

Rene Guenon's Place in The System of World Comparative Philosophy

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Abstract: The article examines the contribution of Rene Guenon to the development of world comparative studies. The author analyzes his unique approach to comparing traditional religious and philosophical systems based on the concept of the Primordial Tradition. Guenon did not just compare different cultural and spiritual teachings, but sought to identify their universal metaphysical core. Special attention is paid to his criticism of modernity, opposition to Western rationalism and the use of the symbolic method of analysis. The article discusses to what extent Guenon's traditionalist approach can be considered as an alternative to classical methods of comparative studies and to what extent his ideas remain relevant in modern scientific and philosophical discourse.

Keywords: Tradition, traditionalism, comparative philosophy, Rene Guenon, dialogue of cultures.

Introduction: Rene Guenon is one of the most mysterious and controversial figures in the intellectual history of the 20th century. His works had a significant impact on the development of comparative religious studies, the philosophy of traditionalism and comparative studies in a broad sense. A researcher, philosopher, and esotericist, he balanced between strict academicism and deep involvement in traditional spiritual teachings. Comparative studies as a discipline involves a comparative analysis of cultural, philosophical and religious systems, revealing their structural analogies and deep connections. In this context, Guenon stands out for a special approach that is opposed to Western rationalism. He did not just compare different traditions, but sought to show their common metaphysical basis, arguing that all authentic spiritual systems go back to a single Primordial Tradition. Guenon's figure does not fit into the standard academic categories. His texts simultaneously resemble fundamental philosophical studies and esoteric treatises, offering a kind of "meta-view" of the universe. In this sense, his work represents a challenge to modern scientific discourse, requiring not only rational, but also intuitive comprehension. Consideration of Guenon's place in the system of world comparative studies requires taking into account his concept of traditionalism, attitude to modernity and

the method of symbolic analysis. How relevant are his ideas today? Is his approach an alternative to classical comparativism, or does it represent an independent line of thought? These questions continue to worry researchers and highlight the complexity and complexity of Guenon's legacy.

LITERATURE ANALYSIS AND METHODOLOGY

In this work, the author relies on primary sources, i.e. the works of representatives of comparative philosophy and Rene Guenon in order to determine his place in the system of world comparative philosophy. To do this, the author applied such methods as hermeneutics, structural analysis, comparative analysis, and an axiological approach. The author drew on the works of such philosophers as P. Masson-Oursel, P.T.Raju, Fung Yu-Lan, Hu ShiP, Nishida Kitaro and others. At the same time, the work of Rene Guenon himself occupied an important place for the implementation of an objective comparative analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Rene Guenon's activity falls during the period of conceptualization and institutionalization of philosophical comparative studies in the 20-60s of the XX century, when Paul Masson Oursel published his Comparative Philosophy (1923), in which he discusses the methodology of comparative philosophy,

chronology, logic, metaphysics and psychology. Attempting to generalize the results of his research and analysis of Western and Eastern philosophy, Masson-Oursel believes that a truly positive philosophy should be a comparative philosophy that "captures" in comparative reflection the "common and special", similarities and differences, the universal interrelation of phenomena, the world in its diversity and integrity [1, 13-25]. Comparative philosophy should study spiritual and cultural phenomena in their interrelation and mutual influence, both in the East and in the West, but without the influence of Eurocentrism and any "isms" in general, since this leads to the loss of the uniqueness of philosophical concepts. The thinker believes that the natural-geographical and socio-cultural environment has a great influence on the formation of a particular worldview, which also affects the development of philosophical reflection in any region, therefore, the broadest environment for the development of philosophy is civilization, which encompasses all spiritual and material processes [2, 109-110]. It is civilization that is the determining factor in the development of a particular philosophy, therefore it is necessary to take into account the relationship, for example, of Indian philosophy with religion. In this regard, it should be said that Guenon's comparative studies also pays great attention to the phenomenon of civilization, but as a "generation and expression of a certain mindset," for the most objective consideration of which Guenon considers it necessary to study its structural components, however, through the prism of their relationship to tradition [3, 79]. Guenon distinguishes between traditional and non-traditional civilizations. He considers the Eastern civilizations (Indian, Chinese, Islamic) to be the first, and the entire Western civilization as a whole to be the second, therefore, we can talk about metaphysical, spiritual, and material civilizations, respectively, and in this regard the positions of the two thinkers are already diverging, especially considering that Masson-Oursel applies the principle of parallelism of spiritual and philosophical development. Europe, India and China, giving preference to India due to its enormous influence on other peoples in the past and its ethnolinguistic kinship with Western civilization [4, 66]. For Guenon, Indian civilization is also a priority, but he finds absolutely no parallelism, even in terms of language. On the contrary, the difference between the West and the East "is comparable to that which exists geographically between Asia and Europe, where the latter is only a continuation of the former; in the same way, strictly speaking, the position of the West in relation to the East is equal to the position of the branch growing from the trunk" [3, 28].

