

ANALYSIS OF THE SYMBOL IN THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract:

In the 21st century, the desire for integration and integrity of culture has led to the need for a close study of the symbol as a holistic and, at the same time, contradictory phenomenon, as a full-fledged instrument of relationships between subjects and objects of cultural space. The article provides a brief historical analysis of the emergence and development of the symbol as a phenomenon of the development of human culture.

Keywords: "symbol", Kant philosophy, symbolic image, medieval philosophy, Hegel concept.

Introduction

The concept of the symbol has played a pivotal role in the evolution of philosophical thought throughout history. From ancient civilizations to modernity, philosophers have grappled with the nature, function, and significance of symbols in understanding reality, language, and human cognition.

The word "symbol" comes from the Greek *symbollein*, meaning connection. The theoretical understanding of the concept of "symbol" appears on the border of ancient and medieval times, when the Christian worldview was formed. Medieval life and thought were saturated with symbols, symbolism was universal. Thinking means eternally revealing hidden meanings, "holy action." Each material object was seen as a sign of something in the higher realm and thus became its symbol. Instead of the similarity or identity of the idea, the meaning of the symbol and its material, emotional embodiment, which was noted in antiquity, now only the special similarity of the symbol and the symbolic meaning or even their opposite is allowed. The concept of "symbol" is different from the concept of "image". Unlike an image that presents its object in a concrete form, a symbol serves not only as a connecting



bridge between the visible and invisible worlds, but also as a barrier, a curtain that separates them. N. Kuzansky writes that the meaning of the symbolic image of the divine power hidden in the world is revealed only to devotees to whom the Creator transmits a secret code.¹ Thinkers searched for the key to the secret world, the door to the world of truth and eternity. Language and speech are defined by such universal keys. To name something meant to understand it, to explain it. The debate about universals, the debate about the true nature of the interaction between words and language played an important role in understanding the symbol, in determining its multi-level semantic structure, analogical connection between different levels-meanings.

A symbol is a concept that captures the ability of material things, events, and sensory images to express ideal content and their immediate sensory existence. A symbol in a hidden form contains possible manifestations of a thing and creates a perspective for its further comprehension. It is not a sign of an object or phenomenon, but it contains a generalized principle of further development of the semantic content folded into them. An example of a logically developed symbol can be any mathematical function that contains the law of its decomposition into an infinite series of close values. The outstanding Russian philosopher A.F. Losev called the symbol an arena for a meeting of known constructions of consciousness with a possible object of consciousness.²

In medieval philosophy, the idea of doubling the world, the embodiment of the divine plan in earthly objects was nothing more than a symbolic interpretation of the universe. Nature is nothing more than the language in which God speaks to man. For the Neoplatonists (Plotinus, Nicholas of Kuzan), the creator (or nature) creates a world of symbols and projects them into the sphere of contemplative and active human life. Man cognizes symbols as a correspondence between natural phenomena and their essence. This means that the goal of Neoplatonic philosophers is to discover the Creator's plan behind external manifestations, which is only possible if one thinks symbolically.

The origins of modern ideas about the symbol go back to the transcendental philosophy of I. Kant, to the fundamental opposition of the phenomenon and the

¹ Кузанский Н. Сочинения в 2-х т. Т.1. М., 1979, с.351

² Лосев А.Ф. Античный космос и современная наука. М., 1927.



"thing in itself" Man lives in a world of phenomena, which is deeply different from the world of entities ("things in themselves") and only symbolizes it. In Kant's philosophy, the phenomenal world of natural necessity and the noumenal world of moral freedom are connected through the symbolic activity of the subject's consciousness. The symbol performs the function of connecting the moral and cognitive experience of man. In the "Critique of Judgment" Kant takes a step towards revealing the symbolic nature of language with a clear-sighted indication of the prospects of this direction of research. In the cautious formula "The beautiful is a symbol of the morally good" Kant combines the requirement of complete freedom of reflection for the aesthetic ability to judge and its humane significance³.

Ardent followers of these ideas were the German romantics of the early 19th century: Novalis, the Schlegel brothers, Schelling, Schleiermacher, who are credited with the famous statement: beauty will save the world.

"Symbolism transforms a phenomenon into an idea, an idea into an image, and in such a way that the idea remains infinitely effective and incomprehensible in the image. Even expressed in all languages, it still remains inexpressible."⁴

For Hegel, a symbol is a sign that, through its external form, expresses a certain meaning, which we understand in the presence of a certain context (culture) as the symbolic content of this sign. A symbol, Hegel wrote, is "a certain intuition, the proper determination of which, in its essence and concept, is more or less the same content that it expresses as a symbol; on the contrary, when it comes to a sign as such, the proper content of the intuition and that of which it is a sign have nothing in common with each other."⁵

In conclusion, the problems of symbolism require study and application to mass consciousness. The meaning of a symbol really exists only within a situation of communication, dialogue. By accepting a certain symbol, delving into it, we allow its creator to appeal to us, to become a partner in our spiritual work. The essence of a symbol will be lost if its infinite semantic perspective is closed by one or another final interpretation, attributing to a certain layer of reality the exclusive right to be the meaning of all meanings.

³ Гадамер Г.Г. Актуальность прекрасного. М., 1991

⁴ Гете И.В. Избранные философские произведения. – М.: Наука, 1964. – 520 с

⁵ Гегель Г.В.Ф. Соч.: в 12-ти т. Т. 3. – М.: Мысль, 1956. – С. 265-266с.



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