The Age of Reason: Rationalism and the Deuteronomistic History

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Date

The essence of this concept is that all life activity is subordinate to reason, and it is the only source of knowledge. Rationalism is opposed to empiricism, in which feelings and experience are the source of knowledge. Like many other areas of philosophical thought, rationalism originates in ancient Greece[[1]](#footnote-1). The first stage of development and formation of this term is associated with the name of Socrates . In his ideas traces a rationalistic orientation. The individual must know the world, himself. Knowledge is perceived by Socrates as good, and ignorance is evil.

Socrates rationalism is called ethical, since the goal of a person’s self-knowledge is his moral behavior. If an individual cognizes himself and distinguishes between the concepts of “good” and “bad”, he will not act immorally. That is, rationalism is necessary for the development of high moral qualities. The next thinker who developed the idea of ​​rationality is Plato, a student of Socrates. Plato believed that the whole material world reflects the world of ideas. Material things change, they are inconsistent. He cited the beauty of a woman and a flower as an example. They are inconsistent, as they change over time. A woman will age, and her beauty will no longer be the same as before. The flower will wither and die.

Plato recognized that we know the world through the senses: we see objects, we feel them, we touch them. But he also suggested that inconstant feelings cannot be a source of knowledge. He suggested that there is a world in which the human soul is located before birth. And before birth, a man knew everything, but forgot about being born. With the help of the senses, the individual learns the world around him, but with the help of the mind, he recalls previous experience and cognizes important, unchanging concepts.

To understand it, it is good to remember some events in the history of the people of Israel. A political and military history that has always been dependent on that of its great neighbors, Egyptians and especially Mesopotamians for the period that interests us. During the Exile and / or after the Exile, this Deuteronomic tradition will become the key to interpreting the whole history of the people, from their entry into the Earth to the end of the Northern Kingdom, then to the South, with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 587 and the resulting Babylonian Exile[[2]](#footnote-2). Then, on the basis of the Annals of the two kingdoms as well as on other traditions and documents concerning the history of the people, from the entry into the Earth until the end of the kingship, "theologians of Babylonian exile dares to give a "meaning" to all this history that has come to an end: speech is declared a decisive factor in history.

Studies of biblical exegesis in the modern era generally place great importance on Protestantism and, in particular, on the principle of " sola Scriptura ". His influence on biblical exegesis and especially that of the Pentateuch is undeniable. But the exegesis of the various denominations is also dependent on another, larger cultural movement that marked this era: that of the Renaissance. The rediscovery of classical antiquity, the humanism and the taste for philology and the original languages ​​had a profound influence on the way of reading the Bible.

After having read and interpreted the Latin Bible for several centuries, Western Christians return to the original languages. The movement leaves Spain, where Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros founds the University of Alcalá to promote, among other things, the teaching of Greek and Hebrew, and commissions the edition of the Bible of Alcalá ( Biblia complutensis ), printed in 1514-1517 and published in 1520-1522[[3]](#footnote-3). Biblia complutensis is a polyglot Bible in which the Old Testament is printed in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, with the Aramaic Targum of the Pentateuch, and the New Testament in Greek for the first time since ancient manuscripts and in Latin. Fifty years later, Christophe Plantin also published in Antwerp, the Netherlands, another famous polyglot Bible, the biblia regia (1569-1572). The invention of printing in 1434, work of Gutenberg (Mayence, 1400 - 1468), and the publication of the first Bible printed by the same Gutenberg (1454-1456) made possible these new editions of the sacred text in the original languages. In France, Guillaume Bude obtained in 1530 from King Francis I permission to found in Paris the College of the three languages, which teaches Greek, Hebrew and classical Latin, while the Sorbonne continues to teach a Latin medieval less cared. This college will take the name of College of France from the Restoration[[4]](#footnote-4).

Erasmus (Rotterdam, circa 1469 - Basel, 1536), one of the fathers of modern exegesis, published his Greek New Testament at Basel in 1516, shortly before the publication of Biblia (1521). The text of Erasmus, very defective, then partly corrected, will serve as a basis for the edition of Robert Estienne (1546 and 1549) and will become critical scholar until the nineteenth century. When Luther prefers " Sola Scriptura " to the more recent "Tradition", he is a faithful follower of the humanists of his time, because he shares their penchant for "origins", for antiquity, and a certain dislike for the Middle Age. The distinction in the Protestant Bibles between original books and "apocryphal" books is another manifestation of this same tendency[[5]](#footnote-5).

The hypothesis of the *fragments* was proposed by a Scottish Catholic priest, Alexander Geddes (1737-1802), who studied German in order to follow the progress of exegesis in Germany. His hypothesis supposes that originally there existed a plurality of sources, small narrative units or separate and incomplete texts, which would have been brought together long after the death of Moses to form the present Pentateuch. He, too, had difficulties with ecclesiastical censorship, and his ideas were hardly successful in Great Britain. In Germany, on the other hand, two prominent exegetes defended similar positions: Johann Severin Vater and, with important modifications, Wilhelm de Wette[[6]](#footnote-6). The final hypothesis, that of complements, was born a little later. We mention it here for clarity. Specialists often attribute paternity to Heinrich Ewald. It should be said, to be more exact, that he suggested the idea without ever defending it as such.

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1. Bond, Donald F. "English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century, 1700-1740.,145 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Bond, Donald F. "English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century, 1700-1740., 234 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Römer.,"Transformations in Deuteronomistic and Biblical Historiography.,7 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Nielsen., The Tragedy in History: Herodotus and the Deuteronomistic History.,87 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid., 121 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Römer., "Transformations in Deuteronomistic and Biblical Historiography.,9-10 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)