

Section Four

COSMOLOGY IN PERSONS

The Conceptualization of Σοφία in Ancient Greek Philosophy: from Earthly to Cosmological

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The article reveals the evolution of the concept of σοφία in the ancient philosophical tradition. It is established that in ancient texts, for the most part, attention is focused on the general understanding of this concept, namely on the interpretation of σοφία as wisdom, practicality, and abilities. It is proved that in the Neoplatonic tradition, primarily in Plotinus' works, σοφία acquires a cosmological character, and therefore in the ancient Greek culture, we can see the transformation of the understanding of this term in the displacement of its interpretation from purely earthly to heavenly. Philosophy of Plotinus, according to Alexei Losev, has a speculative-theoretical nature, which allows us to study the specifics of the abstract understanding of cosmology in ancient culture. Plotinus focuses his attention on such concepts as the One, the Mind, and the Soul. The specifics of the existence of the concept of σοφία is revealed through an appeal to the One in the philosophy of Plotinus. The One acts as an intermediary, which ensures the emanation of σοφία from God to the world. In the concept of Plotinus, the theory of the ascent of the soul from sensual fragmentation to spiritual concentration, when the mind concentrates in the One, is also important. Plotinus, accordingly, refers in this context to the concept of νοϋς, which is an ideal world of forms. It is found that the external nature of this concept in Neoplatonism is revealed in the fact that σοφία refers not so much to earthly wisdom as to the understanding of man's place in the universe. The Logos, which is realized on the basis of the Mind, Plotinus calls εἶδος, in relation to which the philosopher uses the term σοφία (wisdom, sophia). It is the main principle of the Plotinus' aesthetics. Thus, in the center of Plotinus' thinking is the problem of the unhappy situation of human in the world, the person who suffers. Accordingly, cosmology (and cosmogony) go alongside with the concept of Plotinus about the human. Plotinus tries to comprehend the reasons that led to such consequences. Sophia devoted a separate doctrine — sophiology. It is presented especially vividly in Russian philosophical thought. In particular, this article examines the concept of sophiology in the philosophy of Sergei Bulgakov, where the Sophia is the basis of the world's ontological unity of the

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(*sophological monism*). Pagan, ancient interpretations of the concept of σοφία, thus, turn into the biblical image of Sophia, which receives a broad philosophical (abstract) interpretation.

Keywords: σοφία, ancient philosophy, Plotinus, cosmology, wisdom

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Introduction

In the world of philosophical and religious traditions, there are concepts and terms that have gone the red thread in their historical process. These categories often radically altered their semantics and meaning of use, but this was not only an indication of the extension of connotations but also of the development of reflections on a particular phenomenon. There is no exception to this and the term σοφία. His long history is filled not only with different meanings and with significances in one or another historical period but also from time to time made fundamental changes in the development of Western and Slavic cultures.

Understanding of σοφία in pre-classical and classical ancient Greece tradition

Foremost, it should be emphasized that in the fundamental dictionaries of the ancient Greek language, the ancient culture, the term σοφία has a number of such meanings [Liddell, Scott, 1894: 1368; Dvoretzkiy, 1958: 1490]:

1. Skill or ability:

a) in crafts and art, or in carpentry works in the “Iliad” (τέκτονος, ὃς ῥά τε πάσης εὔειδισ). [Il.14.412]; telchines in Pindar, [Pi.O.7.53]; Hephaestus and Athena in Plato’s “Protagoras” [Pl.Prt.32 1d]; Daedalus and Palamedes in the “Memorabilia” of Xenophon [X.Mem.4.2.33];

b) in music and singing in the Homeric anthem to Mercury [h.Merc.483, cf. 511];

c) in poetry in legacy Solon, Pindar, Xenophon, and Aristophanes [Sol.13.52, Pi.O.1.117, Ar.Ra.882, X.An.1.2.8];

c) in the control in “Theages” of Plato [Pl. Thg.123c];

d) in medicine and surgery in the Pindar’s “Pythian odes” [Pi.P.3.54];

e) in the divination of the Sophocles’ “Oedipus” [S.OT 502 (Iyr.); “δυσθανατῶν ὑπὸ σοφίας εἰς γῆρας ἀφίκετο” in “Republic” of Plato [Pl.R.406b; 365d]; and in “Ion”, “Apologia Socratis” of Plato [Pl.Ion 542a; Pl.Ap.22b]; and also in Aristotle’s “Ethica Nicomachea” [EN1141a12] etc.

