

## PHILOSOPHICAL JOURNAL

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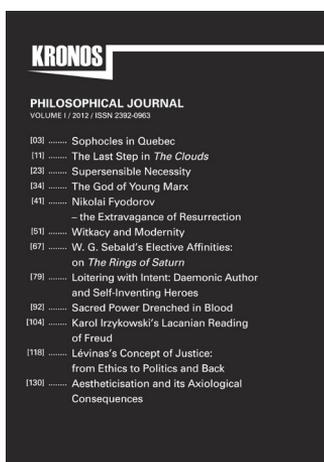
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# EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION



There is a story in Kleist's "On the Marionette Theatre" about the adventures of a German traveler who, while in Russia, found himself in the estate of a certain Livonian nobleman. For whatever reason, he was challenged to a fencing duel by the nobleman's sons. The young hotheads were quickly defeated and disarmed, yet they kept molesting the visitor, telling him that sooner or later he is bound to meet his match. They then led him to a shed where – as it turned out – a bear was kept. A Russian bear (...) "Go on! – cried the nobleman – See if you can score a hit! Having recovered somewhat from

my amazement, I went at him with my foil; the bear made a slight movement of his paw and parried the blow. I tried to throw him off guard by feints – the bear did not stir. I went at him again with a renewed burst of energy (...) But all was in vain! Not only was the bear able to parry all my blows like some world champion fencer, but all the feints I attempted-and this no fencer in the world could duplicate-went unnoticed by the bear. Eye to eye, as if he could see into my very soul, he stood there, his paw raised ready for combat, and whenever my thrusts were not intended as strikes, he simply did not move."

What a ridiculous story! Russia as a fencing bear or "the barber of Siberia": such images, as we know very well, are concocted to bedazzle and arrest our attention. This fairytale Russia is meant to fascinate and stimulate the imagination of Westerners with exotic notions and bizarre incidents. But this Russia has little to do with reality. Even today, for many Western intellectuals the basic source of knowledge about Russia is the spurious story about a Master, a Margarita and a couple of other swindlers. These made-up and largely unconvincing stories aside, I sense in Russia something untamed and alien, a darkness, an impenetrable aura. If Russia continues to inspire and fascinate, it is not as part of popular culture, but as a separate and not very well explored continent. This becomes clear when we listen to the conversations of such brilliant and incisive thinkers as Konstantin Leontiev and Vasily Rozanov.

Russia somehow missed out on the Middle Ages; it developed no Gothic architecture and did not take part in the "conflict of faculties." It had no gentry, no bourgeoisie. Every aspect of life was supervised by the Tsar, later by Stalin, who deemed himself God and kept his people in a constant state of fear and mutual suspicions. The Western understanding of liberty, and the institutions and ideas designed to uphold that liberty, did not take root in Russia. The Russians' attitude towards the West was ambivalent, to say the least. Some, full of naive admiration, copied insignificant things considered Western. Others, conversely, believed that the world can only be redeemed through the "Russian element," which did not always improve relations with Russia's neighbors. Almost as a rule, those who were European in an instinctive and unaffected way were eliminated.

Whoever tried to be original, whoever wanted to tread new paths, was either forced to flee the country (Nabokov, Kojève, Kandinsky, Bunin, Merezhkovsky, Prokofev), submitted to the torture of “naming and shaming” (Tsvetaeva, Blok, Mayakovsky, Pasternak) or simply murdered (Gumilyov, Mandelstam, Babel, Pilnyak, Florensky). What unbelievable recklessness!

Among those Russians who paid the highest price for being a European, for his unadulterated freedom of thinking, is Gustav Shpet: an eminent phenomenologist and pupil of Husserl, as well as translator of Hegel and Shakespeare. His impressive work and his tragic fate are the subject of this edition of *Kronos: Philosophical Journal*.

Piotr Nowak  
Deputy Editor in Chief



# KRONOS

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Dedicated to the centenary of birth of M. G. Shtorkh, née Shpet



Gustav Gustavovich Shpet

*Photograph supplied by Marina Gustavovna Shtorkh, née Shpet*

Thomas Nemeth

## INTRODUCTION TO SHPET'S “CONSCIOUSNESS AND ITS OWNER”

The following essay originally appeared in a “Festschrift” in 1916 for G. I. Chelpanov, Shpet’s professor first in Kiev during the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and then in Moscow, where Shpet completed his studies after Chelpanov assumed a professorship in 1907. However, ostensibly in conjunction with acquiring material for his doctoral dissertation, Shpet spent the academic year 1912-13, the most active period of the Göttingen Circle, at Göttingen University studying with Husserl. Husserl’s *Ideen I* appeared in 1913, and Shpet by all indications immediately set out to write a critical account of it. The resulting work, *Appearance and Sense*, appeared in Russia already in the first half of 1914 and thrust Shpet into the forefront as the leading Russian interpreter and advocate for phenomenology in general and Husserl’s latest philosophical turn in particular.

The essay that follows marks one of Shpet’s few technical contributions to philosophy in the narrow sense. In it, Shpet took exception, among other things, with Husserl’s abandoning in *Ideen I* of his own earlier non-egological conception of consciousness put forth in his *Logische Untersuchungen* from 1900/1. There, in his fifth investigation “On Intentional Experiences and their ‘Contents,’” Husserl started his discussion much as Shpet would with the ego, or I, as understood in everyday language. The I is like any particular physical object, e.g., a book, a tree, etc. The unity that it has is that given “through its unified phenomenal properties.”<sup>1</sup> If we conceptually

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<sup>1</sup> E. Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, trans. J. N. Findlay (New York: Humanities Press, 1970), vol. 2, 541; *Logische Untersuchungen*, zweiter Teil: *Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1901), 331.

eliminate (*abscheiden*) the body from the I, as given empirically, limiting ourselves to the purely mental I, we have a unity of consciousness, but this reduced I is not some special thing hovering, as it will, over and above the various experiences. No, it is simply the interconnected unity (*Verknüpfungseinheit*) of these experiences. In short, then, the I is the unified totality of the content of experience (*einheitliche Inhaltsgesamtheit*). These contents come together, i.e., unite, in ways that are law-governed, and as united they form or constitute the I, or unity of consciousness. Thus, there is no need for an additional principle to unite or provide the basis for these contents. The postulation of any such additional principle is superfluous.

Husserl singled out for criticism, in particular, the Marburg neo-Kantian Paul Natorp, another figure Shpet will pointedly rebuke. Natorp claimed that we can distinguish three “moments” in consciousness, although they are actually inseparably united. There is, of course, the content, the consciousness itself, and, through further abstraction, the I, “which, as a common reference point for all conscious content, cannot itself be the content of consciousness. The I simply stands opposite everything that can be content.”<sup>2</sup> Both Shpet in 1916 and Husserl in 1900/01 were puzzled by this assertion: if the I cannot be a content of consciousness, it cannot be thought. If it cannot be thought, what is the basis for singling it out and even for acknowledging it in the first place? Yet, this is precisely what Natorp had done. Further on in the same work, Natorp reiterated that the I cannot be a content of consciousness, and, in fact, it does not even resemble such a content. Therefore, it cannot be described, since description can only be done using terms drawn from the content of consciousness. Natorp, despite his own declared prohibition, nonetheless, characterized the I as the “subjective center of relations.”<sup>3</sup> Shpet will ask of Natorp, as well as of other philosophers, whether, in speaking this way, we are not introducing a lot of “theory,” i.e., presuppositions.

Shpet was well aware that Husserl changed his position on the I in *Ideen I*, i.e., that in 1913 he exclaimed he had managed to find the I in the interval since publishing the *Untersuchungen*. Already in *Appearance and Sense*, Shpet expressed this change as “interesting” without hinting of any significant alarm or disagreement with Husserl’s new stance. Indeed, he informed his readers that Husserl’s earlier work, the *Untersuchungen*, represented an incomplete idea of phenomenology. During the intervening years, Husserl struggled with determining just what is excluded by the phenomenological reduction. His conclusion, as Shpet saw it, was that there is an I that remains constant and identical throughout the constant flow of mental experiences. All mental experiences belong to this I and emanate from it. Nonetheless, the I itself cannot be found in the flow of such experiences. Therefore, although necessary, the I, the pure I, cannot be an object of investigation. It is, in Husserl’s own language, a “transcendancy within immanency.”<sup>4</sup> Although Shpet did not refer to Natorp here, it certainly must have seemed to him

<sup>2</sup> P. Natorp, *Einleitung in die Psychologie nach kritischer Methode* (Freiburg: J.C.B. Mohr, 1888), 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>4</sup> G. Shpet, *Appearance and Sense*, trans. Thomas Nemeth (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), 58. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy*, trans. F. Kersten (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), 133.

that Husserl had completely reversed himself, accepting Natorp's stand *in toto* for no apparent reason.<sup>5</sup>

Despite his fervent desire in 1914 to follow Husserl's philosophical trajectory, a certain unease pervaded Shpet's defense of this new train of thought. How can Husserl's phenomenology, calling for a "reduction" to the immanent and the exclusion of all transcendency, retain the pure I, which admittedly is transcendent? In *Appearance and Sense*, Shpet begged off the question, saying that a complete answer would require a phenomenological investigation that he could not undertake at that time. All he could do was suggest the path along which the question could be answered.

Shpet attempted valiantly to argue that the transcendency of the I and that of the objects of consciousness are not the same. In conflating the two, the temptation arises to endow one with the properties of the other, leading to such metaphysical positions as spiritualism, on the one hand, and materialism, on the other. The being of the I is essentially not transitory, and while an object is correlative to consciousness the I is in consciousness absolutely. That is, everything subject to bracketing in the phenomenological reduction is correlative to consciousness, but if we would try to bracket the I, attempting to see it purely in relation to consciousness, we get nothing. For "there would be nobody directing consciousness itself."<sup>6</sup> Every mental experience (*Erlebnis*) is a mental experience of the I, and consciousness belongs to the I, without which it, the I, is nothing.

Obviously in light of the position he upheld in the essay before us from 1916, Shpet himself hardly remained convinced of the position he himself tried to defend earlier. The key, or at least the only key we have, that sheds light on Shpet's thinking at this time is his letter to Husserl from 14 December 1913, in which he thanked Husserl for sending him the new edition of the *Logische Untersuchungen*, but that, as a result, he would have to re-work his entire presentation.<sup>7</sup> Of course, in the absence of any possible drafts for *Appearance and Sense*, we cannot say to what extent, if any, Shpet did re-work the final version to reflect this reading of the new edition of the *Untersuchungen*. His editing could not have been extensive, for in the essay "Consciousness and Its Owner" Shpet sharply departed from Husserl's 1913 position as well as his own defense of it the following year. Now in 1916, Shpet took exception with what he regarded as Husserl's fundamental thesis regarding the I, namely that every *cogitatio* effected is of the form *cogito*. But what, or who, is this *Ego cogito*? And is it something other than the stream of mental experiences and, unlike the ever-changing steam of experiences, something numerically identical in

<sup>5</sup> Marbach has suggested that Husserl altered his position in grappling with the problem of intersubjectivity. If *Erlebnisse* belonged to no one, i.e., were anonymous, how would it be possible to distinguish *my* consciousness from *yours*? E. Marbach, *Das Problem des Ich in der Phänomenologie Husserls* (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 100. Unfortunately, Husserl did not address the topic of intersubjectivity to any extent in *Ideen I*. In any case, Shpet, conceivably, would have found Husserl's treatment deficient by its reliance on the exclusivity of merely two types of intuition: experiencing and essential. It is owing to that exclusivity that Husserl's problem arises in the first place. Miller has suggested that Husserl's "change of mind about the notion of ego was primarily motivated by his theory of time consciousness." I. Miller, "Husserl on the Ego," *Topoi* 5 no. 2 (1986), 157. Again, the issue of time consciousness is barely broached in Husserl's *Ideen I*.

<sup>6</sup> Shpet, *Appearance and Sense*, 62.

<sup>7</sup> E. Husserl, *Briefwechsel*, ed. K. Schuhmann, vol. 3: *Die Göttinger Schule* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994), 529.

those experiences or, even more fundamentally, that to which these experiences belong? Husserl admitted that the pure I is not “in” mental experiences. That is, this I is not one such experience among others.

Shpet endeavored to follow Husserl along the path of his newly discovered phenomenological reduction, but unlike the latter Shpet found that that path emphatically excludes the pure, or transcendental, I. Husserl provided no new evidence in 1913, in Shpet’s eyes, that warranted an alteration of his 1900/01 stance. There is no basis, after effecting the reduction, to hold that the stream of experiences that make up the pure consciousness belong to a pure I. Having excluded everything empirical, including the empirical I, we could, conceivably, retain the “transcendental residuum” as an I, but it would be ideal. Since the pure I is not a real (*reelles*) part of the mental experiences nor “behind” them as their subject, it must be merely a form, namely, the unity of those experiences.

The denial of the unity of consciousness as the I and the concomitant positing of some pure I “behind” consciousness, in Shpet’s eyes, leads directly to subjectivism and with it the skepticism at least implicit in psychologism. Even stronger, merely taking the Cartesian *Ego cogito* as the starting point of philosophy itself leads to contradictions. However, we may ask just what was Shpet suggesting. Did he hold that there is such a thing as an impersonal consciousness, a consciousness, albeit unified, that is neither yours nor mine, a consciousness that hovers, as it were, in some ethereal world yet which observes this world of buildings, trees and people, a consciousness that is no one’s?

Shpet did not deny that there can be a personal consciousness, but there can also be a multipersonal one. There are times or cases where my consciousness is at least similar, if not identical, to another’s. Moreover, just as Shpet in *Appearance and Sense* alluded to the possibility of a third form of intuition in addition to Husserl’s experiencing intuition and eidetic intuition, one that provides access to a region of being that those forms do not, viz., social being, there is a consciousness belonging, as it were, to society as a whole, a united whole, viz., a communal consciousness. In other words, Shpet believed that Husserl in 1913-14 had omitted from his gaze the entire realm of the social, or, better still, the communal. Whereas my mental experiences (*meine Erlebnisse*) are mine and only mine, the I, phenomenologically considered, can not only be distinguished from my experiences, but also not be exclusively mine. If we take consciousness ideally, i.e., phenomenologically, can we, then, ask whose consciousness it is? Such are the lines along which Shpet examined this theme and initiated his non-egological conception of consciousness.

Shpet, rather amazingly, articulated his position years earlier than did both Sartre and Gurwitsch, both of whom almost certainly remained in ignorance of Shpet’s deliberations. In his 1936 article “La transcendance de l’*égo*,” Sartre too questioned the need for a transcendental I within the phenomenological reduction. The field opened up by the epoché is in itself impersonal, or, to use Sartre’s own expression, “pre-personal.”<sup>8</sup> Admittedly, Sartre, with knowledge of more Husserlian texts than Shpet had, pointedly proceeded further than the more cautious Shpet. Sartre, for one, spoke more directly of the unity of consciousnesses in a transcendent object and appeared more willing

<sup>8</sup> J.-P. Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, trans. Andrew Brown (London: Routledge, 2004), 3.

to acknowledge the role of consciousness or consciousnesses in the process of the constitution of an object. However, for his part, Shpet was far more concerned than was Sartre with the notion of "sense." The two men most strikingly departed in different directions from this common non-egological conception. Sartre would go on to emphasize the sheer freedom of a consciousness that arises from its encounter with the world leading to the extreme subjectivism and nihilism of his *L'Être et le néant*. Shpet, on the other hand, would go on to emphasize human sociality and the role of language as an instrument in that sociality.

Gurwitsch, with full knowledge of Sartre's position, also rejected in 1940/1 Husserl's stand. In the phenomenological attitude, there is no center of activity, no pure I, from which conscious acts emanate. For Gurwitsch, to speak of an I is to speak of a mundane I, which is itself constituted. Concomitantly, there is no transcendental consciousness apart from that consciousness with which we are familiar, though it can have transcendental functions including constitution. The difference here with Shpet's conception is more elusive, though again Shpet's emphasis lies elsewhere than Gurwitsch's on psychology understood as that of the human individual.

Shpet's essay makes for difficult reading not least owing to his adoption of Husserl's technical vocabulary. Standard English translations of Husserl's terminology have been retained wherever it is clear that Shpet has that terminology in mind. For example, the Russian word *актуальность* (which corresponds to Husserl's *Aktualität*) is rendered as "actionality," despite its awkwardness, and *переживание*, which corresponds to the German word *Erlebnis*, which in turn has been translated variously even in the existing translations of Husserl, is rendered herein as "mental experience." The Russian word *предмет* is consistently rendered as "object" and *объект* as "Object," except in those cases where such usage conflicts with an accepted English translation of a particular work that Shpet quotes. The Russian word *уразумение* is given as "comprehension," in keeping with the terminology used in the translation of Shpet's *Appearance and Sense*, even though the word "understanding" may seem more fluid. The several uses of ellipsis in the text are found in the Russian original and do not indicate any omission of passages or words. The footnotes were originally made by Shpet, with the exception of those added by the translator and marked with initials [TN].

The Anglophone reader will also find that Shpet draws from a wealth of literature, making allusions to much material not typically found in technical philosophical pieces as well as, of course, to a number of philosophers, who, for one reason or another, are largely unknown today but who Shpet clearly regarded as significant.

The translator certainly wishes to express a deep sense of gratitude to an anonymous reviewer's extensive comments and suggestions on an earlier version of this essay. Whereas almost all of the suggestions, being insightful, have been incorporated into this version of the translation, any and all inaccuracies and imperfections that remain are the responsibility of this translator alone. Finally but certainly not least, the translator would like to express his heart-felt thanks to The North American Society For Early Phenomenology, and in particular to Dr. Rodney Parker for assistance in the preparation of this translation.

# CONSCIOUSNESS AND ITS OWNER<sup>1</sup>

## 1

Our thinking not infrequently gets us into trouble; our enemy, rather, is language. As if lying in ambush, a *homonym* hides behind almost every word that we express or apprehend. We cannot completely prevent others from misunderstanding our thoughts and, in particular, the expression of these thoughts. In fact, we ourselves occasionally fall into errors of expression. However, one group in particular stands out for its paradoxicality: Errors arise when we initiate a search for the *general* meaning or the *common* origin of homonyms. Perhaps from a psychological or linguistic perspective such a problem is of some interest, but logically it is paradoxical. Of course, a generalization is logically permitted when there is a subsumption of species, designated by various terms, under one genus. But what are we to make of a generalization that subsumes different things bearing an identical name under a single genus? Homonyms should not be generalized, but differentiated and determined. The meaning of each term should be rigorously delimited; the intended meaning should be specified and precisely stated. “If, then, the definition applies in a like manner to the whole range of the ambiguous term, it is not true of any one of the objects described by the term.”<sup>2</sup>

Among the homonyms that play an important role in philosophy is the term “I,” [“self,” or “ego” – TN<sup>3</sup>]. The customary way of distinguishing the various meanings of this word lies in some supposedly consistent transition from a relatively general meaning to an ever more specialized one. It is said that we are to understand the word “I” or “self” as designating a *thing*, like one of the many things in the world around us; for example, I live on such and such street, I have a certain social standing, I was exhausted, I wore shabby clothes, etc. We pass from this first sense to the so-called psychophysical I, or self, when we understand that term as designating a psycho-physical *organism* that reacts to irritations arising in its environment and in turn displays activity and movement produced by the organism’s inner powers. Regardless of whether they are directly perceived or merely inferred on the basis of actions, the facts demonstrating the presence of mental activity in a person are attributed to a *psyche*, understood as the

<sup>1</sup> From *Георгию Ивановичу Челпанову от участников его семинариев в Киеве и Москве 1891-1916* [To Georgi Chelpanov from the Participants of his Seminars in Kiev and Moscow 1891-1916] (Москва: Тип. А. И. Мамонтова, 1916), 156-210.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Topics*, trans. W. A. Pickard (Cambridge: NuVision Publications, 2005), 169. Shpet provides the original Greek [TN].

<sup>3</sup> Unlike in English philosophical terminology, Russian uses only one word for the German “*das Ich*,” namely, “я” [TN].

bearer of a person's mental powers and states. This, in turn, leads to the psyche being defined as a new meaning of the "I."<sup>4</sup>

It is easy to see an *analogy* between these various meanings, which consists of limiting the sphere of the I while concomitantly enlarging the "surroundings" to which it is contrasted. Extending the analogy further, the term "I" sometimes takes on yet another new meaning – that of an I anchored "within" the psychic I and the source of a new activity. New and quite different issues arise when the I is taken in this sense. Self-consciousness is now spoken of as the "I" of consciousness. We also hear talk of the [human] spirit, of a generic I, of a transcendental I or ego, etc. Not all of these meanings of "I" are synonymous. The "[human] spirit," for example, is taken to be a concrete object, and the earlier contrast between the I and its surroundings is preserved even when the term "I" is understood in this sense. Even here, it is used to designate the specific source of an arbitrary activity. In the other cases mentioned, an unoriginal, abstract meaning is usually ascribed to the term "I," a meaning that is clarified only on the basis of the well-known theoretical presuppositions of philosophical *subjectivism*. In such a case, the I, conceived as the subject, is invariably set against the Object of cognition or of behavior or of a consciousness in general. In each instance, there is either no consistent transition from one meaning to another, or the transition turns out to be merely imaginary. Although in the first three cases the use of the term "I" is somehow justified on the basis of an analogy – albeit only in a figurative or a metaphorical sense – using it to mean "the subject of cognition"<sup>5</sup> cannot be justified in the same manner. We have even less justification for using the term "I" to designate some abstract property. For in doing so we strip the I not only of its sense as the source of my activity, or of my suffering, but even of its sense as the "bearer" of my individual characteristics and traits. Instead, the I is transformed into a *quality*.

## 2

What we have just seen is merely the reverse side of taking the ambiguous term "I" as synonymous with the words "person," "individual," "psyche," "subject," "understanding," etc. For the time being let us put aside the question of the legitimacy of these and other, similar identifications. If we look solely at the formal relationships between these concepts, we will see that, on the whole, all these meanings of the term "I" have to do either with the sphere of an empirical object, such as a person, a psyche, etc., or with that of an ideal object, conceived as a "subject," a (logically) generic or general I, etc. Such a position could be considered normal if we could establish a natural correlation between a "thing" and an "idea," something that would, of course, be revealed from the fact that the concepts within this or that order had a single sense. However, let us assume that the concept of the empirical I is actually "formed" by opposing it to its *surroundings*, while the concept of the ideal I is "formed" by opposing it to its *Object*. We would, then, have to recognize

<sup>4</sup> One of the keenest analyses of the various meanings of the term "I," or "self," is given by F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1969), 74-102.

<sup>5</sup> A. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, 1969), vol. 1, 207. Payne, however, translates Schopenhauer's "*Subjekt des Erkennens*" as "subject of knowing" [TN].

that in moving from the one concept to the other the substitution precludes any correlation like that just mentioned.

### 3

This substitution can easily be seen if we form a clear idea of the character of the actual correlation. Since the empirical I is always a single, concrete “thing,” a simple reference to it can take the place of a definition. Every attempt to describe this thing starts with an explicit recognition of its empirical existence, that is, the fact of its *presence* in the real world. No feature or collection of features can adequately express the “sense” of the proper name that an I so described in this way bears. We can get an indirect determination of the proper name only through a concrete reference to the surroundings, the situation and the conditions in which we find this I. If we examine these conditions, we will convince ourselves that the precise reference we need requires more than the mere specification of the “thing’s” unique time and place and even of its unique birth as a living being. We also have to state explicitly its social and historical uniqueness. In other words, we simply return to its proper name – the one designation that points to the presence of the described I. And apparently only the demonstrative pronouns *this* and *that* can serve as a substitute for the proper name.

On the other hand, every direct reference to the properties, traits, characteristic features, etc., of this particular I presupposes knowledge and an understanding of his or her unique circumstances and surroundings. For example, we could say that Ivanov wrote a beautiful piece, but such a judgment would be unintelligible if there were no explicit reference or mutually understood context to our “sphere of discourse.” In this way, the words “a beautiful piece” in connection with Ivanov acquire a different sense depending on which Ivanov we are speaking of: whether it be Nicholas, Eugene, Ivan or Vyacheslav Ivanov. In exactly the same way, such determinations as “I am the one you have heard,”<sup>6</sup> and so forth, serve as references only by way of mentioning the unique nature of the “circumstances” or of the “sphere of discourse,” since this is sufficient to understand what is being said. Therefore, it actually seems that in our attempt to determine the I we end up with nothing but tautological judgments, such as “I am I,” or “I am so-and-so,” etc. Any reference to a characteristic, an activity, a feature, etc. of the I alone simply amounts to mentioning his or her proper name. A reference to the unique nature of the circumstances and the conditions leads necessarily to the same conclusion: A collection of common nouns is only a lengthy formula for the proper name. In spite of its subjective origin, it seems as though a simple pointing out (*haecceitas*<sup>7</sup>) is an exhaustive determination.

Certainly, there are significant difficulties here – or am I artificially magnifying them? Would it not be simpler, following the usual procedure, to begin with a portrayal of my “own I” and establish my distinctiveness “on the basis of what is given in self-observation”? I do insist, however, that each I is “personal,” and if I would want to depict my own I, i.e., *myself*, I would have to present my autobiography, which, in any case, is

<sup>6</sup> From the poem “Demon” by Mikhail Lermontov, Part 2, §10 [TN].

<sup>7</sup> “Thisness” – a central concept in the medieval philosopher Duns Scotus, for whom it is the principle of individuation [TN].

not of philosophical interest even to me. This accepted procedure commits a sin at the very start. Avoiding biography, it proceeds from a description based on a fundamentally false assumption about the *identity of the I* of the writer who is being described, of the reader who is reading, and of the Ivan or the Socrates who figure as examples. If there is something similar in all of these, it is only that each I is an individual, a unicum, and this is exactly why we must see how they are *dissimilar*. Instead, seeking what is similar and “common” to all of them, the writer speaks not about the I, not about one’s own individual self, not about oneself, but about “man,” about “a person,” a “subject,” a “psyche,” etc. In the best case, such a procedure involves a useless multiplication of terminology, and in the worst case it invokes the homonym we noted.

Do we not encounter, however, the same difficulties in describing *any* single, concrete object? Do these obstacles, perhaps, spring not from the peculiarities of the I, as the object of our study, but from those of a concrete thing as such? There is something, though, that empirically singles out the I in a decisive fashion from its surroundings populated with other concrete things: Only an I can be taken as a synonym for a proper name. We can give proper names to other single, concrete things, e.g., “Man’s Best Friend,” “Sans Souci,” “The Count of Monte Cristo,” the “Atlantic,” “New York,” “Mercury,” the “Sun,” etc. In some of these cases, we proceed from the possession of a thing to some I (*my* “Best Friend,” *Al. Dumas’s* “The Count of Monte Cristo,” etc.); in others there is no possession. In *none* of these cases, however, is there a synonymous identification of the proper name with the I. Grammarians (for example, Buslaev<sup>8</sup>) state that, properly speaking, the pronoun I refers to animate objects and *primarily to people*. Logic, which deals with the sense and the content of an expression, can more pointedly emphasize that the pronoun “I” simply acts as a substitute for the name of a particular person or “individual.”

When studying a single, concrete thing in general, we take it to be an example, a model, a specimen, i.e., as something “impersonal.” That we immediately move on to an even more impersonalized “generalization” clearly shows that we are studying not this particular thing, conceived as a *unicum*. Although hidden in the guise of a “generality,” we are, all the same, studying the thing as something concrete. In other words, that my particular “Best Friend” underwent a vivisection in the veterinarian’s office provided me with the opportunity to make a judgment about “dogs in general.” Nevertheless, he lost *nothing* in terms of being an object of study. When the vivisection is carried out on the I, however, the result is different: the I loses *everything*, since a “generalization” about the I that goes beyond this given I is essentially impossible. If we do, this I ceases to be this I, i.e., a *unicum*. In fact, we do speak about the “psyche,” “a person” and other generalized scientific objects, but not about the I. In short, the I stands out among concrete things by the fact that general concepts concerning it are inadmissible if the concepts overstep the bounds of the individual. Indeed, it is impossible to say that this restriction is due to a “desire” or any “interest” on my part. On the contrary, it is due entirely to the I itself, conceived as an object. By virtue of these very peculiarities, which permit no generalization to be made about the I, as such, there can be no theories of it. As such, then,

<sup>8</sup> Fyodor Ivanovich Buslaev (1818-1897), philologist and disciple of Grimm [TN].

the I is *inexplicable*. It is subject to interpretation alone, i.e., to a “translation” into the language of another I or into the conventional, “artificial” language of a poetic creation.

#### 4

A doubt, however, unwittingly arises with such a restrictive characterization of the I, taken as an object: Is it possible to think and speak of an *idea* or *eidos* of the I? Since an *eidos* must be conceived as a “universal,” a doubt was raised already long ago concerning the possibility of speaking of the *eidos* of a concrete, singular or “individual” thing without falling into contradiction. Today, we find categorical rejections of the notion of an “individual universal” just as we do of the *idea* of a given single, concrete thing as such. In particular, the assumption of an *idea of the I*, i.e., of the *idea* of a given so-and-so, may seem strange and unacceptable! Nevertheless, it seems to me that we must recognize such a thing as necessary. We should not forget that there is a contradiction here only if we accept a particular psychological theory according to which concepts are formed through a process of “generalization.” Yet, the inadequacy of this theory has been sufficiently demonstrated even within the psychological sphere, i.e., within the region of the processes it was specifically invoked to explain. Nevertheless, if in “first philosophy” we encounter the conviction that the content of an *eidos*, taken as the aggregate of the essential predeterminations of a concept, is necessarily a universal, then this is surely due simply to the influence of just such a psychological theory. There is absolutely no basis for identifying an abstract universal with the “essential,” except to deny the possibility of an individual universal. If the problem is formulated in a manner that is unprejudiced in favor of any particular theory, then such a denial simply by itself constitutes an *ignoratio elenchi*.<sup>9</sup>

In fact, the only serious obstacle to accepting the *idea* of an I, taken as an object designated by a proper name, is our own Aristotelian logic. In spite of the fact that it proclaims on its first pages that there is a correlation between the extension and the content of concepts, it turns out further on to be entirely a logic of extension. But even if we allow our attention to be drawn to the content of a concept, our logic remains too much a product of the *understanding* to find in it a place for the rational explication of concepts as logical instruments. Being two dimensional, it does not allow for movement from the *plane* of the understanding into the depths, a penetration into the intimate object by means of a comprehension<sup>10</sup> of this intimacy. From a logical standpoint, the “content” is a simple aggregate of signs, internally united and formed in such a way that in it the essential by itself already appears as a universal. Sense and meaning ultimately turn out to be for logic a “hindrance” that obscures its formal *purity*. This logic senses itself to be free only in the sphere of “species” and “genus.” Any “singularity,” and, even more so, the uniqueness of the I in its realm is simply an anarchic element that undermines its foundations. For this reason it is subject to all of the corresponding limitations and reductions. Nowhere is this so clearly expressed as in the distinction of the meanings of “the same,” *το αὐτόν*, which

<sup>9</sup> Literally, ignorance of the refutation, i.e., drawing an irrelevant conclusion or missing the point of an argument [TN].

<sup>10</sup> Shpet’s word here “comprehension” (*уразумение*) is a technical term that plays a large role in his hermeneutic phenomenology [TN].

Aristotle introduces and which remains a “fundamental law” of logic.<sup>11</sup> For “the same” has greater scope and has all kinds of rights within the sphere of “species” and “genus.” However, within the sphere of the individual there is only the “numerically one.”<sup>12</sup>

Actually if traditional logic would wish to explain more than just the numerical identity of the individual, this could be done in only one way given its understanding of the “universal,” namely, by dividing up the individual, temporally-enduring being into more or less arbitrary parts or “bits,” viewing them as new individuals, which could then be generalized by its usual methods. A universal concept of the genus, for example, of Napoleon and of Socrates would result, where once again, however, the character and the individuality would be destroyed. Indeed, this is why traditional logic sooner agrees to accept an “abstract” Julius Caesar (as does, for example, Höfler<sup>13</sup>) than to doubt its theory of generalization and recognize a concrete *idea* of the same Caesar.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, such relations, as that of whole to part, organism to organ, person to his/her experiences, organization to members, etc., would have to provide the basis for a reconsideration of the relations of genus and species, which absorb everything into logic. Finally, “the typical,” taken as a logical problem, is either silently passed over or is examined extremely superficially. Logic persistently remains two dimensional, on a single plane, and because of this we encounter the difficulties we saw in explaining the “idea of an individual.”<sup>15</sup> Essentially, it remains for us to recognize without prejudice that there is no contradiction in this concept. In any event, if logic in one way or another, i.e., regardless of this or that theory of generalization, accepts the possibility that “extension,” which ultimately is always the “real,” is *assimilated* to an idea, thereby surmounting the spatial extension of things, it is impossible to reject the possibility of the same “assimilation into an idea” of the temporal protraction of any thing. Each person or I completely lends itself to such a transformation into an “idea.” Just as there is absolutely nothing absurd in seeing in, for example, Nikolai Stankevich or Oliver Cromwell both a social (i.e., concrete) phenomenon and an idea (of this concrete phenomenon), so there is nothing absurd in raising the question of his idea along with the real empirical I, say, of Stankevich. And we do this each time we want to find and establish what is *typical* of it and of it alone and uniquely. We do this precisely when we want to incarnate a certain I in poetical form. And, finally, we do this

<sup>11</sup> See Aristotle, *Topics*, Book I, Chapter 7 [TN].

<sup>12</sup> See Aristotle, *Topics*, Book VII, Part 1 [TN].

<sup>13</sup> Alois Höfler (1853-1922), a student of Brentano’s and disciple of Meinong and author of *Psychologie* (Vienna: Verlag von F. Tempsky, 1897) and *Grundlehren der Logik und Psychologie* (Vienna: Verlag von F. Tempsky, 1906) [TN].

<sup>14</sup> James frankly speaks of the “generic identity” and the “generic unity” of the person. *The Principles of Psychology* (New York: Henry Hold and Company, 1890), v. 1, 335. [Although James does use the expression “generic unity” on the mentioned page, he never writes of the “generic identity” of the person in this work. On p. 335, however, we find “generic similarity of different individuals” – TN].

<sup>15</sup> Cf. “The formation of a Concept does not consist in separating the attributes which are said to compose it from all other attributes of the same object, and enabling us to conceive those attributes, disjoined from any others. We neither conceive them, nor think them, nor cognize them in any way, as a thing apart, but solely as forming, in combination with numerous other attributes, the idea of an individual object.” J. S. Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton’s Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 309. James quotes this passage in his *The Principles of Psychology*, 470 [TN].

when we picture to ourselves the idea of a concrete person as an ideal and a rule of personal or universal moral behavior or for religious worship and imitation.

Thus, it seems quite legitimate to speak not only about this actual, empirical, existing I, but also about its ideal correlate, about the constant, enduring I and therefore seen as outside the *empirical*, temporal order of its actual manifestation. The ideal I, like any object of an eidetic investigation, is characterized by ascertaining what is “the same” in its changing, unstable content. The identity of the I, which determines the essence of the empirical I, consequently is not a contradictory concept. On the other hand, however, it would be a contradiction to posit the empirical I as lying outside temporal change and ascribe a “real identity” to it. Herein lies the actual reason why it is impossible to assert that the personal I is established solely by ascertaining the identity of this I or “self-consciousness” as, for example, Locke thinks. On the contrary, Leibniz was right in saying that identity is an adequate indication of the “moral person,” but inadequate for the “real person.” Indeed, Leibniz’s reference to the fact that for the latter certain signs are still necessary, of particular importance being the “testimony of others,” deserves the most profound attention.<sup>16</sup>

## 5

From everything we have said, it is clear that we are taking the I as an *object*, i.e., as the “bearer” of a certain content and imparting a necessary unity to that content. And it is as a unity that any object appears before us. If we were to stop our inquiry at this point, we could say nothing more about the I than about any other object. To stop our inquiry here would mean that we are satisfied with this quite formal characteristic of the I, viz., its *unity*. The sense and the meaning of an object, however, is revealed only when it ceases to be “empty.” Only the object’s content reveals the object, and, in general, apart from that content, we cannot say anything about it. The content, the unity of which we call the I, however, must be distinguished from the content of other concrete objects, which, as we pointed out, play for us the role of “exemplars.” Therefore, at the very start we must point out what about the I prevents it from serving as an “exemplar” and essentially distinguishes it from all other concrete units.

A *unity of [mental] experiences*, or, to put it another way, a *unity of consciousness* is, in many respects, a satisfactory characterization of the I as an empirical unity. In this case, the peculiar nature of the I, as a unity, is clarified by how we portray mental experiences, or consciousness, and what place we assign to them. Not for a minute, however, should we lose sight of the conditions under which such a characterization is created, for these

<sup>16</sup> J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (New York: Meridian Books, 1968), 212-213: “For it being the same consciousness that makes a man be himself to himself, personal identity depends on that only.” (The word “consciousness” here ought to be translated as “self-consciousness” or “consciousness of one’s own self.”) Leibniz: “*Je suis aussi de cette opinion, que le consciosite ou le sentiment du moi prouve une identite morale ou personelle (...) Ainsi la conscience n’est pas le seul moyen de constituer l’identite personelle, et le rapport d’autrui ou meme d’autres marques y peuvent suppleer.* [I also hold this opinion that consciousness or the sense of I proves moral or personal identity. (...) Thus, consciousness is not the only means of establishing personal identity, and its deficiencies may be made up by other people’s accounts or even by other indications.]” G. W. Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, ed. and trans. by Peter Remnant, Jonathan Francis Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Book II, Chapter XXVII, 238.

conditions are precisely what makes the characterization inadequate. The first and most essential fact, by which this characterization is formed, is that we get it in answer to the question: What is the I? Consequently, proceeding from a recognition of the unity, we then ask: Of what is this a unity? In other words, the *path* before us is restricted in that we must get an *irreversible* judgment as a result. Nevertheless, having said that the I is a unity of mental experiences, or of consciousness, we naturally begin to think that the I itself is essential for any unity of consciousness, whereas our assertion made no such no claim. Secondly, the homonymy of the term “I,” with which we began on a path leading from a statement of a unity to a characterization of the manifold, makes itself felt particularly in the interpretation of both this very unity as well as of the unified content. In this way, it turns out that the I is the unity of psychic life, of the spirit, of a human being (i.e., the unity of a psyche and a body), of a person, etc. Nevertheless, we still need to find the genuine meaning of the I that would clarify its unique position among concrete things and that prevents it from being regarded as an “exemplar.” For it is not clear from the concepts of a psyche, a person, a human being, etc., per se why the objects designated by them are not considered to be exemplars.<sup>17</sup> Finally, based on the above considerations, the I designates a particular so-and-so, any proper name of a person. A reference to the unity of consciousness is a reference to the meaning of a set of common nouns. But again we come back to the question: Wherein lies the uniqueness of the I, taken as a particular so-and-so?

## 6

Ever since the era of ancient philosophy, “matter” has almost unanimously served as the individuating principle in determining what is individual and concrete. However, several voices expressed support instead in favor of “form” (Duns Scotus) as such a principle. In modernity, we more often come across claims that the real sources of individuality lie in “activity,” “self-activity,” the “will,” etc., or that the determining relations have to do with spatiality and temporality. It is clear, however, that all such means of determining the individual are too general for the I. Besides, we want to approach the problem from a completely different angle. The means of determination just mentioned clearly bear either a pronounced metaphysical character or by referring only to determining relations they suffer from an extreme formalism. Moreover, we found that, generally speaking, the I is a unity of mental experiences or of consciousness, and it is precisely in this that we must seek the exclusive conditions determining its absolute uniqueness.

<sup>17</sup> In his book *Person und Sache* (Leipzig, 1906), W. Stern bases his entire philosophical outlook on a distinction between “person” and “thing.” But of all the definitions known to me his definition seems to me the least successful. “The person,” he says, “is an existing being which despite [?] its great number [and what unity is not the unity of a great number?] of parts, forms a real, unique and intrinsically valuable unity, and as such, despite [!] its great number of different functions, fulfils a unified, purposeful spontaneous action. A thing is the contradictory antithesis of a person. It is also an existing thing [How is one “existing thing” contradictorily opposed to another also “existing thing”?], which consisting of many parts, does not form a real, unique and independent unity and which, functioning [How does something that is “non-real” function?] in many different functions, does not accomplish a unified, purposeful spontaneous action” (p. 16). If this definition is not completely devoid of sense, then according to it a “thing” is an ideal or abstract object, e.g., a decagon, virtue, etc., and a “person” is what is usually called a thing, e.g., the Sun, the Earth’s magnetic pole, etc. Other definitions either limit the concept of “person” by an attribution of moral and juridical features or expand the concept by a reference to their inadequate number, such as, e.g., identity, spontaneous action, etc.

## 7

Nevertheless, despite the quite general nature of our remarks we believe that there is a need to introduce one division. The need for this will become clear from what follows. We have been speaking up to this point of a “unity of mental experiences,” and now we seek the character of this unity in the peculiarities of the “mental experiences” united into an I. However, in general, if a “mental experience,” as such, is correctly revealed to us to be first and foremost an activity, it is no less important to note that not all mental experiences without exception – or perhaps it is better to say not everything in a mental experience – appears *originarily* as an activity, and we have every right also to call our experience or something we “undergo” a mental experience. It is also quite clear – because this is a fact of immediate consciousness – that something we undergo is not simply a non-actional or potential mental experience understood as an activity. Rather, it is originarily a distinctive feature given in the mental experience along with the activity, even though the preceding analysis revealed that an “experience” also demands an active bearer.<sup>18</sup> Passing to an analysis of pure consciousness, we accordingly distinguish the states or “structures” of consciousness, which we can call, on the one hand, an aesthetic or, primarily, *phenomenal* (Stumpf’s phenomenological, Husserl’s hyletic) consciousness, and, on the other hand, a functional or, primarily, *intentional* consciousness.<sup>19</sup>

This division has to do with the very essence of consciousness, and the distinguishing features that we found obviously must be given in both moments of consciousness. Hence, this division is necessarily intended to distinguish the absolute uniqueness of the I from the exemplar-like character of other concrete objects. The purely “subjective” haecceity of the subject of a proposition, objectively understood, is revealed as both a phenomenal structure and a functional productivity. Nevertheless, in the history of philosophy, as a rule, the importance of only one of these moments was stressed. In this way, the individual turned out to be either something completely predetermined, *omnimode determinatum*,<sup>20</sup> (e.g., Aristotle, the Scholastics, Wolff, et al.) or a pure creation from nothing (= from itself), a spontaneity, or, in the broad sense, a being *for itself* (Lotze’s *für Sich*, Krause’s *Sich-selbst-für-sich-selbst-Sein*<sup>21</sup>). A combination of both characteristics was considered to be internally contradictory and antinomical. In fact, however, just such a combination is a *conditio sine qua non*<sup>22</sup> and is an immediately recognized fact. Merely one of the mentioned moments is insufficient, and to assert such a thing is to countenance a deprivation. To affirm predetermination, or predestination, alone is insufficient for the reason that the absolute uniqueness of each individual remains incomprehensible. This is clear from the existence of theories of the absolute circularity or recurrence, etc. of events and things in time and from the existence of theories of

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Husserl, *Ideas*, §35, pp. 69-73 [TN].

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Husserl, *Ideas*, §85, pp. 203-204 [TN].

<sup>20</sup> For example, C. Wolff, *Philosophia rationalis sive logica*, ed. Jean Ecole (New York: Georg Olms, 1983), part I, sec. 1, Chap. 2, par. 74, Band 1.2, p. 152: “Apparet hinc, Individuum esse ens omnimode determinatum, seu in quo determinata sunt omnia, quae eidem insunt” [TN].

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (1781-1832), *Vorlesungen über Naturrecht oder Philosophie des Rechtes und des Staates* (Leipzig, Otto Schulze, 1892), 74 [TN].

<sup>22</sup> Latin: absolutely essential condition [TN].

metempsychosis – particularly with regard to the I when it is interpreted as a “soul.” A reference to freedom is also insufficient, since it leads ultimately to the idea of a single source (in the genre of Schopenhauer’s *Wille zum Leben*). Consequently, it becomes impossible internally to distinguish individuals and I’s.

The only way out that I see lies, above all, in recognizing the fact of the matter just as it is, i.e., the presence of both predetermination and freedom, or, combining these into one term, the presence of *rational motivation*. What makes this I, this particular so-and-so, absolutely unique? Its uniqueness lies neither in its unity in itself nor in itself the presence of a coordinated predetermination and freedom, the unification of which is manifested in an individualizing goal-directedness. Rather, its uniqueness lies only in a distinctive interpretation of this entire unity. Interpretation is the detection of sense, a construal, as a manifestation of comprehension. That is, it is the way out into a third dimension that we spoke of earlier. Here, we find that the I is not cut off or restricted in scope, but is intertwined as a “member” of some “community” in which it occupies a place *predestined* for it alone and which cannot be taken by anyone else. On the whole, the predestination of a so-and-so – ultimately in the “world” – predetermines its haecceity, although this still does not solve the problem of the impossibility of its quiddity. Imagine now the following: Let us take the I of Robinson Crusoe and that of Selkirk, not with regard to what is typical of them as individuals or in their individual essences, but with regard to what they have in common. We find between them a “similarity,” which leads us, so to speak, to a “Robinson in general.” According to what we have determined, this similarity should be a similarity of predestination, and a generalization of the I would actually be permitted. However, it is subsequently found out that in spite of the similarity of the predestinations, Selkirk “degenerated” and became “crude,” while Robinson Crusoe acquired the great virtues. How can we speak of a “Robinson in general” without depriving these two cases of what is essential in each of them? How do we accept the essential difference between these two I’s if we assume that in both cases the “predestination” is the same? We must conclude that in order to recognize the uniqueness of Robinson and that of Selkirk there is a need for the creative freedom that each of these “members” in the vast whole retains and that consequently turns out to be far from unique. However, if this freedom did not suddenly burn out but from the start abided in each I, then we would have to think that it is precisely this freedom that determines them from the start in their absolute uniqueness and makes them mutually irreplaceable.

Thus, the I is an irreplaceable and absolutely unique member of the world as a whole. The I, as Leibniz said, “expresses the entire universe,”<sup>23</sup> and it is predetermined by its predetermination. However, the I expresses the universe from “its point of view,” which can actually remain *its* point of view only by being essentially free and arbitrary. For a freedom repeated in the entire universe ceases to be free and arbitrary but becomes automatic or an imitation. The I, as an identity, i.e., the I in its essential meaning is a unity and “bearer” of consciousness, characterizable by its predetermination and by its

<sup>23</sup> Or Plotinus: “since then the Kosmos contains the Reason-Principles not merely of man, but also of all living individual things, so must the Soul.” Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), 419-420.

freedom. Empirically, as we saw, we must speak of the relation of the I, or of each unique “subject,” to the environment or surroundings. Indeed, the uniqueness of each I leads to the impossibility of a generalized I, just like the impossibility of a “general subject.” However, this is a *conclusion*, as I indicated, based ultimately on the specific premises of the Aristotelian theory of generalization. But the immediate givenness of “the same” in the unique I should have given rise to a doubt in this very theory. Actually, Plotinus already closely approaches this problem of the “idea of the one” and the support for his doubts seems to be unshakeable: “man in general” is a prototype of the human “exemplar,” but not of “each” in its infinite variety<sup>24</sup> – this is not at all a mere numerical identity. As a result, therefore, it turns out that the individual I in essence is indeed conceivable, is an auto-Socrates, an auto-Ivanov, etc., and yet it has a proper and not a common and general name.

## 8

In light of the considerations we have now seen which of the different senses of the term “I” do we take? The most interesting and important of these, of course, is that which accepts the “general” I as a (logically, not ontologically) “generic” I, a “transcendental” or an “epistemological,” I. All of the preceding amounts to a rejection of the validity or “meaningfulness,” in short, the intelligibility, of such a concept. Nevertheless, it can still be accepted either as an arbitrary conditional designation for some object *sui generis* or as a fiction, useful for one reason or another in clarifying the problem of the unity of consciousness. As we indicated, however, one way of forming this concept evokes bewilderment. For in it, we find that a certain “substitution” took place in the transition to this “I.” We now want to look into this matter.

For each of us, the “natural” and direct way of designating ourselves is through our name. We disclose the sense of our name or the meaning of the term “I” either by a direct reference or through an immediate recognition of “self-consciousness” or a “sensation of oneself.” Since the “I” is replaced in this determination with some general or figurative meaning, such as psyche, man, etc., what we need to establish for a determination is not something common to several I’s but what distinguishes them. The external sign through which we get the latter is its *hic et nunc*, which is concretely revealed in the content of its “surroundings.” Guiding this determination, the ideal sense of the I, as a concrete object, justifies such an empirical determination in establishing the rational motivation, combining predetermination and freedom. Hence, it turns out that when such unusual privative meanings as soul, man, and person are imparted to the I, the shift in terminology can still find its justification *analogously* to the way the definitions of these “things” are obtained through their relationship to their surroundings and to the conditions under which they are realized. However, we should not thereby ignore the fact that all of the meanings mentioned retain their sense, and the analogy itself finds its justification only by observing the *absolute* meaning of the term “I.” The concept “surroundings” is no more correlative to that of “soul,” “person,” etc. than the correlation between the I and the not-I.

<sup>24</sup> “One Reason-Principle cannot account for distinct and differing individuals: one human being does not suffice as the exemplar for many distinct each for the other not merely in material constituents but by innumerable variations of idea type.” *Ibid.*, 420.

This much is clear as long as we do not introduce into our reasoning any philosophical presuppositions or theories, and consequently as long as we limit our examinations to what is actually given to us, i.e., to our own I and to that of others, but taken also as unique I's. The situation is obscured only if starting with certain presuppositions we introduce a "generalization," which (abstractly) accepts a "generic" or some other *general* I. In fact, what sense and meaning can the latter have? If not all, then in any case the overwhelming majority of philosophical writers take the "general I" to be the *subject*, which is conceived as correlative to the *Object*. However, strictly speaking, if this is not already included in the presuppositions of the corresponding philosophical theory, then there is no need of this correlation. In other words, if the word "subject" is actually what the "I" designates, then *the subject is also an absolute concept*, and not a correlative one (namely, to the Object). It is a "concept of the Object" (as Drobisch<sup>25</sup> defines "absolute concept"). A preconceived interpretation of the I, conceived as subject, conceals as well another counterfeit one – namely that in place of the "surroundings" an "Object" is posited, one supposedly correlative to the "subject." In this way a substitution takes place which further virtually accustoms us to conceive our surroundings as correlative to the I (for example, the surroundings to the individual). Above all, however, an understanding of the "Object" in general begins to be extended broadly to everything, where there is only some kind of sense of the I. Consequently, the "Object" becomes a completely universal correlate of the I, which is also understood as the subject in the universal sense of the word. We begin to speak of the "subject" and the "Object" in psychology, and from then on this correlation is extended to all other meanings of the I. Ultimately, a habit is formed, obscuring even the absurdity in the assertion of a correlativity simpliciter between the I and the not-I.

## 9

In this way, the source of the falsification lies in the substitution of the I with a general subject. And the source of the theoretical superstition is the instilled habit in *contemporary* philosophy to conceive the subject as if it were correlative to an Object. Fichte, apparently, more than all others, is responsible for implanting this superstition. Without going into superfluous detail, let us simply note the following. Although the term "subject" in general is now recognized as correlative to an "Object," it is, nevertheless, sometimes used in an absolute sense, in particular in the sense of an indefinite person. In fact, in such a case, unlike the "I," it designates something *impersonal*. But this sense, as well as other senses of the term, such as the "[grammatical] subject," the "[national] subject," the "[thematic] subject," in general the "content (subject)," etc. are obviously not the reason why we turned to this concept. The original, medieval meaning of the term "subject" points precisely to the "underlying matter" i.e., that with which we are concerned. Such a meaning of the term, of course, is not correlative, but *absolute*. The meaning of this term is retained in modern philosophy, where the term "subject" still has the meaning of "that with which we are concerned." Along with this broad "logical" sense, the term, however, also conveys a narrower "ontological" meaning of the "thing" that appears as the bearer or source of certain faculties and possibilities, both active as well as passive. (A stone is the *subject* of

<sup>25</sup> Moritz Drobisch (1802-1896), German mathematician and philosopher, professor in Leipzig [TN].

warmth; humans are the *subject* of knowledge, etc.). A subject is the *materia in qua* (or *id in quo*), whereas the material proper is the *materia ex qua*, and the Object is the *materia circa quam* (*id circa quod*). Only in *German philosophy*<sup>26</sup> from the mid-18th century does the term receive a new, even more constrictive meaning, in some respects one directly opposed to the earlier one. From the time of Kant, the word “subject” in its new sense has become a necessary implement of philosophical language. The ordinary usage of the word, however, in many languages (e.g. French, English, Italian) up to now has resisted and poorly assimilated this new meaning of the word. However, if it has been assimilated, then it has been primarily in the *absolute* meaning of “man.” (In the Russian language, the word is also ordinarily used absolutely: “the suspicious subject,” the “unknown subject,” etc.) It is quite possible that the “subject” in this new sense, stems ultimately from “man” (or “self” or “mind,” etc.) as the *object* of our concern and which appears as the bearer of consciousness and the source of its *activity*, i.e., as the bearer of certain “faculties,” – in general of all that in our earlier terminology (e.g., still Wolffian) we would call “adjuncts” of the subject.

In all this, the most essential thing for us is that the history of the term does not provide bases for understanding it as a term that has to do with some correlativity. On the contrary, it appears before us in its absolute sense even when it is incredibly constrained to designate merely the psychological subject. It is a clear fact that if we now generalize the concept of the individual I, which, as we said, we have no right to do, and on the other hand, limit the concept of the subject to mean the animate and thereby the human subject, we thereby to a certain degree justify the identification of the generalized I with the restricted subject. Yet, we still must use the term “I” as an absolute one. We can go further and agree to call the single, individual I the subject, but the question certainly is not only whether there is an inner justification not only for this identification, but even simply for a comparison of the I with the subject. Or is this simply a matter of a linguistic agreement? In any case, if there is a basis for this comparison, i.e., if in general it makes sense, then it is only that the I, as the individual unity of consciousness, is viewed as a subject, as *an object that can be conceived and discussed*.

## 10

Having reverted, therefore, to the I as a unity of consciousness and seeing it as a “subject,” i.e., an object *sui generis* among other objects, let us now turn to an examination of this substitution, which is our concern, in its essence. We saw that there is a basis to speak of the ideal I as an essence, which we can see in the concrete and individual I, in some so-and-so, and that the ideal I retains all its uniqueness, contrary to traditional theories of generalization. In this connection, it is found, on the other hand, that the idea of a “general I,” of an “I in general,” either contains a conditional form or is an absurdity. Nevertheless, this idea has begun to play a quite extraordinary role in philosophy since Kant’s time. It is true, Kant himself gives anyone who does not want to confuse philosophical terminology the

<sup>26</sup> Apparently for the first time in Baumgarten, though not just in German, but also, as Eucken observes, in Latin [R. Eucken, *The Fundamental Concepts of Modern Philosophic Thought*, trans. M. Stuart Phelps (New York: D. Appleton, 1880), 2]. Cf., for example, A. G. Baumgarten, *Philosophia generalis* (Halae, 1770), §32. *Certum subiective tale est, cuius veritas a determinatis seu cognoscentibus clare cognoscitur*.

right to ignore him on this point. For he calls one and the same thing by several names that since long ago belonged to some other thing. By Kant's own admission, his "transcendental I" or "synthetic unity of apperception" is nothing other than the *understanding*.<sup>27</sup> And on the assurance of a contemporary commentator of Kant, it "would be less ambiguous and would more closely correspond to the fact" to say that it is a matter of a "scientific understanding" (Cohen).<sup>28</sup> Possibly! But where in this is the I in its indisputable singularity and absolute irreplaceability? In any case, it seems to me smarter to speak of a "scientific understanding" than of a "universal self-consciousness."<sup>29</sup>

## 11

Nevertheless, however capricious the Kantian terminology may be, I am prepared to recognize in the identification of the I with the understanding, at least, the appearance of an analogy with other definitions of the I by its opposition to its "surroundings," since in singling out the understanding as the I, we can still interpret the remaining content of the "psyche" as the "surroundings" of this "I." However, how are we, then, to understand or make sense of Fichte's venture, i.e., of his empty and sterile deductions of the I and what he deduces from the I?... Fichte roared, screamed, angered and intimidated many, though not everyone. One who was not frightened was, for example, Schopenhauer, who also dispensed his own unique names for Fichte. Another one who was not frightened was a *personalist* metaphysician, who exhaustively characterized the philosophy of the "brave" Fichte with the words: "As an energetic character, he had a particular taste for the command doctrine (*Commando* doctrine) of Kant's practical reason" (Teichmüller).<sup>30</sup> Let me quote one remarkable passage from Fichte: "If you do what I tell you," – he commands – "you will think what I think.... Perhaps you would have no objection to including in the concept of the self something that I would not include, e. g. the concept of your individuality, since this concept is designated by the same word. All this is now left to you: Only what is established by means of the simple appeal of your thought to itself is the self of which I am here speaking" (WW, I, 513).<sup>31</sup> Philosophy in the imperative mood!... Apparently all that remains is to obey....<sup>32</sup>

I have quoted this passage above all in order to focus our attention on Fichte's new bias compared with Kant in understanding the "general I." The "understanding" in Kant "prescribes laws" and commands, but among other things it is concerned with its own business, viz., to think. In any case, Kant himself comes to it by thinking. The I in

<sup>27</sup> "And thus the synthetic unity of apperception is the highest point to which one must affix all use of the understanding, even the whole of logic and, after it, transcendental philosophy; indeed this faculty is the understanding itself." I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. P. Guyer and A. W. Wood (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1997), B134n. (247n). [Shpet quotes Kant's words in German – TN].

<sup>28</sup> A reference to the Marburg neo-Kantian Hermann Cohen (1842-1918) [TN].

<sup>29</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B132 (247) [TN].

<sup>30</sup> G. Teichmüller, *Die wirkliche und scheinbare Welt* (Breslau: Verlag von Wilhelm Koebner, 1882), 7 [TN].

<sup>31</sup> *Fichtes Werke* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1971), 523. Not p. 513 as in Shpet's text [TN].

<sup>32</sup> However history notes that among Fichte's auditors there was one who dared to ask: "Now is this individual determination something foreign in the I by which it is contaminated and distorted?" [J. F. Herbart, *Psychologie als Wissenschaft: neue gegründet auf Erfahrung, Metaphysik und Mathematik* (Königsberg, August Wilhelm Unzer, 1824), vol. 1, 86 – TN].

Fichte is obtained as the result of an activity and itself acts! “The *self posits itself*, and by virtue of this mere self-assertion it exists; and conversely, the self *exists* and *posits* its own existence by virtue of merely existing. It is at once the agent and the product of action; the active, and what the activity brings about; action and deed are one and the same, and hence the ‘I am’ expresses an Act.”<sup>33</sup> This is worthy of attention in all respects. Above all, Fichte excludes “individuality” from the I, and yet his I “acts.” It seems that God Himself, who can make what happened not to have happened, cannot force an abstract concept to “act” but Fichte can. On the other hand, if we are not quibbling over the word “action,” it is impossible even for an individual to think in the form of an action, but for Fichte “to think” means “to act.” “Your thinking is, for you, an *acting*. (...) I am speaking of nothing but the activity of which you are immediately conscious when you are in this state – and only insofar as you are conscious of this activity. If, however, you should find yourself to be conscious of no activity at all in this case (and many celebrated philosophers of our own day find themselves in just this situation), then let us part from each other in peace at this point, for you will be unable to understand anything I say from now on” (WW, I, 592).<sup>34</sup>

Having parted with Fichte on *this* point, let us recall another order he issues, which again illuminates subjectivism from a new angle. One of the numerous experiments in his exposition of the *Science of Knowledge* begins: “Attend to yourself: turn your attention away from everything that surrounds you and towards your inner life; this is the first demand that philosophy makes of its disciple. Our concern is not with anything that lies outside you, but only with yourself” (WW, I, 422).<sup>35</sup> Who is this going to deceive? I personally know very well that our concern will not be *myself*, this so-and-so. If some so-and-so should by chance discover his presence here, he commits a great philosophical mistake... But this can also be forgiven, since at the moment something else interests us in Fichte’s *Introduction*. Let us in fact follow Fichte’s invitation and start to deduce a philosophy from the I, however we take it, whether in Fichte’s sense or in mine or in whatever sense. For example, let us agree that the term “I” designates “water” or a “stone.” Then as long as we are consistent and do not exceed the bounds of our first fundamental thesis is it any wonder if it then turns out that *everything is an I or in the I* and that yet we are not overstepping the bounds of the I? Therefore, if we find that the I is the unity of consciousness, then clearly adhering to elementary consistency, we next find that consciousness is unique to the I and that outside the I there is no consciousness. Starting from the I we come to this position and everything that we find along the way will belong to the I, everything will be “*mine*” and will be “given to *me*.” I will possess it, etc. – whatever expression we can devise here. And if this I is still a “subject,” then everything necessary for “subjectivism” is now guaranteed.

<sup>33</sup> [J. G. Fichte, *Science of Knowledge (Wissenschaftslehre)*, ed. and trans. P. Heath and J. Lachs (New York: Meredith Corporation, 1970), 97 – TN] The word “Thathandlung” is now somewhat out-of-date. Originally and even in Fichte’s day, it meant a *forced action*, but then in general the execution of any act. Fichte’s play with concepts could be translated very well by as an actual, realized action.

<sup>34</sup> J. G. Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings*, trans. Daniel Breazeale (Hackett, 1994), 106-107 [TN].

<sup>35</sup> Fichte, *Science*, 6 [TN].

**12**

Thus, on the basis of everything said we take a step forward here in revealing something fraudulent: finding that the I, some so-and-so, is a unity of consciousness, the unity of consciousness is proclaimed to be the I! Is it this so-and-so? But where is common sense here? It is right where it should be!... A so-and-so is surely only a contingency, a *phenomenon*, a thoughtless act of the Creator,<sup>36</sup> a pretentious nothingness! There is a genuine, authentic transcendental I. All we have to do is remove from this so-and-so *his* “mask” and a *certain subject* is obtained which is indistinguishable from its neighbors to the right and to the left. Moreover, since in the higher spheres there is no “right” or “left,” it is the “universal subject” alone guaranteeing everything and vouching for everything.

**13**

If the entire issue amounted simply to the fact that the conditions under which a *conversio pura*<sup>37</sup> is achieved are so easily forgotten, we would suffer little, since we also gain little if they are observed. The claim that the “unity of consciousness” is nothing other than the I seeks corroboration in the pure evidence found within the fact of consciousness itself. Consequently, it is neither a matter of logical deductions *nor of theories* but of an immediate, obvious and undeniable fact. While it is true that Hume doubted some of the things here, he was a skeptic by vocation and by specialty. The same holds for Mill as well as for perhaps a few others. But, on the other hand, as is well-known neither Mill nor Hume hid the fact that with their doubts they were not able to make the ends meet. As a result there is an impressive unanimity of opinion in contemporary philosophy concerning the question of the immediate presence of the I in every mental experience and in every act of consciousness. Consequently, there is also an essential necessity for consciousness to be a consciousness of the I. In order to examine such a claim we could limit ourselves to the analysis of a particular example, but since I have to object to the “evidence” and consequently must proceed with particular caution, I will select three representatives of three *different* philosophical *theories*. All three, however, display a great degree of solidarity on this issue.

**14**

Teichmüller<sup>38</sup> was one of the most subtle thinkers of the late 19th century, a defender of transcendent metaphysics, a personalist and a most vicious “*Kanttödter*,” if I may so express myself. Taking Lotze as his point of departure, Teichmüller resolves the entire content of consciousness into relations and analyzes the “material of consciousness” in the following way: “Let us take a simple relational unit, for example, the judgment ‘I see a green field’

<sup>36</sup> Sergei Troubetzkoy interprets the relationship between the “absolute subject” and an “individual consciousness” in the absolute idealism of German philosophy in this way: “Individual consciousness emerges by means of some unfathomable error of the absolute subject, its original sin. The individual consciousness is recognized as essentially false, that need not exist and is subject to elimination.” “*О природе человеческого сознания*,” [On the Nature of the Human Consciousness] С. Н. Трубецкой, *Сочинения* [Works] (Москва: “Мысль,” 1994), 490.

<sup>37</sup> Pure or simple conversion [TN].

<sup>38</sup> Gustav Teichmüller (1832-1888) taught philosophy at the Universities of Basel and later Dorpat, now Tartu in Estonia, which at the time was part of the Russian Empire [TN].

or ‘I hear the soft music,’ etc. We need only eliminate the relational forms – therefore the article “a,” the representation of the object, such as ‘field,’ and ‘music,’ in order to obtain three regions of simple relational points. 1) In the ‘I’ we have an immediate singular self-consciousness, which cannot be put together from other simpler representations; 2) In ‘seeing’ and ‘hearing’ we have a consciousness of our activities or states; 3) In the ‘green’ or the ‘soft’ we have sensations or feelings. Nothing here is obtained through inference or mediated in any way. It is a simple, relation-less consciousness.”<sup>39</sup>

Therefore, what we have here is not a “theory” but the pure representation of an actual mental experience. Doubts concerning the “purity” of the represented experience, however, arise already with a preliminary “elimination” of certain parts of the “judgment,” the removal of which, in my view, does not always leave something to be analyzed. Let me take other judgments: “The Earth revolves around the Sun”; “The relation of the circumference of a circle to its diameter =  $\pi$ ,” etc. If we eliminate here the “relational forms,” then how are we to define the “relational points”? We must appeal to *theory* and *deductions* in order to explain that “in fact,” i.e., psychologically, every judgment of such a sort is implicitly accompanied by a some mental supplementation, for example, “I see that...”; “I hear that...”; “I find that...”; “I doubt that ...”; “I am convinced, am glad, etc., etc., that...” That is, it is a matter of either a so-called modality or simply of “my” relationship to something that is established irrespective of me, in which the I, this so-and-so, concerning the specific issue of my relationship to it simply “does not participate.” Of course, however, since Teichmüller in one way or another took or takes part in some “relational unit” and if thereupon he analyzes this unit starting with himself, it simply would be an astonishing lack of attention or unnecessary modesty on his part were he not to find himself and not to mention his own name. Once some so-and-so introduces himself, it is clear that in the events in which he does participate, he must be mentioned as one of the “relational points.” Let us suppose some so-and-so now imagines himself to be the center and “subject” of all the correlations introduced. In that event, even if he refused to give his name and identity in order to preserve his honored place in the universe, this would be on his part only a form of conceit which can, perhaps, also be categorized as a modality of the respective judgment. However, it is quite impossible to recognize it as a “representation of the subject” or of what truly exists. Let us assume, though, that to some so-and-so it really *seems* to be so, and let us limit ourselves only to what *seems* to be the case. Again, we are left with *just what* seems to be the case. Perhaps, it is dubitable, but the fact that it *seems* to be is inescapable. Is it not clear, then, that this “seems to be” is correlative to an I, and that the latter is just as indubitable as the very process of “it seems to be the case”? Nevertheless, I think that this is neither clear nor simple. It is a matter of the experiential or conscious process, of a “stream of consciousness,” as we are used to saying now, and of the evidence or of immediate givenness. However, if it is correct that the experiential process is obvious in its immediate givenness, then the I does not lie in *this* piece of evidence. For it is impossible to find the I unequivocally as a part or moment in the changing mental experiences. The “green” changes to “yellow,” the “delicate” becomes a “screeching,” a “delight” becomes a “revulsion,” etc., but it is not clear where

<sup>39</sup> G. Teichmüller, *Die wirkliche und scheinbare Welt* (Breslau, 1882), 18.

the “I” enters in these changes nor again what its role would be. If it is given, it is given somehow *differently* and not as experiences themselves are given. Nevertheless, if the I is given evidently and immediately, this evidentness and immediacy are of a different sort than the evidentness of a mental experience or of an act of consciousness. And if we accept Teichmüller’s opposition of the “material of a relation” to the “form of a relation,”<sup>40</sup> the “representations of the object” necessarily belonging to the “forms,” then I am ready to assert that the I, this so-and-so, has precisely the givenness of an object and has, of course, its immediacy and fundamental character. In any case, though, this is just not the evidentness of a mental experience. Along with other “objects,” the “I” is also found in consciousness as an object, perhaps, even as an object *sui generis*, but that already is a secondary issue. It is, above all, an *object*. Correlatively, consciousness itself can be *sui generis*, as Leibniz already said (and as Lipps also said), a “sense of the I,” a self-consciousness, as an object-consciousness *sui generis*. This too, however, is a secondary issue. In any case, since we are thinking of Leibniz, I recall his remark about the necessity of the testimony of *others* in order to establish “personal identity,” e.g., the identity of some so-and-so, e. g. from the cradle, through the battlefield and finally onto the island of St. Helena. The testimony of the so-and-so himself, consequently, is insufficient, and my preceding observations evoke the question: *Who* is this who is conscious of this object *sui generis*, of “his very self,” of this so-and-so? For the time being, I will answer that in any case it is *not only* the I, *not only* the so-and-so himself. This is enough to emphasize the difference between the obvious givenness of the I, of a so-and-so, and the givenness of a mental experience, which belongs *only* to the I as in Teichmüller’s example. One must not only connect one’s thoughts by grammatical forms and relationships.

## 15

Let us turn to a second example. *N. Lossky* is a representative of immanent philosophy, a staunch advocate of, as he himself calls it, the “intuitivism of N. O. Lossky.” In examining the issue before us, he holds that we must “begin simply *with an analysis of the structure of consciousness* and with a precise description of the elements and of the relationships found within it without relying on any preconceived theories of the relationship between the I and the world.”<sup>41</sup> He carries out the analysis itself in the following way: “Let us discard all our preconceptions of the world, the psyche, the human body, etc. and concentrate on an examination of the factual structure of the manifestations of consciousness that are

<sup>40</sup> Teichmüller, *Die wirkliche und scheinbare Welt*, 19 [TN].

<sup>41</sup> Н. Лосский, *Введение в философию*, часть I [Introduction to Philosophy] (Санкт-Петербург, 1911), 231ff. In his article “Реформа понятия сознания” [Reforming the Concept of Consciousness] Losskij gives the following definition: “Consciousness is the aggregate of all that stands in a certain distinctive *relationship* to the I.” However, the “I” is to be understood here not as an “individual I,” but, in our terminology, as a “fraudulent” I, so that it is impossible to object to it by arguing that, for example, while the “religious consciousness of paganism” is a consciousness, “paganism” is not an I. Of course, it seems that either the “I” or “consciousness” must be understood “differently” here. On the whole, though, it is clear that if “consciousness” is *defined* as that which stands in a certain relationship to the I, then, as we saw, simple consistency demands that every consciousness be a consciousness belonging to an I. Losskij’s argument, which I am examining now, is, on the contrary, of special interest as it is an attempt to discover the I not by means of deductive reasoning from a definition, but by means of a direct reference.

expressed by the words ‘I am glad,’ ‘I want to listen to music,’ ‘I see stars in the sky,’ ‘I am touching something coarse,’ ‘I know that  $2 \times 2 = 4$ .’ In each of these examples, the object of consciousness – whether it be a sense of joy, the desired listening to music, the seen stars, etc. – is very different, but in each case there is *something* that stands in a certain special *relationship to the I*. It is impossible to describe or define this relationship by means of an analysis of its elements, since it is both simple and elementary. The only thing we can do is allude to the relationship with the aid of the following vivid expression, which must not be taken literally: Everything that the I ‘possesses’ enters into the field of consciousness.”

It is not hard to see that almost everything that was said above with regard to Teichmüller’s analysis is applicable here as well, and if we were to judge solely on the basis of the passages cited, the ways in which “transcendent metaphysics” and “immanent philosophy” approach this problem are not so different. Do they perhaps have just a different understanding of the “I”? Nevertheless, how would this be possible if both authors have in mind the same piece of evidence and the same immediate givenness? And if they do not, then already this alone speaks against the supposed givenness of the I, conceived not as an “object,” but as a moment or part of *every* manifestation of consciousness. In addition, however, I do not understand how Lossky can speak as though he does not rely “on any preconceived theories of the relationship between the I and the world.” He proposes to discard “all of our preconceived ideas of the world, of the psyche, of the human body, etc.” However, is it not really the case that behind the expression “etc.” there hides, among other things, a thoroughly “preconceived” idea of some “general I,” which in Lossky is in a direct line of succession from Kant’s “transcendental apperception” and from Fichte’s vacuous “I”? Therefore, the most important point of all is that the “I” is then called on in Lossky’s philosophy to play the role of the “epistemological subject.” Consequently, it also plays the role of the “subject” which must be correlated with the “Object,” or which stands, to use Lossky’s own terminology, in an “epistemological coordination” with its “Object.”<sup>42</sup> In this regard, Lossky’s analysis is of particular interest to us now for the following reason. Since the subject and the Object, the I and the not-I, or (as Lossky puts it) the I and the content of consciousness, are correlative concepts, we must be able to characterize the relationship between the two in some way, just as we can all correlative concepts. (For example, the marriage relation is between a husband and a wife; between a servant and a master the relation is termed “service,” etc.) Lossky, indeed, makes an attempt to designate this *relationship*. He vividly characterizes it as “possession.”

We must admit that this portrayal is not very successful. The kinship between this possession to the German word “*Haben*” is obvious. A great admirer and defender of the latter is Remke, who uses this term to characterize the “activity” of consciousness, a characterization that must not be understood as an operation or an efficacious act.<sup>43</sup> This purely negative characterization seems to me quite correct, but how can we then

<sup>42</sup> In order not to complicate our exposition we do not want to leap from a fundamental analysis of consciousness to a theory of knowledge, but it is certainly impossible to ignore it.

<sup>43</sup> Lipps also uses the word “*Haben*,” and it seems to me that Lossky is closer to Lipps than to Remke on this point. However, I mention Remke [1848-1930, professor of philosophy at the University of Greifswald – TN] in order to stress the positive meaning of this term. Cf. also Mill: “mind may be described as the sentient *subject* (in the scholastic sense of this term) of all feelings; that which has or feels them.” Mill has a right to speak in

find a positive characterization of consciousness? The term “possession” or “*Haben*” is inadequate in that it leads us to interpret the “acts” of consciousness as “belongings” or “property,” but whose “property” or “belongings” would they be? We would have to say “of the ‘I.’” However, if we actually discard every idea of the “body,” of the “psyche,” etc. and know the “I” only as the “unity of consciousness,” what sense does it make to speak of consciousness as a “belonging” of the I or as something that the “I” possesses?<sup>44</sup> The unsuccessful nature of this portrayal is also revealed from another side: If we can put up with such cacophonous expressions as “I am happy” = “I possess happiness,” “I feel” = “I possess a feeling,” etc., what, then, does it mean to say “I possess stars in the sky,” “I possess the fact that  $2 \times 2 = 4$ ”? Or are these improper questions, because it is impossible to speak of “stars in the sky,” but only of “my vision of stars in the sky”? Surely, though, Lossky also wants to avoid at all costs just such a “subjectivism.” Therefore, he must distinguish the two sorts of the “possessive” relationship that depend on the two sorts of “content of consciousness.” Such a division, consequently, ought to save us from “subjectivism.” How is this possible, though, if in both instances the other member of the relationship is always the same “I”?

Lossky says: “This ‘possession’ is of two sorts, each sharply distinguished from the other. Certain contents of consciousness are immediately experienced as *manifestations of my I* (happiness, desire, etc.). On the other hand, other contents of consciousness (the observed ‘blue’ color of the sky, the ‘rigidity’ of iron, the ‘oscillation of a pendulum,’ etc.) are immediately experienced as something that is *foreign to my I*. They enter into my consciousness only as ‘given to me,’ only so long as I direct my attention to them, only so long as I ‘have them in mind.’ There is no dispute that the contents of the first sort are always recognized as *psychic* and belong to the *inner* world of the subject. On the other hand, those of the second sort are seen immediately, without the help of any theory, as belonging to the *external* (transsubjective) world, similar to the way naive realism construes them....” Thus, the “*foreign to my I*” is at the same time what the I “possesses,” and so the I “possesses,” for example, the “rigidity” of iron, etc. Furthermore, this “*foreign to my I*” is “given to me” as long as “I have them in mind.” However, with the *psychic*, it seems, this is not the case? But, then, what kind of liberation from “psychologism” and “geneticism” is this? The “psychic,” as the object of psychology, is as “transsubjective” as is the “physical.” And if Lossky understands the “psychic” as pure consciousness, what does he mean by the “subject” with its *inner* world? Surely, here is our *fraudulent* “I”! And why are “ideas of the world, of the psyche,” etc. “theories,” while an idea of the “subject” is not? Finally, why does Lossky hold that there are only *two sorts* of contents of consciousness? Truly, the division appears quite irreproachable, a pure dichotomy: “mine” and “not-mine” or “foreign to me.” The error lies elsewhere: It arises not from the logic of the division, but precisely in the preconceived theory. Lossky wants to divide

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this way because he considers his I “as distinct from these sensations, thoughts, etc.” J. S. Mill, *System of Logic Ratiocinative and Inductive* (New York: Cosimo, Inc., 2009), 40.

<sup>44</sup> Lipps speaks about “belongings” (*Zugehörigkeit*), but for him “the proper meaning of the word ‘consciousness’ is the I.” [T. Lipps, *Leitfaden der Psychologie* (Leipzig: W. Engelmann, 1909), 5f–TN]. This is why he starts his “description” with the “I.” Is it so amazing that his analysis of the “experience of consciousness” concerns only the I?

up the “content of consciousness,” but in fact he severed *the content of consciousness that is united in the I*. Naturally in his view the “I” is present in both members of the division. For this reason there remain quite unforeseen problems: 1) Can we, perhaps, find consciousness apart from the I? 2) Can we, perhaps, find consciousness elsewhere besides in the I? Accordingly, Lossky selected his examples so that they all plainly begin with the “I.” However, even in Lossky’s adduced examples one thing sharply breaks the harmony of the entire construction: “I know that  $2 \times 2 = 4$ .” “Twice two is four” is a certain “content” of consciousness. However, where do we assign it? Do we assign it to the first sort along with “happiness,” “desire,” etc. or to the second sort along with “the blue color of the sky,” “the rigidity of iron,” etc., i.e., to the *psychic* or to the *transsubjective*? In any case, it is, apparently, not a “manifestation of my I,” but what basis do we have to refer it to the “external (transsubjective) world”? In general, it does not belong to any subject;  $2 \times 2 = 4$  is a relation that holds apart from any subject. If we undertake to analyze this expression as a judgment that is a part of consciousness, we are not duty bound to justify any theory. In our analysis, we do not even think of the existence of a “subject,” and, consequently, we do not have to turn to any “transsubjectivity.” A philosophical and logical analysis of this expression will be as “impersonal” as a mathematical analysis of it, as impersonal as a multiplication table. This is probably why Lossky does not say “ $2 \times 2 = 4$ ,” but says “I know that this is so.” However, the question arises: What is the importance to the relationship, to two times two, whether N. Lossky or any genuine or fraudulent “I” knows it or not? Another so-and-so might indeed find such knowledge to be laudable. However, such knowledge is of absolutely no importance to the relationship itself, just as it is of no importance that it is *not only* Lossky who knows this relationship but others also know it or in any case *could* know it. There is only one “I” that cannot know about this, namely, the general, transcendental, epistemological, fraudulent I. It cannot know anything, for otherwise it would not be fraudulent.

There is something else in Lossky’s example that we cannot silently overlook. “I am happy” = “I have happiness”; “I want to listen to music” = “I have a desire to listen to music,” etc. We can continue with Lossky’s examples: “the felt happiness, the desired listening to music, the seen stars, and so forth.” It is unfortunate that Lossky stops with “the seen stars,” since it is not easy to ascertain what this “and so forth” is without his help. How does one analyze: “It is known that  $2 \times 2 = 4$ ”? ... I will now turn to the direct objects of the expression “I have.” “I know that  $2 \times 2 = 4$ ” = “I have knowledge...” – Here our rephrasing *breaks down*. Instead of “twice two is four” we have to say “I have knowledge that  $2 \times 2 = 4$ .” Are these two truly only a matter of syntax? *In terms of meaning*, is it really the same to say, “I know Alexander Ivanovich,” or “I know the multiplication tables,” and “I know *that* Alexander Ivanovich is something, e.g., my mentor,” or “I know *that* the multiplication tables are foreign (or not foreign) to my I”? This little word “that” plays a rather large role. (I will simply remind you that by means of it Meinong defines his notion of “Objective.”) Among other things, it is precisely this little word that signals an entry into the topic to be under discussion – even though it be *my* discussion. Such a relationship in itself has nothing to do with my I.

I will repeat once again that, of course, if we begin our analysis of consciousness with an analysis of the I, we will come to the fact that we find the I to be present everywhere,

provided we simply remember enough not to forget just what it is we are investigating. If we are investigating consciousness itself, we will find that it is always a consciousness of *something*. This “something” is found to be a system of relations in which the presence of the I is optional. It may be present here, but it may also not be. However what is particularly important is that since this is an investigation of pure consciousness, of pure directedness to something, or pure intentionality, we are not obligated to begin with the I as the unique form of the unity of consciousness. Without saying anything about the complete intelligibility of such expressions as the “moral consciousness of humanity,” “the religious consciousness of the first Christians,” “the scientific consciousness of the Enlightenment era,” “the political consciousness of the Russian nation,” etc., let us turn our attention simply to such descriptions as “the evening at NN’s place was boring,” “it was terrifying in the city,” “the audience was excited,” “all of Russia is amazed at the news of the treasonous act,” etc. What these expressions want to convey in this way are not the judgments of some so-and-so, who happens, for example, to “notice,” “find,” or “hear” this, but something quite different. Whereas the “boredom,” “dismay,” “amazement,” etc. that are mentioned are “states of consciousness,” the unity of this consciousness is sometimes directly indicated (that of the “audience,” or of “Russia”), only it is not the unity of an “I.” So, at least a fact is stated, and one can now *ad majorem Meimet gloriam* concoct as many theories as one wants including theories, I venture to say, of some sort about cellular psychology or theory of knowledge. However, a fact remains a fact.

## 16

Finally, let us turn to a third example. *Paul Natorp* is one of the most prominent representatives of contemporary transcendental idealism and a most industrious disciple of the so-called “Marburg School,” which has done so much to overcome Kant and his subjective philosophy. We begin with a matter-of-fact assertion: “Nothing can be an Object except to a subject or consciousness. To every Objective thing that is cognized or accepted there lies a contrasting subjectivity (*das Gegenverhältnis zur Subjektivität*). For every subject, there must be an Object (*dem Subjekt soll das Objekt gelten*). The Objective is indeed set against the subjective and at the same time is placed in an inseparable relation to it.”<sup>45</sup> Therefore, from the very start Natorp is indifferent to whether it is the “subject or consciousness,” whether it be the correlativity of the subject, taken as consciousness, to an Object or the correlativity of the subject, taken as an epistemological cognizing subject, to a “cognized and accepted” Object.<sup>46</sup> However, let us drop all talk of a theory of cognition – which is a separate philosophical fraud – and stick simply to an analysis of *consciousness*. It is indisputable that consciousness is correlative to what is intended, and if we agree to call consciousness the “subject” and what is intended the “Object,” then certainly there is no Object without a subject and no subject without an Object. However, you know one is supposed to compile the “conditions” “correctly” and “without any trickery.” In any

<sup>45</sup> P. Natorp, *Allgemeine Psychologie*. Book I (Tübingen, 1912), 22. Cf. *Einleitung in die Psychologie* (Freiburg, 1888), 11ff; *Allgemeine Psychologie in Leitsätzen* (Marburg, 1904) and second edition, 1910, 1. *Einleitung*. A. *Objekt der Psychologie*.

<sup>46</sup> Whereas Shpet just above correctly translates Natorp’s words “*in aller erkannten oder angenommenen Objektivität*” he now reads Natorp as writing “*und*” instead of “*oder*” [TN].

case, they are supposed to be observed. Natorp's "trick" is revealed when it turns out that his "subject" is also the "I" and as such is not "consciousness" but only a moment within consciousness. We then end up fundamentally with everything that we saw in Teichmüller and Lossky. In fact, that "something is an object of consciousness" Natorp sees as a hidden indication of "an I (or You or He, etc.)," and states "on the whole there are three moments which are closely connected into one in the term 'consciousness,' but which nevertheless can be distinguished through abstraction: 1) the something that someone is conscious of; 2) the something or someone who is conscious of something; 3) the relation between the two: that someone is conscious of something. Simply for brevity, I call the first the *content*, the second the *I*, and the third *awareness (Bewusstheit)*."<sup>47</sup> I will not start arguing that it so *happens*, as Natorp depicts, that we can distinguish the mentioned moments in some mental experiences or in some acts of consciousness, but I do doubt that his analysis is an adequate expression of *every* act, indeed, of *every* unity of consciousness. This, indeed, is certainly the entire issue. Natorp himself glosses over his doubts by his very courageous parenthetical clarification, namely "(or You or He, etc.)," even though he should have recognized it as fatal. Does this mean his "I" is not universal? Or is it the very same universal "You" or "He"? And is not the "I" present in the "You" as a necessary moment and the "He" in the "I"? This would be a surprising result for subjectivism! And what does the "etc." mean here? Does it mean "She" and "It" or also "We"?... Should we not then expect the appearance of some neotero- or neotato-Kantians,<sup>48</sup> who reveal to us that subjectivism proper is a *communality*?... But the fact of the matter it seems is not so pretentious. It is simply a matter of terminological scope. The word "or" does not have here an explanatory but an exclusionary sense: today you, but tomorrow me. However, if it is not the case that *every* act of consciousness reveals the presence of the "I," then the first question that arises is: *When* does this happen? I gave examples above where I could find no presence of the I. It is essential in all of these cases that consciousness be directed towards some content, the "subject" or the bearer of which, however, cannot be called an I. Conversely, is it now impossible to say that the I is found in a mental experience or in an act of consciousness when it serves as the "object" towards which consciousness is directed at a given moment? But it is precisely here that we encounter the chief stumbling block on the part of Natorp, which must be subjected to a special examination. Therefore, we will put this question aside for now in order to return to it later.

## 17

Now let us turn once again to Natorp's analysis. He also makes an attempt to designate the relation between "being conscious" and the "object of consciousness" as one of "awareness." This may be more subtle than "possession," but such a designation loses all of its charm, if we recall that "under our condition" consciousness is a subject. Consequently, it simply here is a matter of *subjectivity*. Owing to the general sense of Natorp's division, which

<sup>47</sup> Natorp, *Allgemeine Psychologie*, 24 [TN].

<sup>48</sup> The suffixes *-tero* and *-tato* were added to Greek words to form the comparative and superlative forms respectively of the adjective stem. Shpet is here, most likely, writing facetiously as though we could speak of neo-Kantians (or new-Kantians), then neotero-Kantians (or newer Kantians), and then neotato-Kantians (or newest Kantians) [TN].

brooks no exceptions, every relation between consciousness and its content is subjective. This is the theory from which Natorp starts out, and it is therefore pointless when he speaks as though an immediate mental experience is found here. The condition itself was formed “incorrectly”: consciousness, the subject and the I are quite different things, and it is impossible to substitute one for the other. What can actually be found in every mental experience is a correlation between consciousness and the object of consciousness, something that is immanent and something that is transcendent. Further analysis reveals the specific features of each side. We can examine one or the other absolutely, but once we come upon their correlation, we are obliged to carry out our analysis on the basis of this correlation so that each statement about one side of the correlation necessarily has a corresponding statement about the other side. In finding such a simple and originally given thing as the manifold of some “consciousness,” we thereby find the manifold of the “object of consciousness” and vice versa. Each manifold is, in turn, correlative to a unity, and we start speaking of a “unity of consciousness.” Do we need a special term for this unity? Let us take any manifold: the table, the dog, the world, the Thirty Years’ War, Tatiana’s letter, Roman Law – all of these are unities, unities of respective manifolds. Why, when we speak of the unity of consciousness, do we have to have a separate designation for it? Because in one way or another subjectivism as a theory must be justified. There can be no other answer. A table is a unity of a manifold, but who would think to claim that this *unity* “possesses” its features, or that this unity stands to its features in a relation of “tableness,” etc.? Obviously, some will understand this “unity” to be not a simple “union” of features, but something that evokes, causes, obtains or bears them. In short, some want to justify a *theory* of substantiality, of subjectivity or some such thing. I am not saying anything against these theories, as theories, for example that one is better and another worse. What I am saying is that it is impossible to claim that these are not theories but an immediate mental experience. Furthermore, as soon as a “subject” appears, it is immediately qualified as the correlate of an Object: There is no subject without an Object, and there is no Object without a subject. We recognized that a consciousness is correlative to the Object of consciousness. However, what is the subject here? And what is the Object? If we could actually establish some subject as the bearer or originator and so forth of consciousness, then its content would also amount to consciousness itself, i.e., acts of consciousness, and not the object of consciousness. Surely, it is precisely what is intended that is the “Object” here! Pure subjectivism, i.e., illusionism, is logically more honest: There is the I (the subject) and my consciousness (the Object) and nothing more. What we have here, though, is a subjectivism in disguise: the I (the subject) and my consciousness (+ that which is intended = the Object). A correlation is obtained between the I and what is intended, which perhaps, in some senses, cannot be denied insofar as it is a matter of the I taken as a so-and-so, provided only that such a correlation does not overstep the bounds of the so-and-so. What is claimed in the view under examination here, though, is the just the reverse. What is happening is the already mentioned *conversio simplex*: What is intended belongs to the I. In order to avoid “solipsism,” the I must be taken not as some so-and-so but as the I, which amounts to a moment in any consciousness. However, it is not enough to say “a moment in consciousness.” Consciousness itself is the I! A so-and-so is already unnecessary. It can be eliminated. Psychologism is overcome. One thing is

certain: It is impossible to cut the hair of someone who is wearing a wig. But no matter how much subjectivism disguises every so-and-so under one “general I,” it fails to achieve one thing. Although perhaps the subjectivists do manage to get used to the idea that this “wig” amounts to a necessary accessory of every mental experience and that they see it as immediately present in every mental experience, this does not make us see every so-and-so as being born wearing such a wig.

## 18

However, am I not myself eliminating the so-and-so? Surely, if all that is originally given is consciousness and the object of consciousness, without any relation to an I, a kind of “impersonal” consciousness, is this not a monstrous paradox, something grotesque, as though there could be a consciousness belonging to *no one*, and as though an analysis of consciousness and what is intended gives us everything except their owner, the I: the Object alone with no subject whatever? Certainly, this question is only rhetorical on my part. I would not dare suspect the reader of misunderstanding everything said above, just as I would not dare suspect the reader of harboring a skepticism concerning my sanity. In fact, I only want to say that consciousness is not “no one’s,” since every so-and-so finds it within oneself. However, it is merely the consciousness of a so-and-so, and this so-and-so is mistaken if he thinks that his consciousness is the only possible one. It is *not only* this so-and-so who has consciousness, nor is it merely his neighbor’s. There can be and still are consciousnesses which, like that of this so-and-so, are unities but which do not belong to an I and which – if the I is the subject – cannot be called subjective. It is not some “general I,” built entirely on the basis of the elimination and negation of the I, of this so-and-so, and which would therefore be in the full sense *no one’s*. This so-and-so has his own consciousness, which is not reducible to anyone else’s and which is, on occasion, even inaccessible, or “inexpressible,” to others. Likewise, these unities can each also have their own, “expressible” consciousness, though it is not accessible and not comprehensible to every so-and-so. This does not amount to the fact, though, that consciousness belongs *only* to a so-and-so. A so-and-so can know about something, but at the same time he also knows that it is *not his* or *not only his*, that, in any case, he is not in such an instance the subject of consciousness in the sense of a *materia in qua*. This is the essential point. However, although I do not believe in the dogma of subjectivism, as though there is no Object without a subject, it is clear that speaking in this way about some so-and-so and about other unities of consciousness, I also cannot accept a “bare” Object *in se*. The subject, *id in quo*, is itself an object. It must be sought in the objective, i.e., in what is intended. To transfer it into another member of the correlation, as the foundation, source and principle of consciousness deprives it, above all, of the distinctive features that are uniquely peculiar to it. Inasmuch as they do not “pity” it, take away from it its special features, they perpetrate an inadmissible *substitution* and force it to live with the forged passport of a *Kannitverstan*.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>49</sup> A reference to a character in В. А. Жуковский, “Две были и еще одна,” *Баллады* [“Two true stories and yet another,” *Ballads*] (Санкт-Петербург: Глазунов, 1907), 115-124. The character Zhukovsky relates is drawn from a German short story, “Kannitverstan,” by Johann Peter Hebel from 1808 [TN].

## 19

Let us pause a bit longer on the question of “whose” consciousness consciousness is. However obvious the legitimacy of this question may seem, there is no need for us to hurry to answer it. I should simply remind you of Vladimir Solovyov’s warning: “The fact is that not only must every answer be examined by rigorous thought – the same is required for every question. In everyday life we can ask, without giving it a second thought: whose coat? or, whose galoshes? But by what right may we ask in philosophy: whose consciousness? – thereby assuming the real presence of various selves to which we must give consciousness as private or communal property? The very question is simply a philosophically inadmissible expression of dogmatic certainty as to the independent and self-identical existence of individual beings. But it is precisely this certainty that needs examination and justification by indisputable logical deductions from self-evident data.... In the present state of affairs, to the question *whose* consciousness is this or *to whom* do the given psychic facts (the facts which form the starting point of philosophical discussion) belong, one can and should answer: *it is not known*;....”<sup>50</sup> This really must be our starting point. The I is, precisely speaking, a problem, and it is in no way either a foundation or a principle. On the contrary, taken as the starting point of philosophy, concern for the I can only provide a distorted analysis of consciousness and owing to preconceived theories forestall a pure description of the facts. It does not matter whether the I is understood to be a “general” I, a transcendental I or a single, individual I, that is, this so-and-so. Again, I will appeal to another Russian philosopher: “Therefore, having proclaimed the individual to be the supreme principle in philosophy and regardless of whether we take it as individuality or as universal subjectivity, we come to illusionism and fall into a host of opposing contradictions. *Having posited personal self-consciousness as the starting point and at the same time the supreme principle and criterion of philosophy, we are unable to explain to ourselves our consciousness of ourselves.*”<sup>51</sup>

Clearly, once there are arguments against the allegedly immediately given fact that every consciousness is a consciousness belonging to an I, the “personal” character of consciousness is not a self-evident thing. And the ironic question “*Whose* consciousness is this?” does not, in any case, then, carry such deadly force. In claiming that consciousness can be non-personal, we are not asserting its impersonality. We are only saying that it can also be superpersonal, multipersonal and even individual. To put it simply and briefly, consciousness can be *not merely* personal. The opposite assertion is not obvious, and demands proof. Natorp, incidentally, has an argument: “The phrase ‘to be an object of consciousness’ contains, as it were, the condensed general sense of the expression:

<sup>50</sup> Vladimir Solovyov, “Foundations of Theoretical Philosophy,” *Russian Philosophy*, vol. III, p. 130. Solovyov examines this question in close connection with that of the *reality* of the unity of consciousness. For the time being, I am intentionally not dealing with this question, inserting here only a portion of my notes on the question of the unity of consciousness. However, I still want to return to this theme and examine in detail the articles by Solovyov and L. M. Lopatin’s response to them. E. N. Troubetzkoy, who has recently revived this dispute, has not, in my view, provided all the conclusions that can still be drawn from the presuppositions of Solovyov’s unfinished work.

<sup>51</sup> C. H. Трубецкой, “О природе человеческого сознания,” *Вопросы философии и психологии*, 1889 кн. 1, 91. Emphasis added.

