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**THE VISIBLE AND THE INVISIBLE IN THE BIRTH OF ANCIENT
THOUGHT**

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Abstract

This article is primarily a result of my experience as a teacher. For didactic goals, turning to the origins of philosophy, its consideration in connection with the history of art may prove very productive, since human thought finds its first cultural expression in art. At the same time, in order to study the history of philosophy, it is worthwhile to avoid, by all means, our own urges of deterministic approach, which is the legacy of a certain kind of Marxism, where the change of epochs is considered predetermined, thus excluding the freedom of human creativity at the beginning of every era, as mentioned by H. Arendt. Hegel was also convinced that the philosopher writes only at the end of an era, and he can not at its dawn anticipate the main novelty coming. Therefore, as a methodological basis for my research, I apply the historicophilosophical approach which sees continuity and novelty as the main constants, at the beginnings as well as the endings of each era. There is especially one task that I believe is inevitable in this context: first off, we must clarify the problem of the relationship between religion and philosophy. An answer to this question is pending in the conclusion of this article.

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1. Introduction

The first manifestation of human thinking is drawing. By drawing, people express and communicate their thoughts, even for those who would still be there after them. It is this fixation of the message of thoughts for the descendants that makes them culturally real, and the collective root of mankind's existence and consciousness is already visible here. The first cultural form of communication of thoughts is nonverbal drawing, painting, figurative representation. We can already talk here about a material cultural heritage. The first known manifestation of thinking through the medium of drawing goes back to the Paleolithic era. In the history of art, these prehistoric drawings are noted for their vivid realism apparent in numerous example of rock art and cave murals. Caves with this kind of paintings, mostly showing images of animals, are found mainly in Europe. One may recall, for example, the drawings of the Lascaux Cave near the village of Montignac in France, or of the Cave of Altamira in Spain, made about 20,000 years ago. The Lascaux Cave, an important late Paleolithic monument, is sometimes called the Sistine Chapel of primitive painting. Man of the Upper Paleolithic era lived by hunting and gathering, believed in magic, and made drawings of animals to draw them closer. When representing an animal, he also wanted to influence the outcome of the hunt, making the beast less dangerous for himself. This has already brought about, in its embryonic form, that bipolarity of the distant and intimate, hidden and manifest, visible and invisible, on which this essay should be focusing. The art of sculpture has also been created during the Paleolithic era. One needs only recall here such an outstanding prehistoric monument as 'Venus of Willendorf', whose age is 29,500 years according to the latest estimate. Images of a female figure with large breasts and belly are found quite often and are associated with matriarchy and the cult of fertility. They are the representations of Mother Earth, a chthonic deity. The earth is rich and fertile, therefore, it is of the greatest interest to man, who does not yet look at the sky (Villa, 2005).

A further, more mature development of the bipolarity of the visible and invisible comes about in the Neolithic age. Just hunting and gathering have ceased to be enough for the Neolithic man. He begins to engage in agriculture. The appropriating economy is being gradually replaced by the producing one. This requires knowledge of the laws of nature, astronomy, calendar. Man of this era turns his gaze to the sky. And the sky begins to interest him not only for practical considerations. If we regard the sky from the point of view of theorists, then it appears, unlike the earth, as something immutable, immovable, monotonous, and, eventually, eternal. It is no coincidence that we meet the first artistic representation of plain clouds, not serving as an Old Testament symbol of the Spirit, only after many millennia, namely in Masaccio's fresco *The Tribute Money* from the Brancacci Chapel. Not the clouds, but only the pure and unchangeable sky interested the Neolithic man, the sky that represented the mind. It is this mind that was able to influence nature, to help the man, at the same time acting on himself. Thus, the idea of the vertical takes shape in his mind. A striking example of these changes to the worldview is Stonehenge. This Neolithic monument is a reflection of a new vision of the cosmos, which is called *symbolism* (Villa, 2005).

