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**THE CAMBRIDGE PLATONISTS TRIGGER PATTERN IN XVII
CENTURY**

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Abstract

This paper covers some issues concerning trigger and innovation barriers mechanisms in historical, cultural, and sociological processes. The idea of some triggering moments in the historical process does not seem to be only of minor importance anymore. We should bear in mind that various trigger effects while competing, cause various trends which could be more or less productive in begetting social and epistemological trends. This paper intends to cover some trends in New Modern Times period within the activity typical of the Cambridge Platonists School during the seventeenth century. Our intention in this paper is to demonstrate, that the common view of the Cambridge Platonists group as of some counterproductive force is not entirely true. We hold in here that the group should be regarded as some counter balancing trend rather than a bunch of purely mistaking retrogrades. The Cambridge Platonists we are about to demonstrate in this paper are of special interest for describing trigger effects as they are termed by the scholars as “the third component in western culture”. We could conclude that as their position as a moderator in various matters in science, philosophy, theology and even politics provided this group the best set of possibilities to compare and juxtapose many faceted trends of intellectual activity in XVII century. Their activity was of both spurring and limiting kind, enabling the thinkers of that period be more critical and not to omit the broad outlook in that turmoil of the XVII century.

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1. Introduction

To make a proper introductory line for this paper we should organize the following set of preliminary assumptions: Theoretical background could be treated both prospectively and retrospectively. Any innovation is based on specifically organized sets of effects that put the situation in motion. To understand the nature of this triggering scheming we put under investigation as many cultural situation as possible. This condition would enable the ranging approach to triggering, as we know it.

This paper covers some issues concerning innovations and innovation barriers mechanisms in historical, cultural, and sociological processes as we had written in our paper (Tsyb & Semenov, 2014). Mostly these matters became topical due to the incessant consequences of attempts by many scholars to outline the origins of consciousness shifts in cultural situations taken historically. Changes, be they slow or rapid, affect the whole system we call society or culture. The system is characterized as being of stable or of unstable state. That is, we are either able, or unable to analyse these states. To be more precise in dealing this matter, we are able to analyse stable systems both externally and internally (we possess enough time for that). Unstable systems are impossible to analyse internally – we come to the sphere of some guessing or, at best, prognostic knowledge. Some systems can be regarded as network, which definitely improves the situation, as invariable guessing becomes systematic, thus offering additional possibilities for prognostics. This networking approach was successfully used in historical, cultural, sociological spheres. Since systems could be treated as networks (Tsyb, Golik, & Semenov, 2013), the stable state in these systems is the result of some initial shifts within the elements of such systems producing some originating effects that set the systems in another state. On the other hand, we should remember about the opposing trends that resist the changes. These opposing trends are the barriers, preventing or even nullifying the consequences of the trigger effects. The barriers of this kind serve as self-limiting factors, correcting the mainstream of system dynamics, thus preventing uncontrollable system development (Cudworth, 1838). The nature of the triggers and barriers (obstacles) is of paramount importance for historians and culture scholars. These effects could be crucial and affect the system as a whole, or they could be minor and insignificant at the beginning, having postponed results, affecting the system only partially or at some later phase of system functioning. We should also bear in mind that somewhat accumulating effects of minor importance might cause in future. The nature of these effects prevents their close investigation as such phenomena may have blurring boundaries and retain their quality in a hidden form. These phenomena could be explained in terms of qualities and active segments of the networks. Like a synaptic neuronets, the bundles of social nets go as both active and receptive elements that guarantee the stable states in the net due to some specific corrective signals, working in the system. Ranging these signals, one can single out one set of signals that cause a desirable or an investigated (tested) state of the system. It also helps to analyse working conditions of the system, depending upon both single signals and their combinations. This might enable clearing out social phenomena using non-linear logics – the task quite possible to accomplish by modern IT specialists.

