Refining the Understanding of the Technosphere as Part of the Noosphere (Based on the Material of the Soviet and Russian Philosophical Discussions)

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Abstract

The article proposes the version of philosophical reflection on technology, within which the technosphere is considered as a necessary component of the noosphere. This, in turn, confronts us with the problem of interpreting the latter. Critically analyzing those versions of such an interpretation that were called “occult” and “exceptionally spatial”, we show that it is impossible to constructively consider the prospects for the development of the technosphere within their framework. Accordingly, we are explicating the advantage of that understanding of the noosphere (as a new stage in the evolution of the biosphere, when the Mind of mankind is “at the helm”), which “ripened” in “Russian cosmism” and was scientifically designed by V. I. Vernadsky: in this framework, technology is becoming much more important than just being a means of enhancing human comfort.

Key words: technosphere, purpose of technology, noosphere and its interpretations, humanity and the biosphere, “Russian cosmism”, V. I. Vernadsky.

Introduction. On the pages of "INTELLECTUAL ARCHIVE" we repeatedly comprehended the legacy of "Russian cosmism" [1-4]. In particular, the idea of “Noosphere”, specifically evaluated by us as the main scientific achievement of this trend. In favor of the relevance of this topic for English-speaking readers, we give the following words of the prominent contemporary Russian biophysicist and philosopher, B. G. Rezhabek, the head of the “Problems of the formation of the noosphere” section in the Russian Philosophical Society. Even such an outstanding Western philosopher and futurologist as F. Fukuyama, “at a meeting in Moscow on June 13, 2007 in response to my question about Vernadsky and the noosphere said that he is not familiar with these ideas” [5, p. 163]. But the doctrine on the formation of the noosphere, developed by the great Soviet encyclopedist and philosopher V. I. Vernadsky, is, in our opinion, the main alternative to the Fukuyama's concept of the “end of history”! Therefore, this teaching can not be simply ignored even by those who hold different views on the future of mankind. Also, according to our position, it is not constructive to consider the development of the technosphere without taking into account the provisions of the noosphere concept. In other

words, in our studies we identify ourselves with those authors who interpret the technosphere as part of the noosphere. Turning to authoritative Russian encyclopedic publications, we will consider definitions of the italicized concepts. The first of them, in a broad sense, captures "the realm of reality, which is characterized by the use of technology" [6, p. 674], but in the narrow one (which appeared in the works of sociologists of technology as a response to the scientific and technological revolution by the middle of the 20th century) "it is used to characterize modern civilization, for which the penetration of complex machine technology into all spheres of activity is specific" [6, p. 674]. In other words, the technosphere is "the totality of all functioning and old, inactive technical objects and all the products of their activities that arose on Earth and in space. Spatio-temporal system of technology and the technological form of matter motion controlled by it" [7, p. 208]. But with the second concept - namely, the "noosphere" - the situation is more complicated, which forces us to consider the etymology and various options for the definition of this concept.

1. The role of V. I. Vernadsky in the appearance of the term "noosphere" and its interpretation as a new geological era. The term "noosphere" (from the Greek "nous" - "mind" and "sphaira" - "sphere") was proposed in 1927 by French thinkers: the naturalist and religious philosopher P. Teilhard de Chardin and the philosophizing mathematician E. Le Roy. However, they were based on the ideas of the Soviet philosophizing naturalist V.I. Vernadsky expressed in readings at the Sorbonne (at the personal invitation of its rector P. Appel) in 1922-1923. lectures on geochemistry [8, p. 7]. These are generally recognized facts from the history of natural science. However, for example, the outstanding Soviet philosophizing mathematician and ecologist N. N. Moiseev, the academician of the USSR Academy of Sciences and the Russian Academy of Sciences, reinforces the role of V. I. Vernadsky in the appearance of the term "noosphere". Based on the testimonies of a number of scientists, "related to the staying of V. I. Vernadsky in France, in particular, in the words of N. V. Timofeev-Resovsky" [9, p. 28], he claims that the term that interests us was proposed by E. Le Roy precisely "during the presentation of V.I. Vernadsky at the A. Bergson's seminar in Paris in the mid-1920s ... (with the aim of P. M.) to serve as the name of the concept of V. I. Vernadsky on the transition of the biosphere to a new evolutionary state under the influence of human activity" [9, p. 28]. But what interests us first of all is not

