

# THE INTERLOCUTOR

JOURNAL OF THE WARSAW SCHOOL OF THE HISTORY OF IDEAS

VOLUME 2 (2018/2019)

## AFTER REVOLUTIONS



A myth is always created about revolution, and the revolution is moved by the dynamic of the myth. The astounding thing is that it is not only the imagination of the masses of the people that creates a myth, scholars creates it also.

Nicolas Berdyaev



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## FROM THE EDITOR

The majority – if not all – of adult Europeans still remember a time when the Russian Revolution rather than belonging to the past was part of *the distant present*, as long as its ideological and social heritage formed a part of everyday experience. This was the case, obviously, not only in countries of the Soviet bloc, but equally in the West, then subject to the threatening proximity and impact of the post-revolutionary empire along with its ideology and myths. When speaking about the Russian Revolution I mean, first of all, the proletarian revolution or, in other words, the Bolshevik turnover and its exceptionally brutal period of social restructuring. It was this event rather than the preceding ‘democratic revolution,’ that was to become the paradigmatic revolution for the twentieth century. It became paradigmatic both in a symbolic dimension, as a source of revolutionary images and artifacts, and in a realistic dimension, as the first element in a long chain of twentieth-century revolutions and reactions. The Russian Revolution seems to have moved within the last decades from the sphere of *a distant present* to that of *a historical past*. For historians of ideas and philosophers it remains a vital problem; while the discussion concerning its meaning – or its absurdity – is far from conclusive. The current issue of our journal is – to a large extent – the outcome of an international conference entitled ‘The Russian Revolution and the History of Ideas,’ which took place in the autumn of 2017 at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of Polish Academy of Sciences. The authors of the essays present a variety of interpretive perspectives and tackle a broad spectrum of issues, from the specific to the more general. Some of them (Dobieszewski, Kantor, Król, Augustyn, Jedliński) analyze the specificity of the Russian Revolution in the light of the nature of revolutionary mechanisms as such. Others (Shore, Matveeva, Evlampiev) consider both the broad and local ideological contexts and the intellectual sources of the Revolution. One finds among these equally an analysis of an individual existential experience of the Revolution (Jewdokimow). A few authors reconstruct those interpretations of the Revolution expounded by the leading Russian thinkers of that era, such as Sorokin, Karsavin, Frank, and more. One of the studies (by Mazurek) tries to capture the characteristics of the historiosophies that emerged within Russian religious thought. The two remaining texts – focusing on selected intellectual responses to the Revolution coming from beyond the Russian context, constitute an interesting completion for the volume – Migasiński juxtaposes Merleau-Ponty’s developing position towards Marxism with the evolution of Polish revisionists; while Krempleska offers an overview of George Santayana’s reflections on communism.

Typically for our journal, more or less direct references to the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas are evident. The Polish revisionists, already mentioned, ones whose methodology is challenged by Jewdokimow, number among its founders. Also Wróbel’s

## FROM THE EDITOR

text – as a result of its thematic scope and regardless of its lack of direct references to the Warsaw School itself - here devoted to the essence and aim of history of philosophy, may fit within this context.

Whether the articles in the volume offer any definitive answer to the question as to the meaning of the Russian Revolution or not, they are nonetheless rich in valuable insights that may constitute potential premises for just such an answer in the future. Today, these texts embolden memory as to the tremendous error that the Russian Revolution was to turn out to be for European humanity. Meanwhile, it is this very memory that appears seriously threatened through the lack of fear of a return to radical revolutionary utopianism. Western humanity, which fears the return of varied twentieth-century demons, inexplicably believes that the revival of utopian revolutionism is non-existent. Let us bear in mind that the twentieth century – ‘the real century and not the calendar one’ (to use Anna Akhmatova’s phrase) – began with the Russian Revolution; and without any recollection of this there can be no talk of authentic memory for this turbulent age.

*Sławomir Mazurek*



AFTER  
REVOLUTIONS

## THE REVOLUTIONARY NATURE OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

By **JANUSZ DOBIESEWSKI**

*The Russian Revolution may be seen in three various ways:*

*Firstly, as an event in the history of Russia, which was caused by its inherent properties and social and political attributes, particular circumstances, contradictions and obstacles in its historical growth; secondly, as an incident of Russian history which fits into a more general pattern of revolutionary events, but which also may serve as its distinct 'sample,' a lesson, a warning for the rest of the world; the Russian Revolution thus would reveal more general rules, threats and controversies of social development, thereby suggesting to other societies the necessary preventive acts which would allow them to avoid the catastrophe of revolution; thirdly, the Russian Revolution may be seen as a structural element of a wider revolutionary process, an element that may be indispensable and essential; this universal context is not seen (as previously) in terms of an independent, though analogous example of a revolutionary event, but as the decisive environment of the Russian Revolution; in this take, we speak of the socialist, proletarian (and before that, bourgeois) nature of the Russian Revolution, of the way it fulfilled Marxist theory and its vision of history (though with the necessity for Western, universal adjustment), or a cruelly and irrevocably falsified Marxist utopia.*

*The article is devoted to these three interpretations of the problem.*

Key words: Revolution, Russia, *De profundis*, Arendt, Marxism

### 1.

The Russian Revolution represents a topic particularly resistant to any attempts of reflective formulation and comprehension. This is due, firstly, to the extraordinary accumulation of dynamic and interdependent historical facts. We may arrive at views in direct contrast with each other: starting from a vision of events as the inevitable, fatalistic consequence of certain causes, and ending with a conviction of the absolutely arbitrary coincidence of chance circumstances; we may even attain more comprehensive and far-reaching arbitrariness in correlating and organizing these facts. Secondly, this 'anarchy of events' is combined with the great conceptual, theoretical and ideological potential of the Russian Revolution. Long before it began and long after it was over (whenever we appoint this end), and certainly while it lasted, it was variously described and explained, in multiple attempts to embed it into diverse conceptions, projects, theoretical, political, ideological, axiological, mythological schemes, including the historiosophical patterns which interest us the most at the moment. Each new attempt to conceptualize the Russian Revolution

is riddled with these circumstances and risks, but it also contains, for these very reasons, a certain creative potential – which may not be taken for granted, and yet may be postulated and expected.

The Russian Revolution may be seen in three various ways:

Firstly, as an event in the history of Russia, one caused by its inherent properties and social and political attributes, particular circumstances, contradictions and obstacles in its historical growth; revolution thus appears as a permanent threat, or a redemptive myth, as well as historical revenge for all the ills of Russian history;

Secondly, as an incident of Russian history that fits into a more general pattern of revolutionary events, but which also may serve as its distinct 'sample,' a lesson, a warning for the rest of the world; the Russian Revolution thus would reveal more general rules, threats and controversies of social development, thereby suggesting to other societies the necessary preventive acts which would allow them to avoid the catastrophe of revolution, or indicating the redeeming differences in the structure, dynamics and nature of these societies;

Thirdly, the Russian Revolution may be seen as a structural element of a wider revolutionary process, an element that may be indispensable and essential; this universal context is not seen (as previously) in terms of an independent, though analogous example of a revolutionary event, but as the decisive environment of the Russian Revolution; in this take, we speak of the socialist, proletarian (and before that, bourgeois) nature of the Russian Revolution, of the way it fulfilled the Marxist theory and vision of history (though with the necessity for a Western, universal adjustment), or a cruelly and irrevocably falsified Marxist utopia.

We may add that these three takes on the Russian Revolution are not quite distinct from each other, but overlap and intersect. This, however, does not undermine the proposed categorization, since it is usually the case, and should motivate one to constantly verify, but not discard such categories.

## 2.

Let us begin with the 'Russian' perspective. We may say that Piotr Chaadayev's *Philosophical Letter* of 1836 begun the trend of a radical, fundamental civilizational turn in Russian history, and this concept matured and was further radicalized in the annals of Russian social philosophy and under the influence of the despotic politics of the government, and was seen to have materialized in the mutinies and uprising of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, revolution had become a general slogan, the myth and the objective of the Russian intelligentsia. It found its conceptual and theoretical expression in various forms of Occidentalism, anarchism, nihilism, the *Narodniki* movement, Marxism or Enlightenment, and its sway over the Russian liberalist movements (for instance, its influence on the program and ideology of the Constitutional Democrats) and Russian

bohemian circles was overwhelming. This universal conviction of the inevitability and self-evident purpose of revolution is somewhat constrained only at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century by the Legal Marxism movement (this must be stressed, even if this restraint in relation to the idea of revolution meant merely pushing it into a more remote fully capitalist future for Russia), as well as during the Russian religious philosophical renaissance, which attempted to redefine the intellectual and conceptual history of the country, i.e., the tradition of intelligentsia, and thus problematize the political and intellectual issues and ideas of the Russian Revolution. This took a spectacular, even scandalous form on the pages of the famous almanac *Vekhi* (Signposts) published in 1909, in a desperate and ultimately futile search for a third way between the interlocked and mutually galvanizing radicalisms: the reactionary radicalism of Tsarism and the revolutionary radicalism of the left-wing intelligentsia. A confirmation of this failure and of the inevitability of Russian revolution, a record written in direct confrontation with the Revolution, and yet in some intellectual detachment from it, detachment originating from *Vekhi*, was the almanac *Out of the Depths* (*De Profundis*) published by the same authors ten years later. The analyses contained in this publication will be the primary material for our examination of the Russian Revolution as national fate and national catastrophe.

In the opinion of almost all the authors of *De Profundis*, those distinguished, eminent representatives of the Russian religious and philosophical renaissance, the Russian Revolution was inevitable, a natural result of the errors and flaws of Russian history. As Sergei Askol'dov wrote: 'of course, this ultimate manifestation of the evil, disorganizing forces of community in moments of revolution has its underlying causes in the preceding periods;<sup>1</sup> moreover, 'by bringing evil to fruition and manifesting it in an obvious and, so to speak, ripened form, revolution at the same time also serves the good' – even if only indirectly and eventually. Nikolai Berdyaev agrees: 'our old national illnesses and sins led to the revolution and defined its character;<sup>2</sup> 'a long historical path leads to revolutions, and they reveal a national uniqueness even when they convey heavy blows to national might and to national dignity;<sup>3</sup> and even if Revolution in Russia is to be 'dismal, terrible, and dark, that it would include no rebirth of the people;<sup>4</sup> a way must be sought not to return to prerevolutionary tyranny and injustice, but to post-revolutionary spiritual transformation. On the same subject, Sergei Bulgakov writes: 'if the revolution did not succeed, it was because of errors, weaknesses, and passions, but by itself it was necessary and beneficial

<sup>1</sup> Sergei Askol'dov, 'The Religious Meaning of the Russian Revolution,' in *Out of the Depths (De Profundis) Articles on the Russian Revolution*, trans. William Woehrlin (Irvine, CA: Charles Schlacks Jr, 1986), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Nikolai Berdyaev, 'Specters of the Russian Revolution,' in *Out of the Depths*, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Berdayev, 'Specters of the Russian Revolution,' p. 33

<sup>4</sup> Berdayev, 'Specters of the Russian Revolution,' p. 50.

in any case.<sup>5</sup> And Piotr Struve writes: 'the revolution was prepared and created from two ends: the historical monarchy with its jealous refusal to admit cultured and educated groups to authoritative participation in the structure of the state; and the intelligentsia of the country, with its shortsighted struggle against the state,<sup>6</sup> while the forces of revolution 'entered into Russian development, not as organizing creative forces of construction, but only as disintegrating, destructive forces of subversion,<sup>7</sup> demanding a healthy reaction in defense of the people, state, civilization, a religious rebirth, or, as Siemion Frank puts it, 'some kind of moral departure from the point of stagnation.'<sup>8</sup> A fitting summary of this embeddedness of Russian revolution in the history of Russia and its meaning would be, as stated by Alexander Izgoev: 'the lesson learned was terrible, but perhaps there was no other path to our recovery.'<sup>9</sup> This 'recovery' must come – let us make this unambiguous – not from revolution itself, but from the reactions to it, spiritual, religious responses caused by its violence and its destructive force, responses which reconstruct and restore national and state integrity.

