A Typology of Good and Evil: An Analysis of the Work Education of a Christian Prince by Erasmus of Rotterdam

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1. Introduction[1]

Erasmus Desiderius of Rotterdam is one of the most important Christian Humanists in European history.[2] Erasmus's ideas and his legacy are still influential today in theology, the humanities and social sciences, as well as in pedagogy. The importance of Erasmus of Rotterdam's legacy is also evident from his emphasis on the communication between the people of the various European nations. Erasmus of Rotterdam inspired many of his contemporaries (outstanding Humanists), such as, for example, Thomas More, and is therefore sometimes labelled the 'teacher of teachers'.[3]

The breadth of the thematic scope of Erasmus's legacy is evident from the list of his works and the topics these works are devoted to. Among the works translated into the Czech language, the work *On Free Will*[4] can be mentioned, which is devoted to a polemic between the determination of the human will (the polemic is primarily aimed against the theology of Martin Luther) and its liberty in the sense of the possibility of autonomous decision-making, albeit within the ethical framework of the moral good. A well-known work is also *The Praise of Folly*,[5] which satirically criticises the situation in the Church, as well as among the intellectuals (including natural scientists). The book *Intimate Conversations*[6] has also been published in the Czech language, consisting of various works written by Erasmus in the form of a dialogue, and the work *Education of a Christian Prince*,[7] which is analysed in this paper. Of the untranslated works, it is possible to highlight, for example, *Enchiridion militis Christiani* (published 1501), which can be freely translated as *Handbook of a Christian Soldier*; further there is *Novum Instrumentum omne* (published 1516), which is a Greek edition of the New Testament, in the preparation and publication of which Erasmus took part; and also there is the translation of Plutarch's *Apophthegmatum opus* (published posthumously in 1539).

1 The text analysis was supported by the Institutional Support for Long-term Conceptual Development of the Research Organisation of the Department of Political Studies and International Relations of the Faculty of Philosophy, University of West Bohemia in Plzeň (in 2016).

2 Cf. Alan RYAN, *On Politics*, London: Penguin Books, 2012, p. 301.

3 Cf. Fritz CASPARI, Erasmus on the Social Functions of Christian Humanism, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 1/1947, p. 80.

4 Erasmus ROTTERDAMSKÝ, *O svobodné vůli*, Praha: OIKOYMENH, 2006.

5 Erasmus ROTTERDAMSKÝ, *Chvála bláznivosti*, Olomouc: Aurora, 1995.

6 Erasmus ROTTERDAMSKÝ, *Důvěrné hovory*, Praha: Votobia, 1999.

7 Erasmus ROTTERDAMSKÝ, *O výchově křesťanského vladaře*, Praha: Občanský institut, 2009.

All the works mentioned above manifest the several main features of Erasmus's philosophy.[8] The first is scepticism and the associated selective criticism of the Church and theology together with anti-intellectualism. With his scepticism, Erasmus of Rotterdam reacted to Church dogmatism, and also to intellectualism in the issue of the extent of freedom with respect to the ontological and epistemological nature of the human being. A result of Erasmus's[9] considerations is the exclusion of the principle of full determination (in this he opposes certain reformers of the Church), and also of purely rational voluntarism, whereby he contributed to the individualisation of ethics, albeit without abolishing its cultural foundation in Christianity (which was later asserted by some of the radical proponents of the Enlightenment who inspired, for example, the ideas of the French Revolution). His relativism in values (which are at the same time grounded in a cultural context and the mutual sharing of values among free individuals) is manifested also in the impossibility to attain absolute knowledge and truth in itself, which is neither fully rational, nor can it be attained by self-denial.[10] Erasmus satirically presented the untenability of such views in *The Praise of Folly*, in which he topically reacts to the withdrawal of scholasticism as an argumentative and investigative system and also to the Stoic 'ethical expectation' of some of the religious orders of his time.[11] Another feature typical for Erasmus's philosophy is his anti-militarism (not outright pacifism), which is manifested especially in the critical evaluation of the concept of just war (reacting amongst others to Aurelius Augustine) and relates negatively to the legacy of the Crusades.[12] The third feature is a balancing between idealism and the effort for the practical education of intellectuals and rulers for the good of all, i.e., for the good of individuals with respect to Humanist ideals.

This study aims to present the political philosophy of Erasmus of Rotterdam through the education of a politician, which is why it is mostly concerned with the last of the features mentioned above (in particular in the work *Education of a Christian Prince*; Erasmus published the work in 1515 as a Councillor to Charles V, in order to 'habilitate' himself before the ruler).[13] Erasmus's approach, which the study will present in more detail, is very much different, for example, from the approach of another important thinker of the time, Niccolò Machiavelli. However, it is not certain how Machiavelli's work *The Prince* is to be read and interpreted.[14] One option is to classify Machiavelli among the sceptics and pragmatists, i.e., among theoreticians who, unlike Erasmus of Rotterdam, do not take cultural norms into account as the shared goods of individuals, but as the necessary (and mere) rational instruments to sustain the rule of the acting elite.[15] Another author and contemporary of Erasmus of Rotterdam, who developed the idealistic position far

8 Interpreting Erasmus's works and the intellectual context of the time is a subject of the Anglo-American philosophical tradition, as well as of the Continental tradition, especially the German one. The authors of interpretations are mentioned below alongside the selected problems of Erasmus's philosophy.

9 Erasmus ROTTERDAMSKÝ, *O svobodné vůli*, pp. 107–120, 243–253.

10 Cf. Erasmus ROTTERDAMSKÝ, *Chvála bláznivosti*, pp. 24–26.

11 For more, cf. for example Fritz CASPARI, Erasmus on the Social Functions of Christian Humanism; Daniel MENAGER, Erasmus, the Intellectuals, and the Reuchlin Affair, in: *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. Erika RUMMEL, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008, pp. 39–54; Richard POPKIN, *The History of Scepticism. From Erasmus to Spinoza*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979; Max RICHTER, *Desiderius Erasmus und seine Stellung zu Luther auf Grund ihrer Schriften*, Paderborn: Salfwasser-Verlag, 2012; Robert STUPPERICH, *Erasmus von Rotterdam und seine Welt*, Berlin a New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1977.

12 For more, cf. for example Peter DUNGEN, Erasmus: The 16th Century's Pioneer of Peace Education and a Culture of Peace, *Jeail* 2/2009, pp. 409–431; Stefan ZWEIG, *Erasmus of Rotterdam*, New York: Viking Press, 1964; Christine Christ-von WEDEL, *Erasmus of Rotterdam: Advocate of a New Christianity*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013.

