Thinking Chaos and the “Other Beginning” of Philosophy

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Chaos was not part of the context of Greek philosophy. Greek philosophy was built exclusively as a philosophy of the Logos, and to us such a state of affairs is so normal, that we (probably correctly from a historical point of view) identify philosophy with the Logos. We do not know any other philosophy, and, in principle, if we are to believe Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger along with contemporary postmodernist philosophy, we will have to acknowledge that the very philosophy which was discovered by the Greeks and built up around the Logos has today fully exhausted its contents. It incarnated itself in techne, in the subject-object topography that turned out to be evidentiary for only two or three centuries until the final, sunset note of West-European philosophy. As a matter of fact, today we are standing on the line or endpoint of this philosophy of the Logos.

Today, we can glimpse the entire process of the evolution of logocentric philosophy that began with Heraclitus and the Pre-Socratics, reached its apogee in Platonism and Socrates, was developed fairly violently in Greco-Latin patristics and later in Scholasticism and the Neoplatonic Renaissance and, in the New Era, turned together with Descartes through the subject-object topography onto its last- self-reflective stage that, in turn, ended with Nietzsche. According to Heidegger, it was precisely Nietzsche who ended West-European philosophy. Thus, we have before us a finished story with a beginning, climax, and end, all about logocentric culture. The Logos, from cradle to grave. But then we have to ask ourselves: who was Heidegger?

On the one hand, Heidegger definitely ends this process of Western philosophy and puts down the final seal, but on the other hand he (potentially) lays the foundations of something new. The end of philosophy is absolutely clear, but the question about the “other Beginning” (der andere Anfang) remains open.

It is totally clear that West-European philosophy, being logocentric, has exhausted its potential. However, we have to ask ourselves the question: what role did chaos play in this logocentric philosophy? It was rejected from the very beginning, left out of account, crossed out, because the Logos is based on the exclusion of chaos, on the affirmation of there being a hard alternative to it. What is the fundamental difference between logos and chaos? The Logos is exclusivity, the Logos is separation, the Logos is a clear idea about the one and the other; it is not by random chance that the Logos received its formalised form in the logic of Aristotle, in its fundamental laws: the law of identity, the law of negation and the law of the excluded third. It is necessary to emphasise that modern and post-modern studies entirely correctly show, that the logocentric understanding of the world is masculinoid, i.e. exclusively male, exclusivist [1]. It is this way, in an explosive manner, that men think of the world and order. The Logos is a male, hierarchised beginning that was simplified in West-European philosophy, reached its high point, and… collapsed, was cast down, dissipated. Today, the “great man”, the “cosmic man” has been shattered into fragments. He collapsed, and together with him his philosophy crumbled, as the Logos and the male beginning are, as a matter of fact, the very same thing. This is where the rightness of the postmodernist, critical term “phallo-logocentrism” comes from. The entire West-European philosophy was built on the male principle from beginning to end. This end is here. We are living through it. This means that the Logos is exhausted. Therefore, we must either meekly slip into the night, or search for new paths.

If we review this process of the appearance, establishment, and downfall of Western European philosophy and the appearance of the Logos in a pure form, consequently, as demasculinisation continues (according to Plato, only the philosopher is a true man; in other words, a man is he who philosophises; therefore, today we can speak of a sweeping degeneration and spiritual castration of men, as they are no longer capable of engaging in philosophy) and the Logos falls, we see before us an image of mixing: dissipated fragments of male logical thought are turbulently mixing amongst each other, thereby forming a post-masculinist amalgamate. It is precisely to this mixing, this phenomenon of the turbulence of parts that are no longer part of something whole that is indicated by those who use the concept of “chaos” in modern science.

Here, we must immediately say that the chaos with which modern science, modern physics, and chaos theory operate is actually a set of structures of order that is more complex. This is nothing else than complex systems that are not at all alternatives to order as such, but are just an extravagant, baroque (here, too, the ideas of postmodernist G. Deleuze from his essay “The Fold: Leibnitz and the Baroque” are valuable) version of a complexified, twisted and significantly perverted order. That was is today called “chaos” by representatives of the scientific and, in part, the cultural establishment is the condition of the post-logical world, a world that is still located, however, within the Logos, inside its orbit, albeit at the most distant periphery, at its last border. A very precise name for such a state of affairs has been given by René Guénon, who called this situation “la confusion” (Fr. “mixing”, “tangle”, “everything getting caught in everything else”.

