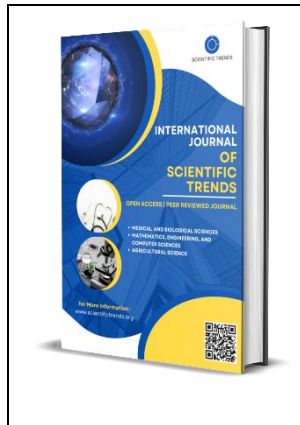


The Ancient Foundations of the “Enlightened Society” Concept

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Abstract

This article analyzes the content of the concept of an enlightened society and the initial stages of its transformation into one of the most pressing topics in the history of social and philosophical teachings. In this process, the views of ancient Eastern and Western civilizations, particularly the "Avesta," ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian sources, Confucianism, ancient Indian philosophy, and ancient Greek thinkers, were studied.

Keywords: Enlightened society, ancient civilizations, primitive society, primitive culture, Avesta, ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian sources, Confucianism, ancient Indian philosophy, ancient Greek philosophy, human development.

Introduction

The concept of an enlightened society is one of the key themes in the history of social and philosophical teachings. In its development, it has undergone a long and complex development, undergoing numerous changes and adaptations in various cultural and historical conditions. Understanding the evolution of the phenomenon of the enlightened society requires a careful examination of both historical events and the theoretical developments that contributed to its formation.

An enlightened society embodies knowledge, rational thinking, social justice, and the pursuit of individual freedom as an ideal. It is based on the principles of humanism and scientific progress, designed to liberate man from prejudice and ignorance. The desire to improve the human condition through education and enlightenment has its roots in the philosophical and scientific revolutions that took place in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries, in the period known as the Enlightenment. Philosophers and thinkers such as Immanuel Kant, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Voltaire, and Diderot played an important role in shaping the concept of an enlightened society. Their ideas of rationality, freedom, and equality laid the foundation for understanding society as a dynamic system capable of self-improvement and progress. These thinkers not only described the ideals of an enlightened society but also criticized existing social and political structures and called for their reform.

However, the significance of an enlightened society is not limited to Western traditions. At the same time, important intellectual and cultural changes occurred in Eastern countries, especially in the Islamic world and China, which contributed to the development of concepts similar to the ideals of enlightenment. Great scholars and philosophers of the East, such as Ibn Sina, Abu Nasr

al-Farabi, and Ibn Rushd, contributed to the development of science, philosophy, and society by promoting the ideas of knowledge and rational thinking.

Literature review

Numerous fundamental literature, books, and scientific articles have been published, laying the foundation for the formation of the theory of an enlightened society and related concepts such as enlightenment, open society, knowledge society, information society, and the philosophy of education. In particular, Francis Bacon's work "The Advancement of Learning" (London, 1605, p. 274) philosophically substantiates that the development of science is the main condition for the development of society. Immanuel Kant's "Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?" (Berlin, 1784. 16 p.) interprets enlightenment as the ability of a person to think independently. John Dewey, "Democracy and Education" (New York: Macmillan, 1916. 434 p.) reveals the importance of education as the basis of a democratic and enlightened society. Karl R. Popper, "The Open Society and Its Enemies" (London: Routledge. 1945 44 p.) justifies the importance of free thinking and critical thinking through the idea of an open society. Daniel Bell, "The Coming of Post-Industrial Society" (New York: Basic Books. 1973. 507 p.) shows that knowledge and intellectual labor are the primary resources of post-industrial society. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. (New York: McGraw-Hill. 1964. 359 p.) analyzes the impact of mass communications on enlightenment and public consciousness. In addition, Alvin Toffler wrote *The Third Wave* (New York: William Morrow. 1980. 544 p.) shows the decisive importance of knowledge, innovation, and information in the new civilization. Yoneji Masuda, "The Information Society as Post-Industrial Society" (Tokyo: Institute for the Information Society, 1980). 171 p.) develops a model of development based on enlightenment through the theory of the information society. Walter B. Dizard Jr. *The Coming Information Age* (New York: Longman, 1982). 240 p.) analyzes how today's information technologies are changing the culture and enlightenment of society. Peter F. Drucker's "Post-Capitalist Society" (New York: HarperBusiness, 1993. 232 p.) shows the knowledgeable person and the knowledge economy as the basis of modern society. Manuel Castells, "The Rise of the Network Society" (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers 1996. 625 p.) explains knowledge and information as the main factor of social development in the concept of network society. "Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education," published by UNESCO (- Paris: UNESCO. 2021, 183 p.) promotes the principles of education, human capital, and lifelong learning to build an enlightened society in the 21st century. Such sources consistently illuminate the evolution of the theory of the enlightened society, from the ideas of the classical Enlightenment of the 17th century to the concepts of the modern knowledge society (Knowledge Society), information society (Information Society), and network society (Network Society).

