although some authors do criticize some ideas of Christianity), but of the official theology that prevailed at the time. To understand the essence of the question, it is necessary to know Erasmus’ attitude to scholasticism and the formal-dogmatic theology associated with it.

Erasmus argues that there is a great difference between the Christian faith and formal dogmatic theology. The main reason for this is the adherents of formal theology, whom Erasmus calls “poisonous plants”. They are so obsessed with their own nonsense that they themselves can neither reach the truth nor put down others. They declare anyone who

disagrees with their views to be a heretic. Furthermore, these theologians, who are actually gossipers, seek to control creation and the people of creation, the possessor of knowledge and learning. Interestingly, even the key to heaven is the saint.

Nor can Peter explain “how the key to knowledge can be held in one's hand without having it”[2, 176]. By the logic of his reasoning, Erasmus moves from a critique of the theologians to a critique of scholasticism itself.

CONCLUSION

In reflecting on the nature of stupidity, Erasmus begins to use it as a synonym for “life. These considerations naturally raise the question. Why has foolishness proved to be stronger than wisdom? According to the author, emotion encompasses the entire human body, although reason is limited to only one part of the body. Consequently, human behavior is largely based on emotion, especially pleasure. Those who have achieved peace consider themselves happy. Surprisingly, people are not interested in real, genuine pleasure. It is enough for them that something is considered a pleasure or something is declared a pleasure. So, one's happiness does not depend on the thing, but on one's own opinion of it. Thus, happiness, as many think, is not to be found in ignorance, but in ignorance, in delusion. The irrational nature of life is also evident here: people live foolishly, deluding themselves into believing that they are happy, whether they are actually happy or not. Because life has an irrational nature, it cannot be comprehended and known by reason, and it is impossible to determine the absolute truth about it. Hence, who and what

should we call those who claim absolute truth and their teachings?

Overall, Erasmus of Rotterdam had a great influence on the worldview of thinkers of the 16th and 17th centuries. By his enviable creativity he created the conditions for the liberation of Christian faith from various absurdities, the formation on its basis of the ideas of humanity, the systematization of the ideas of social justice and equality. Later his reflections found their logical culmination in the works of Thomas More and Tommaso Campanella.

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