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S. K. KOSTIUCHKOV^{1*}, A. V. VOROBIOVA^{2*}^{1*}Kherson State University (Kherson, Ukraine), e-mail kosser.63@ukr.net, ORCID 0000-0003-1708-643X^{2*}Kherson State University (Kherson, Ukraine), e-mail avorobiova@ksu.ks.ua, ORCID 0000-0003-3425-0174**Philosophical and Anthropological Vision of the Idea of Spirituality in Isaac Asimov's Foundation Trilogy**

Purpose. The article is a philosophical and anthropological representation of the idea of spirituality in *The Foundation Trilogy* by the American science fiction writer, philosopher, populariser of science Isaac Asimov. **Theoretical basis.** The study is based on an understanding of the worldview imperatives of Asimov's work, which highlight his philosophical and anthropological vision of spirituality as a historically established property of a rationally organised society and a key condition for its progressive evolution. The emergence, stochasticity and eventuality of the development of the modern global society brings the content of A. Asimov's philosophical and anthropological ideas to a fundamentally new level of understanding of the further development of humanity. Asimov's articulation of the idea of spirituality in *The Foundation Trilogy* allows us to define the philosophical and anthropological concept of the writer in the fullness of its social, philosophical, existential and axiological dimensions. **Originality.** The authors have substantiated the expediency and relevance of considering the idea of spirituality in A. Asimov's *Foundation* trilogy in the semantic field of philosophical anthropology. It is shown that Asimov's philosophical anthropology has a clearly expressed teleological "load". In the writer's interpretation, a person of the future is not a "posthuman" with a biological nature altered by special technologies, but a person focused on spiritual development and self-improvement based on the eternal values enshrined in the mental code of *Homo sapiens* – happiness, love, freedom, dignity, independence, patriotism. **Conclusions.** *Foundation* is a multifaceted work, rich in plot, compositionally mosaic and polyphonic, in which, at first glance, it is difficult to identify any dominant idea. In the course of the study, it was found that one of the main content centres in A. Asimov's works is the philosophical and anthropological discourse, in the space of which considerable attention is paid to human spirituality.

Keywords: science fiction; Foundation; national memory; future; war

Introduction

The worldview guidelines in the texts of Asimov's works demonstrate the originality of his philosophical and anthropological reflection on spirituality as a historically established property of a rationally organised society and a key condition for its progressive evolution. The relevance of the problem under study is determined by the philosophical and anthropological load of the texts of the novels with the unifying title "Foundation". Asimov's creative heritage is a material for depicting the outlines of an ideally organised society – on Earth or in space, but under the condition of the dominance of humanistic tendencies with a focus on the spiritual development of a free personality in the harmonious space of a human-centred free society. The philosophical issues of Asimov's works are associated with human spirituality as a key anthropological constant, with the individual's desire for personal and social freedom, dignity and independence, and an adequate combination of the interests of society and the individual.

The Foundation is one of the most influential science fiction works in the world's literary treasury. A series of books written by Asimov in the 40s and 80s of the last century not only influenced the literary preferences of millions of readers, but also contributed to the formation of original research positions in such sciences as political science, economics, sociology, psychology, and religious studies. Elon Musk and Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman, among others, have noted the influence of Asimov's works on their decision to plunge into the world of science. It is in *The Foundation*, in comparison with dozens of other works, that Asimov, in the

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authors' opinion, most meaningfully presents his own philosophical and anthropological ideas. Despite a fairly large number of scholarly publications on various aspects of Asimov's work, the philosophical and anthropological context of *The Foundation Trilogy*, with its focus on the idea of human spirituality and the society of the future, remains insufficiently studied.