13 Cf. Johan HUIZINGA, *Erasmus*, Praha: OIKOYMENH, 2014, p. 113.

14 Cf. Timothy HAGLUND, Was Erasmus's Christian Politics Too Uncompromising?, *Expositions* 1/2014, p. 168; Quentin SKINNER, *Machiavelli*, Praha: Argo, 1995.

15 Cf. Niccolò MACHIAVELLI, *Vladař*, Praha: Kma, 2007, pp. 120–121.

beyond the scope of Erasmus's thought, was Erasmus's friend Thomas More. In his work *Utopia*,[16] he presents an ideal community of fully free human beings (also in the sense of the positive freedom deriving from a fundamental material equality) and develops the humanist idea of a political system, in which the human being is in the centre and politics is adjusted to his needs. The intellectual legacies of Machiavelli and More contrast with each other and represent the context of the theoretical conception of power, the human being and society in Erasmus's time.

In Erasmus of Rotterdam the education of a politician is bound up with the categories of good and evil. Although the categories are vague, they determine the basic framework of separation for further criteria, which are tied to social scientific concepts, such as freedom or political power. With respect to what has been said above, this study aims to present good rulership in the conception of Erasmus of Rotterdam as a specific type of the system of ruling, by means of analysing the meaning of 'good' and 'evil' in connection with the activity of a ruler and a tyrant by means of setting them in the political system and manifestations of power. The goal is to grasp the perennial legacy of Erasmus's politico-philosophical theses in a unique phase of the history of political thought between the personalisation of politics and the emphasis on the system, and also between pragmatism and idealism. The point of departure is Erasmus's preliminary determination for the education of a ruler: 'Christian theology attributes three prime qualities to God the highest power, the greatest wisdom, the greatest goodness. In so far as you can you should make this trinity yours. Power without goodness is unmitigated tyranny; without wisdom it brings chaos, not domain.'[17]

In order to fulfil the goal, several questions and problems are followed: Can the content of the concepts 'wisdom' and 'goodness' in the sense given to them by Erasmus of Rotterdam be used to create a typology of political systems? Based on which conditions does a king differ from a tyrant? Can the contemporary analytical framework of the concepts 'power' and 'freedom' be applied to the discursive practices of Erasmus's work? The answers to these questions are sought by means of interpretation using the methods of *framing*[18] and content analysis[19] by determining the particular content of the tracked concepts in Erasmus of Rotterdam. The particular analytical steps are: (1) automatic coding in the automatically recognised text of the work *Education of a Christian Prince* by means of the MaxQda software (version 11). The subjects of coding are all of the words (here so-called lemmas) according to the tracked concepts stated in the introductory quotation according to the words 'wise', 'good' (including the comparative and superlative, i.e., 'better' and 'best')[20] and 'power'; (2) checking the coded segments by hand in order to eliminate codes in chapter headings, in footnotes where another author is cited, etc., with the goal of eliminating all that has no bearing upon the tracked concepts; (3) creating metaphorical semantic sets in order to classify the context in sentences and paragraphs where the tracked word occurs (for example, 'wisdom is discretion'). This step is important for narrowing down the tracked field and for a preliminary orientation towards a future interpretation; (4) interpreting the individual sets and identifying the mutual links among the sets by *framing*; (5) interpreting the context and its meaning by determining the content of the concepts (represented by the links among the sets); and (6) answering the questions and deducing consequences.

16 Thomas MORE, *Utopie,* Praha: Mladá fronta, 1978.

17 Erasmus of ROTTERDAM, *Education of a Christian Prince* (online), at: http://stoics.com/erasmus_s_education_of_a_chris.html, p. 158.

18 For an example of use in modern political science, cf. George LAKOFF, *Don't Think Of An Elephant!*, White River Junction: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2004.

19 For a broader context cf. for example Hsiu-Fang HSIEH and Sarah E. SHANNON, Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis, *Qualitative Health Research* 9/2005, pp. 1277–1288.

20 Terms such as 'proper' were not coded, because they don't correspond to the tracked meaning.

2. The character of Erasmus's work – preliminary remarks

The work *Education of a Christian Prince* can be perceived from several points of view. This paper will mention two of these: the general determination of the content of Erasmus of Rotterdam's political philosophy with respect to the way in which the terms he uses are conditioned by his epoch, and the specific determination of the levels of the system and the individual by means of the conceptual apparatus of political science with a necessary regard and respect to Erasmus's way of thinking (including the evaluative content of the conceptual apparatus). From the general point of view, the political philosophy of Erasmus of Rotterdam revolves around the individual, who is always the primary subject of reflection, while questions of the organisation of a (Christian) society and state with a monarchist system of government are secondary and derived from the individual. The interests of an individual are co-directed by the individual himself and by the social milieu, which is determined by traditions. Erasmus of Rotterdam tries to relate the good (derived from Scripture) for the human being (as an individual) to the organisation of the society as a whole, which is in itself problematic, and Erasmus's attitudes are sometimes vague or give the impression of being contradictory. One of the reasons is that Erasmus's 'Christian philosophy' deviates from the topics of the theology of his time (for example, the issue of the Most Holy Trinity, etc.) and includes some heathen elements focused on the practical impacts of ethics. The other reason is the rational justification of some theses, in which human reason is conceived of as an explanatory element, which gives the impression that God and divine principles are lower in the hierarchy of explaining than the abovementioned reason.[21] In his work *Education of a Christian Prince* Erasmus of Rotterdam relates the person of the ruler and the political system of monarchy by means of education and of particular manifestations of power – a connection conditioned by the analytics of his time, yet having a practical ethical expression reaching out to the present era.

But the issue of the particular character of an individual's rulership is problematic and shatters into a never-ending chain of perspectives (institutionalism, structuralism, functionalism, and others, including their derivatives or subtypes). The particular content is different for each theorist, which is due not only to the perspective, but also to personal preferences, etc. In any case, the content of the system and the determination of a person's character (here, the character of a king) must be grasped analytically, albeit it is shattered. One can focus on the way in which the ruler exercises his power, or whether he is or is not limited by something or someone in ruling (in the social dimension, not that of the physical or the metaphysical).

