



**Philosophy and its relation  
to Religion and Arts**

## PHILOSOPHY AND ITS RELATION TO RELIGION AND ARTS

### FILOSOFÍA Y SU RELACIÓN CON LA RELIGIÓN Y LAS ARTES

#### ABSTRACT

Presently existing philosophical schools and tendencies show a fundamentally different form of the very philosophical thinking, and therefore, radically different solutions to the problem of the essence of philosophy. One way to find an answer to the question of what philosophy represents is to compare philosophy with other forms of spiritual culture that are related to it: art, religion, and science. The article covers the variants of the mutual correlation of the concepts “philosophy”, “religion”, “art” and attempts to compare them. On the one hand, these phenomena cannot be clearly opposed to each other because of their obvious connection, on the other hand, their identification will also pose a serious threat to a correct understanding of the system of spiritual culture of modern society.

KEYWORDS: Spiritual culture, philosophy, religion, art, theology, rhetoric, truth, artistic image.

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#### RESUMEN

Las escuelas y tendencias filosóficas actuales muestran una forma fundamentalmente diferente del pensamiento filosófico y, por lo tanto, soluciones radicalmente diferentes al problema de la esencia de la filosofía. Una forma de encontrar una respuesta a la pregunta de qué es lo que la filosofía representa es comparar la filosofía con otras formas de cultura espiritual que están relacionadas con ella: el arte, la religión y la ciencia. El artículo cubre las variantes de la correlación mutua de los conceptos “filosofía”, “religión”, “arte” e intenta compararlos. Por un lado, estos fenómenos no pueden ser claramente opuestos entre sí debido a su conexión obvia, por otro lado, su identificación también representará una grave amenaza para una correcta comprensión del sistema de la cultura espiritual de la sociedad moderna.

Palabras clave: cultura espiritual, filosofía, religión, arte, teología, retórica, verdad, imagen artística.

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KONSTANTIN VLADIMIROVICH KONDRATIEV



Kazan Federal University, Russian Federation



[kons-kondrat@yandex.ru](mailto:kons-kondrat@yandex.ru)



ROMAN KAMILIEVICH SMIRNOV



Kazan Federal University, Russian Federation

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Philosophy is a kind of unique spiritual phenomenon, the peculiarity of which lies in the fact that for 2500 years of its existence it has not formed any single, continual field of problems in relation to which it would be possible to formulate some consensus solution shared by all philosophical community. This is also true in point of the question on the specifics of the very philosophy, its distinctive features. As I.G. Fichte wrote: "even between true philosophical writers there is hardly a half-dozen of those who would know what philosophy really is" [1, p. X]. We can describe a similar situation, which continues to be in philosophy up to this day as a permanent crisis of grounds.

One of the ways to solve the problem of the essence of philosophy is to correlate philosophy and other contiguous forms of spiritual culture - religion, art and science. Nevertheless, it is difficult to find a common opinion on this question: Bertrand Russell argued that philosophy "is something intermediate between theology and science" [2]; A. Camus noticed in his diary: "You can only think through images. If you want to be a philosopher, write novels" [3]. Of the more recent authors, one can mention Nikiforov A. L [4], Bibikhin V. V [5], Bochkovy DA [6], Bolotnikova E. [7] and others.

Of course, it is not possible to determine the relationship between philosophy and other forms of spiritual culture in simple formal-logical terms of identity, mutual intersection or subordination. Nevertheless, some points of contact that allow of talking about the possibility of a convergence of philosophy with art, science or religion can be determined. In this article, we confine ourselves to comparing philosophy with art and religion, since the question of the relationship between philosophy and science, in our opinion, is more complex and requires more circumstantial

consideration, to which we will return in one of the following publications.

## 2. METHODS

The main method used in our work is the method of comparative research, which makes it possible to reveal the specificity of the object being determined by comparing its characteristics with other phenomena that are similar in content and form. In addition, we used the method of semantic analysis of the use of concepts, as well as a genetic method that makes it possible to trace the development of a certain cultural phenomenon through its origin.

## 3. RESULTS

### PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION.

Philosophy and religion converge in their claim to expressing some truth. And we are not talking about any, but about some "higher", the most basic truth. For example, Aristotle, in fact, identified the term "theology" with what he called the "first philosophy" or "metaphysics" as it was called later. The content of "the first philosophy" is the doctrine of the divine, which, according to Aristotle, "is preferable to other speculative sciences". The divine, as it is well-known, according to Aristotle, is a fixed driver or a self-thinking mind [8].

Does it mean that philosophy and religion are identical in content? In no way: after all, philosophy today can exist in a completely atheistic and materialistic hypostasis. On the other hand, religion can do without philosophical reflection: for example, in the form of everyday religiosity of ordinary parishioners of temples, which do not go into the subtleties of theological questions. In this sense, an assertion suggests itself that philosophical theology is an intersection of spheres of religion and philosophy, which in themselves preserve non-overlapping areas.

