
PHILOSOPHY AND PHILOLOGY: ASPECTS OF INTERACTION

CONCERNING THE PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND OF LYRICAL POETRY: SOME PRELIMINARY NOTES

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The phenomenon of lyric poetry is described as a special, internally necessary form of self-realization of person in culture and, moreover, as a special form of self-realization of culture as it is. At the heart of this phenomenon there are the principles of spontaneous self-discovery of human personality in a rhythmic speech flow and at the same time — spontaneous integration of personality into trends and meanings of language and culture. Both of these principles assume, first, expansion of a search field of human memory and associations, and, secondly, a search field of communication between people. Thus, the lyric poetry appears to be a necessary, though semi-hidden, ingredient of sociality and civil relations, accustoming us to involuntary self-knowledge and aspiration to find contacts with the other person and, therefore, to wisdom and tolerance.

Key words: philosophy, lyric poetry, creativity, culture, language, existential, sudden, spontaneous integration, interlocutor, reference.

As it seems me, such kind of formulation of our coming discourse could involve us not only in the matter of understanding of the nature of lyrical poetry itself, but, moreover, in the matter of understanding of human cognition as well as human creativity.

Once upon a time British scientist and philosopher Michael Polanyi had defined human creativity, especially in its crucial moments, as certain “spontaneous integration”, or spontaneous association and mutual correlation of different and seemingly unlike verbal and imaginative streams in the same human experience [6].

This generalization of creative scientific practices may be also used for our following interpretation of the poetical, or better to say, *lyrical phenomenon*.

Surely, we could define the lyric poetry as well as the poetical sphere itself as a final realization of spontaneous *tacit knowledge* (once more, Polanyi’s notion) being willy-nilly cherished by the poet, as usual, through years and years. This final and sometimes unexpected realization means almost sudden reciprocal discovery of the stream of speech in human existence as well as (*vice versa*) an almost sudden discovery of human existence in the stream of speech. This spontaneous transformation of “tacit

knowledge” into the meaningful and beautiful stream of speech and, moreover, stream of language (1), was acutely marked in the early poetry of Boris Pasternak:

И сады, и пруды, и ограды,
И кипящее белыми воплями
Мирозданье — лишь страсти разряды,
Человеческим сердцем накопленной.

(“Gardens, ponds, fences, // And the Universe itself, full of bubbling white screams, — // All these things are only discharges of passion // Accumulated by human heart”) (2) ...

If we have to speak not only about the wide phenomenon of creativity, but about more specific area of creativity in poetical field, it is necessary to underline the primacy of *language* in the matter of poetry. It is worthy to remember that the very notion of poetry used in the present day language is rooted in the Greek *ποιησις*, meaning not only sublime poetical work, but also the almost prosaic working processes. Thus, the notion of *ποιησις* could also mean a kind of language practices.

Passions and images cherished in the depth of our consciousness, semi-consciousness or subconscious (3) are being transformed in sometimes momentary acts of poetical creation into something organized and animated by the structures and meanings, sometimes paradoxical, of our common language. And thanks the language, thanks the inner work of our thought and consciousness these deep processes receive more or less understandable and rational expression.

Non-linear, instant, non-commonplace character of poetical associations proves unique character of human experience as well as existence. Thanks completed and finally trimmed poetical text the poet’s Bergsonian *durée* becomes almost common cultural as well as mental heritage.

Lyrical poetry responds the peculiar human need for transforming of our intimate pains and conflicts into some conditional meaning, order and beauty. But, as we know thanks the works of outstanding philosophers of science (K.R. Popper, T.S. Kuhn, I. Lakatos e.a.), the more responses we get the more questions we have to put. And — sometimes — the more wide audience we have to address [5].

Thus, it is a high time to precede to the problem of audience as well as of the addressee of the lyrical poetry.

As it seems, it’s important to note: human uniqueness is by no means closed in itself, but necessary needing somebody other, needing for some kind of interlocutor or addressee, maybe not only known, but also unknown, though demanded (4). Sometimes this interlocutor could be denoted not only as “you” or “Thou”, but also as “he” or “she” (the latter kind of silent interlocutor was displayed in Lermontov’s masterpiece “The Dream” — «*В полдневный жар, в долине Дагестана...*»). But such kind of substitute is not so important.