‘Something is an object of consciousness for me or for someone’.<sup>52</sup> However, for us, the entire puzzle lies here in the words “for someone.” To whom does Natorp cede a right to consciousness? After everything that subjective philosophy has told us, this is a pointless question.... However, does it follow from the “infinite” above that *only* an I is conscious? Or is the grammatical word “we” philosophically also an I?

In the article cited above, S.N. Trubeckoj connects subjectivism’s appearance and its successes with the dissemination of Protestant philosophy and finds a completely different understanding of consciousness in ancient and medieval philosophy. “Medieval scholasticism, just like Greek philosophy, did not directly raise the issue of the individuality of consciousness.... Therefore, the logical and psychological principle of medieval, or more precisely general Christian, thought was exceptionally broader than Protestant subjectivism. Along with the personal basis of human consciousness the possible communal nature of this consciousness was also recognized as obvious.”<sup>53</sup> Whatever the connection between subjectivism and Protestantism may be, only the latter fact is important to us. In philosophy, a recognition of the specifically personal nature of consciousness, its subjective character and that it belongs only to an I, is by no means universal. The matter would certainly be different if consciousness essentially has to belong to an I and if this were an immediately given and obvious fact. Modern philosophy begins simply with an analysis of consciousness – cogitatio, but there is clearly no evidence that would entitle its leading names, Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, to connect it with subjectivist theories or for “rationalism” on the whole to recognize the I as essential for consciousness. It is true that in the 18th century we can find some insignificant figures whose theories were at the time characterized as an “egoism,” but the genuine start of a fundamental subjectivism – albeit with a fraudulent subject – belongs to Kant and Fichte. The problem, properly speaking, of the “individual” was posed, of course, earlier, and post-Lockean philosophy allotted a prominent place to it. We might also think that ancient and medieval philosophy were blind, but once the problem was raised philosophy “saw the light.” Nevertheless, we encounter the facts regarding a categorical rejection of the immediate givenness of a self-identical I. Already Leibniz, as we saw, pointed to the fact that for him to be convinced of the identity of his I “while in the cradle” as well as at the moment of his polemic with Locke, he had to recall “relations with others.”<sup>54</sup>

In any case, this should not be misunderstood. Neither Leibniz nor any other so-and-so of the ancient, medieval or contemporary world would be troubled by the problem whether he is aware of himself. The answer would be a indubitable “yes.” But when he begins to tell us about his I, he already cannot say that it is given to him also immediately in its entirety. On the contrary, it presents itself to him as an “object,” whose content is

<sup>52</sup> Natorp, *Allgemeine Psychologie*, 24. Konstantin Oesterreich in his very informative and interesting book *Die Phänomenologie des Ich* (Leipzig: J.A. Barth, 1910), 225, quite categorically asserts: “it is impossible to evade the question: Who perceives?, Who apperceives?, Who represents?, etc. Invariably, the only answer can be to say: Some I perceives, apperceives, etc. Essentially, a moment of the subject is inseparable from all these processes.” If this were so, then in my view it, nevertheless, means only that it is essential for the “subject” to perceive, etc. but in no way that an “I” is essential for “consciousness.”

<sup>53</sup> Трубецкой, *Сочинения*, 492-3 [TN].

<sup>54</sup> In one of his letters to Arno (June 1686), Leibniz additionally insists on the necessity of a “proof” and of an “a priori foundation” to the identity of the I.

revealed in a very complicated way and by no means through some immediate ascertaining. But what's more, analyzing his own consciousness, a so-and-so will have to recognize that *not everything* in it is essentially connected with the I. Finally, in wishing to express his "idea" of himself, this so-and-so must also treat it in the same way as in the transition from what is empirically given in an object to its idea. Whereas consciousness itself in its essence stands before him, it is only in its ideal givenness, and in this sense it is not his consciousness, the consciousness of this empirical so-and-so. The question now is whether an ideal I, an ideal so-and-so, is essential for this consciousness. We answer "no." It is not essential, because the consciousness of an ideal I is not only his consciousness and not in its entirety only his entire consciousness. Precisely here we find intruding the idea of a "general I," of a "subject" belonging to no one, which, transgressing the individuality of this so-and-so, pretends to embrace the "entire" consciousness. In this way, the authentic I, this so-and-so, is eliminated, and the fraudulent "I" begins to play a role that this so-and-so cannot pretend to do, namely, the role of a philosophical foundation and principle. Now, we are faced with verifying whether it is correct that only this so-and-so is an I, and there is no other I whatever. But, then, are the other unities of consciousness of another type and sense than the I, taken as a so-and-so?

## 20

The classical expression of a doubt in the immediate givenness and the evidence of the I – taken not simply as the "I" of a *moment*, but precisely as something stable that is found to be the "bearer" or "subject" of consciousness – is found in Hume. Hume certainly harbored not the slightest doubt that *his* consciousness is precisely *his* consciousness, and that consequently our idea of ourselves is always within us and immediately present to us.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, his well-known chapter "Of personal identity" begins with the words: "There are some philosophers, who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our SELF; that we feel its existence and its continuance in existence; and are certain, beyond the evidence of a demonstration, both of its perfect identity and simplicity."<sup>56</sup> In place of this, he advances his theory of the "connexion of perceptions." Certainly more important than this, however, is his testimony from immediate experience: "I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception."<sup>57</sup> Actually what Hume doubts above all is the substantiality of the I and its separation from mental experiences. The question of the substantiality of the I is not of interest to us at the moment, but such a "separation" is either a theoretical problem or a problem with the definition of the concept of substance. As the literature noted and, in particular, as L.M. Lopatin clearly showed, there is nothing contradictory in the indivisibility of a substance. More importantly, Hume also doubted the identity and the continuity of the I. As we recognized based on Leibniz's observations, there are grounds for such a doubt. However, we would now like to push into the foreground one consequence of this doubt. Since for the I, which finds itself

<sup>55</sup> "Ourself is always intimately present to us." Cf. *Treatise*, in particular part II, Of the Passions (According to the Selby-Bigge edition, pp. 307, 320, 339, 340, 354, 427).

<sup>56</sup> David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 251 [TN].

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 252 [TN].

in each of its mental experiences, a doubt in the identity and the continuity of this I is possible, and since the sole means to verify it lies in an appeal to another's experience, we recognize that the *object* of this doubt is an object *not only* for the doubting I. That is, this object is also "another's" consciousness or that of "others." There are no grounds to think that these other consciousnesses, taken as unities, are identical or similar to the doubting consciousness. On the contrary, even if we are convinced that the other's I is always similar in appearance to mine, then already the simple fact of our *communal consciousness* speaks of some new, peculiar form of consciousness. Consequently, my I turns out to be an object *not only* for me. From the very start, the I is decisively distinguished from my mental experiences, which can *only* be mine.

Hume did not draw these conclusions although he had grounds for directing his thought in this direction.<sup>58</sup> He preferred to seek substantiation for his theory of the "connexion of perceptions." However, it was in essence only a matter of ascertaining an isolated moment within the stream of consciousness, of an isolated mental experience. As soon as Hume sought to pass beyond these limited confines and resorted to "memory" he fell into a difficulty from which he could not escape but which he honestly recognized: "But upon a more strict review of the section concerning personal identity, I find myself involv'd in such a labyrinth, that, I must confess, I neither know how to correct my former opinions, nor how to render them consistent."<sup>59</sup> Remarkably, however, Hume, in spite of this, did not think it possible to accept the views that he had opposed. In his eyes, the *arguments* of the advocates of an *immediate* recognition of the I's identity remain unconvincing. Consequently, for Hume the "I" ultimately cannot be established even to be this so-and-so – although, of course, Hume could not deny its reality. However, in all likelihood he would in return rise up against our "ideal I." From the point of view of such an extreme nominalist, like Hume, this would only be a matter of consistency. In any case, Hume, on the whole, rejects the I as a subject but does not reject the I as an Object. Consequently, if the I were immediately given to some degree, this givenness would be of another sort than that which is found by the subjectivists who recognize that every consciousness is a consciousness belonging to the I alone.

## 21

Mill quite correctly recognized that once we speak of the "I" as a *subject*, and of mental experiences as its "possession," the I is thereby placed "outside" the processes of consciousness. This alone already means that it cannot be an immediately given object, but that it appears to be the result of a hypothetical or deductive construction. In *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, Mill insists that we do not have a conception of the I distinct from the phenomena of consciousness, and in general he also rejects the view that in our experience we have from the outset a conception of the I as continuously

<sup>58</sup> Namely, in his theory of sympathy. For example, he says: "'Tis also evident, that the ideas of affections of others are converted into the very impressions they represent, and that the passions arise in conformity to the images we form of them" (*Treatise, op. cit.*, p. 319. Cf. p. 369 and other places). This conversion is already a theory and explanation and we can argue against it, but it is indisputable that the mentioned conformity is indicative of some "social consciousness" in the feeling of "sympathy" but not of a new "I."

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 633 [TN].

existing. He claims that there is no basis for holding, along with Hamilton and Mansel, that the I (ego) is the original conception of consciousness. However, in declaring that there is no more basis to assert the presence of the I in each moment of consciousness than there is in asserting the presence of some non-I, Mill goes too far. For by doing so Mill rejects not only the *subjectivity of the I* but its *objectivity* as well. This is simply a consistent result of Mill's phenomenalism, but ultimately he, like Hume, is conscientiously aware that phenomenalism is not equal to the task. Nevertheless, he shows no greater inclination than did Hume to recognize the arguments of the opposing viewpoint as convincing.

## 22

Let us pause briefly on one example which is particularly instructive, because: 1) it concerns our own era in which subjectivism reigns as the dominant philosophical trend, and 2) with it we once again encounter an exceptionally conscientious investigator, who really undertakes his work free of "theory"<sup>60</sup> – and yet nevertheless succumbs to theory. There is reason for us to think that in opposing Natorp's well-known analysis, Husserl was to some extent under the influence of Mill's *Examination*. In the first edition of his *Logical Investigations*, Husserl categorically asserts: "I must frankly confess, however, that I am quite unable to find this ego, this primitive, necessary centre of relations. The only thing I can take note of, and therefore perceive, are the empirical ego and its empirical relations to its own experiences, or to such external objects as are receiving special attention at the moment, while much remains, whether 'without' or 'within,' which has no such relation to the ego."<sup>61</sup> This much is clear. Here, he can only raise the issue of the "empirical I" and of its "eidos." Yet, in the second edition Husserl already recognizes a special "I" as the "necessary centre of relations" and writes, "I have since managed to find it."<sup>62</sup> This "pure ego," as Husserl now calls it, is nothing other than "the subject of a pure experience of the type *cogito*."<sup>63</sup> The latter proviso, as we will see, is very important. Nevertheless, how can we avoid lumping Husserl among the "subjectivists" and as a representative of that Ego psychology which Stumpf so energetically dismisses?

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Husserl, *Ideas*, 56: "In these investigations, we keep theories – here the word designates preconceived opinions of every sort – strictly at a distance" [TN].

<sup>61</sup> E. Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, trans. J. N. Findlay (New York: Humanities Press, 1970), vol. 2, 549-550. Oesterreich replies to Husserl's argument with the following analogy: We are not always conscious of the I as the center point of an act, just as in hearing music we do not always notice the rustle of notes being turned and so forth, although undoubtedly we do hear it (235). In such an observation, however, there is obviously a confusion of an *empirical* situation and the *essential* moments in that very act. Who can dispute that the empirical I is present in every experiential act of the I? But what is disputable is Oesterreich's statement (236): "To perceive, to read and to ponder are conceivable only as the acts of perceiving, reading and thinking of some subject." These examples by no means exhaust the sphere of consciousness. However, even among them, "reading" is essentially an "overstepping" of the bounds of "subjective" consciousness, and is a purely "social" act or process. Moreover, how do we explain, for example, a "joint" reading? Or if we say, for example, "*Quel giorno piu non leggemmo avante*," ["*That day we read no more*," Dante, *La divina comedia*, Canto V, 138 – TN] do we concur with Oesterreich that "all psychic life is the life of an I and there is no bridge from one subject to another" (250)?

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 549f. Nevertheless, it turns out that the problem of the "pure ego" is *irrelevant* to any of the "logical investigations" (551). How could this be possible if the "ego," or "I," actually is the *necessary center* of relations in consciousness?

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 544f [TN].

We find some clarification in Husserl's *Ideas*. He writes, "In reflection every cogitatio effected takes on the explicit form, cogito" (§57).<sup>64</sup> We must understand what the expression *Ego cogito* means. Indeed, it turns out that in reflection consciousness belongs to the I. We recognized this, because it is self-evident. Hume did not deny it; Husserl himself earlier also probably recognized it. However, Husserl later found that in the stream of mental experiences something remains as the object of phenomenology, i.e., after the so-called phenomenological reduction of everything empirical and real. Although nowhere in this stream do we come upon the pure I as a mental experience like the others, it, nevertheless, belongs to every mental experience that flows by. *The I is an identical something*. In principle, every cogitatio can change – even though we doubt that it presents itself as necessarily short-lived and not just factually short-lived. On the contrary, the pure I is necessary in principle; it is absolutely the same throughout all the real and possible changes in mental experiences, and in no sense can it appear to be a real part or moment of a mental experience. But how then did Husserl come to this identical I? Contrary to his habit and contrary to his own "principle of all principles," which demands evidence of originary givenness, Husserl does not provide any evidence. Here, to me, is how the matter stands: Having excluded the empirical I in the phenomenological reduction, Husserl can retain the ideal (eidetic) I only as an *object*, but by no means as the subject of consciousness. And then in the "transcendental residuum," taken as the object of phenomenology, a pure consciousness would remain, but it would be, so to speak, *no one's*. This vagueness now introduces the temptation of subjectivism: A positing of the I at the *foundation* of consciousness itself, as its condition or as the condition of its unity. For Husserl, in other words, this means an alteration of his principles and an introduction of theory where there is no need of it.

## 23

Perhaps, however, another consideration is even more important here. The empirical I, this so-and-so, is one "thing" among the other things in our real world. An ideal I must also be correspondingly coordinated. It happens here, though, that the I turns out to be, as it were, on the same level as a "physical thing" and consequently, in accordance with Husserl's definition, is a *transcendancy*. Just why does this conclusion stop Husserl?<sup>65</sup> After all, not only is there nothing paradoxical in this, but it is something that had to be recognized long ago! Certainly to be precise there is a difference between a *physical* thing and this so-and-so, but to elucidate this difference is not as easy as it seems. The point is not that an I, this so-and-so, is necessarily a "physical thing." Rather, the point is that a "physical thing" is a certain convention and is in any case an *abstraction* or a *part of a whole*. So as not to be verbose, let me explain it this way: In seeking an example of a "physical thing," we turn to the *things surrounding us*, and the favorite examples of philosophical mediations are our everyday objects – a table, a book, an apple, a block of wood, etc. Leaving aside, however, the difference between those that are organic and those that are inorganic, *all are, above all, social Objects*. They are the products of work, culture,

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 132 [TN].

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 544f.

exchange, purchase and sale, etc., etc. The state of things is such that we do not even know *another* reality than social reality: Sirius, Vega and the most remote stars and nebulae are also for us social objects. For otherwise we not only would not have a name for them, but we could not call them “stars” or “nebulae.” Actually, we can obtain a physical thing from this only as a result of abstraction or by separating a “part” from the “whole.” One thinks one has shown God knows what generosity by allowing oneself to call the “I” not only a “psyche” but also a “psycho-physical organism,” and even on occasion an organism draped in clothes. Except in the last case, however, as the thorough Dr. Teufelsdröckh<sup>66</sup> already showed, everything else is an abstraction and is referred to by a common noun. This is why it cannot also be called an I, a so-and-so.

Therefore, the I is actually a “thing” alongside other things, although it is not the same as a physical thing. Nevertheless, it does precisely appear as a transcendency *sui generis*. Husserl himself says that the “pure Ego” is in no sense a part or moment of a mental experience. Consequently, it is not a moment of consciousness, but can be characterized then only as an objective transcendency. Husserl calls this “*peculiar*” transcendency a “*transcendancy within immanency*.”<sup>67</sup> But does this ornate combination of Latin terms provide any clarification of the matter? And if we are convinced that the I, this so-and-so, is a social thing, then for us it is only a matter of a generalization. For is not every social thing a transcendency within immanency?<sup>68</sup> In any case, the problem remains a problem, and is not resolved by combining Latin terms. One thing, however, is clear, and it is that even with his altered formulation of the problem Husserl has no basis to recognize, along with Natorp, that the I is a “foundation.” That it is not a problem, as Natorp asserts, but the foundation and premise of every problem is, properly speaking, consistent subjectivism.

## 24

Let us return to Husserl’s proviso that the I is the subject of mental experiences of the type cogito. Are all mental experiences of this type? Earlier, we contrasted the field of the intentional to the sphere of the “predetermined,” and in analyzing Lossky’s division we provided examples in which we believe the object does not always refer without fail to an I and only to an I. Husserl, actually, elaborates on his proviso. Other mental experiences (those not of the type cogito) that form a general milieu for the actionality of the I certainly do not have a distinctive relatedness to the I, but they do participate in the pure I and the latter in them. They “belong” to it as “its” mental experiences. They make up *its* background of consciousness, *its* field of freedom. However, by virtue of the peculiar interweaving of all mental experiences with the I, the latter cannot be taken *for itself* and made the Object *proper* of an investigation. Apart from its “relations,” the I is empty; it has no explicable content and in itself is indescribable: the pure I and nothing more (*Ideas*,

<sup>66</sup> The fictional character in Thomas Carlyle’s work *Sartor Resartus* [TN].

<sup>67</sup> Husserl, *Ideas*, 133 [TN].

<sup>68</sup> As is well-known, the idea that the “social” is an objectivized subjective something (Spirit) comes chiefly from Hegel. At the present time, some defend this idea. I personally think here the relation is actually mutual: The social is an objectivized subjectivity, but it is also a subjectivized objectivity. I am simply repeating the word “subject” for others, and I think that “the unity of consciousness” can be both subjective as well as collective.

§80). Above all, we can say that this still does not exhaust the types of cogitatio itself, since along with the form cogito we find the form cogitamus, which is irreducible to the former either by means of addition or multiplication. However, even within the bounds of the cogito and, consequently, *committing* ourselves in the name of consistency to stick with the I, we still come upon “other mental experiences,” which we cannot possibly avoid, experiences that, Husserl says, have their “share” in the I and the I its share in them. *This holds not merely for an I*. That is, there must be other unities of consciousness, since the I is a unity of the type cogito. However, another side in all of this is particularly worthy of attention. Husserl, certainly, is correct in holding that the I in itself cannot be described and cannot be the Object of an investigation. For it is a unity of consciousness and nothing more, though consciousness itself can be subjected to an investigation. However, the truly empirical I, this so-and-so, as well as the ideal I, though it be individual, concrete and indispensable, a unicum, can also be such an Object. In this way, Husserl obtained his “pure Ego,” but not as the I appears in its direct givenness. It is clear from his explanations that Husserl’s “pure Ego” is actually formed through an analogy with the actual I so far as there is a determination of the I’s *milieu* (to use Husserl’s term). In such a case, the I is not merely a “unity,” but is subject to an all-round determination. It must be an *omnimode determinatum*. In accordance with what we determined earlier, the I must be determined in line with its predetermination as well as in line with its freedom. It must be rationally motivated. Husserl himself recognizes that his “pure Ego” must be “an essentially different pure Ego for each stream of mental experiences.”<sup>69</sup> We obtain here a striking paradox<sup>70</sup>: the I, this so-and-so, is something individual, concrete, particular and even ungeneralizable. Consequently, reality in its immensity presents an infinite plenitude of content, an inexhaustible wealth. This is the case not only empirically, but essentially and in principle. Then suddenly Husserl has nothing to say about this I in itself, i.e., the I in its particularity and singularity: the pure Ego and nothing more! Would it not be more correct to say that there simply is nothing? That is, that nothing can be said, that it is impossible to say anything, or simply that there is *no use* talking about this I, because it is not an I at all. The real, genuine I, this so-and-so, is, as we saw, a social “thing.” It, as well as the social “we,” is an “object of consciousness.” It is, for example, Ivan Ivanovich, both as an empirical being together with his narrowly construed way of life as well as his ideal and enduring essence. He is not some international subject. Consequently, this I has his own content, his purpose and his sense. Philosophically, he is a problem and not a foundation or presupposition.

## 25

Of course, from the point of view of subjectivism, which holds its fictitious I to be a foundation, this I cannot itself be a problem. Natorp quite persistently defends this position, apparently without noticing the contradictions and difficulties into which his own presuppositions plunge him. This much seems clear. Although we cannot understand how

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 133. Translation slightly modified [TN].

<sup>70</sup> Many contemporary thinkers do not notice this paradox. Cf, for example, W. Schuppe, *Erkenntnistheoretische Logik* (Bonn: Eduard Weber’s Verlag, 1878), 82 and August Meser in his new book *Psychologie* (Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1914), 359.

we can speak about the I, a fact remains a fact. This is something basic. If our presuppositions can lead us nowhere, we must either repudiate them or frankly acknowledge, as Hume and Mill did, that no resolution of this aporetic problem is to be had. However, after Kant can we really speak of insoluble problems? ... Natorp says, "To be an I means not to be an object, but to stand in a relationship to objects without which something cannot be an object" (p. 29).<sup>71</sup> If this is meant to be a *definition*, an objection could be leveled against its narrow scope. For it is incomprehensible why something is an object with respect to the I, but with respect to another object, it seems, it will not be an object. However, even for Natorp this is not a definition, but a "thesis," which he tries to prove. It would seem here, though, that since the I cannot be an object of consciousness, it cannot be the object of a proof, a discussion, or a conversation. It also cannot be the object of a fraud or even of an hallucination. Regarding the I, Natorp argues: "Consciousness, as we said, is a relation which as such needs two terms. It cannot be satisfied by one alone. Consequently, if we say that we have a consciousness of ourselves, we artificially double what nevertheless by itself must be absolutely one; we (artificially) make ourselves into an object. This means, then, that what we are conscious of in this act is no longer the original I, which is conscious of this fact. For the original I is precisely the subject (i.e., that which has a consciousness of something). It cannot be at the same time also an object of the same act of consciousness (i.e., what we are conscious of in it). I conclude from this that the object of the act that we call self-consciousness must no longer be the original I but a derivative one" (p. 30).<sup>72</sup> What we get here as the Object is merely a fiction. "However, the subject is not fictional. In any case, the I is the one who is distinguishing. Consequently, the object must be purely fictional. That is to say, it is not the original I but something else, some 'content', through which the I is represented" (p. 31).<sup>73</sup> Just as the retina cannot see itself except in a reflection from a mirror, so we can speak of the I, as an Object, but not in the literal sense: As in a mirror, the I is reflected through its content.

Natorp's reference to the correlational nature of consciousness is a reference to an actual and indisputable fact. It is quite correct that every consciousness is a consciousness of *something*. However, we saw how a substitution can take place here: The I as a hypothetical subject (in the contemporary sense of the word, i.e., as a "general I") takes the place of consciousness; and this I then turns out to be correlative to what is intended as its Object (also in the contemporary sense, i.e., Object = not-I). In precisely this way, it turns out that consciousness is not merely the consciousness of *something*, but also *one's* consciousness, not any *someone's* but precisely *one's*, specifically that of the "general I." However, leaving aside the issue of this substitution we must recognize that because consciousness is a consciousness of *something*, it is necessarily directed to an

<sup>71</sup> Natorp, *Allgemeine Psychologie*, 29 [TN].

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 [TN].

<sup>73</sup> Natorp, *Allgemeine Psychologie*, 31. It is worth our while here to notice the truly Copernican approach of Natorp's thought. The experience that gives us the I is a fiction, but this I, as a "condition," is not a fiction! Nevertheless, this condition is constructed along a notorious pattern: If we do not accept this fact, then we cannot explain or demonstrate that fact. Where is the "fiction"? According to the quite competent definition of Hans Vaihinger, the author of the *Philosophy of As If*, a "fiction" is nothing other than "a scientific invention with practical intent" (*eine wissenschaftliche Erdichtung zu praktischen Zwecken*). Where, then, in Natorp is the "as if"?

object, and if we pause on this affirmation of *self-consciousness*, this “self” makes sense only as an object, whatever peculiarities it may show in comparison to other objects and whatever peculiarities are revealed in the correlative description of consciousness itself. In any case, the analogy with a “mirror” and “retina” is quite inappropriate here. We can make an analogy when the comparisons deal with whole items that have similar parts. A comparison of consciousness with the object of consciousness has by itself no more of a basis than the expression “it rained cats and dogs.” And the only thing that Natorp’s analogy can prove is the conclusion that there is no basis for comparing self-consciousness and a retina’s seeing of itself in a mirror.

Examining the essence of Natorp’s argument and even ignoring the fact that he *sometimes* identifies the I with consciousness, we must recognize that his argument goes too far, *nimum probat*.<sup>74</sup> For if it is correct, not only can the I not be an “object” but consciousness itself, as such, cannot be an object. “Experience,” Natorp says, “is more original than any concept. Consequently, from the very start it was absurd to demand a concept of it” (p. 32). Clearly, Bergson is forcing an already open door!... However, we would contend just the reverse: Precisely because mental experience is “the first” of our expressions, it is in need of conceptualization. And if, as Natorp thinks, through logical conceptualization we “withdraw from the ultimate immediacy and originality of mental experience,” this means only that not knowing how to express what is necessary we are using *very bad* concepts. Is it incomprehensible how and why those same concepts become *good* only when it is necessary to express the thought that the I is not a problem and an object, but the foundation and the subject? But Natorp’s reasoning is *nimum probat* still in other respects. Above all, all of his arguments actually are expressed using poor “modernistic” concepts. As for their content, the arguments are quite respectable given the age of the participants in the old campaigns against the possibility of “self-observation,” “reflection,” etc. I do not think that they are like useless invalids. On the contrary, the question is very serious, but since, it is, as we saw, somewhat “excessive” I will limit myself simply to pointing this out. The only thing that I will venture to note is the extreme *nominalism* of Natorp’s deduction. It works with a “consciousness in general.” Moreover, with the same ease that it successfully deprives consciousness of objectivity, it could object to the objectivity of a “horse in general” or an “auto-horse,” or “auto-person” (*αὐτοάνθρωπος*), etc.

## 26

On the whole, however, it is necessary to recognize that in spite of the extreme banality of the assertion that there cannot be a “consciousness of consciousness,” just as of course there cannot be a “movement of a movement,” or an “oscillation of an oscillation,” etc., the assertion itself is not nonsensical. In no way does it follow from this that “consciousness” cannot be “the Object of an investigation.” If we do not make *two* different problems out of this, we can meet the natural objection: inasmuch as an “investigation” is a mental experience and a consciousness, it turns out that a “consciousness of consciousness” is possible. And if we actually do not want to admit here a secret *quaternio terminorum*, then

<sup>74</sup> Latin: “what proves too much, proves nothing” [TN].

we need only reveal the sense of the conditions under which this is possible. It appears that precisely because a “consciousness of consciousness” is impossible we speak of self-consciousness, i.e., we ascribe to consciousness some *subject* (in the old sense) as the object or the “bearer,” as an *id in quo*. This is already sufficient in order to say that consciousness can be an “object” and is an “object.” But in order for it to become an Object (taken also in the old sense: *Objectum est subject, circa quod aliquid versatur*<sup>75</sup>) we need only point out its “limits.” We need to *terminate* it (because again: in *objecto terminantur actiones agentis*<sup>76</sup>). Therefore, it is all the same whether we turn to consciousness, either in its parts or as a whole, either as a disjunctive or as a collective unity. This “unity” appears as an object – not a “fictitious” but a *given* object. This is why there is a play on words here when we say “the subject is not fictitious. In any case, the I is the one who is distinguishing. Consequently, the Object must be purely fictional.”<sup>77</sup> But surely this also means that the “distinguishing” is a fiction! Well, with a fictional “condition” and “foundation,” what is surprising about having a fictitious “Object”?

## 27

The result here is that if the I, in some sense, can be taken or defined as a “unity of consciousness,” then it certainly appears as an *object* of consciousness. Moreover, it is not difficult to see that an I, a so-and-so, in the actual, concrete sense of an individual and irreplaceable I, just like any concrete unity of consciousness, simply lies within the sphere of what is intended and consequently appears as an *object* – and from a certain, for example, metaphysical point of view – appears even as an object *par excellence*. Consequently, “subjects” certainly are objects whether in the old or the new sense, and even the Fichtean formula “there is no subject without an Object, no Object without a subject” makes sense in terms of the assertion of a correlation between the objects themselves: *There is no object without another object*. An object is an object or becomes an object only with respect to another object or other objects. An I, a so-and-so, only exists as an object among objects – Pavel Ivanovich (Chichikov) in his nourishing and illustrious surroundings or “milieu,” which is lit and warmed by his presence.<sup>78</sup> The I is an object, and there is nothing that would force it to conceive the correlative non-I as a non-object. However, the I by itself is not correlative to another object. The I simply does not exist without surroundings, without a milieu. Yet these are not logical but *real* relations, which correspondingly must be examined. If, as is obvious, the I is a social “thing,” then its milieu is also a social milieu. An I, a so-and-so, and the milieu exist in a real relation or interaction, but obviously these surroundings can be conceived without the I just as the I can be conceived in changing surroundings. What we have here ideally is a social theme, whose resolution subjectivism was most responsible for obstructing. Instead of a transition to an analysis of the sense of the ideal I, an ideal so-and-so, taken as the object

<sup>75</sup> J. Micraelius, *Lexicon philosophicum terminorum philosophis* (Jena, 1679), column 729 [TN].

<sup>76</sup> Christian Wolff, *Philosophia Prima Sive ontologia* (Frankfurt & Leipzig: Renger, 1736), §950, 684 [TN].

<sup>77</sup> Natorp, *Allgemeine Psychologie*, 31. In this instance, Shpet again quoting Natorp’s words presents a slightly different translation than just above. To retain exactitude, I have again based my translation on Natorp’s German [TN].

<sup>78</sup> Pavel Chichikov is the main character in Nikolai Gogol’s novel *Dead Souls* [TN].

of consciousness, subjectivism proceeded to an I, written with a capital letter, positing it as if it were an absolute ruler, legislator and the owner of every kind of consciousness and of everything that is an object of consciousness.

## 28

I just said that an I, for example, can be looked at from a metaphysical point of view even as an object *par excellence*. The metaphysical point of view is the point of view of real explanation, and we only need to find the substantial nature of the I to explain why it can be called in metaphysics an object *par excellence*. However, we need to consider the empirical and ideal forms of the concept of substance both in empirical reality and in their ideal essence in order to arrive here to the appropriate association of the I and the object. The anthropomorphic interpretations of nature are no less a misuse of the I as an object than is a psychological interpretation of the I as the psyche. The I in the concrete sense is a social “thing,” but do we need to prove that it is a “thing” *par excellence*, whereas even such “things” as a house, a street, a book, a judge, a gentleman, etc. are “relations” and are reducible to “relations”? An analysis of pure consciousness, as such, reveals to us the ideal source of such a division. The most fundamental distinction carried out in the intended, as such, is that between “content” and “object” (K. Twardowski and in general the school of Brentano). It is difficult for subjectivism to accept this distinction, because for it the entire object of consciousness is “content.”<sup>79</sup> However, if we adopt this distinction, it is not hard to agree that an I, a so-and-so, is an object *par excellence*, because it is impossible to say about it what is said about an object in general, viz., that it is an X, that it is an *indefinite* object. An I is precisely a definite object; it has a proper name. Its objectivity is not a matter of theory, but an immediate mental experience even though the “content” of this object has to be established, as we saw, with the help of communal or collective evidence. Although situated among and in connection with other objects, the I, as an object, could, nevertheless, with good reason be called absolute, because there is no correlation that could serve as the basis for its unique and necessary determination. Furthermore, the very concept of an I, as unique and irreplaceable, excludes even the possibility of any correlation whatsoever, since the latter bears a general character. In other words, if there were such a correlation, it would also be new and irreplaceable each time, and this already deprives the correlative determination of sense. An I, as a social object with a proper name, is absolute in the sense that the I is not only a “bearer” but also a “source,” not only “predetermined” but also “free.” However, since along with the I we find also other “unities of consciousness” including collective “unities” that “are connected” only by “bonds” of freedom, freedom itself is found here both as something communal and also as something *common*. Consequently, a complete definition, or better, a self-definition of the I, of this so-and-so, still demands something that, as we already casually indicated, is “inexpressible.” “The divine is God’s concern; the human, man’s. My concern is neither the divine nor the human, not the true, good, just, free, etc., but solely what is *mine*, and it

<sup>79</sup> Natorp’s theory of “presentative consciousness” and “representative consciousness” tries to “cover up” this *fundamental* fact. Natorp, *Allgemeine Psychologie*, 53ff. Cf. also 282ff.

is not a general one, but is – unique, as I am unique.”<sup>80</sup> And what is sin, if, starting from oneself, such an I, a so-and-so, for example Kaspar Schmidt, then testifies: “And now I take the world as what it is to me, as mine, as my property; I refer all to myself.”<sup>81</sup> The I, this so-and-so, am absolutely right here, because no one even contests its rights.

## 29

But if an I wishes to secure his right to property, wants to specify his heirs and find his ancestors, to point out his mother and children, if he wants to find himself and say his name, wants to find his place amidst his possessions, he cannot manage without addressing someone with a “you” and without a recognition of “we.” He is right. However, if he sets out from himself, his hands are tied, so that already he cannot say: “I,” but “*also not only I*” – give me a hand, friend and brother! If he, nevertheless, one way or another came to say this, he must recognize himself as having been *wrong*. He must hear and *understand* the voice of his brother, one utterance from some so-and-so already forces him to recognize a connection and a unity existing “outside” and “above” them both. *Διά τά ἦναι πάντες ἐν*<sup>82</sup>... And any assertion in this regard, or even a thought about it, already testifies, as we said, that the judgment “I am a unity of consciousness” cannot be rescinded. If, continuing on the basis of definitions used in formal logic, we relinquish the idea or preconception that the “individual” is the minimal type, then clearly judgments whose subject is the I cannot be general judgments, because the I cannot be *generalized*. Strictly speaking, it is impossible even to say that “every” I is a “unity of consciousness,” because there is already a generalization here. The I, the so-and-so, is pushed into the background. Consequently, the I, the so-and-so, is, at least, not *only* a unity of mental experiences and of consciousness, but is rather what distinguishes a unity of consciousness from another unity. In “collecting” consciousnesses, we do not generalize them, but rather *multiply* them, passing from an *I* to a *we*. Without encroaching in the least on the individuality and irreplaceability of the so-and-so, we nevertheless clearly see in this “multitude” not a unity of consciousness, but a *unity* all the same. The I, the so-and-so, necessarily appears as predestined, which establishes and sets its boundaries, its “definition”: *An I cannot not be itself*. Its boundaries are also the boundaries of other so-and-so’s. Within these boundaries, each is free: *The I is free, since in everything it remains itself*. The “community” is what eliminates these boundaries, i.e., the boundaries of each so-and-so. It is what eliminates separation and distributiveness. In other words, it is what leads to absolute freedom: In this, the I is liberated from predestination. *It can also not be itself*.

## 30

So *whose* unity is it, this unity of consciousness? The unity of a single consciousness certainly is the unity of *this* consciousness, but the unity of a multitude or of a collective or of a communal consciousness is a unity of the collective consciousness! I am not playing with words but am distinguishing a meaning which has a *genetivus subjectivus* and a *genetivus*

<sup>80</sup> M. Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, ed. John Carroll (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 41 [TN].

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 49. Johann Kaspar Schmidt was the actual name of Max Stirner, the anarchist philosopher [TN].

<sup>82</sup> John 17:21 – “that they all may be one” [TN].

*objectivus*. I deliberately wish to stress merely that since such a question is being posed, the only possible answer is to refer to its ambiguity. A “unity of consciousness” belongs to no one, because in general it is not a “possession” or a “property.” It is only a *unity of consciousness*. That is, it is consciousness itself. But in answer to “Whose consciousness?” it is its own. It is free! In other words, this means that it is *no one’s*! Perhaps, some Ivan Ivanovich will claim: I am a unity of consciousness. What are we to make of this? In my view, he will be right but only that Ivan Petrovich is also a unity of consciousness.... Here is the origin of our tendency to identify consciousness with the “psyche” or the “spirit.” Such expressions as “I, this so-and-so, am conscious of my body, my social position, my immortality, etc.” deprive *me* of a body, of social connections, but the *I* still remains. However this same so-and-so can say:

When I shall die, pray let my bones  
High on a mound remain  
Amid the steppeland’s vast expanse  
In my beloved Ukraine<sup>83</sup>

Does the “*my*” here mean consciousness and its unity? Certainly not. It only means that “I” am a social thing who also determines his social relations. Ultimately, it is as impossible to say *whose* consciousness as it is to say *whose* space or *whose* air this is, even though everyone is convinced that the air that he breathes is *his* air and the space that he occupies is *his* space.<sup>84</sup> They are “natural.” They make up “nature” and have to do with it. They “belong” to it. However, these examples, it seems, reveal the sense of the question: *Whose* is this consciousness? The word “whose” itself appears here to be a social category, and Solovyov was profoundly correct in comparing this question with that of “Whose coat?” “Whose galoshes?”<sup>85</sup> If we take consciousness and its unity to be an *ideal* object, i.e., examine it in its essence, then it makes no sense to ask *whose* it is. Consciousness can belong to the essence of the I, but it is not clear that to be the consciousness of an I or of another “subject” belongs to the essence of consciousness.<sup>86</sup> The I itself, as a unity of a multitude of other “unities of consciousness,” is collective and communal. If we have

<sup>83</sup> T. Shevchenko, “My Legacy,” trans. C. H. Andrusychyn and Walter Kirconnel, in *Taras Shevchenko Memorial Book* (Washington, D.C.: The Shevchenko Memorial Committee of America, Inc., 1964), 25. The poem is better known under the title “My Testament” [TN].

<sup>84</sup> “We are so accustomed to the thought that everything is for us, that the earth is mine, that when we have to die, we are surprised that my earth, something belonging to me, will remain and I won’t. Here the principal mistake is in thinking the earth as something acquired and complementary to me, when it is I who am acquired by the earth, an appendage to it.” Leo Tolstoi, *The Journal of Leo Tolstoi (First Volume – 1895-1899)*, trans. R. Strunsky (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1917), 147. As though this is not applicable *mutatis mutandis* to consciousness...

<sup>85</sup> See Vladimir Solovyov, “Foundations of Theoretical Philosophy,” in *Russian Philosophy*, vol. III, 130 [TN].

<sup>86</sup> The problem of “no one’s” consciousness has risen in various forms. In the treatments of it known to me, their “critical” part is of more value than their “constructive” part, which concludes either with abstract definitions of the “I” or with very stupid “psychophysical” hypotheses. “One should say ‘There is thinking’ just as one says ‘There is lightning.’ To say ‘cogito’ is already to say too much as soon as it is translated as ‘I think.’” G. C. Lichtenberg, *Vermischte Schriften* (Göttingen: Dieterichschen Buchhandlung, 1844), vol. 1, 99. Mach’s position on this issue is well-known. The “actual I” of Zschimmer is also interesting from a critical direction. See *Das Welterlebnis* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1909), 54ff.

in mind some aggregate of empirical experiences, then of course being empirical they are pinned to a specific time and place just as well as to a specific geographic, social and historical moment. The word “whose” here is only a request to indicate the “thing” with the help of which certain social relations must be revealed to us. To answer the question “Whose?” means to specify the point in the social whole where we must refer the given problem, which we can call, as above, an “Objectification,” to use an “apothegm.” In a discussion of the corresponding problems, then, there definitely are no obstacles to indicating any so-and-so as such a point in the social whole.

### 31

Continuing, however, with our empirical analysis, we can obtain other “points” of consciousness as well, and specifically those to which it is impossible to direct our question, as we can to a so-and-so, but which if they would answer could not always say “my” but would say “our,” as in such examples as: “Our epoch,” “Pushkin is our pride and glory,” “our victories and defeats,” etc. Here the word “our” by no means has the sense of belonging to each of us. The author of the brilliant work “Ojczyzna Nasza”<sup>87</sup> (Count Cieszkowski) points out that we say “our Father” but not “my Father.” We speak of “our,” common Father, who is *our* Father only insofar as we consider ourselves brothers. He writes, “Live! But live in fullness. Live in one love with family and nation, with Church and Humanity, even with our mother the Earth, who is not dead as you suppose, but also lives and shares in the fellowship of the universe. Live in love unceasing; for in so doing you will be living in God, and with God.”<sup>88</sup> Since such thoughts and feelings, such experiences, are possible, what does it mean to speak of *my* consciousness in this context? But it is interesting that in purely *personal* utterances we quite often mean not *just* ourselves. Such expressions, as “*my* homeland,” “*my* moral consciousness,” “*my* duty,” “*my* political convictions,” etc., not only do not point to me as their “owner,” but directly suggest the idea of my participation in collective relations, which are characterized by reference to “points,” “unifying” some *communal consciousness*.<sup>89</sup> We hardly need to dwell on this aspect of the problem. In his time, Sergei Troubetzkoy in the article mentioned above selected many empirical arguments in favor of a collective or communal consciousness. We have a science – whatever it may be called – whose object is consciousness, “the existence of which does not depend upon the individual; not because the contents of this consciousness presuppose a collective subject (*un sujet collectif*) distinct from the individuals composing the social group, but because they are characterized by features that cannot be found solely by examining individuals as such.”<sup>90</sup> In short, it is a matter of the “ways of acting,

<sup>87</sup> Polish: “Our Father” [TN].

<sup>88</sup> A. Cieszkowski, *The Desire of All Nations*, trans. W. J. Rose (London: Student Christian Movement, 1919), 127 [TN].

<sup>89</sup> Sometimes we speak directly of a “social psyche” or of a “collective I,” for example, in the ethnic psychology of Lazarus and Steintal. In general, much attention is also given to this question in contemporary French “sociology” (the school of Durkheim) and in American “social psychology” (Baldwin). Cf. also Z. Balicki, *Psychologia społeczna* (Warsaw, 1912), esp. pp. 63 and 141 (*jaźń zbiorowa, jaźń społeczna* [collective I, social I – TN]).

<sup>90</sup> L. Lévy-Bruhl, *How Natives Think*, trans. L. A. Clare (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), 3. [I have translated Shpet’s Russian, which serves his own purposes, rather than providing the English translation of Lévy-Bruhl, which runs: “their existence does not depend upon the individual; not that they imply a collective unity

thinking, and feeling that present the noteworthy property of existing outside the individual consciousness.”<sup>91</sup> But *whose* are they?

### 32

Analyzing consciousness as such and not clearly realizing the fact that an I, a so-and-so, is solely a concrete, social thing, extraordinary significance is attributed to it only because, as we pointed out, in this analysis one proceeds from oneself. Striving then to establish such an important thing, there is no resolve, however, for it to be introduced – probably owing to the pressure of the collective consciousness – as “the sole problem of philosophy,” and the quest begins for a universal representative: psyche, spirit, transcendental apperception, absolute I, etc. All of these serve as cloaks of philosophical modesty. Subjectivism, in this sense, is a proof of this exceptional philosophical modesty and timidity and by no means of conceit and swagger as it can seem to the superficial observer. ... But since the subject, in fact, is both impersonal and unpretentious, our observation, amounting to the fact that the I is an object along with other objects, can hardly seem paradoxical to anyone. The nature of the I, by the way, still remains a completely open question. Consequently, to say that this object is a “unity of consciousness,” is the perfect truth. The proviso that this I is *not the only* unity of consciousness does not destroy this perfection in the least. Unfortunately, like many other “perfect truths” this truth is quite empty. The fact is that the a “unity of consciousness” – by virtue of the correlativity between consciousness and its object, which it is difficult to deny, – will always also be a unity of the object. Does this mean that the unity of the object of consciousness is a unity of consciousness?... In order to show the unity of the object of consciousness, of the “world,” of “nature,” it is necessary to resort to different kinds of “substances,” “forces,” “things in themselves” and other devices of dogmatic metaphysics. Would it not correspond more to the dignity of philosophy to designate the unity of consciousness as the “subject” and through it guarantee the possibility of philosophy itself and of all kinds of knowledge about it – except for the disgraced metaphysics? Here, we have the trump card of subjectivism! But the trouble in this case is that this “ace” was pulled not from the playing deck, but turned out to be provided beforehand. For this reason it is said to be *fraudulent*. This is what we were talking about.

### 33

What we have determined to be the unity of consciousness, or respectively of the object of consciousness, is extraordinarily varied. Any “thing,” “content” or “object,” – whether it be named, conceived, represented, imagined, or whatever – is a *unity*, a unity as much of the object of consciousness as of consciousness itself. In this *general* description, no individual I or collection of I’s enjoys special rights or privileges. The problem concerning them arises, as we saw, in the form of the more specific one of the “social object,” which must, above all, be coordinated with other objects. If we now concentrate on this “object,”

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distinct from the individuals composing the social group, but because they present themselves in aspects which cannot be accounted for by considering individuals merely as such” – TN].

<sup>91</sup> E. Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, trans. J. Mueller (New York: The Free Press, 1966), 2 [TN].

we discover in it not only its “predetermination” but also what realizes it, viz., a certain entelechic principle, which is the “source” of mental experiences and of consciousness, namely *freedom* – the source of its concrete nature and individuality. “Consciousness” itself appears here as an object of consciousness, and the unities of consciousness *sui generis* are revealed to us as “bearers” *sui generis*, though not as “X’s” but as proper names that are a symbolic expression of the “inexpressible.” Here lies the genuine source and prototype of any concept of a “bearer,” a “substance,” an “hypostasis,” etc. Refraining, however, from any metaphysical explanation of this source, we see that the sole path to comprehending it lies in a pure explication of these symbols, in exposing them and, consequently, in revealing their secret. Every instance of comprehension is by its essence not simply an instance of “participation,” but one of “co-participation,” “co-involvement,” and com-plicity.<sup>92</sup> This in itself is already a new object of consciousness in its unity: a unity of consciousness that is an object of consciousness. The unique and irreplaceable nature of each participant or co-participant in this unity cannot be destroyed by it. Were it otherwise, it would be internally contradictory and consequently in essence impossible, because it would reduce the individual to nothing, and of course from a collection of nothings a new unity could not arise. The unique nature of the individual is not destroyed if, glancing into its essence, we establish what is “typical” about him and describe him with particular reference to his uniquely peculiar structure. Without anticipating any theories or analogies, we cannot in any case assert that what is typical of an individual in some relation can predetermine for us the relations that are “typical” of the collective. The essence of the communal and its essential types form an independent sphere of investigation. Such expressions as the “moral consciousness,” the “aesthetic consciousness,” the “religious consciousness,” the “scientific consciousness,” etc., already show the direction from which corresponding problems arise, although it is only an abstract field and in such a form are merely titles for entire “disciplines.” These are not “types,” but generalizations. We must not forget, however, that the concrete, as such, has its own special “community,” which is attained not by means of a “generalization,” but by means of “intercourse.” Religious consciousness, for example, can be looked upon not only as a common consciousness, but also as a *communal* consciousness. It has its own concrete form of *community*; it has its, let us say, “faith organizations.” The aesthetic consciousness has a concrete communal form of art or “beauty organizations.” The same holds for “science,” and so forth. All of these necessarily should have their own “form” so that they can be designated and then the sense of that *designation*, its logos, can be revealed.

### 34

Our analysis of a “consciousness that is the object of a consciousness,” as a collective object, shows that an I itself, a so-and-so, is the “bearer” not only of its own “personal” consciousness, but also of a communal one. The analysis itself, certainly, distinguishes – although this is not always easy – the instances in which this so-and-so presents *himself* “as himself,” and those in which he presents himself “as his community.” S. N. Trubeckoj, speaking of “cognition,” states: “in fact the I holds within himself a council about

<sup>92</sup> G. Finnbogason in his book, *Den sympatiske Forstaaelse* (Copenhagen, 1911) collects some interesting facts.

everything with everyone.”<sup>93</sup> It is not just a matter of *cognition*, and not of the “criterion” of the matter, which Trubeckoj finds here.<sup>94</sup> I even think that there simply is no criterion here. Trubeckoj hastens to make use of a *fact* that he noticed already for his theory. We simply come to a stop before this very “fact.” What is important to us is simply to pay attention to its peculiarity. If we need “conclusions,” each of us can draw them to our heart’s content: A fact does not guarantee them and does not answer for them. There can be no criteria here already simply, because *otherwise* no one would join this council and there was not nor would there be any “unanimity.” Ultimately, what is ingenious is not to hold “a council with all” but to conceive *oneself* as a pseudo-council, to conceive *oneself in one’s* own freedom as a so-and-so, and not in a communal freedom. Is it in essence possible to answer this? ... No one else’s experience can convince me, not because it is improbable, but because it is irrational, i.e., inexpressable. On the basis of reason and comprehension, such a “personal” thing will not be “mine,” because the “thing possessed” is not the I, not this so-and-so but “Ward No. N.”<sup>95</sup> ... In any case, all these are problems above all for a fundamental analysis of pure consciousness in its essence.

Moscow, January 1916

*Translated from the Russian and edited by Thomas Nemeth*

<sup>93</sup> Трубецкой, *Сочинения*, 495 [TN].

<sup>94</sup> “Our general agreement, the possible unanimity, which I immediately see in my consciousness, is for me the absolute inner criterion, precisely just as an external, empirical agreement concerning some identified generally accepted truths is the external criterion, the authority of which depends on the former.” Трубецкой, *Сочинения*, 99. It is quite incomprehensible why Troubetzkoy in his analysis of *consciousness* needed to secure the criterion of *cognition*. This is surely the heresy of “Protestant subjectivism” – epistemologism. Did Troubetzkoy recall that with such a “criterion” he stands closest of all to ... Feuerbach?

<sup>95</sup> Possibly an allusion to Anton Chekhov’s short story “Ward No. 6” about the occupants of a provincial hospital ward 6 devoted to the mentally ill [TN].

# THE CHRONICLES OF THE LIFE AND WORKS OF GUSTAV SHPET<sup>1</sup>

**25<sup>th</sup> of March 1879 (7<sup>th</sup> April).**<sup>2</sup> Gustav Gustavovich Shpet is born in Kiev. His mother, Martselina Iosifovna Shpet (1860–1932), was Polish, originating from an impoverished szlachta (noble) family that lived in Volhynia region. His father was the Hungarian officer Koshits.

**September 1890.** Gustav enters the 1<sup>st</sup> form of Kiev 2<sup>nd</sup> All-Boys Gymnasium. Lev Vladimirovich Shcherba (1880–1944), a famous philologist, is also a student.

**9<sup>th</sup> of September 1897.** Shpet is adopted by a brother of his mother, a member of the Russian nobility Ivan-Vladislav Shpet (certificate of Kiev Assembly of Nobility Representatives №499).

**5<sup>th</sup> of June 1998.** Graduates from the Second Classical Gymnasium in Kiev (protocol №19 of the panel session of the Pedagogical Council of Kiev 2<sup>nd</sup> All-Boys Gymnasium).

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<sup>1</sup> This chronology is being published for the first time in English in a shortened version, based on materials from: Т. Г. Щедрина, *Густав Густавович Шпет* [Gustav Gustavovich Shpet] (Москва: РОССПЭН, 2014), 402-459. Translated by A. Kabanov and E.-M. Kabanova. The following chronicles are presented on such a scale for the first time. This is not the final version. There are still a lot “blank pages” in the intellectual biography of Gustav Gustavovich Shpet and the work of filling those pages can be continued. In the process of compiling these chronicles the following sources were taken into consideration: Н.С. Полева, “Основные даты биографии Густава Густавовича Шпета” в *Густав Густавович Шпет. Архивные материалы. Воспоминания. Статьи* [“The main dates of the biography of G. G. Shpet,” Gustav Gustavovich Shpet. Archival materials. Memoirs. Articles], ред. Т. Д. Марцинковская (Москва: Смысл, 2000), 5–14; “Хронология жизни Г. Г. Шпета периода арестов и ссылки 1935–1937гг.” *Шпет в Сибири: ссылка и гибель* [“The key dates of the life of G.G. Shpet from the periods of his arrest and exile 1935–1937,” Shpet in Siberia: The Exile and Death], ред. Н. В. Серебрянников (Томск: Водолей, 1995), 321–327. The years of the publications of Shpet’s works are not indicated in the present chronicles (see the bibliography for the current issue). Only the dates of accomplishment of the works, indicated by Shpet himself are presented in the current chronicles.

<sup>2</sup> All the dates up to 1918 inclusively are indicated in the old style (O.S. – Julian Calendar), the date indicated in brackets stands for the new style dates (N.S. – Gregorian Calendar). All the dates starting from 1919 are written in the new style.

**August 1898.** Enters the Physics and Mathematics Department of Saint Vladimir Royal University of Kiev.

**1898.** Interrogated in regard to the case of “Kiev’s Soviet Council of the United Associations of fellow-country men and organizations.”

**17–18<sup>th</sup> of February 1899.** Takes part in a clandestine student rally (*сходка*) at Kiev University, after which he is expelled from the University for “participation in a United Council, that directed the work of “students’ protests and for the distribution of social-democratic literature.”<sup>3</sup>

**31<sup>st</sup> of March – August 1899.** After a search and arrest, Shpet is sentenced to a six-month exile to Kherson under strict surveillance.

**18<sup>th</sup> of April-21<sup>st</sup> August 1899.** Makes summaries of the works of W. Windelband, K. Bucher, F. Engels, G. Plekhanov, K. Kautsky.

**4<sup>th</sup> of September 1899.** G.G. Shpet is denied the right to enroll on a course in the Saint Vladimir Royal University of Kiev as he was accused of a breach of clauses “250–252 and 318 of the regulation on punishments and submit under surveillance of the police.” Protocol is approved on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September 1899.

**11<sup>th</sup> of January 1900.** Receives an official notice from the Department of National Education, stating “the request for re-enrollment in the same University submitted by the subject was rejected by His Excellency the Minister.”

**25<sup>th</sup> of July 1900.** Sends a request to the rector of Helsinki University with an inquiry of the possibility to enroll.

**4<sup>th</sup> of September 1900.** Receives a reply from the rector of Helsinki University, in which the latter states, that in order to enroll in Helsinki University, one must first graduate from a Finnish school and pass a special exam.

**21<sup>st</sup> of November 1900.** Peter Struve answers Shpet that someone has already made a translation of *Anti-Dühring*.

**June 1901.** Shpet corresponds with Sergey and Elena Berdyayev.

**16<sup>th</sup> of August 1901.** Shpet resumes his studies at University after being re-enrolled on a course of the historical division of the history-philological department.

<sup>3</sup> Autobiography, Shpet Family Archive [E.V. Pasternak].

**1902.** Shpet publishes the public lectures of G.I. Chelpanov *Of the modern philosophical directions*. Takes active part in a scientific activity of a psychological seminar given by Chelpanov.

**13<sup>th</sup> of February 1902.** A circular letter of the Police Department is issued, in which Shpet is to be subjected to secret police surveillance for two years.

**March 1902.** Shpet receives a postcard from an actress L. Yavorskaya, with whom he is friends.

**2<sup>nd</sup> of February 1903.** Finishes writing a paper “On Social Idealism” (working title “The Newest Currents in Social Science”).

**25<sup>th</sup> of February 1903.** Shpet gives a public speech “On Social Idealism” during a meeting, dedicated to the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the work of the Psychological seminar of G.I. Chelpanov.

**26<sup>th</sup> of February 1903.** Shpet is released from secret police surveillance.

**13<sup>th</sup> of July 1903.** Member of the editorial board of *Problems of Philosophy and Psychology* Y.I. Aykhenvald tells Shpet that his notes for the bibliographical department have been accepted for publication.

**Autumn Semester, Academic Year 1903–1904.** Shpet participates in a work of the Psychological seminar in Saint Vladimir Royal University of Kiev under the direction of G.I. Chelpanov. The subject of their classes in that semester is the problem of causality. Shpet prepares and reads three of his papers on the topics of “Hume Against Rationalism,” “Causal Judgement in Hume,” “The Problem of Necessary Connection in Hume.”

**25<sup>th</sup> of October 1903.** The editorial board of *Problems of Philosophy and Psychology* journal proposes that Shpet write a review of the book of G.I. Chelpanov *The Brain and the Soul*.

**3<sup>rd</sup> of November 1903.** Participates in a students’ demonstration in memory of Stepan Balmashev.

**19<sup>th</sup> of November 1903.** Receives a letter from Sofia Tseritely, a translator of David Hume’s work *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, whose translation he reviewed in his article in Vol. 11 of the journal *God’s World*.

**1904.** Shpet is arrested and deported from the city due to revolutionary propaganda.

**25<sup>th</sup> of January 1904.** Shpet marries Maria Aleksandrovna Krestovskaya; her original surname – “Krestovozdvizhenskaya,” while Krestovskaya is a scenic pseudonyme

(24.06.1870–27.10.1940 New Style – Gregorian Calendar). After their wedding they go to the town of Loubny.

**18<sup>th</sup> of November 1904.** Shpet participates in a session of Kiev Society of Classical Philology and Pedagogics with A.I. Sonni presiding and G.I. Chelpanov reading his paper “On Teaching Introduction to Philosophy in Secondary Schools.”

**8<sup>th</sup> of December 1904.** Shpet participates in a session of Kiev Society of Classical Philology and Pedagogics with A.I. Sonni presiding and G.I. Chelpanov reading his paper “On Teaching Introduction to Philosophy in Secondary Schools of Germany.”

**December 1904.** After listening to Chelpanov read his paper at a session of Kiev Society of Classical Philology and Pedagogics Shpet writes an article “On the Question of Teaching Philosophy in Secondary Schools” for the *Kiev Reactions* newspaper.

**31<sup>th</sup> of December 1904 (13 January 1905).** Shpet’s daughter Lenora is born (31.12.1904–12.09.1976).

**17<sup>th</sup> of February 1905.** Shpet participates in a joint department meeting of philology students of Saint Vladimir Royal University of Kiev. Shpet is one of the authors of the appeal-leaflet.

**28<sup>th</sup> of February 1905.** A certificate №453 is issued for the competition paper “The Problem of Causality in Kant and Hume” by Shpet, for which the author is awarded a gold medal.

**23<sup>rd</sup> of November 1905.** Shpet graduates from the Saint Vladimir Royal University of Kiev with a second class degree, having successfully passed the exams of the State Examining Committee of the history-philological department (Certificate №202).

**10<sup>th</sup> of December 1905.** Shpet submits a request to be appointed a teacher at the Kiev-Podolsk and Foundouklyevskaya Women’s Gymnasium. From that moment Shpet is entitled to teach history.

**February–March, 1906.** Shpet corresponds with Pavel Pavlovich Muratov concerning his collaboration with Kiev newspaper *Freedom and Right* (later to become *Free Thought*).

**April 1906.** Sergei Nikolaevich Bulgakov invites Shpet to participate in the creation of Kiev newspaper *People*.

**15<sup>th</sup> of June 1906.** The rector of the Saint Vladimir Royal University of Kiev N.M. Tsytovich notifies the history-philological department “of the decision to keep Gustav Shpet, who finished the course with a second class degree, in the University starting from the 1<sup>st</sup> of

June of the current year for the following two years assigning him a yearly allowance of 600 Roubles from the Ministry budget to enable his preparation for professorship in the department of philosophy.”

**September 1906.** Together with Konstantin Feofanovich Lebedintsev Gustav Shpet frames the charter of the Kiev Pedagogical Club. At 7 PM on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September the first general meeting of the club is held.

**1<sup>st</sup> September 1906.** Shpet is accepted as a teacher of history at the Foundouklieyevskaya Women’s Gymnasium.

**1<sup>st</sup> October 1906.** Shpet is accepted as a teacher of pedagogics in Kiev-Podolsk Women’s Gymnasium.

**Academic Year 1906–1907.** Shpet gives lectures on logic for the Kiev Women’s Courses, established by M.V. Dovnar-Zapolskiy.

**1907.** Writes a paper “On Psychology,”<sup>4</sup> in which he criticizes physiologism in the works of P. Fleshsig, T. Ziehen, T. Meynert, S. Exner, etc.

**Spring 1907.** Gives lectures on logic at the A.V. Zhekulina’s Higher Education Courses for Women in Kiev.

**April–May 1907.** With the help of G.I. Chelpanov and a close friend of M.A. Krestovskaya, V.S. Kostromina, Shpet addresses Y.I. Aykhenvald with a request to assist him in getting a teaching position in Moscow.

**March–May 1907.** Shpet corresponds with the editor of *Critical Review* N.D. Vinogradov regarding the publication of his reviews. Shpet goes to Moscow at the invitation of G.I. Chelpanov. He is attached to Moscow University. He takes up residence on Plyushchikha Street on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Neopalimovskiy Lane.

**23<sup>rd</sup> of June 1907.** Shpet stays in Moscow. He settles with his family on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Neopalimovskiy Lane, Semyonov’s House, in Apartment № 2.

**Autumn 1907.** Shpet invites Evgeniy Troubetzkoy to participate in a scientific-philosophical society. Troubetzkoy refuses due to his political activities.

**Autumn 1907.** Shpet starts to teach pedagogy, logic and introduction to philosophy at Moscow Pedagogical Courses.

<sup>4</sup> Published in 2006.

**31<sup>st</sup> of October 1907.** Shpet is accepted as an assistant teacher in the philosophy subdepartment of the history-philological department of the Moscow Higher Education Courses for Women.

**19<sup>th</sup> of November 1907.** The deputy curator of Kiev Educational District notifies the rector of the Saint Vladimir Royal University of Kiev that the “Esteemed Colleague of the Minister has allowed Gustav Shpet, who was entitled to a scholarship and to remain in the university for the preparation for professorship of the sub department of philosophy, to become attached to the history-philological department of Moscow University for teaching duties until the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 1908.”

**At the end of 1907** upon the recommendations of G.I. Chelpanov and S.N. Troubetzkoy Shpet is elected a full member of Moscow Psychological Society. For the next 10 years (until the closure of the society in 1918) Shpet gives multiple presentations during its sessions.

**26<sup>th</sup> of March 1908.** Shpet receives an invitation to Vyacheslav Ivanov’s lecture “Symbolism and Religious Works” at the Moscow Religious-Philosophical Society in Memory of Vladimir Solovyov.

**September 1908.** Shpet begins to teach pedagogy to the 8<sup>th</sup> year pupils of Alferov Gymnasium. He continues teaching until Spring 1912 (When he leaves for Göttingen).

**5<sup>th</sup> (18<sup>th</sup>) of October 1908.** Shpet’s second daughter Margarita is born (18.10.1908 [New style]-03.04.1989).

**1909.** Shpet teaches at A.L. Szaniawski’s City National University.

**Winter 1909.** Shpet attends a session of the Moscow Literary-Artistic Society, where D.V. Filosofov with contributions from D.S. Merezhkovsky gives a lecture on Lev Shestov.

**Summer 1909.** Shpet prepares for his master’s exams.

**9<sup>th</sup> of July 1909.** Shpet gives lectures to the people’s teachers in Penza.

**August–September 1909.** Shpet communicates with the members of publishing house “Musaget,” L. Ellis, A. Bely, E. Methner. Shpet receives a proposal to collaborate with A. Bely in writing articles on the philosophy of Fichte, Polish philosophy and culture.

**2<sup>nd</sup> of October 1909.** Shpet is invited to a public meeting for the members of the Moscow Society of Devotees of Astronomy held on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October.

**1910.** Shpet passes a master’s exam on philosophy, gives a test lecture on the philosophy of D. Hume, and is appointed Privatdozent of Moscow University.

**16<sup>th</sup> of February 1910.** The dean of the history-philosophy department of the Moscow Higher Education Courses for Women notifies Shpet of a department panel session on the **18<sup>th</sup> February**.

**8<sup>th</sup>(21<sup>st</sup>) of June 1910.** Shpet is in Berlin on a business trip. He works at a library, writing notes in his notebook.

**15<sup>th</sup> of July 1910.** Shpet is in Bonn with Chelpanov on a business trip. There he works at a library and is introduced to Oswald Külpe and his psychological laboratory.

**16<sup>th</sup> of July 1910.** Shpet and Chelpanov travel along the Rhine on a steambot with the intention of getting to know psychological schools. On their way they stop in Frankfurt am Main.

**17<sup>th</sup> of July 1910.** Together with Chelpanov Shpet visit Würzburg. There he is introduced to Karl Marbe.

**19<sup>th</sup> of July 1910.** Shpet and Chelpanov visit Leipzig.

**Academic Year 1910–1911.** Shpet teaches the 8<sup>th</sup> (the final) year of Alferov Gymnasium, where his future fiancé Natalia Konstantinovna Guchkova studies. He teaches logic at A.L. Szaniawski's City National University of Moscow.

**October 1910.** Shpet participates in the panel meetings of the “Musaget” publishing house.

**Academic Year 1911–1912.** Shpet teaches psychology in A.L. Szaniawski City National University of Moscow.

**17<sup>th</sup> of January 1912.** Shpet receives an invitation to the ninth panel meeting of the Society of Free Aesthetics for the season of 1911–1912, where V.Y. Byusov reads his translation of the IV book of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

**13<sup>th</sup>(26<sup>th</sup>) of April 1912.** Shpet arrives in Göttingen and rents a flat at Göttingen, Groner Chausse, 22<sup>1</sup> for 100 Deutsche Marks per semester (April–August). By that time his wife M.A. Krestovskaya and his two daughters (Lenora and Margarita) had already come to Göttingen and settled in the flat owned by a school teacher called Hüttig.

**19<sup>th</sup> of April (2<sup>nd</sup> of May)–22<sup>nd</sup> of April (5<sup>th</sup> of May) 1912.** Shpet works on the second chapter of the second volume of *History as a Problem of Logic*. He is writing about Kant at the same time.

**22<sup>nd</sup> of April (5<sup>th</sup> of May) 1912.** Shpet continues his work on the second chapter of the second volume of *History as a Problem of Logic*. He also begins classifying 19<sup>th</sup> century doctrines.

**27<sup>th</sup> of April (10<sup>th</sup> of May) 1912.** Shpet continues his work on the second chapter of the second volume of *History as a Problem of Logic*. At this time he also writes about Schopenhauer. In the evening of the same day he starts reading the works of L. Bourdeau.

**7<sup>th</sup>(21<sup>st</sup>)–10<sup>th</sup>(23<sup>rd</sup>) of May 1912.** Shpet analyzes the philosophy of history by L. Bourdeau.

**10<sup>th</sup>(23<sup>rd</sup>)–18<sup>th</sup>(31<sup>st</sup>) of May 1912.** Writes a chapter on J.S. Mill.

**18<sup>th</sup> of (31<sup>st</sup>) of May 1912.** Starts working on W.M. Wundt (reading and writing précis).

**27<sup>th</sup> of May (9<sup>th</sup> of June) – 29<sup>th</sup> of May (11<sup>th</sup> of June).** Lev Shestov visits Gustav Shpet in Göttingen.

**3<sup>rd</sup>(16<sup>th</sup>)–6<sup>th</sup>(19<sup>th</sup>) June 1912.** Shpet continues working on a chapter about W.M. Wundt.

**14<sup>th</sup>(27<sup>th</sup>) of June – 30<sup>th</sup> of June (13<sup>th</sup> July).** Shpet works on a chapter about C. von Sigwart and W.M. Wundt.

**2<sup>nd</sup>(15<sup>th</sup>) of August 1912.** Shpet finishes the second chapter about W.M. Wundt (135 pages).

**14<sup>th</sup>(27<sup>th</sup>) of August 1912.** Shpet arrives in Moscow.

**Second half of August 1912.** Shpet is in Znamenskoye of Tambov governorate, the family estate of Varvara Ilyinichna Zilotti (maiden name), the mother of Natalia Konstantinovna Guchkova.

**22<sup>nd</sup> of September 1912.** Shpet divorces his first wife M.A. Krestovskaya.

**15<sup>th</sup>(28<sup>th</sup>) of September 1912.** Shpet leaves for Göttingen.

**19<sup>th</sup> of September (2<sup>nd</sup> of October) 1912.** Shpet begins studying Danish. At that time he planned to go to Karl Lehmann for practical lessons.

**24<sup>th</sup> of September (7<sup>th</sup> of October) – 25<sup>th</sup> of September (8<sup>th</sup> of October) 1912.** Shpet works on restoration of the plan for his work on W.M. Wundt.<sup>5</sup> He also works on this chapter till the end of November. During this time he continues studying the Danish language.

**25<sup>th</sup> of September (8<sup>th</sup> of October)<sup>6</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup>(15<sup>th</sup>) of November<sup>7</sup> 1912.** During this period Shpet becomes acquainted with E. Husserl.

<sup>5</sup> Letters written from the 8th of October (25th of September) 1912 till 23rd (10th) of January 1913 were lost.

<sup>6</sup> The last remaining letter from Shpet to Guchkova dated 1912. In all previous letters including this one, Husserl is never mentioned by Shpet.

<sup>7</sup> The date of the letter to E. M. Methner, where Shpet wrote about his acquaintance with Edmund Husserl and Heinrich Meier.

**15<sup>th</sup>(28<sup>th</sup>) of October 1912.** Shpet starts attending Husserl's lecture course "Logik und Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre." Shpet writes a précis of the lectures.

**3<sup>rd</sup>(16<sup>th</sup>) of November 1912.** Shpet attends Husserl's seminar for Nature and Spirit on "Ding und seine Ausdehnung, Phantom."

**1913.** Shpet helps Chelpanov in setting up the Moscow Psychological Institute. For a short period of time Shpet lives at Bolshaya Tsaritsynskaya Street (Malaya Pirogovskaya), and later on moves to Dolgorukovskaya (Kalyaevskaya) Street, where he lives for almost 20 years until 1927.

**10<sup>th</sup>(23<sup>rd</sup>) of January 1913.** Shpet writes 198 pages of the chapter about W. Dilthey. At this time Shpet plans to start writing about H. Rickert.

**8<sup>th</sup>(21<sup>st</sup>) of June 1913 (Saturday<sup>8</sup>).** Shpet attends a lecture by E. Husserl called "The Nature as a Correlate of Natural Science." From 1 PM till 1:30 PM Shpet talks to Husserl in person.

**12<sup>th</sup>(25<sup>th</sup>) of June 1913.** Shpet attends Husserl's lecture "Objectifying and Evaluating Acts, Material and Animal Nature."

**16<sup>th</sup>(29<sup>th</sup>) of June 1913 (Sunday).** Shpet is invited to supper with Husserl. During supper they discuss Kant and phenomenology.

**2<sup>nd</sup>(15<sup>th</sup>) of June 1913 (Tuesday).** Shpet visits H. von Heister. Later on he listens to a lecture by Scheler about God.

**13<sup>th</sup>(26<sup>th</sup>) of July 1913.** Husserl presents Shpet with a photograph, signed: "To Mr. von Shpet with friendship in memory of Göttingen philosophical discussions 1912/13. E. Husserl."

**16<sup>th</sup>(29<sup>th</sup>) of July 1913 (Tuesday).** Shpet visits H. von Heister. Later on he is seen off by Alexandre Koyré and Jean Hering.

**17<sup>th</sup>(30<sup>th</sup>) of July – 17<sup>th</sup>(30<sup>th</sup>) of August 1913.** Shpet travels to Edinburgh. On the way to Edinburgh Shpet reads works of B. Russell.

**17<sup>th</sup>(30<sup>th</sup>) of August – 20<sup>th</sup> of August (2<sup>nd</sup> of September).** Shpet travels to London.

**21<sup>st</sup>–27<sup>th</sup> of August (2<sup>nd</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> of September) 1913.** Shpet travels to Geneva and Coppet.

**3<sup>rd</sup>(16<sup>th</sup>) of October 1913.** Shpet finishes writing the main part of his book *Appearance and Sense*.

<sup>8</sup> Beginning of diary entries for the year 1913.

**6<sup>th</sup>(19<sup>th</sup>) of October 1913.** Shpet goes to Husserl to show him the proof-sheets of his work.

**29<sup>th</sup> of October (12<sup>th</sup> of November) 1913.** Gustav Gustavovich Shpet marries Natalia Konstantinovna Guchkova, who was his student at the Alferov Gymnasium. It was a secret church wedding that took place in the Butyrskaya Prison Chapel, because Shpet could not endure the three year church penance with which he was punished with for divorcing M.A. Krestovskaya.

**November-December 1913.** Shpet and his new wife go on a honeymoon trip to France (Paris), Switzerland (Coppet). There they meet L.I. Shestov.

**1914.** The opening of the first Psychological University takes place. G.I. Chelpanov is appointed the first director. Together with G.I. Chelpanov and L.M. Lopatin Shpet works on a big project to prepare a Psychological Conference, that is not realized due to the outbreak of the First World War.

**26<sup>th</sup> of January 1914.** Shpet gives a speech at the opening of the Moscow Society for the Study of Scientific and Philosophical Issues.

**January – February 1914.** Shpet gives a lecture on phenomenology as a basic science to the Moscow Psychological Society.

**20<sup>th</sup> of April 1914.** Shpet writes a letter to M.O. Gershenzon in which he consults him on psychological literature.

**24<sup>th</sup> of May 1914.** Georgie May Smith sends Shpet a précis of lectures that H. Bergson gave in Edinburgh.

**1<sup>st</sup> of June 1914.** Shpet visits L.I. Shestov in Coppet.

**2<sup>nd</sup> of June 1914.** Shpet goes to Geneva, where at that time his first wife M.A. Krestovskaya and his two daughters Lenora and Margarita are staying. His mother M.I. Shpet lives with them. Shpet visits them every day while he is in Switzerland.

**3<sup>rd</sup>(16<sup>th</sup>) of June 1914.** Shpet meets the Remizovs at Shestov's house.

**11<sup>th</sup>(24<sup>th</sup>) of June 1914.** Shpet discusses his book *Appearance and Sense* and the works of Husserl with L.I. Shestov.

**16<sup>th</sup>(29<sup>th</sup>) of June 1914.** Shpet receives a letter from Husserl, in which the latter thanks Shpet for sending him a copy of the book *Appearance and Sense*.

**17<sup>th</sup>(30<sup>th</sup>) of June 1914.** Shpet discusses the translation of his book *Appearance and Sense* into German with L.I. Shestov.

**19<sup>th</sup> of June (2<sup>nd</sup> of July) 1914.** Shpet arrives in Göttingen. He stays in the same flat where he lived in 1912–1913.

**23<sup>rd</sup> of June (6<sup>th</sup> of July) 1914.** Shpet meets Husserl twice. They talk about Shpet's book *Appearance and Sense* and about the possibility of translating it into German. At this time Shpet works on the third chapter of his book *Herbert Spencer and his Pedagogical Ideas* by commission of M. Rubinstein for the publishing house of Tikhomirov, which published a series of monographs about the most outstanding representatives of psychological thought.

**26<sup>th</sup> of June (10<sup>th</sup> of July) 1914.** Shpet visits Husserl at home. They talk about *Logical Investigations (Logische Untersuchungen)*, and about Shpet's future philosophical works. Shpet mentions his plans to translate the work of A. Messer.

**28<sup>th</sup> of June (11<sup>th</sup> of July) 1914.** Shpet meets Husserl. Husserl suggests that Shpet write an article on phenomenology for a French philosophical journal. Shpet refuses, confessing to a lack of time.

**29<sup>th</sup> of June (12<sup>th</sup> of July) 1914.** From 11 AM to 6 PM Shpet stays with Husserl. Husserl reads to him an article on the subject of time.

**2<sup>nd</sup>(15<sup>th</sup>) of July 1914.** Shpet finishes writing the third chapter of his book about Herbert Spencer.

**7<sup>th</sup>(20<sup>th</sup>) of July 1914.** Shpet arrives in Moscow.

**13<sup>th</sup> of July 1914.** Shpet visits Mikhail Anatoliyevich Mamontov, his publisher and a relative of N.K. Guchkova.

**21<sup>st</sup> of August (3<sup>rd</sup> of September) 1914.** Gustav Shpet and N.K. Guchkova's eldest daughter Tatiana is born.

**4<sup>th</sup> of October 1914.** Shpet reads his paper "The Philosophical Heritage of P.D. Yurkevich (on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death)" to the Moscow Psychological Society.

**8<sup>th</sup> of October 1914.** Evgeniy Germanovich Loundberg meets Shpet's first family at a railway station in Saint-Petersburg on their way from Germany.

**6<sup>th</sup>(19<sup>th</sup>) of December 1914.** A "symposion" takes place at Shpet's flat in Moscow, in which Vyacheslav Ivanov and N. Berdyaev and Shpet himself participate. According to Shpet they "debate all evening long."

**29<sup>th</sup> May 1915.** Shpet visits Shestov at his house. Shestov suggests that Shpet stay overnight, but Shpet refuses.

**1<sup>st</sup> of June 1915.** Shpet meets S.V. Lurie and Shestov. The latter goes to Kiev.

**7<sup>th</sup> of June 1915.** Shpet visits Vyacheslav Ivanov, who reads his new poems.

**8<sup>th</sup> of June 1915.** Shpet visits Shestov, where he meets S.V. Lurie.

**28<sup>th</sup> of June 1915.** Shpet visits L.I. Shestov and meets the Remizovs there. On that day he continues work on his dissertation.

**30<sup>th</sup> of June 1915.** Shpet meets G.I. Chelpanov.

**3<sup>rd</sup> of July 1915.** Shpet visits Vyacheslav Ivanov. There he meets J. Baltrušaitis and K. Balmont. They read each other their poems. Shestov and Remizov also attend the meeting.

**11<sup>th</sup> of July 1915.** Shpet visits Vyacheslav Ivanov, where he met Gorodetskiy. Ivanov reads them his poems.

**19<sup>th</sup> of July 1915.** Shpet meets Chelpanov. They discuss the allocation of teaching hours for the next academic year.

**23<sup>th</sup> of July 1915.** Shpet visits Vyacheslav Ivanov and meets M.O. Gershenzon and his brother and L.I. Shestov there.

**1916.** Shpet is elected a professor of Higher Education Courses for Women and a docent of Moscow University.

**January 1916.** Shpet finishes his work on an article entitled “The Consciousness and its owner.”

**2<sup>nd</sup> of March 1916.** Shpet is elected a fellow of Moscow Society for the Study and Popularization of the Physical Sciences.

**22<sup>nd</sup> of April 1916.** August Adolfovich Krogius thanks Shpet for the book *History as a Problem of Logic* that he received from him.

**9<sup>th</sup> of May 1916.** A thesis defense by G.G. Shpet takes place in Moscow University. *History as a Problem of Logic. Volume I. Materials* is submitted as the dissertation. An article about this thesis is published in a newspaper *Russkiye Vedomosti* (“The Russian Journal” – № 106. 10 May 1916, 4).

**11<sup>th</sup> of May 1916.** Shpet receives a postcard from A.M. Lazarev, where he expresses his gratitude for sending him a copy of the book *History as a Problem of Logic* and highly praises his work.

**15<sup>th</sup> of May 1916.** Lazarev congratulates Shpet on his successful thesis defense.

**18<sup>th</sup>(31<sup>st</sup>) of May 1916.** Shpet's daughter Marina is born.

**12<sup>th</sup> of September 1916.** Shpet writes a letter to A.M. Lazarev, inviting him to take part in an annual entitled *Thought and Word*.

**24<sup>th</sup> of September 1916.** Shpet receives a letter from A.M. Lazarev, in which the latter tells Shpet of his writing plans and doubts that his article on Bergson will be suitable for publication in the Annual.

**7<sup>th</sup> of November 1916.** A.A. Krogius submits his article on the localization of psychic processes to Shpet.

**13<sup>th</sup> of November 1916.** B. Kistyakovskiy tells Shpet that a review of his book *History as a Problem of Logic* is published in a newspaper *Priazovskiy Kray* ("Azov Sea Coastal Region").

**24<sup>th</sup> of November 1916.** A.A. Krogius thanks Shpet for his article "The Consciousness and its Owner."

**1917.** Shpet puts together a publishing plan for a "Philosophical Series" and works on a *Psychological Anthropology*, a manuscript of *Hermeneutics and its Issues* and *Anthology on the History of Psychology*.

**January 1917.** Shpet finishes working on his article "Wisdom or Reason?"

**20<sup>th</sup> of February 1917.** Sergey Vasiliyevich Kravkov promises Shpet a critical essay on the objective method in the articles of Turró for the *Psychological Review*.

**25<sup>th</sup> of February 1917.** Shpet finishes working on his article "History as a Subject of Logic."

**2<sup>nd</sup> of March 1917.** Shpet receives an invitation for the seventh panel session of the Society of Free Aesthetics for the season of 1916–1917 (on the premises of the Legislative Council, Malaya Nikitskaya Street 25), where Maximilian Voloshin reads his new poems, Konstantin Lipskerov – his poem on the contemporary life of "The Other."

**15<sup>th</sup> of March 1917.** The February Revolution. Shpet gives a lecture to the students of the Moscow Higher Education Courses for Women on the current political situation.

**15<sup>th</sup> of May 1917.** Shpet is appointed a professor of the Moscow Higher Education Courses for Women.

**4<sup>th</sup> of August 1917.** Shpet meets with A.K. Solovyova. They talk about Husserl.

**8<sup>th</sup> of August 1917.** Shpet is visited by L.I. Shestov. They debate skepticism.

**3<sup>rd</sup> of December 1917.** Fyodor Fyodorovich Berezhevskiy congratulates Shpet on his appointment as a docent of Moscow University.

**26<sup>th</sup> of December 1917.** Georgiy Adolfovich Lemahn-Abrikosov writes a letter to Shpet with a review of the first issue of the Annual *Thought and Word*.

**December 1917.** Shpet invites D.M. Koygen to participate in the Annual *Thought and Word*.

**1918.** Shpet works on the Annual *Thought and Word*.

**29<sup>th</sup> of May 1918.** Shpet gives a lecture entitled “Italian Philosophy as a type of Italian Culture” in the Institute of Italian Culture (Lo Studio Italiano).

**September 1918.** Shpet is elected a Professor of Moscow University.

**18<sup>th</sup> of October 1918.** Shpet attends a panel session of the Course Council in the Council room of the auditorium building of the Moscow Higher Education Courses for Women, where the Director gives a report on the current situation and on the way the latest decrees of the People’s Commissariat for Education should be applied in their institution.

**October 1918.** Shpet participates in the establishment of the socio-historical department in Yaroslavl University.

**1919.** Shpet writes articles for a *Pedagogical Encyclopedia* that go unpublished.

**January 1919.** Shpet finishes his work on an article entitled “The Skeptic and his Soul.”

**17<sup>th</sup> of May 1919.** Shpet receives an offer from the Instructors Courses of the Party of Revolutionary Communism to participate in lecture courses, organized by the Central Committee for the members of the party.

**6<sup>th</sup> of June 1919.** Shpet’s son Sergei is born (1919–1972).

**14<sup>th</sup> of June 1919.** The President of the State Science Council M.N. Pokrovskiy invites Shpet to the session of the special committee of the State Science Council to discuss the project of interuniversity reform (**16 June 1919**).

**1<sup>st</sup> of December 1919.** Shpet is elected an acting member of the Society of Devotees of Russian Literature.

**1920.** Shpet establishes the first Russian cabinet of ethnic psychology affiliated with Moscow University. Shpet's student N.I. Zhinkin is elected the secretary. In that year Shpet puts together a plan for a *Biographical Library of Philosophers* and a plan of a book series entitled *Moralists*. In that year Shpet also takes an active part in the work of the Moscow Linguistic Society, whose members include R. Jakobson, G. Vikokur, R. Shor, B. Yarkho.

**January 1920.** Shpet reads his report entitled "On the question of introduction of the Latin alphabet" (the report was prepared to be published in the Works of the Academy) to the Science-Pedagogical Association. This same report was later read to the Union of Writers.

**8<sup>th</sup> of January 1920.** Shpet finishes working on his article "The Philosophy of P.L. Lavrov."

**11<sup>th</sup> of January 1920.** Shpet finishes working on his article "P.L. Lavrov and A.I. Herzen."

**20<sup>th</sup> of January 1920.** Shpet gives a speech at a ceremonial meeting of the Society of Devotees of Russian Literature on the topic of "Herzen's Philosophical Outlook."

**11<sup>th</sup> of February 1920.** Shpet receives an invitation to the meeting of the Pushkin Society from Vyacheslav Ivanov.

**March 1920.** Shpet reads his paper "Aesthetic Elements in the Structure of the Word" at a meeting of the Moscow Linguistic Society. In April he corrects and edits his article entitled "History as a Subject of Logic" for the *Nauchniye Izvestiya* ("Scientific Bulletin") journal.

**May 1920.** Shpet reads his paper "The Role of Language in the System of General Education" at a Science-Pedagogical Association.

**22<sup>nd</sup> of May 1920.** Shpet reads his paper "The Crisis in Philosophy" at the Liberal Academy of Spiritual Culture.

**Summer 1920.** The summer months are dedicated to the work on the III volume (*The Principles of Logic*) of his study *History as a Problem of Logic*. During this time he completes two chapters.

**August 1920.** Shpet finishes writing his book *Herzen's Philosophical Outlook*.

**3<sup>rd</sup> of August.** Submits proof-sheets to the publishing house "Kolos."

**23<sup>rd</sup> of September – 25<sup>th</sup> of November 1920.** Shpet writes the second chapter of his work *An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy*.

**Beginning of November 1920.** Shpet is arrested for an unstated reason.

**8<sup>th</sup> of November 1920.** Shpet is released under an amnesty dedicated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Soviet government.

**Autumn-Winter 1920.** During Autumn Shpet compiles *An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy* (by commission of “Kolos” publishing house, Saint-Petersburg). By the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1921 around 10 printed sheets have been completed.

**1921.** Shpet gives a course of lectures on logic, psychology, methodology of science, introduction to philosophy, history of psychology, history of scientific thought, ethnopsychology, aesthetics, pedagogics and history of pedagogical thought. That year Shpet is appointed a director of the Institute of Scientific Psychology that he had established. He also establishes a Liberal Association for Artistic and University Intellectuals (Intelligentsia) in Saint-Petersburg.

**Beginning of the year 1921.** The establishment of the section of Theatre Department of the Ministry of Education (Narkompros), of which Shpet becomes a member.

**24<sup>th</sup> of January 1921.** Shpet receives an invitation from the Liberal Academy of Spiritual Culture (**26<sup>th</sup> of January 1921**), where he and N.A. Berdyaev give an introductory speech for discussion on the topic of “The Death of Beauty.”

**February 1921.** Shpet receives an invitation to teach a course of psychology and logic at the Literature and Arts Institute (rector of the university – V.Y. Bryusov).

**24<sup>th</sup> of February 1921.** Shpet visits the session of the Institute of Scientific Philosophy of Moscow University (in the assembly room of the Psychological University) to discuss the candidates for the position of professors and teachers of the scientific institutes: philosophical, psychological and pedagogical. Shpet receives a proof sheet of the book *Herzen's Philosophical Outlook*.

**Spring 1921.** Shpet starts to work at The Academy of Physical Education.

**Beginning of March, 1921.** Shpet finishes writing *Aesthetic Fragments*.

**5<sup>th</sup> of April 1921.** Shpet receives an invitation for the meeting of the Moscow Psychological Society (scheduled for the 9<sup>th</sup> of April in the Psychological University), where I.A. Ilyin reads his paper “The Fundamental Elements of a Normal Religious Experience,” and N.K. Methner and N.N. Luzin stood for the post of acting members.

**Summer 1921.** Shpet attends an evening organized by Marienhof and Yesenin, where they read their newest works.

**Autumn 1921.** A discussion of the Society's activities takes place during the panel session of the Moscow Linguistic Society that Shpet attends.

**September 1921.** Together with A. Bely Shpet starts to work in the Moscow branch of the Liberal Philosophical Association (Volphilia). A. Bely is appointed president of the council of the branch, and Shpet – his deputy.

**1<sup>st</sup> of September 1921.** Shpet becomes an acting member of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences (starting from 1925 – The State Academy of Artistic Sciences).

**9<sup>th</sup> of September 1921.** Shpet presides at the organizing session of the Institute of Scientific Philosophy of Moscow University.

**11<sup>th</sup> of September 1921.** Shpet finishes working on his paper “Differentiation of Theatre Performance” (this paper was published in №s 7–8 of the *Theatre Culture* journal in 1921).

**22<sup>nd</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of September 1921.** Shpet acts as representative at a panel session of the Council of the Institute of Scientific Philosophy. First, the organization of the Autumn semester for the students of the former philological department is discussed, as well as plans for the educational courses. The next meeting deals with the necessity of saving the interdepartmental status of the Institute of Scientific Philosophy as well as other organizational topics.

**27<sup>th</sup> of October 1921.** Shpet participates in a discussion of a paper by F.A. Stepun entitled “The Crisis of Intellectualism in Western Philosophy (Concerning the Book by O. Spengler),” that is read during the panel session of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**December 1921.** Sergei Yesenin presents Shpet with his book *Pugachev* with a dedicatory inscription.

**Start of December 1921.** Shpet reads his paper in the Committee for the Organization of the Academy of Physical and Social Upbringing.

**Academic year of 1921–1922.** Shpet along with Chelpanov are suspended from work in Moscow University.

**1922.** Shpet faces deportation but succeeds in appealing his case – he, as well as Florenskiy, are among the few, who managed to do so.

**26<sup>th</sup> of January 1922.** Shpet finishes his first volume of *Aesthetic Fragments*.

**27<sup>th</sup> of January, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1922.** Shpet reads his report “On the Plan of the Work of the Philosophy Department” at a panel session of the board of directors and next at a session of the scientific council of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**13<sup>th</sup> of February 1922.** Shpet finishes the second volume of *Aesthetic Fragments*.

**19<sup>th</sup> of February 1922.** Shpet finishes the third volume of *Aesthetic Fragments*.

**20<sup>th</sup> of February 1922.** Shpet conducts the first constituent meeting of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**3<sup>rd</sup> of March 1922.** At a panel session of the Board of Directors of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences the beginning of the work of the philosophy department is announced. Its staff members are: G.G. Shpet as president, his deputy – B.P. Vysheslavtsev, the academic secretary – B.A. Gritsov, and staff members: N.A. Berdyaev, S.L. Frank.

**16<sup>th</sup> of March 1922.** Reads his paper “A Profile of Contemporary Aesthetics” at a session of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**6<sup>th</sup> of April 1922.** Shpet takes part in a discussion of a paper by B.A. Gritsov “The Aesthetics of Benedetto Croce” which is presented at a plenary meeting of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences. Receives a direction from the dean’s office to provide a list of courses and practical classes for the summer trimester that are to start on the 24<sup>th</sup> April of the current year.

**22<sup>nd</sup> of April 1922.** Together with A.A. Sidorov and L.L. Sabaneyev Shpet is elected a member of the committee for the organization of the choreology laboratory of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences (N.F. Tian is put in charge of this laboratory).

**27<sup>th</sup> of April 1922.** Shpet participates in the discussion of the paper entitled “Aesthetics and Art Criticism” by A.A. Sidorov presented at a plenary meeting of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**11<sup>th</sup> of May 1922.** Shpet participates in the discussion of the paper entitled “The end of Renaissance in Modern Art” by N.A. Berdyaev presented at a plenary meeting of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**14<sup>th</sup> of May 1922.** Shpet finishes his paper entitled “The Problems of the Modern Aesthetics,” based on his previous work, presented on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1922 (“The Profile of the Contemporary Aesthetics”).

**22<sup>nd</sup> of May 1922.** Shpet conducts a seminar at the philosophy department of Moscow University, where Alexander Andreyevich Huber presents his paper “The Notion of Naturalism in Husserl’s Philosophy.”

**1<sup>st</sup> of June 1922.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper by K.R. Eiges entitled “Of the Relation of Music to Other Arts and Artistic Experiences” presented at a plenary meeting of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**26<sup>th</sup> of June 1922.** Shpet conducts a seminar at the philosophy department of Moscow University, where Alexey Vladimirovich Chicherin presents his paper entitled “Philosophy as a Rigid Science” (based on the material of Husserl’s article).

**6<sup>th</sup> of August 1922.** Shpet writes a letter (a “review”) of the books by Nikolay Nikolayevich Rusov, *Epistemological Novel* and *Overintellectualizing of the Flesh*, presented by the author together with Shpet’s review at a meeting of the Liberal Philosophical Association (Volphilia) in Petrograd in **April 1924**.

**17<sup>th</sup> of August 1922.** A foreword for Volume I of *The Outline of Development of the Russian Philosophy* is completed. On this day a series of arrests and searches are carried out in Moscow, Petrograd and Kazan (according to the lists of State Political Directorate). On the 17-18 August 1922 arrests are carried out in Ukraine.

**1<sup>st</sup> of October 1922.** Shpet presents his first semi-annual report on the activities of the Institute of Scientific Philosophy.

**3<sup>rd</sup> of October 1922.** Shpet reads his paper “Theatre as an Art” at a plenary meeting of the theatre section of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences (published in № 1 of the *Theatre craft* journal in 1922).

**16<sup>th</sup> of October 1922.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of the paper of P.S. Popov entitled “On Picturing Spiritual Life in Fiction,” presented at a plenary meeting of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**20<sup>th</sup> of October 1922.** Shpet reads his paper “What is Philosophy” at a public meeting of the Institute of Scientific Philosophy.

**27<sup>th</sup> of October 1922.** A discussion of Shpet’s paper “What is Philosophy” takes place at public meeting at the Institute of Scientific Philosophy. A.A. Bogdanov and senior research associates B.N. Bobylin, V.R. Eiges, B.A. Fokht (Vogt), P.S. Popov, I.N. Dyakov and some of the members of the public, including A.F. Losev and P.I. Ivanitskiy, participate in the discussion.

**20<sup>th</sup> of January 1923.** Dmitriy Moiseyevich Petrushevskiy sends Shpet a highly appreciative review of the latter’s *An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy*.

**Spring 1923.** The Institute of Scientific Philosophy is criticized and radically reorganized. Shpet is suspended from directorship.

**12<sup>th</sup> of April 1923.** Shpet receives a notification from The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences of a ceremonial meeting, dedicated to laying the cornerstone of the monument to A.N. Ostrovskiy.

**1<sup>st</sup> of May 1923.** Shpet finishes his paper “On the Question of Hegelianism of Belinsky” for presentation at the literature section of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**19<sup>th</sup> of May 1923.** At a panel session of the Scientific Council of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences Shpet is elected a Board member of the Academy.

**21<sup>st</sup> of May 1923.** Shpet reads his paper “On the Question of Hegelianism of Belinsky” at the literature section of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**29<sup>th</sup> of May 1923.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of the paper “On the Question of Hegelianism of Belinsky” at the literature section of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**26<sup>th</sup> of June 1923.** At the first panel session of the committee for the research of the problem of artistic form at the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences Shpet is elected its president and reads a paper entitled “The objectives of the committee for the research of the problem of artistic form and the plan of work.”

**27<sup>th</sup> of July 1923.** Shpet reads his paper “On various meanings of the notion of “Form” at the committee for the research of the problem of artistic form at the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences. N.N. Volkov, N.I. Zhinkin and A.G. Tsires take part in the discussion.

**31<sup>st</sup> of July 1923.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of the paper of M.M. Kyonigsberg “On the Linguistic Course of Ferdinand de Saussure” read during the session of the committee for the research of the problem of artistic form of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**14<sup>th</sup> of August 1923.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of the paper of S.Y. Mahse entitled “The Melodics of the Poem (on the book by B.M. Eikhenbaum)” read during the session of the committee for the research of the problem of artistic form of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**4<sup>th</sup> of September 1923.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of the paper of A.A. Buslayev entitled “On Syntax of M.N. Peterson” read during the session of a committee for the research of the problem of artistic form of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**25<sup>th</sup> of September 1923.** Shpet reads his paper “On the Vocabulary of Art Terminology” at the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences with contributions from the representatives from other departments and sections. That day Shpet finishes the précis of his paper “The Notion of Inner Form in the Works of Humboldt and its Possible Interpretation.”