The word "symbol" comes from the Greek verb «συμβάλλω», a combination of the basic «βάλλω» 'throw' and the connective prefix συν-, with the resulting meaning of 'throwing or bringing together'. A symbol is a conjunction, a union of the visible and the invisible, the near and the far. This phenomenon will eventually find its philosophical peak in the bipolarity of Greek thinking. Speaking about bipolarity, it is very important to understand its difference from dualism, which presupposes a certain contrast or

contradiction of two absolutely equal forces, which is only relieved by the victory of one of them in the accomplishment of times. And this is uncharacteristic of Greek thinking. The bipolarity we are talking about just interprets one of the two forces as the main, on the constant basis and without the ultimate exclusion of another force. Later, in ancient philosophy, we see that in Plato all levels of reality have a bipolar structure, with the synthesis of the One and the Dyad. But let's go way back in time. The transition from the appropriating economy to the producer type occurs in VIII–VII millennia B.C., during the Neolithic era, and is called the Neolithic revolution. This period, as already mentioned, has witnessed the rise of ancient symbolism, and it was the time when people came up with signs. There was a practical need for this, a need to fix not only the growing stores of accumulated knowledge, but also the boundaries and property of emergent cities. As a result, the first systems of writing appeared in different parts of the world. Initially, writing did not reflect the sound of the language, it was entirely symbolic. Each symbol reflected this or that concept. Despite the fact that the logographic writing played a very important role in the history of mankind, it remained imperfect and did not fully satisfy the needs of a growing civilization. It was replaced by syllabic writing, in which the logograms have lost their ideographic integrity, transforming into varying batches of dots and dashes for each syllable. Closer to us, the phonetic writing appeared at the turn of the second and first millennia B.C. In contrast to the previous systems of writing, the new one managed with only 20–30 characters. Most modern writing systems lead their history from the Phoenician phonetic writing. The Phoenicians not only created the alphabet closest to us, they were the first sailors of the Mediterranean world. To the Phoenicians, in *interpretatio Graeca*, we owe the very name of our continent. Europe, according to the ancient Greek myth, was the the name of a daughter of a Phoenician king. With her name, a part of the Western Mediterranean was called, and later the whole continent. Thus, the myth serves as a narrative with the help of which the human thought not only tries to explain the incomprehensible phenomena of nature, but also to master its forces, to put it under human control. Mythology consists of two layers: figurative, inherited from art, and semantic. At a certain time in a certain place, as logical thinking evolves, the semantic layer comes to the fore and rises above the layer of images. A process of conscious replacement of images with concepts begins, the transition from myth to logos. This is the transition point from mythology to philosophy.

2. Problem Statement

Greek mythology becomes the primary source of philosophy. One of the reasons for the origin of philosophy taking place in Greece is the beauty of the Greek myth. Obviously, the Greek myth differed from its Babylonian or Egyptian counterparts with its particularly well developed representation of harmony, its penchant for measure and proportionality. In addition, the Greek myth is distinguished with at least partial presence of cause and effect sequences, that is, with the classical logicity and consistency of thinking. In the VI–V centuries B.C., early Greek philosophers still experience a strong influence of mythological imagery. However, they are already trying to explain the phenomena of nature on the basis of natural causes, which humanity is able to learn with the help of reason, that is, through their careful observation. The first philosophers do not consider man as such, he is still only a part of a single organism which is nature. All elements of this organism are divided into variable and unchanging ones. The man may be an infant, an adult or an oldster, but the sky ever remains unchanging. Thus, man begins to single out the

categories of the temporal and the eternal. He realizes that those elements of nature as a single organism which are born are sure to die, while the eternal is that which is never born and therefore never dies. In search of the eternal, Thales comes to the conclusion that this eternal primary element is water, for him it is ἀρχή, the beginning that is present in everything. Today's mentality is different from the ancient one, and it is, moreover, a medal with two sides. The one side is an extreme subjectivism, which differs substantially from the subjectivism of Protagoras the Sophist. Protagoras looked for something that was useful to the city, proceeding through a general discussion of individual ideas about what is useful; a modern subjectivist does not want to discuss anything, he is only interested in what is visible to him, and he does not see any sense in a discussion. This is also connected with modern nihilism. Even in the teaching of another Sophist, Gorgias, we can not say that there was nothing left after his rejection of ἀρχή: the words remained, still in plain view to everyone, and they were beautiful and useful. The other side of the modern mentality is an extreme abstraction, where concepts get very distant and invisible. An attempt of a certain branch of contemporary art to embody such concepts does not solve the problem. This modern problem of the relationship between the relative and the absolute has probably arisen as early as when it became clear, thanks to the new physics, that stars, contrary to Aristotle's conviction, are not like eternal gods, but rather like earthly people who are born and eventually die. The problem became even more acute with the expansion, thanks to the new natural sciences, of the notion of the invisible (Einstein's macrocosm and the microcosm of quantum physics) that is visible only to a narrow circle of scientists. But this is beyond the scope of this essay. Philosophy by its nature tends to the revelation of truth. From the very beginning, it entertained a complex relationship with those ancient religions that tended to hide the images of God inside a temple, because otherwise his full form would prove to be terrible and unbearable for a mere mortal.