Even the Lord Himself from the time of the Psalmists is being perceived as necessary Interlocutor of the lyrical *ποιησις* through ages and ages. And the range of such

poetry is very wide: from loud enthusiastic praises up to the semi-whisper of confession. Let us once more remember the early poetry of Boris Pasternak. I mean his untitled octave written in 1915:

Не как люди, не еженедельно,
Не всегда, в столетье раза два
Я молил Тебя: членораздельно
Повтори творящие слова.

И тебе ж невыносимы смеси
Откровений и людских неволь.
Как же хочешь Ты, чтоб был я весел,
С кем бы стал Ты есть земную соль?

(“Not as all the people, as they use to do weekly, // But seldom, maybe only twice a century, // I prayed Thee: please, // Repeat Thy creating words in articulated way.

All these blends of revelations and purely human compulsion // Are also, I should say, unbearable for Thee. // Thus, how do Thou want me to be marry? // Whom doth Thou need for sharing the salt of the Earth?”).

I would like also to quote another paradoxical example of almost whispering as well as confessional poetic prayer written by another great master of Slavic poetical area: the Pole Leopold Staff (1878—1957). This quatrain was written by Staff in the end of his life:

Stojąc sam na milczenia progu,
Tracę na zawsze twoje imię,
Druga osobo dialogu,
Wiecznej mgławicy pseudonimie.

(“Standing alone on the threshold of silence, // I’m losing Thy Name forever, // Oh, Thou, the second Person of the dialogue // And the pseudonym of eternal nebula”).

As it seems, the very fact of our persistent need for interlocutor is the reason why Benedetto Croce denoted lyrical poetry as “the quintessence of humanity” [3. P. 349].

This kind of penetrative dialogue and penetrative communication may also be described as a manifest “spontaneous integration” of our existential as well as esthetical and linguistic experience in the rhythmical stream of speech. This correlative integration deals not only with the necessary human need for gathering of the Universe in our mind, but also the need of inner collecting of ourselves. Through our poetic experience (not only in making, but also in listening or reading poetry we are trying to find the intimate connections or correlations among the Universe and ourselves, among the Macrocosm and our tiny and fragmentary Microcosms). If to remember Eckermann’s record of Goethe’s conversation on January 27, 1824, the old poet’s words were as following.

According to Goethe, his poetical experience, especially in the end of his life, helped him to collect the Life, including the life of his own, as the kind of his intimate chronological order (“*als Annalen*”) [4. P. 101].

In many respects this statement reminds Plato's idea concerning remembering / recollection (*αναμνησις*) as the necessary premise of the gathering of the Universe in ourselves and, *vice versa*, of the inner gathering ourselves in the Universe (Phaedrus, 249b-d). Special features of this remembering / recollection are very peculiar things being out of the ranks of our present discourse. But as for myself, I should once more underline a specific and spontaneous character of lyrical poetry, its necessary role in the process of organization of our *αναμνησις*.

This accent on the fact of spontaneous, immediate poetical illumination partly leads us out of the borders of classic Athenian philosophical heritage (nevertheless, not out of the border of classic Athenian drama). Poetical phenomenon of immediate correlation of things as well as immediate gathering of fragmentary and semi-distracted human existence partly drawing us near some trends of the ancient Oriental thinking, including Israel, India, China. Quite the same could be said concerning the tradition of Christian Patristics as well as the tradition of Christian mysticism (Jacob Boehme, Vladimir Solovyev e.a.).

Thus, the very culture of poetical meditation with its accent on immediate correlation of things, symbols, feelings and thoughts helps us to get more deep understanding of many trends in modern as well as in post-modern European, American and Slavic philosophical and scientific thinking [5]. If to remember Gaston Bachelard — "*La poésie est une métaphysique instantanée*" [1. H. 224]: The poetry is a kind of momentary metaphysics.

