



Charles-Louis Montesquieu's Social Views on The Laws Of Human Nature as A Paradigm Of Peace

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Abstract: This article analyzes the philosophical views of the French Enlightenment thinker Charles-Louis de Montesquieu on the state of nature and natural laws. Montesquieu explained the fundamental laws of human nature through four main principles, highlighting their essence and role in the formation of society. According to the author, in the state of nature, humans strive for peace, tend toward cooperation, and naturally develop social ties. Additionally, the article explores Montesquieu's critique of Thomas Hobbes' ideas and the differences between his views on the state of nature and those of other Enlightenment thinkers. The research also examines the assessment of Montesquieu's legacy by representatives of the French sociological school. This study holds significant importance from the perspectives of law, philosophy, and sociology, providing a deeper understanding of the state of nature and the formation of society throughout human history

Keywords: Natural Law, Enlightenment, Equality, Humanity, Society, Philosophy, Sociology, Culture, Civilization, Genealogy, Renaissance.

Introduction

Definition of natural laws: "...In order to comprehensively and justifiably understand laws, one must consider a person in the context of time, that is, an individual who lived before the formation of society. The laws that such a person relied on to exist in that (pre-societal) state are the natural laws". Thus, Montesquieu understood natural laws concerning humans as laws that took precedence over all human and existing laws (he stated that they governed) and originated from the primitive structure of human nature.

According to him, natural laws are of four types. The first natural law concerning humans is the state of nature or the world itself, which is humanity's first law. "In the state of nature, a person is important not because of their knowledge but because of their ability to acquire knowledge. It is clear that their initial ideas do not have a reflective character: before thinking about the origin of their existence, they think about preserving their life.

Such a person initially feels only their own weakness. They are extremely timid; if examples are needed to confirm this, they have already been found in the forests where savages live: everything frightens them, everything forces them to flee”.

Methodology

In this study, qualitative and analytical methods were chosen as the primary approach. The historical-comparative method was widely used in the examination of Montesquieu’s and other Renaissance philosophers’ views on human nature. Firstly, a historical-philosophical analysis was applied, comparing Montesquieu’s ideas with those of other thinkers, particularly T. Hobbes, J. Locke, and I. Kant. Through this comparison, the distinctive aspects of Montesquieu’s concept of the state of nature and natural laws were identified. Secondly, by using the conceptual analysis method, the core concepts in Montesquieu’s doctrine – such as the state of nature, natural laws, society, and social relations – were explored in depth. This approach provided an opportunity to understand the philosophical and social aspects of the research topic. Thirdly, based on the structural analysis method, Montesquieu’s ideas on natural laws were examined in an interconnected manner. He identified four laws of the state of nature, and it was demonstrated that each of them is inherently interrelated. This methodological approach contributed to ensuring the logical consistency of the research. In the final stage, deductive and inductive methods were employed to synthesize Montesquieu’s ideas, drawing conclusions based on their philosophical, social, and legal characteristics. This, in turn, ensured the logical validity of the research findings and reinforced its scientific foundations.

Result and Discussion

According to Montesquieu, only in the state of nature does a person possess or feel the following:

- a) A person cares about preserving eternal life as well as their own life;
- b) There is no value higher than human life itself – this can only be felt, understood, or known in the state of nature;
- c) A person exists in a state of equality with all others who are like themselves;
- d) A person remains in a state of eternal peace, even though Montesquieu did not explicitly use these words (as the essence of his idea implies this).

These conclusions are not exclusive to Montesquieu but are also present in the philosophical systems of many other Renaissance philosophers, such as J. Locke, I. Kant, and others.

When writing about the state of nature, Montesquieu emphasized: “In such a state, everyone feels inferior in relation to others and attains a sense of equality only with great difficulty. The desire to attack one another is foreign to such people (Montesquieu opposes T. Hobbes’ ideas of “the war of all against all” and “man is a wolf to man”); therefore, peace is humanity’s first natural law”.

Montesquieu argued that Hobbes was wrong when he claimed that primitive people socialized out of a desire to dominate one another. He wrote: “The idea of power and

domination is so complex and dependent on many other ideas that it cannot be the first idea in human history". Montesquieu also criticized Hobbes for deriving his ideas not from human nature or the state of nature but from a concept of society that belongs to civilization. He wrote: "If war is not the natural state of mankind, then why do men always carry weapons and lock their doors?" Hobbes asked. However, Montesquieu countered, "One should not attribute tendencies such as attack and defense – motivations that arise only after society has been formed – to people who lived before society existed". Thus, according to Montesquieu, the state of nature is simply nature itself as it existed before the emergence of society. He even referred to it as "the world itself", asserting that in this state, humans exist in peace with one another.