2. Problem Statement

The problem we should strive to solve concerns trigger mechanisms mapping that intends to guarantee some reliable results in historical and cultural data processing. This mapping procedure requires

careful search within historical events boundaries. The idea of some originating moments in the historical process does not seem to be only of minor importance anymore. We could rely on such effects in cultural and sociological aspects of life as well as in physics and engineering. Our intention to trace or to show some features of importance in historical process may be fruitless without specifics concerning causative aspects of what might be called as “historical mechanics”. These effects could be regarded as both epistemological and technological contents of social and personal conscience (Karabykov, 2018). As these triggers are of some special importance for various types of society we should stress the educational dimension, for traditional and modern types of society differ greatly in skill formation aspect. In a traditional society, the past does not end in the past, but rests in the present and does repeat itself in the future. In this case, we transfer the child only the skills from the past, as a religious component partly stagnates the development at large. In the modern society, when mass production prevailed, the family or the church could not provide proper skills anymore. Hence, the educational machine deals with the masses of students to be processed in a centrally located school. In this case, the machine type of education repeats itself in the machine type of mass production. Then comes another overturn when it becomes clear that many parents could provide better home training than some local schools. Then again, the situation is reversed and new artisans are again in demand. Every such phase of education requires some initial conditions that start working until another trend would prevail and become a new obstacle to be overcome.

The epistemology we are talking about rests on both science and religion. This is true also because certain clerical strata mostly upheld education. These very strata may be treated as being responsible for both an innovative and outdated trends. Nevertheless only, some specific segments of historical timeline seem to be equipped with such mechanisms producing definite obviously outlined changes in epistemology and social structures. What is interesting about the triggers it is their competitive character. We should bear in mind that various effects of this kind while competing, cause various trends which could be more or less productive in begetting social and epistemological trends.

3. Research Questions

The problem could be subdivided into several research questions: To pose some questions we should derive our inspiration from epistemological domain, as we may borrow the data under investigation regarding the clashes of epistemological platforms in historically significant points of the timeline. This paper intends to cover some trends in New Modern Times period within the activity typical of the Cambridge Platonists School during the seventeenth century. According to Sarah Hutton’s view: “The seventeenth century was a defining period in British philosophy. This is the period in which for the first time, British philosophy was put “on the map”, producing philosophers of international stature and lasting influence” (Hutton, 2015, pp.1-2). Our intention in this paper is to demonstrate, that the common view of the Cambridge Platonists group as of some counterproductive force is not entirely true. We hold in here that the group should be regarded as some counter balancing trend rather than a bunch of purely mistaking retrogrades. The so to say “checks and balance pattern” in intellectual life in England of the XVII century is presented by some formative forces to regard and to analyse. It is only simplification but we should restrict ourselves to several already well-known components: diminishing scholasticism, Renaissance Humanism, magic and pseudo-magic, that is, scientific shifts most directly connected with epistemological

aspiring of the thinkers' circles of the period under investigation. What is typical beginning around 1600 is the reviving of creativity. Epistemology takes more central position than it used to take before. We can also see the rebirth of metaphysics though with a bent, as we could see in Collins's work: "All this happened with an explicitly innovative consciousness that contrasts with the surreptitious character of creativity in earlier epochs" (Collins, 2002, p.523).

New metaphysics was deeply connected with the revolution in mathematics and science. Developed and transformed mathematics required specialists and technicians the monasteries could not provide in plenty. Hence – the secularization that changed organization of the church and of the university system. Another change in science is the change of values since intellectuals (both non-professionals and theological ones) converge and combine themselves in various groups setting new tasks and generating new sets of values. Secularizing led to the penetration of philosophy in political life. Philosophy became a decisive factor of active transformations in politics. The new philosophy has substituted the old one. Again Collins Randall offers an idea: "The generations from 1600 to 1665 believed that their new philosophy, which consisted of natural science, would completely replace the old; yet the last generation of the 1600s saw the greatest outburst of metaphysical system building in centuries - Berkeley's" (Collins, 2002, pp. 524-526).

The trigger effect produces certain avalanche of events that later cause social changes and shifts in mind. The idea of begetting some trends in social process is not a new one though at times it is presented as some crucial moment in general development process. At the same time, we should bear in mind the obstacles to progress and juxtapose innovative and hindering tendencies to reveal the necessary initial phase. The causes for such effects might be both of extrinsic and intrinsic nature. As for the external ones, we can speak of some social background situation producing some aspiring mood within the nation. Therefore, this is the sum total of both political and economic features for some certain period.

