ISSN 2227-7242 (Print), ISSN 2304-9685 (Online)
Антропологічні виміри філософських досліджень, 2021, Вип. 19
Anthropological Measurements of Philosophical Research, 2021, NO 19

UDC 1(091)

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Formation of the "Self-Made-Man" Idea in the Context of the Christian Middle Ages

The purpose of this article is to analyze the variability of the "Self-made-man" idea in the context of the Christian Middle Ages in its primarily historical and philosophical presentation. Research is based on the historical and philosophical analysis of the medieval philosophy presented foremost by the works of Aurelius Augustine, P. Abelard, Thomas Aquinas, and also by the modern researches of this epoch. **Theoretical basis.** Historical, comparative, and hermeneutic methods became fundamental for this research. **Originality.** The conducted analysis allowed to draw a conclusion that, despite the still existing view of the Middle Ages as a kind of an ideological gap in the formation of the self-determination idea, the Christian philosophy of this period not only does not reject but also gives essentially the universal character of the ancient intention to recognize the individual's right to self-determination and self-government, makes it not only religiously acceptable but also obligatory. **Conclusions.** Despite to general theocentrism, providentialism and fatalism of Christian medieval philosophy and culture in general, at its epicenter there is a man of a special type, focused on preserving spiritual autonomy and identity in the social dimensions of their existence, and at the same time, on personal responsibility for their own destiny. Such focus became a logical and somewhat unexpected result of the complex interaction of numerous factors of medieval culture, as well as the ideas and intentions inherited from Antiquity. In particular, the idea that a person who does not act freely cannot be morally responsible for what he does, as well as the intentions of the ancient sage to autonomy, autarky, and apoliticism. In the Middle Ages, this intention became essentially universal, as it became a right, even an obligation of every Christian to be free, at least from the worldly, in determining and realizing his own destiny. The gradual compromise recognition that personal salvation is possible only as a result of synergy, i.e. the co-participation of God's grace and human freedom, legitimizes and strengthens its focus on active personal efforts and personal responsibility for one's own salvation, in fact for one's own destiny. All this in historical perspective was found in its radicalized and purified from all sorts of mystical and religious layers of expression in the idea of "Self-made-man".

Keywords: self-determined personality; "Self-made-man"; philosophical legitimization; philosophy of the Middle Ages

Introduction

Relevance of research. The modern world is characterized by the gradual expansion of a new type of man – the so-called "Self-made-man", that is "the man who created himself". The natural consequence of this spread is the growing attention of the various fields' researchers, including philosophers, to the issues related to understanding the essence, socio-cultural and ideological origins, historical perspectives, and consequences of this spread. Moreover, such attention is not unique to Western researchers, but also typical to the representatives of the former Soviet Union. However, most of them are works on linguistics, comparative culturology and coaching, which are based on a somewhat, in our opinion, simplified idea of the ideological and cultural-historical origins of the idea of the man who created himself. We believe that the essence of this simplification is to limit these origins to the XVIII century and the process of the American cultural code formation. The author's position refers to the formation of this idea, that begins far beyond these limits, because

> The ancient culture, despite the core dominant idea of the fate (logos, year, necessity, etc.), shows a clear intention for a rather contradictory

doi: https://doi.org/10.15802/ampr.v0i19.236055

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> and still the recognition of the individual's right to self-defense, to make their own assessments and choices, so – at least a formal recognition of the ability and right of the individual to create their own destiny. (Korkh, 2020, p. 65)

However, has this intention survived in the context of the Christian Middle Ages with its characteristic of the actually apodictic dependence of the human destiny on God's providence and mercy? Has it not dissolved in the unconditionally defining for him postulate, formulated by one of the main Christian authorities, Saint Augustine, according to which "God created us, not we ourselves"? After all, it is not only about the body and soul, but also about the fate of man, since "everything that happens is God's will". Reproduced many times by himself and his numerous followers, does this postulate not create a kind of lacuna – an ideological gap in the development of the above-mentioned ancient intention, as it outlaws any personal efforts to create their own destiny? Such questions are justified due to the fact that the "light hand" humanists of the Renaissance, the Enlightenment (Diderot, Voltaire, Montesquieu), and Hegel, who called Middle Ages a kind of barbarism, this historical epoch is still often perceived in mostly negative connotations – such as "ten centuries of darkness", "dark ages", "a period of deep cultural decline", "break in the development of spirituality" and so on. (Interestingly, the modern English of the Middle Ages is often translated as "Dark Ages"). And there are certain reasons for this, in particular the dogmatism, hierarchy and authoritarianism of that time society, in which church pastors, according to I. Herder, treated people like real sheep, and