Bertrand Russell, as one of those who contributed to the conceptualization of philosophical comparative studies, had a negative attitude towards the attempt to westernize China, calling for the preservation of the "soul of Chinese civilization", Chinese culture and philosophy, and dialogue between the West and the East; he opposed the suppression of its aggressiveness, the spirit of exploitation and profit inherent in Western countries [4]. Rene Guenon, calling the West a "material civilization", also saw among its essential features a desire for expansion, which "represents nothing new, but in previous eras it was limited to a more or less crude dominance over peoples, and the influence of the West did not extend beyond the level of politics and economics... Today, more and more Eastern people are... completely and completely "Westernized.... renounce their traditions and assimilate all the misconceptions inherent in a purely modern worldview" [5, 114]. If Russell mainly draws attention to the attempt to "Westernize" China, Guenon extrapolates this to the entire Eastern world. At the same time, he notes that an almost completely Westernized Japan is already present in the East, which "seeks to exercise its hegemony over the whole of Asia and organize it in its own way; but in such an enterprise it will meet the same resistance as that offered to the European peoples, and perhaps even more," despite the presence of traditional Shintoism, which could "play the same role as Confucianism in China." Regarding the dialogue between East and West, the thinker believes that "it is necessary for the initiative to come from the West ... in modern conditions, authoritative representatives of Eastern traditions cannot be intellectually interested in the West" [6, 161].

The interaction between China and the West was the central theme of comparative studies by Feng Yulan, who became interested in the problem of East-West cultural interaction in the early 20s while studying in the United States [7]. Yulan, through his "new lixue", tried to open the way for the modernization of Chinese philosophical thought through its synthesis with the achievements of the Western tradition. Guenon considered such a synthesis to be completely impossible in the vector in which the Chinese philosopher provides it. For Guenon, the very concept of "modernization" is identical to the concept of "modernity", which is essentially an anti-metaphysical phenomenon, since it covers up a confusing and incoherent "syncretism" in which ancient concepts are interpreted in the most erroneous and arbitrary way. For Guenon, modernization itself is nothing more than the spread of the West in the East, which leads to destructive consequences. The synthesis that Feng

Yulan is talking about is possible for Guenon only in the key of transformation in line with the Eastern tradition. Western trends were stronger in the philosophical and comparative views of Hu Shi, who believed that for several millennia Chinese philosophy had been following the "wrong path". The Chinese philosopher, who embraced the American pragmatism of John Dewey, criticized not only the material but also the spiritual backwardness of China. The latter was expressed for him in Confucianism and Taoism, which became an obstacle to China's scientific and technological progress. Therefore, he considers it necessary to abandon traditionalism in favor of Western individualism and liberalism. Interestingly, even Hu Shi's "Great Course of Chinese Philosophy", according to the reviewer, seems to have been written by an American researching Chinese thought [8, 6]. Although the thinker still finds some similarities between Chinese and Western philosophy, in particular, in the presence of a "logical method" in them, since "philosophy is conditioned by the logical method, the development of philosophy certainly proceeds from the development of the logical method". Guenon, speaking about logic, called it a "special science" because "its connection with metaphysics is much more direct, since what is called logical principles is a simple application in the field of conditioned true principles of a universal order". Based on Guenon's opinion, we can say that logic, as such, is a metaphysical science, and, consequently, a traditional one. Based on this, the similarity in logic between East and West was present only when there was a Western tradition before the Renaissance. In modern times, this similarity has been lost. For Guenon, Confucianism and Taoism are absolutely not factors that contributed to China's backwardness, on the contrary, both of them are two parts of traditional Chinese doctrine. The West, which is the standard for Hu Shi, for Guenon is in a state of crisis, "social chaos" and is close to its degeneration, salvation from which is possible only through "communication" with the East. Pragmatism, on the other hand, "represents the logical conclusion of modern [i.e. Western] philosophy and the last stage of its decline" [5, 18].

