

PHILOSOPHICAL SCIENCES

TAJIK ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE LATE 19TH – EARLY 20TH CENTURIES AS A SOCIO-PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS FOR THE FORMATION OF NEW PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT

Mulloboeva D.

Ph.D., Associate Professor,

Doctoral Candidate at the Department of History of Philosophy and Social Philosophy

Faculty of Philosophy

Tajik National University (TNU).

<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-6442-2741>

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Abstract

This article examines the Tajik Enlightenment of the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a holistic socio-philosophical phenomenon that played a key role in the transformation of intellectual consciousness and the formation of new philosophical thought in the Tajik community. Amid the crisis of traditional forms of knowledge, the strengthening of colonial influence, and increasing social change, the Enlightenment emerged not only as a cultural and educational movement but also as a distinctive form of social philosophy aimed at rethinking the categories of knowledge, reason, individuality, and society.

The article devotes particular attention to the analysis of the historical and social preconditions of the Enlightenment movement, its ideological sources, and philosophical foundations, formed at the intersection of the Islamic rationalist tradition, the Persian-Tajik intellectual heritage, and modern European philosophy. It is shown that the Enlightenment movement viewed knowledge as a tool for social transformation, and education as a key mechanism for shaping a new social consciousness.

The paper argues that it was within the framework of enlightenment discourse in the Tajik community that a shift from religious-normative and commentary thinking to critical, historically oriented philosophical reflection occurred. The enlightenment contributed to the formation of a new intellectual elite and laid the foundations for a philosophical understanding of society as a dynamic and historically changing system.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in the interpretation of the Tajik enlightenment as a socio-philosophical foundation for the development of modern philosophical thought, which allows us to expand the framework of traditional historical and cultural analysis and reassess its significance in the history of philosophy in Central Asia.

Keywords: history of philosophy, modernization, social philosophy, Tajik enlightenment, philosophical thought.

Introduction: The late 19th and early 20th centuries marked a turning point for Tajik society, characterized by a profound transformation of social consciousness, value systems, and forms of intellectual thought. Amidst increasing colonial pressure, a crisis in traditional educational institutions and religious knowledge, and growing contact with European culture and rationalist philosophy, a unique phenomenon emerged in Tajik society: the Enlightenment, which emerged not only as a cultural and educational movement but also as a holistic socio-philosophical paradigm. It was during this period that the need arose for a new type of philosophical reflection, focused on rethinking the role of reason, knowledge, and the individual in society [8, pp. 3–7].

Tajik enlightenment in the late 19th and early 20th centuries should not be considered in isolation, but rather within the broader context of pan-Islamic and regional modernization processes, primarily associated with the Jadidist movement in Central Asia. However, unlike universalist reformist projects, Tajik enlightenment thought drew on a rich Persian-Tajik intellectual heritage, combining elements of Islamic philosophy, ethics, and literature with borrowed ideas from European rationalism and social criticism [5, pp. 41–45]. As a result, a unique type of philosophical consciousness

emerged, one in which tradition was not entirely rejected but rather critically reconsidered.

The socio-philosophical significance of Tajik enlightenment lies in the fact that it was the first to center thought on issues of social progress, the role of education in transforming social structure, the responsibility of the intelligentsia, and the relationship between the individual and society. Enlightenment thinkers viewed knowledge not as a sacred, closed category, but as an instrument of social transformation, capable of altering both individual consciousness and collective forms of existence [9, pp. 12–16]. Thus, the foundations of a new philosophical thought oriented toward critical thinking, historicity, and social activism were laid.

The relevance of this study stems from the need for a philosophical understanding of the Tajik Enlightenment not only as a historical and cultural phenomenon but also as a conceptual foundation for the formation of modern philosophy in the Tajik intellectual tradition. The article aims to demonstrate that the Enlightenment of the late 19th and early 20th centuries served as a key link between traditional Islamic thought and new social philosophy, laying the foundations for the further development of philosophical knowledge in the region.