the one who suggested the word itself, but which of the meanings invested in it contributes to a constructive consideration of the future of our civilization, including its technical component. We believe that this meaning appeared before the term “noosphere”, namely, in the Essays on Geochemistry by V. I. Vernadsky published in Paris in French in 1924 (These essays, we add, were known by E. Le Roy and P. Teilhard de Chardin). It said that "with man ... a huge new geochemical force appeared on the surface of our planet." The equilibrium in the migration of elements, which has been established over long geological times, is disturbed by the mind and activity of mankind ”[10, p. 258]. In subsequent work, "Scientific thought as a planetary phenomenon" (which was written in the late 30s of the XX century, but was not completed), on this occasion it was said even more definitely: “a living, dynamic process ... of the existence of science, connecting the past with the present ... is reflected in the environment of human life, is an ever-growing geological force that turns the biosphere into the noosphere. This is a natural process ”[11, p. 376]. The last words, we repeat, mean that the noosphere is the stage of development of the biosphere, at which the mind acts as the main driving force. Moreover, the biosphere is understood not simply as “the area of the living,” but as “the area of the living inextricably linked with the inorganic.” In his last lifetime publication, the article “Some words about the noosphere” (1943), briefly summarizing his research, V. I. Vernadsky writes: “In the lectures at the Sorbonne in 1922/23, I accepted biogeochemical phenomena as the basis of the biosphere” [12, p. 11] (pay attention to the mention “Geochemical phenomena”!), And the “new state” of the biosphere that is so understood “is the noosphere” [12, p. 11]. This understanding of the noosphere that is recorded in the most authoritative Russian specialized publications. In the “New Philosophical Encyclopedia” (2010): “a concept used in ... evolutionary concepts to describe the mind as a special natural phenomenon” [13, p. 107] and fixing, first of all, the fact that "mind arises as a result of the ongoing development of the material world and gradually turns into a leading factor in this development" [13, p. 107]. Similarly, in the “Russian Philosophy” encyclopedia (2014): “a concept denoting the sphere of interaction between nature and man, in which the latter plays a decisive role” [14, p. 426], which "was a natural consequence of the synthesis of the idea of the evolution of the organic world, the idea that with the advent of mankind, our planet entered a new geological era" [14, p.]. And, finally, in the “Human Ecology” dictionary (1997): “a qualitatively new phase; the

highest stage of development of the biosphere, associated with the emergence and development in it of civilized humanity ... when intelligent human activity becomes the main, determining factor in the development of the Earth ”[15, p. 106].

2. The essence of the technosphere “in the light” of alternative interpretations of the noosphere. However, the reader may ask: why did we use the concept of “discussion” in the title of the article if all the discussions on the noosphere considered so far are complementary? The answer is: we are talking about discussions with those authors who interpret the noosphere alternative way. Among the alternative interpretations, we distinguish two, which we will call “occult” and “exceptionally spatial”. The essence of the first is vividly conveyed by B. G. Rezhabek, thus criticizing this position on the example of the reasoning of the famous Russian religious thinker, deacon A. Kuraev. According to the latter, the term “noosphere” to V. I. Vernadsky “was suggested ... by the priest Pavel Florensky” [16]. (On this occasion, we repeat what was said at the beginning of this article: yes, the idea of the noosphere, even when there was no such term, was also developed by the “Russian cosmists” preceding V. I. Vernadsky. Including P. A. Florensky, who, in fact, talked about the “noosphere”, using “his” term - "Pneumatic sphere"). It would seem that this should be approved by the modern priest, however A. Kuraev categorically states: “Florensky himself borrowed this idea from occult literature” [16]. And moreover, “both Vernadsky and all literature on Russian cosmism” has the “noosphere” as just a polite invitation to the world of occultism ”[16]. Strengthening this, let us say that A. Kuraev in such assessments of the idea of the noosphere is not alone. For example, professor of theology V. Chernyshev considers the “energy-informational field (Vernadsky’s noosphere)” to be “temptations” sent by “rational creatures of a non-protein-nucleic nature” [17]. By the mentioned “non-protein,” but “rational” creatures, we can mean only “demons,” but the discussion about them, of course, goes beyond our - as well as any scientific - article. But such reasoning is fully consistent with the esoteric tradition. To illustrate this, let us turn to the work “Occultism and Magic. Ancient high magic ... ” of Count Pierre Vincenti (1874-1942) (from an ancient Italian-French family), who, under the pseudonyms Pierre Piobb (P. V. Piobb), described in detail the ideas of the European esoteric school of the turn of the 19th-20th centuries. “Occultism recognizes the existence of three worlds, ... three schemes of existence ...: the spiritual world, the astral world and the

physical world” [18, p. 35], and the second one is filled with "Astral bodies", or, "astrosomes", "partly conscious, partly unconscious" [18, p. 36].

