

ANTINOMIC-SYMBOLIC EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONCEPT IN RUSSIAN PHILOSOPHY

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There were dualistic concepts of relationship between Faith and Knowledge in Russian philosophy. Faith and Knowledge are opposed antinomically. P.A. Florensky, L. Shestov, G. Florovsky and others came to the problem of the relationship between Faith and Reason from the antinomial standpoint. They insisted on inevitable antinomial status of human reason in case of the faith. They combined conflicting idea of Faith and Knowledge having equally convincing logical base. P.A. Florensky rejects strongly any agreement on Faith and Reason. According to him, the «reasonable faith», the faith «with proof based on reason», is a revolt against the God and the worst kind of the godlessness.

The main contradiction in the European culture – the contradiction between individual and general – has emerged throughout the human history in the system of relationships between an individual's free will and the divine will. In the Russian religious philosophy, this contradiction had a theologo-metaphysical tinge and demanded a reinterpretation of freedom and transformation of the intellect. In other words, the idea was to reform rationality. Two approaches to resolving this conflict took shape. Philosophy of total unity (V. Solovyov) called for transformation of the intellect, its integration with morality, which is only possible if the intellect and morality are spiritualized by faith. Representatives of the reformist school of Russian religious thought (N. Berdiaev, L. Shestov, D. Merezhkovsky and others) demanded that the intellect and morality submit to existentially tinted faith and it take its place in the spiritual life of man. Thus, the medieval issue of the relationship between faith and reason came once again to the foreground in the Russian philosophical thought at the turn of XIX and XX centuries.

P.A. Florensky was critical about V. Solovyov's attempts to establish, using rational theories, «harmony» between philosophy and religion, and hence between faith and reason, which demonstrates an-

other feature of the thinker's philosophizing – anti-intellectualism. In his work «Pillar and Ground of the Truth» the philosopher emphasized that his work was to oppose the «reconciliatory philosophy of Vladimir Solovyov». However P.A. Florensky realized that the traditional «vilification of reason» does little to convince of the truth of religious dogmas, because in order to believe man must «test God with his intellect». This «test» was understood by him as a «failure» of human reason «to perceive the ultramundane». But it was through philosophy, natural sciences and humanities that he sought to justify this conclusion, refuting the truths of the mind with the arguments of this same mind [1, 2].

Scholastic theology, according to P.A. Florensky, sought, using the theory of dual truth, to separate scientific and religious dogmas, but this program appeared to him a kind of a «Christianity's wake». Rejecting pluralism in determining the truth, he enunciated the philosophical, scientific, and art explorations not only as not contradicting religion but also as confirming the correctness of religious doctrines. Moreover, it was quite evident for P.A. Florensky that «art, philosophy, politics, economics, etc. cannot be considered as self-sufficient entities», since it is only «Christ-centric aspiration» that specifies them» [3].

In other words, all manifestations of human culture have value only as long as they can be «transfigured in a Christian manner», i.e. made useful for religion. Consequently, a holistic evaluation of P.A. Florensky's worldview should not be focused only on his scientific, art, or cultural explorations, for the thinker emphasized that the lack of religious orientation leads to the fact that «the gray fruits of the brain» in many respects obstruct «spiritual eyes». This attitude determined P.A. Florensky's understanding of philosophy as «the evidence of the spiritual world». The forms of this evidence in the philosopher's speculations are extremely varied, but most of them are different from Western rationalism, and often are non-conceptual and non-verbal. Therefore, the verbal expression of philosophical ideas was implemented by P.A. Florensky in antinomistic, contradictory manner, sometimes leading to formal-logical problems.

The thinker consciously aimed to reveal antinomies both in the field of scientific thinking and in the field of religion. The «antinomies of Christian life», the «antinomies of the biography of God» were mentioned by B.P. Vyscheslavtsev, S.N. Bulgakov, L.I. Shestov, V.F. Ern and others, who, however, used this notion occasionally, while in his works P.A. Florensky made antinomies-contradictions the subject of systematic consideration that eventually grew into a certain methodological program: «Knowledge of contradiction and love of contradiction, along with ancient skepticism, appear to be the highest achievement of antiquity. We must not, we dare not, cover contradiction over with the paste of our philosophemes! Let contradiction remain as profound as it is...» [1] This methodological and at the same time thematic idea put forward by P.A. Florensky was the subject of critical-reflexive analysis by such philosophers as N.A. Berdyaev, V.N. Ilyin, N.O. Lossky, Fr.G. Florovsky, and others.

