

Paper Title: Interplay between Science and Religion. Methodologist's Reflections.  
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Paper Abstract:

Contemporary relations between science and religion become more complicated because in today's world different cultures interplay and collide with each other. These cultures can differ radically according to the place which science and religion occupy in them. Indisputably, the problem of the interplay of science and religion can not even be posed beyond its socio-cultural context nor without defining the socio-cultural framework. What follows is that dealing with this problem in a contemporary context a certain methodological basis, a typologisation of cultures, is necessary (in our opinion), which must be relevant to the problem under consideration. This typologisation, at the same time, is a scheme for considering a crucial (for our problem) period in the development of cultures. An essential element of the proposed methodological basis is identifying the culture represented in the western society (and the culture which is being formed in Russia at present) with one of the proposed types of culture. In our opinion, when reflecting upon the problem of science and religion interplay, it would be appropriate to proceed from the following typologisation of cultures.

The first type corresponds to cultures which should be characterized as monocentric. In our case it would be religiocentric cultures. They are characterized (as it is seen from the notion itself) as being "oriented in accordance with" one center, which determines and organizes everything else. Religion is such a center. Religion underlies this type of culture, permeates all other sectors of culture, sanctions them, dictates the rules of play, and treats them as minor or subordinate. In the course of the substantial part of human history, there have existed religiocentric cultures. Many of them remain religiocentric even in our time.

Still, religiocentricity is a transient state of a culture. Starting at least from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a culture of a new type began taking shape. At that time secularization processes became intensified. Other spheres of culture and social life (politics, economics, art, education, science and technology) started to ease themselves from the dominating influence of religion, to gain more and more independence and self-sufficiency. Science is highly valued in such a transitional culture: virtually, it is the most valued and omnipotent. Science is thought as a means of tackling all the problems that face man and humanity. Common belief that science is leading (and will lead) to truth, justice, happiness is inherent to such a transitional (from the monocentric to the polycentric) society. In this culture a peculiar religious attitude is being formed towards science. Yet, it would not be correct to define such a society as science-centric. Actually, science has never been a foundation of culture, it has never molded together other sectors of culture. But the trend of a transitional society towards science-centeredness has always been obvious. It is assumed that the trajectory of cultural development (from the Middle Ages to the present) should be pictured as follows: monocentric (religiocentric) culture – transitional one (from religiocentric to polycentric) - polycentric culture. Within the framework of the

approach suggested in this article, a culture that is being formed at present in Russia (and that has in the main been formed in Western society) can be defined as fundamentally polycentric. There is no, there cannot be, there must not be a single center that fully determines such a culture. Diverse spheres of such culture are self-sufficient, relatively autonomous, and fulfill specialized functions. Assuming the polycentric character of the present-day culture means that representatives of each sector of culture (science, art, religion etc.) should fully acknowledge the propriety of relatively autonomous existence and development of other sectors of culture. It also requires: 1) for each sector – to establish the long-term relations with all other sectors of culture; 2) for each sector – to clarify (more profoundly) its own essence as well as the essence of other sectors of culture. The next methodological principle (which is the sole basis for adequately solving the problem of the interrelation between science and religion) is the principle of system comparison of particular sectors of culture. To be more exact, when reflecting on the problem of the science and religion interplay, it is not their particular (or even important) characteristics that should be our first consideration, but the main modes of their being. When dealing with this problem, it is crucial to remember that science and religion (as socio-cultural entities) are, at the same time: 1) social institutes, 2) specific types of human activity, and 3) the totality of results of this activity. For better clarification of science and religion interplay in the light of the systematicity principle, it is essential to compare their socio-cultural functions. Only varied systematic consideration of this interplay in the context of a particular type of culture makes it possible to grasp its manifold nature, its diverse and non-straight-forward character. It enables us to see that this interplay can be of conflict character. It reveals that in some cases there is a reason to speak about the independence of religion and science. It brings to light the issues which necessitate the dialogue between religion and science. It reveals the issues which can be thought of as meeting points or potentials for the integration of both science and religion.

#### Biography:

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Paper Text:

The issue that concerns the character of interplay between science and religion is an extremely complicated and actual one. Its urgency and significance are defined by the fact that science and religion represent the important sectors of culture, which are both striving for spiritual dominance. The history of this interplay is replete with misunderstandings, reciprocal accusations, and even tragic collisions. At present time these interrelations indeed need much more enlightening and clarification. Opinions and judgments that this issue has received recently are radically different. They are surprisingly contradictory concerning the place and the role of religion and science in social life, and their outlooks for the future. Trying to characterize the situation in contemporary Russia, some thinkers underscore the religious Renaissance, which is revealed in mass reconstruction of temples and building of new ones; embedding religion in politics, into state, social and private life; expectations that religion has the potential to contribute to the spiritual revival and development of our society; attempts to bring theological disciplines into the curriculums of state educational institutions.