In our case, we deal with some religious features, as during the period of about XVI-XVII centuries, drastic changes in European social structures took place. Since religious institution is somewhat education oriented, the changes in teaching standards caused educational shifts that led to deep mind changes, producing new historical perspectives. The group of the Cambridge Platonists is a striking example of intermitting an old and a new wave. Since the Reformation cannot be regarded as pure positive phenomenon of the New Modern Period, from the point of view of liberal trends, the Cambridge Platonists regarded the reforms as partly defective that could not possess any originating effects within. These facts become clear to us at some later phase of philosophical development and we could see that reading the articles by Serkova, Pylkin, Safonova, & Savitskaya (2017) and Timermanis, Ivanov, Zamorev, & Smaragdina, (2017). Here we could add that the true religion grounds were ruined by the clerics themselves, as they were not the true embodiment of the values they protected (Vorontsov, 2017). Being liberators at heart, they could not reconcile with insufficient "half-baked" reforms both in religious liberal strains and in a new scientific approach to the same reality description. The liberal core inside the Cambridge divines teachings is accepted and studied by modern scholars. In Michaud's dissertation we find: "Smith is well known today for embracing tolerant liberal views on religion during the period of the English Civil War (1642-1652)" (Michaud, 2015, p.6). The same words could easily be used to characterize any other Cambridge Platonist. Their being liberators nevertheless, did not indulge total freedom that caused their struggle with the so-

called enthusiasts (i.e. various kinds of sects and dissenters). Scientifically, the Cambridge Platonists denied the progressive teaching of Descartes, thus forming some kind of minor trigger effect that could be seen in natural philosophy ideas, typical of later period scientists. A case in point here would be Henry More, who “was exposed to Cartesianism in the 1640s, and, in 1646, published “Democritus Platonissans”, arguing that Cartesian mechanism and experimental philosophy was compatible with Platonic mysticism (Pearse, 2016, p.130). Nevertheless, even arguing Descartes’ system and posing Descartes as the follower of Epicurus, Henry More accepted what was true and rejected what was purely mechanistic and fortuitous and lacking spiritual dimension: “though I detest the sect of Epicurus for their manners vill. Yet what is true I may not well reject” (More, 1968, p.20). It would be apt to cite Igor Agostini’s opinion: “Accordingly, the disagreement on the infinity of the world constitutes a case of a more general disagreement on the nature of the necessity of the theorems of Cartesian Physics” (Agostini, 2017, p. 878). Ralph Cudworth also opposes Descartes’ descriptions of brutes as devoid of soul and having a merely mechanical organization (Cudworth, 1678).

We should not omit in here the lack of Geography knowledge before XIX and even XX centuries. This fact was an obstacle for the scholars, as they knew not enough to comprehend world history. Hence, the critical mass of historical research is one of the triggers causing local shifts, which eventually led to some certain global change.

The dynamics here could be demonstrated in the following examples. The initial phase that could be only partly satisfactory was Eurocentric viewpoint. Having it only as a starting point scientists and scholars passed to a new phase in viewing world culture and almost immediately fell into information excess. As the lack of knowledge makes us suffer so does the excess of information. This new bundle of problems will inevitably beget some new possible trigger effect. Various situations cause obvious shifts of stages, which may be of non-linear type (Collins, 2002).

Another decisive factor may be knowledge and ideas propagation. Here we are interested in networking, as intellectual network patterns allow us to trace social links among the thinkers who are lucky to pass their ideas to future generations. However, our time entails not only propagation means problems but also the matter of cultural variety and diversity. The following articles allow us to see through these matters from the applied viewpoint (Chernyavskaya, 2016; Pogodin & Li, 2017). Ideas propagation at times have many dangers and we could mention William Tindal (1494-1536), who translated the New Testament, into English and was burned for that in Brussels. In seventeenth century, as Hutton (2018) mentioned, the situation changed: “The 17th century was the period when philosophers abandoned Latin in favour of the vernacular as the language of philosophy. To mention here Ralph Cudworth (1617-1688) who was one of the first English philosophers to write in the vernacular” (Hutton, 2018, p. 174). However, logical straightforward texts by Cudworth are not the only component to disseminate thoughts and ideas. It would be apt to mention in here allegorical poetry by Henry More that is his Philosophical Poems (Gorman, 2017).