A number of scholarly works have been devoted to the issues of philosophical anthropology in Asimov's works. J. L. Arroyo Barrigüete (2018) analysed the problem of transhumanism in world fiction on the example of Asimov's *Foundation*. D. Idier (2000) studied science fiction and technological scenarios in Asimov's works, focusing on robotics and cyberspace. The world of the future in the interpretation of A. Asimov is reflected in the work of D. McKernan (2013). J. Heter and J. T. Simpson (2023) investigated the philosophical basis of Asimov's trilogy. Asimov's trilogy. J. Hay (2021) focused his research on the posthuman trajectory of the universe in the texts of the series. C. Elkins (1976) analysed *The Foundation Trilogy*, considering cyclic psychohistory in relation to historical materialism. The book by D. E. Palumbo (2016) analyses the plot, characters, places and terminology in Asimov's texts. M. Jazbec (2018) devoted his research to the depiction of diplomatic practice in the *Foundation* trilogy. D. Girisha and C. Shanmugasundaram (2019) analysed Asimov's psychohistorical conclusions in the trilogy. C. Williams (2022) focused research attention on the creation of artificial intelligence in the future, based on the texts of Asimov's *Foundation*. J. Käkälä (2011), exploring the sublime and rational in the texts of the series, uses the concept of "enlightened sense of wonder". The future history of Asimov and the problems of utilitarian calculations have become the objects of research attention of J. J. Miller (2004). L. R. Nair's (2017) study focuses on artificial intelligence and the "instrumental miracle" in Asimov's novels from the *Foundation* series. However, the theme of the spirituality of the man of the future and the people's struggle for freedom and independence in *The Foundation Trilogy* remains insufficiently studied.

Purpose

By means of philosophical and anthropological analysis of the problem of the spiritual-centred orientation of A. Asimov's *Foundation* trilogy, to find out its teleological nature and consonance with the ideas of the dominance of positive trends in the development of society in the future.

Statement of basic materials

From its very inception, science fiction as a literary genre has focused attention on the problems of philosophical anthropology, offering vividly original scenarios of future development of man and society. In his novel *The Time Machine*, H. G. Wells depicts the panorama of the eternal existential struggle between Good and Evil – the Eloi and the Morlocks, representatives of posthuman organisms in the distant future. In the novel *The Man Who Could Live Underwater* by the French writer Jean de La Hire, the Jesuit Fulbert transplants fish gills into a boy, demonstrating to the world an anthropomorphic chimera, a fundamentally new biological construct. A living organism named Ocean, which exists in a distant galaxy, establishes contact with earthly scientists through familiar images – this is the plot of the novel *Solaris* by Ukrainian-Polish science fiction writer Stanisław Lem.

In the world gallery of science fiction writers, Asimov occupies a special position – his works are rich not only in science fiction constructions, but also in bold futurological forecasts, socio-psychological and ethical conflicts, technological predictions, and a piercing vision of the prob-

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lems of philosophical anthropology, etiologically linked to the eternal phenomenon of spirituality. In this study, we will focus not on the literary qualities of the *Foundation* trilogy (this aspect of Asimov's work has been thoroughly covered in scholarly research), but on their overtones of philosophical anthropology, which makes it possible to explicate the harmoniously implicated components of various humanistic concepts in the fantasy world created by the writer, philosopher and scientist.

It is the analysis of the essence and existence of man at any time and in any conditions that

...is the goal of philosophical anthropology, whose subject area includes

a variety of processes and phenomena, etiologically affiliated with the

constantly expanding spectrum of aspects of human problems. One of the

most important points of such an analysis is its metaphysical problems –

the direct entry of constructive emotion into the realm of the transcenden-

tal: the view of man as such *sub specie aeternalis* – from the standpoint

of eternity. (Kostiuchkov & Kartashova, 2022, pp. 16-17)