Historical and social background of Tajik enlightenment

The development of Tajik enlightenment in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was shaped by a complex set of profound historical and social factors that affected all key areas of public life in the region. Traditional society, based on a religious-normative system, class hierarchy, and established forms of knowledge transmission, entered a phase of structural crisis by the end of the 19th century, manifested in the loss of the ability to adequately respond to new social and political challenges [10, pp. 612–615]. This crisis was not only economic or administrative in nature, but was primarily expressed in the exhaustion of previous intellectual and ideological models.

One of the key factors determining the nature of social transformations was the inclusion of Central Asian territories within the orbit of the Russian Empire. Colonial policy was accompanied by changes in administrative structures, the destruction of traditional mechanisms of self-government, and the strengthening of social stratification. At the same time, it was precisely under imperial domination that Tajik society for the first time found itself in a space of intense cultural and intellectual interaction with European civilization, which facilitated the penetration of new concepts of science, education, and rational knowledge [13, pp. 44–48]. These processes were contradictory: on the one hand, they increased the dependence and marginalization of the local population, while on the other, they created the preconditions for the formation of a new intellectual elite.

A significant role in the emergence of the Enlightenment movement was played by the crisis of the traditional education system, particularly madrassas, which by the end of the 19th century had largely lost their function as centers of intellectual development. The formalization of the educational process, the dogmatization of religious disciplines, and a disconnect from social realities led to the reproduction of knowledge incapable of explaining the changing world [8, pp. 27–31]. Awareness of this gap between knowledge and social practice became an important impetus for the search for new educational and philosophical guidelines.

An equally significant factor was the change in the social structure of Tajik society. The growth of urban centers, the expansion of trade and economic ties, and the emergence of a secular intelligentsia contributed to the emergence of a new social group critical of traditional authorities. It was this milieu that became the primary bearer of Enlightenment ideas, viewing education and philosophical thinking as tools for social renewal [5, pp. 52–56]. Enlightenment, in this context, served as a form of intellectual resistance to stagnation and social isolation.

A key prerequisite for Tajik enlightenment was the pan-Islamic reformist discourse that spread across the Muslim world in the second half of the 19th century. Ideas of renewal (*islah*), rational interpretation of religious texts, and harmonizing faith with the demands of the times resonated in the Tajik community as well, but here they acquired a specific content conditioned by local cultural tradition [4, pp. 91–94]. As a result, an in-

tellectual atmosphere emerged in which critical thinking ceased to be perceived as a threat to religion and, on the contrary, was seen as a means of understanding it in new historical conditions.

Thus, the historical and social preconditions for Tajik enlightenment were formed at the intersection of colonial transformations, the crisis of traditional knowledge, social upheavals, and reformist tendencies in Islamic thought. It was this combination of factors that paved the way for the emergence of enlightenment as a socio-philosophical phenomenon aimed at rethinking the individual, society, and the role of philosophy in historical development.

Ideological sources and philosophical foundations of the enlightenment movement

The ideological development of the Tajik Enlightenment movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries drew on a complex and multilayered array of philosophical sources, seamlessly intertwining elements of classical Islamic thought, the Persian-Tajik intellectual tradition, and borrowed concepts from European rationalism. The Enlightenment movement did not emerge as a radical break with the past; on the contrary, its philosophical foundations were formed through the critical appropriation and rethinking of existing ideological paradigms [10, pp. 614–618]. In this sense, the Tajik Enlightenment movement should be viewed as an evolutionary, rather than a revolutionary, stage in the development of philosophical consciousness.

One of the key ideological sources of Enlightenment thought was the Islamic philosophical and theological tradition, particularly in its rationalistic and ethical dimensions. The legacy of *kalam*, *falsafa*, and Sufi philosophy, focused on understanding reason, knowledge, and human moral development, created a solid intellectual foundation for a critical approach to the dogmatism and formalism of late medieval religious practice [4, pp. 88–92]. Enlightenment thinkers appealed to early examples of Islamic rationality, emphasizing that the search for knowledge and the use of reason are integral parts of religious tradition.