**2<sup>nd</sup> of October 1923.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of the paper by A.G. Gabrichevskiy entitled “Poetics of Goethe’s West-östlicher Divan” read during the joint session of the philosophy department and literary section of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences. A.L. Saketti, M.I. Kagan, B.I. Yarkho, M.A. Petrovskiy, P.S. Popov and A.S. Akhmanov take part in the discussion.

**21<sup>nd</sup> of October 1923.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of the paper by N.I. Zhinkin entitled “The forms of Notions in Mythological Thinking” read during the session of the committee for the research of the problem of artistic form of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**30<sup>th</sup> of October 1923.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of the paper by M.A. Petrovskiy entitled “Expression and Depiction” read during the plenary meeting of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**6<sup>th</sup> of November 1923.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of the paper by A.G. Gabrichevskiy “The Structure of Artistic Form” read during the plenary meeting of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**12<sup>th</sup> of November 1923.** Boris Gornung dedicates his poem “Rulers” (“Vlastiteli”) to Shpet.

**13<sup>th</sup> of November 1923.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of the paper by B.V. Gornung entitled “The Works of Professor V.M. Zhirmunskiy” read during the session of the committee for research of the problem of artistic form in the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**19<sup>th</sup> of November 1923.** Shpet conducts a seminar in the “Institute of the Word.”

**24<sup>th</sup> of November 1923.** Shpet reads his paper “The Notion of Inner Form in the Works of Humboldt” at the committee for the research of the problem of artistic form at the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**Autumn 1923.** Shpet edits the translation by P. Veinberg and A. Shishkov of the tragedy *Julius Cesar* for the Moscow Art Theatre. At the same time he is working on the production of the scenic version of the text.

**11<sup>th</sup> of December 1923.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper entitled “The Notion of the Inner Form in the Works of Wilhelm Humboldt” at the committee for the research of the problem of the artistic form at the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences. N.N. Volkov, B.V. Gornung, N.I. Zhinkin, A.G. Tsires take part in the discussion.

**13<sup>th</sup> of December 1923.** Shpet reads his paper “The Form of Expression of Theatre Performance” at the plenary session of Theatre section of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**18<sup>th</sup> of December 1923.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper by A.S. Sidorov entitled “Intellectual Intuition and Aesthetic Perception” read during the plenary session of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**1<sup>st</sup> of January 1924.** Shpet becomes the president of the Science-Art Committee of the *Hermes* journal.

**29<sup>th</sup> of January 1924.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper by M.M. Kyonigsberg entitled “The Notion of the Inner Form in the works of Anton Marti” read during the session of the committee for the research of the problem of artistic form of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**5<sup>th</sup> of February 1924.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper by A.L. Saketti entitled “The Contents and the Form in the Work of Art” read during the plenary session of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**19<sup>th</sup> of February 1924.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper by T.I. Rainov entitled “The Role of Time in Drama” read during the session of a committee for the research of the problem of time of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences. A.S. Akhmanov, P.S. Popov, B.V. Shaposhnikov, M.M. Morozov, M.A. Petrovskiy, G.G. Shpet and T.I. Rainov take part in the discussion.

**26<sup>th</sup> of February 1924.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper by N.N. Volkov entitled “The Problem of Form in the Artistic Work of a Poet” (concerning the book by Ermatinger) read during the session of a committee for the research of the problem of artistic form of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**March 1924.** Shpet attends M. Voloshin’s poetry session that takes place in the apartment of A.G. Gabrichevskiy.

**4<sup>th</sup> of March 1924.** Shpet presides at the session of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences. There he announces the appointment of the Committee for the History of Aesthetic Teachings as an administration of the university. The presidium of the University unanimously elects G.G. Shpet president, his deputy – A.F. Losev, and V.P. Zubov as the academic secretary. To commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kant’s birthday they decide to establish a Committee, consisting of G.G. Shpet and the members: M.I. Kagan and A.L. Saketti. It is also agreed that Shpet should go to Königsberg on a business trip to participate in the anniversary celebrations.

**11<sup>th</sup> of March 1924.** As part of the work of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences a presentation of Shpet’s paper “Style and the Novel” is scheduled.

**9<sup>th</sup> of April 1924.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper by B.A. Fokht entitled “On the Beauty as the Subject of the Arts” read during the plenary session of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**11<sup>th</sup> of April 1924.** Shpet is appointed a member of the Board of Directors of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences with responsibility for finances.

**22<sup>nd</sup> of April 1924.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper by N.I. Zhinkin entitled “The Problems of Aesthetic Form” read during the session of a committee for the research of the problem of artistic form of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**11<sup>th</sup> of May 1924.** Shpet becomes acquainted with M.A. Kuzmin in Moscow at a Youth Literary Circle, connected with *Hermes*.

**10<sup>th</sup> of June 1924.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper by N.N. Volkov entitled “On Logical and Poetic Formalism” read during the session of a committee for the research of the problem of artistic form of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**14<sup>th</sup> of August 1924.** At the session of the presidium of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences following Shpet’s report about the necessity to create a psychophysical laboratory the decision is made to acknowledge as a preferred option, the establishment of a psychophysical laboratory administered by the university, and to put in charge of it a special official with the rights of the head of the section.

**28<sup>th</sup> of October 1924.** At the presidium session of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences the decision is made to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the literary activity of G. Shpet following the proposal of the philosophy department.

**31<sup>st</sup> of October 1924.** Shpet is elected vice-president of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences for 1924–1927 at the Board meeting of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**4<sup>th</sup> of November 1924.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper by A.F. Losev entitled “The History-Typological Classification of the Teachings of ‘Artistic Form’” read during the plenary session of the philosophy department at The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**11<sup>th</sup> November 1924.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper by N.N. Volkov entitled “The Problem of Plurality of Meanings and of the so-called ‘Core’ of a Meaning” read during the session of a committee for the research of the problem of artistic form at the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**18<sup>th</sup> of November 1924.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper by M.I. Kagan entitled “On the Living Meaning of Art” read during the interdepartmental plenary session at the philosophy and sociology departments and the section of spatial art of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**23<sup>rd</sup> of November 1924.** Shpet is appointed vice-president of the Scientific Council of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences. In this new office, in addition to the one of the president of the philosophy department, Shpet works until 1929.

**24<sup>th</sup> of November 1924.** Shpet reads his paper “On the Boundaries of Scientific Literary Criticism” at the joint session of the philosophy department and literary section of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences. P.N. Sakulin and B.I. Yarkho take part in the discussion.

**25<sup>th</sup> of November 1924.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper by A.A. Buslayev entitled “Karl Bühler’s Views on the Subject of Syntax” (a summary paper of his works on the general syntax) read during the session of a committee for the research of the problem of artistic form at the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**1<sup>st</sup> of December 1924.** Shpet reads the thesis of his paper entitled “On the Boundaries of Scientific Literary Criticism” at the joint plenary session of the philosophy department and literary section of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences. B.V. Gornung, M.P. Stolyarov, T.I. Rainov, Y.M. Sokolov, M.A. Petrovskiy, B.G. Stolpner, B.I. Yarkho, M.I. Kagan and A.L. Sakketi take part in the discussion.

**30<sup>th</sup> of December 1924.** Shpet takes part in the session of the editorial committee suggesting they concentrate their efforts on the production of a strictly scientific encyclopaedia that would represent the research activity of The Russian Academy of the Artistic Sciences. The decision is made to start work on the production of two encyclopaedias (one of which would be strictly scientific and the other, shorter one – a consumer version of the former) simultaneously.

**27<sup>th</sup> of January 1925.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper by R.O. Shor entitled “The Principles of the New System of Theoretical Linguistics (concerning vol. II of *Aesthetic Fragments* by G.G. Shpet)” read during the session of a committee for the research of the problem of artistic form at the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**1<sup>st</sup> of February 1925.** Shpet’s friends and colleagues from The State Academy of Artistic Sciences present Shpet with an engraving of “The School of Athens” by Raphael with a dedication from the fourth song of Hell from the *Divine Comedy*: “E pi’u d’onore ancora assai mi fenno / Ch’essi mi fecer della loro schiera, / Sich’io fui sesto tra contanto senno” (“And even greater honor still they did me, / for one of their own company they made me, /

so that amid such wisdom I was sixth” – translated by Courtney Langdon). But instead of “sesto” Shpet’s friends have written “SPETTO.”

**3<sup>rd</sup> of February 1925.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper by O.A. Shor entitled “Michelangelo (on the Problem of Artistic Work)” read during the joint session of the plenum of the philosophy department and the subsection of pictorial art of the spatial art section of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**24<sup>th</sup> of February 1925.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of the paper by A.A. Huber entitled “Hefe’s Theory of the Essence of Poetry” read on the 17<sup>th</sup> February at the session of a committee for the research of the problem of artistic form at the philosophy department of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**3<sup>rd</sup> of March 1925.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper by A.F. Losev entitled “The Idea” read at an editorial committee for the production of the Dictionary of Art Terminology at The State Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**31<sup>st</sup> of March 1925.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper by A.G. Gabrichevskiy entitled “On the Spatial Forms in Art” read at a committee session for the research of the problem of artistic form at the philosophy department of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**14<sup>th</sup> of April 1925.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper by V.N. Derzhavin entitled “The Experience of Classifying of the Linguistic phenomena and disciplines” read during the session of the committee for the research of the problem of artistic form at the philosophy department of the State Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**25<sup>th</sup> of April 1925.** Shpet’s students (A. Akhmanov, N. Volkov, N. Zhinkin, A. Zak, A. Tsires) prepare and publish a collection of articles and scientific papers, dedicated to their teacher.

**5<sup>th</sup> of May 1925.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper by N.N. Volkov entitled “What is a Metaphor?” read during the session of the committee for the research of the problem of artistic form at the philosophy department of the State Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**22<sup>nd</sup> of August 1925.** Shpet discusses the creation of a collection of works in memory of Maksim Kyonigsberg with Boris and Leonid Gornung and with Mikhail Petrovskiy.

**13<sup>th</sup> of September 1925.** Shpet is invited to the Academy of Science for a soirée in honour Russian and foreign scientists.

**8<sup>th</sup> of October 1925.** At the plenary session of the philosophy department of The Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences Shpet’s student B.V. Shaposhnikov on behalf of the action

group announces the creation of a committee for the research of the modern problems of philosophy of art. Shpet is elected president of the committee.

**9<sup>th</sup> of October 1925.** At the Board meeting of the Academy the committee for the research of the modern problems of philosophy of science with Shpet at its head is approved.

**10<sup>th</sup> of October 1925.** Shpet takes part in the session of the Council for the coordination of the activity of the departments and sections and other units of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences (the Association of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences and the State Institute of the History of Art, and the Association of publishing houses). Shpet reads his report on the merger of the research activity of the philosophy department with other sections and departments of the Academy. On the same day Shpet finishes the précis of his report “The Plan of Research Work in the Institute of Art Criticism.”

**13<sup>th</sup> of October 1925.** The discussion of the committee plan on the research of the modern problems of art takes place, 7 of the 10 members of the committee appointed by the Board of Directors take part in the discussion (A.S. Akhmanov, G.O. Gordon, N.I. Zhinkin, T.I. Rainov, A.G. Tsires, B.V. Shaposhnikov, G.G. Shpet).

**24<sup>th</sup> of November 1925.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper by A.S. Akhmanov “Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art” read during the session of a committee for the research of the modern problems of the philosophy of art at the philosophy department of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**February 1926.** Shpet finishes his work on the report “On the Question of Working Arrangements in the Field of Art Criticism” for the *Bulletin of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences* (1926. № 4–5). At this time Shpet is appointed a member of the editorial board of the *Encyclopedia of Art Terminology* of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**8<sup>th</sup> of February 1926.** Shpet carries out his editorial work, reviewing the first issue of the typed up *Hyperborey* journal.

**9<sup>th</sup> of March 1926.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper by A.K. Solovyova entitled “On the Correlation of the Problems of Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art Based on Hegel’s Theory” read during the session of a committee for the research of the modern problems of the philosophy of art at the philosophy department of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**23<sup>rd</sup> of March 1926.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper by A.G. Tsires entitled “On the Borders of the Portrait Image” read during the session of a committee for the research of the modern problems of the philosophy of art at the philosophy department of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**13<sup>th</sup> of April 1926.** Shpet reads his paper “Art as a Form of Knowledge” during the session of the committee for the research of the modern problems of the philosophy of art at the philosophy department of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**20<sup>th</sup> of April 1926.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of a paper entitled “Art as a Form of Knowledge” at the committee for the research of the modern problems of the philosophy of art at the philosophy department of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**17<sup>th</sup> of June 1926.** Boris Gornung dedicates his poem “The Pagan Rite is Frozen Over” to Shpet.

**October 1926.** At this time Shpet finishes working on his book entitled *The Introduction to the Ethnic Psychology*.

**4<sup>th</sup> of December 1926.** Shpet is re-elected vice-president at a conference of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences for the new three year term.

**14<sup>th</sup> of December 1926.** Shpet participates in the discussion of a paper by I.V. Zholtovsky entitled “The Account of Research of the Antique Thought in Architecture,” read during the session of a committee for the research of the modern problems of the philosophy of art at the philosophy department of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**16<sup>th</sup> of February 1927.** The Board Directors of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences with Shpet as its vice-president is approved.

**28<sup>th</sup> of October 1927.** At the session of the Scientific Council of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences, following Shpet’s suggestion, a committee for the unification of all works of the Academy of L.N. Tolstoy is established with L.I. Akselrod, P.N. Sakulin and G.G. Shpet as its members (headed by P.N. Sakulin).

**1928.** At this time Shpet moves into a new corporate apartment at 17 Bryusov Lane according to the design of the architect A.V. Shchusev. It was to be Shpet’s last apartment in Moscow. That month A.I. Bachinskiy presents G.G. Shpet’s candidacy to the philosophy department of Academy of Sciences of the USSR.

**1<sup>st</sup> of January 1928.** Shpet is elected an honoured member of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**24<sup>th</sup> of January 1928.** Shpet becomes a member of the Arts Council of Moscow Art Theatre by the appointment of the Ministry of Education of the Soviet Union.

**10<sup>th</sup> of February 1928.** Shpet takes part in a session of the Arts Council of Moscow Art Theatre, where the play *Untilovsk* by L.M. Leonov is discussed.

**28<sup>th</sup> of February 1928.** Shpet takes part in the discussion of the paper of N.N. Volkov entitled “The Graphic Image” read on the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> of February during the session of the committee for the research of the modern problems of the philosophy of art at the philosophy department of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**16<sup>th</sup> of April – 6 May 1928.** Shpet writes a letter to Dmitriy Moiseyevich Petrushevskiy, in which he explicates his concept of philosophy and methodology of history.

**27<sup>th</sup> of April 1928.** Shpet finishes writing a review of S.I. Daneliya’s work *Scientific Knowledge in the Ideas of Democritus*.

**30<sup>th</sup> of May 1928.** Shpet and other Soviet writers attend an official meeting with Maxim Gorky, who had come to Moscow from Italy, at the State Publishing House of the USSR.

**1<sup>st</sup> of June 1928.** Shpet’s candidacy is put forward for inclusion in the All-Union Academy of Sciences by a group of scientists and art critics and supported by the Scientific Committee at the session of the Scientific Council of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences (Shpet himself is absent from this meeting).

**June 1928.** Shpet accepts R.O. Jakboson’s proposal to collaborate on the creation of the *Slavische Rundschau* journal.

**29<sup>th</sup> of September 1928.** Information of Shpet’s candidacy for the appointment of acting member of the Academy of Sciences is sent to the Academy of Sciences.

**November 1928.** Shpet’s scientific position comes under ideological suspicion. The amount of criticism of the course of work of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences significantly increases in the press.

**28<sup>th</sup> of March 1929.** Shpet attends the session of the committee for examination of the work of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**6<sup>th</sup> of April 1929.** Shpet takes part in the conference on the reorganization of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**5<sup>th</sup> of June 1929.** Shpet finishes working on his paper “The Sources of Chernyshevsky’s Dissertation.”

**3<sup>rd</sup> of September 1929.** Shpet announces his retirement and that he will be receiving a personal pension at a session of the Board of Directors of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**28<sup>th</sup> of October 1929.** Lunacharskiy’s speech that he gave at a meeting in the publishing house “Land and Factory” is published in *Литературная газета*. In his speech he characterizes Shpet’s works as harmful in the highest degree.

**29<sup>th</sup> of October 1929.** At the meeting of the Board of Directors of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences Shpet resigns and is dismissed from the office of vice-president of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences, effective from the **1 November 1929**.

**January 1930.** Shpet is dismissed from the office of the acting member of the Academy following the decree of the science-political section of the State Science Council, affiliated to the Ministry of Education.

**20<sup>th</sup> of January 1930.** Shpet writes an open letter to the editor of *Литературная газета* S. Kanatchikov (published in №7 (44) of *Литературная газета* on 17 February 1930).

**21<sup>st</sup> of January 1930.** By the decree of the Academy of Artistic Sciences, based on the protocol of the meeting at the office of the head of “GlavNauka” (“State Scientific Directorate for the Control of Science-Art and Museum Institutions”) I.K. Luppol from the 21<sup>st</sup> January 1930, G.G. Shpet is dismissed from the board of acting members due to staff reductions providing him with a two week salary.

**2<sup>nd</sup> of February 1930.** Shpet is removed from the list of honoured members of the academy at the session of the Board of Directors of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**9<sup>th</sup> of April 1930.** Jurgis Baltrušaitis writes a poem “To Drunken Shpet” and “I sang to Mary, I sang to Vera,” for Shpet’s birthday.

**3<sup>rd</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> June 1930.** G.G. Shpet attends a session on the purge of the apparatus of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences.

**16<sup>th</sup> of July 1930.** A resolution is passed as a result of the purge of G.G. Shpet. At a session of the committee on the purge of the apparatus of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences Shpet is accused of creating “robust citadel of idealism” within The State Academy of Artistic Sciences. He is banned from holding senior administrative or financial positions, and from working in positions, concerned with ideological control. It is deemed acceptable to use Shpet’s knowledge in the sphere of foreign languages for work as a translator, provided he is put under sufficient ideological control.

**1<sup>st</sup> of August 1930.** An article is published in the newspaper *Вечерняя Москва*, about the purge of The State Academy of Artistic Sciences. It claims that the most notable figure that was purged was G.G. Shpet. His purge lasted for more than 10 hours. Being deprived of the right to continue his research and his right to teach, after exhausting and long lasting petitions, **at the end of 1930** Shpet receives the right to continue his translation works “on the condition that he submit to ideological directorship.”

**1931.** Shpet collaborates with the publishing houses “State Publishing House of Fiction Literature” (“Khudozhestvennaya Literatura”) and “Academia.”

**18<sup>th</sup> of January 1931.** Shpet receives proof-sheets of *The Pickwick Papers*.

**4<sup>th</sup> of February 1931.** Finishes working with the proof-sheets of *The Pickwick Papers*.

**31<sup>st</sup> of March 1931.** Finishes the translation of G.G. Byron's *The Age of Bronze*.

**10<sup>th</sup> of April 1931.** Shpet works on the translation of Byron's *Mysteries*.

**May – June 1931.** Shpet works on A. Krivtsova and E. Lann's translation of *The Pickwick Papers*.

**22<sup>nd</sup> of May 1931.** Shpet participates in the session of the editorial board of "Academia" Publishing House, where the three-year editorial plan for the sections of music and Scandinavian literature were discussed.

**5<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of June 1931.** A. Krivtsova and E. Lann write official requests to Shpet, asking him to become an equal partner in the translation of *The Pickwick Papers*. They also send their request to the "State Publishing House of Fiction Literature" ("Художественная литература"). An additional agreement to Shpet's participation in the work of the translation of *The Pickwick Papers* is made.

**October 1931.** In collaboration with Liubov Yakovlevna Gurevich, Shpet edits a book by K.S. Stanislavsky entitled *An Actor Prepares*.

**1932.** Following the invitation of K.S. Stanislavsky, Shpet becomes a professor of the Academy of Theatre Arts.

**February 1932.** Together with Liubov Yakovlevna Gurevich, Shpet continues to edit the book by K.S. Stanislavsky *An Actor Prepares*.

**Spring 1932.** Shpet visits Sophia Yakovlevna Parnok and translates one of Almast's arias into English for her.

**April 1932.** Translates the libretto of G. Verdi's *Rigoletto* for the Moscow Art Theatre. Shpet's translation is not accepted.

**30<sup>th</sup> of April 1932.** Stanislavsky writes Shpet a letter apologizing for the rejection of his version of *Rigoletto*.

**May 1932.** Shpet signs a contract with the "State Publishing House for Technical Literature" for the translation of Galileo Galilei's *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*.

**8<sup>th</sup> of November 1932.** Shpet writes a letter to Vladimir Dmitriyevich Bonch-Bruyevich with the proposal to publish the letters of Afanasy Fet, received by the State Academy for Artistic Sciences from M.Y. Avinova with annotations.

**16<sup>th</sup> of November 1932.** Yuriy Mikhailovich Panebratzev sends Shpet an article entitled “Levels of Consciousness in Relation to Death and Immortality: A Phenomenological Essay.”

**1933.** Shpet collaborates with the “Academia” Publishing House and writes a review of K. Erberg’s translation of *The Wedding* by Stanisław Wyspiański.

**January–June 1933.** Shpet takes part in the translation of *Anna Karenina* into English.

**9<sup>th</sup> of February 1933.** Shpet writes a review of Y.O. Zoundelovich’s translation of a fragment of the poetic novel *Maria* by Antoni Malczewski.

**17<sup>th</sup> of February 1933.** Shpet attends the session at the office of N.I. Bukharin, where the topic of publishing the complete works of Shakespeare is discussed.

**March 1933.** Receives a proposal to work on the plan of reorganization of the Academy of Theatre Arts affiliated to the Moscow Art Theatre from the Director of Gorky’s Moscow Art Theatre of the USSR K.S. Stanislavskiy.

**2<sup>nd</sup> of May 1933.** Shpet writes a review of S. Gorodetskiy’s translation (vol. II–VII) of *Pan Tadeusz* by Adam Mickiewicz.

**May 1933.** Shpet edits the translation of W.M. Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* for “Academia” Publishing House.

**May 1933.** Shpet presents a project of *The Complete Works of C. Dickens* for “Academia” Publishing House.

**June 1933.** Shpet presents a project of a Dickensian Encyclopedia for “Academia” Publishing House.

**First half of June 1933.** Shpet edits the beginning of A. Radlova’s translation of the tragedy *Othello*, and notices that the translator need to rework it. Shpet reports his opinion to L.B. Kamenev.

**8<sup>th</sup> of June 1933.** Shpet writes 1) a review of N. Volpin’s translation of J. Keats’ poem “To Autumn”; 2) a review of F. Samonenko’s translation of the poem *Maria* by Antoni Malczewski.

**14<sup>th</sup> of June 1933.** Shpet writes a review of N. Sochnev’s translation of *Pan Tadeusz* by Adam Mickiewicz.

**15<sup>th</sup> of June 1933.** Shpet takes part in a council meeting at “Academia” Publishing House regarding the publication of the complete works of Shakespeare. There he presents his

publishing plan for the series and the principles of translation. He is appointed an editor-in-chief of the VI volume of the series, which included: *Measure for Measure*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*.

**First half of July 1933.** Shpet writes letters to A.A. Smirnov regarding the editing of the complete works of Shakespeare.

**July 1933.** In collaboration Liubov Yakovlevna Gurevich and Vasiliy Grigorievich Sakhnovskiy, Shpet continues to edit the book by K.S. Stanislavsky *An Actor Prepares*.

**19<sup>th</sup> of August 1933.** Shpet receives the project “Problematics of Research in the Field of Artistic Speech” and the plan to equip the cabinet for research of artistic speech, from S.I. Bernstein for the Academy of Moscow Art Theatre.

**26<sup>th</sup> of August 1933.** Shpet attends the funeral of Sophia Yakovlevna Parnok with B.L. Pasternak.

**First half of September 1933.** Writes letters to Smirnov, explaining his opinion of the test translations of the plays of Shakespeare and the untranslated plays.

**10<sup>th</sup> of September 1933.** Shpet writes a letter to Smirnov, expressing his readiness to start negotiating with A. Radlova regarding the translation of *Macbeth* only after receiving her completed translation of *Othello*.

**23<sup>rd</sup> of September 1933.** Sergey Polyakov sends Shpet his translation of *The Crimean Sonnets* by Adam Mickiewicz.

**Second half of September 1933.** Shpet writes letters to Smirnov, saying that 1) the play *Titus Andronicus* has been assigned to Korusheva; 2) that Asmus has expressed his readiness to participate in the work on the volume of articles about Shakespeare.

**Beginning of October 1933.** Shpet tells Smirnov of his “depression” after reading some of the ideology-driven articles in the newspapers of the time, dedicated to Shakespearean topics.

**23<sup>rd</sup> of October 1933.** Writes his review of Efremenkov’s translation of Heinrich Heine’s poems.

**17<sup>th</sup> of December 1933.** A contract for the publication and reissuing of the translation of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* is signed between “Academia” Publishing House, S.M. Solovyov and G.G. Shpet.

**16<sup>th</sup> of January 1934.** Shpet attends the very first session of the Editorial board of “Academia” Publishing House on *The Mythology Dictionary*.

**20<sup>th</sup> of February 1934.** Shpet writes a reply to B.V. Avilov's translation of *C. Dickens' Letters*.

**19<sup>th</sup> of March 1934.** *The Lady of the Camellias* production by V.E. Meyerhold is premiered in The Meyerhold Theatre. Shpet takes part in the translation and production of this play.

**3<sup>rd</sup> of April 1934.** Shpet takes part in the organization of an evening dedicated to the works of Shakespeare.

**15<sup>th</sup> of April 1934.** Shpet attends a meeting of the translators of the Bureau of translated literature affiliated to the Organizing Committee of the I Congress of the Soviet Writers, during which the paper of E. Lann "The Style of Early Dickens and his Reflection in the Russian Translation based on the material from *The Pickwick Papers* is read.

**14<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> of April 1934.** Shpet writes a letter to L.B. Kamenev with an attachment of the edited version of A. Radlova's translation of *Othello*. Proposes that L.B. Kamenev himself should become the "reader" of the translations of Shakespeare's works.

**12<sup>th</sup> of June 1934.** Proposes A. Frankovskiy as a translator for *A Sentimental Journey...* by Sterne to "Academia" Publishing House.

**July 1934.** Corresponds with Dmitry Shakhovskoy regarding the publication of the *Philosophical Letters* by P.Y. Chaadayev.

**2<sup>nd</sup> of July 1934.** Smirnov sends Shpet Kuzmin's translation of *King Lear*.

**8<sup>th</sup> of July 1934.** Smirnov sends Shpet Radlova's edited translation of *Othello*.

**9<sup>th</sup> of July 1934.** Shpet writes a review of N. Zhdanov's and B. Avilov's translations of *C. Dickens' Letters*.

**October 1934.** Shpet writes a response to the criticism of D. Mirsky regarding the principles of translation of Shakespeare's works.

**1<sup>st</sup> of October 1934.** Shpet attends a preliminary conference on the discussion of the assignment-program for the development of a prototype-project of the buildings of Gorky's Institute of Literature, affiliated to the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union in Moscow.

**Start of November 1934.** Shpet writes a letter to Smirnov, describing his situation after Mirsky's criticism of his translation of *Macbeth*.

**End of December 1934.** Shpet sends Smirnov his Commentary to *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* by Dickens (Moscow, 1934).

**Second half of January 1935.** Shpet writes a letter to Smirnov, in which he refuses to go to Leningrad and announces the appointment of S. Dinamov the editor-in-chief of the complete works of Shakespeare.

**6<sup>th</sup> of February 1935.** Shpet is summoned to the section of translators of the USSR Union of Writers (Apt. 14, 52 Vorovskogo St.) to M.A. Zenkevich on a personal matter.

**8<sup>th</sup> of March 1935.** Shpet writes a letter to O.L. Knipper-Chekhova thanking her for the book *The Correspondence of A.P. Chekhov and O.L. Knipper-Chekhova* that she had given him.

**14<sup>th</sup> of March 1935.** Shpet is shown a warrant for his arrest and search.

**15<sup>th</sup> of March 1935.** Shpet is arrested and sent to Lubyanka prison.

**22<sup>nd</sup> of March 1935.** G. Beus writes a letter to S. Dinamov, in which he states: “As for the volumes VI and II, Shpet has drawn the short straw regarding them as well.”

**17<sup>th</sup> of April 1935.** At a conference on the publication of the Complete Works of Shakespeare the publication plan, suggested by Shpet is reviewed. The general editorship of the Complete Works of Shakespeare is assigned to S. Dinamov. The latter suggests a new publication plan of the series. Volume VI that was submitted to the publishing house before Shpet’s arrest is not accepted. The translation of *Macbeth*, completed by S.M. Solovyov and G.G. Shpet is also declined by the publishing house without notifying Shpet.

**End of May – beginning of June 1935.** Transferred to the Butyrka prison. He is named a suspect, alongside A.G. Gabrichevsky, M.A. Petrovsky and B.I. Yarkho.

**20<sup>th</sup> of June 1935.** The verdict of the special council is pronounced: a five year exile to Yeniseysk.

**28<sup>th</sup> of June 1935.** Meeting with his family (Natalia Konstantinovna, Lenora, Margarita and Marina) in the Butyrka prison.

**30<sup>th</sup> of June 1935.** Second meeting with his family (Lenora, Tatiana, Marina and Sergei).

**1<sup>st</sup> of June 1935.** Departed from Yaroslavsky train station, Moscow, for Krasnoyarsk with his wife Natalia Konstantinovna and son Sergei. Natalia Konstantinovna stays with him until **15<sup>th</sup> of September 1935.**

**Beginning of July 1935.** Shpet spends five days in Krasnoyarsk in the House of Kolkhoz (House of collective farmers).

**12<sup>th</sup> of July 1935.** Shpet arrived in Yeniseysk. Rents a room at 7 Tamarova Street, next moves to 12 Ioffe Street.

**3<sup>rd</sup> of September 1935.** Arrival in Yeniseysk of his daughter Marina.

**7<sup>th</sup> of September 1935.** Writes a letter from Yeniseysk to Liubov Yakovlevna Gurevich, in which he asks her to write her memoirs, and also read his article about Herzen.

**September – October 1935.** Shpet translates Tennyson's poem "Enoch Arden."

**6<sup>th</sup> of November 1935.** Arrival of Lenora.

**10<sup>th</sup> of November 1935.** The Special Council decides to change the location of his exile to Tomsk.

**1<sup>st</sup> of December 1935.** Shpet is informed of the Special Council's decision.

**18<sup>th</sup> of December 1935.** Departure on the postal cart with Lenora and Marina.

**Around the 20<sup>th</sup> of December 1935.** Shpet spends a few days in Krasnoyarsk with the parents of N.A. Kytmanov.

**24<sup>th</sup> of December 1935.** Shpet arrives in Tomsk and settles in apartment 2, 9 Kolpashevsky Lane. Monthly registration with the NKVD begins on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December.

**28<sup>th</sup> of December 1935.** Departure of Lenora.

**Beginning of 1936.** Translation of G. Berkeley's *Three Dialogues*.

**End of March 1936.** Arrival of Natalia Konstantinovna who stays till **18<sup>th</sup> of April 1936**.

**13<sup>th</sup> of April 1936.** Shpet signs a contract with the Publishing House of Sociological and Economic Literature for the translation of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* by G.W.F. Hegel.

**17<sup>th</sup> of April 1936.** Elizaveta Nikolayevna Konshina visits Shpet; departs **2<sup>nd</sup> of June 1936**.

**April – May 1936.** Translated the letters of Schiller to Goethe.

**First days of May 1936.** Begins work on the translation of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

**1<sup>st</sup> of June 1936.** Arrival of Margarita and Natalia Ilinichna Ignatova, who stay till **25<sup>th</sup> of June 1936**.

**6<sup>th</sup> of June 1936.** Begins proofreading his translation of the letters of Schiller and Goethe together with N.I. Ignatova and his daughter Margarita.

**2<sup>nd</sup> of July 1936.** Arrival of Natalia Konstantinovna (leaves around 20<sup>th</sup> September) and Sergei (leaves 12<sup>th</sup> of August).

**25<sup>th</sup> of September 1936.** Termination of the contract with the Publishing House of Sociological and Economic Literature for the translation of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* by G.W. F. Hegel without notifying the translator.

**7<sup>th</sup> of November 1936.** Lenora gives birth to his granddaughter Yelena.

**28<sup>th</sup> of March 1937.** G. Berkeley's *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* is sent for publication without crediting the translator.

**8<sup>th</sup> of April 1937.** Arrival of Marina, who stays till **3<sup>rd</sup> of May 1937.**

**End of May 1937.** Arrival of Lenora and Granddaughter Yelena, who stay till **30<sup>th</sup> of June 1937.**

**4<sup>th</sup> of July 1937.** Arrival of N.I. Ignatova.

**10<sup>th</sup> of July 1937.** Arrival of E.N. Konshina.

**End of July 1937.** Arrival of Natalia Konstantinovna and Sergei, Departure of Ignatova and Konshina.

**Mid-August 1937.** Shpet completes work on *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (published in 1959 with translation credits given to Shpet). Departure of Sergei.

**12<sup>th</sup> of September 1937.** Marina gives birth to his grandson Alexei.

**21<sup>st</sup> of October 1937.** M.A. Petrovsky is arrested. Natalia Konstantinovna departs.

**25<sup>th</sup> of October 1937.** Completion of M.A. Petrovsky's case.

**26<sup>th</sup> of October 1937.** The date of the last, unfinished letter to his wife which is left lying on the desk.

**27<sup>th</sup> of October 1937.** Shpet is arrested.

**31<sup>st</sup> of October 1937.** NKVD Troika sentences M.A. Petrovsky to death.

**1<sup>st</sup> of November 1937.** Shpet is interrogated.

**2<sup>nd</sup> of November 1937.** Completion of Shpet's case.

**9<sup>th</sup> of November 1937.** NKVD Troika sentences Shpet to death.

**10<sup>th</sup> of November 1937.** M.A. Petrovsky is shot.

**16<sup>th</sup> of November 1937.** Shpet is shot.

**April 1940.** Additional research is carried out on the 1937 case.

**10<sup>th</sup> of December 1940.** NKVD refuses to reconsider the 1937 case.

**December 1955.** The case is reconsidered.

**19<sup>th</sup> of January 1956.** Decree by the Tomsk Regional Court to reverse the sentence of the NKVD Troika.

**27<sup>th</sup> of January 1956.** Certificate of the rehabilitation of the 1937 case.

**21<sup>st</sup> of February 1956.** Official testimony of the death of G.G. Shpet of lung inflammation in 1940 is issued.

**6<sup>th</sup> of November 1958.** A ruling of the Military court of Moscow Military District is issued, reversing the sentence of the Special Council of the NKVD.

**14<sup>th</sup> of November 1958.** A certificate of rehabilitation of the case of 1935 is issued.

**8<sup>th</sup> of June 1959.** A contract is signed between the Publishing House of Sociological and Economic Literature and Shpet's children to reissue *The Phenomenology of Spirit* in the series of Hegel's works.

**10<sup>th</sup> of April 1989.** B.P. Trenin's report on "The Criminal Case Against G.G. Shpet" at Tomsk Regional Symposium is cancelled.

**2<sup>nd</sup> of June 1989.** N.V. Serebrennikov's article in *Russian Thought* (Paris) entitled "New Information on the Death of G.G. Shpet" is published.

**15<sup>th</sup> of November 1989.** A memorial service for G.G. Shpet is held in the Tomsk Lutheran Fellowship.

**28<sup>th</sup> of August 1990.** Official testament of the death on 16 November 1937 is issued; cause of death – execution by shooting.

**10<sup>th</sup> of October 1990.** A rejection by Tomsk Regional Prosecution Office to change the phrasing of the original sentence from the existing: “failure of evidence” to the proposed “absence of the event of crime.”

**9<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> of April 1991.** International conference dedicated to Shpet is held in Tomsk.

**14<sup>th</sup> of April 1992.** A certificate of rehabilitation due to the absence of the event of crime in the 1937 case based on the article of the law of the 18<sup>th</sup> October 1991 “On the Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression” is issued.

Natalia Avtonomova

# THE PROBLEM OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL LANGUAGE IN GUSTAV SHPET'S WORKS<sup>1</sup>

The question of philosophical language, or rather, of abstract, conceptual language, of the way philosophy sees the language and which language it uses, is profoundly controversial nowadays. In one way or another, it is woven into the framework of contemporary disputes on modern philosophy, on its possibilities and perspectives: whether philosophy should follow patterns of fantasy and imagination, placing its emphasis on emotion and experience, or whether it should support everything related to cognition in culture, its aspiration to objectivity, that fundamental value of the Western culture, without which it would not be able to sustain itself. In the first case, the issue of language is, in fact, pushed into the background and the struggle with the “language husk” of the thought as an obstacle to its spontaneous movement comes to the fore. In the second, the issue of the language (languages) as an instrument of articulating contents gains in significance, since without this tool no mature thought may express itself. Thereafter, the forms of existing philosophy differ: it comes closer to art and the aesthetical forms of being, than to the humanities and its characteristic forms of expressing mental experience.

In his time, Shpet defended philosophy as a branch of knowledge, though many disagreed with him. Today this issue is even more pressing, since in the circumstances

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<sup>1</sup> The research was made with the financial support from Russian Foundation for Humanities (RFH). Project No. 14-03-00587.

of the loss of foundations, philosophy faces the risk of going astray, becoming something in-between literature and sermon. During the last ten years, Shpet's works often provided a consolation to me, and his treatment of what I call here the problem of the philosophical language was important as a footing in my research. Therefore, I will try to trace how this problem manifests itself in three aspects that are important to me: in the history of philosophy, taken in the cultural context of the epoch; in the analysis of basic concepts of social sciences and humanities; and finally, in the practice of translation as a special privileged form of the thought's being in culture. All these components communicate with each other and nourish each other within the framework of language and linguistic being of culture.

### **PHILOSOPHICAL LANGUAGE IN THE HISTORY OF RUSSIAN PHILOSOPHY**

Foremost of all, this problem is discussed in the *Очерк развития русской философии* (An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy).<sup>2</sup> Both in Shpet's lifetime and today, the reception of this work has always been and continues to be controversial, on the one hand, and in particular, because it contains his criticism of utilitarianism and moralistic tendencies in Russian intellectual culture, and due to the underdevelopment of what we now can call conceptual languages on the other hand. As it is known, the composition of this work was preceded by the toil on 15-volume anthological project on the history of Russian philosophy. This project had to be abandoned, and Shpet set to work on the *Outline*, incorporating into it vast amount of material which partly remained in the form of unencrypted references. During the preparation of my book *Cognition and Translation: Essays on the Philosophy of Language*,<sup>3</sup> I had the chance to access and analyse anew a series of historical sources with which Shpet worked while he was writing the *Outline*; in my opinion they not only substantiate the main line of Shpet's argument, but occasionally provide material for a more pointed and closer look at various issues, not for the purpose of criticism, but for sake of the future development of Russian culture. We can only regret that this project was not realized: if the empirical sources of Shpet's conceptualizations were presented to the reader in an organized and systematic way, there would be fewer questions relating to his reconstructions and interpretations. Shpet wrote about the *Outline*:

Whatever the qualities of my work are, at least it is partially justified by the amount of material included. Nevertheless, in this regard my work remains the pioneering effort. Only after it is concluded, I, or anyone else, can launch out into the more deeply hidden profundities both of its "contexts," and of the Russian philosophical word itself.<sup>4</sup>

These depths (the historical context and the philosophical word: let us note that they both are treated not extensively, but intensively, not in breadth, but in depth) show

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Г. Г. Шпет, *Очерк развития русской философии* [An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy], ред. Т. Щедрина (Москва: РОССПЭН, 2008). Hereinafter – "Outline."

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Н. С. Автономова, *Познание и перевод. Опыты философии языка* [Cognition and Translation. Essays on the Philosophy of Language] (Москва: РОССПЭН, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Шпет, *Очерк*, 44.

us the twofold reference point of Shpet's approach to the history of Russian philosophy. The first task is to position it within the right context: it precisely defines historicity or unhistoricity of our approaches and judgments; moreover, Shpet considers the investigation of education, enlightenment, science in philosophical and historical light, to constitute the most immediate context of the studies. The second is of the most interest to us at present: the Russian "philosophical word" or, to rephrase, the Russian conceptual language. Underneath this humble designation lies an agenda of tremendous significance. According to Shpet, the encumbered and sometimes controversial establishment of the "Russian philosophical language" functions as a horizon on which the development of Russian philosophy takes place.<sup>5</sup>

Shpet associates the primary conditions for the formation of philosophical thought precisely with the presence or absence, development or inadequacies of basic conceptual languages both in the West and in Russia. Speaking metaphorically, Russia appears in the *Outline* as a country without a "patronymic," an orphan in the European family: the Europeans were inscribed into the context of cultural succession from antiquity, while in Russia the Old Bulgarian language, which at one time was used to translate the Holy Scripture, was not the language of a large cultural tradition, and therefore distanced us from such heritage. Though we were christened in Greek, "we were given the Bulgarian language. What could the language of a nation devoid of cultural traditions, literature and history bring to us?"<sup>6</sup> And this conceptual underdevelopment of language affected the Russian culture for a long time, until, according to Shpet, the literary efforts of Zhukovsky and Pushkin at last ended the era of "Bulgarian haze."

Here a whole range of questions emerges. First of all, numerous researchers do not agree with this opinion: Russia was not simply cut off from the ancient legacy but on the contrary, could perceive it more directly and more intensely than the Latinized West (and if something was missed, it was for the best). However, Shpet emphasizes that in the optimistic part of their thesis such people take the desired for the real. The other side of the case is what today could be called a lack of necessary political correctness, and we should keep that in mind. Are not all languages equal? After all, magnificent lyrical poetry, for instance, is possible in every language. Yet, not every language has the capacity for creation of a philosophical treatise: for such a possibility to appear, time and patient purposeful efforts are needed. Today such lack of conceptual facilities and the urgent necessity for a quick development of conceptual languages is being felt in one way or another in the former republics of the Soviet Union, now formed into separate states, and also in the countries of the former "people's democracies" that more or less recently entered the new extended Europe. Therefore, this issue of the language is universally not the thing of the past, but an acute concern of the present. As to the Old Bulgarian, it was not a living, developing language for the Russian people: over time – in the conditions of a gap between Russian as a language of everyday communication and a language of

<sup>5</sup> Speaking at the World Philosophical congress in Boston in 1998 with the report on the topic "Creation and (re) Creation of Russian Philosophical Language" ("Создание и (пере)создание русского философского языка") I faced an ambiguous perception of my thesis about necessity of creation of Russian philosophical language; I was comforted by the thought that in this way I was Shpet's companion.

<sup>6</sup> Шпет, *Очерк*, 55.

church tradition and patristic writings – it became more incomprehensible, and a habit of literalism in reading sometimes led to a fixation of dogmatic habits in the interpretation of metaphors and allegories. This entire array of socio-cultural, socio-psychological, conceptual language circumstances put together, became an obstacle on the path of Russian “enlightenment.”<sup>7</sup> Finally, there is something else. In Russia the periods of comparative openness to the West and comparative self-isolation alternated; however, it is clear that even the epoch of Peter the Great, marked by its stress of openness to the West, an epoch that has introduced a policy of intensive translations in different spheres of knowledge, still fell short of overcoming the crudity of language. Of what language? Shpet’s response is: “literary language,” but this needs further clarification: it is all about conceptual language, about different conceptual languages, about a lack of scientific terminology (or about a “lack of words for the description of terms”), but also about a lack of corresponding readers’ demands.

Herewith, as we can see, the question of the languages of ancient cultures was, for Shpet, not insignificant, but preeminent. This direction in the *Outline* is also supported by his other texts. Thus, in one of his letters he develops an entire program of education, based on the fundamental role of Latin and Greek languages in the cognition of our own languages and cultural legacy, and also, in connection with this point, on the advantages of philology (along with mathematics) among the other disciplines. Latin and Greek act as a “key to all living languages,” and also as a way of acquainting oneself not only “with culture (art, thought, science, philosophy, poetry, social life, religion) of Greeks and Romans, but also, through this, with what “lies in the basis of *our entire culture*.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, the issue here is not so much the language itself, but the capacity of language to transmit culture and intellectual legacy, enabling their appropriation and application of new conceptual tools to specifically Russian problems, creating a possibility to speak in one’s own voice, without constraint, or mannerisms, or slipping into a mystical whisper. Shpet emphasizes that Pushkin succeeded in this. I would like to remind the reader that Pushkin did not blame his difficulties on historical language and cultural deficit, but simply grappled on his own with what he called the lack of “metaphysical language” (i.e., conceptual language of abstractions), appealing to his friends and adherents to do the same. Where and how such an arsenal of cultural means and such a storehouse of mental tools may be acquired? For Pushkin the means of creating such mental tools were his works, correspondence with his friends and translations.<sup>9</sup>

Maturation of the cultural demand in reflection and creation of a Russian conceptual language is, according to Shpet, a twofold process. If European culture sharpened its ability towards reflection using the material of forming sciences and philosophy itself, in Russian culture these materials were literature and language. After Russia acquired its own

<sup>7</sup> As to his relation to the light: “A Lie is bad not by itself, but because it is (1) the origin, (2) the consequence of ambiguity. (...) Every withdrawal into darkness is a sin. (...) The resurrection from the dead = an enlightenment of everything” – letter from G. Shpet to N. Ignatova of 11 February 1921, *Густав Шпет: Жизнь в письмах. Эпистолярное наследие* [Gustav Shpet: Life in Letters. Epistolary Heritage], ред. Т. Г. Щедрина (Москва: РОССПЭН, 2005), 353.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. letter by G. Shpet to his daughter Lenora of 16 December 1919 in: *Густав Шпет: Жизнь в письмах*, 291.

<sup>9</sup> For further information on the topic see: Автономова, *Познание и перевод*, 219-521.

literature (as something not merely pragmatic, moralistic or utilitarian), there was a need for reflexive awareness and understanding of this kind of creativity, and this in turn became the direct driving force behind the development of philosophy. The advent of Russian “metaphysical language” created new opportunities for reflection, helped sentiments and stances to be turned into an articulated thought. Becoming aware of itself as something precious, literature and especially Romantic literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century gave impetus to the development of Russian culture. Reflection assumes the ability of free and at the same time disciplined thought, a skill to return to already made moves of thought to verify their validity. In a more general philosophical sense, we can say that reflection for Shpet brings with it the theme of relationship to others in the process of developing one’s own concepts. In general, “one’s own” is not something “private” and substantial (this topic was developed by Derrida): it is not initially given, not given to us by the right of birth, it is a result of work that each generation has to do anew.

Thus, history realizes a fine cultural paradox: “Romanticism” changes its place in culture; it develops from a sentiment into a philosophical problem, requiring the dispelling of the twilight of spontaneous experiences: “Criticism as a sentiment was transformed into a thought. Reflection itself became a part of the spontaneous detection of the Russian spirit.”<sup>10</sup> The sentimentalism of Karamzin, as Shpet writes, declared something new: the sovereignty of human feelings. Yet his innovations still needed to be “attached to the seedling”; Zhukovsky had already put new cultural principles in place, although he had not yet “domesticized” them and only in the works of Pushkin did the “Russian elemental force become (...) an idea, and the Russian idea was his elemental force.”<sup>11</sup> These passages were often misunderstood in the past, and remain so in our days. But in these words we should not see a rejection of morality, nor a disregard for aesthetics, but first and foremost we should observe in them the recognition of the fundamental importance of cognitive, self-aware, reflexive component for thought and culture.

## PHILOSOPHICAL LANGUAGE IN THE SPHERE OF HUMANITIES

The other field in which we face the problems of intellectual languages is the *functioning of social sciences and humanities*. I had discovered this field by considering the forms and processes of identification and self-determination of some collective entities, in the way they are reflected in the problematics of modern social sciences and humanities. My task was to analyse “ethnic determinism,” a modern phenomenon, connected with the transition from previous social theories of society, culture, consciousness, soul etc. to their explanation in terms of ethnical and national factors and circumstances. In search for a philosophical key to these phenomena of modern Russian culture I turned to Shpet’s works, *An Introduction to Ethnical Psychology* in particular.<sup>12</sup> Here similar mechanisms of the functions of consciousness were investigated (although the research concerned a different material of another epoch), generating different kinds of indoctrination. For Shpet, one of the most effective ways of opposing such mechanisms was the analysis

<sup>10</sup> Шпет, *Очерк*, 326.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 329.

<sup>12</sup> Г. Г. Шпет, *Введение в этническую психологию* [An Introduction to Ethnical Psychology] (Москва: Государственная академия художественных наук, 1927).

of what he called mistakes of understanding and expressing meaning, a phenomenon he primarily associated with conceptual homonymy. We are speaking of the necessity to dissect various meanings, tangled and “transformed” into hybrids, of such important words and concepts for social and humanitarian cognition as “subject,” “I,” “nation,” “spirit,” “soul” etc. Thus, with a single word “I” one can indicate a *thing* among things of the world around us; the psychophysical *I* which reacts to irritations coming from the environment; *I* as a soul, as a self, possessing certain integrity of human conditions, etc. All these meanings must be put apart in specific contexts, and in general, so to speak, at the level of conceptual vocabulary.

The analysis of philosophical language and also of the languages of social sciences and humanities conducted by Shpet is not narrowly logical or strictly linguistic. Nowadays, Shpet’s project which he formulated and implemented may be called the study of philosophical narratives or discourses of humanities and social sciences, which accentuate contextual varieties of meanings as a kind of substrate of different philosophical concepts. In such cases, Shpet spoke about synonymy and even more frequently, as was previously mentioned, about homonymy. Some researchers (for example V. Molchanov<sup>13</sup>) consider the use of the term “homonym” in such cases to be inappropriate, emphasizing that lexical homonymy (the existence of words identical in form but different in meaning: compare the Russian word *ключ* as “the source of water rising from the earth” and as a “metal shaft of a special shape for opening and closing of a lock”) is not the same as conceptual homonymy. Therefore, it is doubtless that in this case Shpet’s concept of homonymy is not identical to the regular lexical meaning of this word: it seems to be broader and therefore applicable to different philosophical meanings, fixated with common lexical form. A dispute about words is hardly productive here. In any case the differentiation of concepts that are transmitted by identical lexical forms should, I suppose, be considered as an essential part of the research of any subject in social sciences or humanities. It helps to resist the dogmatization of common concepts which may easily occur if we permit an unrestrained semantic glide of one sense into another.

For example, in the study of historical subjects it is fundamentally important to distinguish different meanings of the word “common.” Shpet isolates meanings that correspond to the German usage of the words *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, and in Latin accordingly *communis* (in Russian *общий*, communal) and *generalis* (in Russian *общий*, common), noting that even Rickert, who repeatedly reflected upon the specifics of cognition within humanities, erroneously left this important issue without due attention. The concept of community occurs in the study of many historical processes, in consideration of their origins, but also in questions of possession, belonging, etc. In all these cases, “communal,” paradoxically, can also mean “the individual.”<sup>14</sup> The task of the researcher is to systematically identify the structure of these special subjects of cognition in humanities, taking into consideration the fact that the concepts employed do

<sup>13</sup> Cf. В. И. Молчанов, “Проблема Я у Густава Шпета: от термина к концепции,” *Густав Шпет и его философское наследие: у истоков семиотики и структурализма* [“The Problem of I in Gustav Shpet: from the Term to the Conception”] in: *Gustav Shpet and His Philosophical Legacy: at the Origins of Semiotics and Structuralism*, ред. Т. Г. Щедрина (Москва: РОССПЭН, 2010), 84-85.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from G. G. Shpet to D. M. Petrushevskiy of 16.04-6.05.1928, in: *Густав Шпет: Жизнь в письмах*, 455.

not obey the logical rule of inverse relationship of volume and content: the structure of these subjects is specific, and every component in it appears as a part of the construction of the whole.

A separate issue that can be only briefly outlined in this case, is the conceptual connection between Shpet's methodological thesis and certain conceptual elaborations of Jakobson, Troubetzkoy and other representatives of Prague structuralism. It appears primarily in the interpretations of ideas of structure and integrity in Roman Jakobson's works. As can be seen from the surviving letters, Jakobson, who knew Shpet from the time of the Moscow linguistic circle, deeply respected him, read his works, followed his publications, sought to engage him in collaborative projects. In particular, he attempted to involve Shpet in the work of the reorganized *Slavic Review* journal in Prague that existed from the end of 1920s to the end of 1930s.<sup>15</sup>

Western researchers usually identify the concept of structure in Jakobson's and Troubetzkoy's work as approximately halfway between structure and wholeness, associating the uncertainty of the status of this concept with remnants of Romantic ideology that did not allow Jakobson and Troubetzkoy to be scientifically coherent in their interpretations of structure. I believe that Shpet's approach to this question (and therefore, on the strength of evident conceptual influence, partly Jakobson's too) has its basis not in Romantic ideology, but another (not actually analytical, and not Saussurean) methodology. Structure for Shpet is not an abstract model that is arbitrarily defined as just a "point of view" of the researcher, but a specific construction. It lies not in the static, but in the dynamic sphere, not in the realm of reproduction of logical connections, but in the realm of the changing conditions of the whole; it assumes not particular logical changes (conversions, transformations), but rather certain dynamics of the whole, implemented through special relationships of parts between themselves and of parts with the whole. I would like to stress that the issue of altering the structure was considered quite legitimate and even necessary in the study of structures by Shpet, in contrast to the adepts of the conditional dogma of structuralism. Thus, both Shpet and Jakobson deal with what we can call an "open structure" that in fact is the foundation of Prague structuralism, very different from other approaches of static structuralism that absolutized closed structures. This, once again, supports the supposition that Jakobson was influenced not only by the idea of the whole presented in *Logical Investigations* by Husserl, but also by Shpet's approach to the problem of the structure as inextricably linked to dynamics and change. For us here it is principally important that Shpet's structure is dynamic, but not at all undefined: it exists and must be studied, because without a definition of the structure of a scientific subject, cognition of it is totally impossible.

In all these endeavours Shpet acts as a historian, a philologist, but first of all as a philosopher who sees interactions between all these disciplines. Shpet openly recognizes the reliance of humanities on philology, or, in other words, the irremovable philological inflection. Shpet used to quote the German philologist Hermann Usener who claimed that the philologist is the one who goes before the historian ("the philologist pioneers for the historian" or in other words, he first settles in that undiscovered country to which historian

<sup>15</sup> Cf. letters from R. O. Jakobson to G. G. Shpet in: *Густав Шпет: Жизнь в письмах*, 502-506.

comes later), yet despite this fact, the historian is “twice the philologist.” After all, reading the text “philologically,” the historian exposes it to a secondary interpretation, decoding certain actual facts (whether it is “the call of the Varangians,” “the murder of Caesar” or “the death of Charlemagne”) as “signs, words and symbols” that need decryption, delineation of some real essences, and in the next move – social groups, social relations, organizations etc. In cognitive sense, of primary importance to us is the idea that the historical subject is never given to us directly: it is presented only in *evidence* – documents, monuments, acts, depositions, etc. Thus, in historical science (and also in other sciences of the humanities related to history), the question of the significance of certain social facts and events becomes inevitable. According to Shpet, this is semasiological, or, perhaps, semiotic aspect of knowledge about human beings.<sup>16</sup>

### TRANSLATION AND PHILOSOPHICAL LANGUAGE

Finally, we approach the third aspect for consideration: *translation and the problem of the philosophical language*. In Shpet’s lifetime, the problematics of translation had not yet become as recognized and widespread as nowadays. However, Shpet outlined all the key stages of the future transformations of this subject which took place in our time, and most importantly, the reasons for rethinking the role of language in the mechanisms of thought. Attitudes to the problem of translation are also determined by Shpet in the history of philosophy, and in modern functioning of this kind of practices and knowledge. It is well known that Shpet had vast experience as an editor and translator.<sup>17</sup> The subsequent chain of reconsiderations of language problematics that unfolded throughout the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century gradually brought understanding, dialogue, communication and finally translation to the foreground in philosophy. Nowadays the problem of translation – as a conceptual resource of understanding, as a basic mechanism of culture and cognition – becomes the primary significant sphere for modern philosophy and methodology of science, not to speak of the broader field of history of culture and cognition. However, this transformation does not run smoothly or painlessly. The further it proceeds, the more powerful become the conceptions which make the problem of untranslatability and various difficulties of translation (which undeniably exist, in plenty if not in excess) explicit; such conceptions postulate the unavailability of “reference points” in principle, and therefore allege an absence of “original sources” with which translations might be compared. In this perspective, all translations are interpreted as equal, functionally defined not by the original, but by the requirements of a certain “translating” epoch. This

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 450.

<sup>17</sup> I will only mention his major translations: R. Eisler, *Grundlagen der Erkenntnistheorie* (Основные положения теории познания); H. Rickert, *Der Gegenstand der Erkenntnis: Einführung in die Transzendentalphilosophie* (Введение в трансцендентальную философию. Предмет познания); A. Bine, *Les idées modernes sur les enfants* (Современные идеи о детях); W. Dilthey, *Ideas for a Descriptive and Analytic Psychology* (Описательная психология, пер. Е. Д. Зайцева, ред. Г. Г. Шпет); G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Феноменология духа). Shpet was a coeditor (with A. A. Smirnov) of the first edition of full collection of Shakespeare’s works (1936-1941). He edited the novel *Anna Karenina* in its translation into English. During his last years he was working on literary translations in cooperation with publishing houses Академия, ГИХЛ, Детгиз, Молодая гвардия. See: *Густав Шпет: Жизнь в письмах*, 716. After his arrest and exile his name was deleted and forgotten for a long time. Cf. chronology of Shpet’s life and works in this issue of *Kronos*.

mind-frame, I would stress, is completely analogous to cognitive relativism in philosophy and methodology of science.

However, Shpet's analysis of history and contemporary practices of translation does not support such tendencies. Shpet wrote about translation and about those who translate, he also translated himself and edited a great deal. Thus, for example, the *Outline* is saturated with examples of the efforts of the translators of the past, and also of historians and philologists who collected for us the material on these cultural processes and the difficulties faced in their analysis. Plato's translations are a perfect example of this. Thus, V. N. Karpov translating Plato in 19<sup>th</sup> Century, criticizes his predecessors Pakhomov and Sidorovskiy who translated Plato in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century: their language is "too pedantic, unnecessarily clothing the philosopher's thought in Slavic forms," and they understood better the "meanings of words, than the thoughts," yet, Shpet notes that Karpov himself is not free from unnecessary Slavisms, and wonders whether "the Russian language of the time was at all capable of creating something better?" The great problem was also the absence of the enlightened reader who would have taste and desire for reading. Even when it seemed that much had been translated, there still was no one to read it: "Printed copies lay in heaps in printing houses and in warehouses and were sold as waste paper or burned. There were no readers. But, more importantly, there was no language."<sup>18</sup> The process of the formulation of a philosophical language, the construction of conceptual languages in various fields of cognition was difficult and nonlinear.

Shpet not only studied translations made by others, but also produced his own, and in the late period of his life, translation work in philosophy was his principle activity. In the preface to Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit*,<sup>19</sup> he laconically presented a whole range of issues of translation, viewed from philological, historical and philosophical perspectives. As Shpet points out, Hegel's stylistic manner may be difficult for translation, but the most serious problems concern the use of terminology. The problem was that the journey of spirit and its ascension required, on the one hand, retention of the established terminology, and on the other hand, created the necessity to somehow mark introduction of a new stage and new meanings. Thus, the question of interpretation and commentary was interwoven into the fabric of translation.

A whole range of difficulties in translation of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* were caused, as Shpet notes, by Hegel's avoidance of Latin and Greek terminology and his aspiration to use only Germanized variants: i.e., terms of everyday speech or terms that were invented by himself, which progressively lost their artificial look and entered into wider literary use. And this tendency characterizes not only *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, but Hegel's other works as well. Herewith, Hegel used systematically (i.e., as terms) words that, strictly speaking, were not terms at all; and yet, this means that they also require a uniform, consistent translation. What, then, should the Russian translator of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* do?

<sup>18</sup> Шпет, *Очерк*, 65, 64.

<sup>19</sup> [Г. Г. Шпет], "От переводчика," Г. В. Ф. Гегель, *Феноменология духа* ["From the translator" *Phenomenology of Spirit*] (Москва: АН СССР, Институт философии, Издательство Социально-экономической литературы, 1959), XLVI-XLVIII.

Since there was nothing similar in the development of the Russian philosophical terminology, and since Latin terminology remains more familiar and more understandable to us, it will be simple pedantry to invent Russified terminology in parallel to Hegel's German equivalents, or to introduce broken Russian words where tradition was not established or is silent.<sup>20</sup>

Of course, not to use the terms borrowed from other languages which have already achieved the rights of citizenship would be a ridiculous purism, so since some terms have already gained a foothold in conceptual language through regular use, the best policy would be to retain them. As to the statement that there “was nothing similar in the development of the Russian philosophical terminology,” here clarification is needed, not so much for Shpet, but for the reader. Attempts to create a Russified terminology were present in the Russian culture from the beginning (of course, I am not speaking of the farcical experiments of Shishkov and his supporters, but of the efforts of V. Tredyakovskiy and A. Kantemir); on the other hand, the history of thought managed to contain and introduce into language only a small fragment of these efforts, while the prevailing tendency towards Latinization of terminology remained dominant for centuries, and in the last twenty years of the post-Soviet era of turbulent translation trends, perhaps, has reached disastrous proportions.

## CONCLUSIONS

Everything discussed above referred to philosophical (conceptual, notional, intellectual) language in the three fields: historical and cultural sphere, the conceptual and functional dimension, and, finally, the field of translation. These were but different aspects of the philosophical essence of language: its appearance (in history), its functioning (in conceptual languages of cognition and philosophy in the fields of humanities and social sciences) and its transformations (in translation). However, after all, along with such objective forms, philosophical language existed for Shpet also in its subjective modus: as a language he himself used, generating it for his own purposes. The philosophical language of Shpet is an interesting topic for future investigation. Turning back to our first object of analysis, to the *Outline*, we immediately notice that in this text there is much of interest from the point of view of the peculiarities of Shpet's language. Indeed, the book is quite academic in its nature, due to the way it introduces and handles empirical material and conceptual schemes, and yet includes journalistic passages and elements of creative prose. Thus, Shpet does not attempt to restrain acutely emotional intonation (for instance, he describes a weak, timid thought as “hesitant steps of the spineless cripple, unsure of himself”), and permits himself stylistic license (the theme progress in philosophy is referred to as a “barded topic”; another example: “around me the revolution raged and rumbled” etc.), there are also biting personal characteristics, etc.

The work on the *Outline* was carried out in the era of “war and revolution,” in the period of economic ruin and spiritual confusion. It seems that in such time, it would have been appropriate to turn the entire force of one's passion onto the defence of philosophy as

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, LVII.

a worldview, as a form of highest ideology. However, Shpet, as it was noted above, created something different: he defends philosophy as a field of knowledge, as a creature of the spirit not subject to government orders or religious sermons; he describes the establishment of Russian philosophy in the modus of autonomous spontaneity and, at the same time, in the modus of the maturing necessity for reflection. Nowadays, the thesis of philosophy as knowledge may seem to be hopelessly archaic, especially to those who are familiar with the dogmatic Marxist view of scientific philosophy. And moreover, it can seem to be an archaism to those who today have an image of philosophy as a cloud with hazy edges, to those who replace philosophy with literature, treating philosophy as a creative literary approximation of the products of our fantasy and imagination. Therefore the sore point of Shpet's era – the question of the nature of philosophy and of what it should constitute, is no less, if not more relevant in our day, when philosophy as a way of formulating clear questions, aimed at the comprehension of truth in different fields of human existence – all but disappears.

Thus, Shpet's thesis on philosophy as knowledge is not an archaism. The field of meanings of this thesis for Shpet, obviously, includes Husserl's framing of philosophy as a strict science, but it is not limited to following phenomenological guidelines. The knowledge of which Shpet speaks, is not an intellectual "copybook," but a result of free creative work and at the same time of reflexive orientation on certain objects that are important in the establishment of a certain culture. In one of the final sections of the *Outline*, Shpet suggests that we are yet to come to philosophy as knowledge: this is the future of Russian culture, its horizon. In 1922, while Shpet remained in Russia refusing to emigrate, he most likely perceived his future as a means of accomplishing this task, as a chance to continue this movement. However, in the course of sixty long years, the advancement towards a wide cultural development of reflection and the conceptual languages necessary for its implementation was interrupted, not because nothing was done in philosophy, but because this movement in culture was hindered by the absolute dominance of the conceptual framework of dogmatic Marxism. Therefore now in the post-Soviet period, Shpet has become for us in some sense an even more relevant thinker, than he had been in the last sixty years. As the saying goes, no man is a prophet in his own land. Who can say what other resources may be found in our legacy? In essence, through Shpet we gain access to something that Europe has not experienced – figuratively speaking, to Husserlian experience that dodges the paths paved by Heidegger, with all his tendencies for slipping into the mystical and inexpressible. Who knows, maybe such "delays" will bring a charge of positive analytics that had already been consumed in other dimensions? In that case, our experience will prove useful not only to ourselves.

# PATHS TO THE “AUTHENTIC ACTUALITY” OF GUSTAV SHPET

## 1. ESSENCE AND INTUITION

Shpet devoted his first major work *Appearance and Sense* (1914) to the analysis of Husserl's book *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*<sup>1</sup> published in 1913. Many modern scholars of Shpet's heritage<sup>2</sup> believe that the greater part of the book is devoted to a brief and quite adequate reiteration of *Ideas I*, and only in the last chapters, mostly Chapter 7, Shpet introduces and justifies his own philosophical position. In our view, this assertion requires a significant adjustment. Shpet subordinates the presentation of Husserl's text to his own goals, selecting passages from *Ideas I* which he considers important and ignoring those which have no relation to his own purposes. This approach not only modifies Husserl's position, however slightly, but also brings Shpet to the conclusions which do not fit within the context of Husserl's phenomenology. Let us consider the text.

From the first chapters of the book, Shpet quite clearly states his objective, which he identifies with the main purpose of philosophy: to discover and describe the authentic actuality, true being. Shpet believes that Husserl's phenomenology will help him to approach the “authentic actuality.” Herewith, he is not at all concerned by the fact that in Husserl's *Ideas I*, the main objective is somewhat different: the development of phenomenology as a science of pure consciousness; a science based on direct and adequate givenness. It is remarkable that to develop an ontological range of problems Shpet turns to *Ideas I*, criticized by many disciples of Husserl, who believed that its transcendentalism constituted a threat to what was perceived as the goal of philosophy, namely “things in themselves.”<sup>3</sup> The critics mostly belonged to the so-called realist phenomenology school: Geiger, Reinach, Hildebrand, Conrad, Scheler and others.

<sup>1</sup> E. Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book: General Introduction to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. F. Kersten (Hague, Dorsten, Lancaster: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1983). Hereafter, *Ideas I*.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Н. В. Мотрошилова, “Книга Шпета «Явление и смысл» как веха в развитии феноменологии” [Shpet's *Appearance and Sense* as a Signpost in the Development of Phenomenology], *Историко-философский ежегодник* (2006).

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Molchanov has pointed out to the possibility of mutually exclusive interpretations of Husserl's text. See В. И. Молчанов, *Различение и опыт: феноменология неагрессивного сознания* [Differentiation and Experience: Phenomenology of the Unaggressive Consciousness] (Москва: Три квадрата, 2004), 233.

In *Ideas I*, Shpet appreciated Husserl's differentiation between the science of matters of fact and the science of essences, and his declaration of phenomenology as a science of essences. But from Shpet's point of view, it is not only the recognition of the ontological priority of the ideal being that matters (since he as a staunch Platonist is already convinced of this and has no need to appeal to Husserl's authority for confirmation), but the method of comprehending the world of essences is also of importance. For Husserl, the essences become discernible in the ideal intuition enhancing empirical contemplation. Shpet, following Vladimir Solovyov and other representatives of Russian philosophy, sees ideal intuition as an alternative to deductive logical reasoning. We can see this as an example of rejection by many Russian philosophers of various speculative rational constructions which, in their view, distract us from the true being that may be seen only directly. Shpet's particular interest in this methodological aspect of Husserl's doctrine is also evident in the fact that the first chapter of the book devoted to the first chapter of the first section of *Ideas I* was entitled "Experience and Ideal Intuition," whereas Husserl entitled his chapter "The Matter of Fact and Essence."

The theme of essences and intuitive seizing upon essences comes to the foreground in Shpet's analyses of Husserl's understanding of pure consciousness. Shpet's chain of reasoning is as follows. Considering the transcendental perception aimed at empirical things versus the immanent perception aimed at the experiences of consciousness, Shpet, following Husserl, fixes the difference between the methods of givenness in these types of perceptions thus: things are given to us through phenomena in gradations and shades, while the experience of consciousness is given to us immediately, "directly in its essence."<sup>4</sup> And for Shpet this means that the immanent perception is the intuition of essence, in contrast to the transcendental perception which is the empirical intuition. Tracing Shpet's references to the relevant pages of *Ideas I*, we can observe that Husserl's terms differ in some aspects from those of Shpet. Thus, Husserl argues that in contrast to a perceived thing the mental processes are "not adumbrated."<sup>5</sup> (...) For an existent belonging to their region, in other words, anything like an 'appearing,' a being presented, through adumbrations makes no sense whatsoever."<sup>6</sup> Crucially, Husserl does not say that experiences of consciousness are given "directly in their essence." The second chapter of the second section of *Ideas I* describes only the reflective perception of the mental processes, without mentioning anything about any essential intuition. This is quite sufficient for Husserl's purposes, i.e., to compare the mode of existence (givenness) of the immanent and transcendent experiences. The exact title of the corresponding paragraph in *Ideas I* (§ 42) is "Being as Consciousness and Being as Reality: Essentially Necessary Difference between the Modes of Intuition." For Husserl, clarification of the significant features of transcendent vs. immanent being does not entail the establishment of the essence of these experiences.<sup>7</sup>

However, Shpet is persistently trying to prove that in this context Husserl is dealing with the experiences given in their essence. With this purpose, he draws attention

<sup>4</sup> G. Shpet, *Appearance and Sense: Phenomenology as the Fundamental Science and Its Problems*, translated by T. Nemeth (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), 30.

<sup>5</sup> "abschatten" in the original, which can also be translated as "shaded."

<sup>6</sup> *Ideas I*, 90-91.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 98-99.

to one important feature of the immanent experience also pointed out by Husserl: “the apprehended mental process is given as something that not only exists and endures but already existed before the regard was directed to it. (...) Mental processes (...) are always ‘ready’ to be perceived.”<sup>8</sup> This leads Shpet to conclude that the mode of being of experience cannot be called existence, but refers to “essence.” This means that the “immanent perception essentially does not give being in time, but being outside of time, or in other words, as it ‘always’ is.”<sup>9</sup> Yet, for Husserl, the fact that our experiences had existed before they were perceived by us, only emphasizes the distinction between the immanent and transcendent perception: the latter might include the objects which do not fall within our field of vision, and therefore cannot be perceived by definition. And, in addition, the fact that experiences are always ready to be perceived gives Husserl further opportunity to explore them as enduring.<sup>10</sup> Probably sensing that he is somewhat departing from the text of *Ideas I*, the Russian philosopher finds a confirmation of his idea of the essential character of the immanent perception by pointing to the words of Husserl that the subject of the immanent perception constitutes the absolute reality. Yet, for Husserl in this context “absolute reality” means, after Descartes, only such reality, the existence of which cannot be doubted. This and nothing more!

Husserl’s use of the terms “essence” and “being” does not become a subject of Shpet’s analysis; he disposes of these words at his discretion. Thus, essence he understands as a kind of timeless, non-spatial perfection, a higher significance. Sometimes, Shpet uses the expression “being of pure consciousness” as a synonym for the “essence of pure consciousness,” and even, apparently, in order to strengthen the rhetorical effect, the “the essence of the being of consciousness.” For example, according to Shpet, intentionality is the “the essence of the being of consciousness.”<sup>11</sup> But this only partially corresponds to Husserl’s consideration of intentionality as one of the essential structures of consciousness, since the intentional acts are understood by Shpet as absolute, that is, timeless essences.

Moreover, to Shpet the “pure Ego” constitutes “the authentic and true character of absolute being,”<sup>12</sup> while Husserl uses more cautious phrasing, mentioning – for example in § 80 of *Ideas I* – only the contingency of experiences with “pure Ego.” Husserl’s “pure Ego” has multiple functions,<sup>13</sup> while Shpet considers only one issue to be important: “pure Ego” is outside the stream of experience, beyond time.

Thus, when Shpet presents Husserl’s ideas he brings into the foreground the search for timeless essences of consciousness. Yet, as will be shown below, Shpet does not limit himself to such search for essences of consciousness. His entire oeuvre demonstrates

<sup>8</sup> Shpet, *Appearance and Sense*, 31.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> *Ideas I*, 94, 194-195.

<sup>11</sup> Shpet, *Appearance and Sense*, 37.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>13</sup> A thorough study of the functions of “pure Ego” in phenomenology of Husserl can be found in the following article: В. И. Молчанова, “Опыт и рефлексия: поток сознания и гипертрофия Я,” *Персональность: Язык философии в русско-немецком диалоге* [“Experience and Reflection: Stream of Consciousness and Hypertrophy of Ego,” *Personality: Philosophical Language in the Russian-German dialogue*] (Москва: Модест Колеров, 2007).

consistent interest in ideal timeless essences. In *Appearance and Sense* this interest is also manifested in the study of problems of individual essences. Perhaps, Shpet was led to reproach Husserl for ignoring this problem due to his inattentiveness to the terminology used in *Ideas I*. Shpet writes: "I also see no obstacles to a purely individual essence. Of course, it does not pass from this state into the actual experiential world but remains in the world of ideal essences."<sup>14</sup> However, Husserl allows a theoretical possibility of the study of pure consciousness without the eidetic reduction, and accordingly, without applying the intuition of essence, as understood by Husserl in the period of *Ideas I*. Thus, we arrive not at the science of pure consciousness, but at a study of experience, i.e., the study of facts of consciousness. However, at the time of writing *Ideas I* Husserl was interested in the development of phenomenology as a science of pure consciousness. It is important for us to note that the theoretical possibility of conducting a study of the ideal individualities in the field of phenomenology still remains. And Shpet attempts to outline the ways to explore this possibility when he declares that the study of individual essences should be combined with the study of the intuition types in which they are observed. According to him, it must be intuitions of a special type: not ideal and not empirical.

Shpet declares the study of various types of intuitions to be one of the most important future tasks for phenomenology. From Shpet's standpoint, this task is fully justified: only intuition enables a direct exploration of the "authentic actuality." And, as already noted above, Shpet attaches particular importance to phenomenological methodology, and more specifically, to the method of essential intuition and description. Herewith, Shpet pretends not to notice that phenomenological methodology extends beyond ideation and description: its most important component is reflection. "The phenomenological method operates exclusively in acts of reflection," writes Husserl in his *Ideas I*.<sup>15</sup> And phenomenological reflection not only turns the attention to the experiences of consciousness, but also produces depiction of the flow of acts from the inside, describing their mutual transitions and interweaving. We believe that Shpet disregarded reflection as a method to describe pure consciousness because Husserl's reflection depicts consciousness as enduring, based on retention-protention structure of internal time. As noted above, Shpet finds it essentially impossible to attribute the structure of internal time to the essences of pure consciousness. Shpet is convinced that the essences of pure consciousness must be timeless, eternal, and their description in the temporally conditioned language is unacceptable. Shpet ignores the distinction between the empiric time and the internal consciousness of time as the structure of essence that provides adequate language to describe any consciousness. Such limitation of the content of pure consciousness to "pure Ego" offers little help in description of the actual consciousness, such as perception. Shpet himself needed to consider pure consciousness only to demonstrate the action of ideal intuitions and the existence of another area of ideal being – the being of pure consciousness. Shpet's approach to the "authentic actuality" cannot be called phenomenological in Husserl's sense. Moreover, Shpet reverses the meaning of the fundamental distinction in Husserl's phenomenology. According to Husserl, there is a self-identical static object and the perpetually flowing

<sup>14</sup> Shpet, *Appearance and Sense*, 90.

<sup>15</sup> *Ideas I*, 174.

stream of consciousness. According to Shpet, everything is turned around: there is the world of volatile objects immersed in time and the absolute eternal being of mental processes.

Nevertheless, pure consciousness is not accepted by Shpet as the “authentic actuality” that is his objective. He calls authentic actuality the actuality of reason. Shpet does not define it more specifically in *Appearance and Sense*, since in this work he is focused on a different task, namely to introduce to the Russian reader a new movement in contemporary philosophy – the phenomenology of Husserl. But almost all of the reasoning steps of *Ideas I* are assessed by Shpet from the point of view of possible penetration into the “authentic actuality.” For Husserl at the time of writing *Ideas I*, i.e., while he was developing phenomenology as a rigorous science, the problem of actuality was reduced to the problem of constituting the regional ontologies conditioned by formal ontologies, and the ontology of consciousness. In particular, *Ideas I* consider the principles of constituting the region of an object. Shpet is clearly supportive of Husserl’s idea of regional ontologies. However, he believes that to construct the region of an object, it is necessary to raise the question “of the intimate sense of the object itself as the bearer of sense-content.”<sup>16</sup>

For Shpet, the inner sense (essence) is, on the one hand, present in experience, but, on the other hand, it is not given explicitly (i.e., consciously). A special act is required in order to observe it. However, according to Husserl, in terms of everyday perception we already see “senseful” objects (in the broadest meaning of the word “sense”).<sup>17</sup> Husserl states this point precisely, indicating intentionality as the basic property of consciousness. That is, our natural experience of consciousness, such as perception, is not purely empirical. Husserl points out that perception of an object already contains an aspect of memory, imagination, understanding, i.e., interpretation. The givenness of an object is already a generalization and a result of the givenness of many earlier acts of our experience. All this allowed Husserl to introduce the concept of “single essence” and the hierarchy of essences (single essence, general concept, categorical essences, etc.). Thus, while analysing consciousness, Husserl departs from his own distinction between empirical and eidetic intuition, a distinction crucial for Shpet throughout his work in *Appearance and Sense*.

Nevertheless, the problem which is fundamental for Shpet – the problem of transition from the sense of the *noema* to the sense of object – is also extremely important for the transcendental phenomenology of Husserl. However, it needs to be rephrased with more precision, as follows: how may our consciousness proceed from an appearance of an object (from the givenness of an object to consciousness) to the object itself? This question is based on Husserl’s belief that the content of an object is not exhausted by its givenness to us through experience. If we consider an object in a different context, based on another mode of consciousness, we may discover a new content in the object. And there is always a possibility to realize this givenness of the object.

This issue was already articulated by Husserl as the distinction between the object, sense and mental process in the first part of *Logical Investigations*. Husserl has revealed

<sup>16</sup> Shpet, *Appearance and Sense*, 132.

<sup>17</sup> *Ideas I*, 213.

this distinction in our everyday experience. For example, the expressions "the Victor of Jena," "the Vanquished of Waterloo" are different denominations (senses) of a single object, i.e., Napoleon; both "the morning star" and "the evening star" point to Venus as a single object. This distinction between the object, sense and act is transferred by Husserl to a phenomenological method. Thus, within the phenomenological framework while exploring the reality of givenness of the object's adumbrations, its properties and qualities, we constantly keep in mind, quite consciously (in contrast to the natural attitude), the object, as a point to which they relate. And this object is not an empty "x" (which is particularly emphasized by Shpet), but an intuitively grasped essence of the object which points the way of investigation. The whole set of properties must correspond to the "essence" (idea) of this object, and we cannot discover in reflection anything that goes beyond the essence of the "thing." And the object itself constitutes an infinite number of contents of phenomena within the general idea of the thing.

Our analyses of the differences between Husserl's and Shpet's approaches to the sense would be incomplete if we did not specify how Shpet understands the "inner sense of an object." The inner sense is determined by the object's purpose, by the way it is used. Thus, the inner sense of an axe (Shpet's own example) is found in its "chopping."<sup>18</sup> This example shows that Shpet begins his ascent to the "authentic actuality" from real, everyday functioning of the thing, instead of approaching it as a sum of specific properties in accordance with the European philosophical tradition that includes, to a certain extent, Husserl. Thus, Husserl can discourse on the nature of a triangle as such, the essence of the red colour as such. For Shpet, the consideration of such generalities taken out from their environment is of no interest. According to Shpet, sense is perceived based on concrete experience which is taken in the context of real situations. We can say that Shpet begins his own study from a description of the "life-world" as the world of everyday experience, while Husserl arrived at this problem only in his late works. While writing *Ideas I* Husserl was only interested in the reality as a result of constituting acts. He tried to modify the science on new grounds, yet, actuality constituted in regions has no direct relation to our everyday experience. Taking into account Shpet's interest in quotidian experience, we can group him with the representatives of non-classical philosophy of the twentieth century, who preceded late Husserl and early Heidegger. However, this quite modern position is nuanced by Shpet's classical metaphysical characteristics. For instance, his inner sense operates as a timeless essence seen in acts of ideal intuition of a special type, called by Shpet hermeneutic intuition. Here one can identify the methodology of the "phenomenon – essence" module which Shpet tries to avoid: the things given to us in empirical perception (and according to Shpet, ordinary consciousness cannot operate in any other mode) are the phenomena that refer to their essences not achievable in ordinary consciousness, since a special type of intuition is required for their detection.

The following analysis of Shpet's later works will illustrate the result of such conflation of classical and non-classical philosophical methods in addressing the issue of the authentic actuality.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

## 2. EMPIRICAL AND IDEAL, INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL

After writing *Appearance and Sense*, Shpet was no longer directly involved in the study of general philosophical problems, such as the problem of reality and justification of philosophical methods of inquiry. He seems to be occupied by completely different subjects, namely, specific applied research in the field of language, aesthetics, literature, etc. But almost in all his works, Shpet relies, explicitly or implicitly, on some notion of reality which is constantly being updated and changed in the course of consideration of specific problems. Moreover, in a number of articles and essays on history of philosophy, Shpet gives an explanation of what he means by “authentic actuality.”

Shpet attains his understanding of the authentic actuality by overthrowing the classical distinction “ideal – empirical (material)” established by Plato. Shpet considers Husserl of *Ideas I* period to belong in some aspect to the philosophers working within this distinction. As is well known, in the first section of this work, Husserl contrasts the ideal world of essences within the world of empirical facts, treating real objects as given to us in the acts of empirical contemplation, while ideal objects (essences) are comprehended by essential (intellectual) contemplation. While Shpet does not directly deconstruct this distinction in *Appearance and Sense* (like every Russian philosopher, he could not help sympathizing with any version of the Platonic ideal world), he still plainly introduces a view that ideal existence and empirical existence are but two sides of the same unified reality, and they are rather correlatives, than opposites. To clarify this thought, we may consult the essay “Wisdom or Reason”<sup>19</sup> which states that intellectual intuition, constructed over sensual intuition and penetrating into the deep essence of the empirical object, thereby does not allow one to remain on the surface of reality, leading still deeper inside, to its origins. Rejecting the fundamental distinction between ideal and empirical being, Shpet is thereby distancing himself not so much from Husserl – in whose studies the distinction “empirical – ideal” does not constitute an opposition – as from the representatives of the so-called Russian Platonism (Florensky, Losev) who believed that the ideal and the empirical are two separate spheres, absolutely incompatible in their essence, while the world of essences or ideas constitutes the true reality, and the primary purpose of philosophical investigation is to penetrate into this sphere.<sup>20</sup> Shpet believed that there is a unified reality given to us prior to the distinction of the empirical and the ideal, and this reality, as he says in *Appearance and Sense*, is the social reality.

But what is understood under the heading of social reality? This polysemous concept requires clarification. As Shpet’s comprehensive oeuvre indicates, social reality is primarily the reality of our daily life: “Reality – everything that exists – is always around us, we are embedded in it and live by it: we suffer, delight in it, however infrequently, we dread, rage, fight, love, die.”<sup>21</sup> There is no need for distinction between the ideal and the empirical for depiction of reality. It is unnecessary precisely because it is not a distinction of experience. In the real life situation, empirical facts are given to us together with their

<sup>19</sup> Г. Г. Шпет, “Мудрость или разум” [Wisdom or Reason], *Философские этюды* [Philosophical essays] (Москва: Издательская группа «Прогресс», 1994), 222-337.

<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, П. А. Флоренский, *У водоразделов мысли* [At watersheds of thought] Т. 2 (Москва: Правда, 1990), 146.

<sup>21</sup> Шпет, “Мудрость или разум” [Wisdom or Reason], 261.

ideal "components," and exploration of the world of ideal objects (scientific theories, moral principles, religious faith), as a rule, requires special approach, detached from everyday experience. So, in fact, already in his early work *Appearance and Sense*, Shpet outlines his own understanding of philosophical investigation, which is opposed to classical historical-philosophical dichotomy. Yet, while paving the new ways for research, Shpet still tries to relate them to the traditional philosophical differentiations. And this is one of the peculiarities of his method.

According to Shpet, the reality we live in demands its elucidation from a philosopher. Therefore, "penetration within" denotes an act of sense-bestowal over reality. Reviewing Ivan Ilyin's work *The Philosophy of Hegel as a Doctrine of the Concreteness of God and Humanity*, Shpet, using the language of philosophical classics used by his colleague, writes: "The true purpose of philosophy is to comprehend, clarify and substantiate the 'specific and empirical' world, or, better, to reveal its foundation, sense and truth."<sup>22</sup> In this work, Shpet sharply opposes Ilyin's belief that philosophy must end the "vulgarity" of the surrounding world and rise to the higher spheres of divinity:

Forget the "divine," if it does not bestow sense on the "vulgar," for the latter is the genuine materialization, therefore, essentially – what we call "divine," "rational," "just," "self-contained" is a way and means to see, through it, having journeyed that road, this very "vulgar" in a new light, i.e., as not "vulgar."<sup>23</sup>

Are we dealing here with the same conflation of sense-bestowal and understanding which was present in *Appearance and Sense*? Further analysis of Shpet's works will help us answer this question.

Meanwhile, we can only argue that for Shpet the problem of detection of the authentic actuality is converted into the task of elucidating the surrounding social world, a task reduced to establishing the specific sense of objects, relationships, situations around us. Reality, according to Shpet, must be elucidated through sense-bestowal. In light of this task, Shpet begins to focus on the question of how the sense might be established. This is one of the major questions he tries to answer throughout his oeuvre. The analysis of Shpet's contemplation of the problem of givenness and sense-bestowal will help us trace all the changes in the philosopher's views in relation to the "authentic actuality."

To consider Shpet's answer to the question of establishing the sense, one must remember that for him the reverse side of the classical "empirical – ideal" opposition is the "external – internal" dichotomy. According to Shpet,<sup>24</sup> traditional philosophy, believing that all ideal is internal, is not interested in anything external. However, he

<sup>22</sup> Г. Г. Шпет, "Опыт популяризации философии Гегеля" [Experience of popularization of Hegel's philosophy], Г. Г. Шедрина, "Я пишу как эхо другого...": Очерки интеллектуальной биографии Густава Шпета, ["I Write as an Echo of Another...": Essays on the Gustav Shpet's Intellectual Biography] (Москва: РОССПЭН, 2003), 291.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>24</sup> Г. Г. Шпет, "Эстетические фрагменты," *Искусство как вид знания: Избранные труды по философии культуры* ["Aesthetic fragments," Art as a Form of Knowledge. Selected Works on Philosophy of Culture] (Москва: РОССПЭН, 2007), 191.

himself is convinced that the authentic actuality cannot be determined exclusively by the internal:

There is an illusory impression that the external may exist without the internal; the internal cannot exist without the external. There is not a single atom of the internal without the appearance. The reality, the actuality is defined exclusively by the appearance.<sup>25</sup>

Shpet's own existential view may be traced in this desire to overcome solitude through external expression and communication.<sup>26</sup> Shpet poses the following question:

What can we gain from a great love of our "fellow man" if this love remains "deep inside"? And how much would we gain if instead of deceiving us with the imaginary reality of the intimate depths our fellow men always manifested and expressed externally their love in their affectionate behaviour. Where is the real vitality: in the goodwill inside and bad manners outside, in "the good of mankind" inside while on the surface – the hand grips a knife, or in the enduring courtesy and continued caress on the outside, while on the inside – but who cares what is "inside"? One may prefer either type of behaviour, but in reality, the first is vulgarity, and in second is love.<sup>27</sup>

The above approach to reality makes it clear why, according to Shpet, the process of sense-bestowal is inseparable from the expression of actuality and why the senses themselves may only exist as outwardly expressed. One of the most important ways of expression for Shpet is the language (along with the art of theatre, architecture, etc.). Not by chance the theme of language becomes predominant in almost all his works of the late period. And the process of sense-bestowal at the same time appears as the process of its linguistic expression. Shpet's manner of description of this process, the role of intellectual intuition and consequent alterations introduced into the concept of authentic actuality will be the subject of our analysis of Shpet's last book published in his lifetime, *The Inner Form of the Word*.

### 3. WORD AND EXPERIENCE

First of all, we will attempt to understand why Shpet addressed the linguistic way of expressing essence in particular. For this purpose we will consider his general approach to language presented in *The Inner Form of the Word*. Shpet elucidates his understanding of language through the prism of critical presentation of Humboldt's ideas in the field of linguistics. He shares Humboldt's definition of language as a kind of independent reality, or energy, as well as Humboldt's understanding of the interior language form as a concrete principle shaping the language: "we can interpret the *form* itself (...) – realistically, as an

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>26</sup> Intuition of loneliness emerges in Shpet's early work *Appearance and Sense* (see Шпет, *Явление и смысл*, 175).

<sup>27</sup> Шпет, "Эстетические фрагменты," 363.

energy of the language, which shapes the verbal flow into a structurally unified whole."<sup>28</sup> The expressions "verbal flow" and "structurally unified whole" bring to mind Husserl's "stream of consciousness" having a certain "unity of consciousness."<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the questions of language and linguistic consciousness play in the general philosophical viewpoint of *The Inner Form of the Word* the same role as consciousness in the philosophy of Husserl. Shpet writes:

Regardless of the content of [the world of objects'] being, since it will be given to us solely in the form of language and, apparently, it is impossible to go beyond these linguistic forms (...), we may only establish the variety of modifications of these objects' being. This alone forces us to recognize the "energy" of the language, *restectiv*, of its forms which are not homogeneous but various, – just as the nutrition of the body provides multiple forms of blood circulation, lymphatic system, numerous secretions, etc. The same result will be obtained if we contemplate the language consciousness itself: acts of representation, imagination, reason – corresponding to the forms of being of the actual, imaginary, ideally-natural objects – turn it into a gaudy texture, leading us to understand previously defined "linguistic form" as a form that combines an undetermined number of structural shapes yet to be studied.<sup>30</sup>

It is evident from this passage that Shpet is convinced that the world is given to us only through the prism of language or linguistic consciousness.<sup>31</sup> Probably this is why Shpet prefers to discuss senses expressed in word, and for him the access to the authentic actuality is only possible through language. His approach is fully consistent with Husserl's journey towards the "things themselves" through consciousness, with the only difference that instead of consciousness Shpet deals with language or linguistic consciousness.

Let us note that Shpet does not deny the existence of non-linguistic consciousness, which is expressly signalled by him in the footnote to this citation; we are merely dealing with the modification of research interest. At this point, Shpet attempts to find the foundation of sense-creation not in Husserlian pure consciousness but in language. Already in the first chapter of *The Inner Form of the Word*, Shpet emphasizes that the main task of language is to express a thought, or carry a sense.<sup>32</sup> And this means that language is an indissoluble unity of an empirical sound and ideal content, i.e. sense. Let us recall that according to Shpet our quotidian consciousness does not possess sense; a thought

<sup>28</sup> Г. Г. Шпет, *Внутренняя форма слова*, [The Inner Form of the Word] in: *Искусство как вид знания*, 374-375.

<sup>29</sup> Though, in further study, these concepts obviously do not play a significant role (and their indirect influence on theoretical developments will be discussed below), Shpet's work *The Inner Form of the Word* can be metaphorically compared with the verbal flow unified only by the general theme of "the inner form of the word," through which Shpet tries to solve (or rather to map out the solution of) all his objectives.

<sup>30</sup> Шпет, *Внутренняя форма слова*, 375.

<sup>31</sup> Allowing for the vagueness of correlation between these two terms we may simply assume for the time being that they are synonymous to Shpet, although he does not specially stipulate this.

<sup>32</sup> That is why, we believe, Shpet uses the word "thinking" as a synonym of linguistic consciousness.

(and hence, the sense) may only exist in expression, and first and foremost, in a linguistic expression. Moreover, the role of language as a means of communication emphasizes its common (intersubjective, in the contemporary idiom) but not individually subjective character, which is a fundamental point for Shpet's existential views.

And the fact that Shpet in his analysis of language consciousness allots more time to the discussion of forms than acts testifies to his close attention to specific linguistic experience, in which it is very difficult to isolate a stand-alone act. Shpet writes:

Every verbal act is interwoven as a component, on the one hand, into the plexus of established acts, and, on the other hand, into its own web of verbal unity. In other words, no act may be completely independent in essence, and the consciousness of the words presented together with their meanings may claim its autonomy only as a complete sphere of the ideal. Any act of perception of the verbal meaning must be an act of *co-perception*, – not only in terms of other contents, but also in the sense of purely verbal contents.<sup>33</sup>

Yet, language is not only necessary for exploration of the “authentic actuality,” but Shpet's peculiar understanding of reality also affects his approach to language. Thus, while criticizing Humboldt for his initial rigid separation of the sound form and the abstract thinking, sign and sense, Shpet proposes to supplement his general and somewhat abstract consideration of language by appealing to ordinary experience:

An unbiased analysis would take a different approach. What we observe around us when we select the language from this environment and attempt to unravel its riddle, are, of course, our experiences, our feelings, and yet not merely empty “sounds,” “impressions,” “reflections,” but the experiences aimed at actual *things*, objects, processes in things and relations between them. Each thing around us can be used by us as a sign of another thing. (...) We can distinguish a special system of “things” that we use in this sense perpetually. This is *language*. Its use constitutes the primary value for us in this analysis, because as soon as we approached it, we began naming “things” as “surrounding objects,” “us,” etc. When we name things (even by simply pointing out to them or by conditional sound combinations such as “this,” “that,” “there,” and so on), we speak and think about them, and understand our utterances about them, i.e., in our words we observe a sense objectively binding objects into various relationships and systems.<sup>34</sup>

This passage illustrates how the phenomenological assumption discussed above, according to which the surrounding world is given to us only through consciousness (which would be linguistic consciousness in Shpet's application), is superimposed on a concrete quotidian situation of the language usage. In fact, Shpet introduces here the

<sup>33</sup> Г. Г. Шпет, “Язык и смысл” [Language and sense], *Мысль и Слово*, 589.

<sup>34</sup> Шпет, *Внутренняя форма слова*, 373.

notion of primary experience of language consciousness, which he, unlike Husserl, understands not as a perception of a thing but as an experience of perception of a word as a sign of social communication. Word is here understood not as an empirical sign, but rather as a word-concept that carries a sense. Thus, sense is already present in our primary experience of language consciousness. In 1929 the philosopher formulated his view in all lucidity in the article "Shpet" for *Granat Encyclopaedic Dictionary*.<sup>35</sup> Shpet rejects his original position in *Appearance and Sense* which held that the primary experience of consciousness is the experience of perceiving a thing as an empirical sign, and that its sense (that is, the inner sense according to the terminology of *Appearance and Sense*) is established in the acts of hermeneutic intuition. Surprisingly, in the above article Shpet identifies his position as a fundamental departure from Husserl's phenomenology, and *The Inner Form of the Word* contains no mention of Husserl at all. And yet it seems that there is a close affinity between Shpet's conscious position in the late period of his life and the phenomenological view. What Shpet considers as primary experience is not of crucial importance, since phenomenology allows for various options: experience of perception, experience of the body, quotidian experience of object usage, etc. Crucially, Shpet is convinced that reality may be studied only on the basis of its givenness in experience, and this experience is not purely empirical, but already contains a sense. We may no longer assume that "self-bestowal" and "elucidation" of reality is identical with understanding in terms of finding the meaning of the empirically given. Quite possibly, these terms may now have the meaning of concretization and itemization of the already given sense.