> …blind obedience became a Christian virtue, a Christian virtue became a rejection of the personal mind, and instead of remaining true to one's own convictions, one had to follow the authority of another's opinion, since the bishop who took the apostle's place preached the faith, and testified, and taught, and interpreted, and judged, and decided everything by himself. (Herder, 1977, p. 482)

To some extent, this is why the idea of personal self-determination is often considered as a product of later times, in particular the Renaissance, defined by A. F. Losev as "the period of childhood and adolescence of the European individualism", or even the New Age. On the other hand, for modern philosophers and theologians remains actual, to the semantic field of the idea of personal self-determination, and hence the idea of "Self-made-man", the key question of the relationship between the own free will and the Providence or Providence of God. Freedom of will is a concept that more than two thousand years has been a canonical sign of a person's ability to control his own actions (the free will, according to A. Lavazza (2019) means "to be and feel himself a "master" of his own decisions and actions", and hence his own life). Providence or

doi: https://doi.org/10.15802/ampr.v0i19.236055

Providence of God is the Christian analogue of destiny and according to Slavic mythology, the Deity, who determines the purpose of man, and hence independent of his desire's life path. And the significant material for understanding this question was developed in the philosophy of the Middle Ages, whose representatives, according to the American researcher Colleen McClusky (2009), "developed theories, both wonderful and original, which still arouse the interest of scientists working in this industry". Moreover, this interest is essential for researchers of different worldview orientations (Chistyakova, 2018; Dyachenko, 2017; Hoffmann, 2019; McClusky, 2009; O'Connor & Franklin, 2018; Shatalovich, 2015; Tornau, 2019), which indicates a common significance of the relevant issue. In these works, however, the author's attention focuses mainly on the analysis of the differences between Western and Eastern patristic in the interpretation of the relationship between human free will and God's Providence, its connection with will and intellect, dependence on "original sin", "good deeds or faith", the transformation of the idea of determinism in the Western European philosophy etc.

Purpose

However, the problem of continuity between the Middle Ages and Antiquity, in relation to the intention of the last one, to gradually recognize the ability and right of the individual to create their own destiny and does not become the subject of special philosophical reflection. And that is why the purpose of this article is to analyze the vicissitudes of the idea of "Self-made-man" in the context of the Christian Middle Ages in its primarily historical and philosophical presentation.

Statement of basic materials

As already noted, the idea of personal self-determination, which arose, in our opinion, in the days of antiquity, at least formally clearly contradicted the main principles of the Christian doctrine. First of all, its theocentrism, providentialism and fatalism. Therefore, any attempts, including Pelagius, to justify the human free will, as well as the thesis "Our merits are God's gifts", which was to motivate the individual to personal efforts for their own salvation, were categorically condemned by Augustine as heresy. However, Augustine himself was not very consistent in defending his own position. And this is not weird. After all, according to Timothy O'Connor and Christopher Franklin, he tries his best to bring together *various* doctrines,

> According to which the source of evil in the world is the abuse of freedom, not a God, and that the will of man, corrupted as a result of the "fall" of the first people, needs salvation, which is *achieved entirely* through the actions of God… He clearly states that the human will by its nature is a self-determining force, that is, no external forces in relation to it determine its choice, and that this feature is the basis of its freedom.

doi: https://doi.org/10.15802/ampr.v0i19.236055

> But he clearly does not exclude that all things are in one way or another
>
> determined by God. (O'Connor & Franklin, 2018)

That is why in his treatises Aurelius recognizes the God-given freedom of human will and, at the same time, following Cicero, emphasizes that the freedom of will is given to man by God only so that he does not count on forgiveness for his sins as those committed against his will. He constantly emphasizes in different ways that our will is always free and, at the same time, not always good. Moreover, the free will of the individual in his decision is the reason why he does bad things. Therefore, without God's grace, we can neither think, nor wish, nor do anything good. As Christian Tornau (2019) rightly points out, Augustine's free will is greatly limited by the sinfulness of mankind, and so it makes no sense to speak of free will without reference to grace.