The revolution itself is for the authors cited above a passive, secondary event, poor in historical value, and thus falsely dynamic, hysterical, fraudulent in its pretensions for political and historiosophical novelty. Lev Shestov even spoke of the conservative and in this sense reactionary, lethargic nature of the Russian Revolution,<sup>10</sup> which is therefore a denial of the futurist and avant-garde ethos of revolution as such. This feature of the revolution will be described particularly well, in a particularly striking way – also in the philosophical sense – by Berdyaev: 'Everything is illusory. Illusory are all parties, illusory are all authorities, illusory are all the heroes of the revolution. Nowhere can one discover a firm being,<sup>11</sup> and this quality he defined as the 'absence of the ontological' within the Russian Revolution. During the same period, though in a different publication, Berdyaev writes of the 'spirit of nonbeing' and the 'spirit of nothingness' permeating revolution and revolutionaries, who passively grow out of the degenerate, 'putrid and devastating'<sup>12</sup> aspects of Russian history. Such an 'absence of the ontological,' as another author of *De Profundis* notes, was a denial and a falsification of the essential meaning of Marxism, especially in its original sense, and a denial of its accomplishments in Russia, where the

<sup>5</sup> Sergei Bulgakov, 'At the Feast of the Gods,' in *Out of the Depths*, p. 77.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Struve, 'The Historical Meaning of the Russian Revolution and National Tasks,' in *Out of the Depths*, p. 210.

<sup>7</sup> Struve, 'The Historical Meaning of the Russian Revolution and National Tasks,' p. 211.

<sup>8</sup> Siemion Frank, 'De Profundis,' in *Out of the Depths*, p. 234.

<sup>9</sup> Alexander Izgoev, 'Socialism, Culture and Bolshevism,' in *Out of the Depths*, p. 144.

<sup>10</sup> Lew Szestow, 'Czym jest bolszewizm,' trans. C. Wodziński, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 6-7. XI. 1999.

<sup>11</sup> Berdyaev, 'Specters of the Russian Revolution,' in *Out of the Depths*, p. 39.

<sup>12</sup> Mikołaj Bierdajew, *Filozofia nierówności*, trans. J. Chmielewski, (Kęty: Marek Derewiecki, 2006), p. 6, 24, 9.

[Marxist] struggle with *narodnichestvo* [Popularism] was, methodologically, a struggle for the right to objective knowledge. (...) In its original testaments, Marxism appealed to economic realism; it destroyed false *narodniki* idealism, and thereby, despite the desire of its representatives, facilitated the affirmation of true idealism in Russia.<sup>13</sup> This idealism is here understood as Russian religious philosophy, which lays the foundation for realism and ontologism – and, paradoxically, for Marxism itself. In this case, ‘the very transitions ‘from Marxism to idealism,’ of course, are not fortuitous.’<sup>14</sup>

Such metaphysical anti-ontologism takes the form of the sins of which the Russian Revolution was most frequently accused: nihilism and utopianism. The anti-ontological nature of utopianism is perfectly explained by Pawel Novgorodtsev in the subsequent essay in the collection: ‘every utopia presents its own dream of universal organization and, along with that, of the simplification of life. They claim that one can find a single word, a single means, a single principle that has some omnipotent and all-healing significance; and that, in agreement with this principle, one can construct life according to reason,’ while for the purposes of the current discussion we might say ‘according to a decidedly subjective idea.’ In any case, this is ‘an interruption of history,’ in essence a negation of life through a ‘simplification of life.’<sup>15</sup>

Nihilism may be seen as the anthropological expression of anti-ontologism. As Berdyaev explains, nihilism is a radical, maximalist attitude, which gives no concessions, rejecting all barriers, limits, hard facts. Such ontological emptiness combined with unlimited ambition intensifies all projects and actions pushing each ‘to the end, to the limit.’<sup>16</sup> In effect, it ‘provides the grounds for confusion and substitution, for pseudo-religion,’ and this appears to grant revolution a comprehensive importance and gravity, in which parodies, slogans and phrases profess the most exorbitant claim to reality. These claims may at times be attractive in their impressive sway and exaltation (or, more precisely, sickly sentimental sensitivity, a literary expression of which may be found in Ivan Karamazov’s quarrel with God over the tears of a child), but their essence is precisely anti-ontological, nihilistic: ‘let the whole world go up in flames,’ since it cannot bring happiness to all; let the pursuit of universal happiness obliterate unhappy arbitrariness, diversity and uncertainty; let there be ‘the total dissolution of all personal and multifarious existence into a featureless, qualityless universality,’ in ‘equality in non-being.’ Precisely so: ‘the Russian revolution also wishes to plunge all of Russia, and all of the Russian people, into just such a negative, absolute, empty, and nihilistic state’<sup>17</sup> (which is expressed in literature in the world of the

<sup>13</sup> Sergei Kotliarevskii, ‘Recovery,’ in *Out of the Depths*, p. 152.

<sup>14</sup> Kotliarevskii, ‘Recovery,’ p. 152.

<sup>15</sup> Pavel Novgorodtsev, ‘On the Paths and Tasks of the Russian Intelligentsia,’ in *Out of the Depths*, p. 188.

<sup>16</sup> Berdyaev, ‘Specters of the Russian Revolution,’ p. 42.

<sup>17</sup> Berdyaev, ‘Specters of the Russian Revolution,’ p. 56-58.

Grand Inquisitor and the figure of Shigalev). Devoid of a self-organizing essence, revolution becomes a theater of temporary intrigues and projects, manipulations, private interests and violence; revolution's intention is to 'turn the Russian people from reality and plunge them into the kingdom of illusions.'<sup>18</sup>

Let us repeat that above all, the Russian Revolution, in the opinion of all the authors of *De Profundis*, 'is the awful wages for the sins and maladies of the past, for the compounded lies, for the negligence of the Russian government and ruling classes in fulfilling their mission, for the hundred-year-long meanders of the Russian intelligentsia, inspired by abstract ideas and illusory, fraudulent phantoms.'<sup>19</sup> The final verifying judgment over this was the reaction of the people. In the face of revolution, 'the Russian people suddenly turned out not to be Christian,'<sup>20</sup> and it was clear that 'there are no longer monarchical feelings in the Russian people.'<sup>21</sup> The absence of the ontological in the revolution found its expression in the utopianism and nihilism of the revolutionaries, in the anti-modern obstinacy of the government, and also in the temporary nature of the ideals and behavior of the people. Populist convictions in the historical and moral substantiality of the people, of the people being the soil of Russia, turned out to be merely myths circulated by the intelligentsia, which concealed the moral transience, social dispersion, historical temporariness of the people element, its complete derivability in relation to revolutionary anti-ontologism. According to Novgorodtsev, it came to a point when it appeared 'that all may do with Russia what they wish.'<sup>22</sup> Vasili Rozanov wrote with some bewilderment in *The Apocalypse of our Time* that at the moment of Revolution, Russia 'disintegrated in the blinking of an eye,' 'from day to day,' miserably, without any exaltation and tragic mien, that 'all at once everyone forgot about Christianity.'<sup>23</sup>

Curiously, this anti-ontological aspect of the Revolution will be repeated many years later in the opinions and observations regarding the end of the Soviet Union. We may find an example of such an attitude in Alain Besançon's *Holy Russia* and other writings by the same author. One of the key proofs of the negative, anti-ontological nature of the entire structure and essence of the Soviet Union was for him the suddenness and peculiar imperceptibility of its demolition. This was the final proof which confirmed that communism was not rooted in existence, that it was fictional, unreal, that it lacked any outposts in the actual real life. As Besançon wrote, the Soviet governmental machine at the beginning of the 1990s 'threw in the towel and disintegrated. The Empire was dispersed in

<sup>18</sup> Berdyaev, 'Specters of the Russian Revolution', p. 64.

<sup>19</sup> Bierdijajew, *Filozofia nierówności*, p. 23.

<sup>20</sup> Bulgakov, 'At the Feast of the Gods', p. 104.

<sup>21</sup> Bulgakov, 'At the Feast of the Gods', p. 83.

<sup>22</sup> Novgorodtsev, 'On the Paths and Tasks of the Russian Intelligentsia', p. 183.

<sup>23</sup> Vasili Rozanov, *The Apocalypse of Our Time, and Other Writings*, (New York: Praeger, 1977).

but a single moment.<sup>24</sup> Ryszard Legutko, clearly sympathetic to Besançon's view, also notes this aspect: 'though Besançon deferred making statements on the collapse of the USSR for a long time, this disintegration in itself in essence confirmed his diagnosis (...). The Soviet regime did not evolve, and it also was not revolutionized. One moment the USSR just vanished, and despite its gigantic power, this collapse was almost entirely silent.'<sup>25</sup> In this context we may note also the fate of Soviet Marxism, which 'during the escalation of Stalinism, and remaining in essence unchanged and still undergoing expansion and intensification even after Stalin's death, rather than the postulated living dialectical thought of Marx or at least Hegel began to resemble Medieval scholastics (of the worst variety) in its schematic, doctrinal, hair-splitting quality, with a tendency to dress up self-evident banalities as scientific profundities. It was obvious that this intolerable intellectual position was sustained only due to an artificial, interfering and coercive external (political) element, and that without it the entire masterful construction of Soviet Marxism would collapse – without causing anyone pain or even a semblance of regret – like a house of cards.'<sup>26</sup> And this is precisely what happened.

### 3.

Let us now turn to the second kind of approach to the Russian Revolution, with the universal context as the preeminent element. Let us examine revolution as such, and as a warning and historical lesson for the world. Hannah Arendt's *On Revolution* (1963) provided an especially useful and effective supporting apparatus for these reflections.

As Arendt explains, revolutions are not simply transformations or sudden conversions; 'revolutions are the only political events which confront us directly and inevitably with the problem of beginning.'<sup>27</sup> Revolution is supposed to constitute a new order. Its task is liberation, it is directed against tyrants and oppression usually at the moment when it becomes intolerable and drives the revolution's negating edge. However, the freedom attained coincides with the ushering in of 'an entirely new era,' with experience of a new

<sup>24</sup> Alain Besançon, 'Tezy o Rosji minionej i obecnej', trans. Wiktor Dłuski, in Alain Besançon, *Świadek wieku. Wybór publicystyki z pierwszego i drugiego obiegu*, vol. I, ed. Filip Memches, (Warszawa: Fronda, 2006), p. 263.

<sup>25</sup> Ryszard Legutko, 'Gnoza polityczna: Besançon i Voegelin', in *Gnoza polityczna*, ed. Jan Skoczyński, (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka 1998), p. 24.

<sup>26</sup> Janusz Dobieszewski, 'Współczesny renesans rosyjskiej filozofii religijnej. Perspektywy i zagrożenia', in *Musica Antiqua Europae Orientalis XIV. Acta Slavica. Tradycja chrześcijańska Wschodu i Zachodu w kulturze Słowian*, ed. Adam Bezwiński, (Bydgoszcz: Filharmonia Pomorska, 2006), p. 11-12. See also Janusz Dobieszewski, 'Sprawy rosyjskie u Alaina Besançon'a', *Pressje*, XXXV/2013, p. 204–205.

<sup>27</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, (London: Penguin, 1963), p. 20.



beginning,<sup>28</sup> and only in such a case is it truly freedom. Freedom means liberation from oppression, but also from the continuation of a fundamental, constituting, subjective, political way of being. Revolution consists in the combination of the pathos of liberation with the pathos of novelty. Next (in the theoretical order, in the order of meaning), comes 'violence,<sup>29</sup> which is not the exclusive property of revolution only, as well as a momentary impulse<sup>30</sup> (occasion) and a 'rotating, cyclical'<sup>31</sup> (emerging, disappearing and appearing anew) aspect of revolution as an 'irresistible flow,' a movement that cannot be stopped, a current that is 'overwhelming,' which brings us to a point of no return, 'irrevocable,<sup>32</sup> usually resulting in the 'feeling of awe and wonder at the power of history itself.'<sup>33</sup>

In Arendt's opinion, revolution is a modern phenomenon and it emerged on the arena of history in two incarnations, which the author of *On Revolution* sees as the only possibilities: the American vs. the French Revolution. The first is for Arendt closest to the ideal requirements of revolution, especially in its libertarian bond between freedom and novelty (beginning). It is also a revolution that succeeded – it managed to liberate from oppression and constituted a new political (public, self-governing) order, a permanent order, the 'entirely new era,' and it 'did not devour its own children.'<sup>34</sup> Yet, this most ideal, 'correct' revolution was to be a historical exception. The norm (and this applies even to the description and evaluation of the American Revolution) was the way of the French Revolution. The struggle against oppression was almost immediately dominated not by the constitution of novelty and true liberty (which would conform to Arendt's model spirit of revolution), but by the secondary, coming now into the foreground, moments of violence and necessity, which were pushed forward by 'the social question,' completely new for the spirit of revolution and absent during the American Revolution. Violence, necessity, the struggle with poverty and – emerging out of these – the struggle for survival became the signal signs of revolution. Concentration, meticulousness, responsibility and also freedom, vision and realism in constituting the reality characteristic for the American Revolution were replaced in the French Revolution by a situation in which 'none of its actors could control the course of events, that this course took a direction which had little if anything to do with the willful aims and purposes of the anonymous force of the revolution if they wanted to survive at all.'<sup>35</sup> The Russian Revolution 'which for our century has had the same

<sup>28</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 29.