Thus, it appears, in *The Inner Form of the Word* Shpet operates within the phenomenological framework. Moreover, a direct description of the "authentic actuality" is nowhere to be found. However, in the chapter "Object Forms and Logical Forms" we may detect attempts to describe our everyday language experiences, conversational situations, i.e., the primary experience of the givenness of reality. Our next task is to consider how, in this case, the concept of reality is specified, how Shpet proposes to accomplish the consequent sense-bestowal, and whether this is consistent with the phenomenological approach.

#### 4. CONTEXT AND ABSTRACTION

Shpet's modification of the interpretation of the primary experience of reality as it was stated in *Appearance and Sense* is accompanied by a different understanding of the sense. As noted above, he believes that any word can be considered as a concept, that is, a sense-agent:

It has a potential tendency to embrace the objective content of the implied object *in its entirety*. In this case, the sense is this very content always transmuted in degrees of comprehensiveness via verbal communication, and

<sup>35</sup> Г. Г. Шпет, "Шпет" (статья для энциклопедического словаря «Гранат») [autobiographical article for Granat Encyclopaedic Dictionary], *Начала* 1 (1992), 50.

eventually appearing in its full entirety only on some ideally-conceivable frontier.<sup>36</sup>

Here the sense no longer appears synonymous to the essence of the object, no matter whether the essence is understood statically, as a fundamental property of a thing, or dynamically, as the functioning of the thing. Sense is understood by Shpet as the content of the object, and the object is understood as a common topic of conversation, a message transmuted via the communication process:

Strictly speaking, from the point of view of the word of expression, an object is some X, to which the attention is directed or recalled, some point of speech concentration that is always in mind when things related to one or another type of being are discussed, as its ideal form, and thus not comprehended but only *implied*, as the unity of comprehended content of the object. Such substance is included in the semantic content of speech not constituted in implication.<sup>37</sup>

Such understanding of the object and sense is quite consistent with our experience. Shpet proceeds from the situation of a real conversation, identifying the object as a point of speech concentration. In everyday communication, we rarely talk about simple empirical things, and yet, any conversation possesses a content and theme or subject. The sense of the object of speech, according to Shpet, is not given fully and finally in an ordinary conversation, but needs to be specified and developed in the process of its consequent comprehension.

Shpet calls the language forms which determine, express, comprehend and develop the sense *the inner forms of the word*. *The inner forms of the word* are also understood by Shpet as the method of concept formation that takes into account, unlike formal logic, specific situations, events, relationships.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the sense is already given to us in *the inner forms of the word* in our everyday communications, and, at the same time, the inner forms of the word are the method of elucidating and developing the sense of the object. Since the object belongs to a particular context of everyday communication, the methodology of the inner form of the word may be considered as a way to bestow sense and elucidate the quotidian reality. One may notice that Shpet tries to correlate this method with his subject (in a general sense), that is, with the reality of our daily life. Shpet's *inner forms of the word* are not universal, unlike Humboldt's language forms, but are always specific and are determined by the linguistic situation and the practical context of verbal usage.

However, before we may finally determine whether Shpet manages to sustain the correlation of his method and object, let us take a closer look at the primary experience

<sup>36</sup> Шпет, *Внутренняя форма слова*, 388.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 400.

<sup>38</sup> Very often in *The Inner Form of the Word* Shpet writes about the problem of bestowing sense on reality in the language of concept formation. Thus, he believes that "completing the conceptual deficiency" would be "the way to reconstitute the fullness of reality." Yet, it is easy to notice that according to Shpet the opposite is also true: one can understand how a concept was established only on the basis of concrete experience of everyday reality.

of the givenness of reality, i.e., a normal event of communication. Shpet's approach here appears somewhat ambiguous. Thus, sometimes Shpet argues that we first name the empirical things, and only later establish the sense of what was said. This, essentially, is consistent with his position in "Aesthetic Fragments": the givenness of word in the nominative function is denoted as sensory-empirical reality that does not carry any "semasiological" (semantic) function.<sup>39</sup>

It appears that Shpet himself fails to notice his return to his old position (let us recall that in *Appearance and Sense* the primary givenness of things is understood as the givenness of empirical consciousness, falling short of the authentic sense), and that it is rooted in the very structure and style of the work. *The Inner Form of the Word* is a collection of essays in various fields of humanities. It deals with the issues of linguistics, aesthetics, general theory of language, drafts of solutions for philosophical problems, including the problem of reality. But herein lies the danger. Inadvertently, Shpet tries to supplement the theoretical approach with reference to our everyday experience and, conversely, uses abstractions accepted only in theoretical approach while describing communicative experience. There is nothing unusual in the fact that Shpet considers separately the external (morphological and syntactic) and the inner forms. In theoretical linguistics, for example, it is permissible to distinguish between the nominative and the semantic function of the word. However, Shpet in this case refers to our acts of plain naming which, in his opinion, do not carry any sense and are purely empirical. It may be so, but where may we find a name in its pure form in our life experience? Any naming we conduct is carried out with a specific intention and possesses a particular meaning. Shpet fails to notice that he is referring not to the real experience of our life, but to its artificial scientific abstraction. Or rather, the very style of his work does not allow for a clear distinction between the view and its reflection.

The classical "empirical – ideal" dichotomy is retained in the field of linguistics. And there is nothing surprising in the fact that *The Inner Form of the Word* contains the classic definition of reality as the sum of empirical things (which may only be named) and ideal objects alongside the perception of reality as the actuality of the world around us. For instance, Shpet uses the notion of empirical thing and ideal object when he is describing a real conversational situation.<sup>40</sup>

Let us summarize the preliminary conclusions and attempt to examine such situations of primary givenness of reality in our communicative experience within the phenomenological framework. In everyday communicative situation, the meaning of the subject matter of speech is given in *the inner forms of the word*, however, it is not fully expressed and understood. In order to fully establish and elucidate this meaning, it is necessary to adopt a special attitude aimed at the understanding of the sense.<sup>41</sup> Not by chance Shpet notes in conclusions of *The Inner Form of the Word* that philosophical speech brings to consciousness something already known to us from experience.<sup>42</sup> Thus,

<sup>39</sup> See Шпет, "Эстетические фрагменты," 217.

<sup>40</sup> Шпет, *Внутренняя форма слова*, 399-400.

<sup>41</sup> Shpet's failure to remark on the transition from the stance of everyday speech to the stance of sense apprehension suggests that he did not distinguish between these standpoints.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 452.

based on *what* is said, we focus on the sense of the object in question. In *the inner forms of the word*, the process of sense development is taking place, which is also the method of elucidation and comprehension of the “authentic actuality.” Let us try to understand what this method entails and how it complies with Shpet’s objective of “sense-bestowal” and “elucidation” of the real life around us. We may also pose the question in a different way: does the method of research correspond with its subject? Is not our quotidian experience in which the everyday reality is given to us obliterated in the process?

## 5. SUBJECT AND MOTION OF SENSE

To answer the questions posed at the end of the previous section, let us consider Shpet’s description of the motion of sense. Discussing the peculiarities of this motion, Shpet uses somewhat Hegelian language:

The things and acts are full of contradictions, which are perfectly represented in this motion of thought, alive within it, inspiring its continued development by their implacable antagonism. (...) This very act of overcoming the contradictions is utterly dynamic. It consists of intellectual, *discursive* creative work, which uses the moment of intuitive insight of the essence as an initial impulse, stimulus and a starting point to reveal the contradiction lurking in all that is statically given, and to systematically select verbal-logical means conveying not only the process content, but also its direction and prospects, its forms and trajectories and, finally, the rules of its implementation.<sup>43</sup>

The described methodology of *the inner form of the word* can be seen as a development of the idea of intellectual intuition, already discussed by Shpet in *Appearance and Sense*. In *The inner form of the word*, Shpet emphasizes the fact that intuition is inextricably linked to discursive thinking. Drawing attention to this, Shpet introduces a distinction of sense and essence. Here Shpet appears, in a certain sense, as a successor of Husserlian “Platonism.” Husserl’s point of arrival at the observation of essence becomes Shpet’s starting point from which he proceeds to study the development of sense. Using Husserlian terms of intention of sense and fulfilment of sense, it may be said that the initial intuition of essence (intention of sense) is fulfilled not in the acts of contemplation or perception, but in the acts of linguistic expression. It is important to note here that the language for Shpet is not only a verbal attire (as it is in part for Husserl) which contains our thoughts, and therefore represents, in a sense, a necessary evil, but the way of being of sense and mental content, necessary for its very existence.

However, to what extent such development of the method of intellectual intuition may serve to elucidate reality? In what way is our experience taken into account in the methodology of *the inner form of the word*? Shpet’s answers to these questions become clear when we consider the role of subject and context in the process of sense-formation. This method is well justified for the study of real life. The sense-bestowal is based on

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 411.

understanding of the context and dependent on the particular person who performs the sense-bestowal (his personal experiences, attitudes, knowledge, goals, etc.).

First, let us consider how Shpet defines the role of the subject in the course of sense formation. In this case, he does not define the subject in theoretical-educational terms as the reverse of the object, but rather follows the Hegelian tradition, defining object as an agency – not of activity, but of individual properties. Shpet constantly reiterates that development, or motion of sense is an objective process of the sense itself. Since its establishment is governed only by the laws of the inner form of the word, it is therefore defined by itself, based on its own internal logic, and is limited by the external forms of language. Shpet emphasizes that the subject has no relationship to the substantial development of sense and its function consists only in the choice of verbal means of sense expression. However, if we take into account the key concept of *The Inner Form of the Word* of the indissoluble bond between thinking (sense) and language, selection of verbal means may automatically entail selection of content. This does not make the content subjective (we reflect the already existing phenomena), but the role of the subject becomes very significant because for Shpet, as noted above, sense only exists in its expression; it is constituted only in the acts of language, and not, for instance, in the acts of perception. Perhaps the special role of a subject selecting a means of expression of sense was also intuited by Shpet. As he says at the end of *The Inner Form of the Word*, “in a properly conducted reduction, which targets the subject as such, the *individual* will necessarily turn out to be the *essential*.”<sup>44</sup>

A legitimate question arises at this point: how may this be reconciled with Shpet’s repeated statements that the sense develops from itself, subject only to the law of the inner form of the word, etc. Moreover, the fundamental role of the subject in this process is ignored and not even taken into account. The situation may be reconstructed as follows. There is only one instance in this work where Shpet allows for existence of something resembling sense unexpressed in language (that is, intuitively grasped and unexpressed): introduction of the ideal object as some X, implied but not explicitly expressed in a conversation. Therefore it may be possible that in order to specify the content of this object, i.e., for the full expression of its meaning, the subject itself may select from a variety of linguistic means the appropriate linguistic forms. Yet consequently, within the selected linguistic forms, the sense development is regulated only by its own laws of the inner form of the word. In this case, the subject plays a decisive role: initially selecting the language means, he thereby chooses his original starting point in the specification of the content of the implied subject, or, in Shpet’s own terms, selects a particular law which will regulate the motion of sense, i.e., the law of *the inner form of the word*. One should note that Shpet’s subject is not a reflecting subject. Having selected language means in order to understand the sense of the object (Shpet does not specify whether this is a conscious act), the subject immediately forgets himself, surrendering completely to the flow of thinking, that is, the stream of linguistic consciousness. Discussing the process of sense-unfolding Shpet never mentions reflection. Thereby, Shpet almost completely departs from the phenomenological method which is based on reflection. According to Shpet,

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 476.

the process of sense comprehension is conducted via creative intuitively-discursive acts. This particular aspect may be considered a concretization of the metaphor of the stream of language. If we do not correlate, in reflection, the motion of sense with its initial, albeit vague, perception, its development may lead very far from the original situation.

Here it becomes necessary to consider the role of context in establishing the sense of the object. Shpet emphasizes that the sense of the object is conditioned by the purposes of a given context, without, however, indicating that these purposes are determined by the subject. Yet, is there any other way for the means to be chosen without concrete purposes? It is worthwhile to note that the context, specific purposes, which elucidate the sense, drastically restrict this sense. It can no longer be in the state of perpetual development because, based on the actual situation, the purposes are finite. Therefore, such modern scholars of Shpet's works as E. V. Borisov may be right: Shpet's "sense" develops in accordance with a single logical tenet, though it is unique only in a given context, within its particular conditions and limitations. If these conditions are altered ever so slightly, the development of sense will be different, though in any case it will be finite. Shpet, however, while recognizing the restrictive role of context and purposes, keeps reiterating in various ways his idea of the indefinite process of sense motion. But if so, it does not matter at all where this process was originated, that is, the context is perfectly indifferent, and the perpetual motion of sense reduces the role of context and subject to null. The original perception of the word does not matter in the consequent motion of sense. Shpet's "sense" appears increasingly as an ideal essence floating in "absolute" space and time (i.e., bearing no relation to real historical time and space, or to time-consciousness in particular), which brings to mind *Appearance and Sense*, the work which first clearly manifested philosopher's interest in such ideal being.

Shpet's belief that the development of sense is a creative process is perfectly consistent with the "absolute" motion of sense. If, in this context, we recall that Shpet shares Humboldt's position about the language as an energy of a special kind of spiritual activity, it becomes clear that the process of development of the sense expressed in a word has constitutive properties. And in this aspect Shpet, just as Humboldt, is very close to Kant. For all his rejection of Kant, while Shpet criticized him for everything and anything (for the concept of the unknowable object in itself, separation of sensuality and reason, subjectivism, etc.), he never objected to his introduction of an active, constructive property into the cognitive process that results in the creation of the object itself.<sup>45</sup>

Obliteration of the context as the initial givenness and the active position in relation to language result in the mythologization of sense. Sense is a source of interest by itself and contains entire "authentic actuality." Such development of sense does not elucidate our reality but embeds in it the autonomous areas of the self-perpetuating sense, bearing no relation to reality. This proves that the method of *the inner form of the word* does

<sup>45</sup> It is precisely Shpet's understanding of language as energy or production that allows some philosophers and psychologists to group him, along with Vygotsky, Rubinstein, etc., with the founders of the activity approach in psychology. Cf., В. А. Лекторский "Немецкая философия и российская гуманитарная мысль: С.Л. Рубинштейн и Г.Г. Шпет" [German Philosophy and the Russian Humanitarian Ideas: S. Rubinstein, G. Shpet], *Вопросы философии*, № 10 (2001); В. П. Зинченко *Мысль и слово Густава Шпета* [Thought and Word of Gustav Shpet] (Москва: УРАО, 2000).

not correspond to its object – the reality of life. However, it is quite justified if reality is understood as the totality of empirical things, since discovery of the “authentic actuality” requires complete detachment from them. As if responding to these objections, Shpet tries to convince us that the motion of sense takes place in full compliance with the world around us, since the sense remains under the subject’s perpetual coercion:

The coercion of the subject itself must be understood not a passive reflection of its statically formal features (...), but an animated dialectic transfer of the *real* as it is, with the *rational* defining it as real. Therefore, we must recognize that in the sphere of verbal-logical structures the final source of creativity is the immanent rational-real structure, as well as its not merely directorial, but constitutive laws.<sup>46</sup>

In this passage, he is most likely referring not to the implied subject of speech, but the world of objects around us. We may read this as a version of Hegelian thesis of the equivalence of being and thinking, postulated but not based on experience.<sup>47</sup>

However, in the above mentioned dictionary article, Shpet expresses more adequately and clearly the result of applying the method of *the inner form of the word*. He argues that the *inner forms of the word* “open up a possibility of a special dialectic interpretation, of reality verbally expressed.”<sup>48</sup> Instead of discussing the acts of sense-bestowal and understanding, Shpet speaks about its interpretation.<sup>49</sup> The value of interpretation for him resides not in its capacity for elucidation and renewal of the surrounding reality, but the fact that “having revealed all the possibilities in the motion of sense, it makes philosophy into a philosophy of culture as a movement of fulfilment of possibilities.”<sup>50</sup> However, Shpet did not have the time to develop such philosophy of culture.

In conclusion, we may assert that all of Shpet’s works are characterized by a peculiar “gravitation” towards ideal essences. Already in *Appearance and Sense*, Shpet is searching for timeless essences in Husserlian phenomenology, including in this category even the intentional experiences of consciousness. In *The Inner Form of the Word*, sense moving in the “absolute” space and time functions as an equivalent of the ideal essences. Both in the early phenomenological perspective aimed at sense-bestowal in relation to the quotidian reality, and in the later hermeneutical position aimed at its interpretation, “the only authentic actuality” for Shpet is the realm of ideal essences.

<sup>46</sup> Шпет, *Внутренняя форма слова*, 419.

<sup>47</sup> Even in the passages which discuss the inner form as a new method of concept formation which takes into account all the actual contradictions of things, events, relations, and suggests that “completing the conceptual deficiency” would be “the way to reconstitute the fullness of reality,” Shpet limits himself to abstract reasoning, rhetorical phrases, and does not explain why this is related to the reality of our life.

<sup>48</sup> Шпет, “Шпет,” 51.

<sup>49</sup> The fact that Shpet’s interpretation fails to bestow sense over reality, instead distracting us from it, does not entail that interpretation as such, for instance in Heidegger-Gadamer tradition, functions in the same way.

<sup>50</sup> Шпет, *Внутренняя форма слова*, 51.

# ON SPECIFICITY OF HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE: DAVID HUME AND GUSTAV SHPET<sup>1</sup>

Shpet saw the purpose of his philosophical work in the development of “historical philosophy.”<sup>2</sup> According to Shpet, in historical knowledge we always go from sensual reality as a mystery to its ideal essence, in order to resolve this mystery through making sense of reality, by discovering the reason that is realized and embodied in the very reality. Therefore methods of historical knowledge should provide the motion of thought in space between “reason” and “sensuality.” It is quite obvious that during these epistemological searches Shpet addresses Hume and his empiricism and skepticism in *History as a Problem of Logic*, vol. I (1916). That being said, Shpet still broadens the context of consideration of Hume’s epistemological ideas. And this move of thought opens up new perspectives in understanding Hume’s philosophy and in Shpet’s own epistemological quests. Shpet states:

English philosophy has gone through a full logical circle, as outlined by the internal meaning of empiricism as a philosophical outlook, and in this respect it actually comes into conflict with “*history*,” because the existence of the object of the latter goes directly against phenomenalistic schemes.<sup>3</sup>

It is this “conflict with ‘history’” that attracts Shpet’s attention. In our opinion, analyzing this conflict lays in the sphere of interests of modern epistemology and philosophy of science.

According to Andrey Bely, Shpet once remarked that “Hume was never understood.”<sup>4</sup> We think that this “lack of understanding” is predominant in the interpretations of Hume’s

<sup>1</sup> The research was made with the financial support from Russian Foundation for Humanities (RFH). Project № 14-03-00587.

<sup>2</sup> See: Г. Г. Шпет, “Философия и история,” *Мысль и Слово. Избранные труды* [“Philosophy and History,” Thought and Word. Selected works], отв. ред.-сост. Т. Г. Щедрина (Москва: РОССПЭН, 2005), 196.

<sup>3</sup> Г. Г. Шпет, *История как проблема логики: В 2 ч., ч. 1* [History as a Problem of Logic] (Москва – Санкт-Петербург: Университетская книга, 2014), 77.

<sup>4</sup> А. Белый, *Между двух революций* [Between Two Revolutions] (Москва: Художественная литература, 1990), 275.

epistemological ideas. In the established history-philosophical tradition Hume's ideas are usually interpreted merely as "skepticism" and "empiricism." And in this tradition they continue to be interpreted time and again within the ongoing course of the development of epistemology, going through a conflict with rationalism towards I. Kant, and further on through the conflict with Neo-Kantianism towards a positivistic philosophy of science and on, towards modern day postpositivist philosophy of science. The last remark may seem inaccurate. In the works of so called "classic authors" of postpositivist philosophy of science the references to Hume's works are more than rare. The fact of the matter is that Skepticism and Empiricism are so dissolved and transformed in today's style of thinking of philosophers of science that the references to the classical history-philosophical tradition seem to be inappropriate. Hume's epistemological ideas have dissolved in the "common sense" of the axioms of modern day philosophy of science: one cannot extract anything but a mere opinion from the experience; empirical foundations of the scientific knowledge, as well as its theoretical contents, are conventional. Only these days the view that scientific knowledge is defined by socio-cultural circumstances is predominant. It certainly differentiates "constructing" as the foundation for modern "sociologicistic" philosophy of science from Hume's psychological "customization." But it does not affect the core of the subject. The attempt to break through to the socio-cultural factors that define the dynamics of science, that Postpositivism attempted to do, still gives philosophy of science the impulse for relativizing scientific knowledge.

In other words, denying positivism leads postpositivists to a specific understanding of history as merely a relative field of knowledge that can only blur or even ruin the inner logic of the development of scientific knowledge, so carefully guarded by the positivists' agenda. It is in this respect, that Shpet's path from the criticism of positivism to sign-symbolic understanding of history parts ways, not only with positivist, but also with the modern socio-epistemological programs of the Edinburgh school.

What distinguishes Shpet's position in this respect? Knowledge in his opinion is first and foremost a linguistic phenomenon, the core of which is in the dynamics of meaning as the inner form of the word. The inner form of the word according to Shpet is a linguistic form, in which the meaning is established, expressed and conceived. This form, which aggregates our conceived first-hand experience, is an objective reality, designated by the outer form of the word. That said, it is crucially important, that the inner form of the word can only fixate and represent meanings of object reality to a person in the field of self-understanding of scientists, who reflectively fixate certain culture-historical situations, in which the conceptual framework of knowledge is formed. The foundation for such knowledge is the understanding of reality as a reality for our life experience. Thus it takes an appropriate culture-historical circumstances, a certain culture-historical context, where due to some reflective efforts, the inner forms of words can "come back to life" in knowledge.

Therefore addressing history, Shpet doesn't relativize knowledge, but relies on it precisely as a foundation, that enables science to be both justified and authentic.<sup>5</sup> It

<sup>5</sup> During the discussion of the project of the departments of Social Sciences Shpet drew attention to the status of History as science: "the debates start, when we, only focus on the results of historical research and on the

is a specific understanding of history as not merely a set of random events and a rigid cause-effect relationship, but as a “reality” that has sign-symbolic nature, objectified in language, that gives him such an option. Only through deciphering modern language as a sign-symbolic reality that has a meaning, can we truly understand why we are in this, and not in any other “modernity.” With this turn of thought Shpet’s thesis of the history of science, which can and must be realized as a whole unity of scientific knowledge in its historic development gains special significance. Thus, it is not history of scientific discoveries in each single field of knowledge that comes to the foreground, but the very principles, methods and techniques of scientific research that become subjects of the history of science as an academic discipline. Shpet’s historicism cannot be narrowed down simply to an assertion of variability and limitedness of all that is created by people a certain epoch, but enables the realization of the borders of what is learnt and opens up new opportunities and perspectives for the unity of science.

Shpet certainly realized the threat of what later on received the title of arbitrariness of historical interpretation and thus the possibility of interpreting history as an absolutely relative field of knowledge. He distinguished active and passive interpretations<sup>6</sup> and insisted on the possibility of unambiguous interpretation of a fact or an event. That is because, according to Shpet, the meaning of the word, that motivates the nomination, is always contextual. At the same time he took into account the specificity and the difference of contexts. According to Shpet, contexts are intrinsically determined in language by different communicative situations, i.e. onto what they focus the resources of language as means of communication on. And in particular he distinguished logical context as characteristic of science and presented logics (logic) as a background for scientists’ descriptions of their views of the world to other scientists. The inner logical form of expression is always unique.

In the light of the above, it makes sense to go back to his epistemological ideas of Hume in a broad, and what is even more important, whole context of his quite multifaceted works. For historical movement of thought contains a plethora of ways, and it is not only for tracking back the chain of fulfilled opportunities, that it is worth addressing the past, but to see the methods of thinking, that are topical in solving the problems of the modern day. With this purpose it is important to overcome the following research trend – to separate the Historian-Hume from the Philosopher-Hume, a trend that dissects his philosophical

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ways of explaining them, not paying attention to the ways of achieving these results and on the very methods of research of historical materials. But when the question of the status of science, on its development as a science and of its own requirements arises, then the methods of research are factors that predetermine all. And in this sense a historian has no other methodological base except that which the art of philological reading with its sophisticated methods of interpretation can give him.” Г. Г. Шпет, “Черновые заметки к обсуждению Проекта устава факультетов общественных наук (после 1919 г.),” Архив семьи Шпета. Цит. по: Т. Г. Щедрина, “Место социально-гуманитарных наук в основании современного образования (историко-философские заметки),” *Труды научного семинара «Философия – образование – общество»*, [“Rough notes on the discussion of the Project of the statutory of the departments of social sciences (after 1919),” in: Shpet Family Archive. Cited after: T.G. Shchedrina, “The Place of sociological sciences and humanities in the foundation of the modern education (historic-philosophical notes),” in: *The works of a science seminar Philosophy – Education – Society*] ред. В. А. Лекторский (Москва: НТА АПФН, 2007), 48. On a related note – V.I. Vernadskiy had a similar understanding of the role of history of science in the development of scientific knowledge.

<sup>6</sup> On this theme see: Г. Г. Шпет, *История как проблема логики* (Москва: Памятники исторической мысли, 2002), 720-721.

outlook and presents Vol. I and Vol. III of his treatise as independent and self-sufficient works: his *Treatise* and his *Essay*, his *Treatise* and his *First Enquiry*, etc.

In fact Shpet overcame this tendency in his *History as a Problem of Logic*. Just as Collingwood did later on, Shpet considers epistemological views of Hume in the context, that takes into account particular culture-historical meanings of epistemology and hence including an integral status of knowledge in culture in the field of its consideration, and not only social-pragmatic contexts of its functioning.

It is notable, that a clear and attentive realization of these culture-historical meanings was natural for the Modern era. For philosophers and scientists of that era knowledge had obvious existential and symbolic value, and perhaps that is why they emphasized and articulated its unnoticed practical value for society. Today the situation has changed: the symbolic value of knowledge has passed into the background and pragmatic value – to the foreground, having eclipsed the former. Today we see addressing skepticism and the empiricism of Hume in their real historic context looks much more interesting and didactic, than their representation in the form of an extracted epistemological scheme from the real cognitive work. Shpet was not happy with such narrow view of these settings of Hume's epistemology (neither was W.A. Knight, the British historian, although for a different reason<sup>7</sup>).

The time of the establishment of science – the time of Hume – is notable, among other reasons because it was the moment when the historical self-awareness of Europe was being formed and science as the knowledge of history emerged. Yet, historical scientificity combined within itself the features of both historical research and literature. Hume wrote a historical work *The History of England*<sup>8</sup> in the spirit of his time. This work can barely be considered “historical research” in the true sense of the word. Hume acts merely as a writer here, telling a story, rather than a researcher, trying to justify his opinion on one or another historical event. However, he still tries to critically evaluate the sources. So he, for example, relying on existing historical research (historiography), shows “*skeptical doubts*” in regards to unverified facts, that were popular at that time.<sup>9</sup> In fact Hume advocates the role of the skeptic, but his skepticism in this instance is of a different kind,<sup>10</sup> different from his own combined-epistemological scheme, that when applied to historical research leads to failure or to no result at all.

<sup>7</sup> W. A. Knight, *Hume* (Edinburgh and London: W. Blackwood, 1886), 224, 226.

<sup>8</sup> D. Hume, *The History of England*, vol. VI (London: A. Millar, 1841). This article cites the New York edition of 1859, available online.

<sup>9</sup> See for example Hume's attitude to a well-known story of his time of the execution of J. Bocher as to an apocryphal story – D. Hume, *The History of England* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1859), v. VI, 297.

<sup>10</sup> W.A. Knight pointed this out (furthermore he reduces Hume's skepticism to a mere criticism of sources). See: Knight, *Hume*, 224. Both Shpet and his student Pasternak also notice this. Shpet wrote: “Hume's skepticism is a very special skepticism, not the meaningless skepticism of “common sense,” but rather criticism itself. This sound gnoseological skepticism should always be distinguished from skepticism, that appeared to Hume as the direct consequence of his inconsistent psychological theories. Hume himself painstakingly defined his position in regards to Pyrrhonism and other types of non-critical skepticism, but due to the fusion of the two types of skepticism in his works, we must admit, that his definition of his own position was unsuccessful from a modern point of view” – Г. Г. Шпет, *Проблема причинности у Юма и Канта. Ответил ли Кант на сомнения Юма* [The Problem of causality in the works of Hume and Kant. Did Kant answer the doubts of Hume?] (Киев, 1907), 11. See also: *Boris Pasternak's Lehrjahre: Unpublished philosophical précis and notes of Boris Pasternak* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1996), 218.

It was this cognitive inefficiency of combined-epistemological schemes of skepticism and empiricism that Shpet documented in his *History as a Problem of Logic*. He stated:

Finally, when after all the philosophical problem of causality had been established, the solution it received in Hume's works could not substantiate neither the induction in general, nor be in any way applicable to the logic of historical substantiation. The core point of Hume's substantiation of the conclusion from the cause or to the cause was the acknowledgement of *repetition*<sup>11</sup> as a sufficient condition for such a conclusion. Could he be talking about the very possibility of substantiating a necessary "single connexion"? In view of this history could be interpreted as either a simple description, that on its own doesn't pose any logical questions, or the "historical" could be leveled with "natural" for the purposes of explanation, i.e. history and "historical" could be explained from the positions of the general, and in this case the search for substantiation would be the same as the search for a law of history. But for the latter, without a special analysis of a historical work, such explanations were understood in the most primitive of ways, as merely a "psychological" explanation, and not in the sense of establishing certain psychological laws or generalizations, but in the sense of that practical-psychological explanation, which we usually use in everyday life for explaining the actions and deeds of a person. [...] Hume turned out to be a typical pragmatist.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, phenomenism distinguishes neither the efficient causes, nor "inner causes." However, Hume's focus solely on experience, i.e. his phenomenism with all its epistemological limitations connected with his desire to "see the entire human race, from the beginning of time, pass, as it were, in review before us; appearing in their true colors, without any of those disguises, which, during their life-time, so much perplexed the judgment of the beholders."<sup>13</sup> He wanted to get an authentic, objective (in the basic sense of this word) image of the past for using it as the "experience" in the sense of the "experience" of an action. As he wrote himself "I dare to think, that I don't belong to any party and I don't follow any trend."<sup>14</sup> He was very upset, when after publishing *The History of England* he was criticized from all sides:

I was met by reproving cries, anger and even hatred; Englishmen, Scots and Irishmen, Tories and Whigs, clergymen and sectarians, free thinkers and the pious, patriots and court flatterers – they all united in their rage

<sup>11</sup> Shpet most likely means Hume's notion "the uniformity of nature" [translator's note].

<sup>12</sup> Шпет, *История как проблема логики* (Москва – Санкт-Петербург: Университетская книга, 2014), 78.

<sup>13</sup> D. Hume, "Of the Study of History," *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1987), available online.

<sup>14</sup> Ф. Ф. Павленков, *Дэвид Юм. Кант. Гегель. Шопенгауэр. Огюст Конт* [David Hume. Kant. Hegel. Schopenhauer. Auguste Comte] (Санкт-Петербург: ЖЗЛ, Кристалл, 1998), available online.

against a man, who wasn't afraid to shed a tear of sorrow over the death of Charles the I and the Earl of Strafford. When the dust of their anger settled, something even more treacherous occurred: the book was abandoned.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time Hume develops a desire to present history as the teacher of life. He said: "These records of wars, intrigues, factions, and revolutions, are so many collections of experiments, by which the politician or moral philosopher fixes the principles of his science."<sup>16</sup> Although here he specified: "Mankind are so much the same, in all times and places, that history informs us of nothing new or strange in this particular."<sup>17</sup> It would seem that here his speech must come to the reasons for certain historical events, but Hume denies direct observation of "the affects of the others," and that should have forced him to doubt the very possibility of application of the principle of causality to historical narrative. And here Hume directs the historical research to another path.

In *The History of England* Hume constantly addresses *The Constitutional History* of Henry Hallam,<sup>18</sup> who (along with Hume) combined the mastery of a historian and a writer even when describing political institutions. In fact, Hallam's research becomes a historiographical foundation for Hume's narrative. At this turn history gains the appearance of a narrative, grounded by certain goals. Therefore Hume in his historiographical work takes a new methodological step: his skepticism regarding the slightest possibility to extract any causal substantiation from the "phenomenal description" of historical events becomes the foundation for a principally different understanding of the research goals of a historian. From everyday-psychological meanings of human deeds he turns to a search for *meaning* of the events that took place in English history, by finding theses meanings in the establishment of its social structures and its social institutions. And possibly it is because of this that his position was often interpreted as subjectivism in recounting of the historical events. Thus, Macaulay characterizes Hume-the-historian as an exemplary "advocate," who proposes advantageous circumstances that level the unfavorable facts in service to the defense of his thesis.<sup>19</sup> Later on the historical work of Hume came under criticism from the point of view of scientific research many times: not only with regards to subjectivism, but for a lack source base (especially in regards to the work on the ancient history of England). R.G. Collingwood pointed this out in particular. Yet it was Collingwood, who highly valued the philosophical speculations of Hume regarding the nature of historical knowledge, in his *The Idea of History*.

In the meantime Shpet, long before Collingwood, in his *History as a Problem of Logic*, and precisely in the course of his critical analysis of "phenomenalism" and "psychologism," comes to a similar understanding to that of Hume of the goals of history

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>16</sup> D. Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, (Harvard: Harvard Classics, 1910), available online.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example: D. Hume, *The History of England*, v. I-VI, 272, 450, 539, 560, 588, 605. Henry Hallam (1777–1859) – English historian, the author of *Constitutional History of England from the Accession of Henry VII to the Death of George II*, 1827, which despite the sympathies of the author, who was clearly on the side of the Whigs, represents the first serious attempt of an integral legal interpretation of English political institutions.

<sup>19</sup> T. B. Macaulay, "History," in: *Miscellaneous Works of Lord Macaulay*, vol. I. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1880), 188, available online.

as science. It must be supposed that it was more important to Shpet to *critically* evaluate that which did not allow Hume to advance in the direction in which Shpet himself was moving at that time – in the direction of a sign-symbolic understanding of the historical process – than to articulate the methodological shifts in this direction that Hume didn't reflect upon himself. In 1911 he writes:

Was Hume therefore a skeptic at all? (...) Hume doubted the cognizability of the real world and resolved his doubts by asserting certain knowledge of this world. Can Hume be called a skeptic simply because he denies the cognizability of the world of actual things, limiting our knowledge to the phenomenal world? Is it not correct to actually call such a teaching agnosticism and even dogmatic negativism?<sup>20</sup>

Nonetheless, Shpet at the end cannot but note Hume's shift towards a sign-symbolic interpretation of history.

Regarding Hume's interpretation of historical knowledge Shpet notes:

[T]he question is not in the causes, but in the *motives* that originate in the emotional nature of a human being and that are not for moral *evaluation* but for inclusion in a system of efficient causes. Hume himself understands the "motive" thus, when he says: "This evident, that when we praise any actions, we regard only the motives that produced them, and consider the actions as signs or indications of certain principles in the mind and temper." The external performance has no merit. We must look within to find the moral quality.<sup>21</sup>

(D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*. B. III. P. II. Sect. I)

Thus, the interpretation of the "outer" as a sign effectively leads Hume to a new ontology. Shpet, disregarding Hume, whilst simultaneously methodologically generalizing this move of thought for himself, which flows, not without appealing to skepticism, writes:

Insofar as psychological causality is the only type of causality that is given to us directly, we can say about all other types of causality that they are comprehensible to our knowledge only insofar as they manifest themselves outwardly. This thought has a special significance in the sphere of social phenomena, since the external givenness of other empirical objects is ascertained by us first of all as a certain sensual complex, whereas for social phenomena sensual data is only a "sign." Thus "objective" givenness of sensual objects doesn't awaken doubts, quite the contrary, it is the "semiotic" character of the social which, apparently, causes many to narrow it down

<sup>20</sup> Г. Г. Шпет, "Скептицизм и догматизм Юма" [On Hume's Skepticism and Dogmatism], *Вопросы философии и психологии*, 106(1911), 16-17.

<sup>21</sup> Шпет, *История как проблема логики*, ч. 1 (Москва – Санкт-Петербург: Университетская книга, 2014), 80.

to the psychical or “subjective.” In any case, it is clear even for psychologists that cognition of the social is only possible when and inasmuch as it becomes “objectified.” We accept this characteristic of the social, since it is its active manifestation that matters, because it is presupposed that in this particular social phenomenon a certain activity is disclosed, i.e., the cause of the phenomenon itself is implied. Therefore, for the social phenomena the objectification consists, as it were, in its apparent outward fixation, and it is only in this way that it is comprehensible to our knowledge. However, more could be said: if something that causes a social phenomenon hasn’t been “discovered,” hasn’t been objectified, then it is not possible to speak of a social phenomenon, because there is no social phenomenon at all.<sup>22</sup>

Thus Shpet actually gives a philosophical substantiation for the necessity of a skeptical method for historical research as scientific research. In his *The History of England* Hume himself unfortunately does not do so, which in all likelihood served as a reason to distinguish “Hume-the-Historian” from “Hume-the-Philosopher” in historiography.

Nonetheless, the epistemological meaning of Hume’s skepticism and empiricism changes when he himself applies them as a method of historical research. It becomes a tool that allows us to break through to sign-symbolic nature of a human history. Skepticism towards experience (empirical data) allows Hume to advance, i.e. here his skepticism leads him beyond the frame of a search of simple cause-and-effect connections in empirical data. Considered in a broader context, Hume’s skepticism proves to be a much more fruitful position, than it is usually said to be. However the very understanding of skepticism changes here – it gets new shades, becoming an epistemological tool that paves the way to meaningful chain of events that form actual history. And to the extent, to which Hume’s skepticism is reborn in historical criticism of the source and historiography, we get the methodological foundations of classical historical science.

Moreover, Robin George Collingwood draws attention to the utilitarian use of skepticism by Hume, writing in *The Idea of History*:

I would not go so far as to call his <Hume’s> entire philosophy a reasoned defense of historical thought, but that was undoubtedly one of the things which it implicitly undertook; and it seems to me that when he had finished his philosophical work and asked himself what he had accomplished in it, he could have said with justice that one thing at any rate was the demonstration that history was a legitimate and valid type of knowledge, more legitimate in fact than most others because not promising more than it could perform and not depending on any questionable metaphysical hypotheses. In the general scepticism to which he was led, the sciences which suffered most were those whose claims were dogmatic and absolute; the whirlwind of his philosophical criticism, leveling all thought to the position of natural and

<sup>22</sup> Шпет, История как проблема логики (Москва: Памятники исторической мысли, 2002), 1120–1121.

reasonable belief, left undamaged the fabric of history, as a type of thought which alone could be satisfied with that condition.<sup>23</sup>

An urgent need in historical understanding of the reality, i.e. the need of history as a research of the past, as a science, which sets goals to acquire true representation of the past of a human, got a status of socio-cultural need in the time of Hume. The society needed to know the answers to the question, what was the meaning of, and hence, what was the condition of possibility of any given historical event, whereas these questions supposed the study of various evidences (sources) of this event in order to find its true meaning. And for that Hume rehabilitates the House of Stuart in spite of the shared opinion of all classes of English society of the time. For him skepticism in this is neither a goal nor a principle, but the beginning of the historical research as a scientific research, for it supposes the objectivity of knowledge that opposes partial interests and meanings.

The value of historical knowledge for Hume turns out to be greater than his combined-epistemological skeptical position and in fact modifies it. One can also lay critical claim to this modification. But it is richer. Most importantly it demonstrates to modern philosophy of science, that epistemological schemes are simply means of advancement towards knowledge. Taking into consideration the value of knowledge, the way culture-historical epistemology suggests, then Hume's skepticism is functional, instrumental and by no means can be reduced to self-sufficient and unconditional epistemological and normative patterns. This is precisely what Shpet discovered at the time. It is exactly for this reason, that his analysis of Hume's epistemological ideas is still relevant today for the philosophy of science.

*Translated by A. Kabanov and E.-M. Kabanova*

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<sup>23</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 75-76.

# WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE IN THE EXPERIENCE OF GUSTAV SHPET'S PHENOMENOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS

## 1

Gustav Shpet is one of the few Russian philosophers and theorists who in addition to the study of scientific problems were also engaged in literary translation, including the works of poetry. His experience in this field has not yet been sufficiently appreciated either by philosophers or by professional translators and linguists. The former ignore it because it concerns fiction; the latter do so because not all Shpet's translations are recognized to be quite successful. However, it seems that both *understanding of the correlation* between these two areas of the thinker's self-expression and the place this correlation occupied in his professional life simply escape attention of the majority of researchers. Meanwhile, it constitutes an absolutely unique and necessary experience that clarifies the study of the *problem of understanding* as a semantically marked relationship to the world and, in particular, as an experience that substantiates the criterion for the preservation of the adequacy of such relationship (as a phenomenon) in the process of transition from one language tradition to the other.<sup>1</sup>

The problem of adequate reproduction of the basic conceptual apparatus in translation remains a crucial aspect for the methodology of historical and philosophical studies. Gustav Shpet is one of the few philosophers both within the native and worldwide context, who did engage in the search for criteria of objectivity and in argumentation of the general foundations of language. This explains his intention to unite the phenomenology and hermeneutics. Upon his return from Germany Shpet must have been undoubtedly inspired by his discovery of the phenomenological method, yet he certainly realized that no method is universal without an appropriate system. To make his method complete he needed an *empirical* system, and it could only be found in hermeneutics.

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<sup>1</sup> In this sense, we can agree that the rehabilitation of "the name of Shpet in the Russian Shakespeare Studies is just such an element, the recovery of which completely changes the semantic structure of professional sphere," Т. Г. Щедрина, "Густав Шпет и шекспировский круг," *Густав Шпет и шекспировский круг. Письма, документы, переводы* ["Gustav Shpet and the Shakespearean Circle," Gustav Shpet and the Shakespearean Circle: Letters, Documents, Translations] (Москва-Санкт Петербург, 2013), 17.

Thus, while working as a translator and interpreter Shpet has remained a philosopher. He not only performed a specific technical task (transforming the mental content by means of language), but he did not lose sight of the *fundamental* problem his task illumined (and preserved the original form of the thought unchanged). Therefore, he did not simply accomplish his task, but also justified the measure of objectivity of such solution, demonstrating the possibility to preserve the original meaning in translation.

It would have been impossible if Shpet had considered that the absolute basis of knowledge is the purest form of consciousness. Being an opponent of transcendentalists' transformation of phenomenology, he therefore preferred a hermeneutical direction, considering a *word* as the fundamental value. Shpet considered a word to be an absolute, ontological, and, at the same time, specific construction, which cannot be subjectively altered, because it is objective and not fortuitous. Still, it does not mean that it cannot be comprehended. The thinker was convinced that through the synthesis of phenomenological and hermeneutical methods of cognition the universal knowledge could be born as an understanding which does not distort the essence. To his mind, it became possible when an inter-penetration of meanings occurred, a reduction of meanings layer after layer, i.e., starting with graphic and phonetic shell which constituted the material shape of the word, down to the pure ideal essence which Shpet called *the inner form of the word*.

This inner form is shaped and comes into being in the process of creation and operation of countless connections between the smallest verbal semantic components (morphemes) generated by historical and logical circumstances. This form is the "skeleton" of the word and, therefore, is the skeleton of the entire language. As the simplest, most direct and commonest unit, the inner form can be considered as the conflation of the initial and final causes which make the word into its precise configuration. Shpet considered the inner form of the word, which, adequately perceived, preserves the adequacy of semantic understanding, to be the basis of language translation objectivity. He based his idea on Shaftesbury's definition of a "*forming form*,"<sup>2</sup> calling it "*a form that forms the forming form*."<sup>3</sup> In other words, the inner form is not a symbol of the concluded movement of the thought, but a prerequisite of such development. Shpet understood it not as a solidified and hardened structure, but as a principle of endless manifestation and development of language, which simultaneously maintains its integrity, independence and autonomy from other modes of conscious attitude to the world.

The discovery of the inner form of the word is both a methodological (cognitive) and conceptualizing (structuring) procedure. It *eliminates an individual* self-contradiction of the *word*, making its meaning sustainable and non-random, and at the same time illuminates the self-contradictory nature of *the language, which is intrinsic, specific and universal*. In other words, by reflecting on the value of the inner form it is possible to identify the generic semantic incongruity of different languages. An understanding of the objective character of this incongruity makes it possible to conjecture or even to predict the transformation of meaning in the course of transition from one language to another.

<sup>2</sup> See A. A. C. Shaftesbury, *The Moralists* in Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Douglas den Uyl (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2001), v. 2, 405-407.

<sup>3</sup> Г. Г. Шпет, *Внутренняя форма слова: Этюды и вариации на темы Гумбольдта* [The Inner Form of the Word: Humboldtian Sketches and Variations] (Москва: КомКнига, 2006), 56.

This contradiction manifests itself in the unity and opposition of its own subject-sensitive and supersensible values. And, therefore, it proceeds in two directions of interpretation of the inner form of the word: “(1) The *negative* one implies that the inner form is neither a sense-given phonic shape, nor a form of pure abstract thinking, nor yet a shape of an abstract object, which constitutes the conceivable content of any possible form of being, and (2) the *positive* one: however, the inner form uses the phonic shape to denote objects and connections of thoughts required by a particular mind-set. At the same time, it uses the external form to express any modification of conceivable subject content, in this case denoted as meaning, with such urgency, that the expression and meaning in the specific reality of their language constitute not only inseparable structural unity, but also an identical *sui generis* being (of the socio-cultural type).”<sup>4</sup>

Based on the foregoing, Shpet concluded that “the word in its formal qualities is such a part in a general cultural consciousness, to which other parts are *homologous*. In other words, it means that the word in its formal structure is an *ontological prototype* of every cultural and social ‘thing.’”<sup>5</sup> Thus, the universal inner form of the word *never, under any circumstances*, allows the consciousness to leave the limits of language, while the content is *constantly* propelling the thought beyond its boundaries, into the world.<sup>6</sup> The equivalence of form and content makes the laws of the language objective and inviolable, regardless of the historical and cultural traditions in which it operates. *A Word has the status of the idea of a thing*. This comprises the formal truth of the word.

## 2

Shpet used this methodology as a starting point while working on the translation of literary works, and believed it to be especially indispensable in relation to the works of Shakespeare, in which the translator encounters countless stylistically and historically unusual and, therefore, logically obscure situations. The philosopher proceeded from the assumption that “every true artist belongs to one of the two types: inclined either to claim the right of the individual nature of language to be art, or to expose the individual nature of art through language, in other words, an artist either gives life and form to hideous dead thoughts, or turns the living reality into a vivid and vibrant imagination. In external forms we are faced with a perfection of clarity, in the inner – with the all-embracing truth.”<sup>7</sup> Language is an art form; therefore its nature and structure are so complex and whimsical that it cannot take rough handling. It is a gift, and our interaction with it, in the end, should be honest and unselfish, like a pleasure. Yet, the irony of the situation lies in art’s inherent insufficiency: it is only through language that its devastating or creative power may be manifested. Sometimes a work of art is too profound, too innovative, too symbolic, in short, too perfect to be adequately perceived. In such cases, language acts as facilitator of perception, restoring the work of art to appropriate level of assessment and recognition, and yet maintaining its actual value for the future.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>6</sup> It is the very same language that makes this possible, though in this case it merely serves as means.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

*William Shakespeare is a rare case of both creative thinking models combined in a single person: he is incredibly “vivid,” descriptive, sometimes even demonstrative in his language, and yet at the same time he opens the metaphysical prospect of infinitely evolving meanings. And it is precisely this aspect that makes it both difficult and easy to embed his works into the context of other cultures.*

According to Shpet, the aspiration of many interpreters *to make the style more picturesque* may be considered to be one of the basic signs of poor translation. In his opinion, such attempts do nothing to clarify the essence of knowledge, or the nature of language as such, or the essence of the culture in which that language develops and functions; on the contrary, such embellishments confuse the reader who senses the presence of a third person (interpreter). The language is no longer grasped as a complete and perfect whole; the reader may no longer perceive through the objectivity of its structure the author's attitude to the world and the peculiarities of a given historical period, instead, he is forced to reflect on the use and suitability of a chosen metaphor, etc. It is one thing if the expressions are initially present in the original, and quite another, if they are introduced by a translator. However, if a certain preliminary idea of the inner form of the word as a “thing in itself” is established, such liberties may be avoided.

This is why Shpet insisted so strongly that in translation, interpretation destroys meaning if it is imposed or separated from the initial direct comprehension of the original. After all, “poetic images are figures of speech, tropes, inner forms. Psychologists made a rotten present to the poetics by interpreting the inner form as a predominantly visual image. It is a false assertion that inner form is pictorial. The visual image hinders poetic perception. To mistake a pictorial for a poetic image is to consider any contemplation, any intuition to be visual.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, a visual image is based on empirical experience and specific, but often random and therefore not necessarily rational concept of knowledge. The poetic image embodies a certain level of abstract thinking which is essentially rational and therefore necessary. Conflating these types of understanding may lead not only to a substitution, but also to the complete abolition of the real subject of knowledge. For example, if the translation is too free, it may seem that Shakespeare's manner of thinking is almost identical to Descartes' or Francis Bacon's, which immediately leads one to doubt the fact of his actual historical existence.

In other words, Shpet was convinced that translation may and must be considered reliable only when it is competent and precise, and, obviously, made directly from the original source. It is the only way to preserve the authenticity of the author's presence, to convey the spirit of the author's identity. And then in the future no one will doubt existence of the author as creative subject. Thus, Gustav Shpet saw the subject as founded on its correlation with the object through the creation of verbal semantic substance. The concept defines the subject, and not vice versa. One of the best and most vivid examples supporting this principle is Shpet's analysis of scenes and episodes with witches in *Macbeth*.<sup>9</sup>

According to the thinker, we should distinguish between the conceptual apparatus of the play's text and of the list of characters which, as a rule, is ignored even by the

<sup>8</sup> Г. Г. Шпет, “Эстетические фрагменты,” *Искусство как вид знания. Избранные труды по философии культуры* [“Esthetic Fragments,” Art as a Form of Knowledge: Selected Works in Philosophy of Culture] (Москва: РОССПЭН, 2007), 183.

<sup>9</sup> See: Г. Г. Шпет, “Комментарий к Макбету,” *Густав Шпет и шекспировский круг*, 384–388.

professionals. Meanwhile, it is important because the text expresses the author's point of view only indirectly, i.e. through the words of the heroes; it is directly manifested only in the list of characters and may not coincide with their own viewpoints. Shpet pointed out the ambivalence of the playwright's attitude to his characters: "What Shakespeare says about the weird 'sisters,' indeed, can be brought under two main headings: characteristics depicting the 'sisters' from the inside, through their 'inner' actions, and those portraying them from the outside. The former are mostly *fabulous*; the latter reflect 'demonological' notions of the time and state *factual* indications which would have been enough (...) to send the subject to the stake."<sup>10</sup> In other words, in the list of characters "witches" are listed, while in the text Shakespeare calls them "*weird sisters*," *prophetic sisters*. This indicates that they are above all the *foretellers*, the *prophetesses*, rather than the creatures of darkness. Of course, this may also be interpreted as "witches" or "sorceresses" denoting "those possessing secret knowledge." However, even this contains semantic subtleties: one may possess knowledge which does not relate to the future, in which case one would not have the gift of prophesy.

At first glance, these details seem inessential; Shpet, however, saw this in a different light. In his conception, "linguistic consciousness" should mirror the slightest nuances of human attitude to the world, irrespective of the reader's personal reflection. When Shakespeare deliberately calls the characters "witches," it is his note to himself, to make sure that he properly depicts their behaviour. However, for the other characters and therefore for the audience as well, they are "prophetic sisters," strange old women, hags, whoever, – but not who they really are. This is because for such knowledge one may have had to pay a very dear price – one's freedom, or even one's life, even though one happened to live during the progressive 17<sup>th</sup> century. And even if there were no danger of actual persecution, still the meaning of the hags' activities may have never been fully understood by their observers.

In other words, Gustav Shpet was convinced that Shakespeare very deliberately constructed the play to somewhat conceal the true role of these weird old women. This is precisely the purpose served by the oblique characterization of the witches in the text, which is not motivated by the peculiarities of their relations with other characters. However, in pursuit of vividness and picturesque quality, translators sometimes neglected these details and, through their stereotypes, inappropriately inflected the text. That is, they violated not only the logic of the play, but also the atmosphere of the epoch. In particular, the words of the witches: "Fair is foul, and foul is fair: / Hover through the fog and filthy air," translated by Shpet and Solovyov as: "*Свет есть тьма и тьма есть свет: / Летим туману, мгле вослед*," other translators rendered in a plainly negative, accusatory tone, which indicates their negligence in distinguishing between the inner and outer forms of word, or a lack of understanding: "*Зло – в добре; добро – во зле. / Полетим в нечистой мгле*"<sup>11</sup>; "*Зло станет правдой, правда – злом. / Взовьёмся в воздухе гнилом*"<sup>12</sup>; "*Зло есть добро, добро есть зло. / Летим, вскочив на помело!*"<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Шпет, "Комментарий к Макбету," 385.

<sup>11</sup> Translation by A. Radlova – В. Шекспир, *Отелло; Ромео и Джульетта; Ричард III; Макбет* (Москва: Цедрам, 1935).

<sup>12</sup> Translation by M. Lozinsky: В. Шекспир, *Избранные произведения в 2 т* [Selected Works in 2 vols] (Минск: Беловежская пуща, 1997), т. 2, 421-512.

<sup>13</sup> Translation by V. Pasternak: В. Шекспир, *Полное собрание сочинений: В 14 т.* [Complete Works in 14 vols.] (Москва: ТЭРРА, 1994), т. 8, 469–632. In this translation, moreover, witches do not just "dissolve" or "hover" in

May other examples may be cited here, in which beautiful, picturesque translation is not only inaccurate, but also creates a distorting emphasis. For instance, the lines: "When the hurlyburly's done, / When the battle's lost and won," are rendered by Shpet and Solovyov in the following way: "*Лишь уймётся трескотня, / Подойдёт к концу резня.*" Lozinsky offers almost identical translation: "*Как только отшумит резня, / Тех и других угомоня.*" However, Pasternak's translation is far more direct: it depicts a particular battle with a specific outcome, which is not mentioned in the original text: "*Когда один из воевод / Другого в битве разобьет.*"

Let us consider the episode in which the witches talk about the impending meeting with Macbeth: "Where the place? / Upon the heath / There to meet with Macbeth." They are referring to not just a chance encounter with the future king, but to a prearranged meeting. Weird sisters see wasteland as a ritual place to make predictions which will be fulfilled. The future Thane of Cawdor is drawn to this place as well, although Macbeth obviously does not yet know what prediction he will receive: "*Встреча где ж? / Пустырь вон тот. / Там Макбет нас найдёт.*"<sup>14</sup> Lozinsky also conveys it very accurately: "*Где сбор? На вереснике. Там / Макбет навстречу выйdet нам.*" On the contrary, Pasternak makes it seem a coincidence, caused entirely by the (obviously, evil) will of the witches, because Macbeth does not seem to know anything about their plans: "*Где нам сойтись? На пустыре. / Макбет там будет к той поре.*"

Evidently we can't help agreeing with Shpet that picturesque quality creates a curious, but rather minor accent that does not constitute the essential value of the language. Vivid imagery concerns not the form of word but its content. It is descriptive, and therefore not vital for either prose or poetry. Devices which produce the picturesque effects are not the images of language, its constituent parts, but mere reflections of things, connections, the circumstances of the objective world – they are what comes into the language from outside. In this sense, it is precisely the use of vivid imager that makes the language vulnerable, i.e., subordinate and inferior (worse than just secondary!). And if it is so, then the artistic devices in their final manifestation are nothing but expressions of the craft of whimsical word arrangement, and it is unclear whether they convey any other knowledge than prose. And, finally, there arises a painful suspicion that the face of the author became irretrievably lost in a profound, emotionally touching and stylistically beautiful text, transformed in the process of translation...

### 3

Thus, Shpet was convinced that not only the structure of words but also their arrangement in a sentence may be subjective or random. And in this lies the power, but also the vulnerability of his idea. Later history showed that the text of *Macbeth*, which is now used as the canon, in fact, was taken from later Folio of 1632, in which the very beginning of

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the darkness, but fly on broomsticks. This removes the viewer's last doubts of their status, insisting on an untruth. It must be said that Pasternak, himself an outstanding poet, paradoxically, rendered a disservice to Shakespeare, entering into a conversation with him, so to speak, on equal terms. This would have probably not taken place, had he been less self-sufficient as a poet. However, while grasping the essence of the thought, he often neglected to retain fidelity to its original expression. That is to say, his thought went beyond the original.

<sup>14</sup> Translation by S. M. Solovyov and G. Shpet. *Густав Шпет и шекспировский круг*, 265–405.

the play is presented as follows: "When shall we three meet again / In thunder, lightning, or in rain?" Accordingly, all the following translations retain the original features: "Когда нам вновь сойтись втроём / В дождь, под молнию и гром?"<sup>15</sup>; "Когда среди молний, в дождь и гром / Мы вновь увидимся втроём?"<sup>16</sup>; "Встретимся когда втроём / Под ливень, молнию и гром?"<sup>17</sup>; "Когда сойдемся мы втроём / – Дождь будет, молния иль гром?"<sup>18</sup>

At the same time there is a much earlier Folio of 1623 (usually called the First Folio), where the emphasis was put elsewhere: "When shall we three meet again? / In Thunder, Lightning, or in Rain?"

As we can see here, each line ends with a question mark which fundamentally changes its meaning. And since these very pages of the manuscript contain the author's remarks, it is highly unlikely that the publishers could afford a mistake in the printing of the very first line of this play. They had to make sure that the question marks put by the author, are safely retained in the three subsequent Folios, treating this detail with an almost religious awe. Nevertheless, the publisher Sir Thomas Hanmer for some reason removed them as a mere printing error, and now all modern editions print the following lines which have quite a different meaning: "When shall we three meet again / In Thunder, Lightning, or in Rain?" "Когда сойдёмся мы втроём / – Дождь будет, молния иль гром?"<sup>19</sup>

And yet, in the light of the aforesaid, Shakespeare most likely could not do without two separately raised questions, however strange this may seem, because the lines had to be arranged in a peculiar order, to disclose his special meaning, known to him alone, namely: "For some reason all our meetings occur only in bad weather, during a storm or rain; so when should we meet next?" rather than, "We meet in different weather conditions, so when shall we meet once more in thunder, lightning, or in rain?" This possibility of inadequate rendering of the meaning should be taken into account, and especially kept in mind when we study the Folio of 1623. Despite the fact that sometimes the two folios are confused causing the obvious mistake, we still have Shakespeare's direct suggestion, in his own words.<sup>20</sup> That is, the witches do not necessarily get together in bad weather – it may be a mere chance, a coincidence or perhaps there may exist a special correlation, known only to themselves. However, Radlova indicates such connection unequivocally, which made her the target of Shpet's criticism.

<sup>15</sup> Transl. by Lozinsky.

<sup>16</sup> Translation by Pasternak.

<sup>17</sup> Translation by Solovyov and Shpet.

<sup>18</sup> Translation by Radlova.

<sup>19</sup> Translation by Radlova.

<sup>20</sup> For more detail, see: W. Shakespeare, *Macbeth, King of Scotland*, ed. by A. P. Paton (Edinburgh: Edmonston & company, 1877), 75–76.

# SOVIET PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERGROUND

It has become a truth universally acknowledged that philosophy could not have existed in the Soviet Russia, that is, if we understand philosophy as a free, creative way of thinking which tackles the most radical questions of human and social existence. Russian philosophy could have survived only in emigration. After the departure of the infamous “philosophers’ steamer” in 1922, Russia inexorably declined into an epoch of “philosophical silence.” This state of affairs was brought about by the dictatorship of the Marxist-Leninist ideology which forbade any kind of a *diverging* worldview – an “iron curtain” that would make it impossible to either read or cite the “bourgeois” authors, and which would preclude any chance to work within the context of a worldwide philosophical thought. The most depressing picture, indeed.

Nikolay Lossky is absolutely unequivocal in his assessment:

The dialectical materialism is the Party philosophy in the USSR and as such deals not with the search for the truth, but with the practical needs of the revolution. And for as long as the USSR is governed by the power that suppresses any free research, the dialectical materialism cannot possibly be seen as a philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

Vasily Zenkovsky emphasized the absence of individual or personal element in the Soviet philosophy:

We never mention any names, – indeed, there is no such thing as individual creativity within that single track of thought approved and regulated by the superiors (‘the dialectical materialism’). This pathetic, tragic in its essence situation of the defaced thought is all the more terrifying because it continues for several decades.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Н. О. Лосский, *История русской философии* [History of Russian Philosophy] (Москва: Высшая школа, 1991), 440.

<sup>2</sup> В. В. Зеньковский, *История русской философии* [A History of Russian Philosophy], т. 2, ч. 2 (Ленинград: Эго, 1991), 53.

I would like to dispute the general thesis that there was no philosophy within the Soviet Russia. Today this belief is creating problems in professional communication, since both the young generation of philosophers and many of the international publishers regard with extreme suspicion the authors who may be identified as the “Soviet philosophers.” They assume that no original or significant ideas could have been expressed within that period of history. I would like to throw some light on the topic and to demonstrate to the reader what was it like for the philosophical thinking to survive within the social conditions which strictly prohibited on ideological grounds precisely this kind of thinking. In my opinion, this topic is part of the problem of the “ecology of thinking” or “cultural ecology.” Unfortunately, it must be recognized that the difficult experience gained by us in the past now once again appears to come into demand, though the causes which threaten the philosophical thinking today are quite different from those we faced during the Soviet period. It is therefore my bitter conviction that this topic will be of interest not only in the historical (retrospective) perspective.

### **CATACOMB CULTURE AND PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERGROUND**

The famous Russian sculptor Ernst Neizvestny was one of the first to express and make public the self-realization of the creative youth of the post-World-War-II generation (the war that the Russians call the *Great Patriotic War*). He wrote:

The concept of the “catacomb culture” was used by me and my friends in 1949 to define what it was that we desired to do. At the time I was a student of the Arts Academy and also studied philosophy at the Moscow State University and I discovered that in the current conditions of the educational system, having studied with great dedication and intensity, we will graduate as accomplished ignoramuses. We learned about Lenin from Stalin, about Marx – from Lenin and Stalin, about Dühring – from *Anti-Dühring*.<sup>3</sup> The course programs were extensive, and it was beyond anybody’s perseverance to read all that twaddle.<sup>4</sup>

I must note here that I found myself in a very similar situation as a philosophy student of the Moscow State University in the 1960s, though, mercifully, I did not have to pour over the works of Comrade Stalin (after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party in 1956 which condemned the personality cult, all the works of Stalin were swiftly removed from library shelves). However, in essence, everything remained the same: we learned about Hegel from Lenin’s Philosophical Notebooks, about Feuerbach – from Engels (*Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*), and about Marx – once more from Lenin (*The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism*). Obviously, the 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy was practically beyond our grasp altogether, since all our closely studied classics remained securely shut within the boundaries of the past centuries.

<sup>3</sup> F. Engels, *Herrn Eugen Dührings Umwälzung der Wissenschaft*.

<sup>4</sup> Э. Неизвестный, “Катакомбная культура и власть,” [The catacomb culture and power] *Вопросы философии* 10 (1991), 3.

When I first met Mikhail Rozov (who later became my scholarly supervisor) in the early 1970s, I asked him where and how he acquired his professional education. He looked at me with a wicked irony and replied: “I am self-taught!” And responding to my obvious astonishment continued: “Of course you realize that a graduate of the Department of Philosophy of A. A. Zhdanov Leningrad State University cannot be said to have received any kind of education.” And I, of course, immediately conceded. Later, Rozov would describe to us in lively detail the episode when he was almost excommunicated from the Komsomol as a student because he was seen reading Hegel in German... Fortunately, after all was said and done, he merely received a severe reprimand.

Ernst Neizvestny continues:

Together with my three friends we’ve created a circle to try to overcome all this. We decided to work on our self-education. We never set any political goals for ourselves, and we had no political conceptions in mind. I was not even a member of the Komsomol, while one of my friends already belonged to the Party. Yet, we understood that we must educate ourselves very broadly, and that reading such stuff as Trotsky or St. Augustin or Orwell or Berdyaev was a indictable offence. That is precisely why there had to be secrecy. So the structure was created based on the catacomb principle... Only four people knew what was going on. Others were merely secondary participants. (...) If the authorities would have asked us whether we were politically engaged, we would have had to answer in all honesty that we were not. But in a country like the contemporary USSR even knowledge is politics. And since we knew that organizing any serious group is punishable by law, we pretended to be the jolly drunkards...<sup>5</sup>

It is worthwhile to note in this wonderful and humorous account the following: firstly, such expressions as “catacombs,” “underground” and “shadow work” may irritate the younger generation of today and the so-called “sociologists of knowledge,” since these words carry unnecessary connotations. I keep hearing such remarks as: “how can you call it an underground, if you were able to keep your job at an academic institution, defend your dissertations, lecture, participate in conferences and even publish – and not in Samizdat?!” Obviously, we had no serious structure of secrecy, special passwords, legends and safe houses. Yet, as a historian I must insist: one cannot criticize the self-awareness, *self-realization* and *self-definition* of the generation which one proposes to make the object of *enquiry*

Secondly, I would like to point out that the main masking tactic of Ernst’s group was to posture as “the jolly drunkards.” In our case we had a somewhat different strategy, though not altogether dissimilar from Ernst’s technique.

I will now briefly discuss some philosophical circles of the 1960-1970s and the peculiarities of their activities. I was directly involved in such activity, and sometimes myself organized such study groups. I also would like to outline the behavioural patterns which allowed us to avoid “deconspiration” and “unmasking” at the hands of the authorities.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem.*

What are the questions which I hope to answer here? There are several: what was the social space in which we found ourselves? What was the behavioural pattern (stereotype) employed by us? What was the “ideological background” and the age category of the intellectual movement discussed? What types of activities was our “philosophical underground” engaged in?

### **THE VARIETY OF HOME SEMINARS**

Thus, already by the end of 1950s there was a blossoming of the so-called home seminars which reached its highest intensity during the 1960s (the time of the political “thaw” initiated by Khrushchev). I will only mention here some of them, focusing in particular on the philosophical study groups which were well known to me. The discussion groups were organized across various fields: historians, philologists, art critics and members of creative intelligentsia (artists, filmmakers, architects) met for home seminars. Such informal gatherings were also popular even among the scholars outside the humanities (mathematicians or linguists, geologists or geographers, etc.).

Dealing with the strictly philosophical environment, I will mention only five leaders of such groups who were the central figures towards which the “trusted” and “initiated” young people gravitated.

#### **Mikhail Petrov (1923–1987)**

Worked in Rostov-on-Don. Incredibly talented, original thinker, in addition unimpeded in his access to the foreign literature (he was a military translator during the war). He read and spoke French, German and English, and often reviewed and summarized particularly interesting Western literature. He represented the type of the “Russian European”; in Moscow which he frequently visited he was nicknamed “Michel Petrov,” thus emphasizing this important European quality. Even back then there was no trace of Marxist-Leninist ideology in him. He formulated several strikingly original ideas on the genesis of the Greek philosophy. His work on the deep sociocultural history of the Western universities launched the sociology of science as a field of knowledge. Yet, his books are being published in their full uncensored volume only now, since during his life he was forced to keep his writing in the sock drawer, without the right to lecture or publish.

#### **Vladimir Bibler (1918–2000)**

A Moscow philosopher who conducted home seminars in his own tiny apartment (near the Rechnoy Vokzal metro station) for over three decades. He enjoyed popularity among the historians, Russian medievalists in particular. He was extremely influential among the psychologists and methodologists of teaching. His favourite concepts are “thinking as creativity” and “cultural dialogue,” which became his methodological and pedagogical credo.

#### **Mikhail Rozov (1930-2011)**

Rozov worked in the legendary Novosibirsk Akademgorodok, the famous science-pole, at the time of its highest flourish, in the period of the most exorbitant romantic flights of the scientific thought. The original and singular “Siberian philosophy” is still

associated with his name, even though he moved to Moscow in 1981. His main interests were epistemology and philosophy of science. The systematic activity of the Novosibirsk philosophical seminar was based on the original research program created by Rozov (Social Relay Race Theory).

### **Vyacheslav Stepin (1934-)**

Organized and conducted a seminar in Minsk. Later moved to Moscow, and achieved an unprecedented success during the Perestroika period within its new social context: he achieved the highest academic honor (the post of the Academician), worked as the director of the Institute of Philosophy, as the Academician-Secretary of the Social Sciences Division of the Russian Academy of Sciences, he also achieved international recognition. Stepin's seminar in Moscow was conducted jointly with renowned physicists. They were both interested in an endeavour to reconstruct the genesis of Maxwell's equations (electromagnetic field theory). This reconstruction became the basis of the epistemological generalizations.

### **Georgy Shchedrovitsky (1929 –1994)**

Worked in Moscow and was very well known to almost all layers of the Moscow intelligentsia. With his unforgettable, vivid personality he was able to create not just a home seminar, but a peculiar intellectual movement which was formed almost in the manner of the famous Vienna Circle. The Moscow Methodological Circle was centred around the figure of this charismatic leader. Both Rozov and Stepin publicly recognized his influence not only on the formation of ideas but also on the very structure of the seminar activity. It is within the Moscow Methodological Circle that my own philosophical position was formed. Therefore, I would like to discuss these seminars in more detail.

## **WHY DID WE GO TO SEMINARS? THE BEHAVIORAL STEREOTYPES**

Looking back today I have the impression that the post-war generation (born after 1945) had an innate desire to “change the world.” This deep and silent longing would first announce itself sometime during the primary school, driving us to not only engage in self-education, but also to seek for organized structures to change the world “for the better.” This propensity led first to the emergence of the “dandies,” later – to the appearance of the hippy and punk subcultures; many were drawn to take journeys to the great socialist construction projects such as Baikal–Amur Mainline or Sayano–Shushenskaya Dam, the development of virgin lands, etc. This was no longer an immersion into the “catacomb culture,” but a search for something usually identified as “counter-culture.” As for the philosophical youth, the students of the 1960s, we seemed to have absorbed in our earliest childhood one of Marx's postulates (from his “Theses on Feuerbach”): “Philosophers have hitherto only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it.”

We longed for changes, but – how might we achieve them? Fortunately, we could address this question to Georgy Shchedrovitsky himself. He conducted the student discussion group within the Department of Philosophy at the Moscow State University (Psychological Division). Such discussions were spontaneous and regularly repeated. He

would answer in the following manner: the history of the world shows that revolution begins with ideas, that is, within the heads!.. Thus, we must learn to think properly, to live within the sphere of thought – and this is difficult, as our tragedy consists in our loss, our abolition of thinking itself!.. Thinking is a way of life!” And if the addressee of this pronouncement seemed to respond with the appropriate earnestness of understanding, an invitation to a home seminar would follow. Back then, the meetings took place in Shchedrovitsky’s own tiny room in his parents’ apartment near Sokol metro station. This room could fit no more than 15 people (seated on folding chairs). But in this space one would immediately feel “initiated.”

The topics of these meetings were never intended to be either ideological or political. Such discussions would be conducted exclusively in the kitchen (after the phone was safely covered with a pillow). Nothing at all in the way of dissidents! The seminars were dedicated to the heated discussion of the problems of logic, historical and philosophical issues, methodological problems of psychology and pedagogy and so forth. The main issue that was closely attended to by our leader was the *thinking by the rules*. Let me emphasize: not some free, original, unfettered thinking, but precisely the thinking that would be conducted *according to the rules*. Later at my own seminars I would be often asked: “Thinking by the rules? But who had formulated these rules?” And who indeed? It appears, the rules were formulated by the very history of humanity itself..

We must note that undoubtedly each seminar (if it was conducted regularly) sooner or later would be joined by an informer (and possibly more than one). Usually these would be quickly identified, yet not excluded. This *стукач*, stool-pigeon, would soon be confused: in the ideological or political aspect, he could find nothing seditious here. How the very concept of *thinking by the rules* may threaten the authorities was unclear. In addition, during the meetings of Shchedrovitsky’s seminar, everything proceeded by the unalterable rules of ritual: everything was recorded on tape, which at any moment could be placed at the disposal of the authorities (and when at last the “proper authorities” took advantage of this opportunity, the puzzled KGB officers could not find anything of interest in these recordings).

Strange as it may sound, thinking back about our patterns of behaviour in relation to the wider social context, we now refer to it as *швейкование* (Švejking). Once we realized this, it has become a prescription for social behaviour. No, we were not “the jolly drunkards”; instead, the famous literary hero created by Jaroslav Hašek was our inestimable etalon. Who was the good soldier Švejk? A simple-hearted, naïve, rather talkative “little man” with a singular attitude to his social duties... In the end, he was left alone, since he was simply the little fool, the “idiot.”

How could we emulate Švejk in our situations? This was an absolutely splendid evasive tactic! We never mutinied or protested, we simply eluded and evaded – refrained from signing any declarative letters of support or condemnation, abstained from joining the party, from participation in the mandatory demonstrations and marches. And, if asked, with great fluency and enthusiasm we answered any questions (just like our good soldier), whether approached by the Komsomol, the Party officials or the KGB. In such cases we were as loquacious as our favourite hero. And at that, we were obviously not the protesting kind, but the open-hearted and unworldly, the *simple souls*.

The consequences of the Švejk-like behaviour were obvious: while participating in the seminars one could not expect to achieve any professional success, find a prestigious social position, or, say, defend a dissertation. The *thinking by the rules* is detrimental to any progress up the social ladder, any official achievement. Because of this, there was a high rate of rotation among the attendants-auditors (as well as the participating members) of the seminar.

However, the problem of the citizen protest remained an issue which had to be solved variously by the different leaders of the groups. As a rule, they all were – had to be – Party members. During the Party meetings they tried to keep the status of the “abstainers.” But sometimes the situation would become more serious, and the years of 1967-68 were the most trying in that sense. The issue at hand was whether to sign or not to sign the open letter in support of the arrested (and later sentenced to labour camps) Moscow dissidents Alexander Ginzburg and Juri Galanskov.

Let me remind the reader of some aspects of the Soviet reality. The post of an academic teacher and a philosophy lecturer was a public office to which candidates were appointed after the evaluation and approval by the Party Committee. Being expelled from the Party membership, or even receiving an official reprimand was equivalent to losing one’s job.

Georgy Shchedrovitsky has signed the letter, while Mikhail Rozov has not, and the Novosibirsk Party officials considered this evasion to be particularly “seditiously cunning.” In fact, almost all important figures in the field of humanities were affected by this episode in one way or another. And in the philosophical circles the situation may be briefly outlined as follows. No, no one was arrested. Shchedrovitsky was expelled from the Party and fired from his job. For some years the seminar collected for him a small financial aid, and some time later with great difficulty we managed to find a job for the “signatory” at the Union of Artists where he received minimal pay. Even though Rozov had not signed the fatal letter, he was still forced to leave the Philosophical Department and start working at the Institute of Automation and Electrometry, Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, where he was researching “minimization of Boolean functions.” Petrov, having written slightly earlier the “challenging” anti-Communist novella *Exam Did Not Take Place*, was also expelled from the Party, lost the right to teach and was earning his living by writing foreign literature reviews. Stepin (somewhat later) also got into trouble by presenting to his friends his own theoretical concept of the October revolution. He was expelled from the Party, and had to work for some years as the interior decorator in restaurants.

We – a group of philosophy students – were prevented from going out to a street protest in December 1966 by Georgy Shchedrovitsky. The story was as follows: about eight of us got together at my apartment, preparing to go out in the morning to the Pushkin square – as was the custom of the dissidents of those times – to take our silent stand holding our posters inside the defunct snow-covered fountain (to avoid the accusations of obstructing the traffic). We intended to stand thus, with appeals for fair justice lifted over our heads, until... until we would be taken in by the police. Suddenly Georgy Shchedrovitsky arrived (I do not know who told him about our plan). He stayed with us until the morning, persuading us to abandon our idea. We were puzzled. “How can

this be? If this continues, we all, still meekly silent, will be put into labour camps.” Our Master continued to insist: “You all will be expelled from the University, and without the right to receive any kind of higher education, you will be cut off from any scholarly libraries, and I do not know how you will earn your living. I have put so much effort into this seminar, into the support of thinking, and I ask you – in the name of the more important goals – to desist from your intention.” And finally, we gave in, though it took quite a while. We asked him: “And what about the accused men?” to which he replied: “I know that the Seminar must express our opinion on the subject. And I will sign the letter.” “But you will be fired, expelled...” “That’s quite all right,” – he smiled slyly, – “I’ve already been educated, I even have a doctorate. I’ve read plenty of books... I have nothing to worry about!”

### **IDEOLOGY VERSUS THINKING: THE SEMINAR MODEL**

Why is the ideology so absolutely hostile to thinking and why does it try to suppress and destroy not so much the content, as the very rules of contemplation and decision-making? First of all, ideology prohibits doubt. Once Mikhail Rozov proposed an explanatory model that showed just why the Soviet project could not triumph and had to fall apart. Imagine a tourist group which sets on an extremely difficult and dangerous journey (let’s say, a mountain climbing). And all the participants vow to immediately throw into the abyss anyone who would dare to say that the chosen path should not be taken. We may easily imagine what gloomy ending awaits such a venture...

The very nature of ideology is such that its most crucial element is the loyalty to the initial idea. Thinking, as world philosophy illustrates, always doubts and is extremely sceptical by nature. Ideology will consider the *majority* to be right; in thinking (for instance, in science), it is the *individual* who finds the way to the truth, and the others may concede to his discovery only with time and after much trouble.

Undoubtedly, the two periods highly beneficial for the development of the philosophical thought in the Soviet Russia were the two “thaws” – one initiated by Khrushchev and the other by Gorbachev, as well as the comparative lenience of the authorities towards the intelligentsia during the Brezhnev era. As was already indicated above, the works of Stalin, Lenin and Marx were obligatory objects of study during the 1950s. In the 1960s, this status was enjoyed by the works of Lenin, Marx and Engels. There was a clear division in the philosophical publications into the two camps: those who cited Lenin and those who cited Marx (and Engels, a little). And this was a crucial difference of opinion. Clearly, the monolith of the Marxist-Leninist ideology was fracturing. Here I would like to cite a backstage phrase of Vyacheslav Stepin. During one of the friendly chats with me he said: “We, the Soviet philosophers, are very fortunate that it was Marx and Engels who were canonized. If it was just Lenin, it would be quite difficult to get anywhere at all: he is a primitive sensualist in the spirit of the 18<sup>th</sup> century materialism. Marx’s gnosiological views at least offer a chance to build non-trivial conceptions.”

And thus began our gradual acquaintance with the “bourgeois” philosophical literature. In the 1960s (and even more so in the 1970s) the most inquisitive students and PhD candidates began to flock to the new Faculty “Critique of the Bourgeois Philosophy,”

located in the special sector of the Institute of Philosophy. There was an on-going joke: the Soviet philosophers may be divided into two categories: those who speak English and those who do not. Those who spoke foreign languages had to abide by their duty as the critics of “bourgeois publications,” while the others could challenge the community by going their own separate way, that is, creating original conceptions. This was the way of Shchedrovitsky, Stepin, Rozov.

And yet, probably the most important achievement of Shchedrovitsky is the creation of the Moscow Methodological Circle with its complex, well-devised structure. The “methodology” in the name was intended to project the importance of its rules and standards. Now it is difficult to judge whether the seminar’s form was the result of a goal-oriented approach. It is more likely that it formed itself quite naturally. Still, in the final count everything was reconsidered and thought-through, and the final set of rules appeared both balanced and elegant.

In its mature phase (1960s) Shchedrovitsky’s seminar functioned at the Institute of Psychology of the Academy of Pedagogy. The institute is located on Mokhovaya street, a little farther behind the Lomonosov statue. It has a superbly convenient hall for the scholarly conferences – two large blackboards, the Chair’s desk, and the amphitheatre with ascending rows of seats as auditorium. This hall could easily contain up to a hundred people. So it came to pass that this peculiar theatrical performance drew together intellectuals of various specialties and points of view. The spectacle was such an attraction, that among the Moscow humanists it was considered simply indecent not to attend the seminar at least once or twice. And it was impossible to remain ignorant of its existence. It was the most significant event in the public sphere of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian post-war philosophy.

We may enumerate here some of the preliminary axioms of the methodological seminar. The first of these stated: “Thinking is a collective effect.” This first commandment was frequently repeated during the lectures, reaffirmed and sustained in presentations and public speeches, supported by the evidence gained in the psychological research. In other words, this was no place for individualists. Those who believed thinking to be “a function of the brain” (in full accordance with the dialectical materialism) would feel here rather out of place. Thinking appeared as a polyphonic, multirole sociocultural phenomenon. The seminar embodied and exemplified this concept of thinking in its own activities.

The second axiom required the seminar participants to reflect on the means of thinking. Newbies would have the concept of “perpendicular vision” explained to them. In other words, listeners were expected not only to follow the speaker, tracing with him his arrival at the reported result, but also – and most importantly – to analyse the thinking processes, procedures and operations which led the speaker to his solution of the problem, i.e., they were supposed to observe his work with detachment, reflecting its process by noting all the peculiarities of each step taken by the thinker. From the contemporary point of view, one could easily perceive in this requirement the pathos of analytical philosophy which claimed such recognition in the West. However, this imperative – to fully grasp each step, each procedure and operation – made possible a practically indefinite discussion of each presentation. As a rule, the speaker would present a single thesis, or even a part of his thesis, and then the multifacial audience would attempt to realize fully what has been done. Every presentation took from two to eight three-hour meetings.

Why was it necessary to allot exactly three hours per meeting? There were important reasons for this structural element as well. The third axiom stated: everything that is being said during the methodological seminar must be recorded on tape. It was a running joke that the distinguishing feature of a “Schedrovitsky disciple” was that he would surely demand, irrespective of place or topic of discussion, to supply him with the blackboard, chalk, and a tape recorder. Otherwise this methodologist would not even deign to open his mouth. The recording of two cassettes of tape, ninety minutes each, took exactly three hours – hence the time-span of each seminar meeting.

Such work was a wonderful learning experience. A principle of “tape-recorder reflection” was formed. Deciphering and transcribing the recording required an additional analysis of the “chess game” which took place in public, open to observation by anyone. To continue the chess analogy, it rather resembled a home analysis of the freshly played chess game. This stress put on the role of the blackboard and the tape-recorder is the singular characteristic of the seminar. Everything that would be said had to leave a trace in some external medium: drawings, charts, texts.

What were the rules of proceedings for the seminar meetings? These guidelines clearly demonstrated various roles for the seminar participants. There were six in total. No one actually made any appointments, the roles were not perpetual, to the contrary, it was encouraged to change positions and roles in the course of the discussion.

The first role, obviously, belonged to the Chair. While this was never scripted, most frequently Georgy Shchedrovitsky filled this position. Today the Chair is usually expected to serve simply as a “moderator.” That is, there is a moderator (chairperson), who is supposed to guide the process of discussion, by opening the floor for questions and comments. The Chair of the seminar, however, had a power to consider any question inappropriate and decline it. He could also come to the aid of the speaker in any difficulties; and if for some reason the Chair decided that the discussion has reached a dead end or was no longer fruitful, he could also interrupt the speaker and curtail the presentation. In other words the Chair was the absolute dictator, the lord and master for the duration of the seminar. However, since there was no permanent appointment, almost anyone could claim this power for the three hours of the meeting. The Chair also made sure that the “regulations” were observed, that is, he would halt the discussion when the tape would run out in the recorder and resume the discussion after the tape has been turned over. The Chair would summarize the discussion of the preceding meeting, and would also indicate the semantic links between the various presented texts. Thus, his role was complex and required great skill.

The role of the speaker appears to be central: without the presentation there would be no meeting. And yet, it was a secondary role. It was Georgy Shchedrovitsky’s task to select the speaker, and quite often he himself would be the presenter, meekly submitting to the rule of the Chair. The game-like nature of the discussion was never concealed, though the contest of passions was often quite in earnest. And yet, the theoretical differences and disagreements would end with a friendly pat on the back, conjoint walks around Moscow, visits to a café or a home party at the flat of one of the seminar members, if one could afford to invite quite a large company and provide tea and coffee for all. Sometimes the presentations were preplanned, and sometimes they were spontaneous,

for instance when colleagues from other cities, who wished to tell us about their work, would arrive in Moscow.

Question time was the key element of the seminar. The enquirers would be divided into three categories. The first group would ask questions “to ensure understanding.” This helped to clarify things: concepts, differentiations, the context of the problems, or their formulation. The second group was the disputative questions. At this point, someone from the audience would cause the speaker to doubt the freshly formulated hypotheses or thesis. It was important not to confuse these two categories of questions, and the Chair always made sure the difference was clear. A question could be declared tactless, incorrect or irrelevant. Sometimes this was pointed out by the Chair, and sometimes – by the speaker himself.

The third kind of questions was reserved for comments. Once the speaker presented a certain semantic segment of his speech, he would be asked questions, but if the enquirer or any of the listeners did not agree with the speaker, they had a right to state their disagreements at length. These comments would be quite ample and comprehensive, since this was the time for the audience to express the most diverging positions and points of view. No one was obliged to accept these objections, but in such case one was expected to provide argumentation for the rejection of the criticism. Curiously, there were times when the commentator wished to complement the speaker, and the speaker would reject such praise because it originated from an unacceptable premise. The comments could by far exceed the lecture in their volume. The speaker would sit humbly and listen silently, ask in vain for the right to speak, while the audience continued a heated discussion of the comments... Someone would call out: “Get on with it! Let the presentation continue!” or “Let the man speak!” The imperturbable Chair, serenely and wisely smiling and from time to time teasing and goading the disputants, expertly controlled all this excitement.

Thus, the natural way of advancement for the participant of the seminar was as follows: one would begin by asking questions on comprehension, then move on to the disputative questions, then, perhaps, would venture to offer a comment, after which one might have matured into a speaker, to finally arrive at the position of the Chair... At which point, it would seem, the full range of possibilities for participatory functions was exhausted. But at this moment the Master, with a sly twinkle, would suggest that it was time to organize one’s own seminar. “But where will I go, where will I find the audience?...” – would mutter distractedly the confused yet ambitious disciple. “Think it up!” – would be the answer. And many of us did manage to invent and create our own seminars. Thus, an entire family of less grand, more local seminars sprang up, seminars which met up usually at someone’s apartment. Another role was created in this way: the unofficial role of the seminar organizer, its leader – obviously, its informal leader. He would have to suggest the direction of development for his group, have his own research program, work on some specific topic. He was supposed to inspire people, suggest research issues to them, demonstrate connectedness of ideas, and embrace the large picture...

Eventually, every participant of the seminar would come to realize that the roles we play define what we see and select as decisive in the discussed material. It would become clear that there may be various points of view and that these differences must be taken into consideration whenever any important and complex matter is discussed. Thinking

appeared, in particular, as a way to progress through the range of such positions and inclusion of various contexts. The “principle of a given position,” the mental “*topos*” of each participant created great difficulties in the process of discussion, but, in essence, it reflected a real sociocultural dimension of the process of collective thinking.<sup>6</sup>

Now there was the one last effort remaining: to interiorize this process, extended in time and place, to make it one’s own “inner voice.” Such was the process by which the technique of the *rule-regulated thinking* was acquired. Shchedrovitsky often said: “Thinking, as the great Danish linguist Hans Jørgen Uldall said, is as rare as the dance of wild horses. It is observed very infrequently, it practically cannot be taught, and it instantly falls apart... Remember this!”

And what was the result? It took from three to five years to fully enter into the seminar activity; the participant had to pay fees that paid for the typing up of the discussion memos; the education would culminate in the organization of one’s own home seminar. It follows that while there were many spectators, the seminar would have but few true participants. In my personal estimation, there were about thirty real Shchedrovitians.

In its symbolic dimension the work of the Moscow Methodological Circle was perceived by us as “the glass bead game” (*Das Glasperlenspiel*). Hermann Hesse provided us with the necessary language (we cited the Russian translation of his wonderful novel as our own manifesto): “The Glass Bead Game is thus a mode of playing with the total contents and values of our culture”<sup>7</sup>; “the Game... [has] the capacity for universality, for rising above all the disciplines”<sup>8</sup>; “[the Games] take place under the leadership of a few superior Masters...”<sup>9</sup>

### COMMANDMENTS FOR THOSE WHO LIVE BY THINKING

The most important part of the interiorization of the thinking process, as was outlined above, lies in acquiring a certain way of life. And what an adept of “the glass bead game” may gain by adopting this *modus vivendi*? Well, nothing too pleasant!

We understood that thinking is not *an inherent and inborn human quality*. This led to an understanding of the importance of the external factors in the preservation and expansion of this laboriously acquired quality. Moreover, thinking is unnecessary in social terms and does not produce the effect of social success. Quite to the contrary, one is doomed to hesitate and always stay behind one’s colleagues who are unencumbered by the burden of strict rules of contemplative conduct.

Our cognitive imperatives, which remained hidden and yet strongly interfered with the external activity, were as follows: to think *in great abundance*, to speak *occasionally*, to present *infrequently*, and to publish *rarely* (but always with precision!).

And it was absolutely clear: publications that present the conclusions of thinking must be incredibly rare! Therefore reading of the current philosophical literature is seldom

<sup>6</sup> On the regulations of the seminar see: Н. И. Кузнецова, Т. И. Ойзерман, «Кастальский ключ Георгия Шедровицкого.» [The Castalian Spring of Georgy Shchedrovitsky] *Вопросы философии* 2 (2009), 181-190.

<sup>7</sup> H. Hesse, *The Glass Bead Game*, trans. R. and C. Winson (London: Vintage, 2000), 6.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

productive. Let us recall the teaching of Heraclitus: *πολυμαθὴν νόον οὐ διδάσκει* (much learning does not teach wisdom). Alas, he is right.

## **CONCLUSION**

What may be said in conclusion? The Soviet philosophical underground is a rather peculiar socio-cultural event of the post-war period. It was concluded approximately by the end of the 1980s and thus by now it is decisively the thing of the past. And its heritage of ideas remains practically unexplored.

The contemporary situation has removed the necessity of the home seminars. People may meet wherever they choose; they may freely say whatever they choose. And yet, it is hardly easier to think freely today, quite the contrary. It is simply impossible to organize such a time and effort-consuming seminar. No volunteers in sight!..

The consumer society and the commercialization of science remorselessly distort the ethos of science. Those who chose thinking as the way of life are caught within an insurmountable conflict of values. The volume of publications and other science metrics are now the only criterion of one's social status and corresponding income. Thinking is now placed in a new, but by no means less difficult, ecological setting. Perhaps, it was much easier to fight ideology.

# A COLLOQUY ON THE END OF THE WORLD: THE LETTERS OF KONSTANTIN LEONTIEV AND VASILY ROZANOV

## LIFE

“I want to live! he valiantly cries;  
Delusion it may be, but give me delusion!”  
Sparing no thought for the transience of ice –  
And there, beneath it, fathomless ocean.<sup>1</sup>

Leontiev could not stand his father – a troublemaker, prodigal, slacker, and drunk – and the sentiment was, in fact, mutual. His mother, on the other hand, a darling of Maria Romanova, the wife of Tsar Alexander the Third, was to him the embodiment of order and prosperity, an oasis of happiness, “a tidied-up apartment.” For most of his life, even after his mother’s death, Leontiev would be returning to the family estate in Kudinovo, where he was born (1831), and to which he grew accustomed like one does to a diminutive of a name.

After graduating in medicine from the University of Moscow, he went on to take part in the Crimean War. In 1861, he met a Greek woman in the Crimea, whom he married. The newly wedded wife, the daughter of a small-time Crimean merchant, was neither pretty nor well educated. Nor did she give him children. It is no wonder, then, that women, in rather large numbers and of great diversity, accompanied Leontiev up until his tonsure. He would “collect” them, to use a risky saying, with the savvy of “an art merchant who deals in feminine beauty.” Professional moralists and Leontiev’s critics have repeatedly pointed to his irrepressible interest in women, and erotic conquests meant more to him

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<sup>1</sup> “Я жить хочу! – кричит он, дерзновенный. / Пускай обман! О, дайте мне обман! / И в мыслях нет, что это лед мгновенный, / А там, под ним – бездонный океан” – А. Фет, “Смерть” [Death], in А. Фет, (untitled), (Sankt Petersburg, 1997), 319. Trans. Christopher Reid (for the purpose of this article). All further poetry quotations come from Afanasy Fet’s poem.

than literary fame, than serving the tsar. Even on deathbed, “the Alcibiades in him did not die. Long-haired, he was invariably attractive to women.”<sup>2</sup>

In 1863, on behalf of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he became a consul in Crete – a position, however, he was soon forced to leave after horsewhipping a French official. In the following years, he continued his consular service, holding posts in Constantinople, then in Adrianople and Janina in Albania. Eastern glamour, exoticism, and the intensity of Eastern life would later make him call his stay on the island of Crete “the honeymoon period of [his] diplomatic service.” While in Adrianople, he further developed his interest in the East. He writes in a letter to K. A. Gubastov:

In order to get fully acquainted with the poetry of Adrianople, just follow my advice, Sir. 1) You should get yourself a mistress without much delay, Sir – a simple Bulgarian or Greek girl would do perfectly; 2) visit a Turkish bath more often; 3) seek out a Turkish girl, which really should not prove that difficult; 4) not pay attention to the Franks and praise Madame Badetti; 5) take a walk along the banks of the Tundzha river and reminisce about me; 6) go with a bottle near the Bayezid Mosque and make young Turks fight with each other in the little meadow near the shop, preferably to the sound of drum. What a ride!<sup>3</sup>

Gubastov did not conceal his fascination with the older friend. Years later, he recalled:

Leontiev was a very magnetic middle-aged man, if not a beautiful one, of excellent, aristocratic manners and habits. He could not do without the help of many servants that he liked to fatherly reprimand and instruct or simply gossip with (...). He wore his hair *à la* Gogol, whom he somewhat resembled in profile.<sup>4</sup>

The year 1871 marked the heyday of his diplomatic career. He was transferred to Thessaloniki to finally be promoted to the position of consul general in Bohemia. In the same year his mother died, while he himself went through a spiritual crisis conceived during (and out of) a severe disease that he diagnosed as cholera. According to Leontiev, he owed his recovery not to the accurate diagnosis or any prescribed medicaments, but to the Blessed Virgin, to whom he prayed fervently for mercy:

<sup>2</sup> В. Розанов, К. Леонтьев, *Письма к Василию Розанову* [Letters to Vasily Rozanov] (Санкт-Петербург: Лондон, 1981), 49.

<sup>3</sup> К. Леонтьев, *Избранные письма: 1854-1891* [Selected letters] (Sankt Petersburg, 1993), 59. Quoted after Егорова, *Русское воззрение, “самобытничество.” К.Н. Леонтьев (1831-1891)*, available online.

<sup>4</sup> К. Н. Леонтьев. *Pro et contra: Личность и творчество Константина Леонтьева в оценке русских мыслителей и исследователей, 1891-1917* [К. N. Leontiev. Pro et contra: Kontantin Leontiev's personality and work as appraised by Russian thinkers and scholars, 1891-1917], ред. А. Козырев и А. Корольков (Санкт-Петербург, 1995), т. 2, 417–18.

