

Kazakh-American University

Philosophy Semester No.3

No. of Credits 3

Humanities Department

Associate Professor Begaliev N.


Topic No.6 Philosophy of the Time of Renaissance

Renaissance is the word of the French origin with the obvious meaning of revival. It was the time of the transition from Feudalism to Capitalism. This period lasted from the XIV up to XVI cc. The birthplace of this transition was Italy.




What were the reasons for such a fundamental transit?

- The necessity to develop the productive forces. It implied a careful look into the natural environment with the academic cognition rather than the scholastic contemplations.
- It meant a considerable shift towards the materialistic into the matters.
- Any cognitive exercise involves the testing of different parameters of the subject in hand. It gave way to the development of the empirical stage of the cognition.
- It brings sooner or later to the rational stage of cognition (ratio – Latin).
- At the medieval times the key players were the religious people. The new reality called along the other crowd of people – with knowledge and intellect.
- The emerging hero was an individual with his perception of the reality and his personal interests.
- Some trends in the research were paving the way as “Studia Humanitatis” – Social studies. It was some outstanding achievement of the epoch of Renaissance.




The other peculiar sign of the epoch of Renaissance was self-explanatory as the revival of the study of the Ancient culture. In effect it meant the reverse movement as the insight into the problems of a human not as the source and the cause of the sin, but as a sensible creator of the reality.

Nicola Kuzano (1407-1457) is one of the great philosophers of the Renaissance time. His main work is the “Academic ignorance”. It contains contradiction which is obvious for a scientist. How ignorance can go with science? Here he makes a point that it is impossible to acquire the infinity which is God. But when it comes to the created reality it can be acquired bit by bit.




Here he arrives at the point that “**coincidence of the contradictions**” (Coincidentia oppositorum) is the right way of learning the surrounding world. The interaction of the contraries is the right way of delineating the right reflection of the ongoing processes. It promotes a human to a position of a creator who is capable of learning some limited extent of his perception with the prospective view of the infinity. He comes up to the conclusion that a human is able of reflecting the surrounding world in the capacity of a human God.




As for the spiritual abilities of a human he figures out Senses (sensus-Latin), Ration (ratio –Latin) and Intellect (intellectus –Latin). Ration comes after senses and be the base for the creative activity. But it is not decisive as animals can put into effect the senses and ration to a certain extent. The key element that makes a human absolutely different is the intellect. He was not divorced from the idols and ideals of his time as he put belief in God in front of the humans’ intellect. The God is the absolute maximum of the world. At the same time he melts the God in Nature perceiving the reality of both. He was a **pantheist**.

As for the penetration into the truth it is on the way to its contrary which is lie. The pattern is like the “day and night”, “light and darkness”.




Philosophic ideas of Nicola Machiavelli(1469-1527). He looked at the problem of a human outside of the religious context. A human is the baby of the nature. Like any live creature he seeks for the self-protection. It was to a certain extent due to the development of some elements of capitalism. Having analyzed carefully the life of the business people like salesmen and merchants he figures out that the driving force of these people is interest, which prevails among all the others which are small matters compared with the private property.


His judgments of the people are very poor = they are greedy, ruthless and can easily go beyond reason in the utilization of the nature. The lack of the moral principles brings the society to setting up a statehood as the reaction to the extremes of the human attitude. The god has nothing to do with the emergence of the state.



The other reason for the devaluation of the Christian religion was the deviation from the basic and primary ideals. Corruption was quite a common thing. Nonetheless the role of the religion is still great as the vehicle to keep the people happy under the support of the Christian values. The other argument is that religion can be of help in implementing the state order.



Fortune (Luck) in Machiavelli's teaching. 50% of the human's life is predetermined by the fate and the other 50% is dependent on the risk, activity and risk taking. The latter is called "Virtu" – (devoted labor or service). So Machiavelli considers a free man who can realize all his ambitious plans to be the hero of his time. This idea of Machiavelli is still the motto and moral value of a present day's western person. As you might have seen the key area of his academic interest is politics under the early stage of capitalism development. If earlier it had been under the control of Religion it later grew into the independent activity. If morality is the area of some ideal world the politics is based on the real state of things when an individual aspires to get the authority combining the talents of the Lion and Fox.



Scientific achievement of the Renaissance Time. We should first of all mention Leonardo da Vinci as the great artist as the creator of Gioconda. Being talented in some other areas as well he proved that it was the knowledge that can take a human to the truth and not scholastics. The Greek astronomer Ptolemy, Nick Copernicus and J. Bruno undermined the idealistic and dogmatic looks into natural outlines of the world. The science paved the way for the progress of the mankind.