Ancient political thought had already distinguished between the limitation of an individual's reign and unlimited reign, in the basic sense of legal strictures. If the reign of an individual was limited by legal strictures, it was a case of monarchy as a type of government system. In the opposite case, i.e., in the absence of legal strictures, an individual ruled as a tyrant and such a system could be labelled as tyranny. The basic significance of legal strictures as a limitation consists in the existence of social regulations creating the environment for legal strictures. If the one who is in power accepts the existence of legal strictures and subordinates himself to the regulative content of particular social laws, he can be designated as a monarch, i.e., as one who rules others by means of determining the legal social rules. A monarch not only respects the laws (and other reg-

21 Cf. Fritz CASPARI, Erasmus on the Social Functions of Christian Humanism, pp. 80, 85; Timothy HAGLUND, Was Erasmus's Christian Politics Too Uncompromising?, p. 169.

ulations which together constitute legal strictures) and abides by their meaning,[22] but also creates them himself. In such a determination, a monarch can also be termed 'king', i.e., 'the dominant one', and also the one who determines the (social) rules.[23] A tyrant is the opposite of a king and may or may not make social regulations. In any case a tyrant places himself above the social regulations and is not subjected to legal limitations, because he does not accept such a limitation as valid for his acts of power execution.[24] So it is only possible to grasp the relationship between the ruling individual and the system by means of the limitation, which is due to elements of the system (regulations) and to the individual decision of the ruling person, whether he will abide by the regulations or not. As a result, 'legal strictures' is a term from which other considerations can start.

Legal strictures can be specified by the particular conditions that must be met (the necessary and sufficient conditions), whereby it is usually bound to the three basic meanings of politics as such. In the case of monarchy or tyranny, the ruling individual can be limited by the normative content of politics in that particular society and by the institutions issuing from it. Various labels are applied to such a limitation (the political order, political culture or simply *polity*); however, it constitutes the basic value framework within which the ruling individual operates and based on which he makes the regulations. An example can be the democratic values anchored in the long democratic system tradition of some state together with the corresponding symbols (in the sense of personalities, important events, etc.). The second meaning is the so-called process (or procedural) aspect of politics, in which the limitation is due to the setting of processes with different levels of obligatory force. An example deriving again from the issue of democracy can be the electoral process, as part of which people must enter voting booths in order for the voting to be confidential (which is a constitutive element of a democratic election), or the non-obligatory rule deriving from political culture that the process of voting is an important event and therefore the voter turnout should be high (or proportional to the importance). It is evident that the political process depends on the basic value framework of politics, i.e., on *polity*, even if these two important aspects of politics are frequently analytically separated. The third sphere of the limitation is the sphere of so-called *policy*, i.e., of the particular political programs issued by the king. In this last case, the specification of the spheres of limitation returns to its starting point, because *policies* are the regulations of legal strictures.[25] The limitations are due to *policies*, but the particular *policies* depend on *politics*, which in turn depend on *polity*. The legal strictures and the form of the limitation revolves around the normative setting of the system and the setting of the system is a particular expression of the dividing line (in this case) between a kingdom and a tyranny, because it determines the content of the legal strictures (whether respected in the case of a king, or not respected in the case of a tyrant). The regulation of the legal strictures depends on the ruling person's act of power in the sense of exercising political power. The problem of exercising political power is characteristic for the ruling persons and stimulates the analyst to move from the level of the system to the level of the individual as the main agent who can define the limits of the systems, i.e., the king.

The king is the one who creates the legal strictures and is tied to the political system. But if the king creates both *policy* and *polity* and is the single agent responsible for the whole system, then the exercising of his rule (the particular acts of power) is necessarily personalised. The king and

22 Cf. Charles MONTESQUIEU, *O duchu zákonů*, Praha: Knihkupectví a nakladatelství V. Linhart, 1947.
23 Cf. © Daniel HARPER, *King* (online), at: http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=king, accessed 9th August 2016.
24 Cf. ARISTOTELÉS, *Politika*, Praha: Rezek, 1998, p. 213.
25 Cf. Petr FIALA and Klaus SCHUBERT, *Moderní analýza politiky*, Praha: Barrister a Principal, 2000, pp. 17–19.

the monarchy are inseparable categories and the limitation of the ruler consists only in his will to accept the role of a king (and the ensuing responsibility), or the role of a tyrant. Responsibility is one of the main topics in Erasmus's presentation of the Christian ruler (king), but monarchy, presented by Erasmus as the best system possible, does not match the contemporary idea of the separation of powers[26] and their mutual limitation. Erasmus's Christian king systemically combines the legislative, executive and judicial powers of the government in his person and one can ask why the conception of the best possible ruler (a king) should be interesting for contemporary democratic systems, which are different from a systemic level point of view. The answer is paradoxically concealed in the connection of the systemic level and the personality of the king. Erasmus imparts educational advice for the cultivation of a politician (as holder of power), which are to constitute the starting point of the normative functioning of the whole society. In that way, Erasmus creates the principles of *polity* based on a good ruler. *If the ruler is good, then the whole system will be good*. The normative and practically constructed appeal is unique for Erasmus's epoch (see Machiavelli and More who have already been mentioned in the introduction), but also for the present one, because it accentuates the neutrality and comprehensiveness of the 'bureaucrats' of the modern state as good,[27] but at the same time appeals to the idea of a discursive community and reinforces the appeal to the good behaviour of the persons exercising power (i.e., the so-called high political culture).

By interconnecting the state, the person of the ruler (king) and values, Erasmus of Rotterdam attributes the systemic level to the good and wisdom by means of a specific understanding of power. The content of the good in Erasmus is explicable (not identical) by means of the conceptual apparatus of the social sciences (which is unique), although this does not automatically mean that the contemporary social-scientific categories can be applied to Erasmus's political philosophy as a whole. The good is and will be a problematic category in the social sciences, and yet it is still encountered in the social sciences (as other value categories are). At a time when the personalisation of politics is becoming stronger, the need to explain who could be evaluated as a good politician is enormous[28] and Erasmus of Rotterdam offers some models based on Christianity, although he does not offer a political theory in the contemporary sense of the word – but he does offer an explanation of the possible content of polity.[29]

3. The king and the monarchy: an analysis of the work Education of a Christian Prince

The image of the best possible king is the main topic of *Education of a Christian Prince*. In Erasmus's words the purpose of the work is to present an image of the best ruler as an exemplar and model worth imitating. The best possible ruler as a king is an ideal which can be pursued due to Christian values. A true Christian king is the best king and as such does not primarily seek the glory of his family or his knowledge, but his spiritual virtues. The key characteristics of a king are his supreme power, supreme wisdom and supreme goodness (as indicated in the quotation in the introduction). An analysis of the abovementioned triad of properties is crucial in determining

26 Cf. Christopher PIERSON, *The Modern State*, London and New York: Routledge, 2004, pp. 12–13.
27 Cf. Max WEBER, *Metodologie, sociologie a politika*, Praha: OIKOYMENH, 2009.
28 Cf. Lance W. BENNET, The Personalization of Politics Political Identity, Social Media, and Changing Patterns of Participation, *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 2012, pp. 20–39.
29 Cf. Fritz CASPARI, Erasmus on the Social Functions of Christian Humanism, p. 101.

the content of the best possible king. The following analysis will emphasise the relationship of the three properties with respect to the act of performing a legal action, relying on the principles and instruments of actualisation, i.e., the abovementioned performance.[30] The analysis serves to answer the questions raised in the introduction and to disclose the form of the context under consideration.

