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LIMITS OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION IN ORTHODOX RATIONALITY

This paper is dedicated to a theoretical determination of the limits of secular social communication in Orthodoxy as a representative form of Christian rationality. The nature of the Orthodox faith allows us to expect that problem of social communication in Orthodoxy occurs from Orthodox rationality, and communicative limits are determined by canonical positions. From the standpoint of internalistic approach to the problem of the social participation, Orthodoxy finds the abruption between social and spiritual activity.

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1. Introduction

The concept of rationality is widely used for the description of the western Christianity, in particular the Catholic philosophy and science. Meanwhile, describing Orthodoxy, this concept either is not used in general, or used in the context of basic difference of Orthodox spirituality from the rational (i.e. logical or scientific) comprehension of reality. A conversation on Orthodox rationality is possible if we mean not a role of logical thinking in believer's outlook, but specific structures of believer's experience (in its wide understanding), defining estimations, behavior and activity. Certainly, the concept of rationality gets a metaphorical shade in that case, but allows reconstructing some faith attitudes which define thinking and social activity of the believer. Orthodox rationality interests us as the representative form of Christian rationality whose specific character, in our opinion, is shown in ways of realization of Orthodox spirituality, in particular in the social activity. Explaining the given specific character, we will adhere to the internalistic approach, i.e. we will claim that typological features of social realization of Orthodoxy are not caused by external (social) reasons, but in-

ternal properties of Orthodoxy which in a special way will organize a social experience.

Eventually, it is necessary to come nearer to the answer whether Orthodoxy is capable to realize the social potential in modern conditions. In modern Orthodoxy, there is a problem of social self-disclosing and this problem occurs from within Orthodoxy. Better to say, the limits of social activity of Orthodoxy depend, first of all, on itself.

Are there the external obstacles essentially limiting the social activity of Orthodoxy? It is necessary to notice that a serious problem in the modern Post-Soviet society is inertia of the Soviet outlook which is not capable to adequately perceive Christianity, as well as any religion. It is caused, firstly, by the absence of adequate knowledge in respect to the religious outlook. For many people of the senior generation, religion represents a social rudiment to which it is not possible to pay our attention. Christianity for them is a version of superstition dying in the process of distribution of the scientific outlook and social progress. A similar ignorance leads to the basic misunderstanding of Christian internal specific character. For many scientists, the Christianity (especially it concerns Orthodoxy) is irrational. An interesting example in this sense is the recent polemic between representatives of the Belarusian and Russian scientific community, on the one hand, and the Russian Orthodox Church, on the other hand. By the end of 2006, the Belarusian Academician, A. Rubinov, has published the paper 'Science and Society'¹. The subject of his reflections did not concern religion. Nevertheless, the author in his statements concerned questions on a scientific and religious parity, and also a religious role in our society. Rubinov thinks that the religion tries to change a materialistic (i.e. scientific) point of view by superstitions. In his opinion, the single possible type of relationship between science and religion is an opposition. The religion supersedes materialism and scientific achievements which help to solve real problems. Rubinov's opinion in respect to an original spirituality was as follows: "An attempt of religion, as well as of literature and art, to monopolize cultural and spiritual values has no sense. The spirituality is born, first of all, in the creation sphere where new machines are created and new technologies are developed and embodied." Earlier Rubinov's affirmations were more rectilinearly: "The spiritually rich person should create for the society something utilitarian." It would be surprising if the Belarusian academician does not know Kantian ethics distinguishing spirituality from utility. Nevertheless, Rubinov also cannot distinguish the functions of religious spirituality from

¹ "Belarus today", on December 12th, 2006

the secular ones. The last circumstance corresponds to the common viewpoint in the Post-Soviet society. For the Soviet materialism, spirituality (as something non-material) can be reduced to the material sphere. Most likely, it is possible to express author's opinion in another way: even if spirituality exists, it grows from our activity. Thus, spirituality is purely immanent to the human behavior and practice. Whether it is possible to use such an understanding of a source of spiritual phenomena as a rational and constructive interaction between secular scientists and Orthodoxy?