The concept of “chaos” that is dominant in modern science does not correspond at all to the Greek chaos as something primordial, organic, and spontaneous, but as the product of the collapse of logocentric philosophy and the logocentric culture that was based on it. The fact that we are today dealing with an alleged “chaos” actually refers to the product of the Logos’s collapse and separation into different fragments. It is precisely for this reason that scholars of “chaos” find within it residual or extravagant, eccentric structures of the Logos. These can be studied and quantified only in more complex procedures and with the help of a special device that has been adapted for the quantifying and description of bifurcational processes, non-integrated equations (I. Prigozhin), and fractals (B. Mandelbrot). The theory of “chaos” studies process that are exceptionally dependent on initial conditions. The definition of “chaos” in modern science is today taken to be the following: a dynamic system with the following traits: sensitivity to initial conditions, topological mixing, and the density of periodical orbits. Mathematicians further specify, that a “chaotic system should have non-linear characteristics and be globally stable, but also have at least one unstable point of equilibrium of oscillating type; in addition, the dimensions of the system should be no less than 1,5 (i.e. the order of a differential equation should be no less than 3)” [3].

Actually, it is not the Greek chaos at all that is hinted at in this concept of “chaos”, but a product of the dispersion and disintegration of the Logos. This is so because we have not yet left the bounds of the Logos: the chaos that modern science deals with is integrated into the Logos, it splashes around within its inner space (albeit at the most extreme orbit), as far away as possible from the logocentric axis, in the furthest borderland of the conceptual Platonic cosmos, in the world of the Titans [4]. Therefore, we must, strictly speaking, call this reality a “very remote copy” that has nearly lost its link to the original; we must not in any case, however, call it “chaos”. Here, either the term “mixing” (Guénon’s “la confusion”) is most appropriate or the postmodern concept of the “simulacrum”, which J. Baudrillard interprets as a “copy without an original”. This is an intralogical zone (albeit at a maximum distance from the centre) that has nothing in common with the initial image of Greek chaos, which, according to myth, precedes the Logos, precedes order, i.e. the cosmos. True chaos is pre-cosmic, pre-ontological. The “mixing” or “chaos” of modern science is post-cosmic, and although almost nothing of being remains within it, it still is, which means that it is in some sense ontological. Here, Zeno’s aporia on the quick Achilles and the turtle is entirely relevant. No matter how much the “mixing” might try to run from ontology, it is analytically incapable of doing so; as René Guénon shows, a line x moving towards 0 will never be equal to 0, but will only continually approach 0 while always remaining at an ever diminishing but still infinitely great (although it is infinitely small) distance from it.

While researching “chaos” (the philosophical Gilles Deleuze describes this as a way of coexistence for incompatible monads [6]; Deleuze himself calls such “monads” “nomads”), modern science is researching the intra-logos, post-logos, dissipative order, instead of an alternative to order, as the nihilistically minded postmodernists had hoped.

Here, it is important to pay attention to the concept of “nothing”. The Logos draws everything into itself and accords to everything the quality of self-identification with itself, i.e. with the Logos. The Logos is everything and draws everything into itself, with the exception of that which it is not; but that which it is not is nothing, the Logos excludes everything that it does not include, and, as it includes everything, only nothing remains outside of it. However, it interacts harshly with this nothing: according to Parmenides, there is no non-being. Nothing surrounds order and serves as a boundary. As we are looking at nothing through the eyes of the Logos, however, it becomes clear that we cannot reach that boundary. However hard we might strive to words nothing, whatever nihilism we might cultivate, we keep remaining in the limits of something and not nothing, inside of order, under the hegemony of the Logos. And even though this hegemony weakens at its extreme limit, it never entirely disappears. Therefore, on the road towards liberation from the power and domination, the modernists (and the postmodernists after them) find the figure of the “despot” in God and traditional society, in society as such, later in reason, even later in man himself, structures, language, context (poststructuralism) etc. The condition that there is no non-being makes being unbearable for those who consider its weight to be a hindrance. All evocations of “chaos” or calls to “nomadic”, incompatible monads that are incapable of providing the desired result, i.e. the final and irreversible uprooting of the “will to power”, which is the main aim of the liberating program of the Enlightenment cannot and will not succeed by its very definition.

