THE IDEA OF HUMAN DIGNITY IN THE ENLIGHTENMENT PHILOSOPHY OF CENTRAL ASIA

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Abstract: This article analyzes the idea of human dignity as one of the central concepts of the Enlightenment philosophy of Central Asia. The study traces the philosophical roots of this idea in the classical heritage of the region, particularly in the ethical and social teachings of Abu Nasr al-Farabi and Alisher Navoi, and examines how it was reinterpreted by the Jadid Enlighteners of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including Mahmudkhoja Behbudi, Abdulla Avloni, Munawwar Qari and Abdurauf Fitrat. Using historical-philosophical, comparative and hermeneutic methods, the paper reveals that the Central Asian Enlighteners understood human dignity not as an abstract legal category, but as a moral and social value realized through knowledge, upbringing, labor, freedom of thought and responsibility before the nation. The article also compares this understanding with the Western Enlightenment tradition and shows its significance for the current reforms in Uzbekistan aimed at elevating the dignity of the human being.

Keywords: Central Asia, Enlightenment, Jadidism, human dignity, humanism, upbringing, education, moral philosophy, national awakening.

Introduction. The problem of the human being, his place in society and the value of his personality has always been at the center of philosophical reflection. In the history of Central Asian socio-philosophical thought this problem acquired special importance during periods of intellectual renewal, when thinkers sought to answer the question of how a person can achieve perfection, happiness and a worthy life. The Enlightenment movement that emerged in the region at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries became one of such turning points. Its

representatives regarded ignorance, social stagnation and the humiliation of the individual as the main obstacles to the progress of society and connected the restoration of human dignity with the spread of knowledge and the reform of education.

The relevance of the topic is also determined by contemporary social processes. In modern Uzbekistan the principle “For the dignity of the human being” has become one of the guiding ideas of state policy, and the development strategy of the country places the interests, rights and honor of the person at the center of reforms [1]. The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted in its new edition in 2023 also proclaims the human being, his life, freedom, honor and dignity as the highest value [2]. In this context, the study of the historical and philosophical roots of the idea of human dignity in the national intellectual heritage acquires both theoretical and practical significance.

The concept of human dignity is usually associated with the European intellectual tradition. Already in the Renaissance, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola described the human being as a creature capable of shaping his own nature through free choice [3], while Immanuel Kant later formulated the principle that a rational being must always be treated as an end and never merely as a means, and that dignity, unlike price, admits of no equivalent [4]. However, the Central Asian Enlightenment developed its own understanding of human dignity, which was based on the ethical heritage of the East, Islamic spiritual values and the practical needs of society. The purpose of this article is to reveal the content, sources and distinctive features of this understanding.

Literature review. The philosophical foundations of the idea of human dignity in Central Asia go back to the classical period of regional thought. In his treatise on the virtuous city, Abu Nasr al-Farabi argued that the ultimate goal of human life is happiness, which can be achieved only through knowledge, virtue and mutual cooperation of people in a just society [5]. In Farabi's teaching, the value of a person is

determined not by origin or wealth, but by his intellectual and moral perfection. This idea later became one of the cornerstones of Eastern humanism.

Alisher Navoi developed this tradition in his ethical work Mahbub ul-qulub, in which he evaluated representatives of different social groups according to their moral qualities and condemned injustice, arrogance and oppression of ordinary people [6]. Navoi's humanism, which emphasized generosity, humility, justice and respect for the human being, served as an important spiritual source for the Enlighteners of the later period.

In modern historiography, the intellectual history of the Jadid movement has been studied by a number of foreign scholars. Adeeb Khalid interprets Jadidism as a project of cultural reform in which the Enlighteners sought to change society through new-method schools, the press and the theatre, and to redefine the place of the individual in the community [7]. In his later work, Khalid shows the continuity of these reformist ideas within the broader history of Central Asia from the imperial conquest to the present [8]. Edward Allworth considers the Enlightenment thought of the Uzbeks in the context of their long cultural history and emphasizes its link with classical literature and ethics [9].

Hélène Carrère d'Encausse analyzed the reform movement in Bukhara and showed how the demand for education gradually turned into a demand for social and political change [10]. Paolo Sartori examined questions of law, justice and cultural change in Russian Central Asia, which are directly connected with the problem of the legal and social status of the individual [11]. The collective volume edited by Timur Kocaoğlu presents the views of Turkestan reformers on progress, freedom and the nation [12].