In Nishida's works, Kitaro consistently develops "Buddhist-Confucian-Western syncretism". He attempts to express Eastern philosophy through the prism of Western philosophy and, conversely, Western philosophy through the prism of Eastern philosophy. His synthesis proceeds through Zen Buddhism and Western philosophy through a selective approach to its currents, namely through Neoplatonism, Fichteanism, Bergsonianism, Husserlianism, Boehme mysticism and Schopenhauer's philosophy [9]. However, Kitaro

recognizes the lack of logic in Eastern philosophy, and then approach universal logic. A distinctive feature of the Japanese thinker is the desire for mutual understanding of East and West. This trait also distinguishes him from Guenon, who, on the contrary, does not see the possibility of such mutual understanding and believes that the West seeks only proselytism and the expansion of its civilization. As for Boehme's Neoplatonism and mysticism, they are traditional teachings, but the philosophies of Bergson and Schopenhauer are the fruit of orientalism and Western rationalism, distorting the "true essence of things". Regarding Buddhism, Guenon wrote that soon after its emergence, Buddhism in India became one of the main manifestations of the Kshatriya revolution against the power of the Brahmins, and as can be concluded from everything previous, there is an indisputable connection between the denial of any unchangeable principle and the denial of spiritual power, as well as between the reduction of all reality to "becoming" and the assertion of a purely secular the authorities whose sphere is the world of action. It can also be shown that naturalistic and anti-metaphysical doctrines always arise when secular power begins to prevail over spiritual power in a civilization. According to Guenon, Buddhism in China communicated more with Taoism than with Confucianism, but since it is a "rebellion against Tradition", its rapprochement with Confucianism is completely unacceptable for a thinker, especially Buddhist-Confucian-Western syncretism.

Poola Tirupati Raju, along with Paul Masson-Oursel, had a fundamental influence on the conceptualization and institutionalization of philosophical comparative studies. For Raju, criticism is the basic principle of his philosophy, as a result of which he believes that Indian idealism should be changed to meet the modern level of philosophical thinking. Based on the synthesis of ideas from Indian, Chinese, Jewish and Greek philosophy, Raju comes to an anthropological turn in his comparative studies, putting forward the idea of the individual as an idealized mystical entity [10, 16]. Regarding the East-West theme, Raju believes that Western philosophy is the philosophy of the outside, and Indian philosophy is the philosophy of the inside. The Western contribution to world philosophy is evident in his socio-political thought, while Indian philosophy is distinguished by its spiritual orientation and tolerance. The philosophical tradition of the West is essentially rational and scientific, the Chinese is humanistic, and the Indian is rooted in the inner development of man. Raju's works provide a rich overview of the history of philosophy in both the East and the West, the main purpose of this analysis is to search for similarities and differences both within one

tradition and between different ones in order to identify "points of contact". At the same time, Raju does not assert the superiority of any philosophical tradition, since everything goes towards the unity and mutual prolongation of traditions. It is unacceptable for him to draw boundaries between East and West, since both are interconnected. Philosophy, first of all, is a philosophy of values, therefore, a comparative philosophy should be a vehicle of spirituality.

Raju's comparative philosophy stands in stark contrast to Guenon's metaphysics. For Guenon, first of all, there is a dividing line between East and West, and it is the latter's fault. Although the original unity between civilizations was present, it was gradually lost, as the medieval Christian civilization fell at the hands of Renaissance humanism, because centralization on man is impossible, since he is only an integral part of the entire universe. Western philosophy is not a philosophy of the external, it is "nothing more than the product of the mental activity of human individuals devoid of any sources of non-human revelation or inspiration, which means, in a word, it is a purely "profane" phenomenon." The socio-political structure of the West denies the traditional social hierarchy as a whole, which is the true cause of the social chaos that reigns in Western public life today. Eastern metaphysics reflects the inner essence of things, tradition as such, but the mutual continuation of traditions is impossible, since a single Eastern tradition has been localized in the form of the Hindu, Chinese and Islamic traditions, which are united in their metaphysical essence. The Western tradition has been lost. East and West are interconnected, but only in terms of the fact that the latter comes from the former, as mentioned above. Therefore, the comparative studies of Raju and Guenon are opposite to each other.

CONCLUSION

There are various trends and concepts in the system of world comparative studies, each of which sees in its own way the further development of the East-West dichotomy, the possibility of a dialogue of civilizations and intercultural relations. However, Rene Guenon occupies a special place here, since he is distinguished not only by the radicality of his "orientocentrism" and the totality of his criticism of the West, but also by the fact that he requires Western civilization to take the initiative to establish contacts with the East [11, 196]. As shown above, Guenon differed in many ways from his contemporaries, rather than having any points of contact with both Western and Eastern thinkers. It is encouraging that Guenon's comparative approach and his entire metaphysical philosophy found followers already during the thinker's lifetime, and is being popularized in modern times. Seyyed Hossein Nasr

believes that supporters of Tradition criticize modernism totally and comprehensively, but their criticism is not derived from observation of facts, but concerns the causes and premises that they qualify as false. Their goal is not to destroy what is positive, but to tear down the veil of ignorance that allows the illusory to seem real, the negative to be positive, and the false to be true. We believe that when evaluating Guenon's work and philosophy, a total critical approach is necessary, since the thinker's metaphysics is fundamentally looking for an ideal where there is none, and its consequences can be quite negative. Therefore, we consider it necessary to adhere to one of the key principles of philosophical thinking – "Doubt everything".

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