3.1 Education as an instrument towards a good rule

Goodness is a term designating the state manifested by good actions (activity). An action is good, if it is understood (by a discursive community) as good, and goodness (in turn) depends on good actions. To grasp the term 'goodness' in Erasmus of Rotterdam, it is necessary to clarify the sense, meaning and possibilities of a contextual conception of the good. In the investigated work the sense and meaning of the good are related to the person of the king, who holds power and applies it by his actions through wisdom. The basic relationships of the triad of concepts, which Erasmus calls 'characteristics of the king', are determined, but their contextual links must be approached by means of a contextual analysis of the discursive practices of each of the concepts – the good being the first of them.

The good education of the king and a good educator are the starting point for unfolding the relationship of the three crucial kingly characteristics. A good king can be educated by means of a properly grounded education. A properly grounded education is a good education, because it relies on the good and imitates the good. Good rulership is the best and the most difficult of the arts, which is why it requires a proper and rigorous education of the future king. The king is normally determined by a hereditary title (i.e., a system of hereditary monarchy; if the king is elected, it is a case of so-called elected monarchy) and in such a case special emphasis must be placed on the education. It does not matter so much whether the hereditary ruler is born with appropriate (good) characteristics, because an appropriate king can be spoiled and a ruler with less appropriate characteristics can nonetheless be educated to become better.[31] Erasmus emphasises the person of the educator and his role for the future good rulership of a good king. The key position between the good, rulership and education is occupied by the good, from which the education for ruling is derived. The good provides the principles of education as instruments towards a good rulership in the sense of the pursued goal. Erasmus also follows the logic of the metaphors THE GOOD IS A PRINCIPLE, EDUCATION IS AN INSTRUPMENT and A (GOOD) RULERSHIP (by means of power) IS THE GOAL[32] in the specific pieces of advice addressed to the ruler or to his educator. The particular pieces of advice are manifested in a similar manner, i.e., from the starting point of the good principle through its mediation up to the purpose of fulfilling the content of the term 'rulership': as a result of that, the metaphors constitute basic semantic sets, whose content constitutes specific discursive practices that mutually affect one another and interconnect different spheres of experience.[33]

One of the first particular educational (good) pieces of advice given to a ruler is that he should think of the continuity of the good (CONTINUITY IS A GOOD) in his realm and as a good thing

30 Cf. Erasmus ROTTERDAMSKÝ, *O výchově křesťanského vladaře*, pp. 19, 37, 71, 137.
31 Cf. ibid., pp. 17, 25, 27.
32 Metaphors are set out in small caps to draw attention to them in the text.
33 Cf. George LAKOFF and Mark JOHNSON, *Metafory, kterými žijeme,* Brno: Host, 2002.

make an effort that he will not be succeeded by a bad ruler. A king is to keep in mind that his children should be educated as well as or better than he was. The purpose of education is maintaining continuity for his country, not the ruler's personal profit. Another piece of advice concerns the manner of the education. It is not addressed to the king, but to the educator. The educator should attend to the ruler's education from an early age, especially by means of the exemplar of the life of Christ,[34] examples of good rulers of the past, deterrent examples of bad rulers, but never by flattery.[35] Besides that the future king is to be present at consultations, attend trials, to be present at the creation of magistrates, and hear the demands of kings. But he should be instructed first so that he may better judge [of what is taking place]. He should not be allowed to make any decisions unless they are approved by the judgment of many men, until his age and experience have provided him with a more trustworthy judgment.[36]

By direct participation in the rulership, but without exercising power, the future king is to gain experience. But gaining experience by trial and error in the course of one's own government is dangerous for the whole monarchy, which is why education before the exercise of the rulership is so necessary. The respect for continuity is manifested in the education for the future generations and it is remarkable that it is the first piece of advice (which adds proper importance to it). The second piece of advice, like the appeal to continuity, concerns stability, which must not be jeopardised, especially if the king is only then learning how to rule. Erasmus of Rotterdam refers to the need for education up to a certain good degree, with a necessary respect for the continuity of society and the state. The person of the king is to guarantee the continuity of the state, and so the effort for the survival of the system is the primary function of the state as a social whole.

The third piece of advice implicitly given to the ruler is that he should not pay heed to his own good, but to the good of all those over whom he rules. He is to adapt his whole life to the rulership for the universal good, and so the king's life is not to be good in the sense of a comfortable human life, but to be the best with respect to pursuing the good of all; such a good is a moral good.[37] The king is to be a philosopher so that he can come to know the moral good and apply it in his rulership. But on the other hand, Erasmus does not identify with Plato's conception of the ruling philosopher, because it is not a dialectical art, but a properly performed 'craft' of rulership (however, there is no agreement on this interpretation and the question of how Erasmus follows up on Plato is more complex).[38] A philosopher is not 'one who is learned in the ways of dialectic or physics, but one who casts aside the false pseudo-realities and with open mind seeks and follows the truth. To be a philosopher and to be a Christian is synonymous in fact. The only difference is in the nomenclature.'[39] By his rulership the king actualises the moral good, to which he is himself (freely) subordinated.