<sup>29</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 35.

<sup>30</sup> Maria Brand, *Rewolucja bolszewicka w myśli Hannah Arendt: od obietnicy wolności do totalitaryzmu*, in *Totalitaryzm XX wieku: idee, instytucje, interpretacje*, ed. Bogdan Szlachta et al., (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2010), p. 292.

<sup>31</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 47.

<sup>32</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 54.

<sup>33</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 50.

<sup>34</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 44.

<sup>35</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 51.

profound meaningfulness of first crystallizing the best of men's hopes and then realizing the full measure of their despair that the French Revolution had for its contemporaries,<sup>36</sup> as Arendt writes, belongs to the very same current. The founding qualities of revolution - liberty and novelty - were transformed into 'the two-edged compulsion of ideology and terror.'

It may seem that in the Russian context this social element, that is, the struggle with poverty, was self-evident and the factual premise and purpose of the Revolution in Russia, in the realm of poverty, an underdeveloped country not unfamiliar with famine. Thus, we may suppose that for objective reasons the Russian Revolution could not have been about freedom (especially as a synthesis of liberation and constitution), but had to fight for the wellbeing of the people, or even for the survival of the people, with all the ruthless, fatalistic political and economic logic particular to such purpose. It may seem that what appeared as the degeneration of the revolutionary spirit during the French Revolution - when poverty instead of freedom became the foremost political force - was in the Russian context entirely justified. This complete concentration on the social issues, on poverty leads - as Arendt shows, grasping with exceptional aptness the psychological leaven and energy of the Russian Revolution - to the natural, and even lofty and praiseworthy transformation of the 'ocean of poverty' into the 'ocean of compassion,' which in turn becomes the ocean of joyful or at least suiting violence. This 'magic of compassion'<sup>37</sup> ('the most powerful and perhaps the most devastating passion motivating revolutionaries'<sup>38</sup>), this 'capacity to lose oneself in the sufferings of others' (valued above 'active goodness'<sup>39</sup>), seeing pity as the 'spring of virtue'<sup>40</sup> (which may 'possess a greater capacity for cruelty than cruelty itself'<sup>41</sup>), Arendt perceptively identified as qualities of the French Revolution. But all these qualities are even more present - both in the literature of the subject and in public opinion - in the Russian context. Such an unmasking of cheap revolutionary sentimentalism is fully compatible with Berdyaev's attempts to expose the cheap and sickly sensibility of the Russian intelligentsia which lies at the origins of the Russian revolutionary movement, and which found its spectacular expression in the religious revolt of Ivan Karamazov, and its fulfilment in the world of the Grand Inquisitor (who appears exactly in this role in Arendt's writings).<sup>42</sup>

And yet, reducing the sources of the Russian Revolution to poverty and underdevelopment is far from simple. In the theoretical aspect it is contradicted by

<sup>36</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 57.

<sup>37</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 81.

<sup>38</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 72.

<sup>39</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 81.

<sup>40</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 89.

<sup>41</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 89.

<sup>42</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 82.

the generalized principle of revolutionary uprisings, one based on careful observation, while in the practical aspect – by the historical facts from the period before and after the Revolution in Russia. To begin with, let us tackle the first aspect. According to the widely held opinion, revolutions erupt not at the moments of extreme social crisis, in circumstances of appalling poverty and absurd injustice, but when the crisis begins to be overcome, the extremity is conquered and the dysfunctional state begins to mend itself, when social aspirations are raised and attention is drawn to social injustices, which are also - at least in some measure, seen as conquerable, and there is hope in the effectiveness of social action, the obtainability of a rational and useful life, accessibility to fair values, a critical but also creative reckoning with the past. Revolutions erupt not when society seems to be facing an abyss, when death, chaos and barbarity seem the only alternatives, but when the worst is left behind and new perspectives and possibilities arise, and when political power is in the hands of the forces which see such opportunities and perspectives as a threat. Let us now look at Russia and we will realize that the reforms of Alexander II created political and social advantages, which were further developed under the economic pressure of international competition as well as under the influence of internal liberal, revolutionary and national forces, and this reached its apogee in the 1905 Revolution. Stolypin's reforms were an attempt to find a 'third way' for Russia which was to lead the country out of the mutually propelling radicalisms of reactionary power and revolutionary movements. Notwithstanding errors, inconsistencies, obstacles, inhibitions, deceits and provocations, at the turn of the century Russia was an incredibly dynamic country, which was coming out of its protracted lethargy, rapidly modernizing itself, and therefore perfectly fulfilling the 'positive' condition of revolution described above. Richard Pipes writes: 'by 1900, with one exception, the patrimonial regime was a thing of the past: the exception was the country's political system.'<sup>43</sup> Moreover, 'it is generally agreed by economic historians that on the eve of World War I, by which time the value of her industrial production had risen to 5.7 billion rubles, Russia had the fifth-largest economy in the world, which was impressive even if, proportionate to her population, her industrial productivity and income remained low.'<sup>44</sup> Pipes cites the French economist Edmond Thierry who wrote in 1912 that 'if Russia maintained until 1950 the pace of economic growth that she had had since 1900, by the middle of the twentieth century she would dominate Europe politically, economically, and financially.'<sup>45</sup> This view is supported by Andrzej Walicki, who cites the opinion of another economist, Alexander Gerschenkron, who wrote of the 'impressive achievements of the Russian economy at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century.'<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, (New York: Vintage, 1991), p. 55.

<sup>44</sup> Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, p. 79.

<sup>45</sup> Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, p. 189.

<sup>46</sup> Andrzej Walicki, 'Miejsce ekonomii w moim ujęciu intelektualnej historii Rosji. Próba zwięzłego podsumowania', *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, 3(444)/2014, p. 10.

Poverty, destitution, underdevelopment are of course present during and before the Russian Revolution, but these are not the causes which are indispensable, initiating and permanent – they are not the deciding factors. The social question is situated here in a similar way as during the French Revolution – as the result of the revolutionary politics, as a project of the chosen logic or revolutionary necessity, which tries to appear as a natural necessity at the very foundations of human survival – the ‘right to food, dress, and the reproduction of the species.’<sup>47</sup> The Russian Revolution followed the path which had been marked as the revolutionary pattern by the French Revolution, and this pattern ousted and displaced another norm, to which Arendt gives her decided preference: the norm of civil society and of the freedom established by the American Revolution.

However, despite the decided success of the social question as the propelling force of revolution in the course of history, the real cause of revolution – the purpose of reclaiming liberation, freedom, dignity – was not to be ignored and constantly and most spectacularly tried to renew the meaning of revolution, even in the midst of social, poverty-combatting (and as a result, resorting to mass violence and terror) revolutionary realities. Arendt writes of the ‘lost treasure’<sup>48</sup> of revolution, which continuously grappled for its own purposes in a noble and energetic fight, struggling to retain the original libertarian, constituting the pre-social, pre-natural, pre-necessity-bound essence of revolution. In France this was manifested in the revolutionary societies and communal councils, which fought with the Jacobean government and were crushed by the central power – not as an actual rival, but as the embodiment and alternative of the revolutionary norm.<sup>49</sup> In Russia, this was a system of councils which were first promoted, and next neutralized through the dictatorship of the party, and which were seen as dangerous not because of their actual current conflict with the government, but because of their alternative nature and originality in relation to the revolutionary government. Arendt writes that ‘the communes, the councils, the Räte, the Soviets (...) clearly intended to survive the revolution,’<sup>50</sup> and this was the reason they became the object of growing resentment and pressure from the centralized government, and the turning point in Russia was the suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion in 1921. Even if this rebellion became legendary, it manifested ‘the failure of the revolutionary tradition to give any serious thought to the only new form of government born out of revolution.’<sup>51</sup> In the final count, revolutions of the ‘French type’ would end either in some kind of restoration, or in a single-party dictatorship. Even in the glorious American Revolution the project of the ‘elementary republics’ (municipal debates or council meetings) was by-passed when they were omitted in the Constitution, through

<sup>47</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 109.

<sup>48</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 280.

<sup>49</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 240-241.

<sup>50</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 256.

<sup>51</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 258.

'distortions and deformations' which finally resulted in the embarrassing limitation of the freedom of the people simply to election day itself.<sup>52</sup>

Let us add that this was not the only flaw or limitation of the American Revolution. Arendt, who decidedly prefers and affirms its model, is still aware of the price which was paid for the American Revolution's ideal, freedom-oriented and effective revolutionary nature. It did not have to side-track into the social issues because of the 'surprising prosperity' of the English colonies in America, which was made possible – just as in the Athenian polis – by the structural existence of common slavery; behind the American 'lovely equality' and American prosperity which included even the 'white trash,' stood the degrading destitution and hard labor of the black slaves.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the result of the American Revolution was not positive in its entirety and for Arendt in particular it becomes the object of bitter contemplations. This relates to the gradual displacement of the idea of universal happiness by 'private welfare,' 'the privacy of a home,' which essentially opposed the libertarian spirit of revolution, its interpersonal, political and public space.<sup>54</sup> Thus, not so much the participation in public affairs (in possession), but rather the space granted by the government for the private pursuit of happiness became the achievement of revolution; public affairs turned into duties and responsibilities, which the individuals try to rid themselves of as quickly as possible, so that 'their attention may be exclusively given to their personal interests.'<sup>55</sup> Liberty and government become opposites, moreover, – natural, permanent and evident opposites. As Arendt bitterly writes, as a result 'the American dream, as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries under the impact of mass immigration came to understand it, was neither the dream of the American Revolution – the foundation of freedom – nor the dream of the French Revolution – the liberation of man; it was, unhappily, the dream of a 'promised land' where milk and honey flow.'<sup>56</sup>

This does not change the particular historical ethos of the American Revolution, nor does it negate the Russian revolution's belonging to the cannon of the French Revolution. The frequently made argument as to the continuation of the French Revolution on the part of the Russian Revolution involves their common origin: one spectacularly founded in France and no less spectacularly repeated in Russia.

There is one other, more general issue related to the way Arendt sees revolution. In her take, pathos or the greatness of revolution resides in its ability to establish new beginnings; revolution is permeated by the 'pathos of novelty' and the 'pathos of beginning,'<sup>57</sup> rooted in 'the exhilarating awareness of the human capacity of beginning,

<sup>52</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 249-250.

<sup>53</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 23, 25, 71.

<sup>54</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 129, 130.

<sup>55</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 129, 136.

<sup>56</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 129, 139.

<sup>57</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 129, 37.

the high spirits which have always attended the birth of something new on earth.<sup>58</sup> This is the most excellent act of human freedom, a manifestation of action (which is the highest form of human activity according to Arendt), and not merely of survival (always artisan, derivative) or (biological) life. 'It is by no means only we who call the men of the Revolution by the name of 'founding fathers', but that they thought of themselves in the same way,<sup>59</sup> and they were right to do so; in their founding act was something of the measure of the absolute – free and productive. This beginning is based on the principle of the negation or questioning of the continuity of preceding historical events, indicating a breach, a fissure, a crack that requires 'repair,' 'restoration,' but also opens a completely new outlook; while the constitution of a beginning is – in Arendt's words – 'an unconnected, new event breaking into the continuous sequence of historical time.'<sup>60</sup> It brings with it 'a measure of complete arbitrariness,' which is the effect of it appearing 'as though it came out of nowhere in either time or space.'<sup>61</sup> This pathos of beginning appears to Arendt the most important manifestation of the power and splendour of revolution. She presents it as unquestionably positive, as a space in which freedom, novelty and action meet, while the risk connected with this – and there is something noble and spiritually powerful and sophisticated in accepting such a risk – makes man a being superior to God (since God due to His omniscience and omnipotence cannot experience risk, and therefore the fullness of freedom). However, this pathos of beginning appears to have a darker side to it, which Arendt overlooks, even though she suggests it involuntarily: 'great leaders (...) appear on the stage of history precisely in these [revolutionary] gaps of historical time.'<sup>62</sup> They are the agents of the revolutionary arbitrariness, and it – being arbitrary – may follow the most dangerous paths, first and foremost the path of leadership self-affirmation, which in turn may become (at first) a personalist particularization, which might next turn into various cults of the individual and reverence for the authoritarian power, in which, crucially, biological and necessity-driven aspects (filial sentiments, the cult of the mother Earth, kinship, traditional values, conservative and reactionary views, etc.) claim priority. Thus, even in the space that seems so permanent and solid, and exclusively connected with the fullness of revolutionary freedom-novelty, we find the potential for the degradation and degeneration of revolution, in its particularly foul form, because it is located at the very apex of the revolutionary eidos and ethos.