2. Mastery in matters of common life. rational judgment, intelligence, practical wisdom, etc., as, for example, was attributed to the Seven Wise Men, for example:

a) like φρόνησις in Theognis [Thgn.790,876,1074] and Herodotus [Hdt.1.30,60], or in Plato’s “Protagoras” [Pl.Prt.360d] and Plutarch’s “Themictocles” [Plu.Them.2];

b) cunning, shrewdness, craft in Herodotus [Hdt.1.68] and Pindar [Pi.O. 9.38],

3. Learning, wisdom, “μείζω τινα ἢ κατ’ ἄνθρωπον σοφίαν σοφοί” [Pl.Ap.20e]; οὐραμαθία, ib.22e; freq. in E., e.g. “μόρσιμα οὐ σοφία τις ἀπόσεται” [Heracl.615] (Iyr.); τὸ σοφὸν οὐ σοφία (v. “σοφός” 1.3) Ba.395 (Iyr.), etc.; freq. in Arist., speculative wisdom,

[EN 1141a19], [Metaph. 982a2, 995b12 (pl.), 1059a18]; defined as θείων τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων ἐπιστήμη, Stoic.2.15; but also of natural philosophy and mathematics, “ζ. τις καὶ ἡ φυσικὴ” [Arist.Metaph.1005b1, cf. 1061b33].

4. Later as a title, ἡ ὑμέτερα, ἡ ὑμῶν ζ. [POxy.1165.6], [PSI7.790.14] (both vi A.D.).

However, in early Ancient Greek thought, the theme of wisdom (concept σοφία) is undoubtedly less reflective than ontological problems. It should be emphasized that none of the thinkers are not written on σοφία as an ontological principle, nor any foundation of the world. However, we can see that in Thales, wisdom does not mean verbosity [11 A 35 DK], so it follows logically that Pythagoras says that he is not wise, but only aspires to wisdom (thus there is a philosopher) [14 B 21a DK]. It must also be said that Xenophanes classifies wisdom as one of the properties of a deity, deducing his first monotheistic conception in the history of world philosophy [21 A 1 DK]. A relatively integral conception of wisdom we can see from the Ephesian sage — Heraclitus. Thus, he affirms the monism of wisdom, and also shows and proves the unity of her and the Logos.

Wisdom, σοφία is an important topic of Plato’s dialogues, and as the subject of discussion is constantly present in them. Therefore, we can meet the search for wisdom in the “Theages” [121c-126d], and in “Cratylus” he tries to find the etymology of σοφία [412c]. In turn, the “Symposium” by the mouths of Diotima speaks of the close connection of wisdom and Eros, which makes the latter a great genius, interpreter, mediator between gods and people [204a-c]. Also not the last value the theme of wisdom takes in Plato in the dialogues “Protagoras” [333a-b], “Republic”.

Such attention to σοφία in the legacy of Plato is due not only to the position of his Teacher (Socrates) in the Sophists but also because, as Oleg Bazaluk notes, “the split of the Homeric education on the line of Plato and Isocrates began with Socrates and sophists”. As we can see from studies by Werner Yeager and Henri-Irene Marr, these lines and, accordingly, the theories of education, not only confronted each other, but also quite often united, together speaking against other educational practices Education in Socrates is a concern for the perfection of the soul, Plato writes in Apology (29d-30b). “Sophists, in turn, believed that education should pursue more utilitarian goals, filling the vital needs of society” [Bazaluk, 2018: 243–244].

In its turn in Aristotle, as Natalia Vaganova writes, wisdom is identical with knowledge. In “Metaphysics”, *wisdom-σοφία* and *wisdom-philosophy* are synonymous: wisdom is the science of beginnings. Wisdom is not “any of sensory perceptions” (981 b 10). It is a science that “explores the first principles and causes”, but not “the art of creation” (982 b 9-11), since the sciences of the speculative, as we know, are higher “than the arts of creation” (982 a 1–2) and the first philosophy explores “self-existing and immovable” (1026 and 18–19), i. e. “existence as being” (1026 and 31–32). But in the “Nicomachean Ethics”, wisdom is also the “most accurate of all sciences” (1141 and 17) and the main science of “what is most valuable” (1141 and 20) [Vaganova, 2011: 37–38].

In general, we can conclude that in the pre-classical and classical period, as noted by Giennadij Mayorov, the experience of comprehension of wisdom was accumulated great. It is also clear that at the end of the VI — the beginning of the V century, σοφία is filled with moral power and meaningful content, and the healthy skepticism about human possibilities increasingly distributes true wisdom to heaven, leaving it to the person only as a desirable but inaccessible goal. On the other hand, in the same period, European science emerges and develops rapidly: first, mathematics and science (including medicine and geography), and the history, linguistics, and rhetoric [Mayorov, 2002: 145].