Another piece of advice for the king is to surround himself with people who are regarded as the best and to take care that these people think of him as well as possible. The fifth piece of advice concerns the educational environment – ideally the future king should be educated among his subjects. The advantages of being educated among the subjects are the respect of the subjects, who

34 Cf. Timothy HAGLUND, Was Erasmus's Christian Politics Too Uncompromising?, p. 170.
35 Cf. Erasmus ROTTERDAMSKÝ, *O výchově křesťanského vladaře*, pp. 23–31, 95, 107.
36 Erasmus of ROTTERDAM, *Education of a Christian Prince* (online), at: http://stoics.com/erasmus_s_education_of_a_chris.html, p. 183.
37 Cf. ibid., p. 87.
38 Cf. Alan RYAN, *On Politics*, pp. 303–304.
39 Erasmus of ROTTERDAM, *Education of a Christian Prince* (online), at: http://stoics.com/erasmus_s_education_of_a_chris.html, p. 150.

will esteem the king highly for his sincerity (he understands their needs) and the affinity between the king and his subjects (the king will regard the subjects as his own).[40] The king doesn't position himself above the laws, nor should he exalt himself over his subjects. In this sense, AFFECTION IS A GOOD. A particular manifestation of that is that the king ought not to despise anyone, not even the subject with the lowest social status, because no one is so weak that he could not harm the king, or on the other hand help him as a friend. The king needs everyone in a certain sense and he should maintain the affection of his subjects. There are several instruments he can use, for example a token of benevolence. Another option is to stay within the borders of his state and thereby manifest his interest in caring for and serving his subjects. In general, the king can gain affection by good behaviour. The eagerness for affection does not stem from a need to give the impression that the king is good and rules well, but from a sincere effort to act benevolently. The king is also to be amiable, just and kind: displays of such behaviour incite gratitude. The particular performance of such displays varies, but Erasmus recommends quite tangible options, such as zero reward to the king for his rulership and modesty.[41]

Modesty and other virtues that the king must master by education are a means to a partial end, which is to gain affection. Gaining affection is good, because it gives rise to the good of the whole by means of a good rulership. A good rulership is good, amongst others, because people think that it is good (and manifest that by having affection for the king). The king gains affection by his act of rulership, fully within the scope of the moral good and for the purposes of all the subjects. By its purpose TO SERVE THE PEOPLE IS A GOOD. The obligation of a good king is to take care of the people over which he rules. In serving the people the king ought to be able even to lay down his life. If that happens, he becomes immortal for his subjects. Serving the people well depends on the good king and a good king tries to be beneficial to all his subjects by means of legal strictures, which he must not transgress.[42] In this context Erasmus even likens the king to a father and the subjects to his family (THE KING IS A FATHER). A father leads his family by his example, and by that rules over its members as over free persons (a father does not rule over slaves, but as a free human being over free human beings, who are entrusted in his protection).[43] Elsewhere,[44] Erasmus likens the good king who serves his people to one of the parties to a covenant between him and the subjects. The king has rights and obligations towards his subjects; he owes them responsibility. If the king establishes by self-reflection that he has not fulfilled his obligations to the people, he should reflect on what he enforces in his subjects (viz. obedience, taxes and respect) and whether his claim is justified. If his claim is morally justified, i.e., if the king (as far as he is concerned) fulfils his obligations, he should consider whether the obedience, taxes and respect are not enforced too harshly. In collecting taxes, he should specifically give regard to the weakest. The basic necessities, amongst which he specifically mentions grains, bread, beer, wine and cloth (he does not explicitly mention others, but the list is not closed), should be taxed at as low a rate as possible, because their final price affects all, even the poorest. On the other hand, things used only by the rich, such as for example silk, crimson, pepper, spices and perfumes, should be charged more, because it will not impoverish the rich. The differences between the rich and the poor need to be balanced out, but no one may suffer harm for the benefit of another. The just taxation level depends on the level of just beneficence resulting is a general profit due to the least harm. A

40 Cf. ibid., p. 117.
41 Cf. ibid., pp. 33, 45, 122, 127, 139, 169.
42 Cf. ibid., pp. 35, 45, 105, 137.
43 Cf. ibid., pp. 65, 73.
44 Cf. ibid., p. 81.

key element of the covenant metaphor (THE KING AND THE SUBJECTS ARE PARTIES TO A COVENANT) is its free acceptance and education to the morally shielded good. This general principle also concerns common contracts, because if people are well educated and are good, it is not necessary to write down a number of precise and anxiously styled contracts to regulate their relationships of mutual cohabitation.[45]

The king is responsible to his subjects, but merely morally and freely and not institutionally, so that a particular failure would result in particular impingements upon the king. The voluntary character of the relationship is due to the freedom of the king and the freedom of the subjects, yet the work *Education of a Christian Prince* does not explicate the way in which Erasmus determines the extent of the freedom of the subjects. The extent of freedom between the ruler and the ruled is not complexly clear or distinct, among other things because the extent of direct influence and its scope within the so-called one-dimensional conception of power (i.e., in model terms: subject A directly influences subject B in his action so that subject B does what he otherwise would not do) is not systematically captured.[46]

Despite the lack of clarity and distinctiveness it is evident that Erasmus emphasises the freedom of an individual as his self-actualisation, not as a space determining the extent of an individual's freedom vis-à-vis another individual in the social space.[47] The manner of collecting taxes corresponds to such a conclusion, since Erasmus does not conceive of the decrease in taxation of the basic necessities as a means to the good in the sense of extending the space of the subjects' freedom, but as a means to the possibility of greater actualisation (the freedom of actualisation as the freedom to be one's own lord) of the basic necessities while at the same time minimising suffering (see also below). Erasmus also does not delineate the space for an individual's freedom in any way, not even in the work *On Free Will*, in which the relationship to God is addressed, not to society, although the moral order is emphasised.

Freedom is a good for the subjects, but it depends on the king's responsibility to himself, or to the good, which he (again) interprets himself by his education. Incorporating freedom and applying one-dimensional power manifests the strength of the necessity to educate the king, because he is the single agent with all the power. Although education is an instrument for a good rulership as a goal, education itself has the goal of inciting responsibility for pursuing the moral good and returning the king to the path of the moral good if he deviates from it. The king's rulership is not one-sided, for it is a difficult task full of responsibility and service: 'When the prince hears his various titles from the provinces, let him not immediately swell with conceit as if he were the absolute master of so many affairs, but let him think to how many he is morally obliged to be a good prince.'[48] In serving his subjects the king is to be humble and accept the advice of the people around him, even if it pointed out a fault of his. A good king can accept criticism and his action is successful only if it benefits the whole state, i.e. primarily his subjects (that is why he ought not to wage war, because protecting the subjects is a king's main obligation).[49]

A kingly rulership has other attributes. A good rulership is de facto more stable (STABILITY IS

45 Cf. ibid., pp. 127, 129, 131, 133, 143, 161.
46 Cf. Robert DAHL, The Concept of Power, *Behavioral Science* 3/1957, pp. 202–203.
47 Cf. Isaiah BERLIN, Dva pojmy svobody, in: *Současná politická filosofie*, ed. János KIS, Praha: OIKOYMENH, 1997, pp. 59–62.
48 Erasmus of ROTTERDAM, *Education of a Christian Prince* (online), at: http://stoics.com/erasmus_s_education_of_a_chris.html, pp. 198-199.
49 Cf. Erasmus ROTTERDAMSKÝ, *O výchově křesťanského vladaře*, pp. 105, 167, 177.