The other type of thinkers is no less numerous. They dwell upon the crisis or impasse in which the society (in its alliance with science) has found itself: ecological crisis, the dominance of pragmatism and utilitarianism, pathos of consumerism, vacuum of values and meanings, and, as a consequence, the raging of criminality, alcoholism and drug abuse. Representatives of religious fanaticism stand firm in their attempts to guard religion, to keep the beliefs and the way of life of their ancestors intact. The basis of such a conviction is the inadmissibility of any steps towards science. The adherents of scientific world view persevere in proclaiming the self-sufficiency and omnipotence of science. Religious modernists, trying to keep up to date, appeal for a dialogue with science. Theosophists and antroposophists are of the opinion that synthesis and integration of science and religion is not only possible, but already has been carried out in the very framework of theosophy and antroposophy.

The issue of the present-day relations between science and religion becomes more complicated, for in today's world absolutely different cultures interplay and collide with each other. These cultures can differ radically according to the place which science and religion occupy in them. Indisputably, that the problem of interplay of science and religion can not even be posed beyond its socio-cultural context, without defining the socio-cultural framework of this interplay. What follows is that dealing with this problem in the context of the present requires a certain methodological basis: typologisation of cultures is necessary (in our opinion), which must be relevant to the problem under consideration. This typologisation, at the same time, is a scheme for considering a crucial (for our problem) period in the development of cultures. An essential element of the proposed methodological basis is: identifying the culture represented in the western society (and the culture which is being formed in Russia at present) with one of the proposed types of culture. In our opinion, when reflecting upon the problem of science and religion interplay, it would be appropriate to proceed from the following typologisation of cultures.

The first type corresponds to cultures which should be characterized as monocentric. In our case it would be religiocentric cultures. They are characterized (as it is seen from the notion itself) as being "oriented in accordance with" one center, which determines and organizes everything else. More particularly, religion is such a center. Religion underlies this type of culture, permeates all other sectors of culture, sanctions them, dictates the rules of play, treats them as minor, subordinate. Only religion can endow people with the Truth. It deals with the

Absolute, the Eternal. All other sectors either only “attend on” religion (religious art for example) or deal only with the manifestations, reflections of the Absolute, with the creature world, with the transitory, the perishable. The power in such a society is blessed by the church and is conceived as endowed by the Supreme. In the course of the substantial part of human history there have existed religiocentric cultures. Many of them remain religiocentric even in our time. Still, religiocentricity is a transient state of a culture. Starting at least from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, culture of a new type began taking shape. At that time secularization processes become intensified. Other spheres of culture and social life (politics, economics, art, education, science and technology) started to ease themselves of dominating influence of religion, to gain more and more independence and self-sufficiency. The total strive to find the Lord’s kingdom, the mass eschatological expectations became superseded by the strive for a successful and happy worldly life, as well as by a progressist world view. Science is highly valued in such a transitional culture (from monocentric, religiocentric to polycentric). Virtually, it is most valued and omnipotent.

Science is thought as a means of tackling all the problems that face man and humanity. Common belief that science is leading (and will lead) to truth, justice, happiness is inherent to such a transitional (from the monocentric to the polycentric) society. In this culture a peculiar religious attitude is being formed towards science. Yet, it would not be correct to define such a society as science-centric. Actually, science has never been a foundation of culture, has never mold other sectors of culture. But the trend of a transitional society towards science-centeredness has always been obvious. The striking example of a steady strive for science-centeredness was given by the Soviet society. The power prophesied and layed down the law on behalf of science. It posed the challenge of obtaining the fully scientific world-view by all people. Creation of scientifically-oriented society was proclaimed to be the ultimate goal. It is obvious that in actual fact this society produced more talk and noise about “scientific-orientedness” than the scientificity itself. We can also admit that it was dominated not by the “true science”-world-view, but by some specific forms of religious-like, utopian consciousness. Still, in spite of this fact, science had always been in the vanguard of culture.

It would be reasonable to note that quite respectable and well-known modern thinkers (as well as prominent public and state figures) put the emphasis on the science being in the vanguard, being the center of modern society. For instance, the acting British Prime minister Tony Blair asserted in his brilliant speech (delivered for the Royal Society) that “science is a central part, not a separate part, of our common culture, together with art, history, the social sciences and the humanities” [1, p.88].