Those who understand the situation of the deep crisis of Modernity (in particular Martin Heidegger) turn to the roots of the West, to the Greek matrix that birthed philosophy. Heidegger meticulously studies the birth of the Logos and tracks its faith, all the way up to the rule of technics, Machenschaft. In order to describe it, he introduces the concept of “Gestell”, in which the referential theory of truth itself is summed up, from Plato (and even from Heraclitus) up to the mechanical mercantile-materialistic civilisation of modern, utmost planetary (but continuously Western-centric) decadence. Having examined the history of philosophy (which also is history as such) from beginning to end, Heidegger finds that it ended so wrongly precisely because it begun so incorrectly. As an alternative, he proposes the project of the “other Beginning” [7].

Having described the first Beginning of philosophy, which led to the logos and, finally, to that dissipative postlogos (and post-masculine) ontological regime that we find ourselves in, Heidegger identifies it as the consequence of a fundamental error that was made in the first, even preparatory stages of the development of West-European philosophy. According to his views, the history of Western European philosophy, culture, and religion is the result of a small, primordial fault in our metaphysical contemplation. According to Heidegger, two-and-a-half thousand years of human history were in vain, seeing as at the very beginning, somewhere in the area of the first formulations of the Logos’ status, a certain error was accidentally allowed to sneak in, an error that, as Heidegger puts it, must first be acknowledged and then be overcome. Thus develops his idea of the two Beginnings of philosophy: the first Beginning, which began, formed, developed, flourished, and eventually degraded and has now become nothing (let us at least remember the modern nihilism that was discovered by F. Nietzsche and magnificently examined by Heidegger), and the other Beginning, which could be found as far back as the roots of philosophy (but this did not happen, and we can see the result: the Logos and its defeat), but, in any case, it should be delineated and initiated now, while everything is clear. But this beginning will begin only when everything truly becomes clear. Everything became clear to Heidegger. The rest is experiencing a “delay”, everything is “still not clear”, noch nicht[8], the eternal “still not”. The other Beginning — der andere Anfang.

If we examine in detail what Heidegger means by the “other Beginning” (the alternative, potential Beginning that has not yet formed or come to pass), and if we trace the line of the grandiose deconstruction of the Logos that he has undertaken, we will be able to view the entirety of West-European philosophy, culture, and history, including religious history; after all, religion is nothing other than the development of constructions of the Logos (which is why Heidegger speaks of “theologica”: the Christian faith, as well as the Muslim kalam and theological Judaism are founded upon the Logos, and, in principle, we know of no other monotheistic religions but for those religions of the Logos). The logocentrism of religions is a very important thing to understand: it shows, that it is futile to turn to religion when searching for an alternative or protection from the downfall of the Logos. The crisis of modern religions is the crisis of the Logos; when the Logos collapses, its entire vertical structure and all its variations (including theological ones) fall with it. This is interrelated: monotheism loses its fascinativeness as the attraction of the Logos weakens, and vice versa. Religions without the Logos cease to be themselves. But even in the case where the Logos is present within them, it will be as a phantom pain, a “confusion”, as the vanity of desemantisised structures (which is what we are seeing today in the form of the dubious phenomenon of a “religious renaissance”, which unambiguously smacks of a simulacrum and a parody).

For this reason, Heidegger proposed to look for an exit in a completely different way: in the sources of Greek philosophy, in the very Beginning (even in the vestibule of this Beginning) on the one hand, and beyond the boundaries of our world on the other, thereby uniting the problem of the moment of philosophy’s birth, its existence in an embryonic, intrauterine state with the problem of the moment of final agony and death. Before Heraclitus, philosophy was located in the uterus, the Logos “swam” in amniotic fluid, in a matrix: today, the Logos is buried in its grave. The grave and the womb have, on the one hand, the meaning of an antithesis: the first signifies death, the second birth; however, at the same time we know, that in the collective unconscious they are synonyms, mutual systems. One can figuratively say, that in both cases it is a night, darkness, existence without distinction, erasure of borders, nocturne [9], all the more so because many intiatic rituals are linked to a descent into the grave as well as the beginning of resurrection, i.e. another, second birth. This is also the rite of Orthodox baptism: water symbolises the earth, the grave, death. The total, three-time immersion of the baptised into the baptistery is a symbol of the three days Christ spent in the grave. It is a descent into the earth, into the grave: the “burial of Christ” is a prerequisite for a new birth.

