

## REVIEW

From Prof. DSc. Stiliyan Yotov, Professor at the Sofia University  
on the dissertation of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vladimir D. Teoharov

### **METAPHYSICS AND PSYCHOLOGY OF SPIRITUAL AGES**

for the degree of Doctor of Sciences

Vladimir Teoharov's dissertation is in volume of 266 pages, it is accompanied by a compact and corresponding to its content abstract and is published as a book in 2018, which proves that the scientific public is familiar with it. The author's own assessment of the twelve contributing moments in the dissertation seems somewhat overstated.

Vladimir Teoharov's research is dedicated to the philosophy of cultural development. Moreover, this is what I refer to in the term "spiritual ages", which clearly refers to the Schelling ages of the world (Weltalter). However, Schelling's project is born of projects on the philosophy of history, and the concept of "world" gives it a natural-philosophical taste. The term "spirit" preferred by Teoharov has a broader range, reminiscent of Hegel's distinction between subjective, objective and absolute spirit, and - to the best of my understanding - in the case of culture; about the models, we use to interpret the world, society, and ourselves. This, of course, sharply brings the study closer to another familiar model, to that of Jaspers about the worldviews (Weltanschauungen), but here in Teoharov's study the emphasis is on development, not so much on typology. As far as the idea of stage development is concerned, it is borrowed from psychology, which I find justified because it corresponds to both everyday intuitions and well-established perceptions of the evolution of cognitive and moral consciousness.

The original in the dissertation is the strong, at times, seemingly overexposed focus of the attitude of faith at the expense of knowledge. Especially in our national tradition, philosophical reflection on culture has brought to the fore the emergence and construction of the scientific picture of the world. However, this tradition has until recently been widely shared in the context of a clear understanding of secularization. Teoharov's book is an attempt to compensate for and correct this one-sidedness. Thus, the idea of combining the "perfection" and "completeness" inherent in the style of thinking of the Greeks and Jews was born and transmitted as a leitmotif throughout the text. The dialectical tension between these two moments reveals in a new way the dynamics of growth in the stages of childhood, adolescence and adulthood. In general, the endeavor and results of Teoharov's work offer a much more syncretic view of culture, which we rarely see. That is commendable in itself

It is true that in recent years similar attempts have emerged. However, this does not deprecate, but only confirms the relevance of the endeavor. For its part, the bibliography shows that it has been realized on the basis of a very good knowledge of classical and contemporary philosophy and theology, and is illustrated with eloquent and original interpretations of works from most fields of art. Teoharov's ability to look in detail, interpret

the etymology of words, and compare their meanings in different languages speaks of his enviable erudition, of his courage to take risks, bringing to the white wedding a forgotten or suspected meaning and contextual dependency.

In terms of content, two layers stand out in the work. On the one hand, these are the three parts dedicated to spiritual ages, on the other, three specially emphasized theses, placed not in accordance with the parts and with a different place in the course of their presentation.

The first thesis even precedes the first part of "Childhood" and plays the role of a common framework, a general statement of the research. It adds to the aforementioned unity of perfection and completeness, characteristic of Greek and Middle Eastern culture, an addition to the role of Protestantism. Thus, the original synthesis takes on a new pedagogical quality. Therefore, the general scheme of the three spiritual ages is revealed to be capable of renewal and development.

Against this background, Teoharov offers his interpretation of the first age, in which faith, the conception of God and religion play a major role. Through the prism of these three phenomena, the human situation seems holistic, resilient, giving a sense not only of the possibility of knowledge and justice, but of salvation. Such an explanation is not new. However, I see the original contribution of the author in his analysis of the ancient model of education - Paideia, and its importance for the reproduction of a certain way of assimilation and passage of this initial epoch of cultural maturation.

The second chapter on "Maturity" explores the contradictions between mental attitudes, between authors who attempt to explain this contradiction, between approaches that characterize classical psychology and psychoanalysis. This is how this second, transitional spiritual age is revealed to be necessary but at constant risk of failure, of false or blind realization. Perhaps because of all its heterogeneity, it is dissected by the other two leading theses - that cultural maturation can turn our being into a home in which we can only find shelter, or that we can also manage, and that myths and dreams play an integral role in our understanding. After this cut, virtually in the middle of the entire dissertation, Teoharov again uses Protestantism as the key to a deeper and more heuristic understanding of the second spiritual age. Both in the first part and here, at the end of the second, another model of education, this time brought to the German term Bildung, assumes the role of a mechanism for absorbing and transforming cultural development.

Rightly, so, I think, Teoharov emphasizes the contribution of drawing the distinction between Paideia and Bildung models, as well as his emphasized priority, respectively, and the visual and auditory perception of cultural patterns and challenges.

The final third part of "Wisdom" seems to be the complete opposite of the second; it is the peace that characterizes Hegel's reconciliation. In volume, it is as much as the two earlier parts. Its 13 parts are organized according to the logic of transforming initially the inwardness into dialog, then generating syntheses in three directions: personification of creativity, preserving the sense of sacral and auretic, and linking culture with experimentation. Against this background, Teoharov raises the question of the opposite perspectives and the tolerance, and finally of the connection between psychology and

metaphysics. In line with the former parts, here the role of Protestantism is crucial, and the model of education is maturing to the extent of taking down other models and stages, balancing the diversity of views and rationalities.

One conclusion in favor of pluralism, which neither Leibniz or Kant, nor Schelling or Hegel, nor Nietzsche or psychoanalysis, suggest.

What seems to be problematic in the proposed dissertation are two things. The first is the role of legal consciousness - the importance of the Roman world - in the formation of spiritual ages. It goes unnoticed, but it hardly matters. However, this deficit is not difficult to fill and this would not change anything from the overall conclusions of the study. The second problem is about sticking to one, I would say, romantic ideology of growing up. It is difficult for me to imagine how the model, defended by Teoharov, could explain the problem of crises and regression in culture.

Given the merits of Vladimir Teoharov's dissertation work, the depth of knowledge in his field of research and his ability to analyze them philosophically and interdisciplinarily, I give my positive opinion and unequivocally believe that the jury should award him a Ph.D. ".

I have no joint publications and I have not participated in joint projects with Vladimir Teoharov.

Sofia, April 20, 2020

(Prof. DSc Stilian Yотов)