In the summer of 1871, when I was a consul in Thessaloniki, I was lying on a coach, possessed by the fear of an unexpected death (caused by a heavy attack of cholera). I was looking at the icon of the Mother of God (brought to me by a monk from Mt. Athos), not understanding a thing from what was going to happen later [here Leontiev refers to his plan to recreate in writing the circumstances of the spiritual transformation which he underwent – P.N.], my literary plans were all too vague. At that time I was not thinking about the salvation of my soul (for faith in a Personal God came to me much more easily than faith in my own immortality); and I, not generally given to fear, became terrified at the thought of physical death; and being already prepared for it (as I have said) by a series of earlier psychic transformations, having my likings and aversions, I suddenly, momentarily believed in the existence and power of this Mother of God, believed so tangibly [ощутительно] and strongly as if I were seeing before me a living, real and familiar woman, very kind and very powerful, and I exclaimed: Mother of God! It's early for me to die! I haven't yet accomplished anything worthy of my talents, and I've led an extremely promiscuous and utterly sinful life. Raise me up from this bed of death. I'll go to Athos, prostrate myself before the elders and beg them to turn me into a simple and genuine Orthodox Christian, who believes in Wednesdays and Fridays, and in miracles; I'll even become a monk.<sup>5</sup>

From that point on, the oriental lavishness, women, penchant for colorful, pagan existence, underpinned by spontaneous immoralism continued to intertwine in Leontiev's life with superstitious ("Christian") and powerfully paralyzing fear of death.

At the age of forty Leontiev retires and devotes himself to creative work. Its character is not easy to define. It is certainly not an academic production. It is equally difficult to rate it among the works of journalism. Leontiev's quasi-Platonic pursuit of reconciliation with the world through immortal wisdom and beauty was perfectly captured in the anecdote about a "cynical" Polish doctor, which is cited by Rozanov in the introduction to Leontiev's letters. In it, the doctor would become engrossed in reading books after hours, which allowed him to get away from longing for his homeland or from his patients' somatic ailments. Reading would evoke the feelings of "true joy: just as if you opened a little door in your soul."<sup>6</sup> What did Leontiev read, what did he open his "little door" with? I reckon that there was no such thing his thought would shy away from. His novels at times resemble lengthy, and at other times poetic philosophical essays; an apologia for Slavdom mingles with the tales from "one thousand and one nights"; the study of the Bible and the writings of the Fathers of the Church is supplemented with the reading of the French *esprits forts*. He addresses the imaginary polemicist thus:

You despicable man! Indeed I have read Voltaire (...) read all that you too have read, or even more. I also grasped much more of it than you. Just as

<sup>5</sup> Леонтьев, *Письма к Василию Розанову*, 110–11.

<sup>6</sup> Розанов, К. Леонтьев, *Письма к Василию Розанову*, 28.

a powerful horse likes to feel the snaffle bit being pulled by his powerful master, so was I inclined to feel God's power over me (...). But you are a scrub and a thrall, wriggling before that indiscriminating audience of yours, composed of thralls and scrubs like you. This only would be a sufficient reason to beat your kisser with a whip – and also that of your audience.<sup>7</sup>

Probably the most widely known theoretical work of Konstantin Leontiev is *Византизм и славянство* (*Byzantinism and Slavdom*, 1875), included in a two-volume selection of his writings, *Восток, Россия и славянство* (*The East, Russia, and Slavdom*). In 1877 Leontiev accepted the job of an editor at prince Golitsyn's conservative newspaper *Varshavsky dnevnik*, while his texts were also printed in Katkov's paper. In 1880, he began working in the censorship department in Moscow, where he mostly read Tolstoy. In a letter to his friend, Leontiev writes: "I consider a censor's life to be something like the life of a pig which, pleased with itself, is rubbing against the logs in the kitchen; and yet it is somehow good."<sup>8</sup> In 1887 he retired to the Optina monastery marked by the presence of Father Ambrose – the prototype for Father Zossima, the protagonist of *The Brothers Karamazov*. Back then, Iosif Iosifovich Kolyshko portrayed Leontiev in an interesting way:

Caustic, wiry, nervous, with sparkling, young man's eyes, Leontiev attracted attention with his appearance, a clear, young voice as well as his emphatic gestures, which were always very graceful. Nobody would say he was fifty years old. He would speak, or rather improvise, but what about – I cannot remember. Listening to the music of his beautiful oratory speech, and absorbing some of his passion, I could barely keep up with the restless, piercing thought that glittered like lightning. I also had the impression that Leontiev's thought did not have enough room, did not listen to him, kindling a fire here and there, illuminating the far, dark horizons in places where it was the least expected. It was a storm, it was a hurricane that harnessed the listeners.<sup>9</sup>

In 1891, Konstantin Leontiev died in Sergiyev Posad of pneumonia – a condition, which he attributed to a dying Europe. One day after the writer's death, *Московские ведомости* run two obituaries. In the first the author included Leontiev among writers who had written for people, not for libraries. "With a clear mind, extensive knowledge, they came to a proper understanding of Russia's objectives, and in their important works they remained both pure Russians and Orthodox Christians." The author of the second obituary, on the other hand, was in a more elegiac mood: "What is there to do? It has been common for a long time that we know the names and books of our great novelists and

<sup>7</sup> Леонтьев, *Письма к Василию Розанову*, 29.

<sup>8</sup> Леонтьев, *Избранные письма*, 249.

<sup>9</sup> Леонтьев, *Pro et contra*, 504.

poets only cursorily. Our eminent authors should stand the test of the attempt to ignore them, “omit” them – their time will come.”<sup>10</sup>

For a long time even the most educated readers in Russia confused Leontiev with Professor Alexei Leontiev, Katkov’s associate, the author of the Dictionary of Latin. Berdyaev even claimed that “Leontiev did not leave behind a perceptible mark within the history of Russian thought and Russian spiritual cravings.”<sup>11</sup> I do not find this vision of things to be exaggerated. Leontiev was an untimely thinker, a prophet no one wanted to listen to, and if anyone did, they did not understand. The only words of substance in the deluge of verbal cheapness – a space where there is no room for play, color and ambiguity – were to him those spoken during confession, while letters filled that void in his private life. The rest he ignored, the rest did not matter.

## CONFESSION

Escape? Where? Which way is truth, which error?  
Where can hands find a rest and a support?  
No smile can hope to provide it, nor any flower  
When, behind each, death triumphs and makes sport.<sup>12</sup>

In 1870 the journal *Заря* published Leontiev’s controversial text “*Грамотность и народность*” that attracted a lot of attention. In it, he spoke against superficial, obligatory education for two important reasons. First, the educated masses cannot take responsibility for what they know. For it is commonly believed that what one can think, one can also do. Leontiev describes this standpoint as lack of cognitive respect, and even impiety. Another reason for his opposition to mass education was the will to wait out the epidemic of cosmopolitanism, rampant at that time among the upper classes, who stood ready to demoralize the holy Orthodox people. He believed that the vertical social structure would become more durable if it was based on clear differences between classes, which, in turn, was a natural consequence of the division into those who were accustomed to govern, and those who owed their allegiance to them. Leontiev’s historiosophical pessimism allowed him to see constant movement in history – from primitive simplicity of culture, through its complication, which he also called “blossoming complexity,” to the ultimate, secondary simplification and senility that eradicates any culture-forming differences. “According to L-iev, when a plant or an animal, man, state or culture reaches its optimum, its next step is towards death, it leans towards her. There occurs in them a “preagonal mingling of elements,” a trivialization, as if, of the whole look, a simplification of the vanishing object’s shape. State becomes simple, religion – simple (rational, poor in terms of liturgy), science – empirical (= simple), and the like. The mechanism melts, the morphology of

<sup>10</sup> А. Янов, “Трагедия великого мыслителя” [The Tragedy of a Great Thinker], in *Вопросы философии* 1 (1992), 68.

<sup>11</sup> N. A. Berdyaev, “K. Leont’ev – Philosopher of a Reactionary Romanticism,” trans. Fr. S. Janos (2006), available online.

<sup>12</sup> “Бежать? Куда? Где правда, где ошибка? / Опора где, чтоб руки к ней простерть? / Что ни расцвет живой, что ни улыбка, – / Уже под ними торжествует смерть.”

a living body undergoes atrophy. Here is the reason why the decline of class system and depriving particular social ranks of their attributes were for Leontiev the sign of the decline of European societies.”<sup>13</sup> He equated the homogenization of human reality with the voluntary adoption of an imposed alien order. Leontiev strongly felt devil’s presence in history. In a letter dated July 30, 1891, he writes to Rozanov that he considers their contemporary civilization to be the result of “an evil spirit at work,” which he tries to “exorcise.”

With my whole soul I hate all these improvements of the latest technology, and selflessly dream of the time – be it twenty-five, fifty, or seventy-five years after my death – when the truths of the latest social science or indeed the very needs of societies will forcibly bring about the destruction, or at least impose severe restrictions on all sorts of inventions and discoveries. Peaceful inventions (telephones, trains and so on) are a thousand times more harmful than the inventions related to the development of military technology. The latter are killing many individual beings, while the former eliminate step by step all forms of life, the whole organic life on earth. They eliminate poetry and religion, they eradicate the distinct identity of particular states, questioning their existence...<sup>14</sup>

“All men become alike,” Rozanov puts forward a summary of Leontiev’s thought.

All countries have more or less the same constitution; they all fight in the same way and they govern themselves in the same way. Industry is the same in every city, and the same kind of monotonous life is led in all of them. Standardized teaching has been introduced for all social classes everywhere, in all countries. The same books are used to teach about the Punic wars, algebra, Greek inflection, and Christian dogmas – with it all being served in a manner which is impersonal and colorless. Great names no longer exist in philosophy or science. There are, however, countless “workhorses” who represent the same level of capability or incapability. Poetry has been displaced by literature that quickly gave way to journalism, which, in turn, is being killed by newsprint. Styles have intermingled, so now an architect, when erecting a temple or palace, thinks only about whose drawing he will filch. He does not create anything, he cannot create, and he also does not understand that he needs it. Stifling atmosphere of short-term desires and impoverished thoughts hangs over it all, preventing any movement upward, reinforcing any and all descent. Here is a state where all are below one another, and thus no one offends anyone with their superiority. That which is weak, or even silly or reprehensible, evokes a feeling of understanding, of mercy; sometimes that of love and care. Whereas that, which is distinguished by a true gift or an

<sup>13</sup> Розанов, Леонтьев, *Письма к Василию Розанову*, 85.

<sup>14</sup> Леонтьев, *Письма к Василию Розанову*, 97–98.

old-time greatness, meets boundless hatred and merciless contempt, nurtured by a bland, impersonal rabble which only deserves itself.

Thus, how much inner pain must these millions of free human beings be carrying if a simple act of observing someone else's happiness fills them with so much suffering; how much filth and venom do they keep inside themselves if they dedicate the efforts of science, intentions of poetry – at least the ones that are still out there – to what is sick, distorted and reprehensible in humanity, while at the same time turning away from everything in man that is healthy, bright, and unbeatable. These things have not been made up. No fabricated theory is being presented here; all of it is grounded in history and is characteristic of the new man, the same way that his filmy eyes and disjointed babble are characteristic of him.<sup>15</sup>

Patriotism, religion, and family are the only obstacles that stand in the way of the unleashed progress – a path mankind follows who knows where. They are a visible sign of values that are persistently mocked, combated, made outdated. Meanwhile, the modern man has no family, nor does he own a piece of land; the absolute – other than himself – is just as strange and remote to him as the stars in the sky. The diversity of cultures perishes in the melting pot of cultural homogeneity.

Inclinations, habits, ways of life are generally similar; people's appearance, the fashion they follow, clothes, attitudes, feelings, they all become undiversified. No one is limited by national borders any longer, one can move freely, according to one's will, needs or fancy; religion, family, love of one's home country – these are less and less capable of stopping this frenzied movement, and precisely because they are still trying to do so, they evoke the new people's hatred and cursing. When they disintegrate at last, man becomes absolutely – and for the first time – 'free.' As free as is the atom of a corpse that turned into dust.<sup>16</sup>

Leontiev's historiosophical pessimism is expressed in the belief that there is no way back to what has passed, what expired, the dire absence of which is so acutely felt by cultured people. Reruns of history do not occur. Mozart or Goethe, who happened to be the Germans once, already stand on the other side of existence whatsoever – on the side of eternity. Progress, civilization of prosperity and material fulfillment, culture of affluence, leftist values being actualized, which were to be instrumental in dissipating earthly anxieties, in fact only multiplied them, reducing spiritual, traditional values to ashes. There is nothing to be done – a "Chinese" way of development awaits us, with its point of departure – and at the same time its canvas – being exceptionless egalitarianism. "Pointing to the Chinese people's role as future conquerors of Russia shows that Solovyov's and

<sup>15</sup> В. Розанов, "Эстетическое понимание истории" [Aesthetic understanding of history], *Русская мысль* (2006), 261–62.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

Leontiev's views on the subject are actually the same." What is more: "Both Solovyov and Leontiev were literally struck by something horrible – by the appalling misery of their era; by the "dead souls" which grew even more dead since Gogol's times, and even more came to resemble corpses. 'The planet has gone to seed' – to express my subjective feeling in a more colloquial way."<sup>17</sup>

Democratic and progressive ideas are relatively easy to absorb, if only because they are being trumpeted again and again, usually using the same mouthpiece – the media. They appeal to the basest feelings and values, those understood and accepted by everyone, which – as applied to man's emancipation from the yoke of history – bring him total enslavement at the very end (and there is no way out of the global state that humanity is heading towards). The only thing that can be done in this situation is to persist in being astonished that all nations sacrifice their property, their cultural distinctiveness, their own uniqueness in exchange for bread and miracles. Historical development, which we are undoubtedly dealing with, basically takes us back to the state of self-imposed nonage and thus to *sui generis* of the natural state, where the ultimate criterion of justice – in the face of equal rights for all people – is naked violence. This picture is characteristic of a world where the equality of all values weakens any criteria for having a dispute within reasonable limits.

Life, which was always considered a 'gift' for man, has become a burden in the nineteenth century; it is no longer a blessed life, but a damned one – this is a monstrous phenomenon, an incredible misrepresentation of the order of things! Regardless of the times man has lived in, persecution he has endured or humiliation he has experienced, he would have never dared to think the thoughts that he speaks now – in the midst of prosperity, tangible peace and general contentment. If the generations, which have long since gone underground, were to be brought together face to face with the ones now inhabiting the earth, if they saw one another and spoke their mind – how much unhappy, how much grim, pitiful, and confused we would have to seem to them. And we would show them our squeaky photographers, bundles of telegraph wire, gelatin plates, or our rail tops and say, "Behold our happiness." But they, unable to see any of it, just by looking us in the face, would say: "What have you done to yourselves, what you have done..."<sup>18</sup>

The idea of progress is therefore a dangerous social fiction which – without too much sentiment – should be completely parted with. In Leontiev's "Notes" to the manuscript of *Эстетическое понимание истории* (The Aesthetic Understanding of History) we can read that "the true Orthodoxy does not even have the right (according to the Gospel and the teachings of the apostles) to await 'universal reconciliation,' 'forgiveness' and 'universal

<sup>17</sup> Розанов, Леонтьев, *Письма к Василию Розанову*, 89, 134.

<sup>18</sup> К. Leontiev, quoted after: Розанов, "Эстетическое понимание истории," 276.

love,<sup>19</sup> or moral harmony in general (in this world); at most it can only allow of temporary improvement and deterioration.”<sup>19</sup>

Leontiev promotes – long before Nietzsche, whom (according to Berdyaev) he anticipated<sup>20</sup> – the apologia for immoralism. He sees not only terror and loftiness in war, but also beauty. His somewhat “Nietzschean” affinity for the past served him as a point of departure for criticism of the times he lived in. Here equals decided to enjoy happiness. And happiness alone. Equality and happiness, which are understood on the one hand as freedom from suffering, and on the other as loosening the “rotten cords”<sup>21</sup> of morality – the tendency to trample the already heavily tarnished values and traces of ancient culture – are accompanied by a sudden increase in appetite for the most basic of necessities. Thinking about spiritual matters turns out to be more difficult than a decision about what to eat on a Wednesday (for “on Wednesday” we “must” eat). Utopia is complete. The new “undermen” – the “last” and failed men grow up in an environment free from diseases, wars and pathology. They reach “for information” to meet a neighbor in distress (“well, thank goodness it’s not me”), study the “gossip section” in the papers, trying to free their hearts from the restraints of indifference. And Leontiev sought a way out of these undoubtedly oppressive conditions in Tsar’s harsh and non-negotiable decisions, in a vertical hierarchy of classes, and in the aesthetic choices as preferable to moral mawkishness typical of lesser and frightened people. “During the difficult and dangerous moments of historical life society always stretches out its hands not to the orators and not to the journalists, nor to the pedagogues and lawyers, but to people of ability, to people who command by know-how, to compel by boldness!”<sup>22</sup> Although opposed to universal education – he actually began his “confession” about the world with it – at the same time he taught simple people to say “Yes for Yes and No for No.” Except that, when it came to making a choice, it was not moral principles that had the final say, but aesthetic taste. This conviction was accompanied by certain haughtiness in life, mocking Christian morality, and the superhuman “pathos of distance” that set Leontiev’s critics on the trail of the German misanthrope.<sup>23</sup>

Leontiev did not like Gogol. He valued him, but he did not like him. He marveled at his form, yet the contentlessness of his work repelled him. He reproved him for clinging to the bustle of life and to foresight, affection for trinkets, all of which the latter would later ridicule. “The reader will be pleased, I think, to know that he [Chichikov] changed his linen every other day.”<sup>24</sup> Gogol could only see what is vile, ugly and vulgar in life,

<sup>19</sup> Леонтьев, *Письма к Василию Розанову*, 78.

<sup>20</sup> Berdyaev, “K. Leont’ev – Philosopher of a Reactionary Romanticism,” 205.

<sup>21</sup> F. Dostoyevsky, “Bobok,” in *White Nights and Other Stories*, trans. C. Garnett (Mineola, NY, 2008), 146.

<sup>22</sup> K. Leontiev, quoted after N. A. Berdyaev, “K. Leont’ev – Philosopher of a Reactionary Romanticism.”

<sup>23</sup> Leontiev did not know the writings of Nietzsche, and Rozanov first acquainted himself with them (just like the rest of Russia’s educated audience) in Vasily Preobrazhensky’s article entitled “Фридрих Ницше: критика морали альтруизма” (Friedrich Nietzsche: The Critique of the Morality of Altruism), published in the quarterly *Вопросы философии и психологии* in November 1892. Apparently, it was then that Rozanov realized that Nietzsche’s ideas are very close to Leontiev’s philosophy, if indeed not identical with it. See: A. M. Lane, “Nietzsche Comes to Russia: Popularization and Protest in the 1890’s,” in *Nietzsche in Russia*, ed. B. G. Rosenthal (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986), 51–54.

<sup>24</sup> N. Gogol, *Dead Souls*, trans. D. Rayfield (New York: NYRB Classics, 2012), 253. Gogol considered life to be something secondary to art, which constituted its ultimate instance. Life could be utterly mocked and questioned,

exposing it to ridicule. *Dead Souls*, *The Government Inspector* or *The Portrait* constitute an attack on life unprecedented in the Russian literature – an attempt to denunciate and reject it. An apologist for colorful existence, a connoisseur of beautiful and useless things, Leontiev watched it with suspicion and observed it with disgust. He did not like “the stench of Gogolian pants.” No wonder, then, that this critical attitude to “everything Gogolian” brought him together with Rozanov. “You already won me over,” he wrote in an extensive postscript to the letter of May 24, 1891 – “with your boldness to poke Gogol, a gesture unheard-of here since the 40s. It really was an act of great boldness and also of great merit. The works from his last period, especially the most famous ones, are both very misleading and harmful; I once wrote about it in passing; but I am old and you are young. Hats off to you, Sir!”<sup>25</sup>

Leontiev’s conservatism not only expressed itself in the praise of the times past, but above all in the adoration of the Orthodox liturgy and the military chic of Warsaw troops commanded by Grand Duke Constantine. His admiration for the Tsar and the will to maintain class inequality demonstrated it as well.

As regards the real aesthetics of life, it entails so many dangers, inconveniences and atrocities, and so many defects that the present-day humanity – a fearful one (as compared to its antecedents, of course), of little faith and poor nerves, effeminate and merciful (again, when compared to its antecedents) – is happy to take delight in experiencing any aesthetics merely on canvas, on the opera and theater stage, or in the pages of the novel, yet not in real life – ‘God forbid!’<sup>26</sup>

Leontiev became a Christian through baptism, but he was an aesthete by nature, somewhat organically. This is where I would seek the source of Leontiev’s reluctance to Dostoyevsky, whose moral instinct imposed compassion on him for the “wronged and humiliated.” Such a standpoint obviously could not please the aristocrat who was enamored of strength and even cruelty, claiming that he felt closer to “the Grand Inquisitor” than to the mawkish Christ, the hero of Ivan Karamazov’s parable. “Indeed, I side with – perhaps not in everything, but still – the Inquisitor. Certainly Dostoyevsky’s Christ, stripped of life, is alien to me.”<sup>27</sup> Vivid, influential beauty – he would say – is to be encountered at a military parade. Its archetypal model is the white of a Greek column, Platonic dialogue, a square formed by the Roman legion. And the Middle Ages as the period when the human person was discovered, which Leontiev associated with the cult of the incarnation idea: God, who became man, outdistanced state and politics in that He came down to ordinary households and settled in the Orthodox church. Leontiev’s aesthetic delight over life gets mixed up,

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if one knew how to do it beautifully and skilfully enough. “It is not my part – he wrote in one of his last letters to Vasily Zhukovsky – to settle to what extent I am a poet; I only know that before I understood the meaning and purpose of art, I already felt with my whole soul that it must be sacred. And it was practically our first encounter which made art become the main and also the first thing in my life, making everything else secondary.”

<sup>25</sup> Леонтьев, *Письма к Василию Розанову*, 60.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

as I have mentioned before, with the Christian trepidation of death – death of the soul. (“Here is my ‘transcendent egoism’ which pleased you so much and so unexpectedly.”<sup>28</sup>)

In an essay written shortly before the Bolshevik Revolution, Marian Zdziechowski, a great expert on Russian affairs, pointed to the satanic element that may be found in Leontiev’s and Rozanov’s works. He believed that the latter – “a master writer” – “knows how to pour them [his feelings – P.N.] into the soul of the reader in a form of an elusive mood... But the mood passes – and the one whose religious sense has not faded, who as a child was taught reverence for the Savior of the world, feels a shudder of horror ripping through him, as if he has just been a witness and an involuntary participant of a spitefully subtle blasphemy, which has insulted that which is most sacred to man...”<sup>29</sup> These words may be just as well related to Rozanov’s master, Konstantin Leontiev. Is there a note of exaggeration in them or that of Zdziechowski’s Catholic resentment towards the undisguised Russian imperialism present in the works and thought of both the writers? I do not think so. Nikolai Berdyaev also drew attention to dangerous “Satanism” hiding in the thought of Leontiev, the “philosopher of a reactionary romanticism.” In his text devoted to it, we read that

[f]or Leontiev Christianity is not a religion of love and joyful tidings, but a dark religion of fear and coercion. He most of all esteemed within Christianity the pessimistic predictions about the future of the world, about the impossibility upon it of the Kingdom of God. Though it seem strange, but the Christianity of Leontiev had its greatest attraction for him in its teaching about evil, about the godless Anti-Christ principle, hid within the religion of Christ. And Leontiev I have decided to term a satanist, dressing himself up with Christian features. His religious pathos was directed towards apocalyptic predictions regarding the impoverishment of love, the death of the world and the Dread Last Judgement.<sup>30</sup>

## LETTERS

Vainly searching, the blind wander far,  
Trusting their blind leaders’ example;  
But if life is God’s noisy and teeming bazaar,  
Death is his one everlasting temple.<sup>31</sup>

Letters and memoirs are usually “pages” that are “torn out” of one’s life. Often, they are fascinating as they introduce us to the world from a private and typically concealed angle. In place of an unbiased perspective, intimacy appears along with subjectivity,

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 42. See also: 62.

<sup>29</sup> M. Zdziechowski, *Dwa bieguny mesjanizmu państwowego w Rosji* [Two Opposite Extremities of National Messianism in Russia] in: *Wybór pism* (Kraków 1993), 334.

<sup>30</sup> Berdyaev, “K. Leont’ev – Philosopher of a Reactionary Romanticism.”

<sup>31</sup> “Слепыц напрасно ищут, где дорога, / Доверьясь чувств слепым поводырям; / Но если жизнь – базар крикливый Бога, / То только смерть – его бессмертный храм.”

egoism, honesty, and sometimes bluntness. Journals and letters tend to be laconic. They are governed by the poetics of mental shortcuts, they refer to amusing situations and everyday misunderstandings. There is no room for thoughts pregnant with discursive weight. They are written not by “ghosts,” but by people of flesh and blood. Some are kept (sent) with a puzzling regularity, others are born under rapidly changing circumstances. Unlike the orderly essays or scientific treatises they constitute an immediate response to the world – a one that is nervous, spontaneous, and almost always ill-considered. Life shows through in letters and memoirs, and it courts the reader even more freely than poetry does. The authors attempt to slip into them not only that which is great, but also that which is small, yet worthy of slipping into because it is profoundly human. “Believe me, my angel,” Dostoyevsky writes in a letter to his life companion, “all year I have been dreaming of buying you a pair of earrings, which I have not yet given back to you. You had pawned all your possessions for me during these past 4 years and followed me in my wanderings with homesickness in your heart! Anya, Anya, bear in mind, too, that I am not a scoundrel but only a man with a passion for gambling.”<sup>32</sup> There is so much truth, affection, and caring for a loved one in these words, and at the same time, they are an act of admitting to one’s own weakness, to prosaic, purely human stupidity and immoderation.

Rozanov met Leontiev a year before the latter’s death. It was only a pen friendship and, I would say, deliberately so. He was in no hurry to have a personal conversation that his spiritual teacher insisted on. In fact, quite the opposite – he kept putting it off on purpose. “Certainly, all this was very easy to arrange, yet some sort of laziness and superstition – which only confirmed myself in the belief that I would not encounter what was kind and dear to me, and what my imagination had already created about the unseen man – made me not to haste or strive to meet him. And thus we have never seen each other.”<sup>33</sup> In the times when the “eminence” of an individual was determined by material resources or by whether someone was awarded professorship, it was the adoration of great personalities and admiration for men of action and “character” that brought the two thinkers together. Rozanov felt drawn to Leontiev’s genuine vitalism. “In his presence, you feel as if you were embraced by the ‘mother provider,’ as if you entered a “vast steppe,” something wild and overpowering (in a figurative sense), a realm where you will either pay with your head or take the crown.”<sup>34</sup> After all, Leontiev was the representative of a particular type of vitalism, originating in an aesthete’s rebellion against trivializing the variety of life. It was extremely difficult to find in his sublime isolation any trait of dishonesty or doing something for show. He was a surgeon by education, a fact that influenced his cognitive perspective: he would watch a man, as if the latter was now only fit for long-term rehabilitation with an uncertain outcome. At the same time he was drawn to the intensity of life, its breadth.

L-iev’s thoughts [...] give him the advantage even over D[ostoev]ski, whom he indulgently referred to as ‘Fyod[or] Mikh[ailovich], the way one

<sup>32</sup> F. Dostoyevsky, quoted after *The American Reader*. Available online.

<sup>33</sup> Леонтьев, *Письма к Василию Розанову*, 116.

<sup>34</sup> Розанов, Леонтьев, *Письма к Василию Розанову*, 25.

addresses a “young man.” L-iev is someone infinitely old in terms of history, someone who belongs in the times still ‘before the Antichrist,’ when the ‘seven seals’ of the book had been opened (the Apocalypse). The thing is that we, Christians, have not learned to envisage a viewpoint other than Christian. Therefore, every ray of our vision is, so to speak, also the “Light of Reason shining in the world.” It leaves its trace literally on everything – morality, “love thy neighbor,” “be his brother,” etc. The pathologist L-iev suddenly cries out: “with all due respect, you’re sick! you’re dying!! You have identified both disease and death (biological one) with the moral ideal.” But the pathologist is a monk at the same time. Having exclaimed that, he all cringed in fear and hid behind his habit, from where there came a wailing: “I fear! I fear for my soul!! I fear of the torments of hell!!!” And he does know quite well what torment is, having gone through twenty years of illness. And then again – perpetually ill, he does not want illness; he scatters around the bottles of medicine, defrocks himself, and begins to seek the colorful, the vibrant, the “esthetic.” (...) Estheticism was his true nature, and Christianity he was incorporated into by baptism.<sup>35</sup>

Leontiev was an advocate of Christianity for the demanding. At the same time he tried, not without success, to “move onto first name terms” with the ancient gods. With Christ he thought of death, while the Greek gods taught him life. Rozanov did not accept Leontiev’s contempt when referring to ordinary people. “Coming from a poor family,” he wrote in his introduction to Leontiev’s letters,

[and] having seen much poverty in my life, I have never wished to cut myself off from it, like from something that is the closest – just like a lazy bear, unwilling to leave its lair. Besides, I was familiar with poverty as a state of hardship and suffering, which, in turn, filled me with sympathy. That is the reason why, once and for all, I grew to be an enemy of fullness and self-satisfaction, be it physical or spiritual. Therefore I agreed with Leontiev in matters of aesthetics, but I refused to assign beauty to the rich, assigning it to the poor; I agreed with his religious arrangement of the soul, and at the same time I needed religion as solace, not a source of quietism (his viewpoint).<sup>36</sup>

The theme, which almost obsessively recurs in Leontiev’s letters to Rozanov, is – besides the subject of religion and monastic life – a matter of recognition. Leontiev realized that he had lost the race for influence and fame in this world.

Imagine a miss, who saw this and that in herself; others confirmed it, so it was impossible for her not to recognize all the beautiful features in herself.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 107. See also: 101.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 24–25.

However, due to bad luck she did not succeed in serious love: one fiancé slipped away, another – clearly on the basis of some calculation – turned to another lady, yet another one got scared of something; in this way, the miss reached the age of, say, thirty-five, and decided to stop waiting for a match that would satisfy her. But suddenly a young man shows up, whispering sweet nothings into her ear; he tells her everything that she desired to hear twenty years ago... Her dormant feelings slowly begin to wake up... Not with the same young vitality, of course, but they wake up nevertheless... And what now? Deception finds her again! The man either abandons her as suddenly as the others did, or he dies, and so on and so forth.<sup>37</sup>

Later in the letter, Leontiev admits that he has received quite enough praise in his life, but always face to face and almost never – just in case – in writing. In general, little was written about him. When it happened, he would cut it out and paste it in a special notebook, and next show it to his relatives and friends, enjoying at least the appreciation of the household members. For the most part, these articles appeared in provincial press, such as some little exotic mags, whose authors, having nothing better to do, mocked strange ideas that were over their heads. These clippings, invariably accompanied by Leontiev's handwritten annotations, together formed a peculiar and an unreleased "book" that says a lot about the psychology of the remarkable author.

In time, Leontiev came to a conclusion that the decision to deny him recognition must have been taken in another world – likely to keep the happiness from going to his head.

God knows well what and when to give, and to whom. I used to be so conceited that the great vision I had of myself could have lead me somewhere, where I should not really be. I therefore infer a conclusion that God (I think so), in His infinite mercy, crossed the plans of my supporters who wanted to write well about me, thus strengthening my fame; (...) the first was an idler who when it came to serious writing; the second was rather timid by nature; the third was too busy; the fourth proved simply unreliable, he clearly had an aversion towards me... All this happening over a span of some thirty years has gradually made me "settle," it has "disillusioned" me, turning out to be a boon!<sup>38</sup>

Besides the churchy rhetoric behind these words, one could also recognize wounded pride, awareness of self-worth, and a great resentment towards contemporaries who could not see what was best in Leontiev. Had he known – Rozanov claims – how to moderate his appetites, his intemperate desire for recognition; had the "psychological tension" in him, directed towards gaining fame, dissolved even for a moment, fame would have fallen upon him immediately. One might say that "it continually stood at his door, waiting for

<sup>37</sup> Леонтьев, *Письма к Василию Розанову*, 95.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

him to stop staring at it. However, he did not stop but kept on staring, which made his ‘guest’ grow tired, then go away and forget about him. It is only now, when he died, that he can be praised.”<sup>39</sup> In Rozanov, Leontiev found a faithful custodian of memory. He died in the belief that he was the only person who had understood him correctly. After thirty years of struggle – the duration of his literary and philosophical activity, according to his own calculations – he was “weary of some people’s injustice, betrayal, ignorance; others’ awkwardness or powerlessness, and of cruelty he experienced from yet another group...”<sup>40</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

It is true that Leontiev craved publicity and recognition. But he craved them as a prophet, teacher, and journalist, and one is typically successful these areas only when pandering to the basest tastes of the audience or by supporting the interests of the powerful groups. Someone who is trained in the art of flattery, will come far in life, but posthumously the memory of that someone will die out as quickly as a candle’s dying flame. In this sense, Leontiev always positioned himself against the tide. If he offered flattery, it was only to the Orthodox people, who, it seems, did not know of his existence. “He began to preach his radically conservative and pious beliefs in the late 60s, that is, precisely at the time when they could not win him anything but consternation, jeers and public insults. All that he preached was entirely independent, deeply considered and lived through. Regardless of how we assess his ideas, they were genuinely his own and never someone else’s words repeated out of calculation or in a wild stampede” (V. Solovyov). Leontiev had the reputation of a conservative thinker. In some circles he was even regarded as a reactionary (soon also Rozanov’s name began to be linked with his views). He was an unrestrained man, a free one. In the works of their greatest writers, Russian readers of the late nineteenth century sought answers to questions about the meaning of life and clues as to what course of action they should take (the famous “What is to be done?”). They, however, would find no lesson, no concrete advice in Leontiev’s writings. Instead, those few readers he had, were rather encouraged to lead a creative life, to fight for reality (and with it). He sensed that Russia would bring forth the Antichrist. At the same time he was convinced that “*оптинские молитвы не спасут Россию от гибели*” – that a collective salvation is impossible to attain through begging or praying. Unlike Dostoyevsky, he did not believe in any paradise on earth, be it the socialist-Christian one (in the spirit of Alyosha Karamazov) or the Christian-socialist one (the realm of the Tolstoyan fools), since “the world lies in evil.” One should get to grips with revolutionary tendencies, which Orthodox Church and the Russian intelligentsia are responsible for, in order to overpower them. Even on his deathbed this proud man cried, “We are still fighting!” Against the devil? With political opponents? It is not known.

I have counted many similarities between Rozanov and Leontiev, to name just a few of them: self-contained nature, freedom of thought, creative perception of life, remaining in open conflict on many fronts. What they shared was also reluctance towards monks – beings completely detached from the world, “moonlight” addicts. Leading a life

<sup>39</sup> Розанов, Леонтьев, *Письма к Василию Розанову*, 49.

<sup>40</sup> Леонтьев, *Письма к Василию Розанову*, 95.

of separation, as Rozanov claims, monks cannot have anything to say to parents after the loss of their beloved child; they do not understand the power of carnal temptations, because they shun sexual pleasure; if they argue that “you do not need to avoid pain,” it is precisely because (like the ancient Stoics) they do not know pain. “Meanwhile Golgotha constitutes life and is inevitable. To still exaggerate it, to seek pain, is a sin.”<sup>41</sup> The monks became living dead, so that is why they have little in common with the living.

Indeed, being a kind of ‘psychological wonder,’ ‘monks’ exist essentially because they incinerate their existence, incinerate the existing things (which was why Peter the Great spoke against monks, as did most of the energetic people). The world’s inscrutable mystery is embodied in monasticism. At times it appears to me to be a Living, Personal Death [*Живою и Личною Смертью*]; a discreet atrophy, deriving joy from its own impotence.<sup>42</sup>

Did Leontiev believe in God? First of all, he sought personal salvation for his soul, and the “transcendent egoism” and an understanding of religion as a source of human anxiety that brings out the best, the noblest in man, were supposed to help him with it. He did not believe in the Parousia. He believed that time turned and changed its course, with humanity going back to the state of nature – and Christ does not redeem animals. So while Leontiev radiates cold, romantic brilliance and solemnity, Rozanov does almost just the opposite: he invites the reader into the kitchen, where he offers his guest a cigarette, raspberry with milk, a saltish cucumber with a tiny thread of fennel on it;<sup>43</sup> he wants to take lumps of earth to heaven with him, together with shoes and a plug of tobacco. He does not see Earth as a place that is cursed; it rather reminds him of the flickering warmth, everyday life, and humble festive joys. “And remember this:” – Rozanov wrote at the end of the *Apocalypse* – “life is a home. And the home must be warm, comfortable, and round. Work at building a “round home,” and God in heaven will never abandon you. He will not forget the little bird that weaves a nest.”<sup>44</sup>

Rozanov admitted that “little has the sun shined on Russia in history.” At the same time he did not see a place for himself outside of Russia, nor did he seek one. Leontiev, on the other hand, predicted Russia’s imminent disaster: it was time for it to die, along with Europe that was even more fatigued. Good riddance. If Rozanov was the first *юродивый* among the Russian philosophers of the “Silver Age,” Leontiev turned out to be “the restrainer” in the hopeless struggle against the forces of the Antichrist.

<sup>41</sup> Розанов, Леонтьев, *Письма к Василию Розанову*, 52.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 116. Solovyov, too, conditionally opted for the self-castration of monks. “In 1894, the late F. E. Szpierzch repeated to me, not without astonishment – Rozanov writes in the afterword to his correspondence with Leontiev – some of Solovyov’s enlightening words on castration as a radical means of loosening the ties that bind us to the oppressive ‘body.’ Indeed, why ever run away from the invincible enemy, if it can be killed during just one minute of pain. What a gain! What freedom of spirit!” (134).

<sup>43</sup> V. Rozanov, *Fallen Leaves*, trans. S. S. Koteliansky (London: Mandrake Press, 1929), 114.

<sup>44</sup> V. Rozanov, “The Apocalypse of Our Time,” trans. S. E. Roberts, in *Four Faces of Rozanov: Christianity, Sex, Jews, and the Russian Revolution* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1978), 300.

# “BLESSED ARE THE PERPLEXED” AN AFTERWORD TO THE QUINZIO- CERONETTI CORRESPONDENCE

## INTRODUCTION

We present here in translation a short chapter from Ceronetti’s *Tragico tascabile* (2015), which appeared earlier in 2014 as a full article on a national newspaper, under the heading “Se muore il cristianesimo” [What if Christianity dies out], and was at a later time collected in the book reviewed below.<sup>1</sup> It is aimed at giving less aphoristical a sample of Ceronetti’s thought than the snippets provided above in the review of his work, and also at giving an idea of the tight interlocking of mental associations, of the cadence and mood of his philosophizing (as for the allure and pithiness of his written Italian, they are beyond the reach of this translator). In addition to that, readers interested in the relationship between Ceronetti and the theologian Quinzio are invited to read it as a follow-up to the correspondence examined in the previous issue of this journal.<sup>2</sup> Ceronetti has outlived his friend for almost 20 years as, in September 2014, he voices a warning he has been harboring for a while. Not only Quinzio is conjured up at the very beginning: textual evidences attest throughout that the article draws on the decade-long exchange between the two (references will be given in the footnotes to the text). The theme of the exhaustion of Christianity as an historical agent and the literary trope of the “last Popes” also make this article sound, in part, as a belated reply to Quinzio’s last book, the only short novel the theologian ever wrote, where a fictional pope Peter II, by way of his final encyclical, proclaims the failure of the Church.<sup>3</sup> An abysmal difference being there between the two, however, since Quinzio’s pope holds a residual hope in the only true consolation, the Second Coming of Christ, whereas Ceronetti witnesses a process that fills him with despondency but validates his philosophy: none of the great

<sup>1</sup> G. Ceronetti, “Se muore il cristianesimo,” in *La Repubblica*, September 10, 2014 (the article begins on the front page and continues on p. 31), reprinted in *Tragico tascabile* (Milan: Adelphi, 2015), 178-182.

<sup>2</sup> G. Ceronetti-S. Quinzio, *Un tentativo di colmare l’abisso: Lettere 1968-1996* [An attempt to bridge the abyss: Letters 1968-1996] (Milan: Adelphi, 2014). Reviewed by G. P. Licatase in *Kronos Philosophical Journal* III (2014), 241-248.

<sup>3</sup> S. Quinzio, *Mysterium iniquitatis* (Milan: Adelphi, 1995).

traditions which keep wisdom and enshrine the sacred can escape the gravitational pull of the “Black Hole,” i.e. historical entropy.<sup>4</sup>

It is our intention here to put forth a few more clues regarding the relationship between these two remarkable men. Perhaps, better focused scholars will put them to good use in their study of either Ceronetti or Quinzio: the one was often the keenest reader of the other; besides, all students of humanities (conceived in the broadest sense) who may meet them on the path of an intellectual avocation will take something substantial with them when they go back to their area of expertise. Rarely as much clearly as in their confrontation do the inner tensions and the clear-cut alternatives between Athens and Jerusalem emerge, whether we ponder Pilate’s question about truth or inquire into the individual and the social meaning of culture. A key into understanding their relationship is, however, that it was asymmetrical. Ceronetti could admire (as one admires consistency and accomplishment independently of rightness) but not reconcile himself with – and sometimes felt threatened by – Quinzio’s radical eschatology: as he wrote once of his friend,

he is a writer imbued with prophetic spirit, who really believes in the Scriptures and wants to see them fulfilled (for nothing else he yearns). And the fulfillment of the Scriptures consists of the dissolution of the sacred order that originated from them, along with any other earthly order or form (*solvet saeculum in favilla*<sup>5</sup>): society, laws, institutions, culture, peace and war, university and stadium, family and science, theatre and church.<sup>6</sup>

This radicality undermined everything men concern themselves with in their lifetime and, with the utmost force, rejected philosophy and literature, Ceronetti’s realm of meaning and salvation, for they easily degenerate into self-delusion or, worse, intellectual playfulness. On his part, Quinzio basically stayed true to the line he sent Ceronetti in one of their first exchanges: “I hate literature with all of myself because it is the slope down which the sacred slips until it disintegrates into nothingness; furthermore, from now on, I have a personal grievance against her, because she is luring a friend into her trap.”<sup>7</sup> Over the years, Quinzio repeatedly invites in private letters and in public articles Ceronetti to give up his posture of absolute desperation: Quinzio reads into the poetry of his friend a struggle with finitude, pain and Fate which he likens to that of poet Giacomo Leopardi, and suggests that it may push him on the verge of a religious conversion: the “tragic” is, in Ceronetti’s pages, so compelling because he feels the urge to transcend it.<sup>8</sup> Toward the

<sup>4</sup> Ceronetti already expressed similar ideas in a letter from Paris to Quinzio of May 14, 1992 (*Un tentativo di colmare l’abisso*, 349).

<sup>5</sup> A line of the Latin hymn *Dies irae*: “[the Last Judgement] dissolves the whole world through a glaring fire.”

<sup>6</sup> This quotation comes from an unpublished review of Quinzio’s *Un commento alla Bibbia* [A biblical commentary] (Milan: Adelphi, 1972), read by Ceronetti on the third national radio channel (Rai3) on 25 May 1973, and transcribed by Marinangeli in the appendix to *Un tentativo di colmare l’abisso*, 400-402.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 34 (Quinzio to Ceronetti, 29 October 1969).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 288-290 (Quinzio to Ceronetti, 14 January 1985, and Ceronetti to Quinzio, 2 February 1985). This interpretive scheme of a Ceronetti-Leopardi, although resisted by Ceronetti himself, persuades, among others, Rolando Damiani in his review of the correspondence in A. Motta (ed.), *Il filo dell’enigma. Omaggio a Guido*

end of their correspondence, he will state to have always sensed in his friend "a treasure of tenderness and compassion," too often suffocated by an appetite for the excess and for the theatrical."<sup>9</sup> These arguments are advanced most forcefully and poetically in a personal letter that Quinzio chooses to publish on a newspaper in 1979 (he wants it to affect the critical reception of his friend more broadly), after having read Ceronetti's *Il silenzio del corpo* [The Silence of the Body].<sup>10</sup> Each line in this letter is essential to the comprehension of their relationship, but the central image will suffice here: a metaphor from Ceronetti's book is quoted approvingly through which, according to Quinzio, his friend has laid bare his existential position, the metaphor of the "house of Horace [the Latin poet]" where he has retreated to shut himself off from the Judaeo-Christian folly that announces eternal life, and where he is comforted by the flowers and the lanterns of poetry, with its promise to elude the thought of death. But all too soon Ceronetti learns in his seclusion that poetic niceties and stoic maxims become less and less effective, while from the night outside the house a call reaches his inhabitant, again and again: Anastasis! (Greek for "resurrection in the flesh").

Ceronetti left the call unheeded, and clung to poetry as a source of revelation.<sup>11</sup> The inner tensions detected by his friend, however, are real and Quinzio has driven little wedges in the tragic monolith. Upon reflecting on his "tragic," Ceronetti admits for a second that "art-poetry" can offer only "a transient benumbment"; to the thought that in the experience of the tragic the world comprehends itself as finite, he adds: "and I know well that it can't be enough"; and in the need to stress that "consolation without limits is indeed so un-Greek," it is once again Quinzio's impertinent hope that has to be implicitly negated.<sup>12</sup> The hope and the mind-set of his nonetheless beloved Quinzio remain an impossible alternative for Ceronetti, although one that is always present to his mind: on the day, for instance, that he is discussing theodicy and remarks that, for someone like him holding creation the work of Evil, "to think instead that the world, this expanding hell, is generated by the Good, is a folly that may throw someone into real insanity, and my friend Quinzio was the living emblem of such a Christian agonizing in a frightening modernity."<sup>13</sup> We conclude with one last clue. Between 1991 and 1994, Ceronetti collects some 400 aphorisms selected by his favorite authors and occasional readings, finally

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Ceronetti [The thread of the enigma. A homage to Guido Ceronetti] (San Marco in Lamis: Centro Documentazione Leonardo Sciascia / Archivio del Novecento, 2015), 167-180.

<sup>9</sup> *Un tentativo di colmare l'abisso*, 361 (Quinzio to Ceronetti, September 16, 1994).

<sup>10</sup> Quinzio, "Guido, io vorrei che tu, Orazio e io," *Il Giornale*, 25 febbraio 1979 (reprinted in *Il filo dell'enigma*, 229-231; cf. also Quinzio to Ceronetti, 13 February 1979 and Ceronetti to Quinzio, 18 March 1979, 218-221; a similar point is made by Quinzio in "Ribellati alla tua immagine!" [Disavow your self-made image!], *L'Espresso*, 8 February 1987, of which ample quotations are provided by Marinangeli in *Un tentativo di colmare l'abisso*, 438-439). The book by Ceronetti is *Il silenzio del corpo. Materiali per uno studio di medicina* (Milano: Adelphi) [The Silence of the Body. Materials for a study of medicine], Polish translation: *Drzewa bez bogów* (Krakow: Oficyna Literacka, 1995). In the humble opinion of a non-specialist, this reviewer thinks the letter from Quinzio to Ceronetti of 1979 should be ranked among the highest pages of modern Italian literature.

<sup>11</sup> Ceronetti to Quinzio, 25 March 1987, 305-306, and more recently, *Tragico tascabile*, 13, 78.

<sup>12</sup> *Tragico tascabile*, 91-93. Ceronetti also evidently relies on Quinzio when passing judgment on the removal of eschatology from theological discourse (*Ibid.*, 26).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. his dialogue on theodicy with theologian Enzo Bianchi that appeared in *La Stampa*, 29 September 2002, and later in *Il filo dell'enigma*, 93-97.

assembled in a book, *Tra pensieri* [Among thoughts]. Of all pages by Quinzio – whose work the collector had been keeping closely abreast of – one single fragment is excised and saved, and one speaking, in its nakedness, a perplexing absence of God:

Jesus suddenly appears in the wasteland, and suddenly as well he disappears from the grave. Obscure is his coming and obscure is his leaving. The world continues to go on along its way, his promise has disappeared with him.<sup>14</sup>

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So it will not happen evermore  
in the minds of the peoples fertile to return  
the inspired word

UNGARETTI, *Accadrà* [It will happen]<sup>15</sup>

I leave my *lapsus* [slip of the pen] (Ungaretti says *anymore* while I, memory lapsing, *evermore*) because I suppose that today it is *evermore* that our poet would incline to put in his verse. What I have to say is that I mourn a dying Christianity. An amputation of vast proportions is going on, in deep anesthesia,<sup>16</sup> so that nobody is wakened. I have no idea, however, of what is going to happen when we realize that, here in the Christian nations of the hemisphere. When Quinzio used to write or speak to me about it, I was indifferent. I don't believe I have changed in the while, nor have I returned in my old age to my childhood devotions; the fact, however, is now so imposing everywhere, and so many are the signs of death, that I too can now feel it personally as a wound. "So, will it happen that ashes prevail?" is the closing line of the poem by Ungaretti above. Ashes, ashes ... ashes equals Nothing ... is this Nothing that scares me? If Christianity is irresistibly drawn into a Black Hole, the ensuing void will be one that will not be filled in any way.

An aphorism by Cioran, the Romanian philosopher, is often infallible. One says: "Christianity died when it ceased to be monstrous."<sup>17</sup> This *when* is a date it is worth

<sup>14</sup> G. Ceronetti, *Tra pensieri* (Milan: Adelphi, 1994), 150. The fragment by Quinzio comes from his *Cristianesimo dell'inizio e della fine* [Christianity of the beginning and of the end] (Milan: Adelphi, 1967). The page number is missing from Ceronetti's reference.

<sup>15</sup> From here onwards, notes to the text by Ceronetti are of the Translator. The fragment comes from a collection of poetry dated 1947, *Il dolore* [The sorrow] by Giuseppe Ungaretti (1888-1970), one of the greatest Italian poets of the 20th century. He began to compose verses in the trenches of the Great War and his poetry also features in Ceronetti's recollection of the war staged in theaters in 2014, "Quando il tiro si alza" ("When the barrage lifts": the title derives from the command at which soldiers got out of the trenches to attack: cf. interview to Ceronetti in "Ceronetti. La mia trincea" by F. Fulvi in *Avvenire*, 1 October 2014).

<sup>16</sup> The idea of amputation recurs metaphorically through the dialogue between Ceronetti and Quinzio, in tune with the place that bodily realities had in their mind frame. For example: Quinzio's Christianity is according to Ceronetti "amputated of Greek and Oriental spirituality" (quoted by Marinangeli in *Un tentativo di colmare l'abisso*, 435), while Ceronetti in the eyes of Quinzio wants to "amputate" his longing for the absolute and the infinite from himself (see the already quoted article "Guido, io vorrei che tu Orazio e io," in *Il filo dell'enigma*, 229-230), and so on. Also anesthesia, that is, the suppression of painful realities in our societies, was a process observed by the two (see the correspondence, *passim*).

<sup>17</sup> This line had been introduced by Ceronetti in his conversation with Quinzio (cf. *Un tentativo di colmare l'abisso*, letter of 9 August 1969, 30). The original adjective by Cioran for "monstruous" is *monstrueux*.

to ascertain: but it must not be distant in time, monstrosities have generally long lives and the longest terminal agonies; sometimes they are immortal, as is the case with antisemitism. It will happen to Islam, too, hence its straining to survive the antimonotheistic wave that sweeps the upper deck by clutching at control, oppression and sheer terror: one can see the present stage as a Darwinian *struggle for life*.<sup>18</sup> All monotheistic faiths are swallowed into the Black Hole. One does not disappear without another following in its wake.

Perhaps, the specifically Christian monstrosity has been declining since when *autos-da-fé*<sup>19</sup> and witch trials have ceased? In our times, since when the Pope left the gestatorial chair<sup>20</sup> and got down to journeying triumphantly around? Shall the second Vatican Council in hindsight appear to have ceased the monstrous character of the Church and to have caused Christianity, in Catholic quarters, to accelerate on its deadly course? In schismatic Orthodoxy (I have the Russian one in mind, in particular), once that Communist terror and persecutions have ceased, a pacific zombie-like continuity, it seems to me, has prevailed; I see nothing alive in it anymore, but until yesterday martyrs were not few. Memorable remains Karamazov's parable of the Grand Inquisitor: Christ comes back, resumes his preaching, wins disciples, eradicates AIDS, ALS,<sup>21</sup> Ebola, multiplies bread and fishes for billions of people, creates so great an imbalance in our reality that for the sake of all the Grand Inquisitor has him arrested. In order not to be arrested, Christ should surround himself with fanatical militiamen, and resurrect, in order to resurrect himself, a monstrous Christianity.

Léon Bloy<sup>22</sup> (a Catholic Christian, and one among the greatest and most monstrous), from his Parisian suburb observer of the destructive frenzies of the Great War, at their highest in 1916, prophesied the advent of the *Paraclete*,<sup>23</sup> the Holy Spirit, whose return is expected at the end of historical times. In his last hope of believer, he invoked and waited for a mysterious Somebody to come; but after his death in 1917, and the mock peace of 1919, what absolute Consolator-Redeemer has ever come? Little, sacrificial, and for the most part anonymous lambs did come, and in great numbers, bearing the evils of the world on them; they do as well today, and will tomorrow; but no sign of a Paraclete whatsoever. Faithful Europe, in those times by necessity entirely Christian (except for theosophic minorities or for those few who had passed by Mount Truth, such as Weber, Rilke), was according to Paul Fussel<sup>24</sup> again on the rise in the trenches, but I doubt traditional faith to have been in such circumstances anything more than the mental invocations before the assaults and the sighs uttered amidst the death-rattle by those left lying in the holes

<sup>18</sup> In English in the original text.

<sup>19</sup> The ceremony accompanying the burning of heretics executed by the Spanish Inquisition.

<sup>20</sup> A chair on which, enthroned, the Pope was carried around during outdoor ceremonies in Rome.

<sup>21</sup> Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

<sup>22</sup> Leon Bloy (1846-1917), eschatological and countercultural voice in *Belle Époque* France, was an object of discussion between Quinzio and Ceronetti, as a living example of the tension between authentic religious experience and literary genius (cf. *Un tentativo di colmare l'abisso*, 83-86, 177, 359-361). Of the two, Ceronetti engaged Bloy more seriously and wrote an essay on him, published as an appendix in the Italian edition of *Le Salut par les Juifs* – L. Bloy, *Dagli ebrei la salvezza* (Milan: Adelphi, 1994).

<sup>23</sup> From ancient Greek: the comforter, the consolator.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Fussel, (1924-2012), historian, one of Ceronetti's sources, author of *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: OUP, 1975).

in the ground. Perhaps, in the British corps, the verses of King James' Bible, memorized in childhood, brought greater solace and vigor, but as an entirely un-Christian voice from the Old Testament. Prayers for peace and Christmases of hope were never lacking among warring nations becoming less and less willing to be torn into pieces; but what can a mystical-transcendent religion ever live off, if not hopes infinitely exceeding any truce of arms and any return to home? And after the war, the endless graveyards with their crosses indicate that, in spite of the Christian symbol, an entirely novel cult has appeared: that of the fallen. The Fallen know of no future life.

One finds the tragic of the Death of God (of the Christian God) – and a tragic imbued with a sentiment of aching and longing stronger than in books – in the film art of Carl Dryer, Luis Buñuel, Ingmar Bergman, where one can hear the roar of the huge waves in which the *Titanic-Christianity*, both Protestant and Catholic, is sinking headlong.

The bewildering abdication of Pope Ratzinger was a Bergmanian drama. The theologian Pope sees in full lucidity that his theology informed by Greek and Latin patrology cannot stand anymore and be preached, forsakes a Christianity he is powerless to reanimate, and retreats into a *Santa Marta* that will be his small surrogate for the rock of Saint Helena.<sup>25</sup> But let us recall Bergman's masterpiece *Winter Light*, that scene at the rural church of a small town in which pastor Ericsson performs the holy service in a church absolutely devoid of believers. The scenery, the Lutheran rite, the officiant stand in their places; souls, don't. Let us now imagine the magnificent San Pietro Square or, for that, a horrid and unpleasant square in Seoul, crowded by people, and then one day the Pope leaning out of the window to wave his blessing on deserted squares. Is this that the Pope glimpsed, instead of the squares of unfailingly occurring triumphs? The deserted church of Frostnäs? And does not the same vision take hold of Pope Francis, too? If I must tell from the signs of doubt and anxiety that sometimes emerge in his pauses of tiredness, it does. A de-Christianized world is an empty world, one without a *ubi consistam*<sup>26</sup> and one orphaned, too, of northern winter lights. Blessed are the perplexed.

*Introduction, notes and translation by Giuseppe Perconte Licatese*

<sup>25</sup> "Santa Marta" is the building in the Vatican City where the Pope currently resides. The island of Saint Helena is where Napoleon served out his exile until his death in 1821.

<sup>26</sup> *Ubi consistam* is a Latin phrase (*Da mihi ubi consistam*: "give me a station I can stand firmly on") that has come to mean, in cultivated speech, an actual or desired fundamental truth or position in one's existence or system of thought.

# HEIDEGGER ON NATURE

“Nature loves to hide,” says Heraclitus. “If you want to discover Nature, first destroy all its forms,” says Eckhart. “The blessed divine is nothing, a pure nothingness; who sees nothing in everything, he is the one who sees,” says Angelus Silesius. “Form is nothingness; nothingness is form,” says the Heart Sutra of the Buddhist tradition. All those statements point to something original, primordial and hidden beyond every phenomenon, revealed – and mediated – by everything, even by the above statements, through which it is pointing to itself, tautologically referencing and reflecting itself.

Heidegger, a descendant of the German Romantic and Greek Presocratic traditions, considered each text a medium, a message, a speech of the Unspoken.<sup>1</sup> From this perspective, all other traditions are also pointing towards the same source, formulating the Unformed, the Uniform. Hence he could later find in Eastern currents of thought astonishing similarities to his own. In a 1963 conversation with a Buddhist monk, Heidegger replied to the monk’s statement “Nothingness is not nothing, just the opposite, it is everything. No one can name it. But it is – nothing and everything – the fulfillment,” that “This is exactly what I’ve been saying my whole life.”<sup>2</sup> It – the Unnameable – is everything. To find a word for the Unnameable was Heidegger’s relentless struggle ever since he started to philosophize. In one of his last texts, *The Lack of Holy Names* (1975), he admits that no single word can be the ultimate name, because every word, every phenomenon, overshadows that which it foreshadows, and this fundamental lack is the result of the self-occlusion of that which is named by every name and which is currently (as Heidegger underscores) present only through its absence.<sup>3</sup> Even though the Unnameable expresses itself ultimately only in silence,<sup>4</sup> Heidegger singles out a series of primordial, cooriginal words from the Presocratic tradition, which point toward the ἄρρητον.

One of these primordial words is ἀλήθεια. It can serve as a good example of the occlusion of the Unnameable (in Heidegger’s own terms: “the oblivion of Being”). For Heidegger logic and ontology are not separate. Therefore the rediscovery of the primordial meaning of ἀλήθεια is equivalent to the revelation of that which has been forgotten and occluded by its derivative meanings. The derivative form of ἀλήθεια is the epistemological form of truth as correspondence, underlying the metaphysical paradigm that Heidegger

<sup>1</sup> M. Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1975-), vol. 3, 202-203 (all quotations from this source are referred to as GA followed by volume and page number); GA 9:46, 203; GA 13:78; GA 15:398, 405; GA 40:179; GA 55:177.

<sup>2</sup> GA 16:592; cf. H. W. Petzet, *Auf einen Stern zugehen* (Frankfurt am Main: Societäts Verlag, 1983), 190.

<sup>3</sup> GA 13:235: “was heute ist, indem es fehlt” (Heidegger clearly expects this to change).

<sup>4</sup> GA 66:353; GA 69:211.

attempts to overcome in order to disclose a non-objectifying mode of existence. The discovery of the primordial meaning of ἀλήθεια in his Aristotle interpretation in early 1920s was a breakthrough for Heidegger's thinking. The original meaning of ἀλήθεια is coming out of hiddenness, disclosing, the φαίνεσθαι of φαινόμενα, the appearing of every appearance, the self-manifestation of that which manifests itself.<sup>5</sup> The interesting thing in Heidegger's initial interpretation of ἀλήθεια is how it leads him back from metaphysics to physics, just like ἀλήθεια itself leads him back to λήθη<sup>6</sup>. He starts his analysis of truth in *Being and Time*<sup>7</sup> by stating that the ancient philosophers were guided by the thing itself (αὐτὸ τὸ πρᾶγμα, Arist. *Met.* 984a), or „that which shows itself in itself” (τοῖς φαινόμενοις, 986b). This research is called the examination of truth (ἐπιστήμη τῆς ἀληθείας 993b) for it concerns ἀλήθεια (988a, 983b) and consists of speaking about nature (λέγειν τι περὶ τῆς φύσεως, 993b). This research is, however, a contemplation of truth (ἡ περὶ τῆς ἀληθείας θεωρία, 993a), which makes it difficult, for truth itself, like φύσις according to the Heraclitean dictum, is evasive and the human soul is blinded by it, i.e. by something that is illuminated by nature itself (τῇ φύσει φανερότατα, 993b), like a bat is blinded by sunlight<sup>8</sup>. One cannot understand this connection between ἀλήθεια and φαίνεσθαι, or between ἀλήθεια and φύσις (mentioned also in *Phys.* 191a) on the basis of the correspondence theory of truth. In *Metaphysics* 988a Aristotle refers to his previous considerations of ἀρχαί and ἀλήθεια in *Physics*. In *Metaphysics* 986b he also refers to *Physics*, mentioning a further analysis of the Parmenidean statement “only one thing exists: being, and besides nothing” (ἐν οἷεται εἶναι, τὸ ὄν, καὶ ἄλλο οὐθὲν), famously paraphrased by Heidegger in the 1929 lecture on metaphysics.<sup>9</sup>

Heidegger follows this clue in order to reconstruct the primordial meaning of ἀλήθεια. His first lecture course on Aristotle, *Phenomenological Interpretations to Aristotle* (1922), essentially elaborates a transition from *Metaphysics* to *Physics*.<sup>10</sup> The first philosophers that Aristotle considers in *Physics* are the φυσικοί or φυσιολόγοι who were guided, like Parmenides in his poem *Περὶ φύσεως*, by the goddess Ἀλήθεια.<sup>11</sup> Their activity is ἀποφαίνεσθαι περὶ τῆς ἀληθείας (993b), i.e., a letting-something-be-seen in relation to ἀλήθεια and within its scope.<sup>12</sup> The key passage that Heidegger uses to elucidate the connection between ἀλήθεια and φύσις comes from *De coelo*, where Aristotle talks about the philosophers who inquired into the creation and dissolution of things (γένεσις καὶ φθορά), namely Melissos and Parmenides, calling them φιλοσοφήσαντες περὶ τῆς ἀληθείας (298b), which Heidegger translates as “those who have been trying to understand that which is deprived of previous hiddenness (unilluminatedness).”<sup>13</sup> Here ἀλήθεια doesn't

<sup>5</sup> GA 14:99.

<sup>6</sup> GA 15:394-399.

<sup>7</sup> GA 2:212f.

<sup>8</sup> According to Bonaventura, this metaphor means that the highest light is so blinding, that it appears to the soul as nothingness – *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, V, 3.4; quoted in C. Braig, *Vom Sein* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder'sche Verlagshandlung, 1896), vi.

<sup>9</sup> GA 9:105.

<sup>10</sup> GA 62:115-120.

<sup>11</sup> GA 2:222; GA 54:22-32.

<sup>12</sup> GA 2:213.

<sup>13</sup> GA 62:186.

refer to correspondence or agreement of a judgment with its object, and is therefore not merely epistemological. Since it refers to illumination (*Aufhellung*), to being revealing itself, or to no-longer-being-in-hiddenness (*Nicht-mehr-in-Verborgenheit-Sein*),<sup>14</sup> it is ontological.

Ἀλήθεια in the primordial sense refers therefore to the universal movement of self-presentation, the appearance of φαινόμενα. This is why Heidegger can state that Aristotle is a more originary phenomenologist than Husserl<sup>15</sup> and his fundamental phenomenological (i.e. ontological or simply logical) treatise – “the central book of Western metaphysics” – is *Physics*.<sup>16</sup> One should therefore look for the examination of the primordial sense of ἀλήθεια not in *De Interpretatione* but in *Physics*.<sup>17</sup> One cannot overstate the far-reaching, revolutionary implications of this statement. If the movement of truth is the movement of being and *Physics* is the central (but hitherto hidden and hence never adequately thought through) ontological treatise of Aristotle, then by obfuscating *Physics* the Western tradition has indeed alienated itself from its source – it has alienated itself from Nature.

But what is Nature? Heidegger gives a preliminary answer to this question in his interpretation of *Physics* B1. Initially he characterizes φύσις as the Greek counterpart of the Latin *natura*, from *nasci*, to be born, to stem. Hence the initial meaning of Nature as “that which allows to stem out of itself.”<sup>18</sup> It is that which stays within, germinates (stems), and returns to itself. Heidegger distinguishes – following Aristotle – three essential characteristics of φύσις: (1) ἀρχὴ κινήσεως καὶ στάσεως (192b13-15), or the beginning and command of motion and rest, where rest (*Stillhalten*) is not the lack of movement but rather its consummation<sup>19</sup>; (2) οὐσία (192b32-193a2) or beingness<sup>20</sup>; (3) μορφή (193b18), or coming to appearance and enduring in it, i.e. taking form.<sup>21</sup> The second meaning is of utmost interest because it relates to the *γυγαντομαχία περὶ τῆς οὐσίας* that Heidegger mentions at the beginning of *Sein und Zeit*,<sup>22</sup> suggesting that the struggle for the recovery of the forgotten meaning of being is the struggle for φύσις (the oblivion of being is the oblivion of Nature). Heidegger’s justification for translating οὐσία as beingness (*Seiendheit*) is also telling: it says “very little, almost nothing,”<sup>23</sup> thereby pointing towards that which is unknown, that which is hidden, overcoming the apparent familiarity. On the final pages of the essay Heidegger shows the paradoxical character of φύσις: it is “the presencing of the absence of itself on the way from itself and to itself”<sup>24</sup> (this is exactly how he characterizes God as the hidden presence<sup>25</sup>). This self-covering of φύσις is necessary for the discovering (disclosing) of anything other than itself. In other words, it “belongs to the primordial love of being”: everything is a gift stemming from the initial

<sup>14</sup> GA 62:332.

<sup>15</sup> GA 14:99.

<sup>16</sup> GA 9:242; cf. GA 10:92; GA 66:368.

<sup>17</sup> GA 62:391.

<sup>18</sup> GA 9:239.

<sup>19</sup> GA 9:247, 250, 283-284.

<sup>20</sup> GA 9:259-260.

<sup>21</sup> GA 9:276, 287, 293.

<sup>22</sup> GA 2:2.

<sup>23</sup> GA 9:260.

<sup>24</sup> GA 9:299.

<sup>25</sup> GA 4:170; GA 7:185. He also characterizes Being in this way in GA 10:95 and GA 40:122.

self-negation of φύσις that allows anything to come into unhiddenness. Φύσις is ἀλήθεια and hence κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ.<sup>26</sup>

Heraclitus speaks about φύσις not only as that which likes to hide (Fr. 123). He also speaks about it in Fr. 16: τὸ μὴ δύνόν ποτε πῶς ἄν τις λάθοι; (“How can one hide from that which never sets?”).<sup>27</sup> What never sets is φύσις, the ongoing growth, that which is constantly growing (τὸ ἀεὶ φύον) out of its self-concealment. It is the eternal flame, the world fire, the utmost light (τοῦ ἐκφανέστατον), the original hidden essence of truth and “the event of its illumination of the world.”<sup>28</sup>

At the beginning of his essay on *Physics* B1 Heidegger quotes Hölderlin’s hymn *Wie wenn am Feiertage*, where Nature is described as something “older than times” and “above gods.” Hölderlin’s concept of Nature is further discussed by Heidegger in his lecture from the same year. One has to remember that according to Heidegger Nature reveals itself especially through poetic (i.e. creative) utterances, which is why Heidegger puts so much effort into analyzing such discourse. Hölderlin’s hymn can be considered his Περὶ φύσεως – that, at least, is how Heidegger treats it. The subject of the poem, Nature or φύσις, is described here as all-present and divinely beautiful. It means growth but not as becoming or development. It stands rather for the coming-forth and opening that simultaneously retreats into the forthcoming and thereby hides in that which gives the present its presence. It therefore means coming into the open, illuminating the clearance in which everything can appear and take its form. Nature is thus all-present, all-creative, and all-living. It is the primordial meaning of φύσις.<sup>29</sup> Nature is the Holy. If nature is holy, its holiness does not result from its divinity. On the contrary; it is divine, because it is holy. Holiness is the essence of Nature.<sup>30</sup> As such it is immediate and unapproachable, available only as something coming and arising, in the twilight, in creation.<sup>31</sup> When Heidegger, following Hölderlin, describes Nature as something primordial, originary, holy and prior to the times and the gods, he does not mean Nature as the opposite of something else, e.g. spirit, history or grace.<sup>32</sup> Nature is all-present and all-encompassing. It is one of the names for that which originates all names. Therefore, it is not external to anything but rather it is the “eternal heart.”<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, this is how Parmenides has described ἀλήθεια in his Περὶ φύσεως: as heart, εὐκυκλέος ἀτρεμέξ ἦτορ.<sup>34</sup>

To summarize: although φύσις is in movement, or, to be more precise, in self-movement, the exploration of φύσις undertaken in Aristotle’s *Physics* is not only an examination of κίνησις and μεταβολή but also of their origins, ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως and ἀρχὴ τῆς μεταβολῆς. Beings (τὰ ὄντα) are in movement, they arise out of that which is nothing in itself and is something only as beings (φαινόμενα). Beings are the self-movement of this ἀρχή. One of the primordial names of ἀρχή is φύσις (192b). What interests Heidegger is

<sup>26</sup> GA 9:301.

<sup>27</sup> GA 7:267f.

<sup>28</sup> GA 7:283; cf. GA 4:53; GA 7:36; GA 9:238.

<sup>29</sup> GA 4:54-57.

<sup>30</sup> GA 4:58-60.

<sup>31</sup> GA 4:63-64.

<sup>32</sup> GA 9:239.

<sup>33</sup> GA 4:73.

<sup>34</sup> GA 15:396, 403.

the relation between the τὰ ὄντα and their ἀρχή. This relation, traditionally called μίμησις or μέθεξις, is a dynamic process of disclosure (φαίνεσθαι). If we call the ἀρχή *das Nichts*, then this relation can be called *Nichtung*: the nothing of nothingness.<sup>35</sup> It can also be called: the worlding of the world. Thus in the Heideggerian phrase *Es weltet* “es” denotes ἀρχή and “welten” denotes φαίνεσθαι. One of the fundamental names for φαίνεσθαι is ἀληθεύειν, a key term in Heidegger’s interpretation of Aristotle (he translates ἀληθεύει ἡ ψυχή as “das menschliche Dasein das Seiende erschließt”).<sup>36</sup> But the fundamental name for it is simply *Sein*, εἶναι.

This shift from κίνησις to ἀρχή τῆς κινήσεως is what Heidegger calls the *Kehre*. It is described already at the outset of *Physics* as the way from that which is clear to us to that which is clear τῇ φύσει (184a16). It is a step into the Unspeakable, into Λήθη. To understand this shift and the first chapter of *Physics* is to take the first step into thinking.<sup>37</sup> Finding a name for Λήθη – the heart of Ἀλήθεια – was the constant endeavor of Heidegger. But as the hidden heart of disclosure, as that what conceals itself in order to let things appear, it is not at all separate, but rather something that permeates everything. Thus Heidegger calls it correspondence or harmony (φύσις is ἀρμονία, *Fügung*). Thus φύσις is the primordial self-differentiating bringing-together, διαφερόμενον ἐωυτῷ ὁμολογέει (Fr. 51 of Heraclitus).<sup>38</sup> But this all-encompassing harmonization or primordial gathering is also the original meaning of λόγος. The original sense of ἀλήθεια, φύσις, and λόγος is the same. But this tautological synonymy is not an indifferent emptiness of meaning. Rather, it is the original self-gathering in the manifold one: ἔν. This primordial unifying one is λόγος as ἀλήθεια as φύσις.<sup>39</sup> This unity as the task of the thinker is expressed in Heraclitus’ Fr. 112: to think is to gather (λέγειν) the unconcealed (ἀληθέα) in its forthcoming (ποιεῖν) according to its growth (κατὰ φύσιν).<sup>40</sup> But, one could object that this is all merely tautology. Indeed, for every primordial thinking is tautological. Tautology is the method of the “phenomenology of the unseen” because what it attempts to think is αὐτὸ ταυτό, the self in itself. This Unseen and Unspoken, Λήθη, is the self remaining in itself, ταυτόν τ’ ἐν ταυτῷ τε μένον καθ’ ἑαυτό τε κεῖται, as Parmenides stated (VII, 29).<sup>41</sup> Every introduction to thinking therefore must be an induction, a guiding-towards (ἐπαγωγή) to Λήθη, i.e. φύσις, for Λήθη is the primordial meaning of φύσις.<sup>42</sup> Ἀλήθεια is the self-differentiation, the inner movement of the self (Λήθη), i.e. of Nature. Ἀλήθεια is, in other words, the movement of Nature contemplating, i.e. creating itself (as Plotinus has observed in *Ennead* III.8). Only from this perspective can one understand why Heidegger begins his analysis of ἀλήθεια in *Sein und Zeit* with the Parmenidean statement τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστὶν τε καὶ εἶναι: νοεῖν is Nature contemplating itself and ἐστὶν is Nature creating itself – the self differentiating itself.

<sup>35</sup> GA 9:114.

<sup>36</sup> GA 19:21; cf. GA 62:376.

<sup>37</sup> GA 10:93-94; cf. GA 62:123.

<sup>38</sup> GA 55:160, 177.

<sup>39</sup> GA 55:359, 371.

<sup>40</sup> GA 55:373-374.

<sup>41</sup> GA 15:397-399, 405.

<sup>42</sup> GA 66:368; GA 73:39-42; GA 76:18-21.

# **NOMOS AS APPROPRIATION: ON SCHMITT'S JURIDICAL THEOLOGY**

## **1**

Three years after having depicted the irremediable end of *Jus Publicum Europeum* in his masterpiece *The Nomos of the Earth*, Carl Schmitt reconsidered the relation between nomos and power in the essay entitled “Nehmen/Teilen/Weiden: Ein Versuch, die Grundfragen jeder Sozial- und Wirtschaftsordnung vom *Nomos* her richtig zu stellen,” which intends to provide us with a powerful explanation criterion aiming to answer why every social order the modern theorists have delineated cannot but turn into social disorder, when concretely realized.<sup>1</sup> Schmitt’s scheme shares all the features of an elegant scientific thesis: it is simple, exhaustive, and universal. In fact, it has not lost its validity yet and could be applied in analyzing the contemporary debate pivoting around the “invasion” of the migrants. If Schmitt is right when arguing that every social order rests on the regulation of land-appropriation, social product distribution, and economic production, then what is at stake in the migrants controversy concerns their appropriation of the European land and of the means of subsistence, their redistribution among the European states, and the possible employment of their labor force in production activities.

In the third gloss to the term *nomos* Schmitt wrote that “universal history is a history of progress – or maybe just of change – concerning the means and methods of appropriation: from the land-occupation at nomadic and feudal times, to the conquest of seas in XVI and XVII centuries, to the industrial appropriation of the techno-industrial epoch with its differentiation between developed and undeveloped countries, and finally up to the air and space appropriation of our days.”<sup>2</sup> The fragility of every social order depends on the forgetfulness of the original appropriation, given that nothing can be redistributed or produced if something else has not been previously taken away: “Has humanity today actually ‘appropriated’ the earth as a unity, so that there is nothing more

<sup>1</sup> The essay was originally published in *Gemeinschaft und Politik* I, 1953 and in *Revue Internationale de Sociologie* I(1954). Later it was republished in C. Schmitt, *Verfassungsrechtliche Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1924 – 1954: Materialien zu einer Verfassungslehre* (Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt, 1958), 489-504. The second edition contains five glosses that have not been published in the English translation of the essay, which appeared in the appendix to Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of Jus Publicum Europaeum*. Translated and Annotated by G.L. Ulman (New York: Telos Press, 2006), 324-335.

<sup>2</sup> Schmitt, “Nehmen/Teilen/Weiden,” in *Verfassungsrechtliche Aufsätze*, 503.

to be appropriated? Has appropriation really ceased? Is there now only division and distribution? Or does only production remain?"<sup>3</sup>

Appropriation, distribution, and production are not activities related to different sectors of the social reality. They all mean *nomos*, law, as we erroneously translate the Greek term. I shall focus upon the first meaning of *nomos*, appropriation, taking, or occupying, given that its absence in the political and juridical consciousness of the Western man makes the stability of the social order hardly achievable. The appropriation involves the *vexata questio* regarding the regulation of violence and war. As a matter of fact, in the contemporary world there is no free land to be occupied, so that the appropriation may concern only the already occupied land, that is, a foreign state territory. Consequently, the problem of the taking interests the juridical basis upon which a foreign soil can be occupied. Is this question to be resolved by referring to juridical means? Or is it rather a question of pure power that one State employs against the foe? Finally, the relationship between violence and right has been long debated in the Western tradition: do violence and right have to be separated or are they rather interwoven by necessity?<sup>4</sup>

## 2

The modern theorists of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century (Schmitt's objection may regard the contemporary ones as well) proposed several and often contradictory conceptions of *nomos* without even attempting to study the original and ever-lasting meaning of the term and of actions (taking, distributing, producing) it involves. They rather assumed the necessity and the possibility to change the structural rule upon which the society is built and that directs the social life. They wanted the history to start anew, to change radically, or to be finally fulfilled.

According to Schmitt, the *nomos* lies before all human laws both anthropologically and historically. Man is the animal endowed with *nomos*, which is not simply the factual, material constitution, the soul of the concrete city, nor is it a conventional rule that has no place in nature. The *nomos* operates even before the city had been established, as at nomadic times. It embodies the ground law of universal history, since men have always occupied, redistributed, and produced something and these basic activities make their life completely human. Schmitt's inquiry into the meaning of *nomos* aims to discover the regularity of the history behind its apparent irregularity, yet without attempting to deliver a teleologically oriented philosophy of history. For this reason he does not provide us with the history of the concept of *nomos*.<sup>5</sup> Rather, Schmitt explains the world history by deducing its structure from basic categories of *nomos*: appropriation, redistribution, production. Anything that ever happened came about according to *nomos*.

The Greek term *nomos* is the *nomen actions* of the verb *nemein*, which firstly means "to take, to appropriate something"; the next meaning is "to divide, or to distribute." The

<sup>3</sup> Schmitt, "Appropriation/Distribution/Production: An Attempt to Determine from *Nomos* the Basic Questions of Every Social and Economic Order," in *The Nomos of the Earth*, 335.

<sup>4</sup> See O. Freudenberg, "Co to jest Eschatologia?" [What is Eschatology?] in: *Semantyka kultury*. Ed. by D. Ulicka, introduction by W. Grajewski (Kraków: Universitas, 2005), 375-378.

<sup>5</sup> See R. Grawert, "Gesetz," in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe, Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, band 2, ed. O. Brunner, W. Conze, R. Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1975), 863-922.

first meaning has been removed from the legal and political consciousness of the West, but the second one exerted a great influence on political and legal theorists. Finally, the last meaning “of *nemein* is *weiden* [literally, pasturage]. This is the productive work that normally occurs with ownership. The commutative right of buying and selling in the market presupposes ownership as well as production deriving from the primary division: *divisio primaeva*. This third meaning of *nomos* derives from the type and means of production and manufacture of goods. The nomads Abraham and Lot searching for pasture and tending their animals, Cincinnatus plowing his field, the shoemaker Hans Sachs at work in his shop, the industrial work of Friedrich von Krupp in his factory, all this is *nemein* in the third sense of *nomos*: to pasture, to run a household, to use, to produce.”<sup>6</sup> *Nemein* thus means to take something, to divide something according to a rational rule, and to produce something according to a technical rule.

Our conception of *nomos* is partial and broken because the modern Western thought has never been able to measure itself with the original taking, so that the primal category of *nomos* has been forgotten even by the most perspicuous political and juridical thinkers, such as Hobbes. The primal appropriation – a category situated beyond the right and the wrong, the just and the unjust (only after the land-appropriation took place, the concepts of justice and equity come into being) – cannot but be forgotten soon, given that men are naturally oriented to organize their present and project their future, and not to reflect upon the beginning. Historically the most influential meaning of *nomos* was for sure “division,” or original redistribution, *divisio primaeva*, since the members of any group identify the justice with the equal distribution of goods the political power performs. The division, which concerns the present and the future, is the source of dissatisfaction, alleged injustice, and social claims, as by nature everyone tends to demand for more. Yet, when the *nomos* is reduced to its second meaning, it becomes impossible to think of a stable and right social order, as the original appropriation is merely put aside.

People have always moved from one land to another and their history

with their migrations, colonizations, and conquests, is a history of land-appropriation. Either this is the appropriation of free land, with no claim to ownership, or it is the conquest of alien land, which has been appropriated under legal titles of foreign-political warfare or by domestic-political means, such as the proscription, deprivation, and forfeiture of newly divided territory. Land-appropriation is always the ultimate legal title for all further division and distribution, thus for all further production. It is what John Locke called *radical title*.<sup>7</sup>

The first movement of man is a motion of appropriation, taking an estate of land and claiming his ownership over it. In virtue of this activity man guarantees to himself the means of subsistence and the possibility of building an *oikos* and, therefore, of launching

<sup>6</sup> Schmitt, “Appropriation/Distribution/Production,” 327.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 328.

the oiko-nomic activities. The appropriation movement, upon which the stable social order is established, has to be regulated itself. The regulation of *nomos* as appropriation represents the principle task of any broader society, such is the modern one, because the appropriation constitutes its beginning.

### 3

The modern political theories turn upside down the right succession of the three moments of *nomos* and sometimes privilege the division and another time the production. Generally speaking, widespread is the supposition that the appropriation belongs to the prehistory of man and that social, economic, and political progress made it obsolete. Accordingly, the social theorists argue that the reformation of the other two categories of *nomos* would resolve the social problem and put an end to violence and war. By assuming the necessity to overcome the appropriation, they actually support the crystallization of the current social- and geo-political order, even if aiming to promote a new and more efficient social machine. Moreover, the modern social theories are rooted in the denunciation of the unjust division and production, to which the associated men are compelled (be it liberal-democratic or socialist, or simply tyrannical). The injustice of the current *nomos*, along with the fact that no one has ever chosen it, is the source of the social crises and instability, and of the universal unhappiness. Consequently, all theories propose a healing, that is, a new *nomos*, grounded in the overcoming of the old, unjust law and in new principles, such as personal freedom or social equity.

In the modern world the first meaning of *nomos* is not merely put aside. The social focus falls on redistribution and production as if these categories were independent from their “nomic” origin, that is, as if politics and economy were autonomous with respect to *nomos* and all *nomos* were reducible to the positive law the legislator posits. Yet, until the XVIII century, until the French Revolution, the succession of three moments were clear in the consciousness of men, and for that reason it was not even necessary to theorize it explicitly: “Land was the precondition of all subsequent economy and law,”<sup>8</sup> for it was clear that man is an earthly animal.<sup>9</sup> After the Industrial and French revolutions the land-appropriation started to be regarded as an imperialistic affair and the very idea of appropriation was linked to feudal or absolutist order. Indeed, starting from the XIX century there was no further appropriation of the European land and every war has been waged in view of the re-appropriation of the land that was claimed to belong naturally or historically to a State and its citizens. The war ceased to represent a land-appropriation aimed activity, and was redirected outside, resulting in colonial occupation.

The modern theorists embraced the following position: the social problem cannot be solved anymore through expropriation, expansion, conquests, that is to say, through the violence exercised upon those who actually work and produce, but by means of the increment of production and the just redistribution of the social product. The history demonstrates to us many evidences proving that progress of morality, sciences, and

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>9</sup> See C. Schmitt, *Land und Meer. Eine weltgeschichtliche Betrachtung*, 7th ed. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2011).

technologies cannot be based on the atavistic practice of appropriation. A happy society cannot be grounded in primordial violence, but in the acknowledgment of natural liberty and equality of all men. Already the French revolutionists accused the nobility of the improper occupation of the land, which should have been owned by the real nation composed of *laboratores*, the *natione industrielle*. At the beginning of the feudal order there was an appropriation, that is, a theft, because originally the land belonged equally to all men. This is how the appropriation started to be identified with a crime, moreover, with the original crime from which all of the historical injustice derives. What is more, if war aims at the appropriation of the land, every war can only be considered as simply unjust, that is, as a legally unjustifiable activity. The war is a crime.

Along with the rising of modern democracies, the feudal land-appropriation has been replaced by the problem of the appropriation of the means of production. So the accusation of unjust taking had been attributed to bourgeoisie. The socialists thought that in order for the creeping civil war (or the class struggle) to be overcome, we had to put a stop to the appropriation practice and turn to redistribution and production. The ideologies (socialism and liberalism) are nothing but the emphases put on these two categories of *nomos*.<sup>10</sup> According to socialism, our social order should be grounded in decisive iso-nomic redistribution of the means of production; according to liberalism in the eco-nomic liberty:

Here is where socialism falls in with classical political economy and its liberalism. The core of liberalism, both as a science of society and as a philosophy of history, also is concerned with the sequence of production and distribution. Progress and economic freedom consist of freeing productive powers, whereby such an increase in production and in the mass of consumer goods brings appropriation to an end, so that even distribution becomes an independent problem. Apparently, technological progress leads to an unlimited increase in production. If, however, there is enough or even more than enough at hand, then, in an epoch of scarcity, to view appropriation as the first and fundamental precondition of economic and social orders appears to be atavistic and repressive, even to be a reversion to the primitive right of plunder. When the standard of living continues to rise, distribution becomes increasingly easier and even less precarious, and appropriation ultimately becomes not only immoral, but even economically irrational and absurd. Liberalism is a doctrine of freedom, freedom of economic production, freedom of the market, and, above all, the queen of all economic freedoms, freedom of consumption. Liberalism also solves the social question with reference to increases in production and consumption, both of which should follow from economic freedom and economic laws.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> According to Schmitt, the only political idea which does not forget the problem of appropriation is Marx's "expropriation of the expropriators." Yet, since Marx accuses the capitalistic imperialism of expropriation, his expropriation of the expropriators represents the extreme form of imperialism rather than of liberation from it.

<sup>11</sup> Schmitt, "Appropriation/Distribution/Production," 331.

## 4

We can now go back to the present age and ask whether the problem of the regulation of the appropriation has disappeared together with the development of sciences and production techniques. To put it in different words: does the fact that we became moderns entail the complete reduction of the *nomos* to production and distribution? Or does the modernity rather hide from itself the feudal element of appropriation that it brings within and that permanently destabilizes its social order in force of its being put under the carpet? The modern State performs the role of stimulating and regulating the production and of redistributing the social product. Modern politics seemingly does not deal with appropriation. Yet, the question of appropriation did not disappear, nor can it be overcome. What is more, it does not concern only the relationships between States: in order that the social product be distributed and the economic activity stimulated, the State has to take one of its parts through the taxation or by other direct and indirect means. The “fiscal socialism” we live in, as Sloterdijk calls our social order, is still based upon appropriation. This means that the original appropriation, from which our social order stems, is rooted in the land-appropriation exerted by sovereign States. In virtue of this *nemein* and of its oblivion the modern State can present itself as an ever-lasting form of political organization, as the beginning of the social order.

## 5

Schmitt's argument is convincing in force of its unshakable historicity (migrations, wars, settlements, movements of people). As we have seen, even the great Hobbes did not grasp the first category of *nomos*. And he was unable of this theoretic performance because his political theory does not rest on historical facts.<sup>12</sup> Hobbes draws upon the hypothetical model of the state of nature and the radical individualism, meanwhile Schmitt's argument relies on the effective history of human groups. Schmitt's man is not an isolated individual. Rather, he is a member of a tribe, people, or nation. This difference, which depends on the real situations of human groups in pre-historical times, is decisive. Upon it rests the Hobbesian forgetfulness of the appropriation as primal category of *nomos*. Indeed, a single person is simply incapable of appropriation, as no one will ever have enough strength to defend all by themselves their propriety from the constant aggression of the others.

In Schmitt's view society and history imply the activities of taking, dividing, and producing, for these are the basic activities of man. From the strictly historical perspective, “the most important period was the transition from the nomadic age to the fixed household: the *oikos*. This transition presupposed a land-appropriation which, by its finality, distinguished itself from the perennially provisional appropriations and divisions of the nomads. Land-appropriation is a presupposition of land-division, which determines the broader stable order.”<sup>13</sup> The social stability stems from the *nomos* as distribution, but the regularity and legitimacy of distribution presupposes the original land-taking.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. D. Baumgold, “When Hobbes needed history,” in G. A. J. Rogers, T. Sorell (eds.), *Hobbes and History* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 25-43.

<sup>13</sup> C. Schmitt, “*Nomos* – *Nahme* – *Name*,” in *The Nomos of the Earth*, 341.

The ordered society, equipped with laws guaranteeing the stability and predictability of behaviors, starts to exist in virtue of taking, and the positive laws should not be written and the economy should not be regulated or deregulated as if the appropriation never took place and is not yet taking place.

On the other hand, Hobbes understands the law as redistribution. The law is grounded in the sovereign power, as well as is the production. Law and economy depend on peaceful social order the politics assures. Before exiting the state of nature, namely before founding the civil society, men have no laws and spend their lives fighting for the bare life and for the accumulation of power, which protects against all evil. In the state of nature everyone takes unconditionally whatever is within their reach: everyone is law for themselves, and “where there is no commonwealth, there is a perpetual war of every man against his neighbour; and therefore everything is his that getteth it, and keepeth it by force; which is neither propriety, nor community, but uncertainty.”<sup>14</sup>

If we consider Hobbes’ model from Schmitt’s perspective, we observe that the violent disorder of the state of nature (*bellum omnia contra omnes*) is due to the necessity of appropriation everyone has in order to safeguard the life and increase the power. This individual appropriation brings to chaotic fragmentation of the land and to the powerlessness of every natural individual power. The powerlessness is the outcome of the state of mutual and permanent war, which in turn derives from the universal tendency to taking. This pre-political state of war is rooted in the absence of the political power. According to Hobbes, we could enter the society without relying on the sovereign power, if we all mutually stopped taking and struggling against each other. Yet, not all men understand that taking results in war, misery, and fear. The most people are unable to *restrain* themselves from chasing after more and more power. Consequently, men need an artificial means – sovereign power – which will transpose them into the state of peace and make the taking impossible. Being naturally incapable of self-government, men have to be ruled by a non-natural external power. The birth of sovereignty means the end of appropriation within a given territory.

The passage from state of nature to civil society, from disorder to stable order, involves the redistribution and the new appropriation of the appropriation power itself. In the state of nature all men have the equally distributed natural right and almost equal power to take whatever they suppose necessary to the increase of safety and well-being. But, anything one takes does not belong to them with certainty, because all the others have the force to take it back. The propriety, the outcome of appropriation, is not such before the common power of the sovereign certifies it through laws and assures it through its own irresistible force against the will to appropriation of all individuals. The ownership is the first result of the sovereignty. The land has to become firstly a territory controlled by a sovereign: the territory is the un-fragmented land that cannot become object of any further appropriation. The positive laws and economy are the fruit of the end of war. For this reason Hobbes argues that *nomos* comes after the politics both chronologically and substantially. The law presupposes the political activity which puts an end to war over by establishing a territory of peace governed by the sovereign. Moreover, the identity between

<sup>14</sup> T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. J. Gaskin, 2nd ed (Oxford, New York: OUP, 1998), XXIV, 5.

state of nature and violent appropriation is what justifies the rise of the sovereign power.<sup>15</sup> As a matter of fact, Hobbes discusses the division of the land only after having affirmed that commonwealth introduces the propriety:

All private estates of land proceed originally from the arbitrary distribution of the sovereign. In this distribution, the first law, is for the division of the land itself: wherein the sovereign assigneth to every man a portion, according as he, and not according as any subject, or any number of them, shall judge agreeable to equity, and the common good.<sup>16</sup>

For Hobbes, as well, the first division concerns the land. But in order that the sovereign power exert the distribution, the land must already belong to it. The sovereign power takes possession of the land the very moment it is being built. By this land-appropriation the sovereign turns the land into the sovereign territory. Therefore, the moment of exiting the state of nature coincides with the sovereign's land-appropriation. Without taking all of the land, the sovereign power would be deprived of its material and juridical basis. At the beginning of the sovereignty there is an act of appropriation and by this act the natural appropriation power is redistributed: the appropriation, that in the state of nature everyone has the right and the power to exercise, now can be performed only by the sovereign. Consequently, what is common to a human group is not the land, as Schmitt argues, which is on the contrary the object of dispute and war, but the political power, which humanizes the land by turning it into the territory to be redistributed among the citizens and on which the production can be undertaken. The sovereign takes all of the land because he took, or he was given by all men, all the natural power of every single individual. Only when men are reduced to powerlessness, they stop taking.

At the beginning of the positive law and of the society, there is the *nomos* as appropriation, which Hobbes calls *pact*. This appropriation is at one with everybody's renunciation of appropriation. Men gave their appropriation power to the sovereign and in virtue of this redistribution they gave life to the commonwealth. Only the appropriation the sovereign power exerts produces the certainty of the social order and upon it positive laws can be promulgated. The sovereign power is thus the beginning and principle of the *nomos* as redistribution, whose main feature is the stability over time. The end of appropriation coincides with the finally achieved social peace.

The fact that it is so is confirmed by the following Hobbes' observation: even after it was redistributed by the sovereign, the land still remains at his disposal. "The propriety which a subject hath in his lands, consisteth in a right to exclude all other subjects from the use of them; and not the sovereign, be it an assembly, or a monarch. For seeing the sovereign, that is to say, the commonwealth (whose person he representeth) is understood to do nothing but in order to the common peace and security, this distribution of lands,

<sup>15</sup> See G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Il potere sovrano e la nuda vita* (Torino: Einaudi, 1994), 41.

<sup>16</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXIV, 6.

is to be understood as done in order to the same.”<sup>17</sup> If someone commits a crime on his private property, the sovereign has the right to sequester it.

## 6

Both according to Schmitt and Hobbes the *nomos* is contemporary to all associated life. The main difference between the great teacher of sovereignty and the disappointed scholar of *Jus Publicum Europaeum* lies in the principle of the associated living. Hobbes’ theory states that society is brought into existence by the sovereign power, by the political art, that is to say, in virtue of the mutual renunciation of the natural appropriation power and of its redistribution. From his perspective, thus, the politics marks the passage from nature to history, and the *nomos* is but a purely artificial political means. Schmitt’s argument, on the contrary, implicitly states that social life, stemming from the categories of *nomos*, is original and that *nomos* is not artificial. Indeed, upon the appropriation, which is not necessarily a politically organized activity in the modern sense of the term (it does not presuppose the city or the state), the politics of redistribution and production are based, and so is the subsequent problem of justice and equity. Therefore, we cannot overcome the war, the violence, the natural tendency to taking. This assumption agrees with Schmitt’s anthropology according to which man as sinner has the war within.<sup>18</sup>

Thomas Hobbes did not teach in vain, but his conception of the political power able to safeguard the peace is outdated. After the World War I the *Jus Publicum Europaeum* paradigm, which regulated the appropriation activity of States, was definitively torn apart, and politics turned to the redistribution and production of *bios*.<sup>19</sup> When the appropriation was declared illegal, the sovereign power was shaken at its basis and the sovereignty itself entered into final crisis. Meanwhile the States kept regulating the redistribution and the production. The groundlessness of sovereign States produced the separation of the political power from the earthly reality of man. The traditional, telluric power of the sovereign turned into a nonhuman, biopolitical techno-power deprived of its original ground.