Accordingly, it is quite logical that in the Hellenistic period, namely in the context of Neoplatonism, this concept acquires a purely cosmological meaning. Let us consider this more in detail on the example of the philosophy of Plotinus.

Plotinus' understanding of σοφία

According to Alexei Losev, during the period of Greek antiquity, a very harmonious conception of the Cosmos was created. The Greeks believed that Eros creates the cosmos from Chaos. The very term “cosmos” can be interpreted as “harmony”, “order”, “modus”, and “beauty”. To prove and substantiate his position, Alexei Losev refers to Plato’s dialogue “Timaeus”: the main thing for the human soul is to imitate the movement of celestial bodies, for they perfectly rotate for ages and the sky is always equally symmetrical, harmonious, without any violation. “This cosmos has always passed from chaos to universal design and from this latter to chaos. Such an eternal rotation of chaos and cosmos was not only clear and convincing in antiquity, but also soothing and consoling” [Losev, 1969: 323]. The author shows that the Platonic representation of the Cosmos is characteristic of the ancient worldview as a whole: the “corporeal-pliable” cosmos in the main opponent of Plato — Aristotle is the eternal realization of the One, the Mind and the Soul, and at the same time the best and most beautiful work of art and the embodiment of divine beauty. It is possible that it is precisely in the gravitation of man to the Cosmos, in his striving to overcome chaos, that not only art but also the experience of various historical cultures, is imperative. On the example of the comparison of a limited world — the cosmos of antiquity — and boundless space — the chaos of the New European culture.

Therefore, Alexei Losev considered the ancient cosmos as a *pied-a-terre* for that experience of worldview in which a person tries to preserve not only his own proportionality to the world but the world itself. Thus, the human was considered as something included in a wider context of being, wholly subject to the laws of “cosmic”, that is, natural, orderliness. First, the concept of “the universe as an integrity” is related, in fact, to the ancient concept of Cosmos (from the Greek *κόσμος* — the universe). Secondly, scientific knowledge now acquires the features of metaphysical knowledge, i. e. knowledge obtained only through the mind (although, unlike antiquity, the mind in cosmological science is a mind exclusively human and not connected with the cosmic Logos). Last, the criteria of the truth of the cosmological theory are, as a rule, intrascientific criteria that are based on such principles of reason as expediency, proportionality, harmony.

The sensuality of the earth is associated with gravity, and gravity. Plotinus describes in detail the process of occurrence of gravity, the magnitude and extent of sensory objects. It turns out that these properties have no eidetic origin (what are the essence of certain qualities: color, size, shape, etc.), but are brought into the body from the side of matter already possessing an uncertain weight and extent, and with the advent of εἶδος they only accept a particular quantity (the amount of gravity becomes mass, and the amount of stretch becomes length). However, it is clear that pure matter has absolutely no certainty, and therefore both gravity and extension are introduced into it by some preliminary influence of the intelligible world. Plotinus does not doubt the eternity and unconsciousness of the cosmos, including its matter, and therefore the impossibility of any kind of cosmogony. Therefore, matter as such, in its “pure” condition, that is, conceivable without regard to any eidetic design, will be neither a stretch nor a weight. Heaviness is accompanied by a value (μέγεθος), and the presence of both of them differs from the soul, which also “accepts” all things in itself; but in the soul, things are present without value, and therefore neither extension nor gravity. Matter,

first of all, acquires these three characteristics, and then it already gives birth to independent things.

As is known, in the center of Plotinus' philosophy — the dialectic of three main ontological substances — the One, the Intellect, and the Soul. Exactly Plotinus gives for the first time a clear systematic analysis of this triad, fragmentarily outlined in Plato. The most original is Plotinus' doctrine of the One as the transcendent principle, which exceeds everything that exists and is conceivable and precedes it. The One, speaking as the first essence of being, is neither intelligence nor a potential subject of intelligent knowledge. The hierarchy of being extends from the One, on the steps of His ascent to matter — for the lower boundary.