Therefore, a person has no personal merits and there can't be any. And in their pursuit of the righteous life, no one can rely only on himself, on his own strength and abilities. Hence the conclusion-verdict, which determines the truly dominant precept of the Christian Middle Ages in relation to any attempt at personal self-determination and self-government – all those "who are supported only by the help of law without the help of grace, who rely on strength of his own and are led by their own spirit are not the sons of God" (Aurelius Augustine, n.d., chap. XII).

And yet it is hardly permissible to characterize the learnings of Augustine as a complete and unconditional anathema to the idea of personal self-determination. More acceptable, in our opinion, is the position in which Augustine, in his doctrine of free will and divine providence, acted both as a follower of the idea of providentialism and as an innovator. The fact is that thanks to God's grace, a person's will is not leveled, but changes from bad to good, and also receives help when it becomes good. At the same time, "eternal salvation", although seen primarily as the result of God's, sometimes incomprehensible grace, is promised to man "by his faith and works", as a reward for righteousness that will come in the final evaluation of everyone's merits. In this, obviously, lies the origins of the idea of personal responsibility of the individual for the cause of personal salvation, in fact, its fate. Hence the calls for personal renewal and self-improvement – "create yourself a new heart and a new spirit" (Aurelius Augustine, n.d., chap. XV), and the confession in the "Confession" that he, Aurelius, became for himself "a land that needs a hard work". So it is traced an obvious continuity between the ancient and Christian attitude to the recognition of the idea of destiny and at the same time – the idea of personal responsibility of the individual for his own life, his ability and right to create their own destiny. That is why Augustine is often characterized on the one hand as a "central bridge" between ancient and medieval philosophy, and on the other – as the founder of Catholicisma and, at the same time, "prophet of Protestantism" (Trubetskoy, n.d., pt. I, § II).

However, as it is not paradoxically, the Christian Middle Ages give to this distinctly common guideline the incomparably greater scale and depth. After all, if in antiquity time the requirement of "autonomia", i.e. the distancing of the individual from the social, his self-determination on the basis of his own nature, his own strength and mind, was widespread among a relatively small stratum of society, despite that, in the Middle Ages, it is a call to get rid of all earthly things, of all worldly affairs, becomes the ideological basis of the whole Christian world (!). In other words, what was rarely demanded in antiquity days, in medieval culture, according to H. Arendt (1999), becomes a right for all (p. 27), or rather even *a duty of every Christian*. As a result, the

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idea of universal spiritual unity, which is fundamental to Christianity, certainly retains its regulatory status, is balanced by the idea of *an individual's autonomy* in relation to the secular as sinful and unjust. So there is a comprehensive universalization of the individual autonomy idea as its liberation from the previously indeed total dependence on the worldly, lapidary expressed in the famous "to be in the world, but not of this world".

Obviously favorable for the spread in the context of the Christian Middle Ages the idea of self-determined personality was the general universalism of Christianity itself, which appeals not to any particular (ethnic, professional, etc.) community, but to *each individual*; recognition of man for the image and likeness of God, which quite logically led to the recognition of his *own dignity*. An important role was played by the personal character of the Christian God, who, unlike the One of neoplatonists, requires a personal attitude. In the same list are provisions on the *uniqueness of each* human soul, created by the Lord individually, as well as the idea of *personal* salvation and personal responsibility of the believing Christian for his own destiny. As O. Chistyakova rightly states,

> The ideals of salvation contributed to the formation in the bosom of Christian monotheism of a new image of the personality, the so-called "new creature". Because salvation a priori presupposed the self-improvement and self-knowledge of a human in the process of exalting him to comprehend the God. (Chistyakova, 2018, p. 9)