We can agree with B. G. Rezhbek that, firstly, the considered assessments are justified, since the term “noosphere” is actively used by “occultists and charlatans,” including - V. Yu. And T. S. Tikhoplavy [19]. (It is worth mentioning specifically about these authors, representatives of technical knowledge, citing the names of their books: “Physics of Faith” (2005), “God's Time: Consciousness and Life” (2005), “God's Time: A Voice from afar” (2006). Even more revealing is the name of their official website: “Scientific Esoterics” [20].) However, secondly, we agree that the real noospheric ideas of V. I. Vernadsky, as well as other representatives of Russian cosmism, "have nothing to do with this occult whistle" [19, p. 61]. “The scientific understanding of ideas about the noosphere as one of the geological shells ... has nothing to do with the occult understanding of the noosphere as a“ sphere of spirits ”,“ subtle worlds ”” [19, p. 61]. Actually, we justified this in detail in the last paragraph of our article, therefore, without further explanation, we agree with B. G. Rezhbek that the circumstance under consideration may not be obvious due to “superficial acquaintance” of the “deacon-humanitarian” (and other authors who interpret the noosphere in the occult channel) with the achievements of natural science [19, p. 60]. But for us it is especially important how the technosphere can be interpreted in the framework of such an understanding of the noosphere ?! The answer is paradoxical: in no way! Hence if the noosphere is “the realm of spirits”, “the subtle world”, “the sphere of the astral”, etc., it is, in principle, connected neither with the biosphere, nor with the noosphere.

We turn to the second alternative interpretation of the noosphere, which we called "exceptionally spatial." It, in fact, is a “truncated” version of the interpretation that goes back to V. I. Vernadsky: understanding the noosphere as a stage (and regular) evolution of the biosphere is being "taken out of brackets", and the noosphere “shrinks”, “decreases” exclusively to the region space transformed or at least affected by activity of the "armed with science" humanity. Such an interpretation of the noosphere is characteristic of those representatives of the natural and technical sciences who ignore the philosophical level of the noosphere concept and reduce the “sphere of reason” simply to a combination of technical devices, technologies for their application, and the results of such applications. It

follows that the noosphere and technosphere become synonyms, and - most important for us - discussions about them no longer need philosophical analysis. After all, the development of the so-called noosphere (= technosphere) is simply an ever deeper scientific knowledge, and on this basis - an ever-increasing “processing”, the transformation of both the lithosphere and the hydrosphere, into an “anthropogenic landscape” (by which we mean “how landscapes were re-created by man, and all those natural complexes in which a radical change ... under the influence of man has undergone any of their components ”[21, p. 25]). But then it makes no sense to ask the philosophical questions of technology proper: what are the boundaries of such an intervention (they simply are not provided for with this approach - the whole biosphere should become the so-called “noosphere”), what is the true purpose of the technology (in this case, it simply reduces to turning nature into “comfortable”, “convenient” environment for humanity).

Conclusion. As we tried to show, within the framework of those interpretations of the noosphere, which we called “occult” and “exceptionally spatial”, it is impossible to constructively consider the prospects for the development of the technosphere and, therefore, avoid technosphere disasters (or at least minimize them). But this raises the question: why is it better, more constructive, than the understanding of the noosphere, which has "ripened" in “Russian cosmism” and was scientifically designed by V. I. Vernadsky?! In response, we add to the analysis of the ideas of this philosophizing natural scientist carried out in the first paragraph of this article a couple of thoughts of his modern researchers. G. B. Gutner, an important feature of the "building" activity of mankind is reflection: it (humanity) "not only changes nature, but also recognizes the changes as a result of its activities" [13, p. 107]. B. G. Rezhbek recalls that the emerging “holistic noospheric worldview” should be based on the idea of “not only about the Rights, but also about the Obligations of Man” [13, p. 107] that it is "necessary to create a real strategy for solving global problems of our time" [13, p. 107]. In other words, if the “noosphere” is a new stage in the evolution of the biosphere, then when “Mind” (moreover, funded by Morale) is “at the helm”, then technology (and, therefore, the technosphere as a whole) cannot be considered utilitarianly, as an instrument to increase the “comfort” of mankind . Accordingly, any changes made to nature should be subject to philosophical reflection, including and from the point of view of the “duties of mankind” organizing co-evolution

(this concept fixes the mechanism of the “interdependent changes in the elements that make up a developing integrated system” [22, p. 514]), ie joint evolution, in the process of which humanity is assigned both active and adaptive roles. The “tool” for the implementation of this is the technique, which through this takes on much greater significance than would simply be a means of increasing human comfort.

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