

НЕКЛАСИЧНІ ПРАКТИКИ ЛІТЕРАТУРОЗНАВСТВА

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THE IMAGE OF A CITY THROUGH THE PRISM OF CULTURAL- PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPT INTRODUCED BY OSWALD SPENGLER

The article studies the problem of city formation as a cultural phenomenon in the concept introduced by Oswald Spengler. We analyze how the urban consciousness, as a free spirit which is transubstantial in art, was formed.

Key words: city, landscape, space, urban consciousness, free spirit, art, literature.

Many scholars believe that a city is an integral part of such a paradigm as *nature – history – culture*. Thus, Oswald Spengler sees a culture as a single living organism with different stages of development – birth, growth, aging and dying – and connects its nature with the peculiarities of the landscape on the grounds of which any culture appears and develops. The landscape, being a natural space, is one of the basic elements contributing to the formation of a city which is a center of any culture and history development [1].

The philosopher considers that a city stems from the landscape, though unique urban consciousness is formed earlier than the process of city formation is completed. Landscape plays a pivotal role in the formation of human consciousness, as nature and the environment are the first elements to be perceived and learned by a human. In this regard it is necessary to apply to Spengler's concept of nature according to which two types of nature can be distinguished. The first is nature unknown, terrifying, which is associated with the image of the Ancient World and considered to be a starting point of the *becoming*. The second is nature known, is associated with the image of the Modern Age and considered to be the end result of the becoming that is the *being*. The first type of the nature is a core of the artistic worldview ("idea" of a culture, according to Spengler); the second one is a core of the scientific worldview ("bone" of the culture). The first is the myth, the second is the fact [1, p. 225]. Since Spengler believes that the history is the *becoming* and nature is the *being*, the history is the myth. Thus, we have two types of world perception such as "world-as-history" and "world-as-nature". In other words, history is a kind of creativity which is a sensory perception of the world in the process of its *becoming*; nature, in its turn, is a kind of science presenting the systemic perception of the world as the *being*. "Systemic abstract mind, different from the sensory, is the latest, narrow and transient phenomenon which is peculiar to the cultures being more developed. It is connected with the cities where the life of culture is more and more condensed" [1, p. 259]. Thus, Spengler connects the formation

of a city with the second type of nature, but this idea is not so precise, as we believe that the city is formed on the basis of both types of nature. City formation background is predetermined by the formation of human world perception, which is already city-oriented, and it happens when the nature is perceived for the first time (the first type of nature, according to Spengler), then is developed in terms of a "matured culture" (the second type of nature).

While considering the space as a fundamental moment in the development of the city and culture, Spengler actually pays no attention to the category of time in this process. Meanwhile, the perception of space and its development (the end result is the city) is passing through the perception of time. In this case the category of time is shown as the human thoughts about the future, so the development of urban consciousness stems from the primitive culture, not the old one, as pointed by Spengler. The anthropologists believe that it is the ability of a prehistoric man to think about the future which provides the basis for creativity being cultural transformation of the world. Thus, the idea of the future is one of the most important factors contributing to the emergence of civilization and the formation of urban consciousness. A fear of nature is another important factor in this process. Nature mastered (hunting) or cultivated (agriculture) saves a human from death, but the nature unknown poses a danger and a human starts thinking about the shelter protecting him from the natural environment. A cave became the first type of a shelter, and its image will generate a mythopoetic worldview, from the inclusion of a cave to the paradigm "life – death – fertility, as the place of conception, birth and burial in the same time, the beginning and the end" to the idea of the birth place of Jesus Christ and its transformation into the temples and sanctuaries in early Christianity [2, pp. 311–312]. But there is another opinion that a cave is the city prototype both in the process of urban consciousness formation and the emergence of the city (compare such city-caves arisen in 1000 BC as the Ajanta Caves in India, Uplistsikhe in Georgia, Dunhuang in China).