A GOOD) and more permanent than a rulership with qualities that do not attain to a good rulership (see also below). Maintaining stability is of primary importance also in comparison with the king's capacity to issue regulations, which is limited with respect to the aspect of stability. Erasmus even designates introducing new laws as undesirable, because even if a new law improved the situation for the subjects, any new regulation arouses indignation and so is relatively worse than a regulation that already exists. If a legal regulation is bearable, a new law should not be introduced (STABILITY IS LEGAL STRICTURES); if that is not the case and the situation really requires change, then it should be carried out gradually and always with respect to what will be suitable permanently (that also prevents passing laws that would be aimed only at the benefit of the king). A key issue of stability is maintaining peace (STABILITY IS PEACE). A king should associate with the neighbours; isolation is impossible and goes against the interest of stability. At the same time, neighbours can pose the greatest threat, but a good king should make war only as a last option. If there is no option of maintaining the state other than by war, then the war should at least be as short as possible and cause the least pain to the subjects, with the lowest loss of Christian lives.[50] Although maintaining peace is a relative condition for maintaining the state and fulfilling its function with respect to survival, it is nonetheless an important condition, since the probability of maintaining the state and a good rulership decreases when war breaks out or is being prepared for. Maintaining peace is an effort to maintain the state despite the causes that may destabilise it from the outside (wars being a typical example). But stability is not expressed only by maintaining peace, but also by the inner legal stability of good laws, which the king is entitled to change (as an expression of the inner sovereignty of a sovereign responsible to himself).

The absolute good (as the last topic of this subchapter) is an ideal which the king cannot attain, because it is in the realm of God, not of the human king. But a good king is obliged to pursue the absolute good and to measure all his acts towards the people by it. The same things are not important for the king and for the people, at least they need not be, since the king's role is to govern and thereby also to measure the good of the people and of the state by the absolute good. Respect to the moral good, whose source is the absolute good, is always necessary and makes considerable demands on the king, because he must not yield to such moves of the mind that would bring him to act for his own benefit (if he did that, he would be withdrawing from the moral good). The moral good is measured by the good of the king's soul (meaning justice and prudence). A just and prudent king is the good and happiness of the subjects. Health and wealth ought not to be measured by the moral good, because physical equality and equality in property are not just.[51]

3.2 Wisdom as an instrument towards a good rulership

The moral good is a human ideal and at the same time a principle from which a good rulership issues as a goal. A king is capable of a good rulership, but only by means of education and self-reflection – in Erasmus of Rotterdam, expressions of mastering self-reflection can be sought in the term 'wisdom'.

In Erasmus of Rotterdam wisdom can primarily be conceived as an instrument to rulership (WISDOM IS AN INSTRUMENT). Wisdom stands in opposition to ambition, anger, covetous-

50 Cf. ibid., pp. 123, 163, 177, 179.
51 Cf. ibid., pp. 33, 43, 95, 105, 123, 125.

ness and flattery. A king is not a good ruler if he is not wise (i.e., is ambitious, etc.). A wise king is a decisive agent who acts for the good of all, and wisdom is an instrument allowing for the king's self-evaluation.[52] As in the conception of the good, wisdom also manifests an unambiguous appeal to the king's abilities and virtues. Not only is the king to be educated to virtue, but at the same time it is an expression of wisdom to influence the subjects for the good and thereby educate them for a good co-existence: 'It is too much even to hope that all men will be good, yet it is not difficult to select from so many thousands one or two, who are conspicuous for their honesty and wisdom, through whom many good men may be gained in simple fashion.'[53] The principle of selection does not always have to do with selecting the king, because selection is typically not possible in hereditary monarchies. In hereditary monarchies, the principle of selecting 'the wise and well-ordered one' is applied to the educator, who then passes on his wisdom (by teaching) to the ruler, whom he wants to educate to be a good king. With respect to the pursued goal of the whole state, wisdom does not differ in content from the good; otherwise, it could not even be an instrument towards the good. Similar content is expressed, for example, in the dedication of the book *Education of a Christian Prince*, in which Erasmus expresses hope that Charles V would surpass Alexander of Macedon in wisdom by maintaining his realm in a non-bloody way. Such an expression fully accords with the good as an element of stability. The relationship of the two terms is similar in the case of the particular content of wisdom to a good rulership, which is constituted by impeccability, by liberation from erroneous notions and from the prejudices of the common people, by selecting good magistrates (a magistrate must be wise and incorruptible; older people are more suitable for performing the magisterial function, because they are more restrained), by rejecting war as a common instrument of rulership and by a wise consideration of the relationship of the absolute good to the laws, which are to be respected by the king and by the subjects. A wise king, who is thereby good, also does not take vengeance for an offence to his person, an exception being if the offence posed a threat to the good of the whole state. The principle of maintaining the state (its survival as a system of cohabitation) is also present in the king's wisdom, because the main purpose of his actions is the stability of the state for the benefit of the citizens. A wise rulership is an expression of a good rulership and beneficially serves the whole state, because the king acts beneficially towards his subjects. The beneficence of a wise rulership is the main purpose of wisdom as an instrument for actualising the good by the king's actions.[54] But the king's wisdom is not expressed only by pursuing the good, but also by familiarity with the international milieu: 'A part of the wisdom of a ruler lies in his knowledge of the traits and characters of all peoples. This he will gain partly from books, and partly from the memories of wise and experienced men. He need not think that it will be necessary for him to wander over all lands and seas as Ulysses did.'[55]

3.3 A good rulership by means of a good power

Power is a direct instrument (POWER IS AN INSTRUMENT) for the performance of the king's good deeds (or the bad deeds of a tyrant; see below). Using power without wisdom results in a rulership that contradicts the good of the subjects and brings them harm, which is unjust (cf. below). The magnitude of power varies and is contingent on the particular elements derived from

52 Cf. ibid., p. 15.
53 Erasmus of ROTTERDAM, *Education of a Christian Prince* (online), at: http://stoics.com/erasmus_s_education_of_a_chris.html, p. 145.
54 Cf. Erasmus ROTTERDAMSKÝ, *O výchově křesťanského vladaře*, pp. 15, 17, 23, 31, 47, 75, 141, 153, 157, 177.
55 Erasmus of ROTTERDAM, *Education of a Christian Prince* (online), at: http://stoics.com/erasmus_s_education_of_a_chris.html, p. 240.