Thus, if the Logos was born in the first Beginning of Greek philosophy through the rejection of Chaos as an exclusive, central principle of division, hierarchy, exception, and order; that is to say, the male beginning was essentially raised to the level of the absolute; and if all of this began the way it did, and if everything ended with what we have in the modern world, then, accordingly, we must follow Heidegger in finding what was lost, what the mistake of that first impetus, which started the development of a logocentric civilisation, was. Heidegger develops his vision in recapitulative and exceptionally complex book “Beitrage zur Philosophie” [10], which I recommend all readers to familiarise themselves with (the work has not been translated, and I would say that this is excellent; it cannot be translated, and there are things that are not just difficult to translate, but which are criminal to translate, things that require the original language to be learned to be understood). The book directly deals with the “other Beginning”; contrariwise, we find a short and relatively “light” treatment of these ideas in the “Geschichte des Seyns” [11].

Heidegger proposes us to think in a radically different way from the one that is usual in philosophical or philosophical-religious thought. But how is it possible to philosophise differently, how can there be a “different Beginning” of philosophy? If we take a close, detailed look at the moment of the birth of Greek philosophy, we will find a single, essential element: philosophy is born alongside exclusion; what is more, it is Chaos that is the first victim of exclusion. Chaos is not a philosophical concept and never was one, but it enters philosophy exclusively through its intermediary, through its substitute in the person of the choir (cora), Platonic “space” in the “Timaeus”, or later in the person of Aristotle’s “matter” (ulh). However, the view of the choir in the “Timaeus” and the view of Aristotle’s matter is the view of the Logos [12], and all the Logos says it that it has already excluded Chaos during the process of its ascension in a similar fashion to “political propaganda” or a “press release”. What the Logos tells us about matter is an exclusively constructivist Wille zur Macht, the “will to power”, a development of an impassioned and aggressive strategy of male domination, the establishment of hierarchic hegemony, the projection of wishful thinking and self-fulfilling prophecy. From the very beginning of philosophy, the “dog was wagged”. Philosophy tries to force unto us that, which is favourable to itself. This is the hiding place of male cunning, the male drive to the absolutisation of the self, and, accordingly, the exclusion of the female beginning, the “other” beginning. And, if we examine this, we can recognise the total incomprehension of the woman. This is the source of woman being accorded qualities that, in reality, she does not have at all. Thus, the male forms between itself that which is excluded by the male from the intellective process. The Logos rejects the choir because of its (un)intelligibility. However, it does not understand it purely because it does not want to understand and prefers to deal with a representation instead of the female itself. The man thinks, that the only way of knowing the woman is to hide her in inner rooms, separate her from the public, social dimension. Later, he thinks a suitable solution is to chase the female away entirely, etching way her traces through the suffering of lonely male asceticism. Therefore, the opinion of the Logos about chaos is a notorious lie, violence, hegemony, the exclusion of chaos as the other. As the Logos is everything, chaos becomes nothing [13].

If we want to comprehend the very possibility of an “other Beginning” of philosophy, on the one hand, we must come to the moment of the birth of the Logos and fix this transition of the boundary, discern the details and semantics of this rite du passage. How could it have come to pass that the Logos managed to break loose, unbind itself, and who allowed it to issue its own, exclusive decrees concerning chaos? Now we come to the most interesting: if we feel discontent with the dissipative logical and postlogical structures, we must acknowledge, that we must turn to the Logos again, seeing as it was the Logos that created all the prerequisites of its dissipation through its exclusivity. We cannot simply up and return to Platonism: there is no way back. The Logos moves only in one direction: it divides and divides (and divides and divides… and so on into the distance [14]). Gilbert Durand [15] call this logic the regime of the “diurn”: until everything is reduced to a chit and stops. This schizomorphosis [16] directly leads to G. Deleuze and F. Guattari’s concept of “schizomass” [17]. This has been beautifully illustrated in the films of Takeshi Miike, for example, in “Killer Ichi” or “Izo”. In the latter film, an insane samurai, having begun his battle with the world, does not stop until he has cut everyone he encounters into pieces. Izo is the Logos.