The consequences of such a situation are dramatic. When States cannot legally justify the appropriation of the land belonging to another State, the demarcation line between friends and enemies cannot be drawn anymore in juridical terms and nobody can be declared as enemy. So the politics cannot deal with the war against the enemy, but is compelled to act only in the view of the peace.<sup>20</sup> The disappearance of appropriation entails the universal friendship between political powers, which according to Schmitt is unrealizable and dangerous. Its riskiness lies in the fact that impossibility of individuation of the enemy on juridical basis makes it necessary to turn him into a criminal. We shall never stop appropriating, but when ordering the society as if we had already overcome the appropriation, in order to justify the appropriation we will have to declare the other

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. C. Schmitt, *Political Theology II: The Myth of the Closure of any Political Theology*, trans. M. Hoelzl, G. Ward (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 122.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. G. Agamben, “The Work of Man,” trans. K. Attell in: M. Calcaro, S. DeCaroli (eds.), *Giorgio Agamben: Sovereignty and Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 1-10.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. R. Koselleck, “Feindbegriffe,” in: *Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung: Jahrbuch* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1993), 83-90.

a criminal, since only the criminal can be fought without making war. We will not expose him to the war and to the treatment the enemy receives, but to the total extirpation the criminal deserves. When the *nomos* as appropriation does not regulate the relationships between States, the enemy is dehumanized and has to be eliminated in virtue of his ontology. The enemy becomes an *animal sacer*. Moreover, since only the peace can justify the war, the latter now assumes different names: peace-keeping, exportation of democracy, operation against the criminals, terrorists, non-humans. Paradoxically, if there is no “nomic” power that can *restrain* the war against non-humans, every peace-keeping turns into the total war whose aim is the complete annihilation of the other. And when there is no *nomos* to guarantee the humanity of the other, potentially everyone can be turned into the other, into the criminal, in virtue of their race, name, religion, “sexual orientation.”

Schmitt's investigation into the original meaning of *nomos* intends to remind us that the unified earth still needs a human power capable to rule nomothetically the transcendent techno-power of redistribution and production.<sup>21</sup> The science of *nomos* should be anterior with respect to the political science. Just as it happened during the *Jus Publicum Europaeum* times, the *nomos* should be organized and theorized by jurists and not by politicians and social or religious thinkers. Indeed, as man is still a telluric animal, a nondestructive politics has to be grounded in the *nomos* regulating the land-appropriation. Otherwise, the appropriation activity, that man cannot abandon for it pertains to his very nature, turns into disordered criminalization of the other and brings to nihilistic warlike police activity. We need to regulate our nature instead of letting it free to rage because we are persuaded that progress shall remove all of its violence. At the present age the political power, which in this feature is identical to Hobbes' individual, is unable of self-government. Today the original political relation of enmity actualizes the total manifestation of violence because it is not framed within the juridical regulation of appropriation. With respect to the techno-power of the modern States, the *nomos* is the *katechon* preventing them from exerting total domination over men and fighting against each other until the ultimate destruction. The *nomos* is what allows to individuate an enemy and, by doing so, to respect his humanity right when fighting him. Not the violence of appropriation in itself is the evil, it is rather the lack of its control. Every social theory that assumes that man can stop taking in virtue of the economic growth or the just redistribution presupposes that man is a potential god in the new paradise,<sup>22</sup> and not the actual sinner acting in the earthly reality penetrated by the evil. Who thinks too “optimistically” cooperates in the manifestation of the radical evil, which now has at its disposal a power that has never been so transcendent with respect to man. The Antichrist will seize the earth when men would have realized the false “peace and safety” (1 Thess, 5, 3) which coincides with the annihilation of man's necessarily violent nature. Who wants man to become an angel is not his friend but acts on behalf of the fallen angel. A non-violent man, the one who does not need the *nomos*, is not the lamb, but the man of lawlessness, who “will oppose and will exalt himself over

<sup>21</sup> Cf. C. Schmitt, *Gespräch über die Macht und den Zugang zum Machthaber*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2012).

<sup>22</sup> C. Schmitt, *Ex captivitate salus: Esperienze degli anni 1945-1947*, trans. C. Mainoldi (Milan: Adelphi, 2005), 87.

everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God... He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie." (2 Thess, 2, 4-9). Is there a wonder greater than the end of appropriation, violence, criminality, and war? Is there a lie greater than the one stating that man does not live in sin, *in peccato existens*?<sup>23</sup> Schmitt's conception of *nomos* is coherent with his religious orientation and represents a historical and pragmatic response of a jurist to the dogma of the original sin.

## 7

The land-appropriation is not just the beginning of the law, but is the beginning of civilization as well. On it the development of technologies, economy, politics, and the rising of the very thinking ability depend. One last consequence can be drawn from the primacy of *nomos* with respect to politics. If *nomos* as appropriation is what makes the political activity of redistribution and of regulation of production possible and, at the same time, puts limits to the political power, Schmitt's essay represents a reassessment of his central theoretical thesis and of his biography: the eminence of the jurist in comparison to the politician, of the power of the *nomos* in comparison to the power of the Führer. Schmitt did not think of himself as of the Führer's jurist. Instead, he thought that Führer is Schmitt's politician. Twenty years after having embraced the totalitarianism as the way leading out of the crisis of *Jus Publicum Europaeum*, Schmitt became perfectly aware that from historical perspective he is a defeated thinker. In front of the new technopower jurists are reduced to silence and cannot perform the role of *restrainers*. Just as Epimethius, Schmitt understood it when it was already too late and he himself had been accused of being a criminal, namely a nonhuman enemy of the friends of the mankind and of universal peace and safety.

<sup>23</sup> T. Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis*, lib. 2, Dist. 28, q. 1, a. 2.

# IDEOLOGY OF HUMAN RIGHTS: THE KEY STAGES IN ITS DEVELOPMENT

The concept of human rights is based on natural law theory which was formed in the Modern Age. On the basis of this theory there came about the individualization of natural law as compared to the natural law theory of Antiquity and the Middle Ages. It can be assumed that formation of this concept is associated with the emergence of a new political anthropology. Its prerequisites are individualistic ideas of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Renaissance introduced the concept of human dignity, as well as of the unique individuality, realized in earthly activities. An important role here belongs to the transformation that took place in the theology of the Reformation. Universalism of Christianity was moved into the plane of personal relationship with God. Justification by faith, the absence of higher church authority, individual hope of salvation, the development of the concept of conscience – all these notions are well known, but most of the time their analysis stops at the theological level. It could even be argued that it is the Reformation that has established the premises for the modern doctrine of human rights. Within the context of the battle which the representatives of the early Protestantism waged against Catholicism, the concept of freedom of conscience was developed, and according to Erich Solovyov, this concept was the “primary origin and prerequisite of the whole spectrum of human rights.”<sup>1</sup>

Freedom of conscience was connected not with the medieval estates and corporate divisions, but concerned (in theory) all people coming to God. It substantiates the possibility of disobedience to authority for reasons of conscience, and the failure of the authorities to impose their will on people in religious matters. Later reformers defended freedom of preaching, press and assembly. The Reformation theology provides support to such fundamental rights as the right to life, which is understood as a divine commandment, the right to vocation, as well as the right to property, considered to be an order and duty (Zwingli, Melanchthon, Calvin’s early works). At the same time, human rights acquire a sacred status, while power (Papal, State) is on the contrary desacralized. The era of religious wars which were the result of the Reformation, led to the gradual detheologization of fundamental rights and their jurisdiction. The balance, which emerged after the Peace

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<sup>1</sup> Э. Ю. Соловьев, *Права человека: истоки, происхождение и смысл* [Human Rights: The Origins, Rise, and Meaning] (Москва: Издательство Университета Российской Академии Образования, 2001), 5.

of Westphalia, between religions and between the newly-formed national states, required a certain tolerance towards representatives of different confession.

Hugo Grotius, a Dutch lawyer and philosopher, was one of the first in the early XVII century to formulate the doctrine of natural law. Natural law is defined by him as “common prescription of reason,” “right in the proper sense,” it is “to provide others with what they already possess.” This doctrine was based on “the aspiration to calm communication directed by reason.”<sup>2</sup> The formation of the modern doctrine of human rights has also been influenced by the turbulent events of the English Revolution, which was seen in apocalyptic tones. Each of the religious movements involved in these events, offered its own version of the cessation of the “war of all against all.” Independents’ “remonstrances” represented the first prototypes of the future Declaration of Human Rights. The issue of freedom of conscience was of primary importance here as well. In the future, these ideas were transferred to American soil and resulted in the “Declaration of Independence.”

Another important source of this document may be found in concepts of natural and legal established by Locke. Locke’s philosophy of law is the link between the ideas of the Reformation and the Enlightenment. Locke introduces the concept of “natural individual” who is “master of himself.” The mind is capable of becoming a measure in the relationship between people. Individual freedom becomes Locke’s fundamental concept, which is no longer treated as subjective arbitrariness. Natural law contains a certain measure, a peculiar system of standards and freedom is treated not as radically as in Hobbes. A natural state of freedom is characterized by equality. Freedom, according to Locke, is possible only if a person is “proprietor of his own person (II, §44).”<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the key rights for Locke are the rights to life, liberty and property. Above the right to life, a particular teleology is superimposed by Locke, a ban on the use of others as means of achieving one’s goals. Right to life in Locke practically takes a form of duty: everyone is “bound to preserve himself, and not to quit his station wilfully (II, §6).”<sup>4</sup> The concept of ownership is closely related to the right to life. God gave man not only life, but put the world at his disposal so that he could make the best use of his life. A common property of all people is thus formed. Private property for Locke acts as an attribute of the human person, as its continuation: “every man has a property in his own person: this nobody has any right to but himself (II, §27).”<sup>5</sup> The toil of man’s body and the work of his hands belong to him by their nature, thus producing private property. Right to life in Locke is associated with the freedom of occupation, fishing and labour. The mind is regarded as the ability to communicate; the mind is able to bring people to peace. Locke also introduced the concept of religious tolerance, which combines the freedom of belief, thought and speech. It implies a fundamental rejection of state intervention in the spiritual life of its citizens. The political condition in his theory grows out of the natural one, securing basic human rights.

<sup>2</sup> В. С. Нерсесянц (ред.), *История политических и правовых учений* [History of Political and Legal Studies] (Москва: Норма, 2004), 299, 300.

<sup>3</sup> J. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. I. Shapiro (New Haven and London : Yale UP, 2003), 119.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 271 (102).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 287 (111).

Legal enforcement of rights occurred in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the American “Declaration of Independence” and in the Declarations of the era of the French Revolution. In the American “Declaration” it was stated that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with rights to life, liberty and the “pursuit of happiness.” In France, human rights have come a long way from the works of philosophers to the legal documents. The political philosophy of Locke identified the development of the concept of human rights in the Age of Enlightenment. Locke’s ideas were represented in the renowned *Encyclopaedia, or a Systematic Dictionary of the Sciences, arts and Crafts*. Natural law of Enlightenment activists contrasted with positivistic law of absolute monarchy. There appeared a new legal formula that we have become accustomed to: the law is equal for all, everything that is not forbidden is allowed, the presumption of innocence. Natural and legal ideas of the Enlightenment were embodied in the “Declaration of the Rights and Freedoms of Man and Citizen,” which succeeded each other with the radicalization of the revolution. Declarations came after the North American documents. Here the influence of the American experience is noticeable.

The most famous of those documents is that of 1789. It was compiled as a program of revolution and claimed to be universal. As regards to philosophy, the authors mostly relied on the works of encyclopaedists. Freedom, “sacred right” of private property, resistance to oppression were secured there. By the notion of freedom the declaration implied the right to do anything that does not harm others. An important fact was the delineation of the rights and freedoms inherent in nature and the rights of the citizen, obtained from the state by virtue of belonging to it. The abolition of classes was proclaimed, equality before the law, “common benefit” were secured. The Jacobin Declaration, as well as the American Declaration of Independence, recognized the right to “general happiness.” Legal equality was proclaimed in its entirety, and the right of private property was recognized. During the revolution contradictions between the individual and collective rights were taking shape. Thus the Le Chapelier Law of 1791 banned “assemblies of workers and artisans of the same profession” under the pretext of protection of individual rights. Revolutionaries were not in a hurry to enact the Declaration in full, deferring that moment until the victory of the revolution. During the Jacobin dictatorship enemies of the revolutionary government were declared “enemies of the people” and human rights, of course, did not apply to them.

During the Enlightenment and the French Revolution the doctrine of human rights was formed as a certain unity of standards, based on a series of metaphysical foundations implicitly present. These foundations can be summarized as follows:

the unity of the human race, which has an ethical value, the existence of human personality, independent of the specific features of each individual, the concept of human nature, giving rise to natural law, the priority of the individual over the social orders, cultures, peoples, nations. The unity of the human race affirms the equivalence, equal importance of each individual.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> A. Benoist, *Beyond Human Rights* (London : Arktos, 2011).

One can distinguish between the European and the American understanding of human rights. The source of the European law is the European Enlightenment and the practice of the French Revolution. Accordingly, this revolutionary principle continued to be present in European law. The European tradition of human rights was to a large extent associated with national states and contributed to the formation of national consciousness, while the American tradition was more cosmopolitan, there was further formalization of human rights. Gradually there appeared various courts responsible for the protection of human rights.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century human rights grow somewhat out of fashion with the development of historicist notions relativizing human nature (Hegel, Marx, Dilthey). The idea of historical time undermines the abstract concept of timeless natural state. The renaissance of human rights came after the Second World War, along with the revival of the doctrine of natural law – the shock caused by the Nazi war crimes played its part in the revival. Preparations for the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights started. As part of this preparation a survey of various moral authorities was conducted. It turned out that it is impossible to come to an agreement not only on the establishment of human rights, but also on the list of those rights.<sup>7</sup> Yet, the Declaration, including the thirty fundamental rights, was adopted. The document was advisory in its nature and was subsequently given concrete expression in a large number of legal conventions. Human rights became then the criterion for distinguishing between good and evil in the world politics. As a matter of fact, in the post-war period, human rights were used to criticize the socialist system. Recognition of human rights and commitment to them served now as a criterion for accepting countries into the world community. Today, human rights are used as a justification for humanitarian intervention and violation of the sovereignty of a given state, since they question the national justice system and introduce the “right to protect” individual freedom anywhere in the world. Today, human rights have become the very ideology of the present, “the ideology of cosmopolitanism.”<sup>8</sup> Human rights are the components of a new cosmopolitan world order, and transnational justice can theoretically fasten individuals together into the global human community. In the recent years protection of the right to life has become the first priority. For the sake of security, rights and freedoms which previously seemed immutable are being restricted.

Thus the rights to privacy, confidentiality of correspondence, the right to secrecy of individuals and their families, are now rendered practically obsolete; freedom of movement is threatened and the right to life is still not guaranteed. The humanism of the doctrine of Human Rights, after a terrorist attack, turns in free France into a new search for the “enemies of the people” and the democracy. The fight against terrorism “implies a right of unlimited pursuit which, in authorising the pursuer to cross borders, enables him at the same time to affirm his hegemony over the world.”<sup>9</sup> Paradoxically, it only reinforces the ideology, the foundation of which is a peculiar faith in the abstract man and his rights.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>8</sup> U. Beck, *Cosmopolitan vision* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> A. Benoist, *Carl Schmitt Today: Terrorism, Just War, and the State of Emergency* (London: Arktos, 2013), 55.

# TOLERANCE IN THE LIGHT OF PHILOSOPHY OF KANT AND MENDELSSOHN

The problem of coexistence and cooperation of the church and state might be ranged among the eternal problems which engrossed the greatest minds of all times and peoples. Power of the sacred and power of the secular as the two poles of society life alternatively drew nearer or further apart in the course of human history. At times, one or the other would be granted an imperial status, while at other times the spheres of influence would be simply divided between the two. The latter is the current situation in most of the European countries, and Russia is no exception in this context. But in contrast to many other European states, Russia is urged not only to determine the general cooperation principles of both powers, but also to find possibilities to apply them to the specific historical situation of its originally heterogeneous multireligious population. True, in case of many other European countries the current situation also appears to be decidedly more complicated than at the end of the last century, above all because of the steady influx of labour immigration and refugee flow from the Near East regions. This forced many European countries, originally homogenous in religious and ethnical aspect, to seek for a way to reconcile different nationalities, cultures and churches, making their coexistence in peace and order possible. Therefore today one of the most important questions is how this may be accomplished. And here it would not be out of place to turn to the historical heritage and to analyse various attempts to find the solution to such questions in similar historical conditions. An epoch which can be considered relevant in this regard is the German Enlightenment.

The middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Germany may be characterized as the unique moment, caused by the coexistence of different Christian confessions and denominations and a significant population of Jews within a single state. This has led the greatest thinkers of the German Enlightenment to reflect upon the questions of religious policy in their works and to discuss the conditions which would allow the adherents of different religions to coexist in harmony within one state. The coming to power of Frederick II marked by liberalism extreme for those times in respect of interior policy, allowed the German thinkers to speak their minds freely on the issue of relations to be formed not only between different religions, but also with the state in order not to disrupt, but rather to consolidate peace in the society.

Kant undertook this direction of research when he proposed his project of “religion of pure reason,” which would be common for all the peoples and the spreading of which would eliminate religious strife in the state for ever. But recollecting Kant’s project we frequently forget that this thinker was not the only one to address this question. Other great minds of that time also contemplated this problem and their research could both help to restore historical and philosophical justice by illustrating the intellectual atmosphere of the German Enlightenment in more detail, and to contribute significantly to the advancement of Kant studies, bringing to light the issues which could have substantially influenced the way some fundamental concepts of Kant’s philosophy were formed and developed. And when we approach the issue of how Kant’s views on the principles of religion of reason and interaction between churches and state were shaped, it is the project of Moses Mendelssohn that presents the greatest interest, concurring with many aspects of Kant’s project. And yet, Mendelssohn’s treatise had been written earlier, and we may therefore suppose that it influenced Kant’s views in this regard.

### **TOLERANCE IN THE WRITINGS OF IMMANUEL KANT**

The issue of interaction between different religions and the state was one of the most important questions for Kant. Its discussions can be found both in Kant’s printed works and the notes to his lectures. We may refer to an example from the notes of Kant’s lectures on rational theology. These lectures are usually attributed to the period of the winter semester 1783/84.<sup>1</sup> But a fragment concerning the relationship between religions and the state seems to be written a little later – conceivably in the winter semester 1785/86<sup>2</sup> – as a later supplement to a large section of notes written earlier.<sup>3</sup> Both the body of these notes and the supplement seem to belong to the same author – Christoph Coelestin Mrongovius (1764-1855),<sup>4</sup> who matriculated at the University of Königsberg on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 1782.<sup>5</sup>

The notes on rational theology cannot be said to contain much about the principles of cooperation between the church and state. But at the same time they construct the central idea, which will run through all the printed works of Kant, namely that the state should not interfere in theological and religious disputes as long as they cause no mischief to the society as a whole. However, religious strife usually proves destructive for peace in the country and therefore the government must help to eliminate it. It takes place because religions are dealing with the most essential issues for all people, such as salvation and eternal life. Such issues leave no one cold. And ordinary reason is usually disposed

<sup>1</sup> G. Lehmann, *Einleitung* in: *Kant’s Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaft, 1970), bd. XXVIII, 1363; L. Kreimendahl, “Kants Kolleg über Rationaltheologie. Fragmente einer bislang unbekannteren Vorlesungsnachschrift,” *Kant-Studien* 79.3 (1988), 327; C. Esposito, “Introduzione” in: I. Kant, *Lezioni di filosofia della religione* (Napoli: Guida, 1988), 30.

<sup>2</sup> E. Adickes, *Untersuchungen zu Kants physischer Geographie* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1911), 41; Kreimendahl, “Kants Kolleg über Rationaltheologie,” 319.

<sup>3</sup> K. Beyer, “Vorwort” *Kants Vorlesungen über die philosophische Religionslehre*, ed. K. Beyer (Halle: Carl Friedrich Franz, 1937), XII.

<sup>4</sup> T. Kupś, “Die erste Ausgabe der Vorlesungen von Immanuel Kant über Religion und Moral” in: I. Kant, *Rozprawa filozoficzna o religii i moralności*, trans. K.C. Mrongowiusz (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2006), 33.

<sup>5</sup> “Natural Theology Notes” in: *Kant in the Classroom: Materials to Aid the Study of Kant’s Lectures*, available at Manchester University website, last modified 6 May 2005.

to recognize them as more important than all other questions dealing with the matters of mortal life. But Kant also says that confusion and conflation of ideas in theological discussions are natural and are explained by the fact that public takes only the first few steps on the way to liberation from despotism and oppression of orthodoxy, and thus becomes intoxicated with freedom which causes quite a number of abuses. The important role in prevention and elimination of such excesses must be played by the government: “Even if states did not interfere in anything, they interfered in religious disputes, because sectarianism being concerned with passion often can bear a negative influence on the state.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, this quite small fragment of Kant’s lectures notes also raises a question about the possibility and even necessity of state supervision of religious life.

More attention is devoted to this issue in Kant’s article “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” (1784). Here the issue is discussed from another point of view that helps us better understand a number of aspects which were not defined clearly enough in the fragment of the rational theology notes. However, Kant comes to an unambiguous conclusion both in the article and in the lectures notes that salvation is not the business of a monarch and therefore a monarch should leave his subjects to do whatever they find necessary for their salvation and should not intrude into the discussions of such matters. On the contrary, he must observe that no one is “forcibly hindering others from working to the best of their ability to determine and promote their salvation.”<sup>7</sup> But all this is effective only until these actual or imaginary perfections of the religious and state systems do not cause a disruption in the civil order. When the latter happens, a monarch has the right and is obligated to interfere in the dispute and to settle it in order to retain the possibility of peaceful coexistence of all society members. But in contrast to the fragment of the lectures notes, the article deals with the way this common rule could be translated into reality or, in other words, with setting the limits which must not be overstepped by the church leaders, theologians and priests while they exercise their liberty of opinion on religious and theological matters.

The issue of the limits of the freedom of conscience and boundaries to manifestation of one’s views is solved by Kant quite simply through the introduction of a differentiation between public and private use of reason. The public use of reason is “that use which someone makes of it *as a scholar* before the entire public of the *world of readers*” and the private use of reason “is that which one may make of it in a certain *civil* post or office with which he is entrusted.”<sup>8</sup> Consequently, Kant gives the following prescription for the true enlightenment: “The public use of man’s reason must always be free, and it alone can bring about enlightenment among men; the private use of reason may quite often be very narrowly restricted, however, without undue hindrance to the progress of enlightenment.”<sup>9</sup> It means that the priest as far as he acts as a pastor of a church community is obliged to preach to people the truths of faith accepted by their church, even in relations to the

<sup>6</sup> *Kants Vorlesungen*, 207.

<sup>7</sup> I. Kant, “Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung? [An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?]” in: *Practical Philosophy*, ed. M. J. Gregor (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), 20.

<sup>8</sup> Kant, “Beantwortung der Frage,” 18.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

aspects “he would not himself subscribe with full conviction.”<sup>10</sup> But as a scholar, that is, in his published works, he must be able to express his own opinion about possible reforms and improvements of the church structure absolutely freely, and to hope that his suggestions will be favourably accepted by the reading public which may further result in their actual implementation. But until these suggestions are not accepted by his church, he must preach to his congregation the truths which are taught by the church he belongs to, thus executing his priestly duty. The only limitation in this aspect is that these truths must not contradict one’s “inner religion” because as Kant writes, “if he believed he had found the latter in them [contradiction], he could not in conscience hold his office; he would have to resign from it.”<sup>11</sup>

One more significant aspect in which our world has yet a long way to go to reach the ideal of the enlightened society, so that it may be justly said that we do not as yet live in an enlightened age but in an age of enlightenment,<sup>12</sup> is stipulated by an answer to the question of whether any community (for example a community of theologians or clergymen) has a right to declare the inviolability of the church dogma. Kant replies that this is quite impossible:

One age cannot bind itself and conspire to put the following one into such a condition that it would be impossible for it to enlarge its cognitions (especially in such urgent matters) and to purify them of errors, and generally to make further progress in enlightenment. This would be a crime against human nature, whose original vocation lies precisely in such progress.<sup>13</sup>

If this occurs, each age is entitled to dismiss false dogmas as unauthorized and unlawful.

Thus, Kant sees two things as important in a quest for a solution to the problem of freedom of conscience, namely: church prescriptions must not disturb civil order and must not contradict the inner religion that is the religion of reason. In the context of the first task, the greatest role is played by the enlightened government or enlightened monarch who can use his power to resolve the conflicts in points of controversy for the benefit of society as a whole. In terms of the second task, the only agent that can ultimately help the society is the society itself, through its gradual progress to enlightenment, directing its forces and faculties to escape the bondage of archaic or even false dogmas and superstitions and to avoid the captivity of the new ones, just as unwholesome as the old. This is a complex process which may be realized by society on its own; however, this may not be done by force. It cannot be done in a revolutionary way, but only through reforms and gradual transformations. There are many dangers on this road to reason as yet unexperienced, and the quest requires great foresight and caution. This is why Kant allots so much attention in his later work *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* to the question of the nature of the religion of reason or moral religion.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

The religion of reason is the genuine religion. It is based on true worship of God which is manifested through observance of the moral law ordained by God. All other religions (that is, historical religions founded on revelation) are false religions. They consist in meaningless observance of rituals and ceremonies, fasting, pilgrimages, etc. All this is absolutely irrelevant to God as the Highest Perfection. And people delude themselves if they believe that all these actions could please God. All these things manifest the weakness of human nature<sup>14</sup> and they will eventually pass into history as useless remnants of the process of development of mankind. Serving God must become free, that is, purely moral.<sup>15</sup> However, such historical religions are not only permissible in contemporary stage of mankind's development, but may also be useful as long as they do not clash with moral religion which is always inner and which represents the ultimate goal of progress, while old religions may be considered only as a means of achieving it.

There are many dangers for human reason on this path. What they are and how they can be avoided are among the main subjects of Kant's later work *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. But foundations which make it possible to proceed to such a comprehensive consideration of religion and of its various genuine and false forms within Kant's system of practical philosophy may be already found in the first *Critique*. And these are postulates of practical reason (postulates of freedom, immortality of soul and existence of God) essential in the nature of human reason which serve as a foundation for any religion.

There is also no doubt that such critical views of Kant on any historical religion could not pass unobserved and had to face the fire of criticism from the church leaders. That caused Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* to be included among the books banned by the Catholic Church as heretical and anti-clerical (the so-called *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*). In fact, this meant a complete ban of Kant's writings which was not removed till 1967.<sup>16</sup> Kant's viewpoint was nevertheless not unique, because the idea of inner, fundamentally moral religion was not of his invention. Thus, may this represent an instance of another myth about Kant's genius in relation to a sphere in which, in fact, Kant has not come up with anything new and original? And if Kant's position in respect to these matters has an analogue in the writings of other thinkers, can we treat this as a mere coincidence of views formed independently from each other, or should we postulate a direct or indirect influence?

In order to answer these questions, it is useful to explore the views of Moses Mendelssohn (1729 – 1786), one of the German Enlightening thinkers of note and Kant's contemporary. His work *Jerusalem, or on Religious Power and Judaism* (1783) was well-known to Kant and was highly commended by him. We find a confirmation of this fact in Kant's letter to Mendelssohn of 16<sup>th</sup> August 1783, in which we read the following lines:

<sup>14</sup> I. Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings*, ed. A. Wood and G. di Giovanni (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), 113.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 173-174.

<sup>16</sup> C. Göbel, "Kants Gift. Wie die Kritik der reinen Vernunft auf den Index Librorum Prohibitorum kam" in: *Kant und Katholizismus. Stationen einer wechselhaften Geschichte*, ed. N. Fischer (Freiburg: Herder, 2005), 91-138.

Herr Friedländer will tell you how much I admired the penetration, subtlety, and wisdom of your *Jerusalem*. I regard this book as the proclamation of a great reform that is slowly impending, a reform that is in store not only for your own people but for other nations as well. You have managed to unite with your religion a degree of freedom of conscience that one would hardly have thought possible and of which no other religion can boast. You have at the same time thoroughly and clearly shown it necessary that every religion have unrestricted freedom of conscience, so that finally even the Church will have to consider how to rid itself of everything that burdens and oppresses conscience, and mankind will finally be united with regard to the essential point of religion. For all religious propositions that burden our conscience are based on history, that is, on making salvation contingent on belief in the truth of those historical propositions.<sup>17</sup>

It is remarkable that these words written about Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* may be seen as a kind of summary of Kant's *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, written much later than this work of the German-Jewish philosopher.

### **TOLERANCE PRINCIPLES IN MOSES MENDELSSOHN'S JERUSALEM**

History of writing *Jerusalem, or on Religious Power and Judaism* is quite interesting. This work first appeared in print in 1783 and consisted of two unequal parts. The first part concerned Mendelssohn's main considerations about principles of coexistence and cooperation of different religions with each other and with the state. The second part represented unorthodox interpretation of Judaism with the help of which Mendelssohn tried to show how the faith of his heritage could be brought in accordance with the views advanced by him about the ideal church structure. The second part was not fully autonomous, as it was written in response to a number of objections against Mendelssohn, accusing him either of inconsistency of argumentation or apostasy from the faith of his ancestry. In a contrasting rejoinder, Mendelssohn tried to convince his reader that Judaism is the religion which in the lesser degree than all other religions consists of revelation truths that cannot be grasped by human reason, and therefore it is to the greatest extent suitable for the role of the religion of reason. It should be added that this work fits within the context of the Enlightenment philosophy that saw its main task in the struggle against all kinds of prejudices and delusions. In Mendelssohn's case, it was a fight against numerous anti-Semitic superstitions.

In view of this apologetic nature of *Jerusalem*, it is no wonder that a number of Mendelssohn's statements are aimed at defence and appropriate interpretation of Judaism. This fact entitles many researchers of *Jerusalem* to concentrate on its contradictory conclusions and interpretations of Judaism as a religion most closely corresponding to the religion of reason.<sup>18</sup> And when we accept Mendelssohn's thesis that Judaism is

<sup>17</sup> I. Kant, "Brief an Moses Mendelssohn von 16 August 1783" in: *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin, Leipzig: Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaft, 1922), bd. X, No. 206, 347; I. Kant, "Letter to Moses Mendelssohn, August 16, 1783, No. 53 in: *Correspondence*, ed. A. Zweig (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), 204.

<sup>18</sup> J. Guttman, *Die Philosophie des Judentums* (München: E. Reinhardt, 1933); A. Altmann, "Moses Mendelssohn's Concept of Judaism Reexamined" in: *Von der mittelalterlichen zur modernen Aufklärung*, ed. A. Altmann

composed of truths of reason naturally common for all the mankind on the one hand, and, on the other, truths of revelation which are also necessary for salvation, but were reported exclusively to the Chosen People, we inevitably arrive at the conflict between truth and revelation.<sup>19</sup> True, it must be said in this context that Mendelssohn himself considered a historical component of Judaism (including truths of revelation) only third and the least in its importance, which shows that he gave preference to truths of reason.<sup>20</sup> But even despite this, it can be asserted that *Jerusalem* has a strong apologetic orientation which at times is in discord with the seriousness of pure philosophical consideration<sup>21</sup> or, in Altmann's words, that we clearly see a permanent strain in *Jerusalem* between Mendelssohn the Jew and Mendelssohn the philosopher.<sup>22</sup>

After this brief overview of the history of composition and main research problems of *Jerusalem*, let us now turn to the ideas of Mendelssohn's work which are most essential for the subject of this paper. Just as Kant, Mendelssohn affirms that the state authority must not interfere without necessity in religious disputes, and that it should not support any religion in particular. Instead, the state takes care of establishing and observing the principles which aim at achievement of the common good and maintenance of virtue which are shared by all religions.<sup>23</sup> According to Mendelssohn, such truths include the existence of God, earnest faith in Providence and in life after death without which love for our fellow-men would be nothing more than a congenital weakness.<sup>24</sup> But in contrast to Kant, Mendelssohn separates the domains of the state and church more sharply and more consistently. This separation is based on the distinction between the sphere of actions (*Handlungen*) and the sphere of frames of mind (*Gesinnung*, sometimes translated as 'beliefs'). An action is a merely outward conformity to moral duty, while a frame of mind contains a motivation behind the action. In view of such a distinction, the state must control the sphere of actions, that is, it must take care of the external observance of duty what will create the conditions for peaceful coexistence of all citizens within a single state. The church, however, must also take care of the right motivation for the actions. Both the state and religion have one and the same object, that is, achievement of happiness by all members of society. However, the instrument used by the state is government, while the instrument used by religion is upbringing. The state ensures harmony of acts; religion maintains harmony in the frames of mind.

Yet, according to Mendelssohn, the state also plays an important role in education and formation of the right frame of mind, ensuring that truths common for all religions are introduced in the first place, with their essence of tolerance creating the foundation for the peaceful coexistence of all religions. All other truths, specific to a given faith,

(Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1987), 234–248; A. Arkush, "The Questionable Judaism of Moses Mendelssohn," *New German Critique* 77 (1999), 29–45; D. Sorkin, *Moses Mendelssohn and the Religious Enlightenment* (London: Peter Halban, 1996).

<sup>19</sup> Altmann, "Moses Mendelssohn's Concept," 247.

<sup>20</sup> M. Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem oder über religiöse Macht und Judentum*, ed. M. Albrecht (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 2005), 129–130.

<sup>21</sup> C.-F. Berghahn, *Moses Mendelssohns Jerusalem* (Tübingen: De Gruyter, 2001), 218.

<sup>22</sup> Altmann, "Moses Mendelssohn's Concept," 247–248.

<sup>23</sup> Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem*, 64–65.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

must be imparted subsequently and only if they do not contradict the accepted principles of civil order and peaceful coexistence of all society members. Thus, even the sphere of education is the sphere where the state and church should combine their forces for achievement of the common good. However, actions of the state cannot be limited to the sphere of upbringing, because the right frame of mind cannot be imparted to all human beings to the same extent. That is why in order to establish harmony and civil order the state has to impose fines and penalties. True, such outward measures cannot make a human being happy deep inside. But if the last is unattainable, the object of the state is to make sure of external order and at least to provide safety of each member.<sup>25</sup> This aim is achieved through the law.

On the contrary, it is absolutely useless to establish such an outward law within the church, because religion is predestined to control frames of mind, motivations of actions and this cannot be accomplished through outward instruments and prescriptions. Religion always needs an earnest spirit, it is unthinkable without it. That is why both Mendelssohn and Kant criticize empty rituals, ceremonies, sacrifices, fasts, pledges and so on. God is self-sufficient and does not need all these celebrations and sacrifices. All these actions only ascribe by analogy the characteristics of human relations to God, which is absolutely wrong.<sup>26</sup>

Mendelssohn concludes his *Jerusalem* similarly to Kant, bringing up the issue of oath-taking on the subjects of faith. Mendelssohn's conclusion is less categorical, yet, in essence it asserts the same opinion: oaths on the subjects of faith are meaningless. We can affirm under oath only external things, the authenticity of which can be established through the use of our senses. However, our inner sense remains unknown even to ourselves. Moreover, knowledge about inner things can be expressed only through words and other external signs which require explanations and may be understood diversely in different instances.<sup>27</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Having considered Kant's and Mendelssohn's views on the question of cooperation between the church and state we can highlight many common features in the opinions of both thinkers. First of all, this relates to the clear differentiation between the two spheres – the sphere of actions and the sphere of frames of mind. Mendelssohn erects the entire edifice of his theory of state and church interaction on this foundation: the state controls the sphere of actions and takes part in the upbringing of proper motivations for these actions, whereas church (religion) limits itself only to the sphere of the frames of mind. The concept of a frame of mind also plays a significant role in Kant's practical philosophy. And like Mendelssohn, Kant sees the main purpose of religion in contributing to the formation of a moral frame of mind. Mendelssohn's distinction between the two realms – the sphere of actions and frames of mind – on the whole could be compared to Kant's differentiation between legality and morality.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 67-68.

There is also a resemblance in the way the two kinds of human duties are distinguished – the duties to God and the obligations to others. But while Mendelssohn considers the notion of duties to God to be absurd, and therefore a supposition of a possible conflict between the duties to God and the obligations to others to be doubly absurd, Kant expresses his opinion in a much less categorical manner. Yet, just like Mendelssohn, he states that God as a self-sufficient being cannot be in need of our services and celebrations, or any other kinds of outward religious ceremonies.

It is also important to remark that both Kant and Mendelssohn specify the truths that should be considered as a basis for the inner religion or the religion of reason. For Kant and for Mendelssohn, such truth is the faith in the existence of God and immortality of soul. Here the main difference should be noted between the discussions of tolerance in the epoch of Enlightenment and the analogous discussions of our times. Namely, the thinkers of Enlightenment exclude atheists from their examination, however detailed, of the principles of cooperation between different religions and the regulative role of the state in this process. It was taken for granted that faith in the existence of God and immortality of soul were absolutely necessary for the harmonic existence of society as a whole and for the accomplishment of the life's purpose by each human being.

Such a strong resemblance between the views of both German thinkers cannot but indicate possible influence of one upon another and, since Mendelssohn's writings preceded Kant's work on the subject, it may be supposed that Kant was indeed influenced by Mendelssohn. But it would be absurd to affirm that Kant's position was formed only under the influence of Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* and that without it there would have been a "different" Kant. Although the clear terminological distinction between legality and morality appears in Kant's printed works only in *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* (1785), this terminological combination is already present in Kant's moral philosophy notes of the 70s-80s of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, though expressed with less lucidity. On the other hand, although the concept of *Gesinnung* may be found already in Kant's early works and later regularly appears in Kant's critical works on practical philosophy, it becomes truly comprehensive only in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. However, many key points of Kant's later works reiterate the views expressed by him earlier, especially in the moral philosophy notes. Thus, in my opinion, although it would be incorrect to speak about the immediate influence upon the forming of Kant's ethical and religious opinions, it is quite possible that Mendelssohn's position and its terminological form influenced at least the direction in which Kant's views continued to develop and the form in which they were finally expressed.

# PHILOSOPHICAL NATIONALITY AND THINKING IN LANGUAGE

The problem of substantiating the *national* in its relation to the *universal* has long been a staple of philosophical discourses, especially prominent when one limits its scope to the post-contemporary reflection, which engages these terms in their today's, familiar meaning. Thus, a disclaimer is due: in what follows I will not touch upon questions pertaining to the notion of "national philosophy" and even less so to the philosophical studies of *nationality* and *nation* as such. Rather, I shall examine the idea of "philosophical nationality" that functions as a flip side of sorts of both the theoretical explorations and the *doxic* use of the aforementioned concepts.

Jacques Derrida articulated the notion of "philosophical nationality" in the paper "Nationalité et nationalisme philosophique" ["Philosophical Nationalism and Nationality"] that he delivered in Moscow in 1990.<sup>1</sup> Derrida redressed and renamed the famed dichotomy of "the national" versus "the universal." Essentially, argued Derrida, *the national* cannot serve as a predicate in regard to philosophy or philosophies. According to Derrida,

the national problem is not simply one philosophical problem among many others, one philosophical dimension among many others.(...) A nation's self-affirmation does not enter philosophical discourse from outside and purely accidentally. In fact, these nationalist claims and aspirations are completely philosophical in nature and constitute a philosopheme.<sup>2</sup>

We are not talking about the philosophical genesis of the concept of "nation" as such, notes Derrida, which is taken for granted:

It is not that nationalism is imported into philosophy as an accident, an external evil, cosmopolitan and universalist, which is allegedly alien to philosophy in and of itself. On the contrary, nationalism is intrinsically

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<sup>1</sup> Ж. Деррида, "Национальность и философский национализм" [Philosophical Nationalism and Nationality], *Позиции*, пер. В. В. Бибихин (Москва: Академический Проект, 2007), J. Derrida, "Nationalité et nationalisme philosophique" an unpublished paper delivered in Moscow in 1990; in 1984-1987 Derrida taught a seminar of the same name at École des hautes études en sciences sociales.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

philosophical in nature, it *is* philosophy, it is a discourse that is philosophical in its structure.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time the nation-philosopheme is not necessarily represented as a system or even a “philosophy.” On the contrary, as Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe showed in their 1980 paper titled “The Nazi Myth” (delivered at the conference *The Mechanisms of Fascism* in Schiltigheim, France) that the nation’s identification (e.g. Germany’s mimetic identification with Greece) is based on the “mimetic-will-to-identify,”<sup>4</sup> on *Muthos* (“the mimetic instrument par excellence”<sup>5</sup>) as opposed to *Logos*.

The national philosopheme most commonly figures as a spontaneous, implicit and yet constitutive philosophy.<sup>6</sup> Partially, Marx’s famous formula “Mas as such is in essence ‘a German’” (“Die deutsche Ideologie”) can serve as an ironic illustration of this kind of reciprocity, mutual invertibility (or *chiasm*, to use the term employed during Derrida’s seminar) of philosophy and nationality.<sup>7</sup>

Here Marx juxtaposes two abstractions that he discovered in Feuerbach’s letter: on the one hand, the optics of the semblable, of the “sensual world,” conceived of as a given, as something non-producible, and on the other, an equally abstract philosophical lens of the “true essence.” By pinning the two against each other Marx effectively undermines and unmasks the alliance between humanism and national philosophism.<sup>8</sup> The unmediated semblance of the sensual, the local and the national only transpires within the abstract optics of the national philosophism.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, the first premise, which ought “to be taken seriously” here is the fact that the tension between the national and the universal cannot be relieved as these are the two facets of the same abstraction. Just as the particular local features of a nation are impossible to pin down and define, similarly elusive are philosophy’s “national traits.” Any representation of the national peculiarity and specificity works to universalize the local. Moreover, Derrida’s “national universalism” problematizes for the first time “the local” and “the universal.” That is why any attempt at unearthing certain irreducible, *idiomatic* features that account for its uniqueness is naïve at best, for these “unique features” will most certainly coincide with the “no less unique” traits of some other nation. After all, such is the aporia of the singular: “*Pour être absolument seul, il ne suffit pas que je le sois, il faut encore que je sois seul à être seul*” [“To be absolutely alone it is not enough to be alone, it takes being alone in being alone.”]<sup>10</sup> Corollary to this is the idea that any

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>4</sup> P. Lacoue-Labarthe, J.-L. Nancy and B. Holmes, “The Nazi Myth,” *Critical Inquiry* 16.2 (1990): 312.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 298.

<sup>6</sup> Derrida, “Nationalité et nationalisme philosophique,” 137.

<sup>7</sup> K. Marx, F. Engels, *The German Ideology* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1994), 513-14. According to Grün’s work “Feuerbach und die Socialisten,” Marx repeats the vision of Feuerbach that obviously echoes his own: “As regards the eulogies to German philosophy, the latter must value them all the more, seeing how little he knows about it. The national pride of the true socialists, their pride in Germany as the land of ‘man,’ of ‘human essence,’ as opposed to the other profane nationalities, reaches its climax in him.”

<sup>8</sup> Derrida, “Nationalité et nationalisme philosophique,” 143.

<sup>9</sup> Marx, *The German Ideology*.

<sup>10</sup> J.-L. Nancy, *La Communauté desoeuvrée*, (Paris: Christian Bourgois éditeur, 1986, 1990 et 1999), 18.

nationality in search of identification is bound to become a sole, singular nationality, a *singular* philosophy, no longer just one idiom alongside multiple others.

My second premise concerns the use of the very concepts (*soil, space, country, land, territory*, etc.), which stake out the confines of the discourse on national identities and serve to substantiate them. These concepts oppose the “will for the mimetic” and contain neither form nor identification. Within the framework of his seminar “Philosophical Nationalism and Nationality” Derrida engaged the example of Plato’s *khôra* to illustrate this point. *Khôra* takes on no definite (and defining) article. In Derrida’s account it is neither Muthos nor Logos, but a constitutive source of everything national, which in fact is antipathic to limits, boundaries, forms and identities. Derrida’s *khôra* is not a “receptacle of qualities”; it does not even have properties, “no meaning or essence, no identity to fall back on.” According to Derrida, any national affirmation implies a definition of *khôra*: there is that space we call “Germany,” “Japan,” “Europe,” “France.” This space is symbolic. When Husserl speaks about Europe as a space of science and philosophy, it is not an empirical space that he is talking about.<sup>11</sup>

Derrida insists that Plato’s *khôra* is essentially intangible, ungraspable, elusive and defies identification with form, body, substance or matter (*hylé*). It is but “pure receptivity”: it receives without becoming anything. No phenomenology of *khôra* is possible for it is a “space, an interval, a gaping chiasm.”<sup>12</sup> Therefore, any nationalism, any search for “national characteristics and particularities” is fundamentally an ever-frustrated attempt at *staking out, defining* space and it is exactly this void, this emptiness that throws national identity into sharp relief, amplifying it. At the same time, this all-receiving space (but not a nation, identity or form), inaccessible to formalization, “is constituted through language and through the idiom of the idiom.”<sup>13</sup> As a result, the phenomenology of *the national* veers towards the analysis of linguistic practices and of the “national idiom,” as it inquires into relationship between the thought process and the national language and looks at the linguistic contrivance and inventiveness to which a philosopher (inevitably?) resorts.

Is language really an external technical facility, a tool facilitating the thought process? – asks Derrida in the concluding lines of his 1990’ paper.<sup>14</sup> The way he chose to phrase this question is hardly accidental (and for Derrida the phrasing is closely interwoven with the main subject of his talk) for it reflects a particular intellectual agenda. To a large extent this agenda had shaped Russia’s intellectual context of the late 1980s and early 1990s and the country’s intellectual community had willingly and enthusiastically committed itself to it.

At the time “philosophy of language,” “deconstruction,” the relationship between philosophy and literature came to figure much more prominently in Russian philosophical discourse than the problems of nationalism in general and of philosophical nationalism in particular. Perhaps, one of the reasons behind the peripheral position occupied by these

<sup>11</sup> See abridged notes of Derrida’s lectures that he delivered within the framework of his course “Nationalité et nationalisme philosophique” published in Russian. Ж. Деррида “Нация и философский национализм: мифос, логос, топос...,” *Хора* 4 (2008), 71.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>14</sup> Деррида, “Национальность и философский национализм,” 144.

problems within the country's intellectual matrix, was national-philosophism, the dominant intellectual figure of the period, that operated as an unmanifested paradigm inaccessible to critical reflection, although not as a "commission," or subject to objectification. The philosopheme of *nationalism* continued to form an unseen, unarticulated, invisible and yet constitutive backdrop to whatever was going on in and outside the field of philosophical studies and research. It was exactly at that moment that a subtle, implicit (manifested at the level of stylization, not of program) will to find a new national philosophical language transpired in the intellectual and academic writing, primarily in relation to the vast body of previously censored, suppressed foreign sources that had to be translated into Russian. Not only was the "bureaucratic style" of writing and thinking of the soviet academic yesteryear declared suspect and was discriminated against, but so was the scholarly gibberish in general. As it made its exit from translated academic sources and scholarly articles and publications it took with it the many borrowings from Latin and English. Guided by a subconscious, intuitive feeling, articulated by V. Bibikhin ("Russian is no less suitable for thinking than German") both translators and thinkers were now eager to come up with neologisms.<sup>15</sup>

Vladimir Bibikhin was one of the Russian thinkers to respond to the challenges of conceptualizing this "philosophical nationalization." His monographs and translations became a laboratory of this new "project." "Ultimately, the language of philosophy," argued Bibikhin, "is an attempt of giving voice to philosophy itself within the Russian linguistic context."<sup>16</sup> At the same time, while for Wittgenstein, Derrida and even Marx access to "natural" language was only possible via the critique of philosophism (and its property – national-universalism), for Vladimir Bibikhin the "natural" language is identical to the "native" – Russian – tongue. Together they allow access to that *language of philosophy* that V. Bibikhin hopes to hear distinctly beyond the ambient noise (the latter immediately points towards – and sounds like – Heidegger's *das Man*): "The language of philosophy is not a research subject, but something in which we want to catch the sound of our native tongue, deafened by the ambient noise."<sup>17</sup> The natural/native/philosophical language is buried under and juxtaposed with the "language of terminological systems," that helps preserve it regardless of the practice of the speaker: "We are not in control of the language,"<sup>18</sup> and:

We are not in the position to deprive ourselves of the natural language. When we reject it in favor of a terminological system, our natural language becomes invisible and thus inaccessible to us. (...) The proper language of thinking is a native tongue, no matter how impoverished and barren it might be.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> В. В. Бибикин, "Дело Хайдеггера" [The Case of Martin Heidegger] *Время и бытие: Статьи и выступления* (Москва: Республика, 1993), 13.

<sup>16</sup> В. В. Бибикин, *Язык философии* [The language of philosophy] (Москва: Языки славянской культуры, 2002), 2.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

Distrust of the language of terminological systems, rejection of the “meaningless philosophical jargon” in favor of the “thinking in language” and of the “philosophical domestication/interiorization of the Russian language” becomes a spontaneous research program of sorts, or at least a strategy of the stylization of thought and writing.<sup>20</sup> Russia’s philosophical language had to be born as a native tongue through the hard labor of processing – working and thinking through ideas and concepts. When calling on the Russian thinkers to master and reclaim the philosophical language, Vladimir Bibikhin simultaneously “nationalizes” the language of Russia’s philosophical discourse and subjugates it to the needs of the project that has remained essentially *German* in its fundamental premises, the painstaking, arduous labor in both senses of the word: the birth of the *native*.<sup>21</sup> It is to this very project that Martin Heidegger dedicated sixty years of his life and as a result “he quite literally was able to hear afresh every little particle of his native tongue, every sound and every word of it in the full scope of their contemporary and historical meaning.”<sup>22</sup>

Derrida concludes his “Nationalité et nationalisme philosophique” with a paradox: language is the last refuge of the universal philosophical nationalism, but it is not a language, not just a language (translated from the Russian translation of Vladimir Bibikhin).<sup>23</sup> However, it is exactly this “not just a language” is the very “*langue philosophique*” that breaks through the worn out, muffling speech, “obstructing access to the native tongue” that struggles to free itself in Bibikhin’s work. Bibikhin searches to uncover the deep-seated layer of linguistic *tradition* buried underneath the debris of bureaucratic Soviet jargon accumulated over decades. Derrida, on the other hand, insists that an idiom (and thus also the “nation” and “the national language”) exist *untraditionally*. We can discern two alternative national-philosophical idioms here that least of all deserve to be explained through the “national peculiarities” of French and Russian philosophies.

Drawing particular attention to the structure of the national *idiom*, Roland Barthes notes that it is juxtaposed with identity: “An idiom is not monolithic, homogenous, pure. An idiom = a patchwork, a rhapsody. (...) The particularity of an idiom inheres – for better or for worse – in its syntax, not in its vocabulary.”<sup>24</sup> To put differently: when we complete the vocabulary of philosophy’s native tongue, can our own syntax remain “native,” too? Does our very optics, through which we “rebuild” this vocabulary, remain (become?) “native”? Thus, neither can an idiom be conceived of as something rigid, a substrate, “mother Earth,” a *hylé* (indurated and identified with specific forms, so no longer very “motherly” and “fertile,” having lost most of its reproductive properties). It can only be a connecting point, a point of transition: “That several languages should be conveyed in and by our

<sup>20</sup> Бибихин, “Дело Хайдеггера,” 14.

<sup>21</sup> It is noteworthy, that Bibikhin’s translation of Heidegger’s texts and their interpretation has inscribed the term “human” into the German thinker’s fundamental concepts, thereby revealing the “alliance of humanism and national-universalism” mentioned earlier. Such “humanization” obviously ran against the grain of Heidegger’s thought and what is more, contradicted Bibikhin’s own determination to discover the sound of the “native tongue” obfuscated, silenced, obscured by the external “noise” of the banal – i.e. everyday *human* language.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>23</sup> Деррида, “Национальность и философский национализм,” 144.

<sup>24</sup> R. Barthes, *How to Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces* (New York: Columbia UP, 2012), 18. The same topic is explored in Barthes’ *Leçon inaugurale*, 1978 (OCIII, 807).

own idiom is a good thing,” argues Barthes.<sup>25</sup> It is hardly an accident that thinkers borrow concepts from the language which is not their own (not their native tongue), the language, which is built into a different, a foreign idiom. The heteroglossia – or plurilanguage – of the philosophical idiom simultaneously encompasses image, universalization and alienation. Philosophical discourse needs this “layering of idioms” as it brings it closer to the “sensual” that cannot be reduced to the “eye-glasses of the philosopher” (Marx) while staking out the boundaries of “desire” (Barthes). “Pluri-language (within an idiom) is a luxury, but, as always, for desire it’s no more than a basic requirement: thus as with any linguistic theft, the right to it is to be insisted upon and defended.”<sup>26</sup> In this description an idiom is akin to Derrida’s *khôra*, it reveals and conceals, while resisting identification.

Reference to etymology, to the “sources and roots” of the native tongue, that contains its own, idiosyncratic (*idios*) access to the truth that do not match other idioms is an alluring path for philosophical nationalization. But it is also a path that leads into the trap of the national/universal dichotomy, since these “sources” cannot be identified, and most of the roots, borrowed from diverse idioms, merge at the core. The discourse of “the true and the authentic,” that subjugates the desire for an etymological reconstruction of primary foundations, points towards the affinity between philosophical and national myths. However, the etymology is not limited to such “reconstruction.” In his analysis of his own writing *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* (1975), the French literary theorist notes:

His discourse is full of words he cuts off, so to speak, at the root. Yet in etymology it is not the truth or the origin of the word, which pleases him but rather the effect of overdetermination which it authorizes: the word is seen as a palimpsest: it then seems to me that I have ideas on the level of language.<sup>27</sup>

Obviously, there is a certain difference between the intention to think *in* language, exploring what Bibikhin defined as “the not yet revealed etymological potential” of the latter and its “proper power,” and Barthes’ thinking “on the level of language,” thinking *by* language, writing at the intersection of national idioms. The metaphysics of the national language and writing itself as a key modernist value that shelters the author from the “noise” of the everyday linguistic practices, refer the author to the “authentic,” original language, to Derrida’s “not just a language.” At the same time, the “just a language,” the writing as a practice, is not connected to the search for identification and is based on a “palimpsest” and on a transgression on account of an implicit challenge of a nation as an assumed identity.<sup>28</sup> The invention and not the etymological reconstruction becomes the meeting ground for language and thought outside the dilemma of instrumentalization and nationalization.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>27</sup> R. Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 85.

<sup>28</sup> M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

# THE ANOMALY OF A LIBERAL AND THE SECRET ECONOMY OF INFINITY

The liberal-capitalist model of life, ever since its inception around the mid-nineteenth century, has turned out to be a fantastic source of energy for mankind. A considerable part of the world's population was allowed to accumulate property, provided with legal protection, and given the opportunity to hand down its assets to the next generations. This motivation proved to exert a drug-like effect on people, spurring activity of which they were not capable before while working under coercion or for the common good. The marvelous scientific and technological development of the last two hundred years is perhaps just another name for the organized egoism inherent in modern societies. Due to this historical accrual of wealth and technological achievements, possibly for the first time since the supposed "original affluence" of the hunter-gatherer Paleolithic, the human species has a real chance to satisfy the material needs of all its representatives.

For several decades now, however, it has been increasingly evident that the liberal model of life contains some hidden error spoiling the idyll of a tirelessly modernized reality, otherwise on the constant upswing. Something is rotten in the liberal state. Behaviors and strategies that once led to an unprecedented increase in the standard of living now not only inhibit forward movement, but begin to thwart their own achievements. It is not only the question of enormous inequalities detrimental to social solidarity, walling the poor in ghettos of poverty and exclusion called the slums, and forcing the well-off to fearfully entrench themselves behind the well-guarded entrances to gated communities. "Society does not exist," argue such contemporary sociologists as Alain Touraine or Bruno Latour.<sup>1</sup> At least since the 2008 crisis, the media now and again ply us with shocking statistics (the data quoted comes from the Oxfam International report of January 2014): the top one percent of the world's multimillionaires own a fortune worth 110 billion dollars; the 85 richest people in the world have assets equal to those in the hands of the poorer half of the planet; in the United States, 95 percent of the growth following the economic crisis has fallen to the richest one percent of citizens; at the same time, "the bottom 90 percent" (sic) have become poorer, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> We live in a "post-social" situation, contends Touraine in his 2010 book *After the Crisis*, transl. H. Morrison (Cambridge: Wiley, 2014). For Latour, the inexistence of society forms the very foundation of his actor-network theory: "It is no longer clear whether there exist relations that are specific enough to be called 'social' and that could be grouped together in making up a special domain that could function as 'a society.'"— B. Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor–Network–Theory* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), 2.

It is easy to imagine that should the current crisis reduce itself to an increase in global inequalities, the result would be a rather familiar course of events: a fundraising rally for the starving in Somalia, and a couple of ironic remarks thrown at the devotees of Karl Marx's antediluvian concepts to boot. Yet it so happens, somewhat fortunately, that those affected by the crisis today are not exclusively the residents of the crucified (Alain Badiou's term) Africa and the rest of the Third World, but also (though in a quite different manner) the traditional beneficiaries of liberalism, the affluent residents of highly developed countries becoming increasingly disillusioned with their comfortable and prosperous lives. Thomas Kuhn pointed out in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* that every intellectual revolution begins with the "awareness of anomaly, i.e. with the recognition that nature has somehow violated the paradigm-induced expectations that govern normal science."<sup>2</sup> Today it is us who have become such a self-contradictory entity. Paradoxically, we tend to learn about our own happiness in the course of logical reasoning rather than introspection. It looks almost as though we derive our sense of satisfaction with life by ticking boxes in a newspaper personality test: "I make reasonable money, my family is provided for and we lead a decent life. Meanwhile, another overcrowded ship with illegal refugees has sunk off the coast of Italy. Many people risk their lives to walk in my shoes, which most assuredly means that I am happy." In fact, however, I am deeply indifferent to this whole world of silicone, the Champions League and TV series which one cannot stop watching, and as much as I fear change, I secretly like to imagine the moment when it will finally disappear.

### THE SICKNESS UNTO WEALTH

Like almost everything else in this system, liberal suffering is average and lukewarm. It is more like the Freudian *das Unbehagen*, a kind of discontent or indigestion – a pea placed under a pile of user-friendly market attractions or a "moist spot" on the lungs of the characters in *The Magic Mountain*, rather than the aggressive form of misery familiar to our grandparents' generation. Which does not mean that it can be described solely through metaphors. For several years, the experience of liberal discontent has figured prominently not only in the works of thinkers suspected of being professionally malcontent – various men of letters, psychoanalysts and humanists – but also in the technical research papers of psychiatrists, epidemiologists and other scientists involved in what has become known as subjective well-being (SWB) studies. The picture emerging from their work is more and more coherent, and forms a consistent narrative.<sup>3</sup>

What attracted people to modernity were always the private, material benefits derived from modernization processes, rather than such collateral trivia as freedom of speech, universal suffrage or women's rights. Therefore, China – a country growing rich, censoring the Internet, and politically pacified – is in fact less of a paradox than it might seem. "Across fifty-five nations," asserts Robert E. Lane in his book *The Loss of Happiness*

<sup>2</sup> T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 52-53.

<sup>3</sup> For a brief overview of the history of the discipline see, among others, Luigino Bruni and Pier Luigi Porta, "Introduction" in: *Economics and Happiness: Framing the Analysis* (Oxford: OUP, 2005). For a good overview of the entire SWB problematic see: M. Eid, R. J. Larsen, *The Science of Subjective Well-Being* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 2008).

in *Market Democracies*, citing the results of a 1995 survey, “when the influence of increased income is removed, growth itself has a slight (nonsignificant) negative correlation”<sup>4</sup> in relation to subjective well-being. The disintegration of the extended family, the loneliness of big cities, the dismantling of tradition, and all the other phenomena bound up with the shift from traditional to modern societies would likely prove unbearable, were it not for the compensation in the form of gradually higher earnings. There is nothing wrong with political freedoms, but overall, what interests us most in liberalism is not so much a better world, as the sense of empowerment derived from using platinum credit cards. “It is the increased income, not the process of increasing income, that makes people on average happier,”<sup>5</sup> concludes the American political scientist.

Except that, as we begin to realize, money only buys happiness for so long. The first person to note this pattern, in 1974, was the economist and demographer Richard Easterlin, whose discovery triggered a debate on what later came to be known as “the Easterlin Paradox.” Once a country reaches a certain level of wealth, growing satisfaction with life ceases to go hand in hand with rising income. Affluenza, the sickness unto wealth, begins. Affluence turns into a disease entity that affects people much like the influenza virus: fatal cases are rare, with the help of proper pills we may as well ignore the problem; however, the complications can prove serious, and a scratchy throat or runny nose make the fullness of life a somewhat distant perspective.<sup>6</sup> In *The Spirit Level*, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett maintain that having achieved a per capita GDP of about \$25,000 per year, increased prosperity brings satisfaction only when it occurs in relatively egalitarian conditions. Otherwise, it becomes literally harmful. “Within each country, people’s health and happiness are related to their incomes,” argue Wilkinson and Pickett. “Richer people tend, on average, to be healthier and happier than poorer people in the same society. But comparing rich countries it makes no difference whether on average people in one society are almost twice as rich as people in another.”<sup>7</sup>

In other words, of the two logics operating in every society – the liberal logic of objective, material standard of living, and the social logic of distinction, bent on dominance and competition – it is the former that loses its sway in highly developed countries. The positive effect of victory in the social game persists, yet as soon as a certain degree of safety and comfort is reached, the level of its achievement becomes virtually negligible. A Greek living objectively at the same material level as an American will therefore be healthier and happier due to the victory he or she has won over their rivals in the game called Modern Greek Society. And conversely, income growth is of no value to either an American or a Greek, unless their financial successes just happen to coincide with an economic stalemate at the households of their respective Joneses. There is indeed

<sup>4</sup> R. E. Lane, *The Loss of Happiness in Market Democracies* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2000), 61.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup> There are, in fact, three books with the same main title, providing as it were ostensive proof of their own theoretical claims: J. de Graaf, D. Wann, T. H. Naylor, *Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005); O. James, *Affluenza: How to be Successful and Stay Sane* (London: Vermilion, 2007); C. Hamilton, R. Dennis, *Affluenza: When Too Much is Never Enough* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> R. Wilkinson, K. Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009), 12-13.

unexpected wisdom in the old Polish joke about the peasant who asks a genie to fulfill his wish, but instead of craving riches for himself prefers to see a thorough decimation of the cows on his neighbor's farm. The postmodern liberal genie works according to the same principle. Its gifts are benevolent only insofar as they are reserved for a few.

### **THE EYE AND THE BELLY**

In the late 1960s, Jean Baudrillard famously asserted that in a mature consumer society, commodities no longer have use-value or exchange value, but above all a sign-value. They do not have to be useful or generate pleasant sensations as long as they mark our individuality and place in the social hierarchy. This seems rather logical. At a certain level of development, the conveniences of which once we could only dream turn out to be ordinary and simple. The euphoria caused by the prospect of securing ourselves fresh linen drains away, and a washing machine as a utility object becomes transparent, turning into a sign of our social position.

Immigrant workers undergo a similar evolution in their new homelands. The first generation is almost uncritical: "All the things that I could never have at home prevail over the barely masked disgust on the faces of the local elite's representatives when they hear my strange accent. In moments of doubt I count the likes posted by friends back in my country under the photo of my new MacBook." The second generation is more demanding: "It's hard to get excited over a new dishwasher. My parents' docility irritates me, and I'm more and more frustrated by lacking chances of advancement." The third generation produces natural conscripts of various fundamentalist ideologies: "Conveniences? Give me a break, man. I'll be nobody in this country, just like my parents and grandparents" (a note in passing: "A local imam invited me to a meeting. If only I get the chance, I'll smash into pieces all those beautiful shop windows along the main street"). It is no coincidence that the Tottenham rioters of August 2011 or the later European recruits of the Islamic State, nearly all came from that segment of the population which the media refer to as "second-" or "third-generation immigrants." There are hardly any better breeding grounds for humiliation and anger than the families of the workers who support the high living standard of Western societies (all those Mexican nannies, Indian cooks, Pakistani drivers, or Polish plumbers) but who are at the same time a kind of blind spot in their structure, a place that is not a place, without much hope that anyone will finally *recognize* them or talk to them without recourse to formulas learned from the manual of political correctness.

Beyond a given threshold of prosperity, the magical world of consumption loses its captivating charm, and what comes to the fore is the repressed logic of distinction. Just think about our own lives. We could just as well follow René Magritte's example and label our household objects with sticky notes saying "this is not a television," "this is not a bookcase," "this is not a pipe." This would pretty much sum up the conversations we hold with friends who visit us at our new place or after renovations. Modern salesmen are also trained in this vein. What do you see there? I see the floor. No, this is not a floor, but a high-quality ecological product inspired by space suits whose unique satin sheen is the result of mixing kaolin powder with silver nanoparticles that guarantee lasting antifungal and antibacterial protection to the delicate but incredibly agile little feet of our wonderful children. We are surrounded by all these pseudo-rational arguments to convince ourselves

and others that our purchases possess use-value, while their true, ultimate and sedulously concealed aim is to see our friends turn momentarily green with envy. Over the years, statistics have shown that the most common cause of serious road accidents is excessive speed, yet nobody but the nouveaux riches buys new, faster cars because they are new and faster, and not because they (so goes the line usually employed on such occasions) are more comfortable and safer than the ones we have driven before.

The human capacity to absorb signs, as opposed to consumption of matter, is endless. Hence Baudrillard's comparison of contemporary consumption to psychosomatic illness. In the case of an ordinary organic illness it is the ailing organ that is treated. When we have a sore throat, we suck an anti-inflammatory lozenge – at times to a desired effect. The same might once have been true about buying. I need clean underwear? I buy a washing machine and my need vanishes. But in the case of psychosomatic illness, treating the organ in which the symptoms appear is pointless. This would be much like using hair growth shampoo when hair loss results from depression. Even if it does bring the desired effect, it will certainly not free us from the disease, which will reappear elsewhere sooner or later. It is precisely in the same way that buying subsequent goods or services does not extinguish the needs lying at their core. Merchandise only alleviates their symptoms. In highly developed societies the need for consumption is not material (to claim so is to rationalize) but social in character. The joy of possessing and using can no longer compensate for anxiety arising from our spying on other people's successes, as was the case in the earlier stages of the development of capitalism.

This also explains the widespread, seemingly paradoxical phenomenon of “reverse” or ascetic consumption, which results in a situation where the absence of a trademark becomes a logo tickling our vanity. I watch less TV than you do, I do not go on vacation to lie around, I cycle any distance up to thirty kilometers, and I generally earn on every purchase. Anything goes in the fight for recognition. We live in a world of unbridled and destructive distinction. Postmaterialism (a term coined by Ronald Inglehart, the author of the World Values Survey, and defined, inter alia, as abandoning the pursuit of money and material goods in favor of individual expression) is a beautiful euphemism for a society sick with jealousy, in which hardly anything brings satisfaction unless it demonstrates our superiority to others. It hardly matters that instead of a new laptop we seek continuous self-development. So much the worse for us. In a sense, materialism was straightforward and healthy. Sooner or later, it allowed us to say “stop.” Having eaten three doner kebabs we will presumably skip dessert, regardless of how much beer we have drunk before. Our bellies, like our whole bodies, have limited flexibility. The human mind works differently. “The eye is larger than the belly,”<sup>8</sup> wrote Adam Smith in a famous passage from *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, in which he uses the metaphor of the invisible hand of the market for the second and penultimate time in his writings. There are never too many status symbols for the eye to devour. Accordingly, the oppressive system is in fact nothing other than the exigencies of our own social nature, which do not let us abandon competition, even if it takes place on a level neutral from the point of view of the benefits consumable in a human lifetime.

<sup>8</sup> A. Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), 215.

## UNIVERSAL AGON

One of the themes in Alejandro González Iñárritu's film *Amores perros* is the story of a Rottweiler taking part in dog fights. The dog is rescued from a car accident by a homeless man nicknamed "El Chivo," and given shelter in an abandoned warehouse where the man lives with a number of other stray dogs. One day El Chivo comes back home to find the Rottweiler sitting next to the other dogs, which it has bitten to death, faithfully waiting for its master to return, expecting signs of recognition and a well-deserved reward. Is not the cruel disappointment experienced by the animal (initially, El Chivo wants to shoot the dog, but he then decides to spare its life) reminiscent of the tragic entanglement of postmodern man who wins game after game, performs at will his most spectacular liberal tricks, yet just cannot fathom why it so happens that after the brief euphoria following each victory, his life is troubled by gradually longer periods of frustration, when nothing and no one seems to want to reward him for the bravura advertising campaign of a new hybrid nail polish?

To repeat the key point: our concern for self-interest was until recently the best recipe for satisfaction with life. Throughout the long period of economic growth we did not have to worry about our relationships with others, since any possible shortcomings in that sphere were effectively compensated by attractions generated by the economy – a model very much resembling that of the immigrants enchanted with the new material reality. Liberal capitalism thus gave rise to two things at the same time. First of all, the marginal attitude to life, which evolutionary psychologists refer to as "free riding," has become the basic moral standard. As long as people lived in small groups on the East African savannah it was crucial from the perspective of their survival to detect slackers dozing off on the watch. Even the slightest deviations could have proved tragic for all; therefore, suspicious characters were quickly identified and disciplined.

It worked both ways. The survival not only of the community but also of individuals themselves hinged on continuous teamwork and cooperation. Nobody could afford splendid isolation, as it was nearly tantamount to a death sentence. However, in the ever more complex modern societies, detecting free riders has become a difficult task and the tools made available to a single person by the accelerating development of science have begotten the illusion that one can cope with life on one's own. The temptation to enjoy the benefits of living in a community without giving anything in return has proved very strong. Moreover, since the ego-based division of social labor turned out to be fantastically efficient from a technical point of view, liberal free riders soon gained a circle of zealous devotees. A person who treats reality, including other people, as "resources" to maximize his or her own profits is none other than *homo economicus* – the mythical hero of classical and neoclassical economics and the figure ideologically legitimized in various types of economizing liberalism. Beginning with Bernard de Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*, through Adam Smith's invisible hand of the market, to the silly neoliberal belief that "a rising tide lifts all boats" and therefore the moral duty of every thinking person boils down to securing his or her private interest.

Secondly, this vision of human nature is only a step away from the society in which interpersonal relationships turn into a universal agon, the "aim-inhibited" war of all against all. Hobbes, the forefather of liberalism, exhibited remarkable perceptiveness.

Generalized competition, solely and uncompromisingly focused on the aim, has become the basic form of social bond in mature liberalism. The other is first and foremost our rival, an obstacle or, at best, our means to an end conceived in the tranquility of a homely stronghold. Is there a driver who is not “tempted, merely by the power of his engine, to wipe out the vermin of the street, pedestrians, children and cyclists?”<sup>9</sup> asked Theodor Adorno in 1947 in his *Minima moralia*, accurately defining the psychological profile of a driver at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Our society resembles the ancient Greek agon (it is a well-known fact that the Greeks argued and competed in all fields, one of the disciplines of the Olympic Games being theatre), devoid of concern for honor and values. The Greeks cherished the style and the limits. They resented hubris, or overconfident pride. We tend to follow the motto of American coaches: “Winning isn’t everything, it’s the only thing that matters.” What excites us is records. Or, to quote the mantra of sports journalists and commentators, which apparently no longer stirs up anybody’s anxiety, “in a week’s time nobody will remember the style in which the victory was achieved.” If no one else, Lance Armstrong might wish to take issue with the authors of such statements.

### THE ETHICAL REVERSE

So what is to be done? One of the most important aspects of the required change could be to abandon thinking about the world in terms of economics and to replace, or at least supplement it with philosophical, anthropological, and sociological concepts. The twentieth century belonged to economics. Its approach worked well in the conditions of economic development revolutionizing everyday life. Up to a point, it was reasonable to highlight private aims and benefits, as this approach provided an accurate description of human experience. We did feel the emotions, and we were granted the rewards that the economists’ calculations had predicted. But why? Contrary to most of the superficial critiques, what on reflection seems truly striking about the liberal figure of homo economicus is not so much its ideological content, as its persistence. Taken seriously, the idea is blatantly ludicrous. It takes a remarkable amount of nerve to claim that when receiving the lethal phenol injection in the death block in Auschwitz and going to death instead of his fellow prisoner Franciszek Gajowniczek, Maximilian Kolbe was in the act of maximizing his utility. Why, then, would the romantic readers of Keats and Wordsworth, along with so many of their successors, suddenly be willing to recognize themselves in the grotesquely circumscribed image of a human being planted to them by economics?

The answer is that neither they, nor most of us, ever did. The whole problem lies elsewhere. When John Stuart Mill, the thinker traditionally attributed with the invention of the calculating, goal-rational subject of modern economics, contended in the essay *On the Definition of Political Economy* that one does not need to delve into the depths of human psyche in order to explain our everyday behavior, his idea was clear, although, in the end, symptomatically ambiguous. In reality, writes Mill, people are certainly not this sorry way we tend to see them under the influence of economics, but it nevertheless

<sup>9</sup> T. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*, transl. E. F. N. Jephcott (London and New York: Verso, 2005), 40.

makes sense to describe them as such, since all the other or extra-economic regards do not count for much when set up against the desire for wealth. Political economy, as he puts it,

makes entire abstraction of every other human passion or motive; except those which may be regarded as perpetually antagonizing principles to the desire of wealth, namely, aversion to labour, and desire of the present enjoyment of costly indulgences. These it takes, to a certain extent, into its calculations, because *these do not merely, like other desires, occasionally conflict with the pursuit of wealth, but accompany it always* as a drag, or impediment, and are therefore inseparably mixed up in the consideration of it. Political Economy considers mankind as occupied solely in acquiring and consuming wealth (...) Not that any political economist was ever so absurd as to suppose that mankind are really thus constituted, but because this is the mode in which science must necessarily proceed.<sup>10</sup>

The idea here is very similar to the position of part of today's sociology, which argues that society does not consist of people, viz, the adequate description of the world should concentrate on anonymous processes of communication, leaving aside the conscious decisions and strategies of human actors. "Society is made up of communications and nothing but communications. Elephants, fish and chips or cars do not belong to society. What is not a communication does not belong to society but to its environment"<sup>11</sup>. In other words, man is dead, the subject is dead, so our individual plans and endeavors amount at best to interfering noise or a statistical error that cannot alter the objective and operationally closed logic of the social systems. Mill's view, to be sure, was more modest but the principle of his proposition was essentially the same. For him, what we can freely disregard in our descriptions of the world are not human beings as such but their extra-economic impulses and passions. People are ultimately much better or at least much more than that, but in practice everyone can be scientifically reduced to a "totally selfish, single-minded marginal pleasure-versus-pain or gain-versus-loss calculator, insatiable satisfaction-seeker and wealth-accumulator at home"<sup>12</sup>, as one of the critics has fluently put it. Save laziness and overindulgence, there are no motives or desires strong enough to effectively counterpoise the pursuit of wealth.

Still, it does not mean that acquiring and consuming wealth is the final truth of our nature. Mill was right when he insisted that people never subscribed heart and soul to the satisfaction motive. In fact, our goal could all along be at one with the fundamental striving ascribed to man by Aristotle. Even in the guise of economic men, people never abandoned the continuous search for happiness or personal flourishing. What deluded us into thinking that we are mere "wealth accumulators" was the temporary and historically

<sup>10</sup> J. S. Mill, *On the Definition of Political Economy; and on the Method of Investigation Proper to It in: Essays on Unsettled Questions of Political Economy* (London: Batoche Books, 2000), 97-98.

<sup>11</sup> F. Vandenberghe, "Systemic Supertheorist of the Social: Niklas Luhmann, 1927-1998," *Radical Philosophy* 94 (March/April 1999), 55.

<sup>12</sup> T. Nitsch, "On Human Nature Presuppositions in Economics – Part II: Homo Oeconomicus and Homo Socioeconomicus," *Midsouth Journal of Economics* 7.1 (1983), 16.

contingent pairing of our desire to flourish with economic self-interest. Herein lies the irresistible charm and awesome predictive power of the classical economic theory. Over the past two centuries our comfort-loving bodies instinctively made us cling to the notion of private interest, since the rapid technical development unleashed by liberal individualism system simply *overrun* all other contenders to the post of the facilitator of happiness. Even if someone felt firmly attached to a traditional way of life and rubbing dirty clothes against the washboard in a freezing stream, the corporeal advantages of owning a washing machine were simply too great for him or her to resist its purchase. As a result, however, we have generally learned to take the finger for the moon. Faith, commitment, and ethical values have been made to acknowledge the profit motive's superiority in bringing about human satisfaction for so long that we have finally forgotten the point of the whole enterprise. Money served as a practical shorthand for happiness until the two finally conflated into the ideological image of the profit-seeking human nature. "Well, yes, it is hard to deny that I have been running after market commodities for the past hundred and fifty years. Apparently, my ideals are a mere fig leaf, whereas my true and only nature is the rather less appealing drive at work underneath. Even Arthur Rimbaud, when he matured at last, took up commerce." Contemporary economists, as a rule, do not say that the profit motive is the most useful way of *describing* human behavior under the historically specific circumstances of liberal-capitalist societies. They frankly admit that the selfish, insatiable satisfaction-seekers is who or rather what we truly *are* as representatives of the human species.

Yet this ceased to explain very much long ago. Satisfaction brought about by new and quicker tablets simply does not exert the same overbearing influence on human minds as regular deliveries of fresh underwear. Consequently, the felicitous marriage of wealth and happiness, as evidenced also by the changes in economic theory, is rapidly ending. In 1979, when Michel Foucault spoke of homo economicus in his lectures at Collège de France, he considered it a hegemonic cultural figure and, to a degree, recent ideological novelty. Pointing to works by Israel Kirzner and Gary Becker and a series of texts published between 1960 and 1970 in the *Journal of Political Economy*, Foucault observes "the generalization of the grid of homo oeconomicus to domains that are not immediately and directly economic"<sup>13</sup>. But another revolution was already cooking. In 1977, Amartya Sen published a breakthrough article, in which he criticizes the "rational choice" approach to analysis of human behavior. "The purely economic man is indeed close to being a social moron," writes the later Nobel Prize winner in economics introducing the notion of commitment, which "drives a wedge between personal choice and personal welfare" and loosens the identity that "much of traditional economic theory relies on."<sup>14</sup> Commitment means behavior undertaken with full recognition of the possible negative pleasure balance we might achieve in its wake. In other words, even economics has to allow for the possibility that the things we consider good do not automatically coincide

<sup>13</sup> M. Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79*, transl. Graham Burchell (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 268.

<sup>14</sup> A. K. Sen, "Rational Fools: A Critique of the Behavioral Foundations of Economic Theory," *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 6.4 (1977), 229.

with personal benefit.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, the seminal works of Daniel Kahneman (another Nobel laureate in economic science) and Amos Tversky (in the 1970s the two long-time collaborators almost single-handedly laid the foundations of behavioral economics) were already well underway, initiating a true sea change in scientific thinking about the proper subject and method of economics.<sup>16</sup>

Profit-independent happiness is thus regaining lost ground with the additional effect of the economy slowly assuming its proper place as one of the many types of human activity. Highly practical, yet not necessarily essential, since what we are after in the first place are not scarce goods, but rather happiness and meaning. This could well become the ultimate axiom of the new postliberal world, resulting in a range of practical recommendations. Consider the question of social welfare. It is quite clear that we can no longer rely on the assumptions of social policy aiming to establish a basket of goods and services whose provision for all would make the lower class withdraw further material claims. Some time ago, in a television interview, a Polish politician denied the existence of poverty in Poland, pointing to the fact that boys playing football allow fallen mirabelle plums to stay on the ground and rot (while he himself once even resorted to weeding sorrel from the railway embankment). He was right, in a sense, though at the same time he spoke on behalf of a world long forgotten in highly developed countries. Beyond the affluence threshold (as set by Wilkinson and Pickett), excluded are not those who cannot afford things-that-make-life-quite-comfortable, but those remaining outside the mainstream of society, people who own much-less-than-others: “(...) surveys of the 12.6 per cent of Americans living below the federal poverty line (an absolute income level rather than a relative standard such as half the average income) show that 80 per cent of them have air-conditioning, almost 75 per cent own at least one car or truck and around 33 per cent have a computer, a dishwasher or a second car.”<sup>17</sup>

A man living in a household owning two cars can hardly be called “excluded.” On the other hand, imagine a millionaire who raised his children in the cult of entrepreneurship, and who then, seeing his son’s difficulties with finding a job, chose to set up a monthly allowance that would secure the boy a peaceful, comfortable life, rather than give him part of the fortune or appoint him to administer the family business. Is the boy not right to feel excluded despite all the comforts he was granted? You cannot keep lecturing people about modernization, optical fibers or multimedia libraries, only to later explain that if they were really poor, they would politely settle for mirabelle plums. A multimillionaire who donates his capital to noble social goals, keeping for himself only a small residence and a modest several million dollars, is also not just. Truly just would be someone striving for a change in the economic mechanism which allows a stockbroker to earn a daily income that exceeds

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 336.

<sup>16</sup> Foucault’s diagnosis remains valid, however, insofar as the mainstream economics along with the public opinion shaped by its hegemonic presence is still to assimilate the works of its late twentieth-century luminaries. Anthropology, by contrast, never had to make similar adjustments. Its main tenets were from the very beginning, in essence, anti-economic (in the sense that they were opposed to the narrow vision of the economy elaborated and endorsed by the neoclassical economic orthodoxy). For an excellent account of the anthropological critique and struggle with the “implausible creature” of homo economicus see: C. Hann, K. Hart, *Economic Anthropology: History, Ethnography, Critique* (Cambridge, Malden, MA: Polity, 2011).

<sup>17</sup> Wilkinson, Pickett, *The Spirit Level*, 22.

the lifelong earnings of a cleaning lady whose efforts, in turn, make his office a place that is an affront to human dignity only in the moral sense of the expression. Whoever wins in the economic game takes the sense of life along with the money. By partaking in charitable events, he or she gives back money reduced to naked purchasing power. In other words, money flowing towards the economic winners is saturated with recognition and meaning, while the beneficiaries of social welfare receive mere pieces of paper enabling them to fulfill their material needs. Economics must remember that it is a social science. The numbers used in its deliberations have meaning rather than just numeric value. Each coin has its social and ethical reverse.

### **MECHANICAL INFINITY**

But perhaps the whole problem lies deeper or, more precisely, further above the social logic – repressed or “anesthetized” by the individual benefits of the liberalism era – which now, after a period of hibernation, strikes us with a vengeance, for we are no longer culturally prepared to deal with the difficult emotions evoked by other people. The majority of traditional philosophical and religious systems have perceived man as a special mixture of temporality and eternity, of the finite and the infinite, of a mortal body and an immortal soul. Søren Kierkegaard expressed this in a much celebrated passage of his *Either/Or* in which he tries to convince the reader that no matter what he or she does in life, there is no choice that can bring ultimate relief.

Marry, and you will regret it. Do not marry, and you will also regret it. Marry or do not marry, you will regret it either way. Whether you marry or you do not marry, you will regret it either way. Laugh at the stupidities of the world, and you will regret it; weep over them, and you will also regret it. Laugh at the stupidities of the world or weep over them, you will regret it either way. Whether you laugh at the stupidities of the world or you weep over them, you will regret it either way. Trust a girl, and you will regret it. Do not trust her, and you will also regret it. Trust a girl or do not trust her, you will regret it either way. Whether you trust a girl or do not trust her, you will regret it either way. Hang yourself, and you will regret it. Do not hang yourself, and you will also regret it. Hang yourself or do not hang yourself, you will regret it either way. Whether you hang yourself or do not hang yourself, you will regret it either way. This, gentlemen, is the quintessence of all the wisdom of life. It is not merely in isolated moments that I, as Spinoza says, view everything *aeterno modo* [in the mode of eternity], but I am continually *aeterno modo*.<sup>18</sup>

The element of infinity blows up all of this world’s decorations. The art of living thus consists in drawing ethical implications and trying to get to grips with the excess or the nothingness inherent in human existence.

<sup>18</sup> S. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Part I, ed. and trans. H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1987), 38-39.

Liberalism has long nurtured the conviction that such a need is utterly bogus. People invented eternity and other such ideas because they did not have enough toys to amuse them on winter evenings. This view might have seemed quite natural in the conditions preceding the outbreak of affluenza, when we still managed to sustain our state of half-animal satisfaction. We have already seen, however, that contrary to the moralists' traditional exhortations, the late capitalism of highly developed societies surely has nothing to do with matter. We are consumers, not materialists. What really fuels this system is not a simple desire for possessing and using, but a wild desire for distinction, which transcends or "dissolves" all matter. Seen from this perspective, contemporary capitalism turns out to be a unique hybrid of biology and exuberant idealism. Much like animals programmed by their reflexes, we compete for territory and the associated rewards, but at the same time our animal bodies are no longer able to absorb the wealth generated by mankind: vide the Western obesity epidemic, affecting mainly the poor; or, at the other end of the social ladder, the merciless diet and training regimes to which thousands of people yield. The symbolic space has become our main area of competition. We no longer fight for material rewards, but their copies arranged hierarchically on the other side of the social mirror, in some quasi-Platonic world of ideas (in this sense, the drama of compulsive snacking consists in the desperate yet also naive and good-natured attempt to eat the delight available exclusively in the form of a symbol; to taste something that exists only in a non-material form). Therefore, despite appearances of instrumental rationality, it is the metaphysical or even religious aspect that constitutes the genuine strength of today's capitalism: it not only satisfies our bodily needs, but it quietly fulfils our congenital instinct for eternity. We are chimpanzees who have somehow managed to relocate their hunting areas to the realm of infinity.

It is hardly surprising that money has become the binder, symbol and passion of a society structured in this way. Money is an almost perfect incarnation of bad, mechanical infinity: the raging abstraction that drives today's postmaterial capitalism. And just like the whole present system, money only pretends that it is all about temporality. In fact, its nature is thoroughly metaphysical. No human body could possibly absorb all the pleasures made available by the fortune of one of the world's multimillionaires, yet the sudden loss of a billion dollars would prove an almost unbearable blow for many. It is not matter that underlies their actions, but the prospect of storing eternal treasures for themselves in the bank. This property of money, which makes it colonize real life, was already sensed by the 26-year-old Karl Marx, who wrote in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*:

The less you eat, drink and buy books; the less you go to the theatre, the dance hall, the public house; the less you think, love, theorise, sing, paint, fence, etc., the more you *save* – the *greater* becomes your treasure which neither moths nor rust will devour – your capital. The less you are, the less you express your own life, the more you *have*, i.e., the greater is your *alienated* life, the greater is the store of your estranged being. Everything which the political economist takes from you in life and in humanity, he replaces for you in money and in *wealth*; and all the things which you cannot do, your money can do. It can eat and, drink, go to the dance hall and the

theatre; it can travel, it can appropriate art, learning, the treasures of the past, political power – all this it can appropriate for you – it can buy all this: it is true *endowment*.<sup>19</sup>

To sum up: a liberal used to be someone who resembled a metaphysician dazzled by pleasure. Contrary to our prolonged belief, however, it has turned out that man is not able to live solely in the here and now. Matter has a limited capacity. Once a per capita GDP of about \$25,000 per year has been achieved, our organ of consumption is no longer the belly, but the eye. This means that the present system will never be able to produce the quality or standard which we could permanently rely on in our actions. The eye can always eat more, so there is absolutely no substance and no set of services that could make us feel lastingly full. Accordingly, the tacit aspiration of the contemporary world has become the number, mechanical growth (aka development, progress, GDP, modernization), devoid of any ultimate goal, with money as its virtual measure. Buying and working in order to then be able to buy again, we do not fulfill our own desires, but we simply try to win the social game which has taken over the sphere once reserved for religion and idealistic philosophy. In this sense, what has been termed the post-secular or theological turn of much of the recent leftist thinking is not just a fancy way of souping up one's discourse. Its pivot and crux lies rather in a sober realization that in the infinite symbolic space of the current consumer market what we need is not just another fridge full of candy but the ability to stare down the abyss of human desire without letting ourselves be torn apart by succumbing to its endless whims. Make no mistake. The tremendous drive of Western civilization only seemingly originates in people's will to satisfy their individual needs. In fact, what we are much more into is the non-existent infinity.

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<sup>19</sup> K. Marx, F. Engels, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts and the Communist Manifesto*, transl. M. Milligan (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1988), 118-119.

# MIMETIC IMAGES, DOUBLE VISION, AND DRAMATIC POETRY IN PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*

The critique of poetry in Plato's *Republic* has so often been attacked or dismissed that it has difficulty gaining a fair hearing.<sup>1</sup> The first argument proffered by Socrates in Book X, which turns on an analogy with painting, has proved particularly unpopular. This is the familiar account of the "three beds," according to which objects depicted in works of art are imitations of objects encountered in the physical world, which in turn are imitations of divine objects, or "ideas." Even readers who are sympathetic to other aspects of Socrates' critique of poetry often dismiss this analogy as obtuse, tendentious, and naïve about how art functions. My aim in this essay is to urge a reconsideration of this much-maligned portion of the *Republic*. I shall be attending to some of the common sense intuitions that motivate the argument, and shall make a plea for its plausibility. I maintain that what are often regarded as three separate arguments against poetry in Book X should be understood to work together, and that Socrates uses the perspicuous example of optical illusion in painting to express a subtle point about the psychology of dramatic poetry. What Socrates' analysis reveals is that the spectator of a staged drama experiences a kind of double vision, a state in which his soul both believes and does not believe what he sees and hears. Recognizing this, we are in a better position to understand how the psychology of the divided soul worked out earlier in the *Republic* informs the aesthetic critique in Book X, and how Socrates' argument accounts for the particular power that dramatic poetry has over even the most reasonable and emotionally stable of spectators. While I do believe that, even on a maximally charitable interpretation, there are serious limitations to Socrates's account, to discern those limitations clearly, it is best to first put his case as strongly as

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the most iconic condemnation is in Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*, where he writes that Plato was "the greatest enemy of art that Europe has yet produced" (F. W. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. W. A. Kaufmann, R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), III, 25). What Nietzsche recognized, but a great many others have not, is that one's best enemy is also, paradoxically, one's friend (see *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Part I, "On the Friend"). Nietzsche's forbearer Schopenhauer writes that Plato's "disdain and rejection of art, especially poetry" was one of his "greatest and best known errors" (A. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* (New York: Dover Publications, 1969), I, 212). A recent commentator on the *Republic*, meanwhile, offers this invidious comparison: "Probably he [Plato] and the Taliban would see pretty much eye to eye as to what kind of art ought to remain" J. Young, *The Philosophy of Tragedy: From Plato to Žižek* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

possible.<sup>2</sup> In what follows, I attempt to do that by tracking the critique as it unfolds in three consecutive – ultimately, I maintain, unified – stages: the analogy with painting, the distinction between image and original, and the concept of a divided and desiring soul.

## MIMĒSIS AND THE ONTOLOGY OF IMAGES

Socrates begins, characteristically, with a question: “Could you tell me in general what *mimēsis* is?” he asks Glaucon. “For neither do I myself quite apprehend what it would be at (585c).”<sup>3</sup> He does not ask Glaucon for a direct answer, but rather, prompts him first to reflect on the way in which objects are made, taking the simple example of a couch. And although his ultimate purpose is to disclose the nature of images in poetry, he begins by way of an analogy with painting. Now, painted images obviously differ in many respects from those in poetry, but we are implicitly asked to entertain the possibility that, in respect of *mimēsis*, there is some essential sense in which they are the same, and it is *that* sense which Socrates endeavors to bring to light. Let us first consider, therefore, what Socrates tries to achieve by beginning with the example of painting. That done, we can then consider how the analogy works with regard to the real topic of concern, tragic poetry.

### Painting

*Mimēsis* and related terms have a wide range of application at the time Plato is writing. In the *Republic*, for example, Socrates uses it in earlier books to denote dramatic impersonation as distinct, in a formal sense, from narration (392c ff.) and to refer to the correspondence between a harmonic mode in music and certain human actions and experiences (399a-b), while elsewhere in the Platonic corpus the term has still other connotations.<sup>4</sup> At the root is the idea of a resemblance between two distinct things, but the particulars of that resemblance may vary greatly from case to case.<sup>5</sup> In the Book X discussion, by using painting as the exemplar of *mimēsis*, Socrates foregrounds visual appearance as the significant factor in the comparison, and in so doing, he emphasizes both the similarity and the difference in appearance between the two relevant objects. The image of a couch made by the painter certainly differs in some respects from that which a carpenter makes.

<sup>2</sup> For an attempt to interpret the significance of those limitations in the broader context of Plato’s overall teaching on tragedy, see T. Bartscherer, “The Ancient Quarrel Unsettled: Plato and the Erotics of Tragic Poetry” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2011). The present essay draws on and revises portions of that text.

<sup>3</sup> I have used the following English translations of the *Republic*: Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, trans. A. Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1968) and Plato, *The Republic*, trans. P. Shorey (Cambridge: Harvard (Loeb), 1935). Occasional minor alterations are not marked; my own translations are marked as such.

<sup>4</sup> For an overview see S. Halliwell, *Aristotle’s Poetics* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1986), 121; for a more detailed discussion see S. Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 2002), 37-48. Important work on the *mimēsis* word-group in the fourth century and earlier include G. F. Else, “‘Imitation’ in the Fifth Century,” *Classical Philology* 53.2 (1958); E. C. Keuls, *Plato and Greek Painting*, Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition, v. 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1978); H. Koller, *Die Mimesis in Der Antike: Nachahmung, Darstellung, Ausdruck*, Dissertationes Bernenses, ser. 1, fasc. 5 (Bernae: A. Francke, 1954); Halliwell, *Aristotle’s Poetics*, 109ff; Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, 15-22; E. A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963), 57-59; A. Nehamas, “Plato on Imitation and Poetry,” in *Virtues of Authenticity: Essays on Plato and Socrates* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> As Murray puts it, “broadly speaking, mimesis and its cognates indicate a relation between something which is and something made to resemble it,” P. Murray, ed., *Plato on Poetry*, Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), 3.

Most prominently, the latter is in two dimensions, the former in three. At the same time, the two must in some sense resemble one another, since it is this resemblance that permits us to correlate them – the painted image is *of* a couch, and not, say, *of* a chariot.

The crux of the issue comes across in the following exchange:

“I suppose you’ll say that [the painter] doesn’t truly make what he makes.  
And yet in a certain way the painter too does make a couch, doesn’t he?”  
“Yes,” [Glaucou] said, “he too makes what looks like a couch.”

(596e)

The painter makes what looks like a couch; he makes the appearance of a couch. But what, in relation to the original couch, is that thing which looks like it? What is a mimetic image? That difficult question, which will subsequently have a long and illustrious history in western philosophy, is what Socrates attempts to formulate through the discussion of a painted couch. He does not argue that the image is “an object *sui generis*, to be judged,” as R. G. Collingwood puts it in his influential interpretation, “by a standard peculiar to itself.”<sup>6</sup> Nor is it accurate to claim, as Alexander Nehamas does in rejecting Collingwood, that Plato’s position is “exactly the reverse,” i.e., that Plato holds that “the imitator of an F thing produces a seeming F thing, an object whose identity is constituted by the thing that it seems to be, not by any properties that it might have in its own right.”<sup>7</sup> The position advanced in Book X of the *Republic* lies in between these two extremes and is more puzzling than either of them. What Socrates plainly emphasizes is what we might call the ontological ambiguity of the mimetic image: there is a way in which the painter makes something that *is* a couch, and a way in which what he makes *is not* a couch.