This leads us – not entirely by accident – to the issue of the most contemporary philosophical discussions, the issue which at least indirectly confirms the diagnosis provided above. The issue in question is the recent publication of Martin Heidegger's *The*

<sup>58</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 223.

<sup>59</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 203.

<sup>60</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 205.

<sup>61</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 206.

<sup>62</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 205.

*Black Notebooks* and Cezary Wodziński's *Metaphysics and Metapolitics* dedicated to them, who focuses on the comparatively new aspects (though of course, not entirely novel) in *The Black Notebooks*, that is, the philosophical basis of Heidegger's politics as well as broadly understood – and broadly and critically addressed – issue of Heidegger's role as the Rector in Heidelberg in 1933-34. As another Polish scholar perceptively and inspiringly notes, to grasp Wodziński's idea of Heidegger's political thought in *The Black Notebooks* it is crucial to understand a certain term, or 'terminological compound,' that is, the 'pathos of inauguration.'<sup>63</sup> This expression combines the political exaltation, exhilaration and impatience which characterized Heidegger during this period, his revolutionary elation and pathos which we find in such expressions as 'complete metamorphosis' ('of our German essence'), 'final solution,' 'leap into the new beginning,' 'new foundation,' 'new order,' 'redirection of the entire nation,' 'fundamental break-through,' 'complete inversion,' 'new beginning,' 'total regeneration,' 'revolutionary reality' or 'rediscovery of the true beginning' in which 'The New is on the March! That which will change the world, man, gods.'<sup>64</sup> All this is brought about by the 'National-socialist Revolution,' and its rules are 'not in statements and 'ideas.' Only the Führer himself is the German reality and its law for today and tomorrow.'<sup>65</sup> Wodziński attempts to present, or even in some measure to excuse Heidegger's attitude rooted in this 'pathos of inauguration' (as an ill-conceived and time-bound transfer from the sphere of metaphysics into politics), but Lech Witkowski, cited above, is certain that this pathos is dangerous as a curse of the radical, revolutionary politics. It creates social excitement, sickly mobilization, which combines views and beliefs that 'we must definitely end everything that was here before us,' that a new beginning must be established, 'and we would be the guarantor, initiators and incarnation of its greatness,' that is, a 'resolute, strong and disciplined leap into the new beginning' must be accomplished, accompanied by 'faith in the metaphysical potential of the 'movement,' which must go on at any cost.' This exaltation cannot but lead to blindness, to the 'loss of vigilance based on one's awareness of one's responsibility and self-criticism,' effectually opening the field for barbarianism.

We may remember at this point that in relation to the Russian Revolution we were also dealing with attitudes similar to the pathos of inauguration. We are dealing here with the nihilistic negation of the previously existing world and setting in opposition to it an anti-ontological, moralistic and arbitrary ('violent') utopia, or a struggle with God over the tears of an abused child, based on falsified and sickly sensibility, which finds its resolution in the state of the Grand Inquisitor.

<sup>63</sup> Lech Witkowski, 'Patos inauguracywności', *Przegląd Polityczny*, 143/2017, p. 155.

<sup>64</sup> Cezary Wodziński, *Metafizyka i metapolityka*, (Gdańsk: Słowo/obraz terytoria, 2016), p. 34, 35, 57, 66-67, 73, 231.

<sup>65</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Czarne zeszyty*, cited in Wodziński, *Metafizyka i metapolityka*, p. 65.

There is one more approach to the Russian Revolution to be discussed, the view which emphasises the universal aspect even more strongly than Arendt's theory; the approach which sees the Russian Revolution not as yet another – though perhaps more dramatic – example of the revolutionary species, but as an exceptional, original, even indispensable structural element of a wider, global revolutionary movement. This approach, as we know, is connected with the Marxist 'format' of the Russian Revolution.

Let us put aside the 'prehistory' of the issue, that is, the *narodniki* vision of the Russian Revolution and socialism in Russia and the fascinating debates between the *narodniki* and Marx and Engels on the chances of success for this revolution and this socialism – when success was not at all impossible.<sup>66</sup> Let us move straight away to the sphere of 'proper' Marxism which does not mean that we reject the importance of *narodniki* in underdeveloped countries, and their chances of success in history, or their 'privilege of underdevelopment' which was the basic premise for the *narodniki* in their hopes of a grand future for Russia.

One of the first and most important works which deal with underdeveloped countries and their role in the historical evolution of capitalism within the context of 'proper' Marxism is Rosa Luxemburg's *The Accumulation of Capital* (1913). According to Luxemburg, the development of capitalism is possible only under condition of the existence of non-capitalist markets, internal and external pre-capitalist forms of social production. Without such a non-capitalist environment, accumulation and broadened reproduction, which constitute the essence of capitalism, would have been impossible. Such an environment is the indispensable buyer of capitalist over-production, the consumer of its surplus value. As an analysis of reproduction schemes shows, in a closed capitalist system the effect of production is higher than the purchasing, consumer capabilities of this system. Therefore 'the accumulation of capital, as an historical process, depends in every respect upon non-capitalist social strata and forms of social organisation'<sup>67</sup> in political struggle with them and incessant mutual interconnections. Yet, at the same time, through this process capitalism breaks and destroys pre-capitalist socio-economical forms, engulfing them within the framework of proper capitalist development. Thus, it destroys its own vital non-capitalist environment; through its development, it gradually limits its own capacity for development, inevitably creating conditions for its own destruction. Developing by ingesting all non-capitalist forms of production, capitalism is driving towards a moment when the entire humankind will in fact consist exclusively of capitalists and employed workers, and 'in a society consisting exclusively of workers and capitalists; accumulation will be impossible.'<sup>68</sup>

<sup>66</sup> I address this issue in 'Rosja: Filozofia a rewolucja', in *Filozofia i ruchy społeczne*, ed. Katarzyna Bielińska-Kowalewska, (Warszawa: Książka i Praca, 2016), p. 19-32.

<sup>67</sup> Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, trans. Agnes Schwartzschild, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), p. 366.

<sup>68</sup> Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, p. 237.



Thus, Rosa Luxemburg demonstrated the inevitability of the fall of capitalism as the consequence of its internal forces, which, however, is not synonymous for her with the inevitability of socialist revolution. When capitalism achieves its objective economic boundary, the final result is either the annihilation of culture or transition to a socialist mode of production.<sup>69</sup> Annihilation of capitalism which paves the way for socialism may, therefore, also entail the annihilation of humanity. 'Bourgeois society faces a dilemma; either a transition to Socialism, or a return to barbarism.'<sup>70</sup>

Analysis of Rosa Luxemburg's works seems to suggest that the barbarian outcome is all the more possible in the final stages of capitalist development. By entering the final forms of development, capitalism makes any kind of social manoeuvre impossible, it becomes a helpless compilation, disintegration and destruction of all subjects of social life. The socialist solution would therefore be connected with the existence of some remains of non-capitalist elements of the capitalist environment. Accounting for such an environment exposes the totalizing and contradictory nature of capitalism, and would allow for an external, critical viewpoint on its developmental processes, preventing the proletariat from limiting its demands and ideals merely to current needs. It would condition the historical scale and universal nature of socialist revolution. Revolution would require the following situation: a maturity of capitalism which would remove the need for the new order to face basic, threatening barriers of economic underdevelopment, combined with the particular immaturity of capitalism to ensure that the proletariat retains its identity, its socio-political autonomy, theoretical clarity and organizational efficiency. It would therefore appear that Rosa Luxemburg admits that from the point of view of Marxist orthodoxy of the Plekhanov type, revolution erupts always too early, while on the other hand, the proper environment for revolution is so abstract that any particular revolutionary upheaval might be considered to be 'premature.' This would be precisely Rosa Luxemburg's evaluation of the Russian Revolution in October 1917.

Let us now turn to the reflections of Vladimir Lenin, which in some sense constitute a continuation of Rosa Luxemburg's approach. For Lenin, just as for Plekhanov, the question raised by the *narodniki* as to the possibility and the need for capitalism in Russia is irrelevant. Capitalism is a fact in Russia. Still, this does not mean that the issues raised by the *narodniki* are to be dismissed. Russia's underdevelopment and the peasant problem are for Russian capitalism, and therefore also for Marxism, an inevitable structural element. In Rosa Luxemburg's view, underdeveloped countries, including Russia, constituted the indispensable capitalist environment; for Lenin, however, capitalism in Russia is something that 'has already completely and conclusively shaped itself.'<sup>71</sup> Lenin based his view on the

<sup>69</sup> Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, p. 237.

<sup>70</sup> Rosa Luxemburg, *Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften*, vol. 1, (Berlin: Dietz Verlag) p. 270, cited in Tony Cliff, *Rosa Luxemburg*, [www.marxist.org](http://www.marxist.org) (accessed: 12.07.2019).

<sup>71</sup> Włodzimierz Lenin, *Dziela*, vol. 1, (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1955), p. 540.

acknowledgement that the social aspect is the most crucial element within the concept of capitalism, as opposed to the economic aspect. 'Capital is a particular relationship between people, a relationship which remains unchanged during the high and low level of development of the comparable categories.'<sup>72</sup> Capitalism is defined not by the scale of production, but by the kind of social contradictions, by the relationship based on exploitation of the employed labour. Russia and underdeveloped countries are considered by Lenin as not an external environment of capitalism, but as its component.

But such a connection of Russia with capitalism (which seems to be much closer than in the previous takes) does not lead Lenin to conclude that the development of capitalism in Russia will finally lead to the country reaching the economic level of the most developed countries. The development of capitalism does not lead to a blurring of the differences between the areas of underdevelopment and maturity; on the contrary – it intensifies the divisions. The Russian example demonstrates clearly that capitalism assimilates and employs the forms of exploitation which are characteristic for the preceding epochs, and that exploitation is more ruthless and diverse. The *narodniki* idealised peasant community is a particularly fruitful sphere for such activity.

Thus, for Lenin, Russia is a fully capitalist country because of the nature of the basic social oppositions, however, this is a particular kind of capitalism because of its level of development.<sup>73</sup> Compared to the West, this is a weak form of capitalism, and its local weakness is the result of the global strength of capitalism. The uneven development is the structural quality of global capitalism, constantly reproduced by it and most beneficial for the most developed countries. In such a situation, the chance of revolution's success must be looked for not in Russia reaching a high level of capitalist development, but in the underdeveloped specificity of this place within the global capitalist system, in its role as 'the weakest link' of the system. We might, of course, hope for the socialist revolt in the most mature, developed and advanced spheres of capitalism, but the power of Western capitalism has also to be understood literally, as the most mature power of its defense against the revolutionary forces, as a considerable elasticity, an ability particular to developed capitalist countries to repress their controversies into the underdeveloped areas. The possibility for revolution is much greater wherever capitalism is weak – weak enough to crumble under the impetus of the revolutionary force, but also weak in the sense of its economic maturity.

Because of political and social factors (and also because of the state of public opinion), there are particularly favorable conditions for the revolutionary upheaval in Russia, for the takeover which will create an opportunity for socialist development; this is connected with the peculiar situation in Russia, with its historical conditions. The main task of revolution therefore is merely to overcome the enemy; and the much more demanding

<sup>72</sup> Lenin, *Dzieła*, p. 228.

<sup>73</sup> Andrzej Walicki, *Polska, Rosja, marksizm*, (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1983), p. 122.

task (compared to the revolutionary act itself) will be to retain the achievements or reproduction of revolution. The nature of this stage, and the nation's survival of it, will depend on the events in developed countries, that is, on the global revolution. Let us repeat: the main premise of the Russian Revolution for Lenin lies in Russia being the weakest, yet at the same time a structural component, a link in the global capitalism, or, more precisely, of its imperialist stage; while the inimitable condition of the success of the Russian Revolution is the global revolution.

To conclude, let us turn our attention to a few questions connected with the Russian Revolution and its particularly interesting aspect, that is, the question of the immediate results, the possibility to retain its achievements or its reproduction, and of the obstacles and errors which appear at this stage.