In 2007, there was so-called 'The Letter of Ten' [9]. Famous academicians of the Russian Academy of Sciences wrote the letter to the President V. Putin in which persistently suggested to stop the clericalization of the Russian education system and science. The claims of academicians concerning the Russian Orthodox Church were not interesting, but we remind their opinions in respect to religion as a whole. So, Russian academicians, among whom there are Nobel prize winners, did not consider theology as a science, because for them science is based on facts and religion is based on beliefs; as a result, they cannot co-exist.

A negative reaction to 'The Letter of Ten' was appeared in the same Russian Academy of Sciences. Afflicted by an incompetent opinion of their colleagues, other representatives of the academic circles have written another letter to the president. They have declared that 'The Letter of Ten' does not express the opinion of all members of the Academy. Thus, the scientific community was involved in an interesting ideological collision. What role did Orthodoxy play in this process?

We see that this story has an obvious political note. The position of the Belarusian Academician Rubinov can be clear if we remember that at that time he was the First Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration of Belarus. The paper 'Science and Society' was a program publication about the direction of scientific and technological development. Rubinov did not concern the role of Orthodoxy in general. In the case of Russian academicians, their statements directly concerned the Russian Orthodox Church. Nevertheless, in both cases, problems (about a specificity of religion, its role in society, etc.) were mentioned. But it was casually. Orthodoxy as a type of the Christian faith was only an unsuccessful example of religion in general. In the case of Rubinov's paper, there was a visible reaction of the Minsk diocese and especially of the famous publicist Fr. Andrei Kuraev. Begun this polemic, Orthodoxy has not only shown a standard religious claim of the kind: "if we have a religion, this is just Orthodoxy", but they have initiated a competent dialogue. For more details see Kuraev's paper and as well as papers of the Minsk diocese [8], [10].

The ability of Orthodoxy to rationally discuss those questions was evident for a long time. Let us remember the case occurred in 2000 at the annual conference in the Belarusian State University, devoted to Christianity. At the final meeting, there were Orthodox clergymen and secular scientists. One of the reports was devoted to the history of Christianity and, in particular, to Christ's life. Professor A. Kruglov, the well-known Belarusian expert in the field of religious studies and atheism, gave the report. He asserted that most probably, Jesus never was born and this history is a myth. Theologians did not expect such a statement. However, they acted as initiators of dialogue and were more tolerant, than the secular scientist.

In the next sections, we will pay attention to features of the Orthodox faith which are connected with the nature of Orthodox rationality.

2. Communicative optimalism of Christian rationality

Christians are capable to consider signs, Lord's instructions in all phenomena. This internal property of a Christian point of view is also expressed in the social activity: Christians estimate their positions as attitudes to the world by appeal to God. Christian knowledge is not simple examination of facts, but it is a message, call of another Actor. The basic expression of this knowledge is sermon. When Christians describe something, they potentially take a communicative action. According to Christian rationality, descriptivism and prescriptivism are two different aspects of one and the same nature. Even ontological statements, like 'the Lord exists', can be a function in the communicative aspect. Behavior and activity of Christians should be understood taking into account the given feature. Christianity participates in the human live by the primary orientation that the true agent of any communication is Christ. Could we assert that Christian rationality is focused on a perfect dialogue?

Whether a certain compromise between full acceptance of the Christian doctrine and a free choice of recipient's own position is possible? We will consider a communicative specificity of the agent of Christian rationality.

If we consider Christian rationality as a rationalization and realization of belief, it is necessary to recall that, according to Christianity, the absolute subject of belief is God. Christians, acting in communicator's social role, represent goals to preserve belief rationalized by saint people. We will not consider hermeneutic subtleties of God's revelation, but features of Christian social communications are interesting for us. How does the Christian look like for the representative of other religious communities? It is possible



Figure 1. The Cathedral of Holy Wisdom in Polatsk (in Polish Połock), built from 1044 to 1066. It was a symbol of the independent-mindedness of Polatsk, rivaling churches of the same name in Novgorod and Kyiv and referring to the original Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. The present baroque building, however, dates from the mid-18th century

to call this image, obtained by somebody through corresponding external social signs, the objectively social one. So, for example, if we see the person making a pray, we understand that he is included in the corresponding social practice. The position of Christians in the society, namely their objectively social position in the social frames can be presented as follows: *the Christian is specified by the source of revelation*. Substantial features of the revelation are defined by criteria which is caused by the character of the Orthodox doctrine, sacred legends, Church traditions, etc. Using such an approach it is evident that Christians, nolens volens, are involved in a religious practice whose substantiation is Christian rationality.