It is worth recalling that the plot of *The Foundation Trilogy* is based on the dramatic history of the Galactic Empire, which existed for tens of thousands of years. Asimov plunges his characters into the distant future: into the whirlwind of interplanetary wars, transgalactic travel, the intricacies of political intrigue, uprisings and rebellions, trade negotiations – but they are nothing more than an artistic entourage and plot space for depicting a person in critical circumstances – on the verge of life and death, love and hate, freedom and slavery. The last scientist of the first Empire, Hari Seldon, devised psychohistory, a special science of human behaviour that operates with mathematical formulas. Seldon predicted that the Galaxy, left to its own devices, would go through a difficult path of anarchy and suffering until it reached a certain harmony under the leadership of a unified government. To preserve the knowledge available to humanity, Seldon founded two colonies of scientists ("encyclopedists") at the opposite ends of the Galaxy, the so-called "Foundations", and Seldon's Plan came into effect. One Foundation operated openly, and the exact location of the second was Seldon's secret. The first Foundation moved in the direction determined by Seldon, which opened up new horizons of development for humanity. Science and technology enabled the First Foundation to take political and economic control of the surrounding barbaric planets. Later, the First Foundation faced something that Hari Seldon could not have foreseen: the mutant Mule appeared in galactic space and, thanks to his extraordinary mental resources, partially destroyed Seldon's plan. The Mule's goal is to find and destroy the Second Foundation in order to achieve absolute power.

Among the problems highlighted by A. Asimov in his *Foundation* series there are those that are traditionally defined as "eternal": a) whether one person can influence history; b) how ethical it is to manipulate large groups of people to achieve a desired result in the future; c) what is the path of "inaction"; d) what is the impact of education on future generations; e) whether human affairs are governed by predictable cycles; f) whether attempts to plan for the future should be

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limited by the free will of the individual; g) whether attempts to build new empires are productive; h) whether attempts to clone the human body are ethical; i) how productive logic can be in analysing human behaviour (Heter & Simpson, 2023).

The range of responses to the *Foundation* series is very wide: L. Malczynski and D. Lane (2023) believe that the trilogy is epic in its scale, it is not a "space opera", having all the advantages of the science fiction style. Arroyo Barrigüete (2018) calls *Foundation* a very specific work for various reasons, the first being that it is impossible to establish clear boundaries of the space in which the trilogy is set. E. James (2015) notes that the "metasaga", as he calls the trilogy, covers all historical stages, which gives grounds to interpret the work from the standpoint of a consensus cosmogony. It is a historical fiction work about the evolution of mankind: space exploration – colonisation of planets – the rise of a galactic empire consisting of many worlds – the decline of the empire – the interregnum with its inherent barbarism – the return to civilisation and the emergence of a new empire.

It should be noted that the above "scheme" of human evolution was significantly influenced by the theory of A. J. Toynbee, who believed that civilisations progress when faced with problems that they are able to solve. Therefore, without challenges, civilisation declines and tends to entropy, while challenges and dangers stimulate its development, increase its internal potential, and reduce the negative impact of external factors, according to the classic principle of Henri Louis Le Chatelier. A. Asimov creates a future political structure in the space of the *Foundation* trilogy, similar to the Roman and British empires.

D. Suvin (2016) argues that high quality science fiction works "...always leave in an attentive reader the feeling that more is going on under the surface than a story about starships or mutants" (p. 372).

Analysing *The Foundation Trilogy*, C. Elkins (1976) insists that the work has a "sense of wonder in the underlying concept" that captivates readers. It is this concept that history has certain laws that are not only understandable, but can also give insight into the course of future historical events. By comparing Seldon's Plan with historical materialism, C. Elkins comes to the need to resolve the issue of human free will in opposition to historical determinism, a problem full of dramatic tension. Human freedom is determined by one's ability to understand oneself and make one's world understandable. Mysterious events lose their transcendent nature, they are "demystified" and lose their power, stimulating man to spiritual development. Seldon's plan is aimed at the fact that people will eventually be able to comprehend the mysterious forces, and this is what creates the preconditions for freedom.

