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PHILOSOPHY AND POETRY AS A PRACTICE OF DEATH

More than a hundred years ago, Leo Shestov remarked in connection with Socrates' deathbed words ("... the one aim of those who practice philosophy in the proper manner is to practice for dying and death" [Phaedo, 64a]) that if we look in any of the modern philosophy textbooks, we won't find a hint of such an occupation there. No sane person, according to Shestov, would agree to exchange real, tangible life for a problematic exercise in death. The situation has not changed at all since then: Plato's thesis, with few exceptions, is hardly mentioned in modern lecture courses. And in general, there is nothing unusual here, because among the traditional philosophical concepts and categories this thesis looks too pretentious. However, even attempts to explain philosophy from such an angle do not produce the desired results. The words of Socrates are mostly taken as a cryptic figure of speech, the meaning of which is revealed directly in the context of the event of Socrates' death and nothing more. Nevertheless, these words are key to understanding the essence of philosophy.

If we turn to textbooks on literature or poetry, we will find descriptions of genre and stylistic features of works, different systems of versification and poetic speech, but we won't find any hint that true poetry, and especially lyrics, is in fact dying and practising death. This truth, again with rare exceptions, is not dared by literary theorists, novice poets or those who have been writing for a long time without looking at any theoretical handbook. However, this is the view of the essence of poetry presented in the heritage of a lot of poets. Here we can remember Alexander Blok's famous lines to the Muse: "Est' v napevah tvoih sokrovennyh / Rokovaja o gibeli vest'...", and Boris Pasternak's poem "O, esli b znal, chto tak byvaet...", and, for example, Konstantin Vaginov's little-known confession that poetry cannot exist without descending into hell of nonsense, wild noises and squeals, of the fatal danger that threatens anyone who ventures in search of new melody for the need to create a new world by word ("Goat Song"). Marina Tsvetaeva's poetological reflections, presented both in her poetic and her "prose" heritage, take a special and unique place in this context.

The confirmation of the close link between creativity and the experience of dying and death can be found in the heritage of F. Kafka, R.-M. Rilke and

M. Proust, V. Ivanov and M. Bakhtin have repeatedly commented on this. The inextricable link between literature and the experience of dying and death is shown in a number of essays by M. Blanchot. But the concept of "the death of the author" has been intensively debated in academia since the late 1960s, due to a highly controversial article by R. Barthes with the same title. Discussions on this subject continue in the present day.

It is worth keeping in mind that the relationships between philosophy and poetry, starting with Plato, have been rather complex and ambiguous. This great thinker, philosopher and myth-maker was deeply involved in poetry in his younger years, but after meeting Socrates, he abandoned this allegedly worthless occupation. In the dialogues, Plato both praises the poet for his divine madness and, because of this madness, belittles him to the point of banishing him from the ideal republic. However, the same Plato forces his most important spiritual parent in the last days of his earthly life and moreover on the eve of the ultimate revelations about the essence of philosophy and the immortality of the soul to engage in nothing less than versification: Socrates composes a hymn to Apollo and puts Aesop's fables into verses [Phaedo, 60d-61b]. And so, poetry, the poetic *techné*, becomes that essential work without which even Socrates cannot finish his earthly way. Not only philosophy, recognized as a ceaseless dying and exercise in death, but also poetry is mysteriously connected with this kind of exercise.