However, the formation of the idea of "Self-made-man" in the era under consideration, in any case, should not be considered the result of purely philosophical and theological factors. The socio-economic and cultural processes of that time, which generated this "new creature" in the direct practical plane, had an extremely important influence on its further formation and legitimation. Since these processes are described in detail in the studies of S. S. Avierintsev, M. M. Bakhtin, M. Weber, A. Y. Hurevych, E. Gilson, J. Le Goff; V. A. Sokolov, J. Huizinga and other researchers, we note only that it is primarily about the rather intensive development of crafts (including the appearance of a new loom) and, as a consequence, the intensification of the commodity-money relations, which created a more favorable economic basis for personal autonomy; rapid growth in the number and autonomy of cities (Venice, Florence, Genoa), in which self-government often took on a republican form, and "the air of which made a person free"; numerous crusades, which opened to Europeans new, unconventional ways of life and ideas (including the philosophy of Aristotle); numerous heretical movements that destroyed the notion of the "only true" Christian learning; the appearance of the first universities, which became centers of secular culture and free thought; numerous conceptions of civil society (unions of vassals, church communities, urban communes, craft shops, trade guilds, monastic and knightly orders, university fraternities, etc.), which, fighting for their corporate privileges, contributed to the appearance of political and cultural pluralism as an important precondition for personal self-determination, the tradition of the particular rights and freedoms protection. This is finally about the reception by the Western Europe northern regions of the Roman law, which was characterized not only by universalism, but also by a clearly defined individualism. Related to

doi: https://doi.org/10.15802/ampr.v0i19.236055

this is the gradual rooting in the public consciousness of the rule of law and the inviolability of the human's "rights and freedoms" (although still purely corporate), as well as the justification of the idea of "two powers", which found its concise expression in the famous "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's", also created incomparably more favorable conditions for personal choice and self-government. The result of the synergy of these philosophical-theological and socio-economic factors is the birth of a new human being (especially among the bourgeoisie), who is increasingly aware that a truly noble man is not born, but is "*Self-made-man*". Gradually realizing the genuineness and benefits of a decision-making, not in terms of authority and tradition, but at his own risk and discretion, he begins to slowly and painfully overcome the millennial paternalistic guidelines and acquire a taste for self-government.

In this complex socio-cultural context, the actual religious and philosophical self-consciousness of the Middle Ages is gradually being transformed. One of the main directions of this transformation, especially important in this problem field, is that the traditional, until the recent time the almost unconditional focus on the sacred and universal is slowly supplemented and balanced by the focus on the profane and personal-unique. The last one is embodied in particular in the gradual spread of nominalism. "In the Middle Ages, when Platonic and Aristotelian realism were associated with orthodox religious faith, the nominalism could be interpreted as heresy", say the authors of the modern British encyclopedic dictionary (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018). Nevertheless, the main official Western theology of that time, if even was not openly nominalistic, then in any case, according to A. F. Losev, often gave a rise to nominalism. In socio-psychological terms, this nominalism is traditionally seen as a kind of reaction of the bourgeoisie to the medieval hierarchy of the social system, which increasingly contradicted the individualization of social being, increasing the importance of its personal dimensions. In the epistemological – to the extreme realism, this asserted the unconditional priority of the general in relation to the individual. Thus, the first major representative of medieval nominalism, Roscelin, who endowed a real existence with only a few entities, questioned a number of key dogmas of Christian universalism, the main principles of which were defended within realism, and at the same time created the theoretical preconditions for rehabilitation of the individual human being manifestations.

In Abelard's conceptualist interpretation, nominalism becomes more moderate. Trying to reconcile the opposites of the finite and the infinite, he recognizes as common the real existence. However, since the sphere of existence of the general is proclaimed the personal mind, in essence, it becomes dependent on the individual, becomes derived from his personal abilities, especially from his free mind. Thus the latter becomes the real foundation of faith, and not vice versa, as in Augustine. After all, it is impossible to believe in what we did not understand before. However, a free mind not only makes the meaning of faith clear and acceptable but also becomes the basis for independent and therefore responsible decisions. So the individuals as they become adults and are able to "…control their own will, …must rely not on others but on their own judgment, and [they] should not so much share [someone's] opinion, but experience the truth" (Abelard, n.d., p. 3).