We can locate this claim at several points. As we have already seen, Socrates proposes that the painter “doesn’t truly make what he makes. And yet in a certain way the painter too does make a couch,” a position to which Glaucou gives assent (596e). Just prior to this, Socrates introduces the idea of the mimetic artist with the same ambiguity, “Tell me, do you deny altogether the possibility of such a craftsman, or do you admit that in a sense [*tini men tropôî*] there could be such a creator of all these things, and in another sense [*tini de*] not?” (596 d-e). It is later asserted simply that the mimetic artist “makes what look like beings but are not” (599a). Again, the question is: what are those things are that “look like beings?” In the *Sophist*, the ambiguous ontological status of images is summarized in the Stranger’s remark that an image, though “not really being [*ouk on ... ontôs*],” nevertheless “really is that which we call an image.”<sup>8</sup> Jacob Klein catches

<sup>6</sup> Collingwood argues that the mimetic image does have this independent status, that this is the implication of the “doctrine of the three degrees of reality,” (R. G. Collingwood, “Plato’s Philosophy of Art,” *Mind* 34.134 (1925), 159). Nehamas opposes Collingwood’s notion of the radical independence of the art object, but he goes too far in the other direction – Nehamas, “Plato on Imitation and Poetry,” 262.

<sup>7</sup> Nehamas, “Plato on Imitation and Poetry,” 262-263.

<sup>8</sup> 240b 12-13 (my translation). There has been some debate over the text. Burnet prints: “*Ouk on ara [ouk] ontôs estin ontôs hên legomen eikona.*” (240b 12-13) – Plato, *Platonis Opera*, ed. J. Burnet, vol. I (Oxford: OUP, 1900). I follow the majority of English translators, as well as Heidegger in his commentary on the *Sophist*, in omitting the second *ouk*. P. Friedländer, *Plato*, 2 ed., v. 3 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1969), 520n39 and F. W. Kohnke, “Plato’s Conception of to Ouk Ontôs Ouk On,” *Phronesis* 2 (1957) believe it should be retained.

the character of this idea nicely when he writes that for Plato, “‘image’ is uniquely that which *is not* what it *is*.”<sup>9</sup>

However paradoxical this formulation might sound, I would like to suggest that there is some intuitive plausibility to what Socrates says. Most of the objects in our world do not immediately pose an ontological puzzle. We are utterly familiar with couches and tables; we use them without wondering about them. Their being in our world does not immediately raise a question about their being.<sup>10</sup> Not so with an image of a couch painted on a flat piece of wood. The image immediately raises a question about its being by resembling something else, and doing so not just accidentally but essentially. If we see only paint and wood, we are not seeing the image, and likewise if we see only a couch (a *trompe l’oeil* in a literal sense). Socrates is proposing that insofar as we call it the image (or painting or representation, etc.) of a couch, we are implying a certain ontological ambiguity, saying that the thing to which we are referring both is and is not a couch. To anticipate the subsequent direction of the inquiry for a moment, we can note here the analogous ambiguity in the three-dimensional world of the tragic theatre: the actor on the stage both is and is not Oedipus, son of Laius and Jocasta. If we see only a human being reciting words that he has memorized, we do not see the character in the play; if we see only Oedipus, we fail to see the enactment as an image.

Through the analogy with painting, Socrates is attempting to account for the inherent duality, or “two-foldedness” of our intercourse with images.<sup>11</sup> As we shall see below, this objective side of the argument, which ascribes ontological ambiguity to images, will be complemented by a subjective account later in Book X that posits a bifurcation in the mind of the spectator, a kind of double vision that characterizes our apprehension of images. For now, however, let us remain with the objects of *mimêsis*, but turn to an aspect of the painting analogy that conspicuously lacks the intuitive plausibility we have noted thus far. Socrates proposes that the couches and tables made by craftsmen – those objects of familiarity that we use unquestioningly and that are the originals relative to the copies made by painters – are themselves images in the sense specified, that they too are ontologically ambiguous.

Immediately after the passage cited above in which Glaucon assents to the claim that the painter both makes and does not make a couch, or as Glaucon rephrases it, that he makes “what looks like a couch,” Socrates asks:

“And what about the couchmaker? Weren’t you just saying that he doesn’t make the form, which is what we, of course, say a couch is, but a certain couch?”

“Yes,” he said, “I was saying that.”

“Then, if he doesn’t make what *is*, he wouldn’t make the being but something that is like the being, but is not being.”

(597a)

<sup>9</sup> J. Klein, *A Commentary on Plato’s Meno* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1989, 1965), 115. Klein is discussing the *eikones* as they are presented in connection with the divided line in *Republic*, Book VI.

<sup>10</sup> Heidegger expresses this as the “withdrawing” of what is “ready-to-hand”: “The peculiarity of what is proximally ready-to-hand [*zuhanden*] is that, in order to be ready-to-hand, it must, as it were, withdraw [*zurückziehen*] in order to be ready-to-hand quite authentically” – M. Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper, 1962), 99.

<sup>11</sup> The term “two-foldedness” comes from R. Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects: With Six Supplementary Essays*, 2 ed. (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge UP, 1980), 205-226.

The carpenter is the craftsman of a couch (597d5-6), but what he makes is not completely being (597a4). The carpenter's couch, then, is also something that "*is not* what it *is*," but unlike in the case of the painted image, this claim does not have *prima facie* plausibility. As noted above, a couch or table or any other piece of equipment from our daily lives seems to be eminently what it is, so much so that what it is, the being of the couch, does not pose itself as a question.<sup>12</sup> And yet Socrates claims that these objects, which serve as the originals relative to the images made by painters, are in turn images of some other objects that truly *are*.

In asking the question, Socrates claims that he and Glaucon are following a "customary procedure," positing a single form [*eidōs*] for each of the various many that bear the same name. Thus, there are many couches, but only one form of couch. The form is not made by the carpenter who makes the couches that are used for reclining, but that carpenter looks to the form, or idea, when making a particular couch (596a-b).

This invocation of the form of couch and subsequent references to a tripartite categorization of objects (form/artifact/mimetic image) has provoked many commentators to scorn the critique of poetry in the *Republic*. Plato's doctrinal commitment to a "theory of forms," so the argument goes, compels him to see poetic images as deficient in being and deceptive.<sup>13</sup> There is, however, good reason to resist this tendency. Even setting aside the general debate about the status of the forms in Plato's dialogues, it is important to recognize at the very least that, compared with other passages that deal with the forms, what is said in Book X about them is, as one critic puts it, "enormously peculiar."<sup>14</sup>

To summarize the most salient peculiarities:

1. it is suggested here (597b-d), and no where else in the Platonic corpus, that a god makes the forms, a position which conflicts with the usual assertion that the forms are eternal and self-subsistent;
2. unlike the earlier discussions of forms in the *Republic*, Book X relies on the one-over-many argument and implies that there is a form for every artifact, both of which raise serious difficulties<sup>15</sup>;

<sup>12</sup> Of course, something may happen to prompt us to confront this question. In Heidegger's language, the object may become *conspicuous* [*auffällig*], as for example, when it breaks (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 102 ff.). In the present case, it is Socrates' questions that prompt Glaucon to confront the question.

<sup>13</sup> One example may suffice to illustrate this familiar position: "If the actual world is only an approximation to the real, if particulars partake of universals by means of imitation (...) this forces an inescapable conclusion on Plato in respect of works of art which have already been shown to be mimetic (...): artistic products are copies of copies, twice removed from reality. They are then not only inferior to what we have got already, but ludicrously redundant. At best they are unnecessary; at worst, they are deceptive"[emphasis added] – E. Shaper, *Prelude to Aesthetics* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968), 44.

<sup>14</sup> Nehamas, "Plato on Imitation and Poetry," 257. On the dubiousness of this appeal to the forms, specifically in relation to the way the forms are treated elsewhere in Plato, see the following, all of which I draw on here: H. Cherniss, "On Plato's Republic X 597 B," *American Journal of Philology* 53.3 (1932); C. Griswold, "The Ideas and the Criticism of Poetry in Plato's *Republic*, Book 10," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* XIX.2 (1981); C. Janaway, *Images of Excellence: Plato's Critique of the Arts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 112; Nehamas, "Plato on Imitation and Poetry"; S. Halliwell, *Plato: Republic 10*, Classical Texts (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1988).

<sup>15</sup> Aristotle, for one, denies that on Plato's understanding there can be forms of artifacts (*Metaphysics*, 991b6-7), and Plato's own *Parmenides* raises doubts about the possibility that there is a form for every object in the world (130 c-d). For a discussion of the one-over-many argument and its relation to other bases for positing the existence of forms, see A. Nehamas, "Predication and Forms of Opposites in the *Phaedo*," *Review of Metaphysics* 26 (1973);

3. Socrates argues in Book X that the god made only one of each thing because, “if he should make only two, there would again appear one of which they both would possess the form or idea, and that would be the couch that really is in and of itself, and not the other two” (597c); but the problem re-asserts itself once the carpenter’s bed is said to be like (597a) or to be an image (600e) of the form; in other words, that which the two share in common and which constitutes their likeness would seem to be the real form, but to explain the commonality again would require positing another form, leading to an infinite regress, the familiar “third man argument” (cf. *Parmenides* 132e);
4. the carpenter, it would seem from this presentation, has knowledge of the forms (or at least, of the form of couch), whereas earlier in the book knowledge of the forms was reserved for philosophers who had gone through long and rigorous training (596b).

Given these difficulties and the conspicuously tentative formulations used by Socrates and Glaucon when referring to forms in this section, we should be wary of explicating the critique of poetry on the basis of assumptions about Plato’s commitment to a “theory of forms.” But that still leaves the task of explaining why Socrates chooses to cast the argument in these terms. By beginning with painting, as we have seen, he is attempting to offer a plausible account of the ambiguity inherent in mimetic images: in some immediate, intuitive sense we can recognize that the painting of a couch “is not what it is.” But by insisting that the same, or something analogous, is true of the carpenter’s couch – that it too manifests an ontological ambiguity – Socrates complicates the matter, introducing a claim that, if anything, seems to contradict immediate experience.

One way to account for this, as we have seen, is to appeal to Plato’s putative doctrinal commitments. Aside from the hermeneutical difficulties inherent in trying to establish what those commitments would be, such a solution also must ignore or somehow explain away the peculiarities listed above. Another approach is proposed by Harold Cherniss, who holds that what is said in Book X about the forms simply does not square with Platonic doctrine and argues that Plato’s aim in this section is “the final conviction of the mimetic arts” and the degradation of the artist, the pursuit of which trumps any commitment to doctrinal consistency.<sup>16</sup> Charles Griswold agrees with Cherniss that the treatment of forms in Book X is anomalous, but proposes that Socrates is being ironic and that the tripartite schema is an elaborate parody of the activity of mimetic poets.<sup>17</sup> Nehamas, meanwhile, maintains that “little of what Socrates says about the Forms is actually relevant to his definition of imitation,” and so chooses not to pursue the issue (257).

A. Nehamas, “Plato on the Imperfection of the Sensible World,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 12 (1975); Griswold, “The Ideas and the Criticism of Poetry...”

<sup>16</sup> Cherniss, “On Plato’s Republic X 597 B,” 239-40. Halliwell, in a similar vein, writes of the “ad hoc adaptation of the theory of forms” for the purpose of convicting mimetic art (Halliwell, *Plato: Republic* 10, 110).

<sup>17</sup> “It is very improbable that Socrates intends this schema to be a true representation of his conception of the Whole; it is far more probable that he intends it as a representation of the poet’s conception of the Whole” Griswold, “The Ideas and the Criticism of Poetry...,” 146).

I would like to suggest that there is a fairly straightforward way in which Socrates' tripartite schema serves the immediate purposes of the discussion, especially if we see the larger goal here as not so much conviction or degradation of the arts and artists, but rather elucidation of the nature of mimetic images. Socrates introduces a tripartition, in which two kinds of objects – exemplified by the carpenter's couch and the painter's couch – are both deemed to be images, can be compared and contrasted as such, and can potentially be distinguished from what is not an image. This enables Socrates to hone his definition of *mimēsis* by juxtaposing mimetic images with ones said to be made non-mimetically. And as we shall see subsequently, Socrates also uses the tripartite schema to indicate what is really at stake in the philosophical critique of poetry.

We have already noted the primary similarity between the painter's couch and the carpenter's couch qua image. Both, Socrates argues, are ontologically ambiguous; of each, it can be said that it is a couch and that it is not a couch. Let us first consider what it means to say that an image “is not what it is,” that the painter's or carpenter's couch, qua image, *is not* a couch. In holding this, Socrates is maintaining that an image is ontologically dependent on the original of which it is an image. As R. E. Allen puts it, images and reflections “depend upon their original both for their character and their existence; it depends on them for neither.”<sup>18</sup> Socrates' reference to mirrors emphasizes this quality of an image. The reflection of a couch in a mirror looks as it does because the couch looks as it does, and the former cannot exist without the latter. Socrates holds that all images have something like this kind of dependence on originals. Now, there is a sense – a purely physical sense – in which the lines and shadings that make up a painting of a couch are ontologically independent of, and on the same level as, the couch itself. Both are objects in the world. But insofar as the lines and colors constitute an image of a couch, Socrates maintains, they are ontologically dependent on an original.

A separate, but related question regards the way in which we come to understand images. Socrates' position implies that, just as the being of the image depends on the original, so too does our comprehension of images depend, in some essential way, on our familiarity with originals. Couches made by carpenters are ready-to-hand (*zuhanden* in Heidegger's sense), eminently familiar, and the painted image draws on that familiarity. Imagine two Attic panel paintings, one depicting two men beside one another in a chariot, the other depicting two men beside one another on a couch. In interpreting the images, the viewer draws on her familiarity with three-dimensional chariots and couches – what they are and what they are used for – and relies on this familiarity to interpret the scene. Even disregarding other potential cues (such as the disposition of the bodies, etc.), the viewer apprehends a difference based on familiarity with what people tend to do in chariots and what they tend to do on couches. The viewer may be mistaken, and the artist may deliberately thwart expectations, but the viewer's attempt to comprehend the significance of the images will nevertheless rely on a familiarity with the three-dimensional exemplars of the objects depicted.

<sup>18</sup> R. E. Allen, “Participation and Predication in Plato Middle Dialogues,” in *Plato: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Gregory Vlastos (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1971), 179.

An important clarification needs to be made here. Does Socrates mean to be saying that a painting of a couch is dependent upon the existence of a particular three-dimensional couch, that very one which supposedly served as a model for the painter in making the image? This is sometimes assumed, and when it is, it often becomes grounds for rejecting the whole argument as naïve or obtuse about art. Socrates, it is assumed, limits artistic *mimêsis* to a kind of radical verisimilitude, its goal being the accurate reproduction of the appearance of existing objects.<sup>19</sup> There are, however, no grounds for placing such strictures on Socrates' conception of artistic *mimêsis*, and good reason for believing otherwise. At one point in the *Republic*, Socrates asks Glaucon whether he thinks a painter

would be any the less a good painter, who, after portraying a pattern of the fairest human being and omitting no touch required for the perfection of the picture, should not be able to prove that it is actually possible for such a man to exist?" "Not I, by Zeus," he said.

(472d)

This passage and others in the dialogue strongly suggest that Socrates does not limit painting to the copying of discrete, existing objects.<sup>20</sup> The claim is rather that images depend on originals in a general way. To the extent we recognize the world portrayed in a work of art, it is not because we are familiar with the particular, existing objects, but because we have a general familiarity with objects of that kind. Many questions might be raised about this theory. To cite the most obvious complaint, artists often portray objects with which we can have no familiarity because they do not exist, such as satyrs. Without going into detail here, one can note that there are some resources in Socrates' account to cover such objections, beginning with his explicit acknowledgment that "painters paint goat-stags and such things by making mixtures" (488a).

Returning to our main argument, we reiterate that Socrates maintains that an image *is not* what it is insofar as it is ontologically dependent on an original. But it is important to remember that for Socrates there is another sense in which an image *is* what it is. The painter does make a couch, but in a certain way. When Socrates first presents the idea of an artisan who can make everything, he notes that Glaucon may doubt that it is possible, but suggests that in a certain way [*tini men*] such a maker could come into being, and in a certain way [*tini de*] not (596cd). This language is picked up when Socrates says that the painter "doesn't truly make what he makes. And yet in a certain way the painter too does make a couch" [*kaitoi tropôi ye tini kai ho zôgraphos klinên poiei*] (596e). The way in which the painter makes what he makes is *mimêsis*. What he makes, his version of the couch, is, as Glaucon says immediately thereafter, a thing that appears [*phainomenên*], something that looks like (the original) couch. These *phainomena*, later called *eidôla* (599a), are the products of mimetic making. The couch made by the painter is "far from the truth" (598b), but not altogether

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, 5th ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1977), 83 and J. Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (Oxford: OUP, 1981), 336.

<sup>20</sup> See 484c and 500e-501c, which also imply that painters are not restricted to mechanical or photographic-like reproduction of the phenomenal world.

without being as a couch. The painter does not make his product in the same way the carpenter makes his, but it is in a certain sense a couch. The carpenter's product, though it too is still at a remove from the truth, or *form*, of couch, is still "a certain couch" [*klinên tina*] (597a2). As Socrates later summarizes, "there turn out, then, to be these three kinds of couches: one that *is* in nature (...) which a god produced (...) and then one that the carpenter produced (...) and one that the painter produced" (597b). Now, the tripartite schema does have the effect, as everyone knows, of denying some aspect or degree of being to images in general, of downgrading them ontologically. And so, as is often noted, Socrates will eventually conclude that *mimêsis* is merely "a kind of play" (602b). But play is not equivalent to frivolity in the dialogues: in the *Republic* itself Socrates says that the conversation he's conducting is a kind of "playing" (536c; and see *Phaedrus* 265c; *Timaeus* 59d; *Laws* 803c). There is, indeed, more going on in this characterization of mimetic making than simple denigration.

Although the couches made by the painter are, on this reading, less real than the originals on which they are based, they are still *couches* in a sense that matters for our understanding of them. In specifying that a given image is an image of a couch, we are not only indicating its ontological dependency on the original, but are also recognizing that part of what it is – what distinguishes it from other things – is its "couchness." The significance of this will become more clear when Socrates turns to poetry, where the parallel point is that the ethical and political life created by the poet, though less real than the life lived by Athenian citizens, still has a degree of reality.

The significance of this is missed if one believes that Socrates (or Plato) insists on the "utter transparency of imitation," or that *mimêsis* is an activity "aiming at but not achieving virtual identity with its model."<sup>21</sup> This latter position is taken by Keuls, who contrasts *mimêsis* so understood with "dramatic impersonation," which she argues is the root meaning of the term (9-14). On Keuls's reading, and others of a similar nature, Socrates' conception of *mimêsis* underplays or ignores the "enactment of life" – either literally in the theatre or by metaphorical extension in other arts – that is central to the pre-Platonic conception of *mimêsis*. But this concern with the "enactment of life" is in fact vital in *Republic* X. Even as Socrates emphasizes the ontological inferiority of an image, he still holds that "in a certain way the painter too does make a couch," a claim that applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the mimetic artist of the theatre (596e).

While both the painter's and the carpenter's couch are images, and as such both are ontologically ambiguous, they differ in one crucial respect, which is decisive for Socrates' conception of *mimêsis*: the originals on which mimetic images are based are themselves also images, those on which non-mimetic images are based are not. Only if there were an original that is not also an image would it be free of the ambiguity and *be* completely what it *is*.<sup>22</sup> And only on that basis would one be able to make an ultimate distinction between the products of *mimêsis* and other objects in the world and to judge the relative being and truth of an image. Such originals, called *eidê*, are of course that which in the earlier portions of the dialogue Socrates nominates as the supreme objects of human desire, rightly understood

<sup>21</sup> Nehamas, "Plato on Imitation and Poetry," 264; Keuls, *Plato and Greek Painting*, 13.

<sup>22</sup> As Benardete puts it, "The answer to the question, What is being? should lie in that which being does not share with the image" – Plato, *The Being of the Beautiful*, trans. S. Benardete, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), II, 119.

as the desire of the highest or reasoning part of the soul. The potential to confuse image and original, and the effort to ground a distinction between them, thus has ramifications not only for the account of *mimēsis*, but also for the broad psychological and ethical schema developed over the course of the dialogue, as we shall see in more detail below.

At this point, however, we need to take up the question of how the analogy with painting bears on our understanding of Socrates' critique of tragic drama. Specifically, if the analogy is in part designed to focus attention on the relationship between image and original, then we are inevitably prompted to ask what the original is of which tragedy is the image, and likewise, who the maker of that original is. In other words, when the tripartite schema is applied to drama, what corresponds to the carpenter and his couch? It is sometimes asserted, usually in putative defense of Plato, that he did not mean for the analogy to be taken too seriously and that it should not be "pressed," presumably to avoid embarrassing inconsistencies. I shall be arguing, on the contrary, that if we answer this line of questioning by following the analogy through, it yields a much richer conception of dramatic poetry than is usually ascribed to the *Republic*.

After the interlocutors have concluded that *mimēsis* is "far from the truth" and is directed toward objects which themselves are only images or phantoms (597e-598b), Socrates makes a peculiar addendum that, in at least two respects, prepares the way for the application of the tripartite schema to the case of drama. *Mimēsis*, he says,

touches or lays hold of only a small part of the object and that a phantom; as, for example, a painter, we say, will paint us a cobbler, a carpenter, and other craftsmen, though he himself has no expertness in any of these arts, but nevertheless if he were a good painter, by exhibiting at a distance his picture of a carpenter he would deceive children and foolish men, and make them believe it to be a real carpenter.

(598b-c)

Leaving behind the main example used thus far – the couch – Socrates proposes instead the curious notion of paintings that depict craftsmen such as cobblers and that are capable of deceiving some people into believing that they are not mimetic images of these men but are the living men themselves.

One fairly obvious point of this passage is to introduce the claim that making an image does not necessarily entail a full knowledge of the original. The claim is plausible enough: a painter need not have an expert knowledge of carpentry in order to render a compelling portrait of a carpenter. It is a point that could have been made just as readily with regard to the original example of the couch: a painter could be ignorant of many things about couches (e.g. how the internal joints are constructed, etc.) and still make a persuasive image of one. But the introduction of portraiture is material to the larger goals of Socrates' argument. While the example used – of an artist in a minor medium who depicts a manual laborer and deceives fools and children observing from a distance – is deliberately comical, it sets the stage for the more serious case of an artist working in the preeminent cultural medium (tragic poetry); depicting kings and queens, sages and gods; and potentially deceiving the majority of citizens as they observe from the distant of spectators at the

Theater of Dionysus. The nature of the deception may of course differ, as children differ from adults. But the key question, as Socrates poses it in the immediate sequel, is whether tragic poets have full knowledge of what they portray, whether they “know all the arts and all things human pertaining to virtue and vice, and all things divine” (598d-e).

Switching the example from couch to craftsman has, I believe, a second purpose as well. In the case of the painter depicting a couch, if we follow out Socrates' argument, the claim is that the painter need not know what the carpenter knows about making couches. This illustrates the general assertion that the knowledge possessed by the image-maker is inferior to that which is possessed by the maker of the original. But what about when a painter depicts not a couch but a carpenter? In that case, who is the maker of the original? Who makes a carpenter? The question is not, “who makes a human being?” in a biological sense, to which the answer might be: “his parents.” It is more specific: who makes the person who has the skills and performs the functions of a carpenter? It could not be the god mentioned earlier (597b-d), for even if we put aside doubts regarding the seriousness of this invocation of a form-making god, such a god would, following the logical scheme, have to be the maker of the *form* of carpenter, not of individual embodied carpenters.

Though the question is not explicitly addressed, the underlying thought, I propose, is that the maker of the carpenter is the human being who is a carpenter, the person who has the technical knowledge and performs the actions of a carpenter. Such a man is not wholly and simply a carpenter – for example, he may also be an Athenian and a father – but insofar as he is practicing the art of carpentry, he is, in a certain sense, “making a carpenter,” making himself a carpenter. Seen this way, Socrates does not undermine the tripartite schema, as some have argued, but rather indicates how it should be applied in more complex cases. Thus, the earlier claim that the craftsman looks “to the idea of each implement” when making the physical object (596b3-4) can be seen to fit this latter case. The man who practices the art, in doing all of his work, can be said to look to the form of carpenter. His “making” consists in striving toward the perfect practice of carpentry.

Through the discussion of painting, Socrates stakes out a position on *mimêsis*, the cardinal points of which we can summarize as follows. Certain aspects of a mimetic image are true of all images: it is ontologically ambiguous (it is and is not what it is) and dependent on an original; the original is truer and more real than the image; but the image has a certain reality or being in itself. Finally, the image can be made without full knowledge of the original. The distinguishing feature of a mimetic image is that the original on which it depends is itself an image or appearance, dependent in turn on another original. The implication, as I shall be discussing in more detail below, is that only in the case of originals that are not also images would there be no ambiguity and only if there are such originals can the relative status of image and original finally be settled.

## Poetry

Let us consider the implications of this understanding of *mimêsis* if applied to tragic poetry. In the case of both Homeric epic and tragic drama, we can identify two kinds of mimetic artists at work, and Socrates' analysis of image-making applies equally to both. There is the poet – a Homer or a Euripides – and the performer, a rhapsode for epic and an actor for drama. Both poet and performer engage in *mimêsis*, and although in

*Republic X* Socrates does not refer explicitly to performers, it is evident that he has in mind poetry in performance; at times, in fact, he specifically targets the performative dimension of *mimêsis*.<sup>23</sup>

The most vivid description of mimetic performance in the dialogues occurs in the *Ion*, wherein Socrates speculates on what happens during a recital by his interlocutor, the renowned rhapsode Ion. “When you recite epic poetry well,” he asks,

do you get beside yourself? And doesn’t your soul, in its enthusiasm, believe that it is present at the actions you describe, whether they’re in Ithaca or in Troy or wherever the epic actually takes place?<sup>24</sup>

(535b)

Ion emphatically agrees, adding “when I tell a sad story, my eyes are full of tears; and when I tell a story that’s frightening or awful, my hair stands on end with fear and my heart jumps” (535c). Moreover, this profound effect is not limited to the rhapsode: Ion and Socrates concur that the spectators are equally moved.

This is the sort of *mimêsis* Socrates ultimately wants to analyze in the *Republic* as well, and his preliminary discussion of painting prepares for that analysis. He will eventually supplement the analysis of the nature or being of images with a psychological analysis that focus on how the soul receives and reacts to them. Scholars typically regard these as separate arguments and some who engage with the psychological account simply dismiss the analysis of images. Thomas Gould, for example, writes that the ontological argument is “peripheral in the context of Plato’s second attack (...) and should not be allowed to deflect us from the main challenge, which is psychological rather than ontological.”<sup>25</sup>

In fact, the two are tightly woven together in the dialogue. To feel the impact of this point, we can imagine attending a performance of Euripides’ *Medea*. We hear the protagonist bewail the fate of the exile and the lot of women, we witness her deceive Creon and Jason, we watch as she resolves to slay her children. It is Medea we are seeing. And yet, of course, it is not Medea but an actor reciting lines. To the objection that these artists have not truly made Medea, Socrates would respond that yet in a certain way they have made her. On Socrates’ analysis, the drama works, it succeeds at being a drama, if it sustains this ontological ambiguity. A central aspect of the psychological explanation of the power of tragedy that Socrates will offer toward the end of the discussion is his claim that we “give ourselves over to following the imitation, suffering along with the hero and taking it seriously” (605d). Yet the reason we do so, according to Socrates, is because the imitation has a certain degree of reality to it. At the same time, and equally importantly, the imitation is not so real that the spectator is moved to intervene and, say, try to save the children. In this sense, the mimetic image in drama, like the painted couch, both is and is not what it is.

<sup>23</sup> See 604e and 605c-606b. In Book III, moreover, Socrates does identify the work of the dramatic actor [*hupokritês*] as mimetic (395a7-b1).

<sup>24</sup> P. Woodruff, trans., in Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997).

<sup>25</sup> T. Gould, *The Ancient Quarrel between Poetry and Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990), 31.

Socrates' analysis of mimetic images is designed to focus attention on this ontological ambiguity, which lies at the core of dramatic poetry in performance. Like the painter, the mimetic poet makes images or phantoms. And just as the painter's couches and tables are dependent on originals, so too are the dramatist's characters. We asked, above, what the original is of which tragedy is the image. Here is Socrates' answer:

Imitation [and note that this comes once the discussion has shifted from painting to poetry], we say, imitates human beings performing forced or voluntary actions, and as a result of the action, believing themselves to have done well or badly, and in all this experiencing pain or enjoyment.

(603c)

The images made by the tragic poet depend on an order of reality with which we are eminently familiar – the habits of human beings, their exploits, successes and failures, pleasure and pains. As spectators, our comprehension of *Medea* draws on our familiarity with, for example, the relations between parents and children. We have intimate and extensive experience with them and this informs our expectations about how each will behave and about the consequences of any given action. Euripides' image is dependent on this lived experience, which, according to the argument, is more real than the image created by the poet.

This claim has important consequences for how we understand drama. It means both that the poet does not create his images *ex nihilo* and also that, for those images to be comprehensible to the spectators, there must be some forms of ethical life shared by poet and audience. Socrates makes this latter point when he argues that what is depicted on the stage must be to some degree familiar to the audience or else it will not be understood:

The intelligent and temperate disposition, always remaining approximately the same, is neither easy to imitate nor to be understood when imitated, especially by a nondescript mob assembled in the theater. For the representation imitates a type that is alien to them.

(604e-605a)

We should be careful to gauge properly the prerequisite of familiarity. On the one hand, it does not mean that the poet is limited merely to faithfully reproducing things that have happened or even the types of things that commonly happen. As noted above, Socrates acknowledges that a painter may depict “a pattern [*paradeigma*] of the most beautiful human being” and even maintains that such a painter would be no less good should he “not be able to prove that it is actually possible for such a man to exist” (472d). He makes a similar admission when, in trying to conjure an image [*eikôn*] to explain the relationship between philosophy and the city in Book VI, he says that “there is no single thing like it” and so he “must bring together many things in such a combination as painters mix when they portray goat-stags and similar creatures” (488a). Socrates does not deny this kind of artistic freedom to poetry. On the other hand, his critique does presume a baseline of familiarity and, correspondingly, it describes some

limitations to the poet's power. To be comprehensible to the spectator, the poet's images must rely to a certain extent on the way people live; the ethical life represented on the stage must, to some degree, resemble the lived experience of the spectator, or else risk being incomprehensible.

This realm of familiar ethical life corresponds to the implements made by craftsmen; it is the original on the basis of which the poet and performer make images. The mimetic artist draws from life, from the imperfect mothers and children, queens and servants, tyrants and warriors who populate the world, and his work is informed by their beliefs and desires. As in the case of the painter, this does not mean that any given mimetic image will necessarily be based on a specific, unique original in the material world. Euripides' *Medea* need not be a strictly verisimilar depiction of some woman who has lived. Rather, it means that, insofar as the poet makes mimetic images of specific individuals and concrete scenarios, he relies on the world of lived experience in general. As a princess, *Medea* resembles actual princesses; as a mother, actual mothers, etc. The poet makes an image of such real or imagined individuals; he depicts this realm of embodied life and the beliefs and desires that attend it.

A painter, Socrates had argued, can depict a carpenter without knowing what his subject knows about carpentry. Likewise, making *Medea*, Euripides need not know what women who are mothers know about motherhood; in making Creon as a king, he would not need to know what men who are kings know about ruling. Moreover, since *mimēsis* "touches or lays hold of only a small part of the object" (598b), the appearance and not the truth of the object, Euripides could persuasively represent a mother or a princess or a king in certain circumstances without grasping the full complexity of a particular individual who is a mother or princess or king in all facets of her or his life.

According to Socrates, however, lived experience is not the ultimate truth of ethical life. More real and more true than what human beings merely suffer and their opinions about their experiences is what, potentially, they can securely know about ethical life. On this rests the very idea of a difference between opinion and knowledge, and if the difference holds, it does so because the object of knowledge is a *form*. But the truth of forms is not "enactable"; it merely and wholly *is* what it *is*. The forms have being, but are not, as Socrates says in the *Symposium*, "polluted by human flesh (...) or any other great nonsense of mortality" (211e).<sup>26</sup>

The tripartite schema, then, is not only, and not even primarily, designed to deny the poet knowledge of forms. The schema does, however, underwrite Socrates' account of the nature of mimetic images. They are not and cannot be copies of *eidē*. According to the argument in Book X, the relationship between an idea or form and its image is not mimetic: the material couch made by a craftsman is an image, but it is not a product of *mimēsis*; and likewise, the ethical life of human beings may in some sense be an image, but it is also not a product of *mimēsis*. In contrast, both the painter's couch and Euripides' *Medea* are mimetic images. Thus, even if Euripides were to have knowledge of *eidē*, his tragedies would not be, could not be, images of *eidē*.

<sup>26</sup> Nehamas and Woodruff, trans., in Plato, *Complete Works*.

Socrates uses the analogy with painting to develop an understanding of mimetic images in poetry that is rooted in common experience but transcends that experience in the act of explaining it. He will again use this analogy in his complementary analysis of how human beings apprehend and respond to those images, to which we now turn.

### **THE POWER OF IMAGES – THE PSYCHOLOGY OF BELIEF AND THE SPECTACLE OF SUFFERING**

Thus far we have focused on the first of the three-part analysis of poetry in *Republic* Book X, which is, broadly speaking, ontological and epistemological (595c-602c). The two subsequent parts can be characterized as primarily psychological, the first specifying the part of the soul over which *mimêsis* exercises its power (602c-605c) and the final one, the “greatest accusation against *mimêsis*,” demonstrating how this power works, i.e., how mimetic poetry succeeds in maiming the souls of those who attend to it (605c-606d). What I wish to emphasize in this discussion is that the three parts of the critique must be understood together and that, as Socrates suggests at the start of Book X, this argument is informed by the psychology of the divided soul developed earlier in the *Republic*.

The second stage of Socrates’ critique of poetry begins with a response to the following question about *mimêsis*: “on which one of the parts of the human being does it have the power it has?” (602c). Socrates again starts with an analogy from the visual world and the art of painting, although as before, his real target is tragic poetry. Painting will ultimately be said to have power over the “ordinary” or “inferior” [*phaulos*] part of the soul, in contrast to the “best” [*beltistos*] part, identified as the *logistikon*. The two are distinguished by considering the relatively common case of optical illusions – e.g. a stick looking bent when partially submerged in water, the appearance of depth induced by color and shading. In such cases, “contrary appearances are presented at the same time about the same things” (602e). *Logistikon*, which measures and calculates, can undertake an investigation and determine that the stick is straight, but for all that it will still look bent. Because the interlocutors had earlier agreed that it is impossible for a part of the soul to hold contrary opinions simultaneously about the same things (602e cf. 436b), Socrates proposes that two distinct aspects of the soul, holding opposite opinions, must be in play in the case of such optical illusions. *Logistikon*, he says, trusts or believes “measure and calculation,” whereas the other part simply believes what it sees. Glaucon readily agrees that the *logistikon* is the best part of the soul and that whatever diverges from it must be inferior.

These considerations are finally generalized to apply to “painting and *mimêsis* as a whole” (603a). While the psychology of vision implicit in the argument is certainly debatable, this should not distract us from a more important point in the exchange. The deeper concern here is the phenomenon of belief in appearances. Significantly, the claim is not that the capacity to measure and calculate does away with the mistaken belief. Rather, the belief persists in part of the soul but is somehow overruled by the superior faculty, with which it is in constant struggle. It is because we have this tendency to believe in the truth of an appearance, even though it may be deceptive, that *mimêsis* gains purchase over us.

One can imagine a panel painting depicting Helen overlooking the plain of Troy. Insofar as the viewer takes this to be a mix of certain pigments covering a measurable amount of surface space on a piece of wood, the *logistikon* holds sway in the soul. But

insofar as one sees the captivating princess standing on the ramparts of Troy during a battle, something else predominates. When the image succeeds *as an image*, the viewer in some sense “sees” Helen. On the account Socrates offers here, seeing Helen would not be the business of the *logistikon*, but of the inferior part of the soul. While that part believes it sees the princess, the *logistikon* simultaneously (*hama*) judges that it is seeing paint on wood.<sup>27</sup> As a rule, *logistikon* prevails in such cases; the viewer knows that the image is not Helen, that the stick in water is not bent. But Socrates is suggesting that *mimēsis* exercises its power insofar as the soul is induced to take, or mistake, the way something seems for the way it is.

Since poetry is equally mimetic, the same argument that holds for painting should apply to it as well. Insofar as a spectator of a tragedy sees Oedipus and not a mere actor, in other words, he would be under the deceptive power of mimetic poetry. And while this does seem to be Socrates’ ultimate position, he does not immediately draw this conclusion. Rather, he insists that he and Glaucon not simply trust the analogy, but that they examine poetry itself to see whether it too has power over an inferior part of the soul (603b-c). They conclude that it does (605-c), but whereas in the discussion of painting they drew attention to the capacity of mimetic images to induce mistaken belief in appearances, i.e., to pass off seeming for being, the corresponding examination of poetry concentrates on the power of *mimēsis* to draw in and please the mass of spectators.

It is established that poetic *mimēsis* portrays human beings in action, and further that this action – the original of which the poetic performance is the image – gives rise to opposition within the soul. Socrates offers the example of responding to misfortune. The parent who loses a child is beset by conflicting desires: to lament and to refrain from lamentation. These contradictory desires stem from two different aspects of the soul: reasoned argument [*logos*] and custom or law [*nomos*] persuade the best part of the soul to refrain from mourning and to persevere, while it is “the suffering itself,” says Socrates rather cryptically, that draws the inferior part to the pain. When the inferior part holds sway, he will later add, it leads the soul toward “reminiscences of the suffering and complaints,” for which it is insatiate [*aplēstōs*] (604d).

To repeat the orienting question: over which part of the soul does *mimēsis* exercise its power – over the part that follows *logos* and *nomos* or over that which is drawn to suffering and lamentation? Socrates makes a circumstantial and somewhat dubious case for the latter, along the following lines. In the first place, it is easier to depict emotionally volatile characters, those in whom the pathos-loving part of the soul reigns, than characters with stable dispositions in whom the desire to follow reason and law predominates. It is assumed that poets will take the easier road, so one can anticipate that they will tend to portray the passionate sorts. Secondly, volatile characters are more easily understood by the majority of spectators, Socrates maintains, because the spectators themselves are of this nature. The more they understand the characters, the more they will take pleasure in seeing them

<sup>27</sup> To employ Richard Wollheim’s distinction between “seeing-as” and “seeing-in,” one could say that each part of the soul, individually, engages in “seeing-as”: the superior part sees the painting as pigment on surface; the inferior part sees Helen. Something like Wollheim’s two-fold experience of “seeing-in,” in which the viewer simultaneously apprehends both, would emerge from this account through the interplay of these competing apprehensions. See Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects*, 205-26.

depicted and the more they will honor the author. Therefore, if poets desire to win the approval of the public, they will depict characters who are ruled by the pathos-loving part of the soul. Insofar as spectators are drawn to such works, their own souls must be governed in like manner. The majority of spectators, according to Socrates, are enamored of the spectacle of their own emotions and so for the same reason will be drawn to the depiction of emotion on the stage. Poetry thus appeals to and gratifies the inferior part of the soul, and so Socrates concludes that in the case of both painting and poetry, it is over the lower part of the soul that *mimêsis* has its power (604d-605b).

Many legitimate objections might be raised here, but to pursue them would take us far afield. From the evidence we have, however, Socrates does at least seem to be correct that the heroes of Greek literature, and particularly those of tragic drama, tended to be men and women of exorbitant passion. And the allure of such depictions is at the center of Socrates' concern in this second argument. Given the centrality of tragedy to Athenian culture, the power of these passion plays was an undeniable empirical fact, but why should displays of excessive emotion so captivate the imagination? Taking the example of suffering as paradigmatic for the dramatic enactment of emotion, Socrates offers a two-step explanation. In the first place, he argues that, despite the urgings of *logos* and *nomos*, which dictate that one who suffers misfortune should shun lamentation, it is "the suffering [*pathos*] itself" which "draws him to the pain [*lupas*]" (604b). In some primordial way, Socrates argues, we are attracted by suffering.

Some clarification of the term *pathos* will be helpful here. In classical Greek, the primary sense of *pathos* is simply "that which happens" to a person or thing (LSJ). It can also be used of that which one undergoes or experiences, good or bad, that which one "suffers" both in the rarer, more neutral sense of that English word and in the more common sense of an experience accompanied by pain. As it relates to the soul, it often means more generally what we would call a passion or an emotion. In regard to the *Republic* passage with which we are concerned (604b), the *pathos* involved is clearly qualified as painful. As Adam suggests, the word here refers to "the affliction itself (...) objectively understood."<sup>28</sup> Socrates is making a symmetrical argument: just as *logos* and *nomos* are objective factors influencing the best part of the soul, so is *pathos* here conceived objectively as something that influences, in its turn, the inferior part of the soul.

Even if one accepts that the *pathos* is to be understood objectively, the passage still remains somewhat opaque. Gould argues that *pathos* in this instance means "the pitiable event" (32n3). If this is correct, the *pathos* in the example Socrates gives would be the actual circumstances of the child's death. The event – some dreadful accident, say – runs like a film loop in the mind of the grieving father, a reminiscence from which he cannot turn away and which causes him constantly to re-experience the pain of his loss. Adam's reading suggests something rather more subtle: it is not the reminiscence of the event, but the father's own state of suffering regarded objectively by the man himself that holds him transfixed in his pain: he is a captive spectator of his own suffering. In either case, the crucial point is the emphasis placed on the power of the spectacle. Something about

<sup>28</sup> For Adam, see Plato, *The Republic*, ed. James Adam, 2 ed., 2 vols. (Cambridge: CUP, 1963), 410.

this *pathos* draws in the sufferer and fixates him on his pain, in opposition to the stern, stoical demands of *logos* and *nomos*.

The second step of Socrates' explanation consists in the crucial and equally controversial claim that this phenomenon is transferable to the experience of drama. That in us which is drawn with insatiable desire to our own suffering is drawn also to tragedy. The common factor is enjoyment in the spectacle of emotion, whether it be played out on the inner stage of the mind through reminiscence of one's own *pathos*, or on the public stage of the Theatre of Dionysus through the enactment of the *pathos* of a tragic hero. The claim is implicit in the second argument, but it will be spelled out clearly in the sequel, when Socrates lodges the "greatest accusation" against *mimêsis*.

### **THE POWER OF IMAGES – THE GREATEST ACCUSATION**

In the ascending stages of the argument against poetry, the third is both a culmination or completion of the previous two and a decisive advance. As noted above, it has sometimes been maintained that the first stage of the argument is not a serious or substantial part of the critique of poetry, and the analogy with painting, especially as used in the second stage of the argument, is often thought either to fail in its attempt to prove anything about poetry, or simply to have no real relevance to poetry. What all of these interpretations have in common is an insufficient appreciation of how the three stages are tied together and how the third completes the argument.

Now, it is certainly accurate to recognize that the analogy between painting and poetry in the second stage is strained. The most that can be said for it is that the power of the mimetic image in both cases is correlated with an aspect of the soul that is inferior to *logistikon*. But both the character of the inferior part and the nature of the correlation are different in each case. In the case of painting, the relevant fallibility is the soul's propensity to believe what it sees, to trust in appearance, whereas in poetry, it is the soul's penchant for indulging in emotional excess. Had Socrates made the case for the identity of these parts – that the two are one and the same – it would have given bite to the analogy. But while he may mean to leave that impression, he does not make nor does he defend this less than self-evident claim. Moreover, there is the difference in correlation. Painted images are related to the inferior part of the soul insofar as they exploit the soul's belief in appearances to achieve their effect. Poetry, by contrast, relates to the inferior part insofar as it both imitates and pleases it. That is to say, the tragic poet depicts souls that are ruled by emotion, and it is the same type of soul, driven by an insatiable desire for *pathos*, that will be attracted to tragedy. Again, given this incongruity, it is hard to see the force of the analogy. And yet, as Socrates summarizes the first two stages of his critique, he emphasizes the significance of the insights he has drawn from them. The imitative poet, he says, "makes phantoms (...) far removed from the truth" (the first stage), and gratifies "the soul's foolish part, which doesn't distinguish big from little, but believes the same things are at one time big and at another little" (the second stage) (605b-c). The foolishness he refers to here is not the excess of passion correlated with poetry, but rather, the belief in appearance that was brought out in connection with painting. The analogy is thus not left behind but rather re-asserted at the end of the second stage of the critique.

It is only once we recognize that the third stage is a completion of the previous two that the purpose of the paired discussion of painting and poetry becomes clear. Socrates uses the perspicuous example of optical illusion in painting to express a subtle point about the psychology of dramatic poetry. When witnessing a tragedy, he is proposing, the soul in part believes what it sees – i.e., that it sees not a fellow citizen behind a mask pretending to suffer and declaiming words penned by Sophocles, but Oedipus himself suffering and lamenting. To see how this works, we turn now to what Socrates calls the “greatest accusation” against *mimêsis*.

As with the second, this final portion of the argument aims to explain the power of poetic – and now, emphatically, tragic – images. Socrates first puts the case this way:

When even the best of us hear Homer or any other of the tragic poets imitating one of the heroes in mourning and making an extended speech with lamentation (...) you know that we enjoy it and that we give ourselves over to following the imitation, suffering along with the hero and taking it seriously.

(605c-d)

The spectator of a tragedy, whether performed by a rhapsode or by actors at the theater, identifies in a significant way with one or more characters in the drama, such that the spectator shares the experience of the character. At the same time, the spectator must on some level regard the events depicted on stage not merely as play-acting. He takes them seriously; in some sense, he believes what he sees; the suffering is real. And as the spectator has identified with the character, so he suffers with him. We “give ourselves over to following the imitation, suffering along [*sumpaschontes*] with the hero and taking it seriously.” Furthermore, what was intimated in the second part of the argument is here made explicit: we enjoy or take pleasure (*chairô*) in this shared suffering (605d).

Now, the belief in the appearance is of course not absolute. No one in the theatre is so persuaded by the portrayal as to try to rescue Medea's children from her knife. Just as, in the case of seeing an optical illusion, the soul experiences contrary impressions, so too in the case of witnessing a tragedy. Socrates' picture of the divided soul is designed to capture precisely this kind of double vision: part of the soul believes the appearance and sees Medea, while part of the soul relies on reason and is not taken in by the illusion. It is here that we see the three arguments in Book X's critique of poetry converge in an account of the dynamic psychology of drama. The first section of the critique argues for a fundamental ambiguity regarding what an image *is*: in our example, Medea on the stage is both the princess from Colchis and an Athenian citizen wearing a mask reciting lines. The second and third sections complement this account of what an image is with an account of the power that images have over the soul. Although the language is not Socratic, we can say that Socrates offers first an ontological argument and then a corresponding psychological argument; or that he completes an objective account of what images are with a subjective account of how they are apprehended. In so doing, he renders a nuanced model of the characteristic duplexity, not to say duplicity, of the experience of drama.

As noted above, the third stage of the argument is not only a completion of the previous two, but also an advance. The previous section focused on the power of tragedy over “the many,” those driven by base desires. Socrates now asserts that even “the best of us” (605c7); even the decent [*epieikeis*] people whose lives are guided by what is best in the soul, who trust measure and calculation, and who heed the call of *logos* and *nomos*; even, it seems, Socrates himself (607c; 607e) can fall under the spell of tragedy.

On the basis of what Socrates has said in the previous two stages of the argument, the decent man ought to be immune to such experiences. In the first place, as one who is ruled by the best part of the soul, he would not identify with passion-driven heroes. Likewise, whatever in him might be prone to believe in the appearance would be overruled by calculating reason. Moreover, even if he were to be enchanted by the theatrical illusion and to share the suffering and lamentation of the hero, he would be repulsed rather than pleased by it, for it is the inferior part of the soul that takes pleasure in *pathos*, not the reasoning part, the *logistikon*, which holds sway in the decent man. Still, despite all this, Socrates confesses that “when even the best of us hear Homer or any other of the tragic poets imitating one of the heroes in mourning (...) we enjoy it” (605c-d). Why should this be?

Socrates’ answer is quite subtle and it indicates the explanatory power of the analysis he has developed in Book X. The mechanics of the divided soul allow Socrates to maintain that a decent spectator can simultaneously reject the behavior of the tragic hero while also delighting in it. In fact, in contrast to the mass of theatre-goers, who identify with the impassioned hero, in the case of the decent spectator, it is precisely because he does not fully identify with the hero that he is able to take pleasure in the spectacle. More specifically, the best part of the soul does not “suffer along” with the hero; it recognizes a difference and a distance between itself and the character in the tragedy.<sup>29</sup> But since even good men – with the exception of certain “rare few” (605c) – do not understand the psychology of drama, their ruling reason relaxes its guard over the inferior part. It is this part, Socrates has already argued, that enjoys the spectacle of its own suffering and that, as a spectator, recognizes kinship with the hero, is taken in by the illusion, suffers along with the hero, and so derives pleasure from the performance. And so Socrates is able to explain to Glaucon why it is that when “we see a man whom we would not condescend, but would rather blush, to resemble” rather than “being disgusted, we enjoy it and praise it” (605e). With his dynamic picture of opposing centers of belief and desire within the soul, Socrates can maintain that what we abhor with one part of the soul we enjoy with another, and that we praise the performance for occasioning this pleasure.

In the foregoing, I have tried to look afresh at Socrates’ critique of poetry in Book X of the *Republic*, shifting the focus from his ultimate denigration of mimetic poetry to his analysis of its nature and power, and offering along the way a defense of its plausibility. The interpretation I advocate maintains that Socrates’ argument is both more subtle and more insightful, and also more relevant to contemporary concerns

<sup>29</sup> “The best element in our nature (...) relaxes its guard (...) inasmuch as this is contemplating the woes of *others* and it is no shame to it to praise and pity *another* who, claiming to be a good man, abandons himself to excess in his grief,” 606a-b [emphasis added].

in aesthetics and the theory of tragedy, than has typically been acknowledged. It is worth recalling at this point, however, that what I have been referring to as “Socrates’ argument” is primarily conveyed to the reader through questions that Socrates asks of Glaucon. As Michael Frede has persuasively argued, if an opinion or position is presented by Socrates (or any other character in a Platonic dialogue) in the form of a question, and Socrates himself doesn’t explicitly endorse it, we cannot legitimately ascribe to him a belief in that opinion or position – that is to say, we cannot really say it is “Socrates’” argument.<sup>30</sup> And there is, of course, a further and even more radical constraint on the interpretation of a Platonic dialogue: we are in no way permitted to assume that the views expressed by any of the characters necessarily represent the views of the author Plato, nor even that they, individually or collectively, constitute the teaching of the given dialogue taken as a whole.

I have argued elsewhere that the outlines of a different understanding of poetry in its relationship to philosophy come into view once we identify the limitations of the argument that is developed by Socrates and Glaucon in Book X.<sup>31</sup> This different understanding is more comprehensive than the argument that they agree upon, and it can only emerge through the dialectic between reader and text. To move toward this more comprehensive understanding, however, requires first that one recognize the full scope, cogency, and explanatory power of the critique that Socrates actually proffers and Glaucon endorses. Facilitating such recognition has been my aim in this essay.

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<sup>30</sup> M. Frede, “Plato’s Arguments and the Dialogue Form,” in *Supplemental Volume of the Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, ed. J. Annas (Oxford: OUP, 1992).

<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 2 of Bartscherer, “The Ancient Quarrel Unsettled: Plato and the Erotics of Tragic Poetry.”

# THE GARDEN OF CIRCULAR PATHS: NABOKOV'S SYMBOLS OF CONTINUITY

*Pale Fire*,<sup>1</sup> Nabokov's involuted poem-novel, is a "fiendishly complex"<sup>2</sup> double-monster of a narrative. Shade, an old, respectable, though somewhat pedestrian poet,<sup>3</sup> produces a narrative of his life and his search for the continuation of that path beyond death. When the poem is almost completed (in all likeness, missing just a single line), Shade is killed. Kinbote, his neighbour who witnesses the murder, steals the text and produces a critical apparatus to the poem – misguided in its entirety. He insists that the poem's real (though hidden) theme is the fabulous world of Zembla, the distant northern kingdom from which Kinbote is exiled. The radical unreliability of the commentary usually suffices to convince the readers that Kinbote is insane. Some aspects of the text suggest that the mad critic is about to commit suicide as soon as he finishes his annotations. If these assumptions are correct, we end up with a weird labyrinthine text by two authors, both of whom are now dead.

It is precisely this orphaned strangeness of the text that endears it to the critics, myself included. Inversion upon inversion, loop upon loop, unreliability upon unreliability, text upon text, madness upon madness – trust nothing and no one, "abandon every hope, all you who enter"<sup>4</sup> – insanity is contagious. Kinbote claims in his commentary to be the exiled King of Zembla, but the text provides enough clues for the reader to decode his other identity, that of a miserable Russian émigré named V. Botkin. Most likely, his past hides some trauma which causes him to construct an elaborate inversion of reality in

<sup>1</sup> All references to *Pale Fire* will be to the following edition: V. Nabokov, *Pale Fire* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1962). References will abbreviate the title as *PF* and indicate the line number of the poem and the corresponding page. When references are made to the Commentary, 'C' is prefixed to the line number.

<sup>2</sup> D. Barton Johnson, *Worlds in Regression: Some Novels of Vladimir Nabokov* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1985), 60.

<sup>3</sup> Fittingly so, since Shade is also a scholar specializing in Alexander Pope's poetry, which, according to Nabokov, belonged to the "pedestrian age" and the "most inartistic of centuries," "intrinsicly inartistic and antipoetical since its enjoyment presupposes that Reason is somehow, in the long run, superior to Imagination" – cf. A. Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin: A Novel in Verse*, trans. V. Nabokov (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1964), vol. III, 451, 506, 498.

<sup>4</sup> Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. M. Musa (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), vol. I: *Inferno*, 89. Dante's description of his descent into Hell may be seen as one of the uncountable subtexts of *Pale Fire*.

the story of Zembla, the kingdom of the mirror.<sup>5</sup> Kinbote's construction of the false past is reinforced by his attempt to trick the reader into believing that return into the past is possible – that time can be charmed into looping back, and reinserting the pattern-maker into the texture of his memory. And Kinbote is not Nabokov's only character to attempt this illusionary return. Almost in every novel we meet figures who try their luck in flying into the mirror walls of their circular prison of time.<sup>6</sup> Think of Martin, walking into the picture of the forest path and dissolving in the night of Zoorlandia,<sup>7</sup> think of philosopher Krug (what a name!), walking along paradoxical bridges in his nightmare of a country,<sup>8</sup> think of Cincinatus, failing to escape from his stage-prop prison, but rising in triumph from the executioner's block,<sup>9</sup> or of Luzhin, traumatized by the unrelenting pattern of his chess art and deciding to take the leap outside, only to be enfolded back into the black-and-white of the text.<sup>10</sup>

We may see these attempts as struggles of the characters, pushed into paranoia by a realization of their fictitious status, to reclaim their reality. But this very same game of seeking for a path leading backwards, into the lost time, is played by the hero of Nabokov's poem *Fame*, who seems to be the author himself:

But my word, curved to form an aerial viaduct,  
spans the world, and across in strobe-effect spin  
of spokes I keep endlessly passing incognito  
into the flame-licked night of my native land.<sup>11</sup>

Nabokov glosses the term “strobe-effect spin” in a footnote to his poem: “the strobe effect causes wheels to look as if they revolved backward, and the cross-over to America becomes an optical illusion of a return to Russia.”<sup>12</sup>

In his celebrated memoir *Speak, Memory*, the theme of looping back into the past may be seen as the structuring backbone of the text. The narrator constantly traces links between his American present and Russian past, bridges that allow him to seamlessly connect the two, passing easily from a charmed childhood fairyland straight into the maturity of a new homeland (without all the fuss of revolution, war, emigration, destitution, loss of loved ones, etc., etc.). He even manages to convince his reader that this future was already inscribed in his past, as a dream or a promise – for instance, when he explains that the distant bog land of butterfly habitat in his beloved Vyra used to be called America by

<sup>5</sup> For one of the possible suggestions as to the nature of Kinbote's trauma see I. Książopolska, “Vladimir Nabokov's Aerial Viaduct: *Pale Fire* and the Return to the Forbidden Past,” *Anglica: An International Journal of English Studies* 24 no.1 (2015), 41-57. Kinbote is constructed as a victim of sexual abuse in childhood who attempts to invert his trauma by projecting himself as the perpetrator.

<sup>6</sup> “The prison of time is spherical and without exists” – V. Nabokov, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited*, ed. B. Boyd (New York: Everyman's Library, 1999), 10.

<sup>7</sup> V. Nabokov, *Glory*, trans. D. Nabokov, V. Nabokov (New York – Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1971).

<sup>8</sup> V. Nabokov, *Bend Sinister* (New York: Vintage International, 1990).

<sup>9</sup> V. Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading* (New York: Vintage International, 1989).

<sup>10</sup> V. Nabokov, *The Luzhin Defense*, trans. M. Scammell, V. Nabokov (London – New York: Penguin Books, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> V. Nabokov, *Selected Poems*, ed. Thomas Karshan (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 107.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

the children. Or, when taking a footbridge over Oredez river the young butterfly hunter sees the Longs Peak in the distance. Or, when a Swallowtail butterfly that escaped from him in Vyra is caught after 40-year chase in Boulder, Colorado.<sup>13</sup>

And what about *Pale Fire*? According to Nina Berberova, “there is in *Pale Fire* a structural surprise: the symbolic level, the fantastic, the poetic, lies on its surface and is obvious, while the factual, the realistic is only slightly hinted at, and may be approached as a riddle.”<sup>14</sup> Berberova dismisses the symbols too quickly: while they do appear on the surface of the text, they are never merely generalized signposts of meaning. Behind all the struggles of the characters and the readers’ troubled attempts to trace “reality” of the story lies an assumption of a pattern that governs space and time. It provides not only a promise of continuity, but also a possibility of return – one may always trace the figure backwards, given enough talent and perseverance. *Pale Fire* is a particularly vivid example of that dream of return to the lost past. Symbols of continuity pepper the text, signalling its interconnectedness with other fictions (where similar images appear). We will attempt to decode five of such symbols: the circle, the spiral, the figure of number eight, lemniscate and – the most tantalizing and peculiarly Nabokovian emblem – the ampersand.

## CIRCLE

In *Pale Fire* the circlet of light appears in the Haunted Barn episode, soon after the death of Maud, Shade’s aunt who raised him. This paranormal activity is studied by Shade’s daughter Hazel, soon to commit a suicide. For all we know, she fails to solve the mystery of this apparition, but leaves behind enough evidence to suggest that the light was a somewhat mischievous ghost. At some point Hazel gets the circlet of light to spell out its purpose, by reciting the alphabet and matching it to the activity of the ghost. The experiment produces nonsensical words which critics of Nabokov manage to twist into meaningfulness.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the circlet is at once a promise of the eternal life (or, less grandly, of some kind of continuity), and a baffling signal of unknowableness of the universe. But this is just a single fleeting image in a novel built as a snake biting its own tale, forcing the reader to re-read again and again the text and its pseudo-critical apparatus.

Shade’s poem seems to be circular in its structure: its first line rhymes with its last (broken off at that instant by the death of its creator). Kinbote insists that the poem is, in fact, completed – the intended rhyme neatly closes the circle.<sup>16</sup> The poem begins by building an image of the continued motion – through the mirror:

<sup>13</sup> Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, 58, 105-106, 90-91.

<sup>14</sup> N. Berberova, “The Mechanics of *Pale Fire*,” in A. Appel, Jr. and C. Newman, eds., *Nabokov: Criticism, Reminiscences, Translations and Tributes* (London: Lowe and Brydone, 1971), 147-8.

<sup>15</sup> See B. Boyd, *Nabokov’s Pale Fire: The Magic of Artistic Discovery* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999), 110; Г. Барабтарло, *Сочинение Набокова* [Nabokov’s Works] (Санкт-Петербург: Издательство Ивана Лимбаха, 2011), 116-117.

<sup>16</sup> Alexey Sklyarenko suggests a variation of the initial line as the poem’s coda: “I was the shadow of the waxwing slain / By its own double in the window pane” – A. Sklyarenko, “Lines 1000-1001 in *Pale Fire*,” Nabokov-L post of 20 September 2015. Such reading certainly ties in with Nabokov’s employment of the theme of the Doppelgänger, both in *Pale Fire* and his other novels. However, the original line with “the false azure” already contains a reference to the theme of reflections or doubles and hardly requires a more direct development.

I was the shadow of the waxwing slain  
 By the false azure in the windowpane  
 I was the smudge of ashen fluff--and I  
 Lived on, flew on, in the reflected sky.  
 (PF 1-4, p. 33)

Shade's poem is enclosed between Kinbote's Foreword and Commentary. It flashes like a candle between two mirrors, foreclosed in the sterile intimacy of two mirror reflections staring at each other, unable to decide which one of them is the original, the creature belonging to reality, and which one is the imposter, shadow, illusion. Critics endlessly discuss interpretative possibilities: Shade inventing Kinbote, Kinbote inventing Shade, both of them existing independently or both of them engaged in a mutual invention.

One of the difficulties in discussing *Pale Fire* is that it is not a text, but a texture, in which every detail leads to not just some other image or detail, but a number of glimmering, glittering, light-refracting and self-reflecting fragments, odds and ends, in turn leading to other surprising bits and splinters of illusions. This applies to characters (each with not a single, but multiple doubles in the text), scenes, reflected in other scenes misremembered as to contain teasing images from yet other scenes, phrases and words (spelled in both directions and anagrammatized until the reader is quite dizzy).

Kinbote, Shade and Shade's killer Gradus share a birthday. Gradus has several alternative names: "Jack Degree or Jacques de Grey, or James de Gray, and also appears in police records as Ravus, Ravenstone, and d'Argus" (PF C17, p.77). Actually, this identity is made up by Kinbote for the insane murderer Jack Grey (yes, yet another madman), imprisoned by the Judge Goldsworth whom Grey tries to kill when he assassinates Shade, who resembles Goldsworth. Or, as Kinbote believes, Gradus, a member of the secret organization of the Shadows, attempts to murder Charles the Beloved of Zembla and succeeds in killing his neighbour. Dizzy yet? We have not even begun to dance.

Gradus is said to begin his career by making something Kinbote calls "Cartesian demons:imps of bottle glass bobbing up and down in methylate-filled tubes" (PF C171, p. 151). Cartesian demon is the God who is not benevolent but evil, delighting in deceit – a God who for his entertainment makes one doubt his own existence (madness again!). Thus, Gradus, who is fuelled, we are told, by "one essential dislike, formidable in its simplicity" (PF C171, p. 152) – hatred of injustice and deception, is at the same time the producer of crude caricatures of his own God, who delights in deception.

And then there are wisps extended outside the text, to the terraced gardens of other novels. The circle now resembles a spider web: "Not text, but texture, not the dream, but topsy-turvical coincidence, not flimsy nonsense but a web of sense" (PF 808-810, p.63). Let us follow one of these gossamer wisps: "Gradus" is the root of the Russian word *градусник*, thermometer, thus tracing the birth of this character to an old childhood illness, as a phantom residing in the delirium of fever. And this recalls a scene from *The Luzhin Defense*, where a sick child plays with a blanket, casting himself in the role of a king:

[H]e remembered especially the time when he was quite small, playing all alone, and wrapping himself up in the tiger rug, to represent, rather forlornly,

a king – it was nicest of all to represent a king since the imaginary mantle protected him against the chills of fever, and he wanted to postpone for as long as possible that inevitable moment when they would feel his forehead, take his temperature and then bundle him into bed.<sup>17</sup>

The escape from the terrors of fever – or, perhaps, from the adults, identified as “they” in the passage, coming with a *зрадусник* and taking away the child to the prison of the sickbed, may be effected through one of those tunnels, built out of sofa cushions, just like in the solitary game Nabokov played in his childhood, one of his earliest memories:

With the help of some grown-up person, who would use first both hands and then a powerful leg, the divan would be moved several inches away from the wall, so as to form a narrow passage which I would be further helped to roof snugly with the divan’s bolsters and close up at the ends with a couple of its cushions. I then had the fantastic pleasure of creeping through that pitch-dark tunnel, where I lingered a little to listen to the singing in my ears – that lonesome vibration so familiar to small boys in dusty hiding places – and then, in a burst of delicious panic, on rapidly thudding hands and knees I would reach the tunnel’s far end, push its cushion away, and be welcomed by a mesh of sunshine on the parquet under the canework of a Viennese chair and two gamesome flies settling by turns.<sup>18</sup>

And, on the other side of the exile and memory, the same image of a dethroned king phantasy reappears in *Pnin*, where young Victor uses it night after night to induce sleep, luring the desired haze of dreams by prolonging the story and endlessly postponing the episode of the king’s escape by a “powerful motorboat,”<sup>19</sup> a faithful copy of which takes Kinbote out of Zembla (*PF* C130, p. 120).

The stories breed other stories, reflections and doppelgangers pass incognito from land to land. Hunting out these resemblances and tracing them down to their textual lairs becomes a sort of obsession – and Nabokov cruelly taunts the reader (or, with more derision, the critic) who succumbs to this fascination, calling him “the future specialist in such dull literary lore as auto-plagiarism.”<sup>20</sup> In this world of circular paths, memory is not an ability to retain and reproduce the factual accounts of events, identifying people and dates, tracing a haunting image to its source in the past.<sup>21</sup> Or, god forbid, tracing it to subliminal cause motivating the writer’s art and life. Memory is a magic trick which transforms reality into stylized fiction (or, more grandly, a work of art). Crucially, all its sources must be placed within itself, all the tails must be tucked in, all the tunnels must terminate in some other part of the crystal world. In fact, the trick works so perfectly, that

<sup>17</sup> Nabokov, *The Luzhin Defense*, 70-71.

<sup>18</sup> Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, 12.

<sup>19</sup> V. Nabokov, *Pnin* (New York: Everyman’s Library, 2004), 62.

<sup>20</sup> Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, 23.

<sup>21</sup> Nabokov, with charming self-irony, calls himself “an ardent memorist with a rotten memory” – A. Appel, Jr. “Conversations with Nabokov,” *Novel* 4 (1971), 214.

after a while reality itself appears as merely a footnote, a reference to a splendid poem: "Man's life as commentary to abstruse / Unfinished poem" (*PF* 940, p. 67).

## SPIRAL

The circle stands not only for the promise of return, but also for the curse of the eternal recurrence. Nabokov introduces another image which seems to evade the totalizing completeness of the closed ring – an image of the spiral. Most famously, he speaks of the spirals in *Speak, Memory*: "The spiral is a spiritualized circle. In the spiral form, the circle, uncoiled, has ceased to be vicious; it has been set free,"<sup>22</sup> an image which Grishakova aligns with the Symbolist idea of time and consciousness.<sup>23</sup> Nabokov insists on seeing his own life as a "colored spiral in a glass ball"<sup>24</sup> – in which every arc is a beginning of a new thematic coil, thus imposing a neat design upon the chaos and troubled discontinuity of his life.

Kinbote also intuits something about the dangers of the eternal return: his restoration of the childhood paradise is bound to be followed by the turmoil of exile. Moreover, the story of Zembla is clearly not his real past, but a fantasy of a perfect past. In writing it, he tries to build a false bridge, or rather a bridge that will take him out of the vicious cycle of his trauma and tragedy into an invented realm in which all the shadows of real troubles will be charmed into harmlessness as blundering clowns. There are echoes in the novel that suggest that Kinbote's past is far from Arcadian idyll he projects (Shade calls it "drab and unhappy" – *PF* C629, p. 238). Thus, by feigning to build a circle, Kinbote attempts to fragment it with his multiple mirror reflections, each at an odd angle, so it would become a gracefully coiled spiral, a central spring within a mechanism of creative memory.

## NUMBER EIGHT

There is yet another symbol of endlessness, or another deformed circle appearing in *Pale Fire* with the persistence of a recurring nightmare. It is the figure of the number eight – a double loop, a circle with a twist. The tunnel through which Kinbote makes his escape from Zembla is 1888 yards long, (preceded by eighteen steps) and it connects the palace with the theatre (*PF* C130, p. 127, 132-134). It was apparently built by Kinbote's grandfather for secret meetings with his lover, Iris Acht (eight in German), who died in 1888 (rumoured to have committed suicide – *PF* C130, p. 121).<sup>25</sup> This very tunnel was first discovered by young Charles years back, while his two tutors Mr. Campbell and Monsieur Beauchamp (each name anagrammatizing the other) played a game of chess which ended in a draw – the only possibility when the game is played across the mirror. As Priscilla Meyer notes, the chessboard is "eight squares by eight – a finite sixty-four squares that

<sup>22</sup> Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, 215.

<sup>23</sup> M. Grishakova, *The Models of Space, Time and Vision in V. Nabokov's Fiction: Narrative Strategies and Cultural Frames* (Tartu: Tartu UP, 2006), 81.

<sup>24</sup> Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, 215.

<sup>25</sup> On the reappearance of the number eight in the novel and its significance see Boyd, *Nabokov's Pale Fire*, 169, 181-182, 186-187.

contain an infinite number of possible moves, like life and art.”<sup>26</sup> Eight year old Charles discovers photographs depicting the death of his father in an airplane crash, which took place while the pilot was trying to effect “a tricky vertical loop” (another eight?) in his aerial machine (*PF* C71, p. 103-104).

There are also 80 index cards on which Shade writes his poem (*PF*, p. 13). Shade’s aunt Maud suffers a stroke when she is eighty (*PF* 195, p. 40), a fit which releases “monsters in her brain” (*PF* 208, p. 40). Hazel’s experiments in the Haunted Barn involve reciting the alphabet to the capricious circlet of light – 80 times (*PF* C347, p. 189). The failed blind date which eventually leads to Hazel’s suicide takes place at quarter past eight (*PF* 403-404, p. 47).

There is something dogged, haunted in the way this number creeps into Shade’s and Kinbote’s joint story. This double loop (itself a repetition) is not benign – it figures as a fatidic number, always connected with something threatening, often deadly – King Alfin’s catastrophe, Maud’s mental monsters, Iris Acht’s suicide, Hazel’s fatal – and final – disappointment. Deliriously, the number eight seems to overextend itself in the image of the site of Hazel’s drowning: the three connected lakes, Omega, Ozero and Zero – a triple loop instead of the customary double. These lakes recall the dreamy Hourglass lake from *Lolita* – the original eight-shaped lake in which Humbert intends but does not dare to try to drown Charlotte.<sup>27</sup>

## LEMNISCATE

The figure of eight does resemble an hourglass – a symbol of time or, in some cultures, death. The sand, dropping from the top part of the glass eight into its bottom part, measures out one’s life. If we want to stop the count – suspend the moment – we turn the hourglass on its side – and the number eight becomes a lemniscate, a symbol of eternity.

In *Pale Fire*, Shade notes the bicycle tracks forming that symbol – with quiet envy for the physical dexterity of the invisible cyclist:

In sleeping dreams I played with other chaps  
But really envied nothing – save perhaps  
The miracle of a lemniscate left  
Upon wet sand by nonchalantly deft  
Bicycle tires.

(*PF* 135-139, p. 37)

It seems that Shade envies the artistic effortlessness of the sign more than the exhilaration of the exercise. And yet, though the image seems less malignant than the eight proper, there is something dark, alienating in its smooth perfection. He sees something akin to two wings of a giant butterfly, indifferent to the mortal stranded in-between:

<sup>26</sup> P. Meyer, *Find What the Sailor Has Hidden: Vladimir Nabokov’s Pale Fire* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan UP, 1988), 203.

<sup>27</sup> V. Nabokov, *The Annotated Lolita*, ed. A. Appel, Jr. (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 81-89.

Infinite foretime and  
 Infinite aftertime: above your head  
 They close like giant wings, and you are dead.  
 (PF 122-124, p. 37)

The image here echoes clearly the famous beginning of *Speak, Memory*, when Nabokov, describing the prison of time, speaks of the two horrors surrounding our existence – the before and the after: “The cradle rocks above an abyss, and common sense tells us that our existence is but a brief crack of light between two eternities of darkness.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, even the lemniscate seems somehow too symmetrical, inhuman in its perfection. Its double loop excludes the speck of mortal dust that the human being represents.

There is one more symbol of continuity introduced by Nabokov’s hero in *Pale Fire*, which – however vaguely, inconclusively – indicates the possibility of moving beyond the boundary of the page.

### AMPERSAND

Shade’s treatment of reality is directly opposite to Kinbote’s artful falsification. He insists on retention of the faithful image of the past, however fleeting or painful that past might be:

I’m ready to become a floweret  
 Or a fat fly, but never, to forget.  
 And I’ll turn down eternity unless  
 The melancholy and the tenderness  
 Of mortal life; the passion and the pain;  
 The claret taillight of that dwindling plane  
 Off Hesperus; your gesture of dismay  
 On running out of cigarettes; the way  
 You smile at dogs; the trail of silver slime  
 Snails leave on flagstones; this good ink, this rhyme,  
 This index card, this slender rubber band  
 Which always forms, when dropped, an ampersand,  
 Are found in Heaven by the newlydead  
 Stored in its strongholds through the years.  
 (PF 523-536, p. 52-53)

Shade’s fierce refusal to give up the most evanescent of his experiences is captured and explained in the individualized symbol, the image of the shape formed by a rubber band used to keep together the stack of index cards on which he writes his drafts of the poem. Of course, the ampersand closely resembles the sign of the eight, only slightly edited, so that it stands apart from the mass-made signs of recognized symbols. This particularized memory is what holds together Shade’s art – and what perpetuates it. The stack of cards on which he writes his poem constitutes the world that will continue itself indefinitely.

<sup>28</sup> Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, 9.

Note how this short fragment of the poem collects together the symbols already mentioned earlier: there is a fat fly with the transparently dark wings of the lemniscate, the snail with its spiralling shell, the trace left by a disappearing plane – Alfin’s farewell sign of eight, the dark circle of the inkpot. We may only notice these echoes when we visualize the poem, rather than just read it – the symbols remain unstated, hidden within the shadows of the words, but they are all there.

It is curious that the theme of memory is always somehow shadowed by the theme of death. Called by extravagant names, death is romanticized either as the villain or the object of desire. Kinbote’s cultural mythologization and Shade’s intense treasuring of the sublime detail are tied up with their alternative ways of probing the “other side.” If Kinbote in his self-imposed detachment from the past, courts death and afterlife as the bliss of oblivion, Shade peers into the darkness much more gingerly, refusing the security of organized religion and sectarianism, yet still hoping for some kind of insurance policy to protect him from the terrors of the unknown, which seems the only pragmatic way to approach this gap of ignorance: “I began to doubt/ Man’s sanity: How could he live without/ Knowing for sure what dawn, what death, what doom/ Awaited consciousness beyond the tomb?” (PF 173-176, p. 39).

The afterlife, always mysterious, never graspable, appears to him almost intelligible through art, which is seen as an attempt to bridge the gap between the quotidian realm of one’s existence and the glorious and unexplainable *потусторонность*, the other side of the mirror, the other side of consciousness. But then Shade’s death – senselessly, mockingly coincidental – happens on the very evening when he writes, exultingly:

I’m reasonably sure that we survive  
 And that my darling somewhere is alive,  
 As I am reasonably sure that I  
 Shall wake at six tomorrow, on July  
 The twenty-second, nineteen fifty-nine,  
 And that they day will probably be fine.  
 (PF 977-982, p. 69)

There are many obvious and hidden ironies in this passage. “Reasonably sure” is quite distinct from the devout confidence of a believer. Comparison between that reasonable hope – based on the poet’s intuition of the pattern and weave of the world, despite all the evidence to the contrary that comes his way, – and expectations of fair weather demonstrates quite nicely the flimsiness of Shade’s assurance in the afterlife – as uncertain, as the weather forecasts. Shade’s death mocks even this tepid attempt at certainty. This seems to be not a denial of the afterlife, but rather an indication of futility of those endeavours to unscramble the “message scribbled in the dark” (PF 235, p. 41), or pronounce any definitive judgments on the ultimate mystery of “what dreams may come/ When we have shuffled off this mortal coil.”<sup>29</sup> It finds its perfect mirror reflection

<sup>29</sup> W. Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, ed. Philip Edwards (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), 158. Hamlet’s “To be or not to be” soliloquy, mentioning the “bare bodkin” as the marvellously easy way to find the desired peace and

– inverted, of course – in Nabokov's last Russian novel, *The Gift*. In this text, the last words of the dying atheist, whose son, like Shade's daughter, had committed suicide, are: "What nonsense. Of course there is nothing afterwards. (...) There is nothing. It is as clear as the fact that it is raining." The narrator wryly continues: "And meanwhile outside the spring sun was playing on the roof tiles, the sky was dreamy and cloudless, the tenant upstairs was watering the flowers on the edge of her balcony, and the water trickled down with a drumming sound."<sup>30</sup>

It seems once more we have returned to our starting point. *The Gift* ends with a short poem, written in a caesura-less continuity:

Good-bye, my book! Like mortal eyes, imagined ones must close some day. Olegin from his knees will rise – but his creator strolls away. And yet the ear cannot right now part with the music and allow the tale to fade: the chords of fate itself continue to vibrate; and no obstruction for the sage exists where I have put the End: the shadows of my world extend beyond the skyline of the page, blue as tomorrow's morning haze – nor does this terminate the phrase.<sup>31</sup>

And now, perhaps, we can understand how the poem of *Pale Fire* can be at once completed and unfinished: Shade's phrase is not terminated by the "skyline of the page." Circularity of the path supposedly promises the return of the lost past – notwithstanding its nonexistence in the present. This is what Nabokov seems to be after, hence all the symbols of cyclicity. Of all these, the ampersand alone manages to avoid the smooth seamlessness of infinity (that is, in this universe, of infinite regress): the perfection of two loops is followed by the implication of a line continuing outward – a tail that overhangs the tale, begging for the phrase to be continued.

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fulfilment, is the acknowledged source of Kinbote's name (and its Russian equivalent, Botkin). However, a less obvious and therefore all the more tantalizing clue to Botkin's name is suggested by Lisa Zunshine: Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* features the very "deadly bodkin," ironically reduced to an ornamental hairpin in Belinda's coiffure – L. Zunshine, "Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* and Nabokov's *Pale Fire*" in *Nabokov at the Limits: Redrawing Critical Boundaries*, ed. Lisa Zunshine (New York – London: Garland Publishing, 1999), 170-171.

<sup>30</sup> V. Nabokov, *The Gift* (New York: Vintage International, 1991), 312.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 366.

# NOSTALGIC EXPLOITS AND PRACTICAL DELUSIONS: NABOKOV'S *GLORY*

When in 1931 Vladimir Nabokov published *Glory*, his fifth novel, it was not met with spectacular praise. The reviews were unflattering: one of the critics pointed out “the absence of depth,” another – “its inner irrelevance.”<sup>1</sup> Even in later years the novel has failed to attract much of critical attention. For John Updike, who reviewed the 1971 translation of the novel, the very last of Nabokov’s Russian books to be made available for the English readers, *Glory* failed to reach its novelistic potential.<sup>2</sup> Yet, there are reasons to suppose that such views only straggle at the contour of the surface story, failing to explore the elaborate design underneath. In the preface to the above mentioned translation, a nudge in the right direction is given by Nabokov himself. Of course, we would be guilty of yet another blunder, to make of authorial remarks a guidepost for the critical appraisal of the novelist’s oeuvre, nevertheless we should not easily dismiss the author’s remarks when he says that *Glory*, like one of his most tricky chess problems, “was diabolically difficult to construct.”<sup>3</sup> This article will attempt to identify the hidden points of juncture in the text which, when taken into account, will offer new ways of reading the key developments in the novel.

## FORMATION OF IDENTITY THROUGH IMAGINATION / VISUALITY

If one was to attempt finding a central struggle in Nabokov’s *Glory*, a fight for supremacy which is the source of the novel’s vitality and momentum, it would have to be a battle between the real and the imaginary. It is in full sway from the onset, being the formative power which not only shapes the identity of Martin, the protagonist of the novel, but also engages and enchants the reader. It is introduced within the first pages of the book with a description of “a watercolor depicting a dense forest with a winding path disappearing into its depths” which hangs over a child’s bed, and has such an irresistible appeal that every night “Martin prayed God that [his mother] would not notice that tempting path

<sup>1</sup> Cited after: P. Tammi, “Glory” in *The Garland Companion to Vladimir Nabokov*, ed. V. E. Alexandrov (New York and London: Garland, 1995), 169.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>3</sup> V. Nabokov, *Glory*, trans. D. Nabokov in collaboration with the author (New York, Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1971), xiv. All further references in parentheses will refer to this edition.

right over his head" (5). The imminent danger perceived by the boy is that of his mother's loving intervention in his fate, preventing the adventure, the chance to enter the picture and follow the trail to its mysterious destination. Years later, thinking back on his life, Martin wonders:

if one night he had not actually hopped from bed to picture, and if this had not been the beginning of the journey, full of joy and anguish, into which his whole life had turned. He seemed to remember the chilly touch of the ground, the green twilight of the forest, the bends of the trail (which the hump of a great root crossed here and there), the tree trunks flashing by as he ran past them barefoot, and the strange dark air, teeming with fabulous possibilities.

(5)

Martin is drawn to the lure of the visual world, and his (mis)adventures seem to be often rooted in the inability to separate the illusion from the real. His earliest dream is to enter the fabulous dimension, and his story may be read as a fulfilment of this wish: the book concludes with Martin vanishing from reality, to all appearances having crossed the forbidden Soviet border.

That final step is by no means something one might expect of this vigorous young man, endowed with many talents. Although young Martin and his mother left Russia in the midst of political turmoil, he is far from being tormented by notions of patriotic nostalgia. Rather than a downcast, disillusioned émigré, Martin is a vibrant, impatient consumer of life's earthly charms, whether it be an inaccessible alpine summit or a night in a hotel room with a streetwalker. And when the thought of crossing into Russia finally enters his mind, its allure lies not in yielding to a yearning for the lost homeland, but in achieving an unthinkable, extraordinary feat.

Thus Martin's quest becomes one of the central themes of the novel, and whatever shape it acquires, it is always a desire for "the remote, the forbidden, the vague" (34). Nabokov calls him "that rarity – a person whose 'dreams come true'" (xii). Notice the inverted commas that Nabokov places around the realization of Martin's dreams. They not only signal a cliché that will be put apart, brushed up, oiled up, and put back together as a shiny new mechanism, but also the second bottom underneath that apparent fulfilment. Martin's reveries do indeed have a certain magical quality in the novel, they pass from the region of fantasy into "reality" with careless ease, often without even signalling the ordeal of the border-crossing. Let us examine one early example of such "fulfilment," taking place at his uncle's house in Switzerland, with Martin gazing at the night sky:

"Travel," said Martin softly, and he repeated this word for a long time, until he had squeezed all meaning out of it, upon which he set aside the long, silky skin it had shed – and next moment the word had returned to life. "Star. Mist. Velvet. Travelvet," he would articulate carefully and marvel every time how tenuously the sense endures in the sound. In what a remote spot this young man had arrived, what far lands he had already seen, and what was he doing

here, at night, in the mountains, and why was everything in the world so strange, so thrilling? “Thrilling,” Martin repeated aloud, and liked the word.  
(48–49)

Martin’s play with the word “travel” – one of his favourite words ever, sounding quite enchanting in the original Russian, *nymewecm6ue* – is an exercise in defamiliarization. First the word has to be emptied out by repetition, all the shades of meanings that have accrued around it are stripped away, it becomes pure sound – and only afterwards, it may return to its meaning anew, reinvigorated. The word game prepares the ground for the next step – a move backwards in time, towards the past that held the future gloriously open before the child – to be followed while he remains standing at the terrace:

Another star went tumbling. He fixed his eyes on the sky as, once upon a time, when they were driving home in the victoria from a neighbor’s estate along a dark forest road, a very small Martin, rocking on the brink of slumber, would throw back his head and watch the heavenly river, between the amassments of trees, along which he was floating. Where again in his life, he wondered, would he gaze – as then, as now – at the night sky? on what pier, at what station, in what town square?  
(49)

Activation of memory deepens the experience and prepares Martin for the imaginative game, infusing it with the magic power to transgress boundaries:

A feeling of opulent solitude, which he often had experienced amid crowds – the delight he took in saying to himself: Not one of these people, going about their business, knows who I am, where I am from, what I am thinking about right now – this feeling was indispensable to complete happiness, and Martin, in a breathless trance, imagined how, completely alone, in a strange city – say, London – he would roam at night along unfamiliar streets. He saw the black hansom cabs splashing through the fog, a policeman in a shiny black cape, lights on the Thames, and other images out of English novels. He had left his luggage at the station and was walking past innumerable illuminated English shops [...]. How foggy the streets were, though, and how crowded, and how difficult the search! And although there was much that looked different, and the hansom were mostly extinct, he nevertheless recognized certain things when, one autumn evening, he walked baggageless out of Victoria Station; he recognized the dark, greasy air, the bobby’s wet oilskin cape, the reflections, the swashy sounds.  
(49–50)

What happens in this passage is extraordinary: Martin imagines London, using rather banal images from poster cards and English novels, imagines himself there – and suddenly, the plot of the novel dutifully transplants him from the solitude and

charmed silence of Swiss mountains to the rush of Victoria Station. There are some minor differences between the fantasized and the real, but there is also the quality of recognition, which takes for granted London's exceptional feat of materializing out of the thin air and childhood memories of books and pictures. Such manoeuvres are Martin's habitual preoccupation, and the story of the book is obedient to his imagination, willingly twisting to provide a realization of some desire, a proof of his talent for happy adventures. There are exceptions: Martin's love for Sonia is never consummated, but even this serves a purpose – Martin is the knight-errant, and she is his Lady, presiding over his quest, granting it the romantic air of seeking the unreachable goal.<sup>4</sup>

Sonia's family has also escaped from Russia and when Martin makes an acquaintance with the Zilanovs we get a glimpse of the émigré community, where Sonia's father plays a prominent role. Mikhail Zilanov is hardly ever home, constantly engaged in some political rallies and voyages of unknown nature, yet all this fervid commotion seems to lack substance, and the financial situation of the family deteriorates with time. And Martin is far from identifying with such political activity and talking about the situation in Russia "nauseates him" (56). When asked by Sonia if he is planning to join the White Army he denies having any desire to do so, for him it is simply one side "fighting for the ghost of the past and the other for the ghost of the future" – a comment (actually stolen from his Cambridge teacher) which does not go down well with Sonia at all (67).

The great desire to accomplish some high deed which Martin begins to entertain is developing in close relation with the growing affection for Sonia. Each sign of rejection or evasion from her causes Martin to embroider his imaginary venture with additional detail all the more fervently. Eventually, however, the squalid reality of Sonia's indifference becomes no match for the intricate perfection of his imaginary exploit, and has to be cast aside as Martin decides to enter the self-invented picture. But before this happens, a confrontation with yet another dream, whose furtive presence was lurking all the while around Martin, must take place. As most of the fateful events in his life – for instance, the news of his father's death (9, 78) – this episode is also connected with the Zilanov family.

Mikhail Zilanov on several occasions tries to interest Martin in his political work. While Martin remains indifferent to these attempts, he does follow one of the leads that persistently recur in conversations with Zilanov: he meets the mysterious Mr. Gruzinov, who is rumoured to be a Russian émigré Scarlet Pimpernel – "a legendary figure among émigrés" (173) because of his successful clandestine voyages into Russia. Martin finally goes to talk to Gruzinov just before venturing to his "heroic exploit" of illegal passage into the Soviet Union. His ostensible purpose is to cleverly extract from the experienced conspirator some pointers on the safest way to secretly cross the forbidden border. The reader may wonder at Martin's naive self-assurance: not only is he planning to outsmart the Soviet adversaries, but also to outmanoeuvre their most cunning antagonist, using him without actually engaging in his serious work. In short, he is planning to master the master spy.

<sup>4</sup> For the exploration of the romantic and fabulous themes in the novel see: E. C. Haber, "Nabokov's Glory and the Fairy Tale," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 2.2 (1977).

Predictably, the interview proves a disaster. At first Gruzinov is “perfectly benevolent, and at the same time impenetrable” (171), then he mocks Martin’s attempts at sly extraction of secret information and quietly suggests that getting a guide might be a better idea than crossing on one’s own. Martin is disappointed but also relieved: since he fails to gain help from the acknowledged “man of great adventures, a terrorist, a very special spy, and the mastermind of recent peasant revolts against the Soviet rule” (146), he is now free to pursue his own dream unfettered by any kind of organized conspiracy.

### THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE NOVEL

It would seem that Mr. Gruzinov’s work and Martin’s fantastic plan both represent parts in the broader pattern of a more generalized émigré dream. Obviously, all the vigorous political activity of the émigré circles was aimed towards either overthrowing the Soviet rule from the outside, or aiding the anti-Bolshevik activities within Russia. Such work required establishing connections with counter-revolutionary groups inside the prison house of a country that Russia has become. Difficult and dangerous as this seemed, during the first half of the 1920s the White emigration appeared to be surprisingly successful in this aspect. They’ve established contact with MOCR (Military Organization of the Central Russia, usually referred to under the code name “Trust”), a powerful underground organization within the Soviet Union which extended into all strata of society, could communicate crucial data from the official secret documents, organize local protests and uprisings, as well as safe border crossings for its agents.

This incredible venture prospered until 1927 when it was exposed as a grand deception cooked up in the OGPU headquarters, a scheme meant to entrap both the emigration (rightly considered a serious threat for the Soviet rule) and the foreign intelligence services. The story of Trust is one of the great fictions of the twentieth century, a well-written and perfectly calculated plot, and even today many aspects of the story remain clouded in mystery. Was there ever an authentic resistance movement that Soviet secret police discovered and took over for its own purposes, or was the whole scheme simply created from scratch as a giant mystification? Was the final exposure of the Soviet plot the failure of OGPU, or was it a perfectly timed and orchestrated action of propaganda, initiated by OGPU itself, once the scheme began to be insupportable? And among all the double- and triple-agents, who worked for which side? Who was truly deceived and unwittingly used by the Bolshevik agents, and who deliberately and consciously played a role pre-scripted in Moscow – for money, a chance to return to the lost homeland, out of desperation? These questions are still the subject of contemporary historical debate.<sup>5</sup> The researchers who examined the records compiled by the NKVD (over thirty volumes)

<sup>5</sup> See the analysis of the identity of the double-agent Eduard Oppenput conducted by Lazar Fleishman: Л. Флейшман, *В тисках провокации: операция «Трест» и русская зарубежная печать* [In the Clutches of the Provocation: The ‘Trust’ Operation and the Russian Foreign Press] (Москва: Новое Литературное Обозрение, 2003). Also see a recent investigation by Marek Świerczek into Wiktor Tomir Drymmer, a Polish intelligence officer involved with Trust: M. Świerczek, “Udział Wiktora Tomira Drymmera w aferze MOCR-Trust w świetle jego artykułu z 1965 r. pod tytułem *Trust*. Wstęp do analizy” [The Participation of W.T. Drymmer in the MOCR-Trust affair in the context of his article “Trust” of 1965 – attempt at analysis], *Przegląd Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego* 10 (2014), 155-167.

were “left reeling by the files full of code names, which changed so often that they give the many interlocking deception operations the complexity of a symphonic score.”<sup>6</sup>

One thing may be said for certain: until 1927 the political activity of the Russian emigration was to a large extent conducted under the supervision from Moscow. The reports of the Soviet secret services claim unprecedented influence over all kinds of anti-revolutionary activity: “within 1923-1924 we were able to put our combat with espionage on such level, that now 95% of the information received by the headquarters of the main European intelligences consists of materials prepared by Narkomvoen (Soviet ministry of defence) and NKID (Soviet ministry of foreign affairs).”<sup>7</sup> Ryszard Wraga, a Polish intelligence officer who researched the origins of the intrigue, reflected on the events as follows:

There were some suspicions among some of the Russian émigré circles. As time went on, these doubts intensified. But no one was willing or able to articulate them loud and clear. And if anybody tried, right away they were shouted down by the enthusiasts of the “sacrificial labour of the underground Russian movement.” MOCR ideology was perfectly suited to the expectations of the Russian emigration. It was so pleasant to believe that Bolshevism was ending, that Russia was still Russia, that soon it would be possible to return without any special pains on our part. After all, one believes what one chooses to believe.<sup>8</sup>

This was precisely the point: the myth of a powerful underground movement, which will presently reveal itself in a great and violent takeover of power from the loathsome Bolsheviks, was the most cherished dream of the Russian emigration. It was only too easy to turn this dream into a grand delusion. This deception fed the desires of the people who lost all touch with reality of contemporary Russia, who led the life of phantoms in a foreign land, who desperately longed to return to a country that no longer existed. Trust was simply a dream come true.

Such state of affairs on the one hand created an illusion of great efficiency of the émigré secret work in Russia, and on the other, it ensured that both strategy of any underground work and its practical implementation were fully controlled by OGPU. If any hyper-active émigré wished to secretly cross the border into Soviet Russia, Trust would be quite willing to oblige, both in organizing a safe passage and local entertainment in the form of meetings with the “resistance leaders.” There were exceptions from the rule: if the emissary was judged to be too interesting a subject for the Soviet secret police to let him slip, it was only natural that a dangerous expedition to the forbidden land ended for that emissary in an occasional spot of bad luck leading to disaster. The notorious terrorist Boris Savinkov was captured this way in August 1924, and a year later – the British spy Sidney Reilly. Saninkov died in Russian prison (either murdered or committing suicide),

<sup>6</sup> J. Costello, O. Tsarev, *Deadly Illusions* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1993), 32-33.

<sup>7</sup> А. Папчинский, М. Тумшис, *Щит, расколотый мечом: НКВД против ВЧК* [The Shield Brocken by the Sword: NKVD against VChK] (Москва: Современник, 2001), 252.

<sup>8</sup> R. Wraga, ““Trust”” *Kultura*, 4-5 (1949), 173.

and Reilly, after heavy interrogations, was executed in November 1925, though Soviet papers announced that he was shot earlier during the border-crossing.

The OGPU continued the exploitation of this remarkably successful mystification for many years until finally, in 1927, it was exposed in the émigré press as a hoax and a complete deception. The news was immediately circulated all over the émigré centres in Europe, amid general shock and astonishment. While writing *Glory* in 1930-1932 Nabokov, it must be assumed, was well aware of the Trust story, realizing the role it played in the émigré political activities of the twenties.

Returning now to the novel, we might perceive some of its events and figures in a different light. Who is the mysterious Mr. Gruzinov and what is his role in the novel? Clearly, he does not belong to the émigrés of Zilanov's kind, living on their political fervour and gradually descending into grey poverty. He is well dressed, he stays in the best hotel in Lausanne, he also enjoys a kind of notoriety that makes him popular with the ladies. The total control OGPU secretly exercised over émigré visits to Russia meant, of course, that there were no "peasant revolts" or terrorist attacks, since the cunning MOCR representatives insisted with great force and consistency: "do not get into our way with your unwanted interference; we are growing in force and preparing ourselves and we will overthrow the Soviet rule when the right time comes."<sup>9</sup> Therefore, when Gruzinov is characterized as "the mastermind of recent peasant revolts against the Soviet rule" (146), this phrase has a double edge. Detached from the historical context, it appears as a romantic portrayal of a mysterious and grand figure, focalized through Martin's bedazzled eyes. Seen in the proper perspective, it acquires a bitter ironic tone and indisputably places Gruzinov in the camp of the Soviet deceivers. He must be the Bolshevik agent.<sup>10</sup> This would explain very well his comfortable material circumstances and his peculiar mixture of the mysterious air and cool unimaginative complacency which Martin finds so repulsive.