The Logos will not help us. If we do not like how the modern, postlogical world is organised, we are forced (if we like it or not) to turn to chaos. We have no other alternative: we must fundamentally step backward towards the first Beginning of Greek culture, in order to make even the smallest step forward, truly forward, and not following the endless arc of the eternally ending world, that is still not capable of finally ending (“still not”). If we do not do this, we will reach the eternal deadlock of the infinite return of dissipative structures and confusions. This is the choice we must make: either we choose the modern, postlogical chaos of confusions, or we break through its boundaries; but the way to break through its boundaries can be found only in chaos, which itself precedes the Logos and is located radically beyond its borders, behind the line of its peripheral agony.

Chaos can and should be seen as an inclusive order, as an order founded upon a principle that is opposite to the Logos; that is to say, the principle of inclusivity, inclusiveness. Therefore, it is very important to understand what inclusiveness means. Once we have comprehended this term, we will know if it is at all possible to build a philosophy of chaos, that is, a philosophy of the “other Beginning”.

If we see chaos the way it is seen by logocentric models, we will get nowhere. There is nothing logical (exclusive, masculine, no Wille zur Macht) in chaos, and this means, that it becomes ouk on (Greek: “pure non-being”), French “rien”, Spanish “nada” to the Logos and Onto-Logos. – ouk on and not mhon, as the Greeks called the non-being that is capable of producing something from itself, “pregnant non-being”). As the Logos will not see anything except itself, according to the principle of Aristotelian logic, we cannot juxtapose anything to it: either A is equal to A (and, in this case, we find ourselves within logical boundaries) or A is not equal to A; now we are outside of those borders, in nothing. According to Aristotle, the latter situation means that A simply does not exist; the A that was not equal to A does not exist. This is in contrast to, for example, the view of the Japanese philosopher Kitaro Nishida, who has, in contrast to Aristotle, developed a separate logic of spaces, “basho”, founded upon Zen Buddhist models of thought.

However, outside of the Logos and its hypnotic suggestion, it is entirely possible to conceptualise chaos as a principle of absolute inclusion or an inclusive philosophy. Why is this possible? Because, if we extract ourselves from the political propaganda of the Logos (under the conditions of which we have been living for two and a half thousand years), we will be able to see chaos as it presents itself, and not the way the Logos presents it. Chaos reveals itself as the inclusive, it carries within itself all possibilities, including the possibility of exclusion, right up to the exclusion of the self. Naturally, chaos contains the Logos as it thinks itself, like a seed in a woman’s uterus: it is and it is being born, it will most definitely be born, tear away, mature, and leave: however, something more important is left out of the picture: that which allows it to live, that which produces, nurtures, and feeds it.

The Logos can be seen as a fish swimming in the waters of chaos. Without this water, thrown onto the surface, the fish chokes, and this is, actually, how the structures of the Logos “croaked”. We are dealing with nothing but its dissipative remains. These are the bones of the fish that has hurled itself onto the shore. It is not by chance, that many speak of the symbolism of Aquarius as the new water, without which the old fish could not live.

The philosophy of chaos is possible because chaos, being all-inclusive, all-encompassing, and the antecedent of any exclusion, contains this very exclusion within itself, but carries a different relation to it and itself, as well as differing from the way exclusion itself (i.e. the Logos) relates to chaos and itself. We know only one view of chaos: the philosophical view from the position of the Logos, and if we want to look at the Logos from the point of view of chaos, we are told that this is impossible, seeing as we are used to examining chaos only from the point of view of the Logos. It is thought, that only the Logos is capable of seeing, and that chaos is blind. No, this is not true, chaos has a thousand eyes, it is “panoptic”. Chaos sees itself as that which contains the Logos, which means that the Logos is located within chaos and can always be within it. However, while containing the Logos within itself, chaos contains it in a totally different way the Logos contains itself, which it does by rejecting the fact that it is contained by anything (whatever that container may be) except itself, and, accordingly, placing chaos out of its view, equating it to nothing, rejecting it. Thus, the fish, recognising itself as something different from the water surrounding it, can come to the conclusion that it no longer needs the water and jumps onto the shore. However one might try to throw the stupid fish back, it will try to jump time and time again. They called this insane fish “Aristotle”.