The idea of personal responsibility is especially important because Abelard does not share Augustine's idea of the inherited ancestral sinfulness of each individual. His man in this case acts not as a generic, but as a single being, which from birth, being a "good substance or creation", is neither bad nor good. Only with time, the degree of acquisition of "excited by the mind of a free will" and the ability to distinguish between good and bad, and conscious choice be-

doi: https://doi.org/10.15802/ampr.v0i19.236055

tween them, the man himself, of his own free will becomes good or bad (Abelard, n.d., p. 13). And that is why the human must be responsible for what he does. Moreover, the criterion of morality or immorality of his actions, in his opinion, is not as much as their compliance with God's commandments (!), but if a person follows his own convictions.

Abelard also has his own view on the question of divine destiny. Of course, he does not deny the role of God's grace in the work of personal salvation – everything happens according to God's plan. But he believes that this grace consists first of all in the fact that "…God offers us two purposes, namely: the highest happiness in the Heaven or the deepest evil in hell" (Abelard, n.d., p. 13). As for the choice between them, or the ways and methods of achieving the chosen, it is the prerogative of the man himself. It depends on the real purpose and its implementation result are determined only in the context of the chosen methods, it becomes quite obvious that the implicit recognition of the individual fate dependence on himself. Thus, Abelard's conceptualism further "legalizes" the idea of personal independence and responsibility of the individual in determining his life path and achieving his main goal.

It is clear that the semantic core of the Christian theology, and thus of the entire Western Middle Ages, were the ideas of Augustine. However, the socio-historical transformations mentioned above have led to a fairly significant revision of certain aspects of his learnings. This is primarily the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, whose influence on the later philosophy, including the relationship between free will and God's grace, according to American researcher Christian Tornau (2019), is both huge and ambivalent. The fact is that Thomas, having developed the doctrine of primary and secondary or so-called "instrumental" causes, gave to the human activity (i.e. "arbitrary" component of the last one) even the greater independence. He substantiates the fundamental necessity of this independence on the basis of the already known to us Cicero and Augustine considerations about what is thanks to that necessity (that is, the free will), the man should be responsible for his own actions. While deprived of this freedom, it falls completely under the influence of blind necessity, which makes the talk of any morality meaningless. At the same time, following in the footsteps of Aristotle's ideas and in contrast to Augustine, Thomas emphasizes not on the will, but on the intellectual ability of man. His freedom of will, as Tobias Hoffmann (2019) rightly points out, is first of all "the rational aspiration" (appetitus rationalis), i.e. the aspiring force, the direction of which is the result of the rational cognition. In other words, it depends on the intellect and is derived from it. It is clear that the primacy of the personal mind over the religiously oriented will significantly enhances the importance and possibilities of personal self-government. This, however, is not limited to the connection with Aristotle. Following Stagirit, Thomas recognizes that all people act for a purpose they consider as good and that the ultimate goal of their life, which people want the most, is the happiness, accessible through the knowledge and God's love. It is important to keep in mind the profound difference between God's love according to Aristotle, followed by Thomas, and God's love according to Plato, which Augustine professed. After all, Aristotle's understanding of this love required the individual to respect himself as a person, to satisfy his needs, and to realize himself in this earthly life. Obviously, it's going about the things, which are very far from the "classic" Augustine's virtues, such as self-humiliation, self-denial, contempt for all worldly and earthly in favor of the sacred and the afterlife.

Clearly, that remaining within the main tenets of Christianity, Thomas is forced to somehow articulate the decisive dependence of the human destiny on God's providence and grace. This is done, however, quite inconsistently:

doi: https://doi.org/10.15802/ampr.v0i19.236055

> God is the first cause of everything, as He sets in motion all causes, both natural and arbitrary. Moreover, the same He, setting in motion the natural causes, does not prevent them from carrying out their natural actions, the same He, setting in motion arbitrary causes, does not deprive them of arbitrariness. Rather, it can be said that He is the cause of their truth, as He acts in every single thing according to its true nature. (Thomas Aquinas, n.d.)