Nevertheless, specialists-philosophers, various scientific thinkers-have gradually come to realize that science, despite all its colossal power, is far from being all-mighty and omnipotent. That it deals with a well-defined (and in a certain sense rather limited) set of tasks. That it cannot and must not substitute any sectors of culture whatever. That it should not have been and should not be entrusted with tasks that are apparently beyond its strength. (At least at the current spiral of time). What science has clearly failed to meet were steep demands and utopian expectations it was layed upon by the transitional society. The resulting psychological consequence was that science instead of being “entrusted with”, started “being charged for”. This “for” means: for what is being done on behalf of science, for what the scientifically-created society has come to face, for technology-caused problems. As we see it, science has also failed to cope with major vision-of-my-world problems, such as: the meaning of life, the problem of freedom. There is one more frustration: it has turned out to be

incapable of creating the system of values that would be adequate to face (and radically cope with) the challenges of the today's world.

So science became the target of accusations for callousness, cruelty, for "being the reason of" vacuum of values and meanings which has irreducibly imbued the society. Such a mood was perceived by many thinkers as a "decline" of science, as a signal for religious Renaissance, as an evidence of necessity for a return. A return from the emaciated science-centered culture, with its exhausted stamina, to a religion-centered one. From a methodological point of view, such reasonings are entirely in the framework that represents the culture as a monocentric entity. As the adherents of this approach see it, the trajectory of culture development ( from the Middle Ages-through the Renaissance, New Time, Today-to the Future ) should be pictured as follows: monocentric (religio-centric) culture — transitional one (from religio-centric to science-centric) — monocentric (science-centric) culture — transitional culture (from science-centric to religio-centric) — monocentric (religio-centric) culture. I am far from accepting this trajectory and considering it adequate. In my opinion this approach comes to be in conflict with the essence of ongoing socio-cultural processes. It contradicts the very essence of their unfolding.

As it was noted above, religio-centeredness (as well as monocentricity itself) is a characteristic only of a certain stage of culture development. We can also consider another type (or, better, -stage, - which is not necessarily the next) - polycentric culture. As we conceive it, the trajectory of culture development (from the Middle Ages to the present) should be depicted as follows: monocentric (religiocentric) culture – transitional one (from religiocentric to polycentric) - polycentric culture. Within the framework of the approach suggested in this article, a culture that is being formed at present in Russia (and that has in the main been formed in Western society) can be defined as fundamentally polycentric. There is no, there cannot be, there must not be a single center that fully determines such a culture. Diverse spheres of such culture are self-sufficient, relatively autonomous, and fulfill specialized functions. Unambiguous and clear-cut judgment of all features and qualities of such a culture is hardly possible. Apparently it should not be thought of as a more harmonious, more humane than a monocentric one. Most likely, polycentricity-is rather a general characteristic of a culture. This type (or stage) comprises various cultures, which are different in degree of harmonicity and humaneness. What may also be noted is that quite often (especially at the stage of development) a polycentric culture may feature insufficient wholeness or integrity. This insufficiency is seen in the following: some sectors may develop a tendency "to work for themselves"; people's way of life may tend to be functional, "partial"; it appears quite difficult for a person, living in such a culture, to integrate a whole unbroken worldview. At the same time, cultures of this type are less inclined to totalitarianism, than monocentric ones. They allow much more freedom for each sector of culture. Whatever the case may be, such cultures are radically different from their monocentric counterparts. It would be easy for a superficial observer to consider a pre-polycentric stage as a science-centric. But in actual fact this stage is a transitional one – from a monocentric (religiocentric) to a polycentric state. That is why it would not be appropriate to characterize the processes that are going on in the contemporary Russian culture as a revival of monocentricity (and namely religiocentricity). With far more certainty, these processes can be characterized as a creation of a new type of culture-a polycentric one. Hopefully, this new culture will allow a framework (or a basis) for diverse development of various sectors within itself. And all these sectors, including religion and science, will find their places,

