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CONFRONTATION OF SCIENTIFIC REASON AND NATURE IN THE FILM “SOLARIS” (A. TARKOVSKY)

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Abstract

In the article, the author analyzes the ethical and philosophical content of the film “Solaris” (1972) produced by the outstanding Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky, based on the same name novel written by Stanislaw Lem, the Polish writer and thinker. Unlike Lem, the director does not praise the courage of space explorers, but shows the paramount importance of moral choice for a scientist. The central place in the film is occupied by the problem of the confrontation between scientific reason and nature, which is revealed through the artistic comprehension of such important problems of modern philosophy as the relationship between science and morality, technology and nature. The director shows the negative consequences of scientific knowledge when the abstract reason detaches from other abilities of human spirit and begins to relate to nature and man as inanimate objects. The nature in Solaris, like a person, has spirituality, the highest manifestation of which is love. However, unlike a person, it is morally perfect and does not make mistakes. The author comes to the conclusion that in his view of reality, Tarkovsky primarily relies on the Russian philosophical tradition. Following the Slavophiles, he proceeds from the idea of the unity of all the abilities of human spirit and the priority of love for fellow being, and like Vladimir Solovyov he shows nature as a living creature with which a person is connected both in his physical and metaphysical existence, taking the position of “religious materialism”.

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1. Introduction

In the context of globalization and the emergence of global science, the problems that scientists face in their research activities become universal. The most important of them is the problem of the correlation of scientific reason and nature, which received artistic interpretation in the film “Solaris” by Andrei Tarkovsky, the outstanding Russian director. Tarkovsky continues the traditions of Russian philosophy, the representatives of which are trying to overcome the limitations of European culture, which, in their opinion, has chosen the way of intellectual development: “Intellect invented and arranged, without thinking about the moral significance of its activities. Therefore, it turned out that a dreadnought is the crown of European culture” (Uspensky, 1916, p. 21). For the Russian philosophical tradition, truth cannot be discovered in a purely intellectual way. As Losev (2014) noted, “the idea of integral knowledge based on the organic fullness of life is the original idea of Slavophil and Russian philosophy” (p. 231). In the film “Solaris,” Tarkovsky successively fulfilled the task set before Russian philosophers by Ern (1991): “to recognize philosophically the realistic truth of the language of symbols that any true art has spoken, speaks, and will always speak, is the first step towards overcoming chaos of modern philosophy” (p. 71).

Tarkovsky, first of all, tried to show that scientific achievements do not always bring benefits to man, and scientific intelligence, devoid of moral content, is destructive to all living things. The fundamental dimension of human life, according to Tarkovsky, is spirituality, and love as its highest manifestation. The essence of the confrontation between these worldviews was clearly expressed by Evlampiev (2012): “The scientific mind and the secret of human soul” (p. 57). The director’s position largely coincides with the ideas of the Slavophiles. Khomyakov (1900) once argued:

Of all the laws of the moral world, according to which the mind must be built in order to receive knowledge, the first and highest is love; it is predominantly necessary for rational development. This provision is already full of consequences. Love is not the same desire: it requires, finds, creates echoes and communication, and grows in echoes and communication, grows stronger and develops. (p. 73)

Chris Kelvin, the main character, psychologist goes to the distant planet Solaris to make a decision on the spot about the fate of scientific research, which has reached a deadlock on Earth according to the opinion of scientists. All the attempts to establish contact with a supposedly thinking planet were unsuccessful. At the station, Kelvin learns that the scientists who are on the planet, decided to expose Solaris to X-ray radiation, which is harmful to all living forms known on Earth and contrary to the existing ban. A living and thinking planet, having experienced harsh mechanical effects from researchers, responded to them in a similar way. It made them objects of its own experiment. Having scanned the brain of scientists, Solaris reproduced in material form the most shameful and painful images from their memory. Thus, it put each of the research team of the station in front of one’s own “I”, which corresponds to the essence of scientific knowledge.

Relying only on scientific reason, it turns the whole world into a mirror in which one can see only oneself. This idea in the film is directly expressed by cybernetist Snout, one of the researchers of Solaris: “We do not want to conquer any cosmos at all. We want to expand the Earth to its borders. We do not know what to do with other worlds. We do not need other worlds! We need a mirror. We work on a

contact and never find it. We are in the stupid position of a man striving for a goal that he fears, which he does not need. Human needs human". The true existence of man, according to Tarkovsky, is based on all the spiritual forces of an individual and is possible only through people's understanding of each other.

As the author of the study on the hermeneutics of Tarkovsky's films Salynsky (2009) rightly notes: "In the film *Snout*, discovering a new truth that human needs only human, refuses from technocratic knowledge of the world" (p. 11).