How can the soul comprehend the One? There is only one way — to know one. It is necessary to discover the One as the beginning in oneself, and this means, first, to give up thinking in all sensory images, that is, to leave the realm of representation, and to entrust oneself to a pure mind. This is the path not only of knowing yourself but also of salvation and distance from evil. Secondly, raising the soul to the mind, it is in it to find the beginning of the mind and with its help to become a contemplative of the One. To contemplate the One does not mean to know it, to know the One is impossible. To contemplate the One means to be together with the One. In this sense, Plotinus speaks of the theory of the One, not in the sense of discursive or intuitive thinking, but in the sense of the beginning of thinking as being together with the One. Why the One does is all and nothing at the same time? If the One is only one, it is nothing of what exists, one cannot speak or think about it. If the One exists, it turns into all things, all possible senses. The one is the condition for the existence of many things, Plotinus thus understands the One as the cause of existence. If Plotinus speaks of the One-in-itself as something about everything, then in a different sense, as he says. For the living, the One is the beginning of everything, but not all, everything will be the Mind that has come from the One. If the consequences can say something about the One, then these consequences can represent the One only as the beginning and reason. Therefore, Plotinus states that everything truly exists from the One, and so that the consequences are not separated from their cause and the cause is not diminished and does not dissolve in its consequences. The principle of continuity of the cause-and-effect chain of existence takes place not only in the intelligible world. Plotinus says that everything comes from the divine principle, even through a multitude of intermediate steps, so that even the things in the existence of the lowest level are still elevated to the Other, that is, even the lowest and insignificant in its being is connected with the One. Plotinus determines the nature of the One as *δύναμις τῶν πάντων*, that is, as the virtue of everything or the ability of everything. Thus, Plotinus offers a theoretical solution to the problem of the beginning, which allows the One to create things, to be the first cause of existence, but not to change in nature, to remain transcendent to the world.

According to Plotinus, formal principles exist at all levels of being, but in different degrees of differentiation. In the One there are all forms but they exist only potentially, in an indistinguishable unity. At the level of the mind in the unity of all forms, there is already an element of multiplicity. In the soul, everything is already divided, although there is still a forming unity. Complete separation occurs only at the level of sensory matter. Thus, at all levels of true being, there is a unity of forms, and their difference, the truth — in varying degrees. Therefore, we can draw a conclusion that in the Mind there should be an idea of humanity in general, and a conclusion that confirms the existence of the ideas of each individual — the idea of the human. Consequently, Plotinus' opposing statements are not contradictory but are two sides of one solution to the problem. The reason that Plotinus

chooses that one statement, then another, should be sought in the context of the phrase, in what parcels he sends it. Considering this kind of contradiction, never one should forget about one of the main features of the philosophy of Plotinus — the unity of rationalistic and religious approaches. In the One and even in the Mind, because of their existence over time, in eternity, there are all opposites.

It should be noted that in the triad the One — the Intellect — the World Soul for σοφία as a mediating entity, some kind of emanational layer between God and the world — there is much more space than, for example, in the hard radiations of the Platonic idea. And since for Plotinus in such an intermediate position is Nous, forming a “second unity”, i. e. slightly “clouded” by the blending of the unity of thinking and being, then exactly this Plotinus’ Mind as the ideal world of idea-forms, or in a sense the same as the Platonic world of ideas, is, according to Sergei Bulgakov, like σοφία. On the other hand, in other words, according to the meaning of his words, Plotinus’ νοῦς corresponds precisely to the Christian Sophia, and his intelligible matter forms the basis of corporeality in Sophia itself [Vaganova, 2011: 45].

Plotinus also writes about the meaning of the Logos (λόγος). In the philosophy of Plotinus, the Logos is first realized by itself or for itself without a transition to otherness. He also gets flesh and becomes a body. However, this body does not have a mind, that is, this body has not yet passed into such an otherness that exists beyond all meaning. The Logos, which is realized on the basis of the Mind, Plotinus calls εἶδος. In addition, this εἶδος cannot be the result of extraneous thinking. It contains in itself initially all its awareness. Because εἶδος is both a mind. For this construction, Plotinus uses the term σοφία (wisdom, sophia). It is the main principle of the Plotinus’ aesthetics. However, there is no outlet to otherness, which would be beyond the mind. In addition, this is otherness. Hence, λόγος, εἶδος, and σοφία must be realized simultaneously both outside themselves and in their surroundings. In other words, they too must pass into becoming outside of εἶδος. This formation can be taken, firstly, only in its principle, in the form when it acts on otherness, but does not go into it. In this form, λόγος, εἶδος, σοφία and νοῦς become the World Soul.

In accordance with this, developing the doctrine of Sophia’s being, Plotinus builds his understanding of σοφίας on the identity and mutual influence of the ideal and the real, on the concept of “global”, the heavenly, ideal of Σοφία and “local”, earthly, material σοφία.