Of particular importance to the Tajik Enlightenment was the Persian-Tajik philosophical and literary heritage, within which philosophical reflection was historically closely intertwined with poetic form and social criticism. The works of thinkers and poets who addressed issues of justice, knowledge, moral education, and social order served as a source of legitimization for Enlightenment ideas in the eyes of traditional society [5, pp. 47–51]. By drawing on this heritage, educators sought to demonstrate that ideas of renewal were deeply rooted in their own cultural tradition and were not imported from abroad.

At the same time, an important philosophical impetus for the Enlightenment movement came from exposure to European thought of the modern era, particularly the ideas of rationalism, progress, and social determinism. Through translations, educational reforms, and the mediation of the Russian intellectual community, ideas about science as an autonomous form of knowledge, the individual as a bearer of reason and responsibility, and the possibility of purposeful social

transformation penetrated Tajik society [8, pp. 19–23]. These ideas were not perceived mechanically, but were adapted to local conditions, acquiring specific philosophical content.

The philosophical foundations of the Enlightenment movement were also shaped by the pan-Islamic reformist discourse, the most striking expression of which was the Jadidist movement. Although Tajik enlightenment is not identical to Jadidism, it largely shared its focus on educational renewal, thought reform, and overcoming intellectual insularity [9, pp. 34–38]. At the same time, in the Tajik context, the emphasis was placed not so much on institutional transformations as on changing the very way of philosophically understanding reality.

The synthesis of these ideological sources resulted in the formation of a new philosophical framework, centered on the individual as an active subject of history, capable of influencing social reality through knowledge and reason. The Enlightenment affirmed the value of critical thinking, a historical approach, and the intelligentsia's social responsibility, marking the transition from traditional normative thinking to modern social philosophy [12, pp. 67–71]. It is on this foundation that the preconditions for the development of a new philosophical thought oriented toward the analysis of society, culture, and historical development are emerging within the Tajik intellectual community.

Enlightenment as a form of social philosophy

Viewing the Tajik Enlightenment of the late 19th and early 20th centuries solely as a cultural, educational, or literary phenomenon significantly impoverishes its substantive significance. In reality, this movement served as a holistic social philosophy, aimed at understanding the structure of society, the mechanisms of its development, and the role of the individual in the historical process. The Enlightenment offered not only new pedagogical practices but also a fundamentally different philosophical interpretation of social existence, centered on the categories of reason, knowledge, progress, and social responsibility [8, pp. 41–45].

A key philosophical shift brought about by Enlightenment thought was a rethinking of the very nature of knowledge. In traditional thought, knowledge was viewed primarily as a sacred and normative category, linked to religious authority and the reproduction of the canon. Enlightenment thinkers, however, advanced the concept of knowledge as a dynamic and historically conditioned process, closely linked to the social needs of society. This understanding brought Tajik enlightenment closer to the social philosophy of the modern era, in which knowledge serves as a tool for social transformation, not an end in itself [10, pp. 620–623].

An equally significant element of Enlightenment social philosophy was a new understanding of the individual and their place in society. The individual ceased to be perceived as a passive bearer of prescribed norms and roles and began to be viewed as an active subject of social action, endowed with reason and moral responsibility. Enlightenment thinkers emphasized that social progress was impossible without the internal transformation of the individual, without the develop-

ment of critical thinking and a sense of civic responsibility [9, pp. 52–56]. Thus, Enlightenment philosophy went beyond abstract reasoning and acquired a clearly defined social-normative dimension.

An important aspect of Enlightenment social philosophy was the understanding of society as a holistic organism subject to historical development. Society was viewed not as an immutable given, established from above, but as the result of human activity and historical conditions. This understanding undermined the foundations of a fatalistic worldview and opened space for the critique of social injustice, backwardness, and inequality [13, pp. 61–65]. The Enlightenment thus formed a philosophical foundation for social critique without destroying society's cultural and religious identity.