It should be emphasised that the aspect of spirituality, despite its clear articulation in the text of *The Foundation*, is not sufficiently covered in scholarly research. And this is understandable: analysing the content of works, in particular, science fiction, which are characterised by deep philosophical meanings, requires concentrating research attention on a certain fragment of the literary canvas. Indeed, numerous publications devoted to *The Foundation Trilogy* cover the linguistic features of the trilogy's text, analyse the economic and political conflicts of the future depicted by Asimov, the problems of war and peace, psychological influence on the individual and the masses, the relationship between the secular and religious worlds, and so on. The problem of spirituality in the work *Foundation* is seen as insufficiently explored in the context of philosophical anthropology. The problem of spirituality is transhistorical – it is etiologically exacerbated in extreme conditions of life of the individual and society, when Shakespeare's existential dilemma "To be or not to be" is exponentially actualised. A. Azimov consistently builds

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the intrigue of a double subtext: the plot of *Foundation* develops under the sign of eschatology in the existential space with the points of optimum and pessimum – decay and renewal. In general, the text of the trilogy has a semantic two-beat rhythm: past – present, present – future, decay – recovery, catastrophe – reconstruction, destruction – development, decline – prosperity, war – peace, crisis – revival, etc.

Indicative in this sense is the dialogue between High Priest Verisof and Salvor Hardin, mayor of Terminus, the Foundation's home planet.

- ...Can we risk the present for the sake of a nebulous future?
- We must because the future isn't nebulous. It's been calculated out by Seldon and charted. Each successive crisis in our history is mapped and each depends in a measure on the successful conclusion of the ones previous... at each crisis our freedom of action would become circumscribed to the point where only one course of action was possible.
- So as to keep us on the straight and narrow?
- So as to keep us from deviating, yes. But, conversely, as long as more than one course of action is possible, the crisis has not been reached. We must let things drift so long as we possibly can... (Azimov, 2021, p. 92)

Speaking about the spiritual sphere of society, it should be recognised that it includes religious, scientific, cultural, mental, political, ethical, legal and other ideas. The evolution of society has shaped the idea of a holistic approach to understanding spirituality, which, according to Peter van der Veer (2009), "is notoriously hard to define... productive as a concept that bridges various discursive traditions across the globe" (p. 5). Asimov's work is reminiscent of Homer's *Odyssey* in its philosophical reflections, psychological conflicts and poetic overtones, where the main character is the idea of spiritual rebirth, travelling through the boundless Cosmos, experiencing breath-taking adventures and moving towards a certain goal. A. Asimov constantly reminds the reader of the spirituality of Hari Seldon's plan, which aims to preserve the scientific knowledge available to humanity in order to pass it on to future generations.

Religion, as a component of the spirituality of the society of the future, occupies a significant place in the plot of the *Foundation*. However, science, as the highest form of rationalisation of the world, is a more important "actor" for Asimov than religion, which by definition is historically an option for spirituality. It should be recalled that we are talking about the distant future, but even there, science provides a thinking person with reliable, unlike religion, optimal ways of knowing objective reality. The most vivid artistic embodiment of rational thinking is the scientist, and it is he who appears as the central figure of the space civilisation. The confrontation between the spiritual and secular spheres takes place in the plot field of the *Founda-*

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tion series, but the scientist Hari Seldon is a prophet, he is, in a sense, a symbol of faith in the world depicted by Asimov.

The highest spiritual power and authority is the great Galactic Spirit, its prophet Hari Seldon and the holy people of the Foundation. Religion in the Empire "...is built on strictly authoritarian lines... The priesthood forms a hierarchy at the apex of which is the king, who is regarded as a sort of minor god. He's an absolute monarch by divine right, and the people believe it, thoroughly, and the priests, too" (Azimov, 2021, p. 104).