The real life situation allows us to pose the idea of conflict as at times the main formative element in intellectual life. The opposing forces and intentions have to protect themselves in endless concept clashes. As the clashes could be traced back to some situations with strong determinism, many New Modern Times thinkers tried to solve this issue. A case in point is the opinion of Hampton: “Cudworth outlined a number of difficulties relating to determinism in the thought of major early modern philosophers, including

Spinoza. He also suggested ways in which their philosophies might be amended” (Hampton, 2017, p.417). Intellectual conflicts are limited by one another and the participants need allies. Hence again the propagation is of great importance.

4. Purpose of the Study

The objective of this paper is to demonstrate some specific features typical of the thinkers such as the Cambridge Platonists. The Cambridge Platonists, we are about to demonstrate in this paper, are of special interest for describing trigger effects as they are termed by the scholars as “the third component in western culture” (Popkin, 1986). We also could remember that the younger This line of thought being separate from Greek inspired insights and biblical faith dogmatics should not be omitted in matters concerning Western intellect formation. It is clear that Christian and pagan components fuse into some integral teaching (no matter it is also of some syncretic nature) enabling the modern paradigm formation (Gladysheva, 2017). This trend or put it more correctly undercurrent (its character was not totally official) became obvious during the Renaissance phase in western history, producing neoplatonic, hermetic, and cabbalistic synthesis (Allison, 1999). Popkin (1986) expressed the same idea earlier. He posed that the philosophical battle of the seventeenth century is a contest between Cartesian rationalism and British empiricism and that thinkers who do not fit in these categories are usually ignored. He also showed that the new philosophy arose as ways of dealing with a sceptical crisis and that some specific tradition being just the strange combination of new science and theology. The representatives of this trend Popkin termed as “the third force”, combining elements of empirical and rationalist thought with theosophical speculations and Millenarian interpretation of Scripture. Further: “the greatest theorist of this group, Henry More, of the Cambridge Platonists, journeyed from complete scepticism to utter reliance on biblical prophecies, to Cartesianism. From this emerged a form of immaterialism best expressed by Lady Anne Conway and Isaac Newton” (Popkin, 1986, p.21-22).

We could say that more or less shaped intellectual conflict and opposition cause some of the effects we are talking about. However, it is also true that some thinkers are not satisfied with these conflicts. They strive not only somehow resolving these conflicts but find certain common ground or a compromise. What is interesting for us in here that by trying to establish a compromise these thinkers also struggle for establishing more multidimensional pattern in both purely scientific and thoroughly practical sides of investigating process. Again an example of More’s position: “I examine Henry More’s engagement with Stoicism in general and Marcus Aurelius in particular, in his “Enchiridion Ethicum”. More continues the neoplatonic practice of downplaying doctrinal differences between ancient philosophers” (Sellars, 2017, p.916). This approach led to broad viewing in science and tolerance and liberal trends in politics.

Reconciling attempts are typical of many thinkers trying to find some new quality based on more simple ones. The reconciling of the doctrines of the Christian religion with the philosophy of Plato, for example, could be found in the earliest centuries of our era. Clement, Origen and Augustine are famous for their profound teachings to accomplish such a task. Here we could mention Taliaferro’s view: “Cudworth, More, and Smith are the Platonists, broadly speaking as the Platonists are Clement, Origen, Augustine, and Ficino” (Taliaferro, 2005, p.15). Closer to our period we find the most remarkable instance of Christian Platonism, that is, the Cambridge Platonists, who wished to prove the essential unity of religion and

philosophy. The philosophical views of the Cambridge Platonists and the like (for example of Lord Herbert of Cherbury) reveals the continuities of thought from the Greek through Renaissance to Early Modern Times periods. The problem of origins could be compared with the origins of language that may be Biblical or not purely Biblical and could be restored in its everlasting state (Karabykov, 2015). The Cambridge Platonism assimilates new sense patterns of Neoplatonic Philosophy, Christian theology and New Modern Times rationality. Scientifically, these groups worked outside the Aristotelian tradition. Mostly these groups could not be characterized as philosophical schools, as the common element in their thinking is a liberal theological outlook rather than a consistent set of philosophical doctrines.