Curiously, in his foreword to *Glory*, Nabokov writes:

The three staunch patriots, dedicated to counter-Bolshevist work, Zilanov, Iogolevich, and Gruzinov, belong to that group of people, politically situated just to the right of the old Terrorists and just to the left of the Constitutional Democrats, and as far from Monarchists on one side as from Marxists on the other, whom I was well acquainted with in the entourage of the very magazine which serialized *Podvig*, but none is an exact portrait of a specific individual. I feel obliged to give here the proper determination of this political type (recognized at once, with the unconscious precision of common knowledge, by the Russian intelligent who was the main reader of my books) because I still cannot reconcile myself to the fact – deserving to be commemorated by an annual pyrotechnical display of contempt and

<sup>9</sup> С. Л. Войцеховский, *Трест – воспоминания и документы* [Trust – Memoirs and Documents] (Лондон: Заря, 1974), 10.

<sup>10</sup> Leona Toker comes to the same conclusion: "Gruzinov – famous for his illegal shuttling across the Russian border – is secretly affluent and inscrutable. His manner to Martin suggests that of a KGB agent who is somehow moved to warn his future victim" – L. Toker, *The Mystery of Literary Structures* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1989), 103.

sarcasm – that in the meantime American intellectuals had been conditioned by Bolshevik propaganda into utterly disregarding the vigorous existence of liberal thought among Russian expatriates.

(xi-xii)

This entire tirade sounds like Nabokov's ironic attack at the ignorant Western reader who knows too little about the historical context of the novel to notice the subtleties in the characterization of Gruzinov and realize the bitterly sardonic twang in the phrase describing him as a "staunch Russian patriot." Yet, Nabokov's explanation of the precise political position of the Russian activists is deliberately confusing, and his reference to the "Russian intelligent" who would effortlessly see through the disguises, is all the more taunting. It would be much more helpful to simply refer to the Trust story, but instead, Nabokov conducts one of his "annual pyrotechnical display[s] of contempt and sarcasm," challenging the reader to make the right connections on his own. In fact, the political affiliation of the three figures is decoded by Maxim D. Shroyer: they are clearly members of Boris Savinkov's movement, the socialist-revolutionary party (SR).<sup>11</sup> Indeed, for the Russian émigré reading *Podvig* there would be tell-tale differences between the three figures. All three are reported to be tirelessly engaged in political work, constantly traveling. But while Gruzinov is assumed to be going to Russia almost routinely, Zilanov is only once said to be "traveling in secret to God knows what places, possibly as far as Kiev" (88), while his usual trips take him "to Riga, Belgrade, or Paris" (77).<sup>12</sup> This is an important difference: while Gruzinov's constant trips make him suspect and indict him as the agent, Zilanov appears at worst as an innocent victim of the Trust mystification.

Let us return to the interview between Gruzinov and Martin. Rather lamely, Martin pretends to be asking for advice on behalf of his friend. Gruzinov asks about the kind of passport that "friend" carries, wonders why he would not simply get a visa; then appears to change the subject. Martin continues to push, expressing concern for his friend's safety.

"And no wonder you do worry," said Gruzinov, "especially if he is a novice. However, one can always find a guide there." "Oh no, that would be dangerous!" exclaimed Martin, "One might run into a traitor." "Naturally, one has to be cautious," Gruzinov agreed, rubbing one eye and studying Martin through fat pale fingers. "And, of course," he added in a dullish voice, "it's very important to know the locality."

(176-177)

<sup>11</sup> M. D. Shroyer, "The Perfect Glory of Nabokov's Exploit," *Russian Studies in Literature* 35.4 (1999), 31.

<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, the Russian text of the novel in this fragment mentions different cities: "Orel, Kostroma, or Paris" – В. Набоков, *Собрание Сочинений русского периода в пяти томах: Столетие со дня рождения: 1899-1999* [Collected works of the Russian period in five volumes: Century of birth: 1899-1999] (St. Petersburg: Simpozium, 2000), v. 3, 154. It seems in the English version Nabokov changed the destinations to émigré centres removing the suggestions of Zilanov's repeated border-crossings – perhaps, to distinguish more clearly between him and Gruzinov.

There is a particular tension in these exchanges – the guide quickly turns into a traitor, Gruzinov’s fat pale fingers are both repulsive and ominous. When, in response to the last statement, Martin shows Gruzinov his map, the latter appears to finally become interested in the conversation:

“You see, I have even provided myself with a chart,” he [Martin] said breezily. “For some reason it seems to me that Nick will cross here, for instance, or else here.” “Ah, so his name is Nicolas,” said Gruzinov. “I’ll note it, I’ll note it. This is a fine map. Wait a bit” – (the spectacle case was produced, the glasses gleamed). “Let’s see, what scale is this? Oh, good. Here’s Carnagore, here’s Torturovka, right on the border. I had a chum – also Nick by a strange coincidence – who once waded across this river here and went that way there; and another time he started from here and then all the way through the wood – it’s a very dense wood, called Rogozhin, and then, if one turns northeast---”

(177)

The names of the villages that Gruzinov spills out contain a warning: Torturovka echoes torture, Rogozhin is the demonic murderous antagonist of the hero in Dostoyevsky’s *The Idiot*; Carnagore is a composite of ‘carnage’ and ‘gore.’ Curiously, the Russian version mentions different locality names: *Пыталово*, *Режица*, *Рогожинский лес*. And while these names may be found on the actual map of the Russian-Latvian border, they echo the semantic weight of the spurious English topos: *Пыталово* is related to *пытка* (torture); *Режица* – to *резать* (to cut or to torture, i.e., it is the place where one is being cut to pieces); *Рогожинский* refers us to Mr. Rogozhyn from *The Idiot*, just like the English version.<sup>13</sup> Thus, it was more important to Nabokov to retain the semantic value in the translation than topological faithfulness.

As the conversation between Gruzinov and Martin continues, the latter realizes that he is being mocked by his interlocutor. At this juncture, a seemingly banal incident occurs:

From the garden two feminine voices called Gruzinov’s name with the first syllable accented instead of the second. He looked out. The two English girls wanted him to come and have ice cream (he was popular with young ladies, for whose benefit he assumed the character of an easygoing simpleton). “How they like to bother me,” Gruzinov said, “I never eat ice cream, anyway.” It seemed to Martin for an instant that sometime somewhere the same words had been spoken (as in Blok’s play *Incognita*), and that then as now he was perplexed by something, was trying to explain something.

(177-178)

This passage, as Nabokov’s critics noted, is related to Martin’s earlier dream (which he sees the night after he learns of his father’s death), in which his friend tells him:

<sup>13</sup> Набоков, *Собрание Сочинений русского периода*, т. 3, 228.

"Грузины не едят мороженого" (Georgians do not eat ice cream).<sup>14</sup> This scene is crucial because it indicates that Gruzinov features not only in the material, "realistic" dimension of Martin's world, but also in the more important "metaphysical" sphere, the realm of his dreams. And, as Nabokov tells us, Martin is that rarity – a person whose 'dreams come true'" (xii). We may therefore read Gruzinov as a phantom bred by a nightmare and translated to the historical plane in the shape of ominous Soviet spy – a double agent of the sinister communist forces and even darker otherworldly shadows.

But to return to the "reality" of the novel: Nabokov makes sure that the reader would be capable of deciphering the temporal dimension of the novel's action. The interview between Gruzinov and Martin takes place in September 1924. This is just after Savinkov's capture, and yet before Reilly's seizure and death. It is doubtful that the news of Savinkov's misfortune would have already reached Martin (and if so, they would only extend the lure of the adventure). On the other hand, for Gruzinov this is the crucial, momentous period: the carefully prepared operation is yielding fruit and he must make sure that nothing interferes with its smooth running. Martin is not a great catch for the Soviets – merely a deluded idealistic young man, but his entanglement (especially, if it can be in any way traced back to Gruzinov) might endanger the operation if anything happens to him and his politically active friends begin enquiring into the circumstances. This is probably why Gruzinov tries to repulse Martin.

Their meeting is a clash of two elements: Gruzinov is a maker of practical delusions, the dream-manufacturer whose every action is motivated by his secret purpose; Martin is the dreamer, drawn by the fabulous and unexplored, by the danger and thrill of a momentary heroism, by the glory of nostalgic and quite purposeless exploits. Whatever happens to him later, at least he manages to escape the allure of the vulgar mass-produced mystification. From this fate he is saved precisely by his foolish detachment from any utilitarian purpose.

Nabokov's depiction of Zilanov in conjunction with Gruzinov serves a double purpose. Zilanov's disinterestedness and singlemindedness appear noble, especially through the contrast with the cold-eyed smugness of Gruzinov. And yet, the whole political endeavour of the Russian emigration is shown as ineffectual, their glorious dream of overthrowing the Soviet rule – frayed and skimpy. Martin's indifference to politics seems somehow justified, especially once we realize that had Martin truly joined a secret organization (as he once lied to Sonya in order to impress and seduce her), he would have been at the mercy of the sinister Bolshevik dream-makers.

## THE DREAM NARRATIVE

When Martin exits the story, he takes leave of his Cambridge friend Darwin, informing him of his intent to cross illegally into Russia from Latvia and hopefully to walk back within 24 hours. His friend finds this scheme so ludicrous that he cannot bring himself to believe either in Martin's story or in his farewell, so that our hero leaves the room unnoticed by Darwin, and consequently by the reader. Because of this shift, we are left in the dark as to what was the shape of the reality entered by Martin that last time.

<sup>14</sup> Toker, *The Mystery of Literary Structures*, 103; Tammi, "Glory," 178.

Let us consider now the precise nature of Martin's exploits and adventures. As outlined above, quite frequently the transition between fantasy and reality is so swift as to leave us in doubt whether the narrative represents the real or the imaginary version of events. The degree to which reality is edited by imagination varies. At times, its involvement is almost invisible, at other instances it may be suspected but remains veiled, and in some episodes it is clearly the mechanism behind the scenes. For instance, Martin's affair with Alla, the glorious and rather vulgar poetess he meets on the way to Constantinople, makes the reader wonder if, perhaps, their intimacy is not overstated by the narration, that is, if we are not viewing the imaginary affair being played out in Martin's mind, rather than on the deck of an actual ship, sailing out of Russia.

Even more suspicious is the sequence that takes place after Martin's departure. It must be noted that throughout the narrative Martin is persistently the focalizer. Feelings of other characters are guessed at, while his are completely understood and precisely detailed by the narrator. When he exits the story – travelling, we assume, to the forbidden border, – the narrative seems to continue by the sheer force of impetus. And the uncanny impression the readers have is that it is still, somehow, Martin's mind controlling the tale.

This is even more striking when we observe Sonia's reaction to the news of Martin's disappearance. She has proved herself a heartless flirt throughout the narrative, only half-interested in Martin; her predictable reaction to the news of his "adventure" would be annoyance or anger, or, possibly, indifference. In the novel, however, she starts weeping, screaming and generally overacting. She never once suspects that the whole disappearance might be a hoax. This is out of character, and, we cannot fail to notice, precisely the reaction that Martin would wish to see.

Darwin's behaviour after Martin's departure is also strange – even though he suspects that something horrible had happened to his friend, he waits a very long time before contacting anyone, instead mailing the ridiculous postcards that Martin left in his care (to prolong the illusion of his wellbeing for the sake of his mother). What Darwin should have done, and what surely would have been in his character, is to investigate the details of Martin's disappearance right away, contacting the people who might be of assistance to locate and, possibly, release him.

The ending of the story, therefore, seems strangely off-key: the world seems to lose its axis, and yet continue to spin; and its curve takes it not where reality lies, but into the space of the fantasy – one of those morbid dreams when we imagine the world after we are gone, our loved ones mourning us, and those, who, perhaps, did not love us well enough during our life time, deeply pained, profoundly moved, finally appreciating all our wonderful qualities.

What really happens at the end of the novel is, therefore, doubtful. Martin may, indeed, have gone to the Russian border, and now he views the scene from beyond, having been killed during his exploit. He may have also simply decided to disappear in some small village (as he once did during the Mognac episode), and is now imagining the impression his departure is bound to make on his loved ones. Or, there is another still valid possibility: he may have succeeded to cross the border and come back, but decided not to reappear in his old life, beginning some entirely new exploit. This undecidedness of the finale allows

him to merge with that fabulous picture of the twisting forest path – he walks out of life into the work of art.

Nabokov mentioned in the foreword to the novel that “among the many gifts I showered on Martin, I was careful not to include talent. How easy it would have been to make him an artist, a writer; how hard not to let him be one, while bestowing on him the keen sensitivity that one generally associates with the creative creature; how cruel to prevent him from finding in art – not an ‘escape’ (which is only a cleaner cell on a quieter floor), but relief from the itch of being!” (xiii). Yet, as is frequently the case with his comments on his own works, this one proves at once insightful and possibly misleading. It makes the reader dismiss Martin as “unliterary” – as a man without a talent to convey the illusory nature of his perceived world in a narrative. In fact, Martin’s consciousness *is* the artist: the world and people in it are “such stuff as dreams are made on.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> W. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. V. M. Vaughan, A. T. Vaughan (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2011), 276.

# DO SUICIDES REALLY LEAVE LETTERS? LETTER AS SYMBOL IN THE PAST AND PRESENT

Despite the fact that the art of traditional correspondence is in decline, letters have acquired numerous new meanings. Their symbolic transformation has proven to constitute valuable research material. It stands not only as an example of a change in forms of communication, but also one of a shift in the approach to writing by hand as well as to word itself. This paper serves as an introduction to a broader study devoted to contemporary symbolism of letters, the value of written word, and the farewell letter as an example of a textual form that irreversibly affects the workings of memory and the materiality of words.

The very instant he reached home, Rodolphe sat down at his desk, under the mounted stag's head displayed on the wall. But once he had his pen in his hand he could not think what to say, so, leaning on his elbows, he began to reflect. Emma seemed to him to have receded into the distant past, as if the decision he had taken had suddenly interposed an immense distance between them.

In an effort to recapture some sense of her, he fetched from the cupboard at the head of his bed an old Rheims biscuit tin where he always stowed away his letters from women. From it arose a smell of damp dust and withered roses. (...) Then he read some of her letters; they were full of details about their journey, as brief, practical, and peremptory as any business letter. He decided to reread the longer ones, written in the early days (...). Roaming idly among his souvenirs, he studied the various handwritings and styles of the letters, which were as diverse as their spelling. They were tender or lively, funny or sad; some begged for love, others for money. A word might summon up the memory of a face, a particular gesture, a tone of voice; sometimes, however, he could remember nothing at all. (...) He picked up a miscellaneous pile of letters and amused himself for a few minutes letting them cascade from hand to hand.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> G. Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. M. Mauldon (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 178-179.

Letters are a unique form of written communication – one that is private and intimate. They are deeply rooted not only in everyday life but also in literary culture. The aim of this paper is to ask whether the notes that suicides leave behind are letters or perhaps some other form of writing. To answer this question, however, it is necessary to begin from investigating the everyday culture of letter writing. Along with the digital revolution and the development of e-mail letters have changed both their form and symbolism. In order to comprehend the new condition of letters it is essential to examine, at least briefly, contemporary online communication. Consequently, there emerges the interesting phenomenon of handwriting. I use the word “phenomenon” because nowadays few people write by hand, which leads to a redefinition of this practice. Another goal of this paper is to concisely characterize contemporary letter writing, its place in culture, and the way letters are used by suicides. Are suicide notes letters, memos or some form of stream of consciousness? Are they monologues that do not await answer, leaving no chance for their recipients to write back?

### **THE SENSUALITY OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATION**

Paper, ink, envelope, desk, proper forms of politeness, and handwriting – these are the conditions in which “material communication” is born. By this term I mean a form of expression that is both recorded (written) and sensual at the same time. Today, however, the smell of paper and ink, the aroma of a newly opened letter, are sensations that have probably fallen into oblivion. What is a letter? What is correspondence, with its envelopes and postmarks? Does e-mail provide at least a taste of the older practice apart from borrowing some of its iconic aspects, like envelope and mailbox? Why are some documents still written by hand? Testaments, farewell letters or holiday postcards all demand – contrary to ubiquitous digitization – to be written by hand, a practice that is taking on a completely new significance these days. Perhaps letters now have a merely symbolic value? What do we call a letter? What lends value to written communication? Why do people who commit suicide leave handwritten notes, and why – despite the diversity of this form – do we still call them letters?

If we desire to approach the contemporary symbolism of letters we need to examine this form from the perspective of the times when it was the only widely available means of interpersonal communication. My aim here, however, is not to write “a history of epistolography.” I simply wish to sketch a map of associations, from which the symbolic meaning of letters will emerge. By employing such concepts as time, the written word, road, materiality and effect, I aim to examine the transformation of letter itself. What was it associated with in the past and what are its connotations today? Is it not the case that for today’s society letters have a purely symbolic form, deprived of all past meanings? Do letters remain a symbol of the value of words? I shall seek answers to these questions by analysing suicide notes.

Before moving on to a detailed comparative analysis of traditional letters and today’s e-mails, one important thing needs to be stated clearly. E-mail has replaced traditional correspondence. Perhaps it may sound somewhat brutal, but it needs to be admitted that only a handful of people still write traditional letters, while our physical mailboxes do not contain messages from family and friends, but bills for electricity, water

and rent. This is the first major change. Letters, previously associated with intimacy and the “confidentiality of correspondence,” no longer need such protection because they contain only information about a raise in our rent, a new bank offer or changes in the electricity tariff – things that are far from being intimate. Together with the disappearance of private correspondence in its “paper” version, we also lost “the intimacy of mail.” Let me recall a passage from Rozanov:

It is simply remarkable how some people act important through letters. And God forbid you’d touch a postcard. With glistening eyes and a trembling mouth, Koczek shouts, spitting all over, at his father or mother (doesn’t matter).

“It’s vile to read other people’s letters!”

“My dear, this why postcards are written – so that all other people could read them.”

“Not at all!!! It’s a letter!!!! After all, IT’S NOT ADDRESSED TO YOU!!!!”<sup>2</sup>

### **EAGERLY LOOKING FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU...**

[S]he rushed into the parlour as if intending to put the apricots there, tipped the basket up, tore away the leaves, found the letter and opened it; then, as though fleeing from some raging fire, she raced, terrified, up the stairs to her room. Charles was there, she realized; he spoke to her but she, hearing nothing, dashed further on up the stairs, out of breath, desperate, reeling, still clutching that horrible piece of paper, which rattled in her hand like a sheet of tin. On the second landing, she stopped outside the attic door, which was shut. Then she attempted to calm herself; she remembered the letter; she must finish it, but she did not dare. In any case, where? How? She would be seen.<sup>3</sup>

The notion of time has a special meaning in the epistolary tradition, both as the time that elapses before the letter reaches its addressee, and the time we learn about from the text. Letter writing is a form that demands time. To shed light on this, I will attempt to outline the process of drafting letters in the past and today. Back in the day, writing a letter necessitated preparations: choosing the paper and the envelope, not to mention the meticulousness demanded from the sender by handwriting. Any changes as well as stylistic or orthographic errors meant that the letter would have to be written anew. E-mails, on the other hand, are subject to different law. Introducing corrections is lightning fast, backups and working copies are easy to manage, while paper, envelope and postmark are entirely unnecessary. However, the single factor that

<sup>2</sup> V. Rozanov, *Opadłe liście*, trans. J. Chmielewski, I. Kania (Warszawa: Fundacja Augusta hr. Cieszkowskiego 2013), 135.

<sup>3</sup> Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 181-182.

significantly transformed correspondence is the speed of delivery. Traditional letters would take days, weeks or even months to reach the addressee. E-mails are delivered in just a couple of seconds, invalidating the distance separating the sender from the recipient. As a result of the above, letters have lost much of their significance. The possibility to send any message again after a few moments allows the wording to be less well thought out and careful. After all, a corrected version can be sent at any time. It is no longer commonplace to wait hours for the mailman to bring an important letter.<sup>4</sup> Anticipating letters also affected memory. The message would linger in the thoughts of its author for quite a long time after posting the letter, revolving around such questions as: Will my letter reach the addressee? When will he or she respond? Will we manage to communicate in time? The possibility of quick, intense correspondence has eroded the labyrinth of thoughts revolving around written communication. Time has also changed the style of letters themselves. In traditional correspondence the sender would use in his or her text the past, present and future tenses. Whether describing current events, planning meetings or recollecting important moments, senders of letters freely manipulate time, which acquires a double meaning upon reaching the addressee, as the account conveyed in the letter may have become outdated. E-mails, on the hand, are composed strictly in the present tense, maintaining a complete unity of time. They do not call for prior planning, and never demand that we predict the course of events. Such exchanges become a “live” form of reporting. Internet communication is characterized by being “outside time.”

In everyday life, digitization introduces a new relationship with time, which is now largely numerical. The time of interactive modes is no longer the time adopted in the media. According to a beautiful formula coined by Edmund Couchot, it is a fleeting time of directness: directed towards neither past nor future, it does not represent anything. It simulates simultaneity. Willingly or not, contemporary man, from philosopher to workman, is set in a motion that occurs *outside time*.<sup>5</sup>

Internet correspondence is situated in virtual time, both in terms of how it is created and how it describes reality. Due to the way they function there, words in the Internet are free from the pressure of time. They are outside it, outside matter, becoming pure communication, a crippled version of the telepathy dreamed up by scientists in the past. E-mail is message, communication, conversation, information – annulling time constitutes the most important reason why this form of expression separated itself from traditional correspondence, probably irrevocably. It is time – in this case erased time – that ensures e-mails will never be like letters.

<sup>4</sup> G. G. Márquez, *No One Writes to the Colonel*, trans. J.S. Bernstein (New York: Harper Perennial 2005).

<sup>5</sup> J. Lohisse, “Przyszłość kultury z informatyzowanej,” [The future of the digitalized culture], trans. Joanna Stryczyk in: *Antropologia słowa*, ed. A. Mencwel, R. Sulima, G. Godlewski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2003), 660.

**“WHEN YOU WRITE TO ME, DON’T TYPE IT ALL ON A MACHINE, BUT DROP A LINE BY HAND, JUST A COUPLE OF WORDS, NOT MUCH...”<sup>6</sup>**

After attaching itself to the soul, technology endowed it with omnipotence. At the same time, however, technology crushed the soul, giving birth to the “technological soul,” which knows the mechanism of creativity, but lacks inspiration.<sup>7</sup>

Due to my research in the area of suicide notes, I am interested in the value of handwriting. The transformation of private correspondence is a topic that can be fruitfully examined. Since the popularization of the Internet and universal computerization, we have observed a significant decline in the use of handwriting. Personal variation in terms of the shape, slope and thickness of letters are all features that not only allow identifying a given author, but also speak volumes about his or her character and mental state. Handwriting changes as we change – it ages and matures, acquiring a specific, individual style:

one ends by creating for oneself a personal style of writing, a style so personal that graphology claims to be able not only to identify it with certainty but to read in it the character of the writer. This is to say that style is so tied to the person that one sees writing change and age with him as if it fit exactly the curve of his life.<sup>8</sup>

One element that has survived since the times of letter writing is the personal signature. To this day it has retained its own unique value and is ritually placed on all sorts of official documents. However, handwritten letters sank into oblivion. With the passage of time, graphology as a science will also become less useful. Writing on a computer is easy, fast, clear and convenient. Broadly accessible, it is deprived of individual features. So why is the written word so meaningful to us? Is it only a question of authentication or sentimentality? Or maybe the written word is now beginning to acquire greater significance than ever before? It becomes part of an ever more unusual habit – a sign of engagement, and some kind of a personal confirmation. Digital documents can be forged much more easily, while the systems responsible for protecting our privacy online are quite unsatisfactory. According to the research I have made, suicides usually leave handwritten notes. The manner in which they have been drafted is absolutely incredible. Small, capital and print-style letters, underlining or miniature, symbolic drawings, hearts or smiles – all of these can be found in suicide notes. One good example is a letter from a mother to her son, in which the woman describes her boundless love for the child, informing him at the same time that she cannot take any other decision and suicide is her only option. From the contents of the letter we can gather that the son is just a couple of years old. The mother attempted to convey as many emotions as she could, so she adorned the tender

<sup>6</sup> M. Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska, “Miłość” [“Love”]. This poem served as the basis for a song titled “Pocałunki” [“Kisses”] performed by Ewa Demarczyk to music by Zygmunt Konieczny.

<sup>7</sup> Rozanov, *Opadłe liście*, 71.

<sup>8</sup> É. Gilson, *Linguistics and philosophy*, trans. J. Lyon (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 114.

sentences with hand-drawn hearts and smiling faces. She informs the child that this letter is supposed to be both a keepsake and proof of her feelings for the son. In this case, written communication acquires a completely new ontological meaning. This letter contains the mother's last words – it is her last breath and decision, as well as a record of emotions. The son will be left for the rest of his life with a letter to which he cannot respond. This piece of paper will become the material proof of her feelings for him.

Among the hundred or so letters I examined there was only one that was written on a computer, printed and left on the bed by its author, a young student of science. The note was two pages long and mainly described his problems with adapting to contemporary forms of education, especially forms of cooperation with lecturers. At the end of the letter he explains his decision and describes the way he planned to commit suicide. The note is signed but not by hand. Still, it is a singular case. Despite the longing for the older, more traditional way of studying, clearly expressed in the letter, it was written entirely on a computer.

The impact that recording things in handwriting has on memory is significant. Upon closer examination of contemporary textual forms of communication, in which handwriting is used (e.g. testament, suicide note, postcard), it becomes clear that these forms attempt to leave a certain “trace” in the recipient's memory. The text recorded in them is supposed to be remembered. The will written on paper, or a farewell letter to the family are specific souvenirs, albeit in a deeper meaning. They leave a trace of the author in the text. A word written personally by hand acquires a meaning similar to the one of sealing something with one's own blood. In the case of suicide notes this may be even literal because drops of blood do sometimes stain the paper containing the message, forming a unique whole.

### **LETTER VERSUS E-MAIL, OR THE WAR FOR WORD**

If letters were inextricably linked with anticipation, handwriting, paper, the institution of the post, postmarks and postmen, which of these features find continuation in electronic correspondence? Virtual mailboxes retain, it seems, the visual dimension, but employ a “substitute form” that imitates traditional correspondence. E-mail accounts feature both an inbox and an outbox, draft and trash folders, as well as a special container for spam. In terms of their visual representation, we find a traditional envelope and a homely mailbox. Every user has a unique address and access code. What virtual mail offers us is a kind of clean and fast system of messaging, one that does not demand special forms, reaches the addressee immediately and is totally deprived of the material dimension. Letters in the Internet become a fleeting written form recorded in the virtual reality, stripped of originality and authenticity. All in all, e-mail is a means of communication divested of the human factor. Since it has no material form, the electronic “letter” exists only in virtual reality, thus becoming completely isolated from its author, recipient and any intermediaries. It is the essence of how human form can be minimalized and perfected, as much as it is possible, in terms of its pure functionality. A single word – a person – ceases to have meaning since all that matters is the message. Words devoid of owners are lonely – they are not roaming free but become stuck in an arbitrary, artificial sphere of communication.

## SUICIDE NOTES – LETTERS THAT BROOK NO ARGUMENT

Farewell letters are uniquely specific. It can be argued that due to their diversity they obey no law. The wide range of their forms makes them difficult to classify and inhibits the selection of essential features characterizing this way of communicating. Despite the fact that suicide notes sometimes refer to the most intimate aspects of human life, they approximate the form of an open letter. Usually left at the place where the author committed suicide, such notes run the risk of being discovered by a third party. On the one hand, they are beyond doubt private messages, but on the other they do not take into account any “wrong interpretation.” This is because a suicide note is, in its form, the ultimate message. It does not brook any argument or counterargument. These are the last words of a person who, upon leaving the note, excludes him- or herself from any discussion whatsoever. The fact that suicide notes are written by hand draws attention to the value of handwriting. They are signatures, proofs that the decision taken by the one who “raised the hand to strike him- or herself” was the result of personal consideration. At the same time, they exclude the participation of others. Of course, there are cases of forging suicide notes, but they are detected with the help of tools at the disposal of today’s criminology (graphology plays a key role here). In what sense is a suicide note a letter? Written on a wall, or on one or more sheets of paper, addressed but never set in motion on a real communication path, a suicide note is left alone and waits until the addressee comes and collects it him- or herself. Sometimes its form is closer to that of an epitaph or a grave inscription. However, instead of commemorating the author it primarily accentuates his or her last will. It excludes the notion of time, for time in a letter written by a suicide is his or her time – a time that is strictly defined and already closed. It is a private space of memories and images of the past. Suicide notes are letters that nobody is waiting for – the mailman does not bring them and the moment when one is found is always a surprise that introduces an unexpected pause. It is a moment that remains forever in the memory of the suicide’s closest. Words written on a piece of paper, the character and style of handwriting, and sometimes drops of blood are all constituent parts of a material farewell. The author literally leaves a piece of him- or herself in the letter. With this last message, he or she forges him- or herself in the memory of the closest. It is in suicide notes that words have the greatest strength. They gain causative power in how they shape memory. They transform the recipient of such a letter for ever.

Among the most typical associations made with the act of suicide we can list two of its material symbols: the noose and the suicide note. Both are inherently connected with popular images of suicide, and form a specific symbolism of death. However, each one refers to a different order: the noose is a visual image, a sign in itself, whereas the note is an image of words, not objects. When we consider the suicide note, we do not see an envelope with a postmark, but the farewell message itself. However, what the noose and the note share is their “indexicality.” Charles Sanders Peirce, who developed the theory of a triadic sign, distinguished in it the object, the interpretant and the sign (or representamen). Examining the nature of the object, he created a typology of signs. He differentiated arbitrary signs (convention, symbol), exclamations (contiguity, index) and onomatopoeic signs (semblance, icon). I would describe the suicide note as an index-type sign just like Umberto Eco understood it. Eco defines the indexal sign as one that has

a physical connection with the object, e.g. as in the case of footprints left in sand. In this sense, the suicide note is connected with the suicide. It is a material trace of the person who committed suicide, the last one he or she left behind. Pre-planned, premeditated and created intentionally using a well-thought-out form, this sign is the ultimate, last trace that the suicide leaves, as well as the last thing he or she has full control over before the body dies when its vital processes stop. The suicide note becomes a symbol of both the person who commits suicide and the social images formed on his or her subject. For the person who takes the decision to commit suicide, it is the symbol of that autonomous choice, whereas for the social imagination it is an authentic signature placed under that decision.

In their notes, suicides frequently use such phrases as “I know I did bad,” “I know that this will change nothing,” “I know that you will not love me,” “I know that I failed you,” “I know that you will be ashamed of me,” “I know that it is not going to be better tomorrow,” “I know that this is the only sensible decision I could have made.” By writing the note, the suicide assumes the position of *the person who knows*. It is the closeness of death, and the certainty of the decision to take one’s life that allow him or her to become, at least for a moment, an omniscient narrator. The suicide brooks no argument – his or her state of mind before dealing the final blow is called the “dynamic constricture.” Erwin Ringel, an excellent psychologist who studied this subject, describes this mindset in the following way: suicides do not see any solution except death as problems surround them from all sides and the walls of their consciousness keep narrowing down. Such a mental condition leaves no place for discussion. It acts like a temporary daze that lasts for a period of time dependent on the psychological strength of the person experiencing suicidal thoughts.<sup>9</sup> Narration from this perspective has all the hallmarks of an absolute one. Full control of time and space help the suicide gain psychological advantage, and act as a source of strength. It is at this stage that suicides write their notes. It makes them experience a surge of power and feel like they are in the lead because those written words will never be questioned. The text left by someone who “raised the hand to strike him– or herself” is a message whose power matches that of a sentence passed by a court, the only difference being that in this case there can be no appeal to a higher authority. Thus, the suicide – the only person who can manage his or her own death – becomes an *absolute* narrator. His or her closest, on the other hand, are sentenced to hear the ruling and remember its wording for ever.

<sup>9</sup> E. Ringel, *Gdy życie traci sens* [When life loses meaning], trans. E. Kazimierzczak (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Glob, 1987), 60.

Wojciech Kruszewski

## ADAM JERZY CZARTORYSKI'S INTRODUCTION TO LITHUANIAN HISTORY OR WHY DID A POLISH PRINCE COMPOSE A MYTHOLOGY ON THE ORIGINS OF LITHUANIA?<sup>1</sup>



Since this is supposed to be a paper on the work of a Polish author from the first half of the nineteenth century, and since this work is about Lithuania, there is no other way but to begin with this motto, taken from the epic poem *Pan Tadeusz* by Adam Mickiewicz:

O, Lithuania, my country! You are as good health:  
How much one should prize you, he only can tell  
Who has lost you.<sup>2</sup>

A few weeks ago Polish social media users enjoyed a small but characteristic event. On a social platform dedicated to literature, a user, most likely a young female Polish

<sup>1</sup> This paper is a transcript of a lecture given in February 2016 at the University of Ottawa.

<sup>2</sup> Translated by Marcel Weyland. All the other quotations in this paper were translated by the author.

poetry enthusiast, wrote: "I could never understand the words: O Lithuania, my country! Shouldn't it be: Poland my country? Isn't it more patriotic? How can we raise patriots when we try to convince young people that Lithuania is their homeland, for which one yearns?" This entry caused some amusement among many of my friends, yet others expressed sincere concern over the educational background of the person who had decided to share such an opinion on Adam Mickiewicz and his masterpieces with the world. However, these reactions, it seems to me, are not completely inappropriate. This opinion is symptomatic and provokes serious thought. The representatives of the younger generation, but also many people of my generation, do not truly understand why Mickiewicz invokes Lithuania? If Poles consider that their literature plays an important role in cultivating national identity, if they decide to educate their children, telling them to read the greatest works of Polish literature, why in the heart of the national literary canon is an epic poem that begins with an invocation of Lithuania? And why do all Polish students have to learn it by heart?

Those who share this confusion, those who also do not understand, how a Polish national epic begins with the invocation to Lithuania, may also be surprised by the work that is the subject of my lecture: *The Introduction to Lithuanian History*. The author is Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, uncrowned king of Poles in the nineteenth century, and undisputed spiritual, moral and actual leader of the Poles in the Polish territories and in exile. He wrote a work entitled *Introduction to Lithuanian History* more or less at the time when Adam Mickiewicz created *Pan Tadeusz*. And it was not all that he wrote. As we shall see, he devoted a huge effort to this work, overcoming great complications that stood in the way of his goal.

The year 2016 will be a watershed year for his work. Soon it will be printed and read for the first time. So far, due to Polish editorial negligence, *Lithuanian History* has been virtually unknown. A few scholars dedicated to nineteenth century Polish history have mentioned it in their works. But those few works show that the knowledge about Czartoryski's *Introduction* has not gone beyond the dull conclusion that this work exists at all.

This poor reception is probably due to two reasons:

1. *Introduction to Lithuanian history* is the unfinished work. At least one can assume so by cursory reading.
2. Manuscript documentation is fairly (but not overly) complex.

Thus, work on the release of the *Introduction* may seem disproportionate to the expected benefits. Why pour over poorly legible manuscripts of complex and unfinished work?

## 1

Before I answer this question, let me explain some basic facts. First of all, what does it mean that the manuscripts are quite (but not excessively) complicated?

Let's start from basic complications. Found in the Czartoryski Library, were five notebooks under the name of *Lithuanian history*.<sup>3</sup> Two of them look like rough drafts. Those are the plans of the work, excerpts from various sources, written in many languages,

<sup>3</sup> The Princes Czartoryski Library in Cracow, catalogue numbers: 6190 II, 6191 IV, 6192 II, 6193 III vol. 1 and 6193 II vol. 2.

notes of the author, first versions, in which we can see signs of tentativeness rather than clear decisions. Those records without a doubt came from the hand of the author himself.

The other three fascicles in this collection contain different versions of the work. These versions are clean copies. They all look like final drafts of the work. Those copies were made by skilled copyists, and we can see only minor corrections made in Czartoryski's hand in some places. We succeeded in identifying the hands of six copyists, working for Prince Czartoryski over this work in the period from the early twenties to the late fifties of the nineteenth century. Of course this does not mean that it took thirty years to finish the job from the first drafts. We are talking about the copies, not about *Lithuanian History* itself. However, if we consider how extraordinarily long this period was, it can lead us to the conclusion that the chronology of this work can signify at least this: over the years the interest the Prince had in the *Introduction to Lithuanian history* had not decreased. For some reason this work seemed to be of great importance to him.

Therefore the first question is: why did the Prince order the creation of different versions? The answer to this question lies in the complicated history of Czartoryski's library. Many valuable collectibles, books and manuscripts, including manuscripts of the work in our interest, all gathered in the residence of Czartoryski's palace in Puławy (Poland), were scattered by the war during the November Uprising in 1831 against tsarist Russia. To protect this collection from inevitable confiscation by the Russian troops, the family split it into parts that had been placed in different locations. When the Prince finally settled in Paris, he started to trace and gather his property again into one place. It was long and difficult work. And this explains why there are so many variants of the *Introduction*.

Please allow me to introduce a short example that shows the complexity of the situation faced by the academics who deal with this work. Let's take a look at the peculiar short note in one of the manuscripts. In one of the copies we can find a short inscription: "copy made by Mr. Żórawski, not finished, because the previous copy has already been found." This remark (made in the hand of Mr. Rutkowski, the copymaker) can help us to determine the genesis of the last copy. Someone (the Prince?) asked Żórawski to make the copy of the *Introduction*. And I must add, we are not sure: what was he copying from? While he was working on the copy, another manuscript was found, the copy made by Hipolit Błotnicki a few years previously, probably before the dispersion of the first library. However, since Błotnicki's copy is incomplete, Żórawski had to continue his work, starting from the place where it had been aborted by Błotnicki. After completing his work, Żórawski sent to be bound what may be called a hybrid, a copy composed, in fact, of two different copies. The first part is a manuscript in Błotnicki's hand, the second was made by Żórawski. The first part of Żórawski's copy, the one that was interrupted by the finding of Błotnicki's copy, was bound in a separate volume.

Complicated? Quite, but not too much. However, researching the history of Czartoryski's library is not just a pastime, an interesting episode only for philologists or historians. It allows us to understand some of the peculiarities of the text the Prince left us. We must remember that he was not a professional historian, but a prominent statesman, at that time – a recognised politician on the European arena (he almost became the King of the Belgians, for example). His work, if it had been printed, would have surely been the object of careful studies undertaken by special services of various states, especially the

one I will mention a little further. And if so, the actual word setting of these manuscripts, are of great importance.

Let's think of it this way. The Prince creates a work on Lithuanian history. For some reason the manuscript of the work is lost for a couple of years. The Prince did not, however, lose interest in his project and undertook some serious, extended efforts to complete it once again in later years. Anyone who has any experience in writing knows that every next approach to writing, every subsequent revision, almost certainly means that some things will be phrased differently. If it comes to manuscripts, every new copy almost always means a new textual version. The surviving records of this work allow us to recognise the change of the Prince's ideological goal. On the occasion of composing each copy, he wrote yet again, and he wrote a little differently. Perhaps the most spectacular example of this process is related to the problem of Germany.

While writing about the earliest episodes of the history of Lithuania, Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski dealt with this crucial problem. In one copy of his work, by Karol Sienkiewicz, we find this interesting passage: "So the two main families of the barbarian tribes in Europe in this era were Germans and Slavs. These two families never intermingled and for various reasons there was an *extensive* breach and deep hatred toward each other for years to come."

In the other copy, made by Franciszek Żórawski, the excerpt is as follows: "So the two main families of the barbarian tribes in Europe in this era were Germans and Slavs. These two families never intermingled and for various reasons there was an *eternal* breach and deep hatred toward each other for years to come."

This is not a change of writing style, but a change of some real importance. The Prince, the most prominent politician among Poles in the nineteenth century, regarded the Polish (in fact Slavic)-German relationship as indelibly marked by (eternal or just protracted) hostility. And since the author was a diplomat... this part of his work really matters.

Let's take a look at the title of the work. We will find a change of similar importance there as well. The title of this work was not written by the author himself in any of the records preserved to our time. And the title is passed to us in two forms: *Introduction to Lithuanian History* and *Lithuanian History*. *Introduction* is the title imprinted on the spine of the fascicle with the most complete (or rather: the longest) version of the work. All other volumes bring shorter fragments of this text. We can conclude, that archivists working for Czartoryski were fully aware that the fascicle, which consists of the hybrid version I mentioned earlier of unified copies of Błotnicki and Żórawski, contain the last authorised version of the work. There is a title printed on the spine of this volume, and beneath this title there is more information stamped on it, the information clearly expresses that this is: "the correct copy." So if we decide to follow the preserved record, we must conclude, that this correct work's title is *The Introduction to Lithuanian History* and not *The Lithuanian History*.

But there is also another motivation that we must bear in mind, while determining the work's title. It is the conviction, based on the close reading of this work, that what Czartoryski left us, can indeed be regarded only as an introduction to the full history of Lithuania. The Prince was interested only in the earliest historical periods before the

history of this part of Europe hopped on its well-known tracks, as attested in historical documents.

The problem of the title introduces us to the issue of the Prince's intention. The records in our disposal allow us to conclude that in the beginning he wanted to write something completely different. Czartoryski wanted to develop not just a part of the history of Lithuania, but rather a vast historical panorama. This writing plan is well documented in one of the drafts, in which we can find a short but complete plan of his future work. This plan makes clear that the Prince intended his work to be a presentation of Lithuanian history from the legendary Wojdewut (the creator of the Lithuanian nation) to King Jagiełło and his accession to the Polish throne, so more or less to the fifteenth century. Meanwhile, what had been preserved largely applies to the period even before Wojdewut. So we need to ask, why did Czartoryski change his initial plan?

Let's take a look at the work of the father of our author, Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski. In his work entitled *Thoughts on the Polish Writings* (written in 1801, published in Vilnius 1801, actually 1810, so more than 20 years before his son wrote *The Introduction*)<sup>4</sup> Czartoryski (the father) discusses works of Polish historians dealing with Lithuanian history. He suggests that the earliest period in the history of this land should be provided only in brief, even overly brief. Historians of Lithuania must focus on periods attested in written records, and should build their works on undisputable facts not tales – this was his strong conviction. The only goal of every historian must not be a kaleidoscopic vision of events, even though those events might be interesting. So he addresses historians in these words: “Do not waste your work on dull and redundant investigations of things of less importance, and almost always unproven, like those frequent and long introductory remarks concerning where the hordes of our ancestors came from and what was their trail (...).”

Reading the *Introduction to Lithuanian History* one becomes convinced that the son did exactly the opposite to what his father advised. Most of his work is a long-winded overview of the pilgrimage of many barbarian tribes; even worse: his accounts are quite often fictionalized; his major concern is the legendary origin of Lithuania. Why did he decide to write his work in this way? His effort resulted in writing against reasonable advice of his father and even against his own initial plan, written in one of the first drafts.

## 2

The Prince presents his work about the legendary Lithuanian origins. But as in the biblical Book of Genesis where there are two stories about the creation of man, Czartoryski gives us two myths regarding the origins of the Lithuanian nation.

The first myth points to a Roman aristocrat, Palemon, as the founder of Lithuania. He arrived to a location on the Baltic seashore during the reign of the Emperor Nero, or maybe later, we are not exactly sure. Was he Roman by birth or of barbarian origin? This is also unclear. But he landed close to the place where the Neman River flows into the Baltic Sea. He integrated Roman culture with local barbaric customs, giving birth to the

<sup>4</sup> The Polish title of this work is: *Myśli o pismach polskich z uwagami nad sposobem pisania w rozmaitych materiach* [Thoughts on the Polish Writings with Comments on the Writing Styles in Various Materials].

first Lithuanian state. Czartoryski reports this myth in his work, but as Michał Otorowski rightly observes, does not put it to the fore. Palemonian myth is in the shadow of another genetic myth, the Prussian one.<sup>5</sup> In this version of the legendary beginnings of Lithuania, another important conviction arises. It is the belief that Lithuania was born somehow naturally, spontaneously. Otorowski tried to answer the question, why did the Prince shift his attention from the legend of Palemon to the legend about Wojdewut and Krywekrywejto (Prussian myth)? This idea at first seems to be completely inexplicable. Why? Because by questioning the Palemonian myth, by putting it in the shadow of the second legend the author was working against the interest of his own family. There is a legend, that the Palemon's coat of arms was a centaur. The centaur is the prototype of the national emblem of Lithuania – the Pahonia. And the same Pahonia is in the centre of Czartoryski's coat of arms. By putting the Palemonian myth into the foreground, Adam Jerzy Czartoryski could quite easily glorify his noble house as the house of the descendants of the Lithuania's founder. And the Prince refrained from this. Admirable restraint. Yet, perhaps there was another reason for this. The Prince overshadows himself and his family, and puts to the foreground the myth of the noble barbarians who first established Lithuanian social order on the foundations of their own pagan religion and on their own barbarian law. Let us ask once again, going deeper and deeper in the project of Czartoryski: what for?

In order to solve this riddle we must change our question. In my opinion, while reading the *Introduction*, we must be aware that there is something far more important than what the author is actually talking about. I have just given you an example. We will not be able to answer the question of why the Prussian myth is put to the fore, unless we know something that Czartoryski did not say which is, in this context, the legendary origins of his house. So maybe, just maybe, is this how it works in the *Introduction*? Maybe we should analyse not what Czartoryski said, but what he did not say? Let us try.

Reading the story of the Lithuanian origins, if we only know just a little bit about this part of the world, we must ask a strange question: who is missing from this story? Russians. Indeed, we will not find any traces of Russian princes in this work. There are Poles, with whom Lithuanians are in the state of perpetual war and with whom they sometimes come to terms. But there are no Russians. None at all! And when we acknowledge this absence, some really serious questions can be raised at last. Among them is the most important one: what is this all about, really?

Let me put it this way:

1. Czartoryski takes pains to develop the Lithuanian history – this is a toil to which he devoted a lot of effort, overcoming many serious difficulties, such as missing a copy of the work. It shows how laudably determined the author was. His work, as we could see, was more likely to perish than to survive. And yet it survived, thanks to some unique persistence. The Prince cared so much about this work.
2. Czartoryski writes against the reasonable advice of his own father, the advice concerning how one should perceive a historian's duties. We can even say,

<sup>5</sup> M. Otorowski, "W poszukiwaniu mitu założycielskiego: Palemon i palemonidzi w Historii litewskiej Adama Jerzego Czartoryskiego" [In Quest of the Founding Myth: Palemon and Palemonids in Lithuanian History by Adam Jerzy Czartoryski], *Kronos* 2 (2015), 246-267.

considering the actual form of his work – this mythical chaos associated with the absolute beginning of Lithuania – that our author is deliberately anachronistic. Deliberately, i.e., he wrote it being fully aware of the consequences of his choices.

3. Czartoryski writes against his original plan, the plan he himself laid in one of the first drafts. It was a very ambitious plan, but after all – an achievable one. In the beginning it was supposed to be the history of one country. And in the end there is only a myth about the nation's foundation. Czartoryski's *Introduction* ends before the real Lithuanian history even begins.
4. Finally, Czartoryski writes against the interest of his own family. He overshadows the story of the legendary progenitor Palemon, and he puts the Prussian myth to the foreground.

If he was not insane (and all his life and work provide enough evidence that he was not), what was the rationale of such proceedings? The key to this question is the answer to this simple problem: who were the intended readers? The easiest way to answer this question is: he wrote it for his contemporaries, so for those who lived in certain conditions, who were subjected to a specific education, for those, whose intellectual horizons were supplied by the special ideology. To put it very directly: he wrote for the audience which was the object of Russian historical propaganda.

At the time Russia ruled in this part of Europe with an iron fist, brutally crushing all aspirations for independence. Of course, some sort of autonomy was possible, but the ambitions of Poles were reaching far. Polish people wanted to govern themselves. So the tsarist establishment had to somehow legitimize its power over other nations. The awareness of such a need, the belief that savage force is not sufficient to rule well, resulted in a specific turn in Russian historiography. Russian historiography has never been just a field of knowledge, a discipline free from obligations to authority. Russian historiography has always been an applied, political science.

But let us get back to our work. *Introduction to Lithuanian History* is a response to the voluminous work of Nicholas Karamzin *History of the Russian State*. The first Russian edition of this book was published between 1803-1826, in English in 1818-1829, and in French in 1818-1828, all versions printed in St. Petersburg. The first Polish translation was printed in the years 1824-1830 in Warsaw.<sup>6</sup> So in the era before the November Uprising, Poles were able to learn about the official Russian point of view on Polish history and Poland's place in Europe. And they could also learn the same about Lithuania.

Karamzin's point of view is as follows, and let me put it very plainly: Lithuanians are barbarians, whose ferocity is opposed to Ruthenian (and Russian) civilization. Karamzin's image of Lithuania is stretched between the two points in history. In the third volume of his work, we find information about the first contact of Holy Ruthenia with Lithuania:

In these times western Russia encountered new enemies, dangerous and cruel. Lithuanians, over the years subjected to Russian princes, a nation

<sup>6</sup> The work was translated to Polish by Grzegorz Buczyński. All quotations from taken from Karamzin's *History* were translated to English from his text.

wild and poor, paid their taxes with skins, even with phloem and willow branches. Our constant disagreements, the separation of the Krywska Land, our weakness in every land gave Lithuanians the opportunity not only to break free, but also to foray Russian provinces. Trumpeting in their long horns, these people got on their fast forest horses and tackled on us as predators tackle the prey. They were burning villages, taking captives, but chased by troops, refused to fight in the field, they used to scatter in all directions and disappear just to show up again in another place. Fighting this way, the plunderers sacked the province of Pskov terribly, even though it was severe winter.

(Karamzin vol. 3, p. 56)

The last reference in Karamzin's *History* presents the Lithuanians as eternal enemies. Karamzin writes about the provisions of the peace with Sweden:

We, Novgorod citizens who rejected king Sigismund and his successors, Lithuania and perfidious Poles, we acknowledge the Swedish king as our guardian and protector on the condition that Russia and Sweden together oppose this enemy and do not conclude covenants one without the other.

(Karamzin vol. 12, p. 261)

So for Karamzin, Lithuanians are barbarians. But perhaps, of noble origin? Karamzin flatly discredited the belief that they are Palemon's descendants. He wrote:

The old suppositions regarding the origin of Great Duchy of Lithuania are fairy tales and are fabricated on speculations only. Some say that an aristocrat Roman called Palemon during the reign of Augustus, or Nero, or maybe even Attila arrived to Lithuania, enlightened wild residents of this place and began to reign over them as their monarch. (...) History of Palemon is a fable, believable only because of the similarity of some Lithuanian words to Latin ones. If we accept this, Russia should therefore seek her ancient Roman origins as well, because our language is so similar to Latin. In *Annals of Quedlinburg* we can find a mention of Lithuania in the year 1009: *In confinio Russiae et Lituae* [on the border of Russia and Lithuania] etc. (...) Before Nestor's chronicles, there is not even a single note about this country.

(Karamzin vol. II, pp. 15-16)

We must be aware, that it is not only Karamzin who expressed such views on Lithuania in Russian historiography. There were also many other Russian historians who shared the same point of view. They all show clearly: Lithuania is the exclusive zone of Russian influence. So let me ask, going back to the beginning of my paper: what does this all have to do with Poland? Why did the leader of Poles devote so much attention to Lithuania?

## 3

Shortly after the partition (during the last years of the eighteenth century), Poles had to find answers to some serious questions, for instance, whether their existence as Poles was still possible. In other words: can Poles remain Polish without their own state? The answer to this question at the beginning of the nineteenth century was still unclear.

The ultimate end of Polish history was certain for officials and civil servants of European powers which had divided the Polish crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The great Polish poet of this era Kazimierz Brodziński remembered his teacher in 1806 (or a bit later):

There was another professor, he taught me German, his name was Schmidt. I will always remember him. (...) He discovered some kind of natural ability in my writings, those in Latin and German which I was giving him. (...) So when he had discovered this, he invited me for a tea once (it was the first official invitation for me in my life). And skilfully and gently he began to question me. But he recognized in me nothing more than a seed of a poet writing in the language which he considered to be already dying with its nation.<sup>7</sup>

What's more important, jeremiads about the end of Poland and of Poles also came out of the mouths of Poles themselves, the ones who could not imagine that Poles could stay Polish without Poland. One of the C-grade Polish poets called to his Muses in 1795, the year when the final collapse of the Polish state happened:

And for what did Apollo shine upon me during these days?  
Why did I turn the night into day by making fire?  
And for whom will we play on our lutes,  
When the Pole turned to German, Lithuanian became a Russian?

As time goes by they forget their mother tongue,  
And Lithuanian mixes his Polish words with Russian ones.<sup>8</sup>

Let me stress that the author, Polish priest Józef Morelowski, mentions Poland and Lithuania in the same breath; in his opinion both states share the same historical fate. But this is not just an inexplicable idiosyncrasy of one poor Polish poet. Karl von Ficquelmont, the Austrian ambassador in St. Petersburg, wrote in his book entitled *Lord Palmerston, England and the Continent* (first published in Vienna in 1852): "The Crown of Poland became important only after her union with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. (...)

<sup>7</sup> K. Brodziński, *Wspomnienia mojej młodości i inne pisma autobiograficzne* [The Memoirs of My Youth and Other Autobiographical Writings], red. A. Łucki, (Kraków: Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza, 1928), 39-40.

<sup>8</sup> *Treny i Sen. Poezje ks. Józefa Morelowskiego TJ napisane w roku ostatniego rozbioru Polski 1795* [Laments and Dream. Poems of rev. Józef Morelowski Written in the Year of the Last Partition 1795], red. K. Lubecki (Kraków: KTOL, 1910), 18.

Lithuania alone was for nearly two centuries at war with the Grand Dukes of Ruthenia; this war became fiercer since the union of Poland and Lithuania” (101-102). So it is quite easy to notice that Karamzin and Ficquelmont in unison combine Lithuania and Poland as the natural enemies of Russia. Ficquelmont's beliefs in this matter are in fact exactly the same as Karamzin's opinions.

What I am trying to say is that these words must be taken into consideration when we look for the right context in which Czartoryski's work should be read. Von Ficquelmont was quite a figure in European diplomacy during his time, a figure of similar importance as Adam Jerzy Czartoryski. They both came from respected European aristocratic families. They both were famous for their diplomatic talents and they both had long-term diplomatic practice. Finally, they both knew Russia perfectly well, although their relation to the Empire evolved differently. The Austrian came to Russia in 1829 as the ambassador of the Habsburg Empire. He loved Russia; his acclimatization in the Romanov's empire was absolutely perfect. He was part of the St. Petersburg court elite and to the end of his life he remained a strong supporter of Russia. In the same year, 1829, Prince Adam's court promotions had already passed, and shortly thereafter he was given a death sentence for anti-Russian activities as the head of an insurgent government. They both knew Russia very well, which included the Russian power elite, Russian thinking habits, idiosyncrasies, prejudices, etc. So maybe von Ficquelmont and Czartoryski both wrote about the same problem, but from two radically different points of view.

To continue with von Ficquelmont: Poland and Lithuania are perceived by Russia as a threat. The scale of the threat is the greater, the closer the relationship of Poland and Lithuania. So, while it might seem as some sort of paradox, is not *Lithuanian History*, in fact, an attempt to rescue the Polish idea by emphasizing Lithuanian self-subsistence; the idea of Lithuania as being socially, politically, nationally, culturally separate from Russia?

In the nineteenth century, the problem of Lithuania was one of the key problems of Russian policy towards people living in the western areas of the empire. Let us take a look at what Mikhail Muravyov-(funnily enough)-Vilensky had to say about that. The editor of his memoirs, Stanisław Tarnowski, wrote:

With these lies of his, lies repeated today by his entire nation, lies which the whole ignorant and dull world still believes, the most impudent, the most deeply rooted and the most political lie is the one about the eternal Russian population, of Russian origin and of Russian language, of Russian nationality in eternally Russian countries: Lithuania and Ruthenia.<sup>9</sup>

Muravyov alone recalls that when he was entrusted with the mission to suppress the Polish Uprising in 1864, the Tsarina tearfully begged him to save Lithuania for Russia. “At least Lithuania!” – she cried.

<sup>9</sup> M. N. Muravyev, *Pamiętniki Michała Mikołajewicza “Wieszatela” 1863-1865* [The Memoirs of Michail “The Prophet”], intr. S. Tarnowski (Kraków: Spółka Wydawnicza Polska, 1902), 16, cf. 64 and 65.

## 4

So to sum up:

1. In the first half of the nineteenth century the official Russian historiography presented Lithuania as an indelible part of Russian lands, united under the rule of the tsars.
2. Polish policy toward Lithuania was seen as threatening important goals of Russian policy in Europe.
3. One of the elements in the struggle to keep Lithuania within the empire was an official historic propaganda offensive.
4. Questioning the Palemonian myth of Lithuanian origins is an ineffaceable part of this propaganda.

The *Introduction to Lithuanian History* should be read in this context. Czartoryski's work is an attempt to save Lithuania, separate it from Russia, thereby being close to Poland.

However, strange as it might be to us living in the twenty-first century, he tried to achieve his goal by constructing a myth. He avoided reasonable studies of preserved historical records and passed on to us a tale. His story about the origins of the Lithuanian state is in fact nothing more than a beautiful fairy tale. Isn't it strange? Czartoryski was not a dreamer, a writer who simply reflected fantasies. He was a statesman of flesh and blood. And yet he put so much effort in building the new Lithuanian identity based on legends.

Prince Adam Jerzy, although he was not a poet, is for me one of eminent Polish writers of Romantic era. Like Słowacki (the author of the unfinished myth about Polish origins – *Król-Duch*), Krasiński or Mickiewicz, he shared the same romantic idea about the power of a poetic word, a word stronger than reasoning. Was he mistaken? Well, after 123 years Poland restored its sovereignty. Many Poles dedicated their lives to the idea of the Polish state, the state free from any hostile influence. Today some Poles think that this heroic act was possible, because someone convinced Poles that their life would be easier in their own state. But I think Poles just believed in something big, bigger than their everyday calculations, bigger than what can be materialized in actual political and social bodies. And they longed to see their dream comes true. The Prince was one of the many who told them the myth of free noble people. And some people believed him. And maybe it is because of this myth that I am Polish in 2016.



Giuseppe Perconte Licatese

## THE TRAGIC COMPASS OF GUIDO CERONETTI: INSIGHTS IN THE LONG XX CENTURY

[Guido Ceronetti, *Tragico tascabile*, Milan: Adelphi, 2015]

Guido Ceronetti, this most unique of authors in modern Italian language, answers a call in his resting retreat in Albenga (North-West Italy), with the same gentle and elegiac tone of voice, which was once noted by his friend and fellow writer Emile Cioran.<sup>1</sup> From this location today he dictates his pieces for the publishers and the press to a laptop-equipped assistant, who deals with the ineludible technology: immaterial, standardized e-mails are after all utterly foreign to a lifelong crafter of patchwork envelopes carrying meticulously hand-written letters – and hand craftiness, also shown in Ceronetti’s theatre sceneries, is correlative to his highly sophisticated writing, which he likens to the shaping of “the iron of the poetic word” (although he is usually trading in superior alchemic materials). Born in 1927, in Turin, on the phone Ceronetti sounds like the written page of his latest *Tragico tascabile*, where one reads of the “ever closer confrontation with death, which I would be ashamed to repress” (184). An intense grappling with the body and its vulnerability and

<sup>1</sup> E. Cioran, *Esercizi di ammirazione* [Exercises in Admiration] (Milan: Adelphi, 1988), 205.

mortality<sup>2</sup> has always been correlative to the longing for the incorporeal, the *ultrafanico* (that which exists beyond the material and apparent dimension) in Ceronetti. In the pages reviewed here Ingmar Bergman's image of the chess game between the Crusader and the Death is recurring and it denotes a dialogue that has been going on for decades, while our societies were making progress in the removal of suffering and death from public and private discourse. And it denotes some measure of irony, too. A friend and fellow writer feels at ease in asking Ceronetti, in the hefty and colorful *liber amicorum* issued as a homage to him this year,<sup>3</sup> if he, the exegete of ancient inscriptions, gravestones, memorial plaques and also anonymous urban *graffiti* in his wanderings across Italy, would be pleased to have such a plaque for him in a street, and whom he would entrust with writing the text.<sup>4</sup>

Right of the distillation of such a text is the dreamt-of achievement of many readers, admirers and friends of Ceronetti each time are faced with the "arduous endeavor"<sup>5</sup> to write about and explain to others a versatile man who over 60 years composed poetry, prose, essays, fiction, translated ancient and sacred texts, delved into esoteric doctrines, invented an experimental and itinerant theatre of puppets, served as a columnist for some of the most prominent Italian newspapers, regularly corresponded with influential intellectuals and artists of his age (from journalist Sciascia to film director Fellini), ranging from literary criticism to political commentary and harsh and gloomy satire, always however seemingly engaged in his personal *askesis* – the already mentioned Cioran once expressed relief over the fact that the step into the monastery,

<sup>2</sup> See his *Il silenzio del corpo. Materiali per uno studio di medicina* (Milan: Adelphi, 1979), which had multiple translations (among them: *Drzewa bez bogów* (Krakow: Oficyna Literacka, 1995). I transcribe here a short commentary of its English edition, *The Silence of the Body: Materials for the Study of Medicine* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1993): "Idiosyncratic musings by Italian poet, critic, and philosopher Ceronetti, originally published in 1979 and marking the first English translation of his work. Ceronetti, who describes himself as fascinated by medicine and obsessively worried over health, is "appalled by the passiveness of our bodies (...) under the scourge of Medicine's will (...) and dismayed by Medicine's insatiable omnipotence." A student of classic and sacred writings, he has perused world literature, ancient to modern, for insights into the human body and human behavior. He shares those here, along with his own melancholy opinions, bizarre memories, sardonic observations, and nightmarish visions. This isn't a continuous text but, rather, a sort of scrapbook of thoughts, sometimes linked together, sometimes not. Occasionally, there are multipage essays, but many entries run only a pithy line or two. Ceronetti can be epigrammatic, cryptic, even poetic – as in his vignette about an aging twosome: "They were a beautiful couple. Her wealth of varicose veins matched his complete lack of teeth." Or in this comment on medical research: "Pharmaceutical products for dogs and cats should first be tested on men kept in special cages." Or: "Since man is a cancer, his metastasis on other planets should no longer seem so improbable." Anglo-Saxon crudities abound, sounding a jarring note amid so many Latin phrases – but whether this reflects Ceronetti's language or that of his translator is unclear. What is clear is that the author has given a great deal of thought to what it means to be human, and that he wishes doctors would do the same. A literary oddity that's compelling yet repellent, amusing yet outrageous" (*Kirkus Reviews*, October 15, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> A. Motta (ed.), *Il filo dell'enigma. Omaggio a Guido Ceronetti* [The Thread of the Enigma: A Homage to Guido Ceronetti] (San Marco in Lamis: Centro Documentazione Leonardo Sciascia / Archivio del Novecento, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Oddone Camerana in *Ibid.*, 211. On this theme, see also the meditation on death and the hereafter that the newspaper *Il Foglio* solicited Ceronetti to write in summer 2007, and later in *Appunti per il dopo* (Milan: I libri del Foglio, 2007), 223-228.

<sup>5</sup> So does the editor in the introduction to *Il filo dell'enigma*, 11. See also my attempt at a brief sketch of the man in the review of his correspondence with Sergio Quinzio: Ceronetti-Quinzio, *Un tentativo di colmare l'abisso. Lettere 1968-1996* [An Attempt to Bridge the Abyss: Letters 1968-1996] (Milan: Adelphi, 2014), in "A Heathen Reawakened: Guido Ceronetti," *Kronos Philosophical Journal* III (2014), 242-244.

a possibility he saw in Ceronetti's temperament, was never taken, and we were thus not deprived of an amusing companion.<sup>6</sup> At the end of this review we will suggest a humble key, bearing in mind the retort that Ceronetti, annoyed by multiple attempts at defining him, once borrowed from Valery: "nobody equals the sum of his appearances," stressing furthermore that "existence matters more than writing."<sup>7</sup>

Here we focus only on Ceronetti's unconventional journalistic prose<sup>8</sup>, displayed in this collection of 47 pieces written over the last three or four years. *Tragico tascabile* could be translated as *Paperback Tragic*, where the adjective hints at the standard book format, with an implied understatement that does not usually go along with the idea of "tragedy." The "tragic" is of course the tragic element in life, what German minds would conceptualize as *das Tragische*. Another possible translation is that of *portable tragic*: insights that lend themselves to be grasped aphoristically and put in one's pocket for an occasional reading. Reality is fragmentary, and so is Ceronetti's writing,<sup>9</sup> but in the end the pieces come together in an "anthropoid form" or "mind" making his way on unbeaten philosophical paths.<sup>10</sup> And this mind is the one of a cultural critic, a *moraliste* who scrutinizes the *mores* (customs) and the *ideas* (or ideologies, usually mistaken) of his contemporaries.

What does Ceronetti mean exactly by "tragic"? The foreword, signed by *il Filosofo Ignoto* (the Unknown Philosopher<sup>11</sup>), suggests that the "tragic" is a matter of individual sensitiveness, a keen perception of the real, a compass that points to the most salient aspect in a given social reality or individual case, which "lets one touch, at the height of the expressive potential of words, its going beyond the measure" (12). Ceronetti's Tragic "frames, clarifies, explains the Becoming" of the chosen events and personalities of the news and of contemporary history, and elevates the material of an often "ungrateful," "unforgivable work" as journalism can be, to a status not inferior to that of the Dionysiac myth, Shakespeare or Dostoyevsky.

In the effort to sort out and dignify the philosophical gold hidden in the tragic, drawing it out of the shoreless sea of painful, mournful or virtuous facts of the daily news and the epochs, I deplete the remainder of this long and weary lifetime of mine. (...) I see the objection coming: it is you who decides on what is tragic, then? Quite so, but I work with the word, mother both of error and of philosophy. Mine is an invitation to a theatre, the one of the World.

(12-13)

<sup>6</sup> Cioran, *Esercizi di ammirazione*, also reprinted in *Il filo dell'enigma*, 245-247.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. the interview by P. di Stefano in *Il Corriere della Sera*, 9 May 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Of which I offer quotations in my translation, where at times square brackets indicate insertions I thought useful in order to clarify what is being said.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. the foreword to a collection of aphorisms and fragments by other authors he compiled, *Tra pensieri* [Among Thoughts] (Milan: Adelphi, 1994), 11.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>11</sup> A mask Ceronetti wore at different times in the past, and resumed to sign his front page column for newspaper *Il Foglio* in 2015.

When, below in the book, Ceronetti asks himself what in the Greek heritage of understanding and consolation may still come to the rescue of Western man, we read that “in the comprehension of the Greek Tragic, one achieves the comprehension of all Tragic,” and that “in the species of the ‘tragic’ thinking itself reaches its conclusion.” The Tragic is thus inherently linked to an idea of finitude and self-contained immanence: to such a “comprehension of ourselves in a finite world” a cosmic, temporal or divine infinity is external altogether; “tragic is the *fulfillment* of one or more destinies that includes any ulterior it may be therein” (92-93). But it is not the Greek spirit that animates this work. Ceronetti’s gaze at contemporary realities is that of the biblical *Ecclesiastes*, which for him has been an exercise of translation and a piece for meditation for decades.<sup>12</sup> In his exegesis and appropriation of the text, the philosopher has strongly made a case for the *Ecclesiastes* sitting uneasily with the rest of the biblical canon, and being an un-orthodox piece of wisdom detached from transcendence and from the promise of redemption, thus nearer to the kind of tragic comprehension of the world we have here.<sup>13</sup> And really the line from *Qohélet*, I, 14: “I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and vexation of the spirit”<sup>14</sup> would be fit as an epigraph for *Tragico tascabile*. Before the eyes of the author and the reader runs a selection and sequence of “the impressive events of my cruel century,”<sup>15</sup> the Twentieth. Like Hobsbawm’s, it deflagrated in 1914, but, as Ceronetti persuasively has it, it lingers on in multiple, haunting forces and presences of our day, the exposure of which aims at being good art and true philosophy for “those who have ears to hear” (82): as we read in an earlier collection of aphorisms by the author,

Many live in the tragic [unaware], they nourish themselves with it, they dwell in it. But since they lack the *Sense of the Tragic* (*el sentimiento trágico de la vida*), the Tragic cannot redeem nor illuminate them, nor can it give them *more life*. And the Tragic is saddened not to be able to help them in any way.<sup>16</sup>

Part of the book offers the idiosyncratic musings the Italian reader is accustomed to, and which Ceronetti voices on newspapers and in the rest of his output. To venture into Ceronetti’s literary and philosophical realm, reading the book along with his parallel production of the last year, especially with his front columns for the national daily *Il Foglio*, is recommended.<sup>17</sup> In Ceronetti’s dense writing, social and historical optimism is the enemy, in its many ramifications, and it undergoes inexorable debunking. There is something distinctively Italian in this counter-progressivism: in this respect Ceronetti is

<sup>12</sup> Ceronetti translated the book of the *Ecclesiastes* twice, in 1970 and in 2001: both versions, with further critical material, are in Ceronetti, *Qohélet. Colui che prende la parola* (Milan: Adelphi, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. the interpretation of the *Qohélet* given by Ceronetti in the introduction to his translation, 19-21.

<sup>14</sup> Here, as elsewhere, I follow King James’ Bible in Kindle Edition.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. another recent book by Ceronetti, *Ti saluto mio secolo crudele* [I Bid You Farewell, My Cruel Century] (Turin: Einaudi, 2011).

<sup>16</sup> G. Ceronetti, *L’occhio del barbagianni* [The Eye of the Barn Owl] (Milan: Adelphi, 2014), quoted in R. Bruni’s review of the book for the literary supplement of *Il manifesto*, 16 August 2015. Reference is made by Ceronetti to Miguel de Unamuno, *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida*, 1913 – *The Tragic Sense of Life* (New York: Dover, 1954).

<sup>17</sup> Also available online.

a kindred spirit of the literary critic Giuseppe Prezzolini (1882-1982), and of the great poet Giacomo Leopardi (1798-1837).<sup>18</sup> Progressivism's blindness to the adverse side-effects of its solutions, and its unperceptiveness of the inherently dilemmatic nature of the problems are decried fiercely, as is the shallow language of political correctness which its captive minds speak – a plague and degradation that must be resisted, because words are the “vital nourishment” of the soul (*anima*), and “we ought be careful with them” (18).

An unchecked dominance of economic thinking is deemed responsible for a dangerous closure of the Western mind, with its fixation on growth, figures, statistics, hiding the deeper spiritual causes of any economic depression. The economy, sometimes called “Necro-economy” (19) perpetuates the use of “worn-out mental tools” (37) and false promises of happiness, among them “growth” (another name of “progress” that is said to be a “degeneration of political thought itself,” 50). The Economy has made men completely dependent on itself, “exactly like the ultra-orthodox’s Shabbath an evangelical word denounces as abuse and violence (...) we are all *for* the Economy,” in unholy inversion of means and ends (cf. 17-19, 38-39, 50-51, 170). This thinking, also tainted by the perception that an increasingly problematic society slides under the power of an ever more intrusive and pervasive administration, places Ceronetti among those enticed into the idea of a *decrescita felice* (happy de-growth), goes with his preoccupation with the “ecological bankruptcy”<sup>19</sup> (less a matter of man-induced climate change than of air pollution, depletion of resources, expansion of barren or industrialized land; cf. 61-62, 134-136), with overpopulation,<sup>20</sup> with epochal migrations – to him “a speciously pacific spill-over of continents” and an “assured promise of civil and religious war” (171), and finally with a progressing urbanization that leaves no residue, no outer and free space but confines men in a hectic and highly organized habitat entirely forged by rationality. “The city,” we read, at one and the same time “liberates and engages” man; “we idolize urban life and at the same time hate it; but *in every direction* we come upon its inexorable walls” (cf. 17, 50, 203-204). Elsewhere, the gloomy humorous Ceronetti ponders over the self-inflicted, compulsory touristic routes of modern man, or over the subjugation of men by mobile smartphones – he too had to surrender to an old model of mobile – and in general by technology and virtual worlds that swallow man, degrading him into “the User” (pp. 83-85, 97-99<sup>21</sup>). Things get more serious when we approach themes concerning the body, which the heretically gnostic Ceronetti, quoting Jean Rostand, holds in the highest regard: “If the body is touched [that is, manipulated, desacralized], all is lost” (160). It happens with the “technical depravity” of artificial insemination, with women lowered to the status of cows, and men obliterated in the process (158-160). It happens with transplants, medical treatments and otherwise surgical and chemical remedies that in our aging West

<sup>18</sup> This lineage is suggested by C. Langone in his review of the book in *Il Giornale*, 24 June 2015, 23.

<sup>19</sup> Ceronetti has in fact been considered “one of the most environmentally engaged Italian authors and philosophers of our time” (cf. S. Sestigiani, “L’angelico stupro: Ceronetti’s *Difesa della luna e altri argomenti di miseria terrestre*,” *The Italianist* XXXI (2011), 416-434).

<sup>20</sup> See also his column on *Il Foglio*, 23 June 2015. Ceronetti lauds contraception and even sterility and consents to abortion not because he is a liberal but because he is a gnostic tempted by the idea that man had better never be born. Consistently, he leans toward the social approval of euthanasia, especially when it means escaping from the grip of Medicine.

<sup>21</sup> See also *Il Foglio*, 13 June 2015.

have empowered a public health establishment, which the author sees as “raving” in his scientific pretenses and even “sadistic” in its determination, to extend life in unbearable physical distress or even in a dreadful state of vegetation.<sup>22</sup>

And what about the youth? Ceronetti often sees them backsliding toward intellectual vacuousness, but it is to them that he gives part of the most caring and benevolent thought to be found in these pages (cf. 41-44, 78-82, 133, 136). He cannot stand platitudes about unemployment and a lack of a sense of purpose in young people, especially when he hears them propagated by shallow and flattering politicians. He observes the paradox that, since 1968 and still today, resentful demonstrators and agitators seem to ask those very things that technocrats and managers of the affluent society are willing to offer them: an assured future of work, leisure time and consumerism. Ceronetti defines the young as he who can harbor within himself the “inevitable, necessary, noble, liberating *uncertainty* of his own future” (41), and stresses, with Abraham Maslow, that “the nature of man knows of higher levels to which to aspire” (42). Although, with Heidegger, he inclines to believe philosophy “socially useless,” he puts forward his modest “proposal of utopian common good”: given that compulsory and universal military service has disappeared – a fact not regretted by Ceronetti, although it damaged the following generations – boys and girls from 18 to 20 should spend one and half year “in useful service to the community, training in the crafts, studying, doing games, sports, theatre, and immediately available in case of national calamities,” thus experiencing a time “free from need, but not from industriousness” that should divert them from a premature search for *il Posto* (“the job position,” which is also *fisso*, “fixed,” that is, not a temporary one but one with legally guaranteed conditions of permanent employment).

To those with an ambition for intellectual work, Ceronetti would say that “the Benedictine rule *ora et labora* retains undiminished and universal applicability. Spinoza was an optician for a living, and philosophised for free” (80). Yet, it is a scene that once materialized at the Expo 2015 – the latest edition of the Universal Exposition held in Milan, a fair of futurology and sustainability whose banner was “Feeding the Planet” – which Ceronetti turns into the following almost poetic image, displaying his ideal in an unpredictably hopeful key:

to the question posed by Carlo Petrini [political activist, writer, founder of the *Slow Food Movement*] to some 450 young people [the audience at the event]: how many among them would wish to devote themselves to agriculture, two only answered positively: *two only*. Had it been the case that the two were a boy and a girl, then it would have been an excellent opportunity to form a couple firmly motivated by an authentic ideal, in

<sup>22</sup> “Now, that I have become one of them, the veil of Iside stripped off my eyes, I see them,” writes Ceronetti of the elderly as an increasing “multitude,” a rising social class and social issue for which, if one does not want to resort to some sort of dystopian legal elimination, a solution must be thought out (cf. 33, 91, 99, 127-132). It is characteristic of Ceronetti’s outspokenness to take seriously the question of the persistence of erotic desire and imagination in old age and to call for some sort of service to meet the erotic needs of the lone elderly, which would be no vulgar prostitution but a resurgence of a sacred, Oriental female priesthood (albeit the tone here may sound like a Swiftian modest proposal: 33-36).

order to convene at dusk, their crop field extending beyond sight in the background, to say the thanksgiving of Millet's *Angelus*. (...)

Will we be saved – since the Messiah is always coming and sometimes leaves messages left unheard in our answering machines – by that surviving couple of two shipwrecked youngsters who, having caught sight of the toiling of men in the world (...) bravely answered Petrini they were willing to devote themselves for the rest of their days to agriculture? A field is well worth a King, says Qohélet. That exceptional couple is thus a sign: a messianic voice in the answering machine.<sup>23</sup>

(133, 136)

In his investigation into man's nature and destiny, Ceronetti has always been enthralled by the so called *cronaca nera* – i.e. media coverage about bloody crimes, mysterious disappearances and the like – convinced with Dostoyevsky that if one dives deep into such a material, one can find that it is likely to exceed Shakespeare in tragic.<sup>24</sup> In this book he is still ready to discern an Orestes in every matricide, and re-examines at length the demonic deeds of murderer Charles Manson (20-24, 191-202). Domestic politics, in his eyes still another realm of unrest and, worse, irredeemable stupidity, is disposed of with one single line over more than 200 pages: “As *civis italicus* [Italian citizen] I strongly doubt there is any sense in going to vote anymore” (40), although the man still clings to a grievous patriotism of language and land.<sup>25</sup>

Most of all, Ceronetti's tragic breathes on the grand stage of international politics and history (students thereof may not be surprised that such a book and such an author concern themselves with it to such great lengths). The character and the moves of the main statesmen and powers of our time are often the object of acute examination, while sight is never lost of the bigger picture behind them: an unraveling West-dominated order, and the age-old drama embracing the three monotheistic religions (with the special relationships among them) and the non-theistic civilizations.

Ceronetti professes himself an amateurish historian, but imbued with a sense *meta-history*,<sup>26</sup> according to which history is a battlefield between Good and Evil, with however the latter constantly ahead in activism and everywhere causing imbalances to its

<sup>23</sup> References are to Jean-François Millet's oil painting “The Angelus” (1859), while the biblical verse is probably Ecclesiastes, 5:8.

<sup>24</sup> Ceronetti quoted in *Il filo dell'enigma*, 175.

<sup>25</sup> See his interview “Nichilista? No, sono un patriota” [Nihilist? No, I am a Patriot] *Il Corriere della Sera*, 9 May 2011. Politically, however, Ceronetti tends to make a leap from mundane party politics into mythical expectations: “Italophiles of the unacademic kind, few and displaced, we care about the Coming of the *Veltro*, and not about who is going to be the next *presidente del Consiglio* of this bankrupt *società Italia*” (Foreword, dated 2014, to the latest edition of his *Viaggio in Italia* [A journey through Italy] (Turin: Einaudi, 2014, viii). The *Veltro* is an allegorical figure summoned by Dante in his *Divine Comedy* (early XIV century). Having since been made object of historical and esoteric speculation, the *Veltro* is supposed to have been a political leader Dante hoped would liberate a troubled and divided Italy and restore its former glory. Beside him is belittled the “Presidente del Consiglio,” Italy's prime minister, while with “società Italia” – that is: joint-stock company “Italy” – Ceronetti scorns an economic (thus, degrading) metaphor employed in the Italian political discourse by politicians who mean that with the right policies Italy, basically reduced to its productive potential, artistic heritage and *lifestyle*, can yield great profit.

<sup>26</sup> *Il Foglio*, 9 May 2015.

advantage.<sup>27</sup> Historical time is a trap, as Ceronetti suggested with the title of a collage of photographs and fragments of the cruel XX century, “In the throat of the Eon” – which by the way is the subtle refashioning of the title of a book by his friend Sergio Quinzio<sup>28</sup> – and to it is suited the “frightening” word invented by Aeschylus, *androsfageion*, i.e. “slaughterhouse of men” (95).

Ceronetti’s philosophy of history is then one of an ever deeper entanglement, of a drift into a “perfect insolubility.”<sup>29</sup> In one instance it condensates into an image involving the maimed statue of the *Nike of Samothrace*, which

in the midst of extreme necessity and turmoil, in the implacable pacing up of what is ultimate [eschatological] – men set against men, mankind fallen prey of nature – stares at us impassive, the beautiful armless statue not reaching out in even an inchoate gesture of help.

(90)

Ceronetti is alarmed by the unchecked violence in the Near East and by the lack of containment on the part of those in power. Up until 2012, he would advise Obama to follow the wisdom of the Tao and “practice the *Wu-wei*, the in-Action,” because it is part of the tragic essence of the world that the attempt at reshaping it ends up destroying it – and the once Taoist China is now ahead of all others in reshaping-destroying. But after the last two years he cannot but lament the enervation of the US president<sup>30</sup> and the elusiveness of his character (37-40, 54-55), while not much can be expected by a European Union in shortage of “authentic statesmen.” The “great technoscientific Reich” of Angela Merkel hardly perceives the “tragic,” nor knows how to deal with it, and the debtor Greece, to which all mankind is indebted, is today but a shell emptied of the former spiritual greatness (49-51). Ceronetti yearns for a romanticized “Europe of Céline,” the fascist novelist, but is repelled by far-right euro-skeptic movements as he would be repelled by the undead (39, 155-157). A heedless Union pursued an expansion to the East, thus arousing Russia, and Putin

<sup>27</sup> Cf. this quotation from 1983: “Sure, Evil is an enormous as much as an impenetrable force, and I feel it at work, as it outweighs everything to its advantage, and makes the scaffolding crumble anywhere someone strains to fill a crack, to catch a body that is falling down” (Foreword, dated 1983, to the first edition of *Viaggio in Italia*, xv) and this fragment from April 1990: “of course Demons do exist, and they are out there in full swing. I cannot see them in material form, for I am no visionary, but I grasp their existence conceptually, I feel their presence and not in my dreams, but in history, and feel their increase in number and in power to do evil” (taken from a letter to Giosetta Fioroni, quoted by A. Motta in *Il filo dell’enigma*, 43-45)

<sup>28</sup> S. Quinzio, *Dalla gola del leone* (Milan: Adelphi, 1980), where Quinzio develops the idea that salvation is no triumph but the difficult escape of the rest of Israel “from the throat of the lion,” a line by prophet Amos (3:12). In Ceronetti’s *Nella gola dell’eone*, exhibition catalogue (Genova: Il Melangolo, 2006) minimal changes – *dalla* (from) becomes *nella* (in) and an apostrophe is interposed that turns *del leone* (of the lion) into *dell’eone* (of the Eon) – change the meaning dramatically, because from the Eon not even a rest of Israel is guessed to escape eventually. The Eon’s throat and Aeschylus’ *androsfageion* also confirm the semantic belonging together of words pertaining to the throat (implied in the Greek root *fag-*) and those pertaining to the “tragic.”

<sup>29</sup> *Il Foglio*, April 25, 2015.

<sup>30</sup> Ceronetti has attentively followed the rise of Obama since 2009 on the front pages of the Atlanticist newspaper *La Stampa*, with a special focus on his posture toward Islamism and Iran, and I found some of its commentary duly translated and archived by the service of BBC Monitoring Europe (esp. the front columns by Ceronetti in *La Stampa*, November 3, 2009, November 24, 2009, May 7, 2010).

has seized the opportunity to take over Crimea. However, if all are drawn into dramatic entanglements, this can in part be blamed on their lack of conscious self-education and philosophical training,<sup>31</sup> and the spectacle lends itself to occasional wit:

In the historical record, says Sun Tzu, no State has ever profited from a prolonged war. One can surmise that Putin is entirely unread in military theory. To cut it out in eastern Ukraine he will have to ask Obama for help, who will turn to Fidel Castro for advice, who will phone the Pope.<sup>32</sup>

Elsewhere, an arresting psychological portrait of Osama Bin Laden is given (“the depth of his hatred (...) did not find its source in his sacred book,” 111), while the “great general” Ariel Sharon lying in irreversible coma embodies a *nemesis* that Ceronetti finds intolerable and undeserved (69). The thought of mass migrations from the under-developed world, with its potential for social disruption, haunts Ceronetti much in the spirit of some dystopian, if somewhat prescient literature,<sup>33</sup> but the idea that “the history of mankind is the history of peoples on the move”<sup>34</sup> leads him into a meditation between ethnography and literature over the fact that the human being has “relentless feet” instead of “roots” (104-109): in this thematic about-face, settlement becomes the original sin and source of all human predicaments, and free is said to be only the walking, wandering man, while the only rooted reality is language, the text (Ceronetti comes here closest to a George Steiner).

In the international theory of Ceronetti – a true hebraizing and judaizing gentile – the State of Israel always features prominently. In 1967 Ceronetti parted ways with the Italian pacifists, appalled by their utopian idea that on the eve of the Six-Days War the Israelis should have opposed a grandiose disarmed non-collaboration to the invading Arabs: “definitely more convincing to me was the moral of La Fontaine’s fable about the pact between the lambs and the wolves: *il faut faire aux méchants guerre continuelle* (...) this maxim is better attuned to human destiny and also to the sacred word of *Bhagavad Gita*.”<sup>35</sup> In the face of the persecution of Eastern Christians, whom in a language reminiscent of Quinzio Ceronetti says “are left alone, in the hands of a unknown and silent God” (64), he deplores that the Vatican and the at least nominally Christian nations have forgot “infallible Qohélet’s verse encapsulating human history: a time to love / a time to hate / a time for peace / a time for war,” and thus failed to act accordingly (63-66). Ceronetti does not only sympathize with the destiny of a people whose national identity is “only kept alive by perpetual war: in the peace everyone yearns for, it would fade away.”<sup>36</sup> It holds Israel dear because it is the questionable

<sup>31</sup> See esp. Ceronetti’s considerations in *Il Foglio*, August 15, 2015.

<sup>32</sup> *Il Foglio*, 17 October 2015.

<sup>33</sup> I am thinking here of J. Raspail *Le camps des saints* (Paris: Laffont, 1973). Cf. *Tragico tascabile*, 71, 171 and *Il Foglio*, 25 April 2015.

<sup>34</sup> *Il Foglio*, 23 May 2015.

<sup>35</sup> G. Ceronetti recalls this in his front column “Lanterna rossa” of *La Stampa*, 14 October 2001, transcribed in *Il filo dell’enigma*, 19.3.

<sup>36</sup> Ceronetti seems to believe that Israel is a people that, unlike others in the civilized world, is still experiencing history in the proper sense: he concurred with Quinzio when he once wrote to him: “Things happening in Israel deeply impress me. Something is *really happening* there, and it is most rare in the world that anything *happens* at all” (Quinzio to Ceronetti, 31 March 1988, in Ceronetti-Quinzio, *Un tentativo di colmare l’abisso*, 311).

but necessary institutional armor for the people among which was kindled the very idea of “consciousness” and thus of “non-submission,” of a man’s fight with God; thus he is deeply upset by the “negationism” of Israeli archaeologists bent on disproving the traces, in their own land, of the history told in the Old Testament (137-138, 142-145, 162). The image of Israel as a safe haven, however, only glimpses for a moment: “since its inception as *Erez*, the secular Jewish State has taken over the protection of the only Christian presence, both monumental and human, within its besieged borders (...) if ever the Pope were one day forced to flee Rome, Israel would be his elective refuge” (162). The magnitude of the events makes Israel precarious as well, on the edge of “the national and religious abysses the Muslim world, caught in its own fatal misapprehensions, is hurling down into, taking with it the Hebrew-Israeli *enclave* behind whose back our entire Western world shakes with trepidation.”<sup>37</sup>

We introduced earlier the concept of *meta*-history. The capital subject of this book is, also by the sheer number of pages,<sup>38</sup> the First World War, which attests the lifelong perusal of historical works, war-inspired poetry and philosophy, correspondences, diaries, archives, places, individual testimonies and belongings by the author, who has felt it his duty to embark on such a “questioning without rest” (56). In these pages the author is at his most impressionistic and erudite and does a precious service to European memory. *Inter multa alia*, it pins the ‘tragic’ down in the songs sung in the trenches as well as in the stubborn and paradoxical “incredulity to the reality of death” (60) propagated by widespread theosophical beliefs in the survival of the fallen in an “etheric form,” beliefs held by civilians well removed from the sight of the real dismembering and even liquefying of bodies. Echoing Thucydides’ *Ananke* [Necessity], war is said to be inevitable. If one asks Ceronetti if peace is possible, the answer is: “Man is not able to build dams to evil because he does not have dominion over himself. Just rid yourself of the idea of freedom, and all becomes clear.”<sup>39</sup> Posterity – that is, us – should not once again entertain the facile idea, already shattered in 1914, that prosperous commercial relations, social and cultural exchanges, and political inter- or supra-nationalism assure peace. Above all else, the consequences of the Great War are still unfolding. Ceronetti opposes “materialistic” historiography “a fundamental hermeneutical principle: as in heaven, so on earth” (146). The Great War did not end in 1918, nor in 1945 or 1989 as it has been said, and the unfinished sequence is not a matter of causation that historians can find plausible and even natural. Ceronetti sees in the Great War the “mother,” the “matrix” of all wars, nothing short of the manifestation of a metaphysical destructive force that did not stop but only ramified, and is still discernible in current limited conflicts and local plights, terroristic metastases and lone wolves, nuclear arsenals, drone wars, treacherous or stagnant peace. And one is left with one more flashing intuition: the fifth (and “the hidden one”) of the empires that were dissolved in the war – after the Russian, the Ottoman, the Habsburgian and the German ones – was that of “archetypal masculinity,” the male principle, gone through culmination to exhaustion in the trenches: there follows “a long peace, during

<sup>37</sup> *Il Foglio*, 18 April 2015. Here Ceronetti invites to read the work of Daniel Sibony, starting with his *Les trois monothéismes* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), as a “masterly guide” to begin to understand this conundrum.

<sup>38</sup> *Tragico tascabile*, 28-32, 56-60, 75-77, 146-154, 173-177 and *passim*.

<sup>39</sup> See the interview about his theatre work on the Great War in “Ceronetti battaglia va alla Guerra” [Ceronetti goes pugnaciously to war] in *Repubblica – Milano*, 3 October 2014.

which Mars hides behind the neutral mask of the Economy, and life is marked by the enervation of the *homo pacificus* and by the advance, on the entire front of existence, of matriarchal power” (175).

The final chapter is a further descent into the vaults of European history, where Ceronetti recovers a disturbing William Blake to explore the meanings of his poem *The Tyger* (1794). Like Goya in the same period, Blake was said to have been possessed by visions as the revolutionary events were taking place on the continent, and compelled to create his art by the invisible. Ceronetti is certain: the poet has *seen* that the industrial revolution in England and the political revolution in France are parallel attempts, in “fearful symmetry,” at reshaping matter and at social engineering, and draws a lesson for our age of technological acceleration: “Let us stop to ponder” (209). Once the exegetical work is done, a mesmerized Ceronetti transcribes his own translation of Blake’s *The Tyger*. The book ends.

Reading Ceronetti is exacting as much as rewarding. One can at times feel to have been drawn into hostile territory, where it is possible to get ensnared. But the wealth contained in this book is beyond doubt: a wealth of insights, of possible points of departure for thought and research, and, even for dissenting readers, of real answers.

The Tragic is overwhelming, but it is unfair to conclude that Ceronetti is willing to acquiesce in the contemplation of it, which he rightly understands to be “paralyzing” (93). His writing does not want to induce the reader into such a paralysis, and his entire work has always had the meaning of a resistance. As director of his itinerant *Teatro dei Sensibili* (“Theatre of the Sensitive”<sup>40</sup>), he toured Italy in the fall of 2014, upon the centennial of the Great War 1914-1918, confident in the power of a staged recollection of those years to heal and reconcile.<sup>41</sup> History may be sometimes “the work of secret societies,” but “the true enlightened” do not strive to dominate, but to bring such reconciliation and understanding between men instead (52-53). In like manner, with his poetry Ceronetti says to have “fought the good fight,” to have paid his due in the ranks of the poets who are all “defensors at the pass of Thermopylae” against the flood of evil, and help men “to understand their own catastrophes and not to lose contact with *being*.”<sup>42</sup> And finally one should not forget that the final defeat of the Tragic is foreseen at the very beginning of the book: where the forces of *catharsis* and forgiveness operate, “there happens the miracle: all of a sudden, Orestes’ Furies wilt and lose strength, and the most awfully sneering demons depicted by Bosch cannot but back away” (15).

<sup>40</sup> *Teatro dei Sensibili* began in the Seventies as private performance, reserved to the friends of Ceronetti and his wife Erica Tedeschi, and only later it was brought to the public in theaters and also street performances. “Sensitive” are those “who can feel the pain of the world, and the world as pain,” and are thus able to move others to compassion, Ceronetti explains (as reported by A. Motta in *Il filo dell’enigma*, 44). On the early story of *Teatro dei Sensibili*, cf. also Rita Cirio-Piera Castelnuovo, “The mysteries of Ceronetti and Tedeschi,” *The Drama Review* 23.4 (1979), 45-48.

<sup>41</sup> The show was entitled “Quando il tiro si alza” (“When the Barrage Lifts”: the command at which soldiers got out of the trenches to attack): see a description and some pictures of the performance, available online; cf. the reviews in the national press: among others, “Ceronetti battagliaero va alla guerra”; F. Fulvi, “Ceronetti. La mia trincea,” *Avvenire*, 1 October 2014; A. Bandettini, “La trincea di Ceronetti, una voragine nel cuore,” *Repubblica*, 5 October 2014. About this experience with theatre, cf. also *Tragico tascabile*, 72-73, 177.

<sup>42</sup> According to the self-stylization by Ceronetti reported by R. Damiani in *Il filo dell’enigma*, 176.

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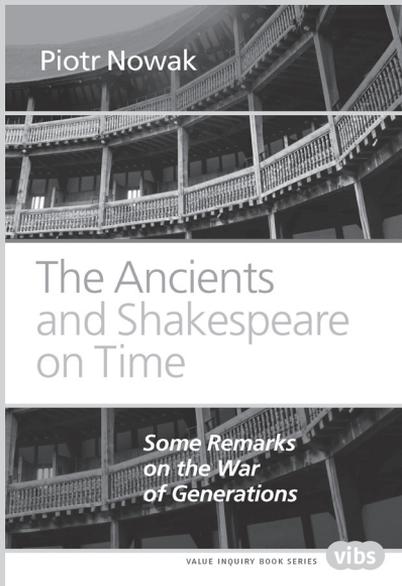
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Piotr Nowak

# The Ancients and Shakespeare on Time

Some Remarks on the War of Generations.



In *The Ancients and Shakespeare on Time* Piotr Nowak depicts a world where tradition – devoid of gravity, “Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything” – attempts to curb the young and new, while youth resists with all its power, vitality and characteristic insolence. The wars of generations, which Nowak explores in the works of Plato, Aristophanes and Shakespeare, pertain to the essence and meaning of time. They make up the dramatic tensions in the transgenerational dialogue between the old and the young.

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“Kronos” quarterly was established in 2007 as a project of a particular generation of philosophers all of whom started their studies around the transitional year 1989. “Kronos” soon became the largest philosophical journal in Poland. It is a new voice in Polish philosophy.

Poland at the turn of the 21st century was and is an inspiring place for thinkers; it is an interesting vantage point for observing and studying human nature. It is a place which saw genocide and two murderous experiments – the Nazi and the Soviet – the aim of which was to create a new type of human being. A philosopher brought up in Warsaw is living in a city destroyed by Hitler and rebuilt by Stalin.

The place and the time when we started studying philosophy influenced our choices and interests. Perhaps a philosopher is nothing but an emanation of the place and time which shaped him. These factors no doubt explain our interest in Hegel and Marx whom we have read through the lenses provided by religious messianists (Fyodorov) or 20th century prophets of the apocalypse (Kojève and Witkacy). The spirit of time and place prompted us also to study the Classics, to return in thought to Greece where – influenced by Heidegger and Nietzsche – we saw the eternally recurring point, where all history ends and every history begins.