In this context, Alexei Losev wrote: “If in VI 1, 12, 46–53 Plotinus opposes the external and internal or, as he says, ‘here’ and ‘there’, then also for the σοφία he also requires such an opposition to the σοφία. Therefore, the ‘global’ σοφία is more important than ‘local’, because it is for her a principle and a semantic task. In I 3, 6, 12–14, Plotinus directly puts σοφία and dialectics on the same level, demanding for both higher and upper generalizations, and not to reduce them to only anything singular or accidental. In another place in Plotinus (V 1, 4, 5–9), we read that a person, turning from the world to the very first image (archetypon) of this world, the world of true-being, will see intelligent entities having their own inner consciousness and eternal life. He will also see the Intellect, which reigns over all of them, is not exactly mixed with anything and will see further ‘irresistible wisdom’. This text lists all the main properties of σοφία: it is an ideal and eternal archetype of all things, possessing its own self-knowledge and irresistibly reigning over all (I 4, 9, 16–23; I 4, 15, 1–6)” [Losev, 2000: 505].

As we see, the World Soul is a receptor of Nous’s influences, which has higher and lower aspects. At the same time, it pours into the “fourth” (having no true substance, matter, meon), then σοφία (unlike the idea in which in cosmological aspect, there is simply nothing to catch on) gets the possibility of philosophical “complication”, gaining some vitality and history —

at least in the form of emanational dynamism. After all, among religious-monistic systems, says Sergei Bulgakov, has the greatest religious and philosophical significance that form of dynamic pantheism, according to which the world is the emanation of the absolute, occurs as an outpouring from its abundant completeness. Demiurge (Sergei Bulgakov means the Soul of the World or Humanity) in the process of world creating organizes nature, transforming its mechanism into the body again, it restores the lost and forgotten unity of *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, and this transforms the world into a work of art in which the idea of the product shines and the whole world becomes cosmos, like overpowered chaos. Thus, according to Sergei Bulgakov, the universal subject of the world and knowledge are united in Sophia or the only Humanity. Finding this, the philosopher addresses the biblical origins of the doctrine of Sophia (namely, Proverbs of Solomon), where Sophia is already recognized as an ideal cosmos and an ideal primitive form of imperfect earthly nature. Sophia here is the Wisdom of God, which was before God in the creation of the world. The world, which in its empirical reality is potentially sophian, is actually chaotic in its timeless existence, it is Sophia itself. The world is separated from Sophia not by its nature, but because of its condition. The condition of the world of *chaocosmos*, in the stage of struggle of chaotic and organizing force, is understandable only as a violation of the original unity of Sophia, the displacement of being from its metaphysical center, the consequence of which was the illness of being, its metaphysical decentralization. Sergei Bulgakov believes that the basis of the world process is freedom as the basis of world creation. Sophia, the prehistoric humanity, as the soul of the world renounces its own self and places its center in God. However, she is also free to move this center, free from herself, to identify self, which forms the dark basis of its existence, its blind and chaotic will to live. In this primordial self and the foundation of the person is laid down with its freedom, and there is also the root of arbitrariness. All nature, whole history, all contradictions in human consciousness testify to the fact that they are the result of a world catastrophe. Protection and expansion of life, and therefore part of his resurrection, constitute the task of human activity. This is the work of Sophia over the restoration of the world order that she leads through humanity. The world, like Sophia, has fallen into a state of inertia, and therefore mortality, must again come to the mind of Truth and the means of this reduction in labor or economy. Therefore, the ultimate goal of the economy is beyond its borders, it is only through the world to Sophia, the realization, the transition from the unbelievable state of the world to the true, labor restoration of the world [Vaganova, 2011: 45].

Considering the cosmological aspect of σοφία, it must be emphasized that Plotinus in a very accessible form thinks himself a transition from σοφία to myth. After all, his σοφία, as we have just seen, is a coincidence of the ideal-semantic with the material-factual that is, a special kind of ideal substance. The idea, instead of being an abstract concept and a discursive-logical definition, absorbs all its possible material incarnations and is identified with them, staying in its own ideal domain. Therefore, we said that the σοφία is the same Neoplatonic Intellect, but only addressed to all the otherness surrounding it and containing it in itself, that is, it is its ideal substance that acts in the form of what can arise outside the Intellect. If this is the meaning of σοφία, then it is clear that it is nothing more than a general concept for all its specific manifestations, which are separate deities [Losev, 2000: 506].

Conclusion

Thus, having made a general analysis of the evolution of the understanding of σοφία in ancient philosophical thought, we can do the following conclusions:

1. The concept of σοφία in ancient philosophy is not limited to that semantics which has had in historical, philosophical and linguistic studies exclusively as wisdom, practicality, and skill.
2. In the legacy of philosophers of pre-classical and classical traditions, we can see different kinds of concepts of understanding of σοφία, incl. epistemological, ethical; sometimes directly opposite to each other.
3. It is in the Neoplatonism the concept of σοφία assumes a cosmological character that is directly related to the ontological doctrine of Plotinus and connected with the One, the Intellect and the Soul.

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