Methodology

This article comprehensively utilizes historical-philosophical, civilizational, comparative, hermeneutic, and axiological approaches to reveal the ancient foundations of the "enlightened society" concept. First and foremost, based on a historical-philosophical approach, the genesis of ideas formed in ancient Eastern and Western civilizations regarding science, enlightenment, justice, morality, and the perfect man, as well as their influence on subsequent socio-philosophical

teachings, were analyzed. Through the method of comparative analysis, similarities and differences in the traditions of "Avesta," ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian sources, Confucianism, ancient Indian philosophy, ancient Greek thinkers, and Islamic enlightenment were identified. With the help of a hermeneutic approach, the content of historical sources was interpreted in a periodic-historical context, and the philosophical essence of the ideas of enlightenment, wisdom, social responsibility and goodness in them was revealed. The theoretical basis of the article consists of the principles of civilizational approach, systemic analysis, dialectical thinking, and interdisciplinary integration. through the civilizational approach, it was substantiated that the idea of an enlightened society is not a product of a specific people or culture, but the result of the general evolution of human thought. Using the systematic analysis method, the interdependence between knowledge, morality, upbringing, statehood, social relations, and cultural values was studied as an integrated system.

Discussion and analysis

Studying the early beginnings of the concept of an enlightened society in ancient times is an attempt to understand how human civilizations and societies evolved and what ideas and practices contributed to their development. The primitive period covers a significant period from the emergence of the first humanoid beings to the emergence of writing and the first civilizations. During this period, fundamental changes occurred in social organization, the economy, culture, and spiritual life, which laid the foundation for the further development of human society.

In the primitive period, the concept of an enlightened society was based on the analysis of archaeological data, anthropological research, and mythological representations. It should be noted that the term "enlightened society" in this context is conventional, as it is usually associated with later historical periods when philosophical and scientific teachings emerged. However, despite the lack of written sources, early human civilizations showed signs of social and cultural evolution, which can be considered the origin of enlightened ideas.

The spiritual life of primitive societies also played an important role in their development. Religious beliefs, myths, and rituals contributed to the formation of collective identity and the transmission of knowledge. According to many researchers, primitive religious and magical practices reflected man's desire to understand the surrounding world and seek harmony with nature. However, there are works that study the evolution of human societies from primitive times to modern complex structures. Some sources considering the development of human society include the work "Ancient Society" by the English scholar Lewis Henry Morgan, which studied the evolution of human society using anthropological and ethnological approaches [1.25]. Morgan is best known for his theories of social evolution, in which he classified societies into different stages of development: savagery, barbarism, and civilization. In Ancient Society, Morgan does not directly consider the notion of an enlightened society as understood in the context of the Enlightenment. However, his works made a significant contribution to understanding the evolution of social structures and cultures, which is an important element for developing the concept of an enlightened society. He analyzed how knowledge, technology, and social institutions evolve and are passed down from generation to generation, which can be seen as a basis for subsequent ideas of education and educational systems.

Lewis Henry Morgan in *The Ancient Society* does not discuss the concept of the Enlightenment society as clearly as the Enlightenment philosophers did. However, his work creates important foundations for understanding the evolution of social structures and the role of knowledge in the development of society, which are indirectly linked to the ideals of enlightenment. His ideas about the social stages and significance of technology and knowledge made an important contribution to the understanding of anthropology and human progress.