According to Montesquieu, the second natural law of mankind is the desire to find nourishment. He explained this by stating that "a person connects their sense of weakness with the feeling of their needs". Additionally, Montesquieu argued that fear initially drives people to avoid one another, but once they realize that their fears are similar, they develop a desire to come together. Instead of Hobbes' concept of "man is a wolf to man", Montesquieu proposed the idea that "a wolf is a wolf to man" and that "human beings do not possess the nature of wolves".

Hobbes believed that before the establishment of the state, there existed a "state of nature" characterized by a "war of all against all", where "man was a wolf to man". According to Hobbes, the "social contract" led to the formation of an all-powerful entity known as "Leviathan", a mythical beast that concentrated the right to use force in its hands. He likened the state to this Leviathan. Like other French Enlightenment thinkers, Montesquieu viewed Hobbes' theory of the "social contract" positively. However, he criticized Hobbes for portraying the "war of all against all" as a natural state". As discussed earlier, the differences between their doctrines stem from the emergence of fundamental political concepts such as civilization, the state, society, and power.

Montesquieu defined a person's need for another and their appeal to one another as the "third natural law" of humanity. Furthermore, he wrote that when creatures of the same species meet, they are naturally drawn to one another by a sense of closeness and comfort, a feeling that arises in any living being. Additionally, the attraction between the two sexes enhances this sense of comfort even further. "Thus, one person's appeal to another (human dependence on fellow humans) constitutes the third natural law". It seems that Montesquieu's idea of "closeness and comfort" represents the genealogy of the family institution. It explains the origins of ethical principles and, undoubtedly, the laws of peace – such as kinship, lineage, brotherhood, and friendship – which humans frequently rely on throughout their lives.

Thus, in Montesquieu's concept of the "state of nature", particularly in the idea of "closeness and comfort", we observe a moral paradigm rooted in family and kinship ties. He highlighted that human interactions, relationships, and bonds existed even before the emergence of society.

In this continuous process of human life, “the ability to feel” leads individuals toward knowledge and understanding. Montesquieu expressed this by stating that “people are connected by a second thread – one that does not exist in animals – called society, which is based on knowledge and complex social relationships”. If we refer to this “thread” as a “bond”, it would be more accurate, as it relates to the genealogy of society. Montesquieu further wrote: “It is precisely from this point that a new reason for closeness arises – the desire to live in society. This constitutes the fourth natural law of mankind”.

According to the analysis of Montesquieu’s ideas, the final stage of humanity’s desire for closeness is “society itself”, and it is this very desire that has brought society into existence. It is important to emphasize that the prominent representative of the “French school of sociology”, political scientist “Raymond Aron”, in his work “Main Currents in Sociological Thought”, described Montesquieu as a “founder of sociology” even before Auguste Comte. While Comte was the first to introduce the term “sociology”, Aron concluded: “I have come to the conclusion that Montesquieu is more of a sociologist than Auguste Comte”.

Of course, Montesquieu’s sociological views require separate research. However, for this, we first need a translation of the aforementioned work into Uzbek, along with commentaries on it. Additionally, it would be necessary to provide Uzbek translations of his other works as well.

At the same time, we believe that Montesquieu’s views on humanity and society, as well as his sociological, anthropological, cultural, and civilizational perspectives, along with his ideas on economics and sustainable development, should be studied separately.

Of course, all of these analyses should follow Montesquieu’s own logical framework, which includes:

- first, examining the theoretical dimensions of the “state of nature”;
- second, analyzing the “political state of society” and “the paradigm of political power”.

Thus, an analysis of Montesquieu’s social views reveals that, in the state of nature and according to natural laws, human beings are destined to live in mutual peace, and peace itself is the source of their needs and the foundation of all human relationships.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that Montesquieu’s ideas on the state of nature and natural laws establish significant theoretical foundations for understanding human and societal relationships. His views on human nature, particularly the tendency of humans to live in a state of peace and the natural development of social relations, remain relevant from the perspective of contemporary philosophy and legal systems. By conducting a comparative analysis of Montesquieu’s concept of the state of nature with the theories of Hobbes and Locke, this research has identified his distinctive approach to natural rights and the origins of society. The study thoroughly examined the four stages of natural laws, demonstrating their role in human progress.

Additionally, the findings shed light on Montesquieu's contribution to social philosophy and sociological thought. His views on human beings and society later influenced the development of sociology, a notion supported by Raymond Aron, who regarded Montesquieu as a precursor to sociological thought even before Auguste Comte. Ultimately, the study reveals that Montesquieu's perspectives on the state of nature and natural laws are not only significant from a historical-philosophical standpoint but also hold great relevance for modern legal studies and sociology. His ideas continue to be pertinent in discussions on social progress, the development of the rule of law, and the protection of human rights in contemporary society.

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