Firstly, let us discuss a more general issue. Socialist Revolution – or the proletarian revolution of Marx – was founded on the great development of the forces of production, the economic wealth created by capitalism. Socialism becomes inevitable when the economic efficiency of capitalism 'overruns' the legal and political forms of the capitalist socio-political order, when society is actually 'smothered' by its own wealth, which is distributed within the social scale in such a way that an enormous part of such a society lives on the borderline of biological survival. This necessary capitalist foundation of socialism leads Marx to multiple statements on the nature and historical mission (revolutionary mission) of capitalism which may be read as its apology. Even in *The Communist Manifesto* we read: 'The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjection of Nature's forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalisation of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground – what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labour?'<sup>74</sup> We may find many similar passages in Marx's work.

This issue is developed in a very interesting way by the German Marxist thinker Karl Korsch, rather forgotten today, but spoken of in a single breath with Lukacs during the 1920s. In his best known text *Marxism and Philosophy*, Korsch constructs an analogy between the historical dependency between the bourgeoisie / proletariat and the philosophical dependency between Hegel and Marx. Just as there is no serious philosophy of Marx without Hegel, there may not be socialism (and the proletariat) without capitalism (and the bourgeoisie). Moreover, according to Korsch, just as Marxism is the continuation of the best and most intellectually mature aspects in Hegel (lost by the remaining 19<sup>th</sup> Century philosophy, the middle-class philosophy which treats Hegel as the dead end of

<sup>74</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, trans. Samuel Moore in cooperation with Frederick Engels, marxists.org (accessed: 12.07.2019), p. 17.

philosophy and seeks a way out under the slogan 'back to Kant'<sup>75</sup>), just so the proletariat is the continuator of the best aspects of the bourgeoisie, that is, of its revolutionary nature which turned out to be inconsistent, self-contradictory, transient. In Korsch's view, 'the bourgeoisie was unable to meet the challenge of its own revolutionary nature, of the social energy produced by its activity,' therefore the new subject – the proletariat - had to claim this historical energy. We may speak here 'of the constant revolutionary process, the continuation of which demands a change of the social subject,'<sup>76</sup> and within this process humanity overcomes the biological limitations and forms the universal historical subjects. The proletariat is the heir of the bourgeoisie in the same measure as Marx is the heir of Hegel. On the other hand, the 'heirship' relationship between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and between Marx and Hegel grants historical reality and substantiality to the proletariat, while Marxism gains its foundation and 'scientific'<sup>77</sup> character, which is the opposite of subjectivism and utopianism; to both, it grants universality, which denies any kind of particularism. In all of this, the proletariat defends and protects the bourgeoisie's revolutionary nature (which, left to itself, degenerates into reaction and middle-class philistine banality), while Marx defends the scale and novelty of Hegel (who without him becomes merely an exhausted trend within European philosophy).

We may now repeat the formulation that the Russian Revolution is the continuation, the heir or even a completion of the French Revolution, but this time in the sense of the protection and development of the revolutionary ethos, in the sense of the continuation and salvation of a broader and unified revolutionary process. Though bourgeois revolution has been its component, now it finds itself in a volatile and ambiguous historical situation, that is, either a reactionary negation of its revolutionary nature, or a proletarian continuation of that nature.

All this means that the project of Socialist revolution in its Marxist version is part of the broader or even universal historical current, and relies on the civilizational achievements of the bourgeoisie, as well as on its revolutionary volatility, which pushes it into a counter-revolutionary position. In this perspective we may consider the issue of the Russian Revolution as Socialist, proletarian, Marxist revolution with a chance to play the role of the indispensable Russian trigger for the global revolution, but also remaining in inescapable dependency on the global completion of the proletarian revolution. This

<sup>75</sup> Karl Korsch, 'Marksizm i filozofia', trans. Aleksander Ochocki, in *Marksizm XX wieku, Antologia tekstów*, ed. Janusz Dobieszewski and Marek J. Siemek, vol. I, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1990), p. 13.

<sup>76</sup> Janusz Dobieszewski, 'O marksizmie Karla Korsch', *Studia Filozoficzne*, 6(223)/1984, p. 132, 134.

<sup>77</sup> In this context, Piotr Struwe's statement may appear both significant and characteristic: 'Socialism owes its existence to capitalism not only in its historical, but also logical sense; without capitalism, it is a ghost without body and blood' [cited in Richard Pipes, *Piotr Struwe. Liberal na lewicy (1870-1905)*, trans. Sebastian Szymański, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar 2016), p. 62-63].

is how it was interpreted and counted upon by Lenin and Trotsky. The Russian national problem was completely relativized by them within the universal or international context, stripped of its autonomy and uniqueness. As Walicki writes, Lenin 'was willing to sacrifice Russia on the altar of the international revolution, to renounce its national tradition.'<sup>78</sup> The success or failure of the Russian Revolution was to be decided in a context broader than Russia itself; it must face the course of events in its historical environment and its most far-reaching influence (both through action and its absence) on specifically Russian problems.

Yet, there may not be any kind of guarantee. Lenin, it is true, and later the continuator of his theoretical and political concepts György Lukacs, announce in their theories of contemporary capitalism, that is, imperialism, that it is about to enter the stage of the 'historical totality of the world-crisis,'<sup>79</sup> the spectacular manifestation of which is the world war, and this makes the issue of 'the actuality of the proletarian revolution' much more urgent.<sup>80</sup> However, 'the transition from capitalism to socialism was characterised by frequent crises and reversions to earlier stages,'<sup>81</sup> to the flow and ebb of the wave of revolution. The working class movement failed in confrontation with the world war, and later it was not to support the Russian Revolution with revolutionary action, leaving it alone to face the unpredictable, chaotic, regressive obstacles and difficulties, which still does not change the objective measure of modernity which is the actuality of the revolution. As Lukacs writes, 'it is evident that the overall economic situation will sooner or later drive the proletariat to create a revolution on a global scale.'<sup>82</sup> Today, as Lukacs further explains, the Russian Revolution creates a premise of the future victory for the global proletariat and what matters now is for the proletariat 'to use all the means at its disposal to keep the power of the state in its own hands under all circumstances' and it 'must be able to manoeuvre freely.'<sup>83</sup> In addition, the not purely proletarian nature of the Russian Revolution, that is, significant participation in it of the members of other social strata, creates a threat: 'it is just as easy for them to deflect it in a counter-revolutionary direction.'<sup>84</sup> And this is what happened with the Russian Revolution after 1917: on the one hand, it went into an excess of revolutionary enthusiasm, on the other – in the direction of the ruthless counter-revolutionary regulations of the state. Thus, the Russian Revolution

<sup>78</sup> Walicki, *Miejsce ekonomii w moim ujęciu intelektualnej historii Rosji*, p. 35.

<sup>79</sup> Georg Lukács, 'Towards a Methodology of the Problem of Organisation', in *History and Class Consciousness. Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1967), p. 307.

<sup>80</sup> Georg Lukács, *Lenin: A Study on the Unity of his Thought*, trans. Nicholas Jacobs (London–New York: Verso, 2009).

<sup>81</sup> Georg Lukacs, 'Critical Observations on Rosa Luxemburg «Critique of the Russian Revolution»', in *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 279.

<sup>82</sup> Lukacs, 'Critical Observations on Rosa Luxemburg «Critique of the Russian Revolution»', p. 292.

<sup>83</sup> Lukacs, 'Critical Observations on Rosa Luxemburg «Critique of the Russian Revolution»', p. 292.

<sup>84</sup> Lukacs, 'Towards a Methodology of the Problem of Organisation', p. 304.

was adapting to the non-event of the global revolution, and in the end this shaped itself into what Leszek Kołakowski describes as a certain significant change in emphasis: not the Russian Revolution in service of the global revolution, but global revolution in service of the Russian Revolution.<sup>85</sup>

One more phenomenon of the post-October period deserves our attention, especially since it combines the rigor of the revolutionary utopianism and the counter-revolutionary love of discipline. Lenin's theory diverges from Marx's, both as its later and Russia-specific incarnation, or as a version 'clearly different from Marxist.' Within the context of the issue that interests us, this second possibility is, perhaps, the more likely. The distinguished Polish scholar of Marxism cited above, separates the rational dialectics of Marx, still closely connected with Hegel, with its 'organic,' profound, or metaphysical approach which accounts for the impersonal or non-subjective aspects of the historical process (economic laws, crises, effects contradicting the intentions, unintentional 'surpluses' of human activities), from the common-sense dialectics of Lenin, in which the primary role is played by the 'physical,' phenomenal political element, through which the sphere of social life is taken over by the absolutely real, empirical social forces (social groups<sup>86</sup>). From Lenin's perspective, this enables us to view any event, tension, contradiction within social life as beneficial or harmful for a particular social group, as a situation which in its essence is devoid of any accidental, arbitrary quality, but instead plays a specific role, one subjective in its effects in the social process, and serving particular interests. The question 'who benefits by this' is quickly replaced by the question 'who is to blame' – interests are only the objective side of the subjective guilt.

This quite quickly and easily leads to the suffocating, heavy, sinister atmosphere of universal social suspicion,<sup>87</sup> even if originally it possesses only the somewhat seductive form of the obsessive subjectivization or personalization of social problems and dilemmas. As Lenin himself wrote, one must 'in any evaluation of the events, place oneself openly and straight-forwardly in the position of the particular social group,' which next leads to the conviction that 'it really does not matter whether a given idea is true, but rather, who benefits by it.'<sup>88</sup> In a long book dedicated to the socio-economical aspects of the revolutionary upheaval, surprisingly positive in relation to the Bolshevik revolt, Ludwik Krzywicky wrote that with regard to various situations in villages, ones rooted in deep and complex historical and economic causes, Soviet Russia applies exceptionally superficial evaluations, for instance interpreting these as the resistance of the kulaks, who are seen

<sup>85</sup> Leszek Kołakowski, *The Main Currents of Marxism. Its Raise, Growth and Dissolution*, vol. II *The Golden Age*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 467-473.

<sup>86</sup> Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, p. 447-466; see also Aleksander M. Ochocki, *Dialektyka i historia. Człowiek i praca w twórczości Karola Marksa*, (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza 1971), p. 490-492.

<sup>87</sup> Ochocki, *Dialektyka i historia. Człowiek i praca w twórczości Karola Marksa*, p. 88.

<sup>88</sup> Pipes, *Piotr Struwe. Liberal na lewicy*, p. 131.

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in direct opposition to the poor peasants<sup>89</sup> and their interests, demanding immediate (though not clearly defined in its meaning and goal) action; such action is understood as the proper, real and revolutionary comprehension of the problem. Something similar was pointed out by the authors of *De Profundis*: Izgoev writes that 'great, natural, and irrepressible mass phenomena' of socio-economic life are explained away 'as 'counter-revolutionary agitation' of the right S.R.'s and Mensheviks, or 'sabotage' by the Kadet bourgeoisie and intelligentsia.'<sup>90</sup> Somewhat later we read: 'the entire economic policy of the Russian socialists came down to the fact that ever newer and ever wider circles of people appeared as bourgeois, petty bourgeois, and counter-revolutionaries.'<sup>91</sup> Thus, the insoluble problem is turned into an enemy who is to be vanquished. And this logic is as socially damaging, as it is shatterproof in the long run, and the example of Russia of the revolutionary and post-revolutionary period demonstrated this only too well.

We might conclude by remarking that the lessons taught by the Russian Revolution in the end turned out to be quite informative and effective, which was demonstrated in the nature of the collapse of the USSR: non-revolutionary, peaceful, even appeased (perhaps, somewhat embarrassingly so), but at the same time raising hopes and expectations as to a reasonable future. The greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the Twentieth Century was in essence entirely bloodless.

TRANSLATED BY Irena Księżopolska

<sup>89</sup> *Rosja sowiecka pod względem społecznym i gospodarczym*, ed. L. Krzywicki, Warsaw 1922, p. 124.

<sup>90</sup> Izgoev, 'Socialism, Culture and Bolshevism', p. 139.

<sup>91</sup> Izgoev, 'Socialism, Culture and Bolshevism', p. 142.