It is in spirituality that Asimov sees the existential choice of the man of the future: he is able to resist brute force, but he does not prefer brutal pressure: the writer sees no other choice for *homo futurus*, the man of the future. In his prophetic monologue, Hari Seldon emphasises: "The Spiritual Power, while sufficient to ward off attacks of the Temporal is not sufficient to attack in turn. Because of the invariable growth of the counteracting force known as Regionalism, or Nationalism, the Spiritual Power cannot prevail" (Azimov, 2021, p. 129).

A. Azimov believes that the earthly civilisation will reach a state in the future when scientific and technological progress and harmonious human development will take on the shape of a system close to an ideal state. Hari Seldon's teaching

...goes beyond money or markets...and from the course that leads to that Imperium we cannot turn. The religion we have is our all-important instrument towards that end. With it we have brought the Four Kingdoms under our control, even at the moment when they would have crushed us. It is the most potent device known with which to control men and worlds. The primary reason...was to introduce and spread this religion more quickly, and to insure that the introduction of new techniques and a new economy would be subject to our thorough and intimate control. (Azimov, 2021, pp. 198-199)

The metaphor of "tearing up the metal skin" is vivid as an image of revealing the deep spiritual roots of the human community. A. Azimov insists that the spirituality and reason of Man will open the way to such a Foundation, the compositional components of which will be Reason, Truth, Freedom, Stability, Harmony, Dignity. The writer concludes that

But several more centuries would yet pass before the mighty works of fifty generations of humans would decay past use. Only the declining powers of men, themselves, rendered them useless now. The millions left

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after the billions had died tore up the gleaming metal base of the planet and exposed soil that had not felt the touch of sun in a thousand years. Surrounded by the mechanical perfections of human efforts, encircled by the industrial marvels of mankind freed of the tyranny of environment – they returned to the land. (Azimov, 2020, pp. 178-179)

It should be noted that Asimov began working on the trilogy in the first half of the 1940s, when the Second World War had already reached its maximum scale, and thus the spiritually centred, peace-loving, humanistic leitmotif of the *Foundation* is quite understandable. This is the period of the creation of the United Nations, the generation of important normative documents that were the result of the collective intelligence of civilised humanity. The "spirit of the age" is felt in the plot structures, genre design and compositional space of *The Foundation* – Seldon's plan, as we see it, is an allusion to the UNO, established in 1945 as a tool for harmonising inter-state relations in the post-war world. There is a certain semantic comparison of the Seldon Plan with the Baruch Plan, popular in the 1940s, which provided for the creation of an international nuclear development agency to control the production and use of nuclear energy and weapons, exchange the results of scientific research in this area with the obligatory transfer of information to the US authorities. The Seldon Plan also alludes to the Marshall Plan, developed in 1947 by US Secretary of State George Marshall as a plan to help European countries that suffered the most economically after World War II. In the third part of the series (*Foundation and Empire*), Azimov (2020) introduces the doctrine of "Manifest Destiny" as an attractive idea for the people, associated with "unshakable faith in a great future" (p. 25). It is interesting that the doctrine of this name (Manifest Destiny) actually took place in the history of the United States in the nineteenth century. In the texts of the trilogy, A. Asimov repeatedly focuses on the assistance of developed empires to the peoples of the planets affected by warfare.

A. Asimov depicts a self-constructed prophecy for his readers: fiction becomes hyper-reality, the sacred turns into the profane, and the mind of the infinite Cosmos is localised in two almost mythical Foundations. The desire of the writer to show in the texts of *Foundation* a detailed, holistic and reliable gallery of lifestyles in the future, determines and justifies the focus on the phenomenon of spirituality, giving the work a deep philosophical and anthropological content. This is a kind of message from Asimov to world leaders about possible strategies for building a new earthly civilisation, the future of which he sees in the convergence of spirituality, scientific knowledge and technological innovations. Moving towards spirituality is a way to overcome the anthropological crisis, to unite people on the basis of reason, science, spirituality, solidarity, education, and humanistic ideology. The man of the future, as Asimov sees him, is a person capable of developing a high level of spirituality, becoming wise and responsible for the entire planet and all life on it, and gaining freedom as a key condition for self-realisation and perfection. Asimov's philosophical reflections have gained considerable relevance in the current situation, in particular, in the context of Ukraine's full-scale war against Russian aggression, the writer's ideas about the eternal conflict between good and evil, the imperative of spirituality in the people's struggle for freedom and independence, the preservation of historical memory and national identity are sounding with renewed vigour.