Herbert Spencer's "*The Principles of Sociology*" examines various aspects of the development of human societies using an evolutionary approach [2.126]. Although Spencer does not use the term "enlightened society" directly, his analysis of social structures, processes, and institutions includes ideas that may be associated with the ideals of an enlightened society. Herbert Spencer, in *The Principles of Sociology*, does not deal with the concept of the Enlightenment society as clearly as the Enlightenment philosophers did. However, his ideas about social evolution, the role of knowledge and education, and the importance of individual freedom and the division of labor are linked to the ideals of an enlightened society. Spencer argues that progress and development depend on the interaction of various social institutions and the accumulation of knowledge, which are the fundamental elements of the concept of an enlightened society [3.327].

In particular, another English scholar, Edward Burnett Taylor, studies the development of culture and religion in human societies in his work "*Primitive Culture*" [4.245]. His work is not directly devoted to the concept of an enlightened society as understood in the context of the Enlightenment, but it provides important insights into cultural evolution and the development of knowledge that may be associated with the ideals of an enlightened society. Edward Taylor does not directly discuss the concept of an enlightened society in his work, but his work provides important insights into cultural evolution and the importance of knowledge associated with the ideals of an enlightened society [5.34]. Taylor emphasizes the importance of education, knowledge transfer, and cultural relativism, which contribute to a deeper understanding of human society and its development.

The English scholar James George Fraser's work "*The Golden Bough*" examines the religious and magical beliefs of various cultures [6.944]. The main focus is on the comparative analysis of legends, rituals, and ceremonies. Although Frazer's work does not directly discuss the concept of an enlightened society, his research emphasizes the transition from magical and religious thinking to a rational and scientific approach related to the ideals of enlightenment. James George Fraser does not directly discuss the concept of an enlightened society in *The Golden Branch*, but his work highlights important aspects related to the ideals of enlightenment [7.943]. His research on the evolution of human thought from magic to science, his critique of superstition, and his emphasis on rationalism make a significant contribution to understanding the development of human society.

The ancient period, spanning the period from the 8th century BC to the 5th century BC, represents the heyday of the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations. This period is significant not only for its cultural and scientific achievements but also for the formation of the ideals of an enlightened society. The enlightened society of antiquity was based on fundamental principles such as the pursuit of knowledge, rational thinking, political freedom, and civic responsibility.

One of the central aspects of the concept of an enlightened society in antiquity was education and philosophy. Ancient Greek thinkers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle laid the foundations of

Western philosophy by studying the nature of man, society, and the state. Their works helped shape the ideals of critical thinking, the pursuit of truth, and moral virtue. In his dialogue "The State," Plato presented the concept of an ideal society governed by royal philosophers who govern reason and justice. In his work "Politics," Aristotle examined various forms of state structure and emphasized the importance of education and moral upbringing in shaping civil society.

An important element of the enlightened society of antiquity was democracy. In the 5th century BC, Athens emerged as one of the world's first democracies where citizens had the right to participate in political life and make decisions. This contributed to the development of the idea of civil responsibility and equality before the law. The democratic principles of antiquity exerted a significant influence on subsequent generations and served as the foundation for many modern political systems.

Ancient science and art also played an important role in the formation of an enlightened society. Greek scholars such as Archimedes, Euclid, and Hippocrates laid the foundations of mathematics, physics, and medicine by developing methodological approaches and rational research methods. Roman architects and engineers created magnificent structures that embodied the ideas of harmony and aesthetics. These achievements contributed to the formation of a common cultural foundation that unites society and stimulates its development.

In Plato's work "The State," various aspects of the structure and functioning of an ideal state built on the idea of justice and rational governance are highlighted [8.215]. Plato presents an image of an ideal society that develops and educates its citizens through education and enlightenment. In the work, the philosopher makes several important points related to education and enlightenment, in particular, he believes that "education plays a decisive role in shaping the personality and character of citizens." In an ideal state, education should be strictly regulated and aimed at achieving justice and harmony. Plato proposes the concept of a ruler who possesses higher education and knowledge—a philosopher. He must rule the state to ensure prosperity and justice. The philosopher emphasizes the importance of knowledge and the pursuit of truth as the foundation for the development of individual and social life. Education is about getting rid of ignorance and mistakes.