On the other hand, considering the character of Christian substantiation, we cannot assert that Christian rationality is a result of a kind of social activity. According to its content, its sources are outside of sociality. From the standpoint of Orthodoxy, a communicative nature in Christianity is caused by Christian's position as believer who should distribute the truth

of revelation. The main condition, which provides this calling, consists in an unlimited distribution of divine grace. The Christian communicativeness, therefore, has the ontological and anthropological foundations and, certainly, social forms. The basic feature to which it is necessary to pay attention is that Christian rationality is outside of profane forms of social communications, because the higher form of communication is a communication with God. In this sense, Christians are recipients apperceiving the communication with God, first of all, as a gift: the Lord is a bearer of life, grace, revelation, etc. It is possible to say that owing to the internal properties, Christian rationality allows believers to communicate. A Christian point of view constitutes believer's communicative competence as a whole. However, the Christian view does not assume a necessity of social communications, and as well as its concrete secular forms. Taking into account the aforementioned, it is necessary to distinguish two types of communications: spiritual (communication with God) and social (communication with others).

The important feature of communicative dimension of Christian rationality in the secular world consists in a position of the recipient. From the point of view of gospel (good news), any being becomes the recipient if he can comprehend the distribution of God's grace. The recipient, as well as communicator, is not the subject of the own communicative competence. The good news allow beings to be included in communications, but your own activity allows to become one of the communicative parties. Thus, (i) communicator and recipient are those by virtue of their participation in the distribution of good news; their communicative competence has a transcendental source; (ii) communicative competence is understood from a soteriologic point of view. Since this competence concerns the notion 'salvation', it does not depend on the social activity, but on the spiritual one, i.e. on the perfection of communication with God: the level of communicative competence depends upon the degree of spiritual advancement. For example, the clergyman is more competent and consequently can organize believers for a pray. But *the secular social activity subjectively is not obligatory and is made owing to objective inevitability* (though this thesis is unapplicable to Protestants). From this statement it follows that *there is no proportional dependence between Christian's communicative competence and his secular social activity*.

In general, in Christianity, there are three strategies of secular communications:

- *minimalistic*, the aspiration to be outside of secular communications (mysticism, asceticism, etc.), the absence of initiative;

- *maximalistic*, the aspiration to be open to secular communications by means of the own initiative (Protestantism, some Catholic communities);
- *optimalistic*, the strategy of possible participation in social communicative activity when the initiative is minimized and ways of participation can be limited only by a religious identity. This strategy is distinguished by Christian's subjective openness to act in communicator's role.

The soteriologic aspect of communicative activity and the spiritual criteria of communicative competence allow us to assume that for early Christian communities, the optimalistic strategy was primary. This follows from Christian rationality as a whole. Communicative strategies which are observed in normal social conditions are based on the following assumptions:

- distinction between spiritual community and social community;
- priority of spiritual community (heavenly) in relation to social one (earthly);
- distinction between spiritual social activity and secular social activity;
- spiritual social activity is necessary (liturgics and morals)
- secular social activity subjectively is not necessary, but objectively is inevitable (owing to the primacy of person as a spiritual recipient and the inevitability of earthly life).

Thus, the above mentioned three strategies of secular communications can be expressed as follows. The secular social activity: it is objectively inevitable, but subjectively is not necessary (minimalism); it is objectively inevitable and subjectively necessary (maximalism); it is objectively inevitable and assumes a subjective openness (optimalism).

Let us consider whether Orthodox rationality allows us to keep the optimalistic strategy.

3. Spiritual limits of communicative activity in Orthodoxy

The openness of Orthodox community for secular social communications depends on a representation about Church's limits. These representations determine attitudes to non-Orthodox and, consequently, the possibility and character of communication.