But water is the beginning of everything. It contains the root of other elements and other creatures. It contains that which it is and that which it is not. It includes that which acknowledges the abovementioned fact, but also that which does not.

We can draw the following conclusion: first, a philosophy of Chaos is possible, and second, salvation through the Logos is impossible: the salvation of the Logos is only possible through a correct turn towards chaos.

Chaos is not just “old”, it is always “new”, because eternity is always new: the eternity (l’éternité) that Rimbaud found again (a retrouvé) – c’est la mer allée avec le soleil. Pay attention: la mer. Chaos is the newest, the freshest, the most fashionable, the latest from the current season’s collection (Il faut être absolument moderne. Point de cantiques : tenir le pas gagné) (1). Precisely for the reason that it is absolutely eternal: time ages extremely quickly, yesterday appears archaic (there is nothing more ancient than the “news” of a month old newspaper), only eternity is always absolutely new. Therefore, the discovery of chaos does not equate to an excavation of history or of the structures that are presented to us as conquered by historical time; no, it is an encounter with the eternally young. Chaos was not sometime earlier or before. Chaos is here and now. Chaos is not that what was, as the Logos propagandises. Chaos is that what is, and that what will be.

In conclusion, we return once more to Heidegger. To reach the truth of being (Wahrheit des Seyns) is possible only in two moments of history: in the Beginning, when philosophy is about to be born, and in the End, when the disappearance, the liquidation of philosophy takes place. Of course, individual personalities could reach the truth in different stages as well; however, they could do this, but they could also be satisfied with something else: they lived in the magic of the Logos, warming themselves in the rays of the solar seed.

Today, this is the only thing we have left, all the rest has been bled dry, and to satisfy ourselves with dissolution in an endlessly ending but incapable of truly ending world, in the “not yet” is the fate of nonentities. Apart from this, doing this in our time is easier than it ever was before. You and I, dear reader, are living in extraordinary times, in which we are presented with an entirely unexpected opportunity to directly encounter chaos. This is not an experience for the weak minded. After all, our task is the construction of a philosophy of chaos.

Footnotes:

[1] See the problem of the “diurn” in the topography of G. Durand’s imaginative structures. Dugin A. G. Sociology of the Imagination. Moscow:Akademichesky Proekt, 2010.

[2] Deleuze, G. The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque. Moscow: Izdatelstvo Logos, 1997.

[3] Gutzwiller Martin. Chaos in Classical and Quantum Mechanics. New York: Springer-Verlag, 1990.

[4] See Proclus. Commentaire sur le Timee. Par A.J.Festugiere. t. I. P.:Vrin, 1966.

[5] Guenon René. Les principes du calcul infinitésimal. Paris, Gallimard, 1946.

[6] Deleuze, G. The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque.

[7] Dugin A. Martin Heidegger. The Philosophy of Another Beginning. Moscow: Akademichesky Proekt, 2010.

[8] Heidegger M. Sein und Zeit. Erstes Kapitel §§ 46–53. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1952.

[9] Dugin A. G. Sociology of the Imagination.

[10] Heidegger M. Beiträge zur Philosophie. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2003.

[11] Heidegger M. Geschichte des Seyns. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1998

[12] Dugin A. Martin Heidegger. The Possibility of Russian Philosophy. Moscow: Akademichesky Proekt, 2011.

[13] Ibidem.

[14] On “diarhysis” and the structure of the “diurn”, which are distinct features of the Logos’ work, see Dugin A. Sociology of the Imagination..

[15] Durand G. Les Structures anthropologiques de l’imaginaire, Paris: P.U.F., 1960.

[16] Ibidem.

[17] Deleuze, G., Guattari F. Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Yekaterinburg: U-Faktoriya, 2007.

Translator’s note:

(1): One must be absolutely modern. Never mind hymns of thanksgiving: hold on to a step once taken.