The category of education occupied a special place in Enlightenment discourse, acquiring the status of a central socio-philosophical principle. Education was conceptualized not only as the transmission of knowledge but as a mechanism for the formation of a new type of social consciousness. Through educational reform, educators sought to change the structure of society, overcome social inertia, and create conditions for intellectual and moral renewal [5, pp. 58–62]. In this context, Enlightenment emerged as a philosophy of social action, oriented toward the long-term transformation of society.

Thus, Tajik enlightenment can be viewed as a unique form of social philosophy, synthesizing traditional ethical values and modern notions of reason, progress, and social responsibility. It laid the foundations for a philosophical understanding of society as a historically evolving system and of the individual as an active participant in social change. It was this socio-philosophical focus that allowed the enlightenment to become a key stage in the development of new philosophical thought in the Tajik intellectual tradition.

Formation of new philosophical thought in the Tajik environment

The Enlightenment movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries played a decisive role in the development of new philosophical thought in the Tajik intellectual community, serving as a transitional link between traditional religious-normative thinking and modern social philosophy. It was during this period that a qualitative change in the very mode of philosophical reasoning occurred: philosophy gradually lost its predominantly scholastic and commentary character and began to focus on the analysis of real social processes, historical changes, and contemporary problems [8, pp. 63–67]. This shift signaled the emergence of a fundamentally new type of philosophical consciousness.

One of the most important characteristics of the new philosophical thought was the affirmation of a critical approach to tradition. The Enlightenment thinkers did not reject cultural and religious heritage, but insisted on the need for its rational understanding and historical reassessment. Tradition ceased to be perceived as an unchanging absolute and became an object of philosophical analysis, subject to interpretation depending on the conditions of time and society [10, pp.

625–629]. This approach contributed to the development of historical thinking and an awareness of the mutability of social forms.

The formation of new philosophical thought was also accompanied by a shift in conceptual framework. The categories of progress, social development, social responsibility, critical reason, and civic duty were introduced into intellectual circulation. These concepts reflected philosophy's desire to move beyond metaphysical reasoning and address the problems of social practice. Philosophy increasingly began to fulfill the function of social self-awareness, capturing its contradictions and potential paths of development [12, pp. 74–78].

Of particular importance in the development of new philosophical thought was the formation of the Enlightenment intelligentsia, which acted as the bearer and transmitter of modern philosophical ideas. This social group recognized its mission not only in the dissemination of knowledge but also in the critical analysis of social structures, cultural stereotypes, and political realities. The intelligentsia became a mediator between philosophical reflection and social practice, giving philosophy a practical and socially significant dimension [5, pp. 66–70].

New philosophical thought in Tajik circles was distinguished by a pronounced ethical and social focus. Philosophical reflection focused on questions of the moral development of the individual, social justice, and responsibility to society. These issues were considered not in the abstract, but in close connection with specific historical and social conditions. Thus, philosophy acquired the character of practical wisdom, oriented toward the transformation of social reality [9, pp. 61–65].

Overall, the emergence of new philosophical thought in Tajik circles was the result of a complex synthesis of Enlightenment ideas, traditional intellectual heritage, and external philosophical influences. This process laid the foundation for the further development of philosophy as an independent field of knowledge capable of critically analyzing society and historical experience. The Enlightenment thus served not only as a stage of intellectual renewal but also as a foundation for the emergence of modern philosophy within the Tajik cultural tradition.

The historical and philosophical significance of the Tajik enlightenment

The historical and philosophical significance of the Tajik Enlightenment of the late 19th and early 20th centuries is determined primarily by its role as a key stage in the transformation of the region's intellectual tradition and the development of modern philosophical thinking. The Enlightenment acted not simply as a transitional form between tradition and innovation, but as an independent philosophical phenomenon that laid the conceptual foundations for the further development of social and historical philosophy in the Tajik community [8, pp. 81–85]. It was during this period that philosophy began to be recognized as a means of understanding and transforming social reality.