Originality

It is substantiated that the philosophical and anthropological representation of the idea of spirituality in A. Asimov's *Foundation Trilogy* complements the extensive gallery of studies of the creative heritage of the American science fiction writer, philosopher, and populariser of science. It is shown that Asimov's philosophical anthropology has a clearly expressed teleological "load". In the writer's interpretation, a person of the future is not a "posthuman" with a biological nature altered by special technologies, but a person focused on spiritual development and self-improvement based on the eternal values enshrined in the mental code of Homo sapiens – happiness, love, freedom, dignity, independence, patriotism.

Conclusions

The assertion of the conceptual philosophical-anthropological provisions of the idea of spirituality in A. Asimov's *Foundation Trilogy* problematises their spiritually-centric orientation with a focus on the dominance of positive trends in the development of the future society as a whole and individuals as subjects of social change. The semantic, textual and artistic features of the texts of *The Foundation Trilogy* can serve as a starting point in the process of analysing certain research areas of philosophical anthropology. Philosophical-anthropological aspects of A. Asimov's *Foundation Trilogy* correlate with the events of today, in particular, with the heroic struggle of Ukraine for freedom and independence in the war against the Russian aggressor, as well as with the preservation by the Ukrainian people of their own historical national memory, which should ensure the spiritual development of the Ukrainian nation.

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Філософсько-антропологічна візія ідеї духовності в трилогії Айзека Азімова "Фундація"

Мета. Стаття являє собою філософсько-антропологічну репрезентацію ідеї духовності в трилогії "Фундація" американського письменника-фантаста, філософа, популяризатора науки Айзека Азімова. **Теоретичний базис.** Дослідження базується на розумінні світоглядних імперативів творчості А. Азімова, які висвітлюють його філософсько-антропологічне бачення духовності як історично усталеної властивості раціонально організованого суспільства і ключову умову його прогресивної еволюції. Емерджентність, стохастичність і евентуальність розвитку сучасного глобального соціуму виводить зміст філософсько-антропологічних ідей А. Азімова на принципово новий рівень розуміння подальшого розвитку людства. Артикуляція А. Азімовим ідеї духовності в трилогії "Фундація" дозволяє визначити філософсько-антропологічну концепцію письменника у всій повноті її соціального, філософського, екзистенціального та аксіологічного вимірів. **Наукова новизна.** Автори обґрунтували доцільність та актуальність розгляду ідеї духовності в трилогії А. Азімова "Фундація" в смисловому полі філософської антропології. Показано, що філософська антропологія А. Азімова має чітко виражене телеологічне "навантаження". В інтерпретації письменника людина майбутнього – це не "постлюдина" зі зміненою за допомогою спеціальних технологій біологічною природою, а людина, орієнтована на духовний розвиток і самовдосконалення, що базуються на одвічних цінностях, зафіксованих у ментальному коді *Homo sapiens* – щасті, любові, свободі, гідності, незалежності, патріотизмі. **Висновки.** "Фундація" – твір багатоплановий, сюжетно насичений, композиційно мозаїчний, поліфонічний, у якому, на перший погляд, важко визначити якусь домінуючу ідею. У процесі дослідження встановлено, що в творчості А. Азімова одним із основних змістових центрів є філософсько-антропологічний дискурс, у просторі якого значну увагу приділено духовності людини.

Ключові слова: наукова фантастика; "Фундація"; національна пам'ять; майбутнє; війна

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