## REVOLUTION AS THE SLEEP OF REASON: THE TOTAL REDUCTION OF IDEAS

By **VLADIMIR KANTOR**

*In his article, the author poses the question, one of the most important for understanding the catastrophes of the twentieth century: how and why the sun of mind rolled over the world (as expressed by A. Koestler). The rejection of reason meant the rejection of the Christian pathos of life. Since the end of the nineteenth century, God, light and mind were not in favor across Europe. The light of reason was addressed to all people, but the elect who assimilated it were few. And then the whole history of mankind, we see with what incredible effort these chosen mobs pull to the light. In the twentieth century. there was a so-called 'uprising of the masses', accompanied by the destruction of Christianity and the elite, carriers of the mind. But this fall in ideas began with the Russian revolution of 1917. In an era when the world of Russia and the West broke, when after two monstrous wars everything was lost, when Auschwitz and Kolyma (where atrocities were happening that are possible only in horrible dreams) erased all the centuries-old attempts of humanism, when the monsters born from sleep of reason seemed to defeat the world forever, there was still a gap. As the Russian philosopher Fyodor Stepanov wrote, Christianity called upon all of us, young and old, healthy and sick, rich in talents and poor in spirit, to such a great transfiguration of the world, before which the wildest dreams of a revolutionary reorganization of human life fall apart. Only this requires spiritual effort. But the elect have always been few. However, it is they who carry the light into the world.*

Key words: Russia, the West. revolution, Christianity. the revolt of the masses, the gospel, the light of reason

Everyone, I feel, remembers that most excellent Spanish saying 'The sleep of reason produces monsters,' which was used by Goya to title one of his brilliant etchings from the suite of satires *Los Caprichos*. There one has depicted a thinker asleep at a table, over whose head circle bats and various demons personifying the reflections of evil, or more exactly manifesting Nothing in their appearance. If one is to continue the saying, then what is conveyed is that at the moment of sleep fantasy is necessary, fantasy that can aid the genius to create something exceptional. But for Goya, it would appear, he has completely consciously forgotten literally about fantasy, while in each of the subsequent etchings he has depicted the metaphysical horrors of human life. It was already the ancient thinkers who first wrote about the notion of reason and its significance within human life and here with the claim that whomever the gods wanted to die, they would deprive of reason. And



all these debates about reason and its dream I shall explore within a Christian context. For it gives an exact reading in understanding the European catastrophes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We also know, as was said in The First Letter of John, 'the Son of God has come and given us understanding to know him who is real; indeed we are in him who is real, since we are in his Son Jesus Christ.'<sup>1</sup> (1 John 5:20).

The renunciation of reason represented the renunciation of the Christian pathos of life. Arthur Koestler wrote in his autobiography 'I was born at that moment (1905 r. – V.K.), when the sun had set over the age of reason.'<sup>2</sup> And indeed – for it was just a short distance to Bolshevism, Fascism and National-Socialism. Husserl was to see in this setting of reason the first cause of the European crisis: 'To get the concept of what is contra-essential in the present «crisis», the concept «Europe» would have to be developed as the historical teleology of infinite goals of reason; it would have to be shown how the European «world» was born from the ideas of reason, i.e., from the spirit of philosophy. The «crisis» could then become clear as the «seeming collapse of rationalism». Still, as we said, the reason for the downfall of a rational culture does not lie in the essence of rationalism itself, but only in its exteriorization, its absorption in «naturalism» and «objectivism». The crisis of European existence can end in only one of two ways: in the ruin of a Europe alienated from its rational sense of life, fallen into a barbarian hatred of spirit; or in the rebirth of Europe from the spirit of philosophy, through a heroism of reason that will definitively overcome naturalism.'<sup>3</sup>

In place of Being, as Heidegger wrote, there appeared Nothing, and it is *a priori* inadmissible and irrational to struggle with it. But this Nothing conducted a deadly struggle with people, slaughtering whole classes, destroying towns, villages, industry, nations, first and foremost Jews who had brought forth the Saviour, although Paul the Apostle had said that in Christianity there is neither an ancient Greek (Hellene) nor a Jew. The host that came destroyed the world of reason. For that was how it was told by the ancients, whoever God wanted to kill he deprived of reason. And deprived of reason they destroyed the bearers of reason under various pretexts. So that light in the world extinguished and an ancient horror came to the throne.

Strictly speaking, all the words of philosophers on the relevance of thought are trumped by the evangelical words that talk of the creation of thought, that is with the word of peace. For God is the creator of reason, of the word. I shall recall the beginning of the Gospel according to John (J 1,1-5):

<sup>1</sup> *New English Bible*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970). All quotations of Bible come from this edition.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Koestler, *Arrow in the Blue: An Autobiography*, (New York: Collins and Hamish Hamilton, 1952), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Edmund Husserl, 'Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man' in E. Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. Quentin Lauer, (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 191-192.

When all things began, the Word already was. The Word dwelt with God, and what God was, the Word was.

The Word, then, was with God at the beginning.

and through him all things came to be; no single thing was created without him

All that came to be alive with his life, and that life was the light of men.

That light shines on in the dark, and the darkness has never mastered it.

As wrote the splendid Russian historian and writer Mark Aldanov: 'Cultural progress results in the reduction of the difference in the intellectual growth between the 'crowd' and the 'elite.' But this reduction may be achieved through the raising of the level of the crowd and a lowering in the level of the 'elite.' Unfortunately mankind in recent times is heading along the latter route much more willingly than along the former. All the teachings of Hitler are a lie not standing up to condescending criticism. But he himself is a living truth about the present world, an unconcealed and terrible symbol of the hatred that saturates the Europe of our times. Most characteristic here is that this man was the son of a liberal, one who considered himself a 'citizen of the world.'<sup>4</sup> As D.S. Merezhkovski said justly about the Nazis: it matters not what you conclude about the ideas of the mob: what is in fact new and important is the *temperature* that created by this swarm.

But this lowering of ideas was to have its beginnings with the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Bunin said that the Bolsheviks killed off sensitivity. We suffer as a result of the death of an individual; the deaths of seven – he wrote – is tolerable; it is more difficult but possible to suffer because of deaths of seventy, yet when seventy thousand die the human perception itself ceases to function. He wrote, referring to Wells and his belief in Lenin: 'These Lenins have smothered in Russia the smallest free breath, they have multiplied the number of Russian corpses into hundreds of thousands, they have converted puddles of blood into veritable seas, and out of the richest country in the world, of a nation though ignorant and unstable, for all that still great, having produced in all fields no fewer true geniuses than England itself, they have created a barren churchyard, a valley of death, tears, of a gnashing of teeth; and they have flooded all of this churchyard in thousands of Cheka agents 'crushing the opposition,' the vilest and bloodiest institutions the world has yet known, this is they [...] for a whole three years crushing the skulls of the Russian intelligentsia.' It was the professorial class that was to bear the brunt the most (when compared to other circles within the Russian population). Here the words of the eminent Russian sociologist Pitirim Surokin: 'The death rate among the Petrograd professors during 1918-22 was six times higher than the death rate of peace times, and twice higher than

<sup>4</sup> Mark Aldanov, 'Gitler' in Mark Aldonov, *Kartiny Oktyabr'skoy revolyutsii. Istoricheskiye portrety. Portrety sovremennikov. Zagadka Tolstogo*, (St. Petersburg: RKHGI, 1999), p. 234.

the rate among the rest of the populations of Petrograd in 1918-1921.<sup>5</sup> Pushkin, logical and lucid Pushkin, having created the fundamental senses of Russian culture, wrote in the 1820s a hymn to reason and the light

You, oh holy sun, shine on!  
As this lamp grows fainter  
With the bright arrival of the dawn,  
So the spurious wisdom flickers and smoulders  
Before that sun of the immortal mind.  
Long live the sun, and may darkness vanish!

But the darkness covered Russia in 1917. This renunciation of God led to a renunciation of reason. The Biblical psalms had long ago said: 'The impious fool says in his heart, «There is no God». How vile men are, how depraved and loathsome; not one does anything good!' (Psalms 14:1). And godless was to be the state policy of the Bolsheviks. The Bolshevik leader was resolute in his hatred for Christianity: 'Religion is one of the forms of spiritual oppression (...) religion is the opium of the people. Religion is opium for the people. Religion is a sort of spiritual booze, in which the slaves of capital drown their human image (...)'<sup>6</sup> And further: 'any deity is necrophilia... every religious idea, every idea about any deity, every flirtation with a deity is indescribable abomination... the most dangerous abomination, the most vile contagion. Your VI!<sup>7</sup> And already upon taking power he was to commence the relentless physical reprisals with those who believed in God, especially with the clergy: 'At the party congress was concluded a secret meeting of all or almost all the delegates on this issue in conjunction with the main employees of the State Political Directorate (GPU), the National Commissariat of Justice (NKYu) and the Revolutionary Tribunals. At this meeting there fell congress's secret decision that the removal of valuables, and in particular those of the wealthiest monasteries, religious houses and churches, should be conducted with a relentless decisiveness, absolutely stopping at nothing and this was to be resolved in the shortest possible period. The greater the number of reactionary clergy and reactionary bourgeoisie we are able to shoot for this reason the better.' Lenin 19<sup>th</sup> March 1922.<sup>8</sup> They were to shoot poets and professors at the same time.

<sup>5</sup> Pitirim Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolutions*, (Philadelphia and London: J.B. Lippincott, 1925), p. 217.

<sup>6</sup> Vladimir Lenin, 'Socialism and Religion', *Novaya Zhizn*, 28/1905, December 3. See *Lenin Collected Works*, vol. 10, (Moscow: Progress Publishers 1965), p. 83.

<sup>7</sup> Vladimir Lenin, 'Letter to Maxim Gorky' (14 November 1913) in Vladimir Lenin, *Selected Works*, (New York: International Publishers, 1943), p. 675-676. Telling off this eminent writer for divine ingratitude, Lenin concludes the letter 'Why are you doing this? Devilish annoyance.'

<sup>8</sup> Lenin on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1922. I quote from *Izviestija*, 4/1990, p. 190-193.

Then, so that the West did not ultimately consider the victorious demos to be a crowd of cannibals, a few hundred eminent academics and writers were sent to the West (this undertaking now bears the name the 'philosophical steamship'). An intellectual and highly passionate summing up of the existence of a Russian university and Russian professorial circles was conducted by the academic Mikhail Ivanovich Rostovtsev, a historian of antiquity and an archaeologist who fled Bolshevik Russia in 1918. For a start I shall present his literal cry of horror over the fate of Russian professors taken from the article 'Science in Bolshevik Russia' (1921): 'Why do academics die of hunger? I am not here going to present a long list of academics who have died of hunger over the course of the last three years. They are legion. Why do the Bolsheviks not protect academics from being murdered and arrested by the Emergency Commission across the length of the country? [...] Why are hundreds of Russian academics, young and old, fleeing Russia and are living the life of asylum seekers in Western Europe, Japan, China and America? According to my research no less than a third of academics have deserted Russia.'<sup>9</sup> While in another article he attempted to show the ethos of a Russian university, of the Russian professorial class, and how they handled the Revolution. And what the universities and those professors who survived were turned into. I shall commence with his understanding of the university ethos: 'The ideals of Russian universities brought forth universities in constant struggle, internal and external conflicts over decades. Much martyrdom was needed to bring these ideals to life. Regardless of the constant steps backward, we all the same are successively coming closer to their realisation. [...] University will always be for the Russian intelligentsia not merely an institution for the education of youth. This was a thought laboratory, one of academic creation in all its fields. This was the focus where the strivings and aspirations of the better part of the Russian intelligentsia would come together.'<sup>10</sup>

The reason for this strike at higher education was in the renunciation of reason as the basis of the construct of the human world. According to Berdyaev 'Lenin was philosophically and culturally a reactionary, an extremely retarded and backward man, he was not even at the level of Marx's dialectics, evolved through German idealism. This was to turn out to be fatal for the character of the Russian Revolution – a revolution that carried out a genuine pogrom on Russian high culture.'<sup>11</sup>

One may take as a version the considerations of the great Russian philosopher Yevgeny Trubetski: 'The flat, steppe nature of our country has left its mark on our history. In the nature of our plain there is a certain hatred towards everything that outgrows flatness, towards everything that too noticeably towers above the surroundings. This hatred forms

<sup>9</sup> Michael Rostovtzeff, 'Nauka v bol'shevistskoy Rossii', in Michael Rostovtzeff, *Izbrannyye publitsisticheskiye stat'i. 1906-1923*, (Moscow: ROSSP-EN, 2002), p. 91.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Rostovtzeff, 'Universitety i bol'sheviki' in Rostovtzeff, *Izbrannyye publitsisticheskiye stat'i. 1906-1923*, p. 95.

<sup>11</sup> Nikolai Berdyaev, *Samopoznaniye*, (Moscow: Kniga, 1991), p. 151.

the bad fate of our lives. It periodically razes to the ground everything that has grown above it.<sup>12</sup> It needs to be said that the subject of landscape and its influence on culture has been expressed in various philosophical works since the time of Montesquieu. And nature and landscape does in fact help in symbolically explaining the lot of a country. Not falling into geographical determinism we may agree with the philosopher that the hordes of wild nomads 'levelled Ancient Rus', that is torched it, destroying, slaughtering; finally the Tatars had levelled everything i.e., they had turned everything into ruins.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless Trubetskoi sees an unexpected way out of this plain flatness: Muscovy was to start its ascent. But equally in this there was manifest this plain tendency. In order to fight against the Tatars threatening from without levelling aspirations, tsarist authority itself had to become the only elevation in the country. Class inequality was still to remain which presupposed points of elevation. Against these were waged terrible peasant wars.