Thus, freedom of will exists, but only when it is supported by God as the primary source of both natural causes and human decisions. Contradictory, but natural enough for situations in which faith conflicts with the personal mind. The main thing, however, is that the last one is gaining more and more recognition as the basis of self-determination and self-government of the individual. Which, in turn, is becoming increasingly legitimate.

Originality

The analysis allows us to conclude that, despite the still existing view of the Middle Ages as a kind of an ideological gap in the formation of the self-determination idea, the Christian philosophy of this period not only does not reject but also gives essentially the universal character of the ancient intention to recognize the individual's right to self-determination and self-government, makes it not only religiously acceptable but also obligatory.

Conclusions

Thus, contrary to the general universalism, theocentrism, providentialism and fatalism of Christian medieval philosophy and culture in general, at its epicenter is a man of a special type, focused on preserving spiritual autonomy and identity in the social dimensions of their existence, and at the same time, on personal responsibility for their own destiny. Such focus became a logical and somewhat unexpected result of the complex interaction of numerous factors of medieval culture, as well as the ideas and intentions inherited from Antiquity. In particular, the idea that a person who does not act freely cannot be morally responsible for what he does, as well as the intentions of the ancient sage to autonomy, autarky, and apoliticism. In the Middle Ages, this intention became essentially universal, as it became a right, even an obligation, of every Christian to be free, at least from the worldly, in determining and realizing his own destiny. The gradual compromise recognition that the personal salvation is possible only as a result of synergy, i.e. the co-participation of God's grace and human freedom, legitimizes and strengthens its focus on active personal efforts and personal responsibility for one's own salvation, in fact for one's own destiny. All this in historical perspective was found in its radicalized and purified from all sorts of mystical and religious layers of expression in the idea of "Self-made-man".

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Становлення ідеї "Self-made-man" в контексті християнського Середньовіччя

Метою даної статті є аналіз перипетій ідеї "Self-made-man" в контексті християнського Середньовіччя в його історико-філософській презентації. Дослідження базується на історико-філософському аналізі середньовічної філософії, представленої роботами Аврелія Августина, П. Абеляра, Томи Аквінського, а також сучасними дослідженнями цієї епохи. **Теоретичний базис.** Основоположними для даного дослідження стали історичний, компаративний та герменевтичний методи. **Наукова новизна.** Проведений аналіз дозволяє зробити висновок, що, попри до цього часу існуючий погляд на Середньовіччя, як своєрідний ідейний розрив у становленні ідеї особистості, яка самовизначається, християнська філософія цього періоду не лише не відкидає, але й надає універсального характеру античній інтенції на визнання права індивіда на самовизначення та самоврядування, робить його не лише релігійно припустимим, але й облігаторним. **Висновки.** Всупереч загальному теоцентризму, провіденціалізму та фаталізму християнської середньовічної філософії та культури в цілому, в її епіцентрі постає людина особливого типу, яка зосереджена на збереженні своєї духовної автономії та самототожності в соціальних вимірах свого буття, і, разом із тим, на особистій відповідальності за власну долю. Така зосередженість стала логічним, хоча і дещо неочікуваним наслідком складної взаємодії численних чинників середньовічної культури, а також успадкованих від Античності ідей та інтенцій. Зокрема ідеї, за якою людина, котра не діє вільно, не може нести моральної відповідальності за те, що вона робить. А також інтенції античного мудреця до автономії, автаркії та аполітії. Ця інтенція в умовах Середньовіччя набуває універсального характеру, оскільки перетворюється на право, навіть обов'язок кожного християнина бути вільним принаймні від мирського у визначенні та реалізації власної долі. Поступове компромісне визнання того, що особисте спасіння можливе лише як результат синергії, тобто співучасті Божої благодаті та свободи людини, легітимує та посилює орієнтацію останньої на активні особисті зусилля та персональну відповідальність за справу власного спасіння. Усе це в історичній перспективі і знайшло своє очищене від різного роду містико-релігійних нашарувань, хоча і дещо радикалізоване вираження в ідеї "Self-made-man".

Ключові слова: особистість, яка самовизначається; "Self-made-man"; філософська легітимація; філософія Середньовіччя

Received: 30.11.2020
Accepted: 26.05.2021

doi: https://doi.org/10.15802/ampr.v0i19.236055