2. Problem Statement

The opposition of scientific reason and nature is revealed in *Solaris* through an artistic understanding of the most important problems of modern philosophy: what is man, what is his true existence, how are science and morality, technology and nature related. Tarkovsky shows nature as a living animated creature. Nature is pervaded by the spirit, and the spirit is inseparable from nature. All natural beings are living. The planet *Solaris* also belongs to them. It is a thinking ocean, which gives rise to all reality perceived by man, like water in the teachings of the first European philosopher Thales of Miletus: "He considered water to be the beginning of all things, and cosmos to be animated and full of divine powers" (Fragments of the early Greek philosophers, 1989). As the Russian philosopher Solovyov (1990) pointed out:

A consistent thought must choose between two positions: there is no animated life either in nothing, even in a person, even in ourselves, or it is in every nature, differing only in degrees and forms. As there is no possibility, remaining on scientific grounds, to separate a person from the rest of the world ... the entire visible world ... it is the ongoing development or growth of a single living being. (p. 27)

Tarkovsky is close to Solovyov's position, who in his philosophy of nature tried to overcome both mechanistic materialism, which identifies the world with technical construction, and idealistic subjectivity, which reduces the world to an epistemological scheme. As it was asserted by Karsavin (1993), the successor of the ideas of the philosophy of all-unity of Solovyov, the spirituality of natural life is;

how is all-unity conceived of the absolute or the triune? How all-unity appears to be the ideal state of the participating absolute cosmos; and unity in its potentiality characterizes empirical being. But the intuition of unity is irreconcilable with the Western typical mechanistic interpretation of the world. (p. 169)

A man in *Solaris* is inextricably linked with nature both in his physical (body) and metaphysical (spirit) existence. Berdyaev (1994) expresses the same idea: "The elements of nature, the elements of space are also the spiritual elements of man; they are connected in the spiritual world. The microcosm and the macrocosm are revealed in spiritual life not in separateness, but in unity and interpenetration" (p. 37). However, the human spirit, unlike nature, which is perfect, can make mistakes, as it has free will. It is a person who is responsible for the fate of everything that happens. Each of the characters in the film makes its own moral choice.

In "*Solaris*" it is shown that true existence of human consists in human communication with other people and nature. The same idea is expressed by the Russian philosopher Kireevsky (1979): "...

everything that is essential in the soul of a person grows in it only socially" (p. 93). Kelvin spends the last days before the flight, contemplating the splendor of nature, enjoying its sounds and smells, feeling the coolness of rain water on his body. As Simonetta Salvestroni (2012), the professor of cinema history at the University of Cagliari (Italy) noted: "This is a place where land, water, animals and people live in harmony" (p. 55). Before flying into space, Kelvin's life was filled with science, displacing all human relations from it. He did not find time to communicate with his father, showed complete indifference to his wife Hari and, as a result, she committed suicide.

3. Research Questions

Science and technology are contrasted in *Solaris* with nature and man as forces that suppress all life. The transformation of science and technology into tools for capturing reality as an external object began with the splitting of rationalistic thinking, starting with Bacon and Descartes, of reality into a subject and an object. "Philosophy ceased to consider man in nature and life as it is in real, not dissected reality, it appeared only as a world of relations, not essences, as a mechanism of causes and effects" (Berdyayev, 1969, p. 71).

The development of mathematical science strengthened the position of science and technology as a means of domination of nature, and their further development led to the subordination of man. Science and technology ceased to be subordinated by man and became independent forces dominating both man and nature:

Previously, man was organically connected with nature, and his social life evolved accordingly with the life of nature. The machine radically changes this relationship between man and nature. It stands between man and nature, it not only conquers natural elements, but it conquers man himself; it not only liberates him in something, but also enslaves him in a new way (p. 23).

People's life began to obey abstract schemes and technical rhythms, as a result of which not only users, but also creators of technical means and regulations became dependent on technical necessity.

