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PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS OF GREGORY OF NAREK REGARDING THE CONTINUOUS SELF-IMPROVEMENT OF MAN

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Abstract: This report is an attempt to reveal the humanistic concept of human self-improvement developed by the 11th century Armenian philosopher, poet, songwriter, and Christian priest, Saint Grigor Narekatsi, canonized by the Catholic Church. The philosophical ideas of a Christian clergyman with a religious worldview regarding the relationship between the human soul, man and society, and man and God are revealed. In his poem “The Book of Lamentations”, the way of realizing the human dream of reaching divine perfection is discussed from the point of view of religious philosophy. His ecological views on the harmonious relationship between rational living matter, man, and nature deserve special attention. It is widely accepted that the psychoanalytical experience of Grigor Narekatsi enriched the universal word culture. From this point of view, Grigor Narekatsi’s multifaceted spiritual legacy has not yet been studied and needs further research.

Keywords: self-improvement, living matter, information, reason, values, humanism, religious philosophy, harmony.

Living matter, as a system that preserves information and transmits it through reproduction, was born and developed due to the formation of biological systems formed by the special regularity of inanimate matter. These systems have been separated from the initial environments of their formation.

Due to their signal transduction and other biochemical characteristics, species of living matter have continuously tried to adapt to environments with certain characteristics and to take a superior position over other forms of life. Their feature of storing and transmitting information by biochemical and biophysical means, biological heredity played a special role in these processes. During the development of living matter,

the emergence of language as a means of interpersonal information exchange among different forms of life and its further conscious development has become a particularly important stage.

Thanks to consciousness, the social form of life has emerged in parallel with biological heredity. Living matter, handed over to Homo Sapiens, turned into a rational phenomenon. If before this stage of development, the living matter was developing on a purely biological level, perfecting its purely biological characteristics, then thanks to logic man began to socially manage the continuous improvement of the personal and public moral profile. We believe that this phenomenon is a new quality of self-improvement of living intelligent matter.

In the presented study, by self-improvement we mean such a process of developing in harmony with the Universe, logically carried out by living intelligent matter, the purpose of which is the formation of personal healthy sexual and public moral and intellectual abilities of self-preservation.

The phenomenon of self-improvement has been in the field of human interest since time immemorial. It was reflected first in mythological stories and then in religious philosophy.

The issues of self-improvement of the human soul were discussed in a new way by many intellectuals in the Christian era.

Gr. Narekatsi (951-1003 AD) is a medieval intellectual who made an original contribution to the development of Armenian and world philosophical thought. He was born in the village of Narek in the Armenian kingdom of Vaspurakan, which is now located in the territory of the Turkish Republic. He is venerated as a saint in the Armenian Apostolic Churches. In 2015, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, Pope Francis declared St. Grigor Narekatsi a Doctor of the Church, for his theologically sound writings.

Gr. Narekatsi lived and created a thousand years after the birth of Jesus Christ, on the threshold of the new millennium. Such a period was invoked among Christian believers with the idea of "Doomsday". In the given period, the question of how people will face the terrible judgment, the judgment of God, dominated in the public consciousness. Master Gr. Narekatsi wrote poems on religious themes and preached hymns to be sung for certain holidays. He authored a research paper dedicated to Solomon's "Song of Songs".

Nerses Lambronatsi, the 12th century statesman of the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia, writes that the young man Gr. Narekatsi was blessed with God and had the body of an angel (Nerses Lambronatsi, 1838, p. 157). Appreciating Gr. Narekatsi, who dared to grasp the secrets of Existence, Fortune, and the Universe with the eyes of reason, Mezhlaitis writes that Gr. Narekatsi dared to include the secrets of Being and the Universe with the eyes of reason based on self-criticism (Mezhlaitis, 1982, p. 52). It is interesting from the point of view of philosophy to examine the works of an intellectual involved in conversation with God Almighty.

Gr. Narekatsi in his work "Interpreting Solomon's Song of Songs" illuminates and emphasizes such values of universal significance as family, love, and knowledge. Analyzing the songs reflecting intra-family relationships that are part of the Bible, he concludes: "Therefore, whoever defiles marriage with filthy debauchery and evil deeds, defiles the sacrament of the church and dishonors Christ, who is the example of this" (St. Grigor Narekatsi, 2007, p. 25). In this work of Narekatsi, the family is seen as a cradle for the development of the strategy of building a self-improving person.

In the some poems dedicated to the birth Narekatsi emphasizes the important social role of women and their nurturing role. "Even now, to honor women, men respect the edification of women" (Grigor Narekatsi, 2007, p. 28). As a philosopher, he draws attention to the infinity of science: "Because as much as a person reaches science, it becomes the basis of higher science" (Grigor Narekatsi, 2007, p. 73). With his interpretation of Solomon's songs of a spiritual nature Gr. Narekatsi logically reveals the goal of a person to achieve perfection and the means to achieve it. "Therefore, see, first of all, the body of sins must be put to death, and Christ's body must be put to death, and the purity of Christ must be equated with fragrant behavior..." (Grigor Narekatsi, 2007, p. 76). Christ is seen as the ideal of self-improvement.

Among Narekatsi's works, the philosophical poem "Book of Lamentations" stands out for its logical structure, in which the humanist intellectual discusses the relationship between man and God. In that poem, Narekatsi continued to develop universal humanitarian traditions from the depths of the human heart. Being deeply concerned about the disharmony of the lifestyles of the individual and humanity, he does not blame the Creator for the robbery, delusions, or miseries of people, he does not argue with him, but he explains these phenomena with the poverty of the human spiritual world, the low level of consciousness.

"For the man who sinned and did not repent.

Who was corrupted and was not ashamed...

Who committed iniquity and did not throw stones at his conscience.