A geography (according to Spengler, a landscape) is one more important factor (a fear of nature) playing a key role in the urban consciousness development. At this stage the human consciousness is focused on the identification of the city function determined by the peculiarities of the landscape. Nikolay Antsiferov sees a function in a special nucleus around which the city emerges and expands. So, according to Antsiferov, the function of a nucleus can be performed by the citadel, monastery, fortresses, factory and so on [3, p. 27]. By means of functional gradation it is possible to distinguish "citadel city" (acropolis, arcs, burg) which arose around the fortified dwelling of the ruler (the Athens, Novgorod, Pskov, Moscow and others); "fortress city" is a military camp, a settlement for defense purposes which appeared in Western Europe on the basis of a Roman fortress (Florence, Manchester), or formed around a citadel (Orel, Kursk, Kazan); "monastery city" arose around the monastery and became a religious center attracting numerous pilgrims (Kirillo-Belozersky Monastery, Solovetsky Monastery, Kurd, Mecca, Jerusalem and others); "market city" or "port city" is a city that has commercial value (Arkhangelsk, Odessa, Amsterdam). It is interesting that "a cave city" is one more type with the function in the historical aspect and it was studied by Karl Bücher in "Die Großstädte in Gegenwart und Vergangenheit". So, he writes "A primitive large city of despots (Babylon, Nineveh, Thebes) was the place where war booty and tributes are gathered, it looks like a cave where a wild animal keeps its prey" [3, p. 26].

Thus, the landscape defines the direction in which human urban consciousness developed to open up new lands. The city is the result of nature development, its cultivation, it is build by a man and, therefore, it is considered as a morphologeme of culture. Here we need to remind that the word "urbs" (*Latin*. a city) is ambiguous, which leads to the solution of two important problems posed by the life, they are the security ensuring as well as creative and cultural development, as from Latin the word "urbs" has such meaning as "a city surrounded by a wall; a city fortress or citadel; Rome", and the derivative from the "urbs" – "urbanus" has the meaning "urban", synonymous to the "ennobled, refined, sophisticated" [4, pp. 798–799].

Thereby, culture is the essence of the original meaning of the city. Spengler says that the development of any culture is associated with the development of the city, however, while highlighting the life cycles of culture he considers the civilization to be the final stage of cultural development and its decline. According to Spengler's theory, the civilization covering the period of the last two hundred years of culture is characterized by the absence of aim and stiffness. Antagonism of the world city and province is clearly distinguished by the author of "The Decline of

the West". And, according to Spengler, the former is characterized by cosmopolitanism, the latter – by a sense of homeland. City elevates the concept of "society" above the concept of "state", as a new type of the man, who is inwardly alien to the culture, is formed there. Thus, according to the idea of Spengler, the culture and civilization are different poles of historical background. Spengler opposes the culture to the civilization and says that the transition from one stage of development to another one is followed by the emergence and development of large cities and purely urban consciousness. Spirit is the element of culture, intelligence is the element of civilization, which, in its turn, turns into the element of a big city. Hence Spengler concludes that the city is not a product of culture, it is a fruit of civilization, and it plays its role separated from the landscape, its traditions and roots, and ultimately – from the culture (in this case we are talking about the world city) [1]. According to this concept there are two images of the city in social and cultural prism:

1) a culture city (a small town), tied up with the landscape, which gave it the rise, nourishes it and cultivates the spirit and the spiritual. The city is not opposed to the province, this city is closely connected with it, and its element is the spirit. A small town signifies the golden age of culture;

2) a civilization city (a world city) is the highest stage of the city development and the last stage of the culture development. This city is the product of civilization; separated from the province, the city is opposed to it. Intelligence is the element of a world city, so, according to Spengler, it signifies the decline of culture. The Empire and imperialism are the essence of a world city: "A world city itself is like the extreme of the inorganic beginning, in the middle of the cultural landscape, it cuts off its inhabitants from the roots, attracts them and then consumes" [1, pp. 538–539].

Thus, on the basis of Spengler's theory one can conclude that the city as a cultural phenomenon initially applied to the landscape which served it as a foundation. The landscape is a source of the city self-realization. Once the aim of self-realization is achieved, the idea disappears, so the city becomes a phenomenon of *civilization*. Hence the concept of the city, its definition, lies between the extremes – culture and civilization.