the moral good, and not, for example, on the number of subjects or the size of the administrated territory. The increase in the king's power due to an extension of the territory he controls is merely illusory. The king's effort for power must be expended not on extending his dominion, but on improving it. Expansion and efforts to extend the territory frequently do not result in a real extension and may even result in the loss of a part of the territory that the king administrated before the expansion was begun. A king ought to direct his effort towards the inner reinforcement of the state, which may mean even dividing his power and giving up a part of his power for the benefit of the subjects. According to Erasmus, dividing power is more certain than relying on an ideally good king, so he prefers limiting the power by dividing it, when elements of the aristocratic and democratic ordering are added to the inner functioning of the monarchy. A kingly rulership is the best possible rulership, but it must adopt such mechanisms into its structure that will prevent the monarchy being transformed into tyranny.[56] The king's manifestations of power must always be within the limits of good acting, which is just. If the king suffered harm because an injustice was committed, it must be considered whether the injustice concerns himself or the whole state. Justice in the sense of an act (not as a good ideal) depends on how many people are harmed. As you would rather stand for an injury than avenge it at great loss to the state, perchance you will lose a little something of your empire. Bear that; consider that you have gained a great deal because you have brought hurt to fewer than you would otherwise have done. Do your private emotions as a man reproachful anger, love for your wife, hatred of an enemy, shame – urge you to do what is not right and what is not to the welfare of the state? Let the thought honor of win.[57]

The king's responsibility for his power is accompanied by his responsibility for acting well towards his subjects (POWER IS RESPONSIBILITY). According to Erasmus, a king would not be judged after death by God in the same way as his subjects, but more strictly. A king is an image of God in the sense that he has the power to be beneficial to those he wants to. The exercise of power by a good king does not take the form of dominion, as it is the case with the heathens; a good Christian king serves his subjects and exercises the power that is available to him on their behalf. The extent of the service determines the extent of the power (SERVICE IS POWER). A king can rule over his subjects against the moral good, treating the subjects like animals, and his right over the subjects will be greater, but the ruler's power will not be greater, quite on the contrary, because it will no longer be a rulership over free persons in the sense of service.[58] 'A good prince measures everything by the advantage of his people, otherwise he is not even a prince. He does not have the same right over men as over animals. A large part of the ruling authority is in the consent of the people, which is the factor that first created kings.'[59]

Finally, Erasmus of Rotterdam defines the king in relationship to his opposite, the tyrant. 'A tyrant is such a monstrous beast that his like does not exist. Nothing is equally baneful, nothing more hateful to all.'[60] A tyrant rules only for himself, for he does not measure his 'wisdom' and power by the moral good, but by his profit. As a result, all suffer under his rulership, which is not just.[61] The particular and fundamental differences between a king and a tyrant are as follows: The main object of a tyrant is to follow his own caprices, but a king follows the path of right and

56 Cf. Erasmus ROTTERDAMSKÝ, *O výchově křesťanského vladaře*, pp. 71, 72, 73, 83, 165.
57 Erasmus of ROTTERDAM, *Education of a Christian Prince* (online), at: http://stoics.com/erasmus_s_education_of_a_chris.html, pp. 154-155.
58 Cf. Erasmus ROTTERDAMSKÝ, *O výchově křesťanského vladaře*, pp. 45, 73, 77.
59 Erasmus of ROTTERDAM, *Education of a Christian Prince* (online), at: http://stoics.com/erasmus_s_education_of_a_chris.html, p. 252.
60 Ibid, p. 150.
61 Cf. Erasmus ROTTERDAMSKÝ, *O výchově křesťanského vladaře*, pp. 49, 53.

honor. Reward to a tyrant is wealth; to a king, honor, which follows upon virtue. The tyrants' rule is marked by fear, deceit, and machinations of evil. The king governs through wisdom, integrity, and beneficence. The tyrant uses his imperial power for himself; the king, for the state."[62]

Although Erasmus of Rotterdam lists other differences, the logic for specifying the differences is the same. A ruler can be a tyrant or a king. A king is a good ruler; a tyrant is a bad ruler. The role of the king in the state can be illustrated by good examples of using wisdom and power, while the role of the tyrant is the reverse (although Erasmus can see even some exceptions of tyrants, who at least in some instances behaved like kings). Erasmus of Rotterdam uses the concept of tyranny as a negative point of reference, which is to supplement the treatise on the king. Despite their supplementary character, Erasmus uses the passages concerning the tyrant to point out particular policies that he had not mentioned before. An example is the king's effort for balancing between the value of the gold reserve and the value of the money in circulation. A tyrant, on the other hand, does not worry about the financial situation of the state, because he is only interested in his own personal financial situation (and the wealth of a closed group of those who support his rulership). A tyrant not only does not take care of his subjects, he even tries to exhaust them financially and to suppress the social bond. The reason is protecting his wealth, because if the subjects were united in one whole, they could incite an insurgence and overthrow the tyrant. To prevent that, fear and an atmosphere of informing must be created among the subjects. As a result, the tyrant treats the subjects like slaves and does all he can so that they attain the lowest possible level of wisdom.[63]

4. Conclusion: a normative typology of good and evil

A king is the best possible ruler in a monarchy because in his rulership he is guided by the moral good: in this way, it is possible to summarise the political philosophy of Erasmus of Rotterdam in his work *Education of a Christian Prince*, which is part of Erasmus's more extensive effort to maintain freedom and individuality, yet set in the ethical legacy of the Christian culture, which is contrasted against an absolute enlightened (rational) voluntarism. The relationships between the individual concepts can be specified somewhat more broadly with respect to the level of the king as an acting person and the system of monarchy as a structure of government.

It is not possible to identify a king with a ruler, because a ruler can also be a tyrant. A king is a king because he differs from a tyrant in precisely the opposite characteristics. A king rules over people, in which he differs from the absolutely good God. As a result, Erasmus of Rotterdam presents a typology of three possible rulers: God, a king and a tyrant. God rules over divine matters, while a king and a tyrant rule over human ones. A king differs from a tyrant by reflecting on the absolute good and pursuing the moral good, which the tyrant does not reflect upon. A tyrant pursues only his own profit. A king cannot pursue the moral good without wisdom as an instrument of self-reflection and consequently also of actualising elements of the moral good. Without wisdom, destruction would come upon the subjects, because the moral good would not be pursued in the ruling. A king can behave like a father, who educates his subjects on wisdom and requests respect, taxes and obedience from them in the interest of the moral good. A king and his subjects can even be parties to a covenant whereby protection of the subjects on the part of the king is

62 Erasmus of ROTTERDAM, *Education of a Christian Prince* (online), at: http://stoics.com/erasmus_s_education_of_a_chris.html, p. 163.
63 Cf. Erasmus ROTTERDAMSKÝ, *O výchově křesťanského vladaře*, pp. 55, 57, 109.

most important. For a king to be a king, he must use his power (which is variable as such) with responsibility towards his subjects and understand it as a service to the subjects. The more a king serves his subjects, the more power he has. By means of a good education a king combines in his person wisdom in using his own power and he is a father and a covenant partner for his subjects with the goal of serving them. The goal of a king's rulership is good service (with responsibility for it) and stability, even at the cost of a limitation in the possibility of issuing regulations.