Among Uzbek researchers, Begali Qosimov made a significant contribution to the study of the national awakening period, describing the Jadids as people of courage, enlightenment and self-sacrifice [13]. Republications of the works of Abdulla Avloni

and Abdurauf Fitrat [14; 15] made it possible to analyze their ethical and social views directly on the basis of primary sources. Nevertheless, the idea of human dignity as an independent philosophical category in the Enlightenment thought of Central Asia has not yet been studied comprehensively, which determines the novelty of this article.

Methods. The study is based on historical-philosophical, comparative, hermeneutic and systemic methods. The historical-philosophical method made it possible to trace the development of the idea of human dignity from classical Eastern thought to the Jadid period. The comparative method was used to identify common and distinctive features of the Central Asian and Western Enlightenment traditions, while the hermeneutic analysis of primary texts helped to reveal the meaning that the Enlighteners themselves attached to the concepts of honor, dignity, upbringing and freedom.

Results and discussion. The analysis shows that in the Enlightenment philosophy of Central Asia human dignity was understood primarily as a moral quality that is formed and preserved through education and upbringing. The Jadids considered ignorance to be the main cause of the humiliation of both the individual and the nation. For this reason, they regarded the reform of education not as a narrow pedagogical task, but as a way of restoring the dignity of the people. The new-method schools founded by Munawwar Qari in Tashkent and by other Enlighteners in Samarkand, Bukhara and Kokand were aimed at forming a literate, thinking and self-respecting individual.

Abdulla Avloni gave the most systematic expression of this idea in his textbook Turkiy guliston yoxud axloq. He divided morals into good and bad qualities and showed that such virtues as patience, honesty, modesty, diligence and love for the homeland raise a person, while laziness, ignorance, envy and flattery degrade him. Avloni's famous statement that upbringing is for us a matter of life or death, salvation or destruction, happiness or disaster [14] demonstrates that he saw the dignity of the nation as directly dependent on the moral upbringing of each individual.

Mahmudkhoja Behbudi connected human dignity with knowledge and social activity. In his articles in the journal Oyina and in the drama Padarkush, he showed the tragic consequences of ignorance and called on parents and society to give children a modern education. In Behbudi's view, a person who does not know the sciences and languages of his time becomes dependent on others and loses the ability to defend his rights and honor. Thus, the Enlighteners regarded knowledge as the basis of personal independence and, consequently, of human dignity.

In the works of Abdurauf Fitrat, the idea of human dignity acquired a more philosophical and social character. In Munozara, Bayonoti sayyohi hindi and Rahbari najot, Fitrat criticized superstition, blind imitation and the oppression of people, and argued that the true teachings of religion call a person to reason, labor and the pursuit of knowledge [15]. In the treatise Oila, he paid special attention to the family as the first environment in which a person's dignity is formed, and emphasized the importance of respect for women and the education of children. For Fitrat, the dignity of a person was inseparable from his freedom of thought and his responsibility before society.

A comparison with the Western Enlightenment reveals both similarities and differences. Like European thinkers, the Central Asian Enlighteners relied on reason, criticized ignorance and connected human worth with the ability to think independently. At the same time, Kant's concept of dignity was grounded primarily in the autonomy of the rational will [4], whereas the Jadids understood dignity as a unity of moral perfection, knowledge, faith and service to the nation. In their interpretation, a person acquires full dignity when his personal development benefits the family, the community and the homeland. This feature shows the continuity between Jadid thought and the classical tradition of Farabi and Navoi, in which individual perfection and social justice were considered inseparable [5; 6].

Another important result is that the Enlighteners did not limit the idea of human dignity to theoretical reflections. They sought to realize it through concrete social institutions: schools, newspapers, journals, theatres, charitable societies and textbooks. Therefore, human dignity in their philosophy appeared as a practical program for the renewal of society. This approach remains relevant today, when the reforms carried out in Uzbekistan in the fields of education, social protection and the rule of law are aimed at creating conditions for every person to live a worthy life [1; 2].

Conclusion. The study shows that the idea of human dignity occupies a central place in the Enlightenment philosophy of Central Asia. Its roots go back to the humanistic heritage of Farabi and Navoi, while in the works of the Jadid Enlighteners it acquired a new content connected with the needs of national awakening and social renewal. Behbudi, Avloni, Munawwar Qari and Fitrat understood human dignity as a value that is formed through knowledge, upbringing, labor and moral perfection and that is realized in service to society.

The distinctive feature of the Central Asian understanding of human dignity lies in the harmony of individual and social, rational and spiritual, national and universal principles. The study of this heritage enriches the history of world philosophical thought and provides a historical and theoretical basis for the modern policy of elevating the dignity of the human being in Uzbekistan. Further research may be directed at a deeper textual analysis of the works of individual Enlighteners and at a comparative study of the concept of dignity in the Jadid movement and other reform movements of the Muslim world.

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