which are expected to be more adequate to their nature and functions. This has led us to an opinion that the problem of interplay between religion and science can be adequately solved (taking into account the conditions of Today) only if we consider the interplay of sectors, that are of some interest to us, *in the context of a polycentrical culture*. Though, it must not be forgotten that today's world community is an aggregate of various tempo-worlds, cultures of various types (religiocentric, transitional, polycentrical). Assuming the polycentrical character of the present-day culture means that representatives of each sector of culture (science, art, religion etc.) should fully acknowledge the propriety of relatively autonomous existence and development of other sectors of culture. It also means the necessity: 1) for each sector – to establish the long-term relations with all other sectors of culture; 2) for each sector – to clarify (more profoundly) its own essence as well as the essence of other sectors of culture. The next methodological principle (which is the sole basis for adequately solving the problem of the interrelation between science and religion) is the principle of system comparison of particular sectors of culture. To be more exact, when reflecting on the problem of the science and religion interplay, not their particular (even important) characteristics should be our first consideration, but the main modes of their being. When dealing with this problem, it is crucial to remember that science and religion (as socio-cultural entities) are, at the same time: 1) social institutes, 2) specific types of human activity 3) the totality of results of this activity. For better clarification of science and religion interplay in the light of the systematicity principle, it is essential to compare their socio-cultural functions. Only varied systematic consideration of this interplay in the context of a particular type of culture makes it possible to grasp its manifold nature, its diverse and non-straight-forward character. It enables to see that this interplay can be of conflict character. It discovers that in some cases there is a reason to speak about the independence of religion and science. It brings to light the issues which necessitate the dialogue between religion and science. It reveals the issues which can be thought of as meeting points for integration of potentials both of science and religion (for details on science-religion interplay see [2]). If not to scrutinize the details, we can suggest that a conflict occurs when science (religion) tends to go beyond the bounds of its competence and attempts to interfere the realm of religion (science). We infer that the most conflict-triggering (as applied to science-religion interplay) are religio-centric and transitional (science-centric for a perfunctory consideration) cultures. Such cultures tend to induce dictate and pretension for the ultimate Truth. In the former case this will be a religious dictate; in the latter-scientific. And in both cases religion (or science) will seek independence from a dominating sector of culture. What might be noted in this regard is that transitional cultures have given examples of frustrating inferences about the “death of God” or “decline of religion”. Such inferences (even made by outstanding thinkers) were apparently the emotional exaggerations called forth by too high expectations of the forthcoming scientific successes, expectations of the future all-powerful science. As we have noted above, during that period a polycentrical culture was being shaped, and in the course of that period, religion was gradually obtaining its niche in the cultural space. Obviously, religion would be holding this niche for quite a long time. Later on, following the expansion period, science also started striving for such a niche, for its natural place in culture. The period of obtaining-and-holding the niche by religion and science (in the space of a polycentrical culture) is not fully complete. Especially it is true for Russia. That is why the current stage of development is quite likely to face conflicts between them. We can say about independence of science and religion from each other if they

forward their energies to their own specific activities, when they accomplish their own specific functions. Implementation of the strategy of independent existence requires adequate differentiation of subject fields of scientific knowledge and of religious conceptions. It also necessitates profound understanding (by representatives of both sectors- religion and science ) of the unique and specific character of tasks each, that sector have to deal with and of functions, that each sector is supposed to accomplish. For instance, the paramount mission of religion is a salvation of human sole. All other tasks, it might deal with, rank as being secondary in significance and only considered as means of fulfilling the major objective. The crucial aim of science is a cognition of the world (in all its possible manifestations: natural, social and etc.); obtaining accurate knowledge of this world, devoid of any obfuscations, corruptions, misinterpretations, distortions, delusions. Everything else is secondary, attendant, circumstantial. So there is no denying of radical difference between religion and science in regard to their prime objectives. And this is a powerful factor for the successful implementation of independence strategy between science and religion.

However, independence is only one aspect of complex and dynamic science-religion interplay. Asserting their entire independence would be naive and incorrect. First, as we learnt from the history of culture, subject fields of scientific knowledge and religious conceptions intersect [3]. Second, science and religion simply cannot stay out of interaction when dealing with many world-view- and social problems. This fosters me to suggest that at the current stage of culture development (Russia's development in particular), and in the framework of mature polycentric culture, the strategy of a dialogue is highlighted as the most preferable among other possible ones, in regard to science-religion interplay. Today's conditions require especial efforts and non-common practices for bringing this dialogue-strategy into life. Partakers of the dialogue should have clear-cut and well-formulated objectives, should clarify the target-issues of the dialogue, should define the parties whose collaboration in this dialogue would be possible and desirable, should clear up weak and strong sides of these both vital sectors of culture. The paramount objective of the dialogue is seen neither as a victory over the opponent, nor its recast in the we-like-it fashion, but better understanding of each counterpart, humanisation of science and religion and raising their culture-maintaining potentials. Apparently, the integration of positive potentials of religion and science is possible for quite a number of issues: socio-economical, socio-political, fight against militarism and terrorism, coping with ecological problems, advance towards more humane and just social system.

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