

Rousseau's Political Organics Heralds a New Era of Political Thought

Summary

This article considers a broad range of various aspects of Rousseau's philosophy. It starts with an ambiguous Rousseau's relation with religion, then moves to general description of the intellectual climate of the contemporary environment. The heritage of Cartesians and emerging Newtonianism are distinguished as major competing poles of the period. This is paralleled with an aspect of the rivalry of Rousseau and Voltaire. The latter is presented as proto-positivist, while Rousseau allegedly still contained some aspects of metaphysical thinking. His political thinking attempted to apply organic approach, which contrasted the still predominant mechanical worldview. Turning to the context of the history of political ideas, the Calvinist milieu of Rousseau's homeland is highlighted, and the earlier debate between political absolutism and the conciliarists at the Council of Constance is presented as a precursor of the absolutist and constitutionalist trends in political theory, showing that Rousseau took the side of the constitutionalists. A reference to

Lithuanian historical situation, the Constitution of May 3, 1791 was given, with a brief consideration of our choice how to treat it legacy. The move then was made to a possibly transcendental elements of Rousseau's critical political thinking. The dramatic and yet creative tension between an individual and the society inherent in the major concept of Rousseau – The General Will – is presented as still actual and productive. The article ends with an attempt to show that abovementioned aspects of Rousseau's analysis are still missing the evaluation of another – scientific – background of Rousseau's thinking. This facet was suggested for the further research in Rousseau's thinking, alongside an invitation to appreciate the possible impact on it of the dense network of marginal religious currents, especially those of Socinians, since they connected not only Geneva (Vernet, Burlamaqui, Barbeyrac) and London (Locke, Newton), but also our Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, wherefrom they sprang off and spread around the Europe.

Keywords: Rousseau, Voltaire, conciliarists, transcendental, organic, instrumentalism, experiment, Kant, Constitution of May 3, Newton, Socinians.