This conclusion seems quite convincing, given the fact that "The Decline of the West" was written in the period of disillusionment. While considering the increasing role of the Nazi movement in Europe, an intellectual saw the prospects for culture existence and development through the dark-colored glasses. The reason for this was not just the death of culture in the first half of the twentieth century, but the death of civilization (in the meaning of the organized, ordered human existence despite the chaos). Not just culture, the history experienced deep crisis, the existence of mankind was doubtful. "Our discoveries are lethal. We have to take back our knowledge," – claims Friedrich Dürrenmatt. "How to write after Auschwitz?" – wondered Theodor Adorno. The city had become the center of technological and military progress, and this progress was leading humanity to the death. Now, after many decades the events and fears of the past are seen differently. But the same idea about the future, serving as a basis for creativity and impetus to technological and cultural progress, has helped mankind to survive and understand the mistakes.

At present the city is a center of human thought which can be scientific or artistic, but creative anyway. From the heights of the 21st century this thought is applying more and more to the past, to the cultural traditions of human being in search for answers to the questions that are urgent today. Leonid Andreev says that the spiritual energy, emanating from "Hamlet" or "Don Quixote" at the end of the 20th century, is more powerful. Rather than at the beginning of the 17th century. And it will be more powerful in the 21st century [5, p. 23].

We think that the idea of contrasting culture and civilization has lost its relevance, since civilization is an organic part of the culture, not its last stage. In this case it is too early to talk about dying culture that is highlighted by Spengler. The culture does not die; it lives in the memory and the world view of *mankind*, not of a separate nation, who created this culture, but of humanity as a whole. The Ancient culture is not just the heritage of Greece, but also of Western Europe and Russia, paganism provided the grounds for the Christian culture, human self-consciousness of the Renaissance contributed to the development of the ideas of existentialism in the 20th century and so on. Is it possible that the current crisis signifies the appearance of a new cultural

paradigm? So, Spengler's idea of the isolated nature of each culture is outdone (actually, if cultures are isolated, how did Spengler feel and know them sincerely? The fact, that he was able to study them and compare, refutes his idea of isolation). In this regard Bakhtin's concept about the openness and interpenetration of different cultures is of particular value. As Bakhtin says: "Foreign culture can be clearly and deeply seen only through the prism of another culture, but not fully, as the other cultures appear, they could see and understand even more. One meaning reveals its depths having met with another strange meaning, and it results into a dialogue that surpasses the isolation of these meanings, of these cultures. We ask another culture such kind of questions it will never pose, we search for the answers to our questions and the foreign culture answers us opening up new depths" [6, p. 335].

So, it is too early to talk about the decline of the culture. It can be proved by the fact that the problems of cultural development of the 20th century are topical for the today's science. Northrop Frye notes that the Industrial Revolution brings a new factor in the world order, which can not fully fit the dialectics of separate "cultures" despite their importance in the past. Such question as "Will the Western civilization survive, degrade or die out?" has become obsolete, because the world is trying to outgrow the concept of "civilization" and to enter a completely different dimension [7].

Thereby, the perception of culture is changing. It does not become the mass, but universal, intertextual in the broadest sense of a word. Culture becomes more open as the space where it exists is open. It is its prosymbol, its city, the development of which is connected with the development of any culture by Spengler: "All great cultures are city-born. The outstanding man of the second generation is a city-building animal... World history is the history of the city men. Nations, governments, politics and religions, art and science are based on the single phenomenon of human existence, which is the city [8, p. 92].

The landscape is the prosymbol of the city, and Spengler believes that it is the space that exists outside of time: "the space is *being* there and by the fact of its "being" it goes beyond the time... Duration dominates in it... as a known property of things... the space itself is temporary that is why it is a sign and expression of the life, primary and the most powerful of all its symbols" [1, p. 336]. A man realizes himself in this space, *feels* it. This way a city appears, it is the space of the man, created by him, but not always cognized, however, it is no longer an abstract space which simply "exists", – writes Spengler. So the city is not just a symbol of culture, it is its image.