Who saw the slave in his greatness and did not condole" (Grigor Narekatsi, 1960, p. 127).

Individual freedom through spiritual self-

improvement for Grigor Narekatsi is a target value. To be a believer does not mean to be a perfect, a person must be able to free himself from shackles thanks to his faith. For the freedom of man, the philosopher turns to God as a parent

“Take me out of prison, Dissolve me from my fetters, strip me free from convulsing chains, Free from worries, destroy from irons” (Grigor Narekatsi, 1960, p. 360).

For a philosopher, the only perfect phenomenon is God, and it is logical that he considers the visible goal of self-improvement to spiritually reach God, who created living rational matter.

His prophecy about human powers is admirable.

“And what he said is terrible...

Can we even be God, chosen with graces?

And connect with your creator ...” (Grigor Narekatsi, 1960, p. 225).

Prophet of humanity, Gr. Narekatsi directs man on the path of universal freedom and divine perfection. Through his poem, he imparts knowledge about self-improvement to the reader. The poem does not reflect a primitive sermon but contains a series of ideas with a solid structure, a message to man and humanity. We believe that “The Book of Lamentations” is a universal self-improvement program.

Being an Armenian by nationality and a Christian believer, the philanthropic author of the poem “The Book of Lamentations” does not distinguish people according to ethnicity or religion. In the universe of Narekatsi’s world perception, there are two phenomena: God and humanity created by him. Man, as a part of humanity, cannot be happy outside the universal cultural sphere, every person is responsible for society. In “Book of Lamentations”, an individual’s life is intertwined with humanity’s life, a person’s self-improvement process is conditioned by the improvement of all humanity. The biophilosophy of human self-improvement rises from the national to the universal level. In his dialogue, Narekatsi courageously takes on his shoulders the burden of humanity’s responsibility before God. We see such a philosophical abstraction moving from the personal to the universal in the German philosopher-pedagogue A. Disterweg’s views. “My name is human, my nickname is German” (Disterweg, 1963, p. 435).

A person reading Narekatsi’s poem “Book of Lamentations” can find not only the path of physical self-preservation but also the path of self-improvement in dialogue with God. It can be assumed that this is one of the reasons that this work by Narekatsi has turned into a monument of humanitarian religious philosophy.

From the point of view of philosophy, the psychoanalytical experience reflected in Narekatsi’s works and the ideas of self-realization, freedom, and humanity have nourished human self-awareness for centuries and are still nourishing the self-awareness of all members of society, “Old or child, virgin or young...” celebrate humanity, regulation of passions, education of will, growing generation. of uplifting self-improvement guides with “cheerful sweetness” (Grigor Narekatsi, 1960, p. 384). Man’s salvation is not determined by blind faith in religion but by the desire for self-improvement caused by the desire to be like God.

Man’s mission is considered not in going to God with passive prayer, but with God-pleasing life activity. Choosing such a lifestyle implies a transformation of the soul in the biological form (body, instincts).

Narekatsi believes that self-improvement should develop according to a certain logic. According to him, a person should understand what he wants, for what purpose he is trying to build his spiritual abilities, and with what vocabulary he formulates his dream of reaching God. Where is he trying to go? To evil or to good? Narekatsi, unlike prophets developing passive doctrines, is a philosopher fighting for the salvation of the human soul. However, he does not come to terms with the material reality, but with the image of the human soul that is deceived by the caress of the devil in that reality. Humanist Grigor Narekatsi is against the adaptation of man to purely biological realities. He tries to tilt the balance of human behavioral motives and raise them towards God through logic and reason.

God created man in his likeness, but that, according to Gr. Narekatsi is still not a sufficient condition to be eligible for heaven. A person who strives for a perfect way of life can go to heaven. Improving yourself is a difficult but solvable problem. In order to solve the problem of achieving harmony with God and the Universe, a person must first know his own perso-

nality, learn to control his behavior and develop positive human qualities, taking God's image as an example. J.P. Sartre also emphasizes the role of behavior suggesting that a person is the totality of his actions (Nitsche et al., 1990, p. 334). Gr. Narekatsi sows the seeds of a humanitarian value system in the consciousness of society through religion. Due to the reality of worship and observance of rituals, religion is characterized by dogmatism. And here religious philosophy comes to Narekatsi's aid as a means of understanding the relationship between man and God.

It can be concluded that Gr. Narekatsi equips a person with determination and self-confidence to fight and win in difficult situations. The basis of the process of self-improvement is the family, love, and respect for parents and people.

Conclusion

Through the cause-and-effect relationships revealed during the discussion of the human-God relationship, Gr. Narekatsi tries to logically develop the idea that a person can unite with God thanks to continuous self-improvement. It is noteworthy that he does not discuss people according to ethno-religious affiliation. There are two active characters in his poem: man and God. The philosopher, not dividing humanity according to religious characteristics (Jews, Christians, Muslims, Brahmins, etc.), thus tries to unite all humans around the idea of God. Italian Dante Alighieri, Austrian Stefan Zweig, Persian Nizami, French Jean-Paul Sartre, and others followed a similar path. From this point of view, kaizen is also a remarkable phenomenon, as a Japanese philosophy on human self-improvement.

Today, the question of what kind of spiritual profile tomorrow's man will have is topical. This is important because the bio-social evolution of intelligent matter has resulted in Homo sapiens not only adapting to the environment around it

but also successfully trying to transform its cradle, the planet Earth, and the Universe. From this point of view, humanistic philosophy remains not only a means of understanding nature but also a means of continuous self-improvement of man.

God can be reached by opening the eyes of consciousness, not by blind faith. A person who has created a humanistic philosophical culture over the millennia must be able to maintain the harmony of *human - universe* relation by effectively using digitized information and artificial intelligence.

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