That German of genius Elizabeth II, on becoming a great Russian empress, was to continue the work of Peter the Great and with incredible effort she broke the back of the peasant revolt, strengthening the class inequality legislatively. Quoting the words of Konstantin Leontiev: 'Up until Peter our social picture was more monotonous, there was greater similarity in the parts; after Peter there began to develop a clearer, sharper division within our society, there was to appear a diversification without which creativity in nations is impossible. [...] The despotism of Peter was progressive and aristocratic, in the sense of the foregoing stratification of society. Elizabeth's liberalism had decisively that character. She was to lead Russia to a blossoming, to creativity and to growth. She increased inequality. And in this is her main contribution. [...] from her times onwards the nobility was to become somewhat independent of the state, but as formerly it prevailed and ruled over the other classes of the nation.'<sup>14</sup>

Its destruction was linked to the movement of Russian revolutions when, as he described the spontaneous mass movement threatens to erase from the face of the earth education itself. And then negative universality and equality existed in the form of a completely straight and equal surface. Trubetskoy searches for the antithesis to this phenomenon of the plain and finds it only in the fashioning of a church: 'A church stood above the cemetery – the embodiment of eternally resurrecting life. On our plain this is the only elevation which death hitherto had been unable to raze to the ground. From amongst the periodic destructions experienced by the Russian land only the Church has emerged whole from the flames and again consolidates the national body that has fallen

<sup>12</sup> Jewgienij Trubetskoy, 'Dva zverya,' in Jewgienij Trubetskoy, *Smysl zhizni*, (Moscow: Respublika 1994), p. 300.

<sup>13</sup> Trubetskoy, 'Dva zverya,' p. 300.

<sup>14</sup> Konstantin Leontiev, *Vizantizm i slavyanstvo*, in Konstantin Leontiev, *Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy i pisem v dvenadtsati tomakh*, t. 7, kniga pervaya, (St Peterburg: Vladimir Dal', 2005), p. 303.

to pieces.<sup>15</sup> Consequently the great equaliser Lenin did not engage in a struggle with Christianity for no purpose.

In Ivan Shmelev's horrific and masterly apocalyptic book 'The Sun of the Dead,' about the Crimea during the period at the very beginning of the Bolshevik Revolution written in 1923, a post office, which is a link that cultured people had with the world, is perceived as a threat to the revolution:

And that drunk Pavlyak, a commissar communist of recent enrolment, would brag:

- Relations with France are to be established... with whomever you please! Let them jot down what they want, show the connection... we'll show them there's no flies on us!..

But Pavlyak could not master the enormity of his powers, jumping from the window, and shattering his skull. And the 'relations' ceased. While the new chief, a ginger-bearded errand-boy, simply growls from behind the grid:

- Whaaat?.. There is no abroad any longer! Only one great expanse ... too little being written to you, eh? Well you obviously had it too good then...

The demos (the people) killed Socrates the intellectual; the confrontation of the *low-brow*, the people of the masses, with what they contemptuously called the *high-brow* is evident across the course of millennia. In subsequent centuries this opposition was to become the subject of specialist investigations. The great French psychologist Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931) was convinced that on the strength of lack of development and a low intellectual level the greater masses of people are governed by unconscious instincts, especially when they find themselves as part of a crowd. Here there occurs a lowering in the level of intellect, a fall in responsibility. And there occurs a contamination by madness, and such a contamination is 'an ability by which people are gifted in such a way as to be anthropomorphous monkeys.'<sup>16</sup>

And there arises a domination of not merely the masses but of the crowd, the human rabble. For here the temperature of the locusts is the same as with the Nazis, it even takes the place of any attempt at thought. In Germany, still at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the German philosopher Wilhelm Windelband in his *Präludiven* drew attention to the growth in the low-brow, calling them the dilettanti; that is those who possess a superficial, amateur notion about everything but hungry for leadership of the world: 'Not being able to control the internal, specific elements of the cultural content of these alien regions, contemporary man runs to the superficiality of dilettantism, which removes

<sup>15</sup> Trubetskoy, 'Dva zverya', p. 300-301.

<sup>16</sup> Gustave Le Bon, *Psikhologiya narodov i mass*, trans. A. Fridmana, E. Pimenovoy, (Moscow: Akademicheskii proyekt, 2016), p. 83.

the scum from all and forgets about the inner content.' This is madness, yet madness is an illness, and consequently infectious. The failed artist Adolf Hitler, having worshiped popular literature, not only considered himself capable of recasting Germany but he did recast it, attempting to annihilate a part of humanity and even though he was defeated, he poisoned the consciousness of millions of people in various countries. And henceforth 'the masses dictate to government its behaviour.'<sup>17</sup> In Germany bonfires of books burnt, on to which were cast the books of great Germans in whom there flowed but a drop of Jewish blood or whom had been noted as being of a liberal bent and mentality. In general anti-Semitism was a blow to the most spiritually developed part of humanity, the former world of the Bible and Christ. The French thinker Jacques Maritain was to write: 'In this is comprised the election: in the person of the Jews - the persecutors of Moses and the prophets, in striving to persecute the Saviour, who had stepped out from the midst of this very nation. [...] Just as they hated Christianity for its Jewish roots, so they hated Israel for its belief in original sin and redemption and for the Christian compassion that came out of Israel. As the Jewish writer Maurice Samuel shrewdly noted, it was not because the Jews had killed Christ that the Nazi anti-Semitic fury was to persecute Jews on every road in Europe but because it was they, the Jews, who had given Christ to the world.'<sup>18</sup>

There occurred what academically is referred to as the Holocaust. Millions were murdered. But it follows to remember that not only people were annihilated – this was the annihilation of a unique local Jewish culture, the annihilation of the memory that this (culture) had been for centuries an inseparable part of the culture of Eastern Europe.

It was no better in Soviet Russia, although here the matter was somewhat different and happened earlier. In 1922, on the order of Lenin, several hundred of the most eminent Russian philosophers, historians, writers and natural scientists were sent to the West on the so-called 'philosophy steamer.' This is a symbolic name, for in point of fact there were two steamers and two trains. Lenin's wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, compiled the Index of prohibited books, which included many Russian classics that did not reflect movement towards a proletariat world outlook. Contemporary historians write about her relentlessness in relation to the printed word. Already in 1920 the Central Political-Educational Committee of the People's Commissariat for Education, on the initiative of Krupskaya sent to the provinces instructions to review catalogues and confiscate 'ideologically harmful and obsolete' literature from public libraries. In 1924 she included in this list the writings of Plato, Kant, Schopenhauer, Leskov and other major writers; something that shocked even Maxim Gorky. Children's libraries were to suffer especially. Confiscated from these, on Krupskaya's instruction, were even folk fairy tales and Aksakov's *The Scarlet Flower*. In total her instructions covered 97 children's writers, including Chukovskii, whose verse she

<sup>17</sup> Gustave Le Bon, *Psikhologiya narodov i mass*, p. 115.

<sup>18</sup> Jacques Maritain, 'Tayna Izrailiya', in Jacques Maritain, *Izbrannoye: Velichiye i nishcheta metafiziki*, trans. N.V. Zamonets, (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2004), p. 418-419.

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described as 'bourgeois rubbish.' The circular signed by Krupskaya outlawed the lending to readers of 'the Bible or any other religious literature.' While the completely crazed young, for as Trotsky said 'the young are the motor of the revolution,' called for the destruction of all world classics. Even that most talented of young men Mayakovski was to write in his poem 'It's too early to rejoice!' (1918):

Find a White guardsman  
And up against the wall.  
And have you forgotten  
Raphael?  
It's time for bullets to pepper  
The museum's walls  
Hundred-throat guns to  
Shoot down the old junk.  
Sow death in the enemy  
Camp  
Don't be hit  
Capital hirelings  
And Tsar Alexander  
There on the square  
The cost of uprisings?  
Take the dynamite right over there  
Set up the cannons along the edge  
Deaf to the white guard  
Kindness pledge  
And why is Pushkin not  
Attacked  
And other generals of classics  
To debark?  
The old junk of art we protect in name

Reprisals rained down on academics and engineers, who were in fact of much use to the young regime, but all were deemed saboteurs, were shot, imprisoned, (I shall recall merely the so-called Industrial Party Trial of 1930). The reason for this seemingly totally pointless reprisal has been expertly elaborated on by Arthur Koestler in *Darkness at Noon*. The investigator Gletkin explains: 'In other countries the process of industrialisation was spread over the course of a hundred or two hundred years, in such a way that the peasantry genuinely and gradually became used to their new life. For us, in Russia, they have to become acquainted with machines and industrial precision within a decade. If we do not sack them and shoot over the pettiest of mistakes then they will not stop sleeping on the machines or in factory yards, a deadly stagnation shall grip the country, that is it



will return to its pre-revolutionary state.' However, from where did this bloody and delirious nightmare of mass sabotage come, one reminiscent of some kind of shamanic rite of sorcery? Obviously it was engendered by the very situation itself, by the peculiarities in the consciousness of the peasantry drawn into industrialisation, and Gletkin deftly elucidates: 'If you say to my countrymen that they are all still backward and illiterate, despite the achievements of the Revolution and the successful industrialisation of the country, no benefit will come to them for such a statement. But if you persuade them that they are heroes of labour and work as efficiently as Americans, but that the country is feverish because of the diabolical sabotage undertaken by its enemies – then this will help in a way. But of genuine veracity is the fact that it is bringing benefit to humanity.' And so were shot the creators of the legendary 'Katusha' rocket launcher. 1937. The heads of the reactive Scientific Research Institute Georgii Langemak and Ivan Kleimenov, without whom there never would have been the legendary 'Katusha' rocket launcher, were shot. For many years the creator of this fearsome weapon was considered to be only Andrei Kostnikov, a Hero of Socialist Labour, a recipient of the Stalin prize, a member of the Soviet Union's Academy of Sciences, who by strange coincidence took over the running of the Institute following the arrest of his colleagues. It is known that their demise was the result of Kostikov's denunciation, who wrote, allegedly, that Georgii Langemak was the son of a priest.

In general it was to be the Orthodox Church and the clergy that were to be mercilessly destroyed. In 1918 passed was the decree on the separation of the Orthodox Church from the state, placing the Church in a position without rights whatsoever. The first practical result of the workings of the decree was the closure in 1918 of the religious seminaries, including any diocesan schools and temples attached to them. From 1918 onwards a total severance with spiritual religious education and any academic Church activity was the norm. The same may be said for book publishing, from 1918 the publication of any Christian literature whatsoever became an impossibility. Only in 1944 on official authorisation was a theological institute opened and pastoral courses conducted, this later to be transformed in 1946 into the Theological academy and seminary. Yet, nevertheless the subject of God and Christ was to sound out, though secretly, even in Soviet literature, where there continued to exist independent creativity; there were the banned works, which are known only in the underground. And there was the so-called Catacomb Church that was to nurture the eminent Church dignitary – Father Alexander Men, around whom gathered free-thinking young people. And above all, one of the most reassuring phenomenon and the sign of inner spiritual health in the same time were the bardic songs of Vysotskii, Okudzhava, Gorodnitskii and others. The light had not extinguished for, in the words of the Gospel 'the light shines in the darkness.'

Today, one would like to believe that the very existence in our culture of thinkers of the ranking of Shpet, Losev, Stepun, Bulgakov and other philosophers of the Silver Age, equally the classics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and of the first third of the twentieth, I shall

enumerate a few: Blok, Bulgakov, Akhmatova, Mandel'shtam, Babel creates within Russia genuine preconditions for a Renaissance. In 1921 the bravest of the greatest of the writers of this period Evgenii Zamyatin, having declared the impossibility for creativity in Bolshevik Russia, used such a formulation: 'I fear that there is but one future for Russian literature: its past.'<sup>19</sup> But this formulation was to turn out to be multifaceted. From Chaadaev and Solov'ev through Frank and Stepun no small distance has been covered. Basing oneself on their texts one may fully regenerate the pathos of the search for truth. In other words there is something to be revived.