The image of any city is correlated with its perception in the life of an individual. According to Spengler, if the world is felt in the time by each living being (this is a history), then the city is the image (gestalt) and the world of an individual. Subjectively and objectively the image of the city is the result of its perception by the individual, so the city is not an abstraction, it is an integral part of a man and his perception, no matter whether it is a small town or a world city. At the same time the city, created by a man, transforms into a particular social organism in the structure of which Nikolai Antsiferov distinguishes three elements on the basis of living being studies: anatomy (topography), physiology (functions) and psychology (soul) of the urban organism [3, pp. 17–20]. This organism exists independently and has an impact on human imposing its own laws (Spengler calls it "to consume" the inhabitant of the landscape). And now the influence of a man upon a city is not confined here, because its heyday is always the evidence of human creative genius prosperity, both scientific and artistic. Since the appearance of the city between two organisms, urban and human, there are close relationship and mutual influence. Culture is the precious fruit of this kind of relationship, and due to this it is possible to consider the city as a symbol binding a human with the history and the world.

Oswald Spengler wrote that the horizontal (spatial) projection of the cities is a reflection of the people's destiny [1, p. 360], and "The Decline of the West" contains a detailed investigation into the problem of city and people, city and nation. Spengler sees a nation as a cosmic unity of people ("the unity of soul"), endowed with the knowledge of cosmic rhythm [8, p. 7, 169]. Such kind of people's unity is peculiar to a small town and completely alien to a world city; as the world city is a rational unity of people, where the spirit of intelligence is the one that rules, not the spirit of culture. However, we believe that growing out of any rational unity of people the city becomes their cosmic unity, only under this condition the city can form the world view, impose its laws, and play a fateful role (as vividly described in the novel "Manhattan" by John Dos Passos.

The city, which appeared as a result of human rational choice, eventually becomes a natural landscape, in other words, it becomes the roots of a man and crucial unity of people. It is in the unity of urban world view, the rhythm of life, sensation, aims in life, language unity (urban dialect), and finally thinking. All these are the binding elements of the culture of nation and the culture of city and, ultimately, the people being in history. The world city does not signify the decline of the culture, it is likely to reveal the undiscovered opportunities, encouraging the humanity to change the attitude to life and to remember the past.

Spengler says that urban intellectual consciousness is not “incorporeal” and not separated from the instincts and feelings. Growing out of the natural landscape (which gave birth to urban consciousness, the prototype of the city), the city becomes the landscape for its inhabitant, his nature, his land. And the landscape can be perceived both by means of thinking and instinctive feeling as the creativity is the means of environment perception (the result of *soul* impulses, not *spirit* ones), which is always instinctive (probably, only from this point of view it is possible to accept Spengler’s statement that any culture is meaningless).

The development of urban space for a citizen can be compared with the cultivation of land for a peasant. The cultivation of a land produces the fruits in the metaphysics of nature, the development of a city provides with the fruits in the metaphysics of spirit. No matter how a person can be detached from the landscape, he is still bound up with it and always returns to nature. This need for closer connection with nature (and village) was stipulated by a garden city which arose in the early 20th century. Ebenezer Howard designed it as a city of the future and this project was realized in two English cities – Letchworth Garden City and Welwyn Garden City. The image of garden city included the utopian views about ideal city in the Modern Times, and this city was a part of nature.

Urban consciousness appearance and organization transforms the essence of human beliefs and religions. Spengler pays special attention to religion in his book considering it to be a prehistoric background of any culture. Reflections on religion in “The Decline of the West” are closely connected with the philosophy of a city and idea of the nation. According to Spengler, religion and postulates of faith can develop only in a small (early) city, beliefs of peasantry always remain at initially primitive level as they express fear of nature and dependence on it. When world cities appear, religion as a spiritual faith dies. This is, perhaps, the basic reason of distinguishing and opposing culture to civilization in “The Decline of the West”, the nature of culture is religious, the nature of civilization is non-religious. The question about the religious nature of culture and non-religious nature of civilizations is difficult, and the answer to it, in our opinion, is ambiguous. It is possible to state rather precisely that the birth of cities distinguished between the concepts of “church” and “religion” as the church becomes one of political management institutions but the religion remains an embodiment of faith for the city people. As to Spengler, the world city transforms the religion which is now substituted with morals, ethics, humanity [8, p. 225]. Thus, modern urban consciousness lacks the genuine perception of religion. However, we believe that the substitution of concept in this case does not mean the substitution of spiritual grounds of religion.