Aristotle also examines various aspects of the political organization of society, including the role of education and enlightenment, in his work "Politics." According to him, education plays an important role in shaping the character of citizens and their ability to participate in political life [9.138]. He emphasized that the goal of education should be not only to acquire knowledge but also to develop the moral values and skills necessary for active participation in public life, as well as the knowledge and understanding of political processes and institutions necessary for achieving justice and social interests. He supports the view that education should contribute to the critical thinking of citizens and the making of sound policy decisions.

One of the ancient Eastern thinkers, Confucius, touched upon many aspects of society and education in his "Conversations and Judgments." He made no exception in introducing ideas related to education and enlightenment into his works. Confucius emphasizes the importance of education and culture as key elements in strengthening social order and moral norms." In his opinion, education contributes to the harmonious development of the individual and society as a whole. In his aphorisms, he shows respect for knowledge and wisdom, calls for constant self-education and self-improvement, and views knowledge as the basis for achieving harmony and

order in society. In his work "Conversations and Judgments," the philosopher presents a philosophy of education and social structure, focusing on the values of education, knowledge, and moral improvement as the foundation of social stability and prosperity.

Lao Tzu's "Tao te Ching" or "Book of the Tao," a text on governance and wisdom, also addresses issues of social organization and education. The philosopher does not directly consider the concept of an "enlightened society" in the Western sense, as is customary in the European philosophical tradition. However, Lao Tzu's text places great emphasis on the ideas of wise governance, harmony, and natural order, which are important for understanding society and governance. Several of the philosopher's main ideas regarding society and governance can be linked to the concept of enlightenment in a broad sense. For example, in "The Tao Te Ching," Lao Tzu writes: "Man follows the earth, the earth follows the sky, the sky follows the Tao, and the Tao follows its nature." This idea is particularly found in Eastern philosophy, particularly Taoism.

This idea carries deep meanings and can be interpreted from various angles. This idea reflects the interdependence and harmony of nature. Man follows the earth because he lives on it and obeys its natural laws. The Earth follows the sky because it is part of the Solar System and is under the influence of the Sun's gravitational pull. Heaven follows the Tao, because the Tao is the fundamental law of existence, the order of the cosmos. Tao follows its nature because it is self-existent, immutable, and eternal. This idea also implies the unique place of man and his subordination to nature. Man lives on earth, feeds on it, and depends on it. And the earth depends on the sky, that is, on the greater order of the universe. This order is governed by the Tao, which requires a person to realize themselves and see themselves as part of nature.

Even in ancient India, the concept of an enlightened society was discussed by various thinkers and philosophers. For example, the ancient Indian philosopher Buddha (Gautama Siddharta) stated in his teaching "The Doctrine of Dharma" that "Buddha's philosophy of enlightenment includes enlightenment through the understanding and realization of dharma," morality, and ways to escape suffering. Also, the author of "Manu-Smriti" notes that while Manu's teaching is more of a legal and social text, it also encompasses ideas about social structure and education.

Conclusion

Thus, in the ancient primitive period, the concept of an enlightened society encompassed many aspects related to the development of technology, social organization, and spiritual life. Despite the absence of written sources, archaeological and anthropological data show that even at the early stages of the development of human society, there was a beginning of ideas and practices that later became the basis for the formation of more complex and organized societies.

These works have been recorded and transmitted in writing for centuries and have been studied by scholars and translators of different eras. The dates of their original editions and places of publication may vary depending on the particular edition and translation, as they were written and used in both oral and written traditions. Thus, the concept of an enlightened society of ancient Chinese and Indian thinkers is a complex of ideas and principles aimed at developing knowledge, rational thinking, political freedom, and civic responsibility. Ancient heritage continues to exert a significant influence on modern society, serving as a source of inspiration and a foundation for further development.

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