5. Research Methods

The direct problem is solved using comparative method. Analytical methods are not used totally, but only as an approach to define the initial and final points of our investigation. The following ideas, it seems, will help to expose and outline the Cambridge Platonists group. The final point for liberal thinkers of the late XVI century might be secularization of science and education. However, the initial phase was strictly within the Protestant establishments. Protestantism, stripped of uneasiness of external dogma, begot its own dogmatics and fused with enthusiasm and political coercion. The conflicts between the split Church were so exhausting that it was necessary to move towards secularization and toleration. Let us regard Tanner's dissertation: "The overwhelming incentive was for the inflexible maintenance of one national Church and evidence of Separatism, the establishment of independent congregations outside the national Church, is not widespread before 1640" (Tanner, 2014, p.36). Religious conflicts in England reached their peak during the period 1680-1740. The centralized monarchy nationalized church property worsened the positions of Catholic aristocracy stuck to church ritualism and caused the rise of urban non-traditional community prone to Protestantism. So was the conflict that caused the deepening of secularization. Compromising at this stage as well as in the period of the Civil War seems to be distant. The conflicts take place in the situation of oppositions of extremes: Hobbes with his all through materialism and the Cambridge Platonists with their objective idealism and morally intellectual innatism. As Hobbes was politically King oriented, his ideas centered on radicalizing "mechanical philosophy" and scientific materialism to legitimize and strengthen government authority and to gain the supremacy of the state over faith and compromising was not his element (Shapin & Schaffer, 1985, pp. 133,293-298). The mystically centered Neo-Platonists from Cambridge detested this all too mechanistic approach. These people were Puritans and supported the Commonwealth. As wrote Collins Randall: "They were a moderate offshoot of the Calvinists, inclined to the so called Latitudinarians, that is, people of broad perspective. They downplayed doctrinal questions in favour of morality and Plotinus contemplation of divine reality" (Collins, 2002, p.596).

The negative aspect of the Cambridge Platonists' is somewhat passive type of their activity: they had Hobbes' materialism teaching as an impetus to protect their pure theological position but they did not present any original ideas fitting their time situation. Ralph Cudworth was deeply in blaming materialism for its sense-oriented nature, as senses according to Plato and to Cudworth are not accurate and one cannot derive reliable knowledge from them. Another progressive thinker of that time Descartes presented dichotomy between spiritual and material worlds and that total split was impossible for Cudworth to agree

with. Dichotomy for him was nothing but total reduction of the magnificent Universe down to the impersonal “Yes” and “No”. Instead of that Cudworth was for “the ladder of perfections in the Universe”, producing a variety of possibilities at every ladder.

The Cambridge Platonists are one of the central points of British intellectual life or, in other words, “furnish a decisive development in modern Western philosophy” (Hedley, 2017, p.932). We could conclude that as their position as a moderator in various matters in science, philosophy, theology and even politics provided this group the best set of possibilities to compare and juxtapose many faceted trends of intellectual activity in XVII century. In new Dugin’s book we find the following words: “The Cambridge Platonists (More particularly) do not just reject Modern Philosophy but offer alternative solutions for the problems treated only in materialistic manner, reinterpreting them in active, alive and spiritual dimension” (Dugin, 2017, p.169). Such a position could easily be employed in any kind of activity that diminishes various clashes in practical matters. A good example is the article by Almazova and others (Almazova, Khalyapina, & Popova, 2017). Their activity was of both spurring and limiting kind, enabling the thinkers of that period to be more critical and not to omit the broad outlook in that turmoil of the XVII century.

6. Findings

Now we are ready to state that the original assumptions concerning the role of the Cambridge Platonists were true, as this group could really be considered as a trigger element with limiting (self-limiting) characteristics that fit well into the set of Modern Time period scientific paradigms. At the same time, we could conclude that the detailed understanding of the Cambridge Platonists activity is still lacking information, which requires further investigation.

7. Conclusion

The principal results and findings are as follows: the Cambridge Platonists have established no new dimension as for new Modern Times science picture, but opposing modern phase thinkers (Hobbes, Descartes, Boyle, etc.); they have outlined some specific set of problems. Much further research is needed in the area of epistemology as the Cambridge Platonists group is characterized of innatism in psychology and ethics what may bring a new dimension in both science and culture.

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