One of the most important aspects of the historical and philosophical significance of the Enlightenment was its overcoming of the insularity of traditional

worldviews. Enlightenment thinkers contributed to the expansion of the horizons of philosophical thought, integrating local intellectual traditions into the broader context of pan-Islamic and world philosophy. This allowed Tajik philosophical thought to transcend the confines of commentary culture and engage in dialogue with the universal problems of human existence, society, and history [10, pp. 631–634]. As a result, an open philosophical system emerged, oriented toward the interaction of various cultural and intellectual influences.

The significant significance of Tajik enlightenment is also evident in the formation of a new philosophical identity. In the context of the crisis of traditional forms of self-awareness, enlightenment thought proposed a model of philosophical self-determination based on the synthesis of rationality, ethics, and social responsibility. Philosophy ceased to be the exclusive domain of religious scholars and acquired a socially significant character, focused on understanding pressing social problems [12, pp. 83–87]. Thus, the foundations of a new type of philosophical culture were laid.

The historical and philosophical role of the Enlightenment also manifested itself in the formation of intellectual elites capable of systemic philosophical reflection. The Enlightenment intelligentsia not only disseminated knowledge but also shaped the philosophical categories necessary for analyzing the processes of modernization, social differentiation, and cultural change. These categories subsequently became part of the philosophical discourse of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, while maintaining a connection with the Enlightenment legacy [5, pp. 72–76].

No less important is the contribution of Tajik enlightenment to the development of social philosophy as a form of social consciousness. Enlightenment thinkers were the first to systematically address questions about the relationship between the individual and society, the role of education in historical development, and the moral foundations of social progress. These issues have not lost their relevance in contemporary philosophical discourse, demonstrating the long-lasting significance of enlightenment philosophy [9, pp. 68–72].

Thus, the Tajik Enlightenment of the late 19th and early 20th centuries occupies a special place in the history of regional philosophy as an intellectual phenomenon that facilitated the transition from traditional to modern philosophical thought. Its historical and philosophical significance lies in the formation of a new philosophical paradigm focused on social reflection, critical thinking, and historical dynamics, making the Enlightenment a fundamental stage in the development of Tajik philosophical thought.

Conclusion

The analysis suggests that Tajik enlightenment in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was not a peripheral cultural and educational phenomenon, but a holistic socio-philosophical one that played a key role in the formation of new philosophical thought in the region. Amid the crisis of traditional forms of knowledge and profound social transformations, enlightenment became an intellectual response to the challenges of the times, offering a qualitatively new way of understanding humanity, society, and historical development. Its

significance lies primarily in the fact that philosophy was removed from the realm of sacred and normative knowledge and moved into the realm of social reflection and public responsibility [8, pp. 87–90].

The Tajik Enlightenment marked a crucial philosophical shift—from the dogmatic reproduction of tradition to its critical rethinking. This process did not signify a break with cultural heritage; on the contrary, it facilitated its rational actualization in new historical conditions. It was precisely this model of intellectual development that allowed for the formation of a stable synthesis of traditional ethical values and modern notions of reason, progress, and social justice [10, pp. 635–638]. The result was a philosophical paradigm capable of internal renewal and dialogue with other intellectual traditions.

The particular significance of Enlightenment philosophy is evident in its long-term impact on the formation of intellectual elites and the philosophical culture of Tajik society. The Enlightenment laid the foundations for critical thinking, a historical approach, and social responsibility, which became defining characteristics of philosophical reflection in subsequent eras. In this context, it serves not only as a historical stage but also as a methodological resource for understanding the processes of modernization and cultural identity [12, pp. 89–93].

The scientific novelty of this study lies in its interpretation of Tajik enlightenment as a form of social philosophy, rather than a purely cultural and pedagogical movement. This approach allows us to identify its conceptual significance in the development of philosophical thought in Central Asia and expand the scope of historical and philosophical analysis beyond traditional descriptive models. Thus, Tajik enlightenment emerges as a fundamental link in the history of philosophy in the region, relevant not only for understanding the past but also for philosophical understanding of contemporary social and cultural processes.

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