P.A. Florensky referred the origins of antinomism to the philosophy of Plato, interpreting the majority of his dialogues as «gigantic antinomy artistically dramatized» [1]. P.A. Florensky gave high regard to I. Kant's antinomies: «The idea of the possibility of antinomialness of rationality is the most profound and most fruitful of Kant's ideas», he wrote [1]. However, he did not accept the classification of the antinomies given by the German philosopher and believed the main cause of his fallacy was in absolutization of the significance of the human mind. Accentuation on the subjective reason makes, according to A.P. Florensky, his «dialectics of the antinomies» indeterminate, meaning that he had not completely met the proposed objective – making room for faith. It is this theme, often referred to as «the overcoming of Kant and Kantianism», that developed in the works of P.A. Florensky into a problem of antinomism. Two factors, according to the contemporary researcher of Russian religious philosophy S. Khoruzhiy, determine its solution by the thinker: on the one hand, a fundamental philosophical dependence on Kant, on the other – an emphasized subordination of philosophical study to the «religious-existential problem, the problem of religious conversion [4].

By focusing his attention on the problem of the reason, Florensky expanded on the idea of its antinomical status. By his own admission, he began his reasoning with what Kant finished his, and posed the question – «how is reason possible?» [2]. In an attempt to answer it, the philosopher defined antinomies as destroying the reason, rendering it a rational judgment that cannot reject the closedness of its rational constructions, depravity. Reason, in his opinion, is woven from two opposed basic principles – «the finitude and the infinitude», i.e. discourse and intuition (contemplation). From this perspective, the antinomies formulated by Kant, «only open the door behind the scenes of Reason: Kant did

not notice that the theses of cosmological antinomies «say that the opposite is impossible and, consequently, «various functions of consciousness» come into collision and not just self-contradictoriness of the same one becomes revealed» [2].

Summing up the study of P.A. Florensky's antithetics, S. Khoruzhy, reconstructs the essence of the thinker's reasoning, and notes that the Truth is the antinomy, which is ruinous to reason. Journey to the Truth demands a renunciation of rationality and sacrificing it. Acceptance of the antinomy and, as a consequence, a split and lost self, is the only and inevitable fate, awaiting rationality on this journey [4]. Thus, in his criticism of rationalism Florensky steps on the shaky ground of irrationalism.

According to S. Khoruzhy, Florensky adopts Kant's understanding of the reason rather than Hegel's, (i.e. pseudo-scientific, positivist instead of philosophical-dialectical), which results in the interpretation of contradictions as inevitable and disastrous for it [4]. For dialectical mind, antinomies, as we know, are not destructive but motivating. It is dialectical mind, according to S. Khoruzhy, that is one of the intermediate cognitive forms between formal logic and pure mysticism. And since Florensky ignores all «intermediate» horizons of the workings of consciousness, «the only way to overcome the destructiveness of antinomy ... is appealing to the mystical consciousness. This is what is Florensky's position ...». S. Khoruzhy rightly says that even if faith is above reason, as Florensky argues, it does not mean that it is antagonistic to it: it is but «free in relation to it, it is not bound by its limitedness» [4]. Equating the supra-rational cognition with antirational one, characteristic of extreme irrationalism, relates P. Florensky's teaching to the tradition of «absurd» faith by S. Kierkegaard and L. Shestov.

We believe that the «mystery» of overcoming Kant and Kantianism in the

works of P. Florensky consists in the fact that the overcoming never occurred. The signs of Kantian statement of problems, the signs of rational philosophizing are present in the «Pillar» in the most obvious way. If the stage of theodicy is marked by unsuccessful attempts against Kant, the stage of «concrete metaphysics» shows that Florensky diverges from Kantianism to the philosophy of symbolic speculation. However it is interesting to note that Kantianism produced E. Kasirera's philosophy of symbolic forms closely related to P. Florensky's symbolism; so Kant is an «eternal companion» of P. Florensky (S. Khoruzhy) [4].

K.A. Svasian also believes that if Kant's phenomenality of cognition is understood as symbolism, it is «fraught with ... tricks of dialectics and antinomies of reason» [5]. The fundamental link between symbolism and the antinomism of the philosophy of Kant – that «eternal companion» of P. Florensky – suggests that antinomism and symbolism in their interrelationship were major theoretical and methodological principles of P.A. Florensky's philosophy.

References

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