It is necessary to remember that urban consciousness formation is connected with the changes in religious consciousness. Great mercy of the religion is an idea of salvation. And in this respect we can distinguish (apart from the landscape) one more important precondition of the city occurrence which is *religious* (or psychological). It is based on the human aspiration for salvation from the lonely “self”, from the fear of death etc. The city represents the salvation from the first and from the last. Even today religion is considered as a way of salvation as fear is the outcome of spiritual world perception (instincts and thinking development).

The fear of death helps a person to perceive a life as a sacrament and encourages him to create the *sensual* (capability to love) and the *material* (which is based on the aspiration for immortality). In this context the birth of a city as result of human activity is predetermined by the aspiration for self- immortalization as well as by the aspiration for cognizing (in other words for curbing) the movement in time and in space. The fear of time generates the desire to stop it and it can be done by the art only, the greatest achievement of spiritual self-expression of a person. In this respect the city, whose architecture preserves the centuries, appears to be one of such achievements that allows considering its appearance to be connected with the evolution of human spirit, consciousness, and then of a landscape.

When the city was on the later stages of development (19th–20th centuries), the free spirit was transformed into a complex of philosophical ideas about the free will of a man connected with the existence in a city. The freedom was understood as a personal choice of one's fate by Sartre, as an opportunity for rebellion by Camus, as a combat of alienation in the relations between people by Martin Buber as well as a chance of going beyond the man's "one-dimensionality" by Herbert Marcuse. The phenomenon of a personal freedom, grown in the cities of the Renaissance, was seen in the desire of a man to change the world for the better (which resulted in the idea of creating new city-states as the embodiment of the ideal world order in art, for example, *The City of the Sun* by Tommaso Campanella, *Utopia* by Thomas More, *New Atlantis* by Francis Bacon, etc.). The 19th–20th centuries saw this phenomenon as a basis of human consciousness in philosophy and one of the important problems in art that stipulated the emergence and development of romanticism and modernism. Romanticism strove for the freedom of the individual manifesting the freedom of creativity. Modernism treasured greatly the inner world of a man and a human individuality, considering it to be of an inherent value, as well as a rebellion against the absurd reality.

But still the urban consciousness is the one that unites the individualities taking into consideration the worldview, senses, aspirations; that allows the citizens to be an organic part of their inhabitancy, making a city alive by means of the phrases "all Paris", "all Petersburg", "all New York". In the course of time it forms the so-called *city race* which has the same roots and the same language (city dialect). This language, while expressing or informing always reflecting the cultural sensitivity peculiarities of the urban consciousness, realized in art, provides the basis for a municipal government in economy, the city geography in science, the city subject in art (the city song in music, the city landscape in painting, the city text in the literature), etc.

So, the urban consciousness stipulates the birth of the cities which are alive and real as well as the births of the cities which are unreal – mythical. At early stages of the development of culture the mythical city reflected the ideas about the other world and the life after death, then, much later, it was the utopia city embodied the dream about the ideal world. Thus, it is possible to conclude that the urban consciousness is dualistic, it is aimed at the idea of new lands opening, the organic unity of life and religion, spiritual and art consciousness.

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В статье исследуется проблема формирования города как культурного феномена в концепции О. Шпенглера. Анализируется процесс зарождения городского сознания как свободного духа, присутствующего в искусстве.

Ключевые слова: город, ландшафт, пространство, городское сознание, свободный дух, искусство, литература.

У статті досліджується проблема формування міста як культурного феномену в концепції О. Шпенглера. Аналізується процес зародження міської свідомості як вільного духу, втіленого у мистецтві.

Ключові слова: місто, ландшафт, простір, міська свідомість, вільний дух, мистецтво, література.

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