A doctrine base concerning Church's limits has developed by St. Cyprian of Carthage (the 3rd century). According to his doctrine, Church cannot be separated from the Holy Spirit who influences through Church sacraments. Out of Church there are no sacraments, therefore the Spirit cannot act. As a result, out of Church there is no salvation. Besides, the

Holy Spirit is not given partially, but streams completely. This means that sacraments cannot be made conditionally: either they are performed, or not. All sacraments are connected to each other. If sacraments are made, they are made only in a uniform Church; otherwise, it is necessary to recognize the presence of other sacraments. Since Church is uniform, its fullness is only in it. Hence, for non-Christians and apostates, there are only two possibilities: either to belong to Church (to receive gifts of Spirit and salvation), or to be out of Church (far from grace and salvation). This viewpoint of St. Cyprian has been recognized as canonical in Orthodoxy. We see that it is quite radical: you either are Orthodox or cannot hope to be salvaged. Here it is possible to see a perfectionism, expressed in the requirement to unify the spiritual and social life in Church. Under conditions, when this requirement cannot be realized (i.e. actually under any conditions), there is an important social consequence: spiritual and secular communities are separated from each other [2]. It could be both in society (for example, a separation of Church hierarchy from the people), and in person (for example, in the form of a dilemma of the spiritual and social identity). As we see, this feature remains in modern Orthodoxy.

Meanwhile, the canonical Church practice demanded other decisions of the problem of the attitude to non-Orthodox. As a result, the practical attitude to non-Orthodox was more loyal, than a canonical position and even contradicted it. That demanded a development of new approaches in relation to non-Orthodox. There are four approaches:

1. *Formalistic approach* developed under the influence of the Catholic thought in the 19th century (Archbishop Nikodim Milasz). Its sense is reduced to that a member of Church is that who is baptized for the sake of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. So, any christening is fertile if it is based on belief in the Sacred Trinity.
2. *“Economic” approach* is based on Church’s desire to facilitate the access to salvation for the larger number of people, i.e. on the basis of the Church advantage for the given situation (A. S. Chomyakov, Metropolitan Antony (Chrapovitsky) and Archbishop Ilarion (Troitsky)). When the Church advantage is seen, for instance, in an indulgence, Church accepts the same people by anointing and even only by a repentance.
3. *Relativistic approach* (N. Afanasev, A. V. Kartashov, S. Bulgakov) suggests to look at Church distinctions and schisms as at a temporary, earthly and relative phenomenon. Church’s limits are not defined by the Church canon. Church remains uniform thanks to Christ, i.e. to the divine nature and the head of Church. Hence, different Christian com-

munities thanks to their spiritual basis belong to a Universal Church. This approach contradicts the idea of unity of grace life in Church. Church's limits look too dim. In addition, we can remember Origen's statement that the soul of any person is Christian by its nature and after that we can absolutely lose ability to distinguish different faiths.

4. *Dialectic approach* (St. Augustine and Ft. Georgy Florovsky) focuses attention on the distinction between the distribution of grace and the salvation: the latter is possible only in the true Church, but grace is possible out of its limits. In other words, out of Church it is possible to have all: belief, spiritual gifts, sacraments, etc., but it is impossible to find a salvation. A human being needs to overcome the own weaknesses, to enter into Church and to find a salvation. This approach is the most comprehensible to the modern Orthodox Church.

Using examples of the attitude to other faiths, it is possible to see the basic strategies of an Orthodox communication with the non-Orthodox world. Concerning Church's limits we find two extreme decisions: (i) Church's limits are firm and precisely coincide with the canonical Orthodoxy (1 and 2 approaches); (ii) Church's limits are mobile, as they depend not only on canonical positions, but also on the real historical Church practice. At the same time, Orthodoxy does not accept the ecumenical approach supposing a synthesis of faiths.

Thus, it is possible to speak about two basic communicative strategies in Orthodoxy: canonical (its foundations are dogmas) and non-canonical (based on theologumens, private theological opinions).