A second concept, the functioning and analytical form of which Erasmus implicitly distinguishes, is 'monarchy'. A monarchy can be either genuine, or mixed due to elements of aristocracy and democracy. A genuine monarchy is the best possible system of government and is constituted by the best possible king. If a king does not rule as the best possible ruler would do, he poses a threat to the stability of the genuine monarchy. In order to maintain continuity, a king ought to provide for the education of his successor; but his success is not granted (the education may merely dull unsuitable qualities). But maintaining continuity and stability is a king's main task, and if the king is reasonable (self-reflective), he adopts new systemic measures consisting in incorporating elements of aristocracy and democracy into the genuine monarchy. In this way, a mixed monarchy arises – one monarch will rule, but he will divide his power into other co-ruling (controlling) components. The direct opposite of a monarchy is a tyranny. So, from the point of view of systems of government, Erasmus of Rotterdam distinguishes between monarchy, aristocracy, democracy and tyranny. A tyranny is the worst system. Erasmus of Rotterdam does not explicitly address aristocracy and democracy.

The typologies that have been presented so far are derived from the systemic element and the individual element. But the common denominator is goodness as a good actualised by power. A king serves the people even at the cost of losing his life, and that is the climax of the good from the point of view of the individual level. A monarchy is a good system of government, if it has the best possible king, and the highest good of a monarchy is self-conservation, which is expressed in continuity and stability. Stability can be maintained by means of legal strictures and maintaining peace, which is absolutely influenced by the good king, who acts as a sovereign. A sovereign king exercises his sovereignty by power in the internal functioning of the state, and also externally (a conception not unlike the contemporary conception of internal and external sovereignty). The affection of the subjects for the king is also a good, but the good per se is a service to the people based on responsibility to the moral good for the benefit of the subjects.

Erasmus of Rotterdam does not address the social freedom granted to the subjects by the ruler or by the structure of the monarchy, which testifies to its absence in Erasmus's reflections. Erasmus of Rotterdam emphasises the responsibility of the ruler to his subjects, but at the same time gives the subjects no scope for exercising their individual negative freedom. Nonetheless, some of the passages show that Erasmus conceives of freedom positively in connection with non-suffering and direct support by means of decreasing the tax on the basic necessities. The best possible monarchy, according to Erasmus, is not a parliamentary monarchy and it is not democratic in the contemporary sense of the word. A king makes his power absolute, not for his own benefit, but for the benefit of all his subjects. Power is exercised only as the king's service to his subjects with maximum responsibility and justification (or, by simplification, legitimacy) before God. As a result, legitimacy is not flattened out into the visible, neutrally bureaucratic exercise of power, but has a supremely ethical dimension, which is somewhat absent from contemporary politics.

The contents of the concepts 'wisdom' and 'goodness', according to the meaning given to them by Erasmus of Rotterdam, can be used for a typology of political systems. The answer to the first question raised in the introduction is therefore affirmative. The answer to the second question (based on which conditions a king differs from a tyrant) is that a king differs from a tyrant precisely in opposing conditions, so if the conditions of the good rulership of a king are explained, then so are the conditions of the categorical determination of a tyrant, and thereby of tyranny as a system of government. The last question from the introduction concerned the possibility of applying the contemporary conceptualisation of political power and political freedom and in fact has been answered already: the contemporary concepts cannot be applied to Erasmus's political philosophy, although the implicit exercising of power by the king in a monarchy is close to the so-called one-dimensional conception of power and the conditions of freedom correspond rather to positive freedom, and not to its negative version.

Although the contemporary apparatus of political science cannot be applied to Erasmus's political philosophy, it can at least be used to explain some implications of ruling in the best possible monarchy with the best possible monarch. Erasmus of Rotterdam was not a political scientist of the modern type, because the characteristics and content of the categories he employs cannot be simply subsumed into the scholarly apparatus which is now in use. But if we step out beyond the ontology of the contemporary concepts, the content of 'good' and 'evil' critically reflects the dogmatism of Erasmus's era and the positivism of the concepts of the 'science of the state', which are partially still present in the contemporary political science. As a result, the political philosophy of Erasmus of Rotterdam transcends the time of its origin, because it explains the relationship between power and responsibility with respect to the good, and all that based on Christian ethics, which gives a (not entirely) new dimension to the conceptual apparatus of contemporary political philosophy. If Erasmus's work is conceived within its normative legacy, then it is a broader part of political philosophy, which is not limited merely to the figure of the ruler, but focuses also on free will, justice and the central position of the human being in political considerations. At a time when politics is becoming increasingly personalised, the issue of responsibility for politics, which certainly belongs to such a legacy, ought not to be omitted, because it has an explanatory force, as the legacy of the political philosophy of Erasmus of Rotterdam makes evident.

A Typology of Good and Evil: An Analysis of the Work Education of a Christian Prince by Erasmus of Rotterdam

Abstract

The paper deals with the political philosophy of Erasmus of Rotterdam in his work *Education of a Christian Prince* and focuses on the relationship of the concepts of 'goodness', 'wisdom' and 'power' with respect to the rulership of a king in the milieu of a monarchy as a system of government. The paper aims to present a good rulership as a type of a political system and the role of the king as an agent who has political power at his disposal with respect to the moral good as a principle. The methods employed were *framing* and content analysis. The main finding is the appeal for the king's responsibility for service rendered to his subjects, whereby Erasmus creates the ethical content of the legitimacy of ruling before God (by means of power exercised for the good of all with the aim of maintaining social stability). Erasmus's legacy for political philosophy is perennial, because, due to the mutual interdependence of goodness, wisdom and power, legitimacy is not flattened out into a visible, neutral, bureaucratic exercise of power.

Keywords: Erasmus of Rotterdam, king, legitimacy, monarchy, the moral good, wisdom, responsibility, political power

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