However, the relationship between philosophy and religion at this point of intersection is far from a well-balanced and mutually beneficial symbiosis. When philosophy in the form of theology acquires a right to reflect on the problems of religion, it immediately brings with it an element of criticism - doubt, which is probably an integral part of rational thinking. At the same time, religion categorically does not accept doubts in a certain body of

truths, fixed as dogmas. That is why theological teachings need additional sanction, which affirms a certain theology as canonical, implying that other variants of theological reflections are not canonical, and, therefore, must be condemned by the official church. Although theology assigns the tasks of defending, substantiating, and systematizing the basic tenets of religion to philosophy, very often, after some time, new measures of protection must be taken against the yesterday's defenders themselves, who in polemical fervor have passed very narrow boundaries set by the official canon.

Can we then conclude about full lack of coincidence between philosophy and religion on the basis of criticism of the first and non-criticism of the second? It is most likely also to be wrong. V.V. Bibikhin wrote: "Pious askesis is so similar to the thought that it is necessary to be surprised at that decades to be in fact very few in the history when philosophy permitted itself to be festively open; but even then the basis and guaranteeing of the fest remained austerity" [5, p. 34]. A certain sense of humility that the philosopher experiences before Truth, many times exceeding his ownself, probably makes religion related to philosophy. The philosopher does not choose the truth, moreover, does not create it with his imagination - he serves it, just as the priest serves his deity. Moreover, Truth is by no means always a kind and grateful mistress, it can be cruel, heartless towards its ministers (let us recall, for example, the fate of F. Nietzsche). Truth is not what we choose in accordance with our own preferences, on the contrary, the recognition of truth often requires us to be courageous, which is resisted by a completely sincere craving for self-deception. A philosopher is to endure all this submissively, otherwise philosophy becomes a salon wisdom, where the main task is to sparkle with erudition and wit, to represent his self as vividly as possible, having received friendly favor from people of the same circle.

The critical function of philosophy does not contradict this pious humility: first of all, because doubt and criticism have as their supreme task not a victory over an opponent, rewarded by a sense of one's own intellectual superiority, which is also achieved, not always, by legitimate methods of eloquent persuasiveness (this is typical for salon disputes), but, rather, the coordination of intellec-

tual forces in a single direction - towards the truth. Philosophical criticism does not seek to refute the truth but wants to bring the one who expresses the criticized views, to the truth, by pointing out one's errors.

### PHILOSOPHY AND ART

Ordinary language sometimes easily identifies philosophy and art: for example, philosophy is sometimes called to be "the art of a beautiful thought". For a number of reasons, philosophy really looks more like art than science: in philosophy, there is practically no advancing progress, the accumulation and addition of knowledge, as well as the obsolescence of past ideas and concepts, as it is always the case in science. Comparing the progress of medicine from the time of Hippocrates, K. Jaspers asserts that in philosophy we have hardly "advanced further than Plato did" [9]. Philosophy contains always several competing, often even mutually exclusive directions and theories that more resemble art styles than scientific schools.

And yet, it seems possible to outline the difference between philosophy and art. For the first time this problem was the subject of special consideration in classical philosophy - by Socrates and his disciple Plato. In ancient culture, the closest form of art to the philosophy was considered oratorical skill, eloquence. In the tradition of the Sophists, eloquence was factually identified with philosophy itself and teaching to eloquence was perceived as teaching to the highest wisdom. Nevertheless, eloquence and philosophy, though they can use identical methods, have practically opposed aims and applications of these methods: where philosophy strives to point to the truth as it is, irrespective of preferences of the speaker, or the listener, the task of eloquence is to convince of the truth of a viewpoint, being for some reason or other desirable for the speaker at the moment - in spite of the fact whether this point of view is true, erroneous or its truth is unknown.

Let us call to mind how Socrates in his well-known "Apologia" shows the boundary between the speeches of his accusers who spoke very expressively, but they did not care of the truth, and his own speech: "They, I repeat, haven't say a word of truth, and you will hear the whole truth from me. But I wear on Zeus, the Athenians, you will not tear flowerys-

peech, embellished, as they have, with various turns and expressions, I will speak naturally, using the words coming first to my mind – after all, I am convinced of the truth of my words”. Speaking of myself, Socrates says that he is “an orator but not according to their model” [10, p. 18].

The distinctions of Socrates from the traditional rhetoricians is most probably in the very readiness, courage to tell the truth in any situation irrespective of the fact whether it is unpalatable for an interlocutor or creates danger for a person who tells the truth<sup>1</sup> – in essence, it is this Socrates’s adherence to the truth that was a real cause of trial where he was sentenced to death. Another important distinction of the philosophical speech from eloquent speeches of the rhetoricians and poets is marked by Socrates when he relates his studies initiated concerning divine message that “there is no one who is wiser than Socrates”. When Socrates comes to the poets who are considered to be the wisest for their works, he begins to ask them: “I took those of their works, which I thought were most carefully worked out by them, and asked them what exactly they implied, and, by the way, to learn from them something”. And then he realizes that “it is not because of wisdom they can create what they have created, but thanks to some kind of natural endowments, as if in a frenzy, like fortune-tellers and soothsayers; because these people also say a lot of good things, but they do not know at all what they suggest” [10, p. 21]