The canonical strategy can lead to a spiritual isolationism. Such a strategy is developed by Fr. Rafail (Karelin), one of the Orthodox conservative polemicists. His position denies grace out of Orthodox Church, he has a radical attitude to non-Orthodox. He writes: "We do not call for a common isolationism; non-Orthodox are our neighbors, fellow workers, sometimes even members of our family, but we state that the demarcation lines between us lie in the mystical plan and communication here and only here without a damage for the truth is impossible." We, certainly, prefer the truth. Then what corollaries could this distinction of spiritual and secular communications have? Whether open social communications with non-Orthodox are possible? Most likely, here it is possible to see a domination, instead of communication.

Taking into account the low missionary activity of Orthodoxy, the strategy of open dialogue could be useful for Orthodoxy itself. Similar viewpoints are expressed by Fr. Andrei Kuraev, one of the best-known and socially active figures of the modern Orthodoxy (Fr. Rafail is his con-

stant opponent). Kuraev thinks that other faiths have a good-quality spiritual experience, too, out of Orthodox Church. Therefore Orthodox should co-operate with other faiths in the Gospel sermon, decisions of social problems, overcoming stereotypes about each other, getting acquainted with the non-Orthodox world, borrowing some social and cultural experience (but not spiritual), and showing tolerance [7], [8]. However, at the same time, obtained the direct question ‘Catholics will find a salvation?’, Kuraev answers: as Catholics-hardly, as simple Christians-possibly. Thus, he suggests avoiding two extreme measures: opinions that there is no grace outside of Orthodox Church and that in Orthodoxy, there is a special case of grace. Between these extreme points there is a space of the possible compromise: we know that Orthodoxy salves, but from this it does not follow that there is no salvation anywhere out.

We see that the position of Fr. Rafail reminds the doctrine of St. Cyprian, i.e. it is closer to canon. On the contrary, A. Kuraev’s opinion is based on the position of St. Augustine and G. Florovsky. Rafail is anxious about internal problems of the Orthodox spirituality, e.g. the Orthodox identity. Kuraev is anxious about Orthodox external manifestations; he asserts that apologia is not enough and confrontation is harmful. Therefore he is open to any communication. “The openness does not mean identity; the ability to perceive something other does not mean identity of two co-operating bodies” [7]. We see that the dialogue space is limited by a spiritual identity. The attitude to other is based on the tolerance. This does not mean a recognition of any belief. Therefore Kuraev’s strategy of communications is also thought in the auto-communicative scheme: a reevaluation of own values is possible in Orthodoxy if and only if these values do not concern the theological foundations. Social priorities and norms can change, spiritual cannot. A spiritual dialogue for the sake of dialogue is impossible. But it does not forbid a secular dialogue. For Orthodox, it can refer to the formula ‘to love the sinner and to hate his sin’.

Between Kuraev and Rafail’s opinions, there are many distinctions, but they are united, at least, by one: *there is an abruption between social and spiritual life, between secular and spiritual practice*. A possibility of such a property is connected with the Christian distinction of spiritual and secular community. In Orthodoxy, this abruption was observed quite definitely. On the one hand, the physical and moral violence are forbidden, on the other hand, the possibility of other faiths from the point of view of full dialogue is considerably denied. This negation should have a passive character, otherwise the spiritual practice will be not simply separated from the social one, but will contradict it. In this sense, Orthodoxy is absolutely

opposite to Protestantism. This implies why Orthodox rationality based on the patristical heritage is not well perceived by the secular man. Most likely, this feature of Orthodox rationality allows us to estimate Kuraev's opinion (which Fr. Rafail considers as modernist!) as quite conservative. At such an abruptness between spiritual and social life, Orthodoxy cannot apply for a high social activity if it wishes to avoid the danger of violence or the basic change of its identity. After Cyprian of Carthage, ways of thinking and the dialogue of Orthodox with others are subordinated to the requirement of Church's unity. Therefore Orthodoxy should choose between secular activity and self-identity, but it prefers the latter. The same does not allow Orthodoxy to actively participate in the ecumenical movement.

Thus, the optimalistic strategy is not alien to Orthodoxy, however Orthodox rationality very sharply finds out a dilemma of social activity and spiritual identity which complicates the realization of the optimalistic strategy. The problem of communicative activity of Orthodoxy in the modern society follows from Orthodox rationality defined by dogmatic positions.

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