3. Research Questions

This article is primarily a result of my experience as a teacher. For didactic goals, turning to the origins of philosophy, its consideration in connection with the history of art may prove very productive, since human thought finds its first cultural expression in art.

4. Purpose of the Study

There is especially one task that I believe is inevitable in this context: first off, we must clarify the problem of the relationship between religion and philosophy. An answer to this question is pending in the conclusion of this article.

5. Research Methods

In order to study the history of philosophy, it is worthwhile to avoid, by all means, our own urges of deterministic approach, which is the legacy of a certain kind of Marxism, where the change of epochs is considered predetermined, thus excluding the freedom of human creativity at the beginning of every era (as mentioned by the philosopher Arendt (1958). Hegel was also convinced that the philosopher writes only at the end of an era, and he can't at its dawn anticipate the main novelty coming (Hegel, 1965). Therefore, as a methodological basis for my research, I apply historico-philosophical approach which sees continuity and novelty as the main constants, at the beginnings as well as the endings of each era.

6. Findings

It is important to emphasize that the category of eternity was born in Greek philosophy not independently, but in connection with those conclusions of the Neolithic era, when man first turned his gaze to the sky and singled out the categories of the near and far, visible and invisible by his art. Emphasizing this helps a modern student to understand philosophical thinking as something very concrete. Greek thinking is particularly concrete, because, one way or another, it is associated with what can or can not be seen by everyone. One example of classical Greek art solved the problem of the relationship between the far and the near, visible and invisible, in the context of its epoch. The *Discobolus* of Miron, as the very name of the statue implies, throws the disk into the sky. This is the symbol of philosophy itself, which means love, in the sense of aspiration, to that total knowledge that is found in the heavens of the gods, who are constantly contemplating, unlike humans, the Sun of Truth, that is, Plato's *Eidos*. This is also reminiscent of the monkey in the famous movie by S. Kubrick, who throws a bone into the sky: according to the director, the emergence of reason manifests itself in the 'find' of the tool (Villa, 2005).

A dialogue, unlike the ancient conflict between the philosopher's desire to see and clarify everything and the need of religion to hide the terrible image of God, today is possible today between philosophy as a whole and the Christian religion. The dialogue is based on what is written in *Jn.* 1:18. The problem is in the translation: the passage supposedly says that only the Son sees the Father and shows Him to all people. However, the Russian Synodal translation is incorrect, and is surprisingly basing here not on the Greek original, but on the Latin translation of St. Jerome, as, indeed, in other important places of the Bible. Jerome has *enarravit*, which means to fully convey in a verbal story something that has been seen by the eyes. And in fact, the original Greek term here is ἐξηγήσατο (Nestle-Aland, 1993, p. 248), which translates "interpreted". The Son *interprets* the Father for the people, and, translating God's language into a certain human language of a certain epoch, He creates a situation in which there are also possible misunderstandings between different mentalities of different times, as well as simple human errors. And people should not stop studying these divine-human words, also with the help of a scientific analysis of philological and historical human contexts and realities. At one time, Socrates did just this when he interpreted the words of the Oracle that he, Socrates, was the wisest Greek, and clarified that this was true exactly because he, Socrates, was saying that he did not know anything, as in *Ap.* 21a (Plato, 1903). Interpretation always means effort, search, research, task, science.

7. Conclusion

Conversely, the restriction imposed by religion on the concept of 'revelation' always implies a risk for the faith to be taken as a convenient property and a 'monopoly' granted once and for all times to only a few people from whom nothing special is ever required except to jealously defend 'one's own' against everything 'foreign'. Therefore, it is in the dialogue between thinking as revelation and revelation as interpretation that there is also a hope for some day solving the conflict between 'reason' and 'faith'.

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