Thus, philosophy is supposed to be a discipline of thinking, expressed at least in the fact that the philosopher must always be able to explain why he adheres to this, and not to another opinion, on this or that question. It does not mean that his opinion should be accepted by all as the only true, just as we accept the scientific truth that went through all the necessary procedures of acknowledgement. However, it cannot be said that in philosophy all opinions and points of view are of absolutely equal worth – the validity and consistency of the point of view in philosophy are the most important requirements. If strictness and consistency of thinking lead the philosopher to a contradiction to his own convictions, whatever attractive they are, he has

either to abandon them and to turn to other positions, or in this way to modify his theory, so that this contradiction to be eliminated: just so Plato did, having undertaken in his old age a large-scale revision of his theory of ideas under the influence of criticism of Aristotle.

And yet, there exists something common between philosophy and art. The task of the artistic image, which art operates with, is not merely to describe, reflect an object that the artist conceives. The object reflected in the picture or described with the poet’s words is just an excuse for conveying a certain emotional mood; the ultimate goal is to form a new emotional response in the soul of a person perceiving work of art. Science is completely inaccessible: the scientific language can accurately describe the subject, including the emotional state of a person (within the framework of psychological research) – however, science is powerless to evoke this emotional state in the person who is perceiving, it needs an artistic image.

Notwithstanding the declared rejection of rhetorical devices, Socrates uses many of the mind Plato’s dialogues, and this is not an accident or inconsistency – such devices are strictly necessary for the purpose of conveying a philosophical idea. After all, philosophy also does not so much describe an object as it seeks to convey the thought that the philosopher has seized. However, it is impossible to convey a thought like a letter in an envelope, from one consciousness to another, the philosopher can only hope that his speech or the text will evoke a thought that is close in content in the consciousness of the perceiver. And this task to be decided requires the use of the artistic methods as well: in particular, it can be rhetorical techniques – figures of eloquence, rhetorical gestures, as well as the ways of persuasion. In the final analysis, we should always think for ourselves – using the results of someone else’s thinking (including thinking of the philosopher) will be just the assimilation of information, but will never be thinking itself. The philosopher can only serve as a kind of a road sign in that direction, perhaps, there lies the thought. We should always move along this road alone. However, so as to really want for a person to move in the direction indicated by the philosopher,

1. This formation of the truth used to be designated with the word «parrhesia» in Greek culture, which denoted perfect and free speech, expressing everything a man has in sleeve, even under those conditions when this perfect statement can be dangerous for the speaker. A detailed analysis of functioning this notion in Greek philosophy can be found in later lectures of M. Foucault: [11, 12, 13]

sometimes he needs to be encouraged in a somewhat tender way, and perhaps even somewhat impolite, and philosophy can be understood as a kind of art of pushing a person to a thought.

#### 4. DISCUSSIONS

One should not forget that speaking about "philosophy ingeneral" in this article, we make a very crude reduction, by abstracting from the multiplicity of forms of existence of philosophy both in history and at the present time. In reality, most likely, there is no single "philosophy in general", but there is a fairly large corpus of different "philosophies", each of which can be located closer or further to science, religion and art. The purpose of our study was to reveal those bridges that cross spiritual chasms that separate the phenomena under discussion and make it possible for philosophy to approach a particular cultural form, never coinciding with it until it is indistinguishable. Ultimately, each concrete form of philosophy can be represented as a point between these cultural poles - art, religion and science.

#### 5. SUMMARY

Certainly, philosophy is not a religion, although it contains a certain feeling of reverence, similar to religious veneration, which makes the philosopher follow only Truth and reason in everything and always - within the framework of those historically changing criteria of the first and the second, which the philosopher is dictated by his epoch. And even the desire to change these criteria inherent in the philosophers of the turning-ages, during which the fundamental paradigms were changing, was carried out exclusively in the quest of a more authentic Truth and a more perfect Reason.

Philosophy is not an art, because it still requires some general validity of its results and does not allow to treat its fruits only from the standpoint of judging subjective tastes - which, as is known, differ. The dispute over philosophical concepts and positions respecting certain rules is an absolutely necessary and most fruitful attitude to philosophy. Nevertheless, the common thing between philosophy and art is that they do not seek to convey some objective information about the subject that absorbs them most of all: this is

the world of human emotions and passions - for art, the world of thinking - for philosophy. The real goal is to evoke in the mind of the perceiver an emotion (for art) or a thought (for philosophy), close to an emotion or a thought experienced by the speaker - and this task already requires the use of means and methods that are of an artistic nature; rhetorical art proves to be the closest for philosophy in this case.

#### 6. CONCLUSION

Thus, we come to the conclusion that the relation of philosophy to art and religion is not described in terms of rigid formal-logical relations - even the intersections of the content of the concepts that we have revealed differ from the formal-logical intersection by the nuances of treatments and interpretations of phenomena. The continuum of points in the plane located between the three main poles: science, art and religion, where philosophy would be in a state of unstable equilibrium, being constantly subject to forces of repulsion and attraction, could serve as the best model for describing the relationship of the concepts under study.

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