This paradoxical definition of poetry given by French philosopher brings us closely to understanding of lyrical poetry as a certain display of animated, though conditionally verbalized, Wisdom. This kind of Wisdom is erecting and supporting human being from early, infantile stages of life and — sometimes — up to the ultimate hours: *in hora mortis nostrae*.

Thus, sometimes poetical experience could be one of the preconditions of human steadfastness and surviving in the crucial circumstances of human life. I have managed to listen or to read many written or oral witnesses of different survivors of Nazi or Bolshevik concentration camps (including Austrians, Poles, Russians) concerning poetry, certainly without books, only thanks memory, as a substantial supporting factor in their almost hopeless camp situation.

Thus, different kinds of poetical experience, either making remembering / recollection (*αναμνησις!*) of poetry could be understood not only as a mere "reflection" of the Universe, but also as its *human re-construction* (5). And, moreover, the human Universe's furthest development.

As a brilliant example of such poetical correlative recollection I would like to remember one relatively short Emily Dickinson's poem "*There came a Wind like a Bugle...*" (1883):

There came a Wind like a Bugle —
It quivered through the Grass
And a Green Chill upon the Heat
So ominous did pass
We barred the Windows and the Doors

As from an Emerald Ghost —
The Doom's electric Moccasin
That very instant passed —
On the strange Mob of panting Trees
And Fences fled away
And Rivers where the Houses ran
Those looked that lived — that Day —
The Bell within the steeple wild
The flying tidings told —
How much can come
And much can go,
And yet abide the World!

To resume this paper as well as to remember some ideas and notions introduced by Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the Poetical Phenomenon seems me to be an integral part of the Human One. Poetical experience of human person (the poet himself or readers of his poetry: this distinction almost does not matter) seems me to be necessary school of the art of instant and sometimes integrative correlation of things, minds, and hearts.

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FOOTNOTES

- (1) This transformation of “common words” of our common language into the beautiful and rhythmically organized stream of speech is one of the main problems of Aristotelian “Poetics”.
- (2) This is the quotation from Pasternak’s poem “The Definition of Creativity” (1919?). Probably, this quatrain may be the root of L.S. Vygotsky’s teaching of creative act as a “discharge” of so heavy and sometimes long internal stress which could be the precondition of the creative escape from the state of stress.
- (3) Certainly, the world of our subconscious is not only poignant Freudian “It”. Rooted in the depth of our psycho-somatic structure rhythmical feeling [8] transforms in human experience into some kind of universal, but very difficult for rationalization *intuition of beauty*. In many respects this intuition has an attribute to sublimate the very state of our mind in different fields of its experience including our artistic, scientific, philosophical as well as religious experience [2].
- (4) The notion of *invitation of interlocutor* as one of the basic principles of lyrical poetry is described in my book “Meanings in History” [7. P. 319—332].
- (5) We have in Russian a very strong noun for denoting this process: *воссоздание*.

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ФИЛОСОФСКИЕ СМЫСЛЫ В ЛИРИЧЕСКОЙ ПОЭЗИИ: К ПОСТАНОВКЕ ВОПРОСА

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Феномен лирической поэзии описывается как особая, внутренне необходимая форма самоосуществления человека в мысли и культуре. В основе этого феномена лежит принцип спонтанного самонахождения человеческой личности в ритмическом речевом потоке и одновременно — спонтанного приобщения личности к стихиям и смыслам языка и культуры. Оба эти принципа предполагают, во-первых, расширение поискового поля человеческой памяти и ассоциаций, а, во-вторых, поискового поля общения между людьми. Таким образом, лирическая поэзия, развивая и мысль и язык, оказывается необходимым ингредиентом развития самих процессов истории. Исторически поддерживая в нас потребность неявного, но глубокого и задушевного собеседования с другими, непохожими на нас людьми, лирическая поэзия оказывается неявным, но существенным ингредиентом социальности и гражданских отношений, приучая нас к самопознанию и стремлению найти контакты с другим человеком и, следовательно, к мудрости и толерантности.

Ключевые слова: философия, лирическая поэзия, творчество, культура, язык, экзистенция, внезапность, «спонтанная интеграция», собеседник, соотнесение.