In *Solaris* there is no admiration of the fact that man conquers outer space. On the contrary, when Kelvin flies to the orbital station, the operator shows, not how a high-tech spacecraft plows the expanses of the universe, but how painfully distorted the face of an astronaut experiencing the hardships of flight. The mood of the protagonist is well described by the words of Pascal (Klyaus, 1968):

I see these terrifying spaces of the Universe that enclose me in myself, I feel attached to one place of this vast world, not realizing why I was placed here, and not in another place, why the short time that I have been given to live is assigned precisely in this, and not in another point of the whole eternity that precedes me and which follows me. (p. 265)

It is indicative that the technical equipment of the *Solaris* station was ignored by the filmmakers. As the director notes:

I would like to shoot *Solaris* in such a way that there is no exotic feeling (technical, I mean) on the screen. A detailed examination of the technological processes of the future turns the emotional foundation of the film as an artistic phenomenon into a dead scheme that claims to be the truth. (Tarkovsky, 1989, p. 14)

Kelvin finds the station almost empty, half-abandoned and unsightly. The crew members of the station are separated and isolated from each other. Each of the scientists is experiencing the consequences of exposure to Solaris alone: the technosphere suppresses the spirit, destroys spiritual unity and generates the estrangement of people from each other. As Berdyaev (1933) notes, “technology is always ruthless to everything living and existing. The pity for the living and the existing nature should limit the power of technology in life” (p. 7).

For the doctor Gibaryan, the impact of Solaris ends tragically – the scientist does not cope with remorse and commits suicide. The cybernetist Snout is confused and inactive. The astrobiologist Sartorius, under the pretext of serving the truth, focuses on experiments on the dismemberment and dissection of Solaris creatures. His actions are as soulless and ruthless as the actions of a Nazi doctor who performed the experiments with prisoners of a concentration camp. He completely lost the ability to empathize. Scientific thinking suppressed all his other spiritual abilities, turning a person into a cognitive machine. He divides living bodies in practice, as mundane as the mind mentally divides them in his analysis. Only Kelvin deliberately ceases to act only as a scientist and is guided by all his spiritual abilities.

Tarkovsky makes a copy of the dead wife of Kelvin Hari, created by Solaris, a criterion for the moral assessment of the station's inhabitants. Thus Sartorius looks at Hari, as well as at the planet Solaris, exclusively from the position of the scientific mind as at a simple object for experimentation. For Snout, the question of Hari's origin is insoluble. Unlike Sartorius, he has a sense of compassion. However, Snout is not able to reconcile his moral ideas with scientific knowledge. Kelvin's first reaction to Hari was fear; he tried to get rid of her. But then, when Solaris recreated Hari again and Kelvin began to communicate closely with her, he felt the strength of her sincere affection for him and had sympathy for her.

In addition, Kelvin was tormented by a sense of guilt about his wife who died because of his soullessness. Soon he discovered that Hari was becoming more independent both in understanding reality and in her behavior. Moreover, seeing Chris's tormenting nature of their relationship, she sacrifices her life for him. Hari's death is her personal attitude towards Chris, since she does not want to be the cause of his suffering. This is an expression of sacrificial love, which is one of the highest manifestations of human spirit.

As Tumanov (2010) rightly notes, characterizing Tarkovsky's position, “love and human emotions are of paramount importance in the Universe” (para. 8). This understanding is expressed by Solaris in the final episodes of the film when he creates on his surface a scene of Chris returning home, to his father. “On the doorstep of her father's house, Chris kneels for the last time, after he kneeled before Hari twice. This gesture expresses a request for forgiveness. At the same time, it is a sign of appreciation and love for the person who helped him grow, understand the meaning of life and its value” (Salvestroni, 2012, p. 22). The planet is moving from scientific knowledge to dialogue with Kelvin, thereby establishing a long-awaited contact with Solaris.

The ocean responded to that very special feature, to the memory of the heart, to the bitterness of Chris Kelvin's nostalgia, which forever encoded mother and beloved woman, guilt and atonement, native home and native Earth, its rustles and smells, and the sound of rain that fell on the open terrace. (Turovskaya, 1991, p. 59).

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research is the conceptualization of artistic understanding of the problem of the confrontation between scientific reason and nature and finding a way to solve it in Russian religious philosophy.

5. Research Methods

During the research the following methods were used: dialectical method; description; analysis; synthesis; comparison; generalization; induction; abstraction.

6. Findings

The way to solve the problem of the confrontation between scientific reason and nature, which received artistic comprehension in the film “Solaris” in accordance with the ideas of Russian religious philosophers, is to set the scientist in his work on moral consciousness and, above all, on love for all living beings.

7. Conclusion

In this film Tarkovsky holds the idea that nature and man are spiritual beings, and on this basis we must relate to nature personally, enter into dialogue with it. Only in unity with nature and other people it is possible for a person to truly exist. The scientific reason, detached from other abilities of spirit, is destructive, as it relates to nature and to people as to impersonal mechanisms and objects for experimentation. Scientists see only themselves in it as in a mirror. Truth is revealed not in a monologue, but in a dialogue, and accordingly not in cognition, but in understanding. The scientist’s activity is justified only when it is not based on abstract reason, but on all his spiritual abilities and, above all, on moral consciousness.

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