Philosophers today are ascertaining the absence of an intellectual-moral origin within Europe. Christianity, for the first time for many centuries, is again experiencing the force of Islam. So called regional wars, homosexual marriages, transgender anger – all this increasingly recalls the world of Sodom and Gomorrah. And wait the wrath of God! Mankind is suffering defeat. But is this really the case? For there still is the ray of hope that the Russian thinker Fedor Stepun wrote about: 'how hopeless human history would have been if it had not, almost 2000 years ago, experienced the light that is Christianity. Having revoked through divinely revealed truth all 'merely' human philosophising and having defeated forever through the silencing mystery of the Bethlehem night all the titanic schemes of godless arbitrariness, Christianity has summoned all of us, the young and the old, the healthy and the sick, those highly talented and the spiritually meek to such a massive transformation of the world, in the face of which the boldest of dreams for a revolutionary reconstruction of human life will be turned to dust. And even in our day the belief that God will finally be victorious over all the 'heroes' fighting amongst themselves is not lost, with this not being as difficult as it initially appeared to be. In order not to be seduced and tempted by the omnipotence of evil one only has to understand that truth is triumphant equally there where the lie that negates it is, attempting to construct our lives according to its scheme, day by day it merely destroys it.'<sup>20</sup> Yet this requires spiritual efforts. Following the nightmare of Stalinism Russia gave birth to not merely one genius who attempted to drag their country towards the light. The great physicist Andrei Sakharov repented, having become an unshakeable fighter with the totalitarian regime, while he the clergyman Father Alexander Men overcame the servile Christianity in Russia. God was to become for a few the orientation of life itself. As the great Russian bard Vladimir Vysotskii sang: 'I have something to sing about in performing before the Almighty,/ I have something to justify myself before Him.' The chosen were always only a few. But it is they who bring the light into the world.

<sup>19</sup> Evgeniy Zamyatin, *YA boyus'. Literaturnaya kritika. Publitsistika. Vospominaniya*, (Moscow: Naslediye, 1999), p. 53.

<sup>20</sup> Fyodor Avgustovich Stepun, *Byvsheye i nesbyvsheyesya*, (Sankt Petersburg: Aleteyya, 2000), p. 292-293.

## REVOLUTION AND TRADITION

By **MARCIN KRÓL**

*The paper examines mutual connections between revolution, radical change and tradition. Historical points of reference for this analysis are French Revolution and Bolshevik Revolution. The author claim that however revolutions fail in terms of its intended goals, they in fact make the radical social change possible. Tradition is an important condition of lasting character of this changes. The Author conclusion is that there are two prevailing forces of social and political history: revolution and tradition and contrary to the prevailing opinion, in longer periods of time they can not only coexist but also, by mutual provocation, become stronger and more effective.*

Key words: revolution, tradition, social change

### REVOLUTION AND RADICAL CHANGE

Everything changes. Change occurs at the moment when I am writing these words. What is the difference between this kind of change and radical change? There are no clear boundaries. Without revolution we often neglect changes that are radical from social or political point of view, such as, for example, vanishing of the peasantry in the twentieth century (not in Poland). Therefore radical change can happen without revolution, but revolution cannot be successful without radical change. It creates some problems. The most important question is the following: are revolutions inevitable and even welcome if we think that in certain circumstances radical change is necessary? Radical change that we can feel, observe, apply, and be happy with. In other words, if we feel that radical change is needed, do we try to inspire, provoke, or perhaps only suggest a revolution?

To answer this question, which is – in my opinion – a really pertinent one, we have to look back and see how it was in the case of two great revolutions – the French and the Soviet. The need for change and the expectation of change preceded the outburst of both revolutions. In France in the 70s and 80s of the eighteenth century, practically every aspect of common life is wrong: politics, economy and social system, which is rigid and closed. Additionally, government is stupid enough to decide to ask citizens what is wrong (*Cahiers de doléances*). Everybody expects change but nobody knows where the change is coming from and how to make a change. The Bastille event is totally unprepared and its consequences are unpredicted. In the past it would have been just another revolt. But now it is the beginning of a revolution. Why? It is totally unclear. There is no known connection between the revolted *populace* of Paris and reasonable demands of

a constitutional monarchy. And when a constitutional monarchy is soon established, the demand for change is not diminished. It is fascinating to observe how new answers to the demands for change produce new solutions, which in their turn produce new demands, etc. It is impossible to establish, to define what was the final aim of this change. When in 1794-1795 Robespierre tries to stabilize the state and establish central institutions that are supposed to complete the new order and, at the same time, to mark the end of the Revolution, his fate is obvious – he has to leave. He is decapitated. Napoleon Bonaparte – if we limit our description to the problems of the state – fulfils the same idea that Robespierre wanted to implement. He builds a new state but he destroys the Revolution – something that Robespierre was not willing and not able to do. The need for change lasted only ten years and produced something very different from the initial, vague intentions.

In the case of the Soviet Revolution, no matter how different it was, the development of the very idea of change and the outcome are, in a way, similar. The state, economy, and society are in turmoil. Everything needs to be changed and the people – those who can read and write and those who cannot – expect a change. While they expect a change, only one thing is clear: the Tsarist regime must end. Many descriptions, diaries, memoirs, and letters of the era provide mixed evidence. The idea of a constitutional and democratic regime is supported by those few who have a clear project, yet it does not have enough support from the many who have no clear project. The very day of the Soviet Revolution is similar to the attack on Bastille. The soldiers and the mob that take over the Winter Palace do not imagine they are starting a revolution. This unimportant event was cunningly used by Lenin as the basis for the building of a new revolutionary state. The difference is in experience. Lenin knew that he had to start from building the state and then proceed to make changes; Robespierre found this out too late. But Lenin, although he had a kind of project (the Marxist project of revolution was very vague), initially did not understand the need for change. From what we know about the mood and the debates in the revolutionary councils in the army and in the towns and villages, the idea of change took very disperse and unclear shape – from the new coming of a new, popular tsar, to the reign of all and no reign at all. It was, by the way, one of the successful periods of anarchist projects. Lenin, once he understood the situation, immediately introduced institutions (secret police) that helped him build the state. So the question that we do not have an answer to is the following: revolution first or change first and then the revolutionary state?

## **THE NEW BEGINNING AND BREAKING WITH TRADITION**

Every change means that something new is coming, yet the question is: how new? In hindsight we realize that changing everything is impossible. Some changes are lasting and perceived by societies as changes, some are so quickly integrated into the former system that people soon forget that something changed or that there once was

an intention to change. The revolution of 1968 in the West and the United States is a very good example of an effort to change that was either quickly forgotten or adapted to the system. It does not mark a beginning of a new historical period. That is so even though it was a clear signal of the forthcoming change.

Revolutionaries in France and in Russia understood that making change was not enough, that there was a strong need for demonstrating to the society that change had been made or was in the making. New calendars are the best symbols and manifestations of this kind of political thinking. It is of no importance that the Soviet new calendar was never practically accepted and finally was revoked. A revolution must bring about a new beginning, it must create everything anew. That is the theory. During the French revolution, after the regicide, efforts were undertaken to create a new past. French history was put aside – Athens, and later Sparta, were supposed to be the only predecessors. However, this new historical politics was unpopular; the new beginning took a different shape. With the emergence of hundreds of thousands of new people, new citizens, the new beginning was situated in the present time, in new ways of acting, communicating, welcoming each other, judging, killing, and fighting. While the new past never became popular, the new present dominated every public event. Therefore, we can say that the French Revolution had no past and no future, but lived in the present time. It was a fantastic occasion for the appearance of new people. Immense social change produced all kinds of sly manipulators from all social strata. Marat was a lump, Desmoulins was a known journalist, Saint-Just came from a local aristocracy. The next wave – the Thermidorians who were all thieves and manipulators – proved corrupted to the core. That was the new beginning. The rule of chaos was inevitable because of the lack of any political or social purposes. From this point of view, historians are right when they argue that Napoleon saved the Revolution from itself, although he used – fully consciously – some of the most corrupted former leaders, most notably – Fouché.

Lenin and later Stalin quite seriously promoted the idea of the 'New Soviet Man'. Although historians are still debating whether Soviet Russia was some form of the continuation of the Tsarist regime or something totally new, it was obviously new. There were philosophical arguments for the new beginning, for the creation of a new human being. If we treat seriously the Marxist utopia as a project of communism, then we must admit that the idea of a free, authentic human being that is endowed with all possible abilities was a philosophical background of the new beginning. For example, in the new world, free from the capitalist pressure, in fact free from any pressure whatsoever, everybody was supposed to be able to sing, paint, etc. In my first year of primary school I happened to be an unhappy victim of these singing experiments.

But there remains an important question to ask: do these Soviet experiments or the French reduction of everything to the present time mean that the thread of tradition had been broken? This is the famous opinion of Hannah Arendt. Although the writings of Arendt have been extremely important for the intellectual development of many of

us, I tend to disagree with the author. A radical change, including revolution, does not annihilate tradition. Of course, it may seem so from the point of view of its participants, but afterwards we see that, first, the tradition of high culture survived even in Soviet Russia and, second, something contradictory happened. Revolutions as a rule help to resuscitate tradition. What Edmund Burke called pre-sentiments and pre-judgments defining our social life are questioned and we have to rethink their uses and abuses, recreating the tradition. That is why Martin Malia suggested that revolutions are 'history locomotives'. Questioning a tradition, which can never be complete, serves this tradition. The fear, shared by the reactionary conservatives of the first half of the nineteenth century that revolution is going to change former ways of life is reasonable, but we, members of Western society, cannot live conserving only the former ways of life. So, to stress it once more, revolutions did not kill tradition, tradition can be annihilated only by a combination of masses, mediocrity, and stupidity. Whatever we think about the revolutionaries, they were neither mediocre nor stupid.

## **REVOLUTION, SOCIAL CHANGE, TOTALITARIANISM, AND THE FUTURE**

There is a widespread opinion that revolutions may lead to a totalitarian regime. The famous book by Jacob Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (1986) influenced many researchers. Talmon looks at the past and finds powerful sources of totalitarian democracy in Rousseau and the French Revolution – a highly debatable idea that I strongly oppose. In my opinion, the notion of 'totalitarian democracy' is nonsense, and Rousseau's idea of democracy was a founding idea of substantive democracy (as opposed to procedural democracy). It had no influence on people's consciousness during the French Revolution and the fact that the name of Rousseau was often evoked at that time does not mean that Rousseau's *The Social Contract* was read or understood.

Secondly, the French Revolution was not totalitarian. There were very despotic periods and cruel decisions were taken but they had nothing to do with totalitarianism. Totalitarian regimes were and are possible only when the means of mass communication are controlled by governments. It makes no sense to mix up despotic and authoritarian regime with totalitarian ones. Totalitarianism is above all an ambition to control the minds of all people. In this context Orwell's *1984* presented a reality more totalitarian than has ever been implemented, because neither the Soviets nor the Nazis were able to gain full control of the minds of their people.

It is true that there are certain similarities between revolution and a totalitarian system. Both the idea of a new beginning and the idea of people as a whole while individuals are considered unimportant, constituted the background of all revolutions. But if we choose to understand these ideas as pre-totalitarian, then we have to agree that there is a tight connection between revolution and a totalitarian order. This is a radically

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conservative idea, constructed to convey the view that all revolutions are dangerous for mankind.

Let us come back, secondly, to the purpose and nature of change, or, more specifically, of radical change that has to occur from time to time in human history. Of course, there have been efforts to reject change and we happen to live in an era when such efforts are being undertaken with a lot of determination. We are supposed to think that the world in which we are living is the best of possible worlds and, consequently, small changes and corrections will do. The future is contained in the present. No ideas, ideologies, visions, or utopias are acceptable. The fear of revolution is based on – understandably – the fear of totalitarianism. This is not only a mistake; this is a very dangerous limitation not only of acting but also of thinking.

The shadow of the French Revolution proved to be powerful and lasting. For some historians (François Furet) it lasted till the mid-twentieth century. The shadow of the two totalitarianisms is persistent too. We still live in a state of fear. But the more we reject any kind of revolution, the more unprepared we are for the revolutionary outburst that is going to happen later or – rather – sooner. The ground for such an outburst is already prepared. We, in the West, accept some mistaken notions about reality. We accept them often silently, but we still do. There is no basis for the very popular idea that the thread of tradition is broken. It seems that those who treat the atrocities of the World War II, Holocaust and Gulag as if they represented breaking with tradition, try to avoid taking responsibility for the past. The debate concerning the sources of totalitarianism, the question whether it was a legitimate child of European culture or only its bastard, is an evidence of the above mentioned fear. There is only one responsible answer: it was a fully legitimate child. The support for both totalitarian regimes – no matter how different they were – was immense.

Recently the shadow of the 30s and 40s of the twentieth century seems to disappear. Consequently, the idea of change, of radical change, becomes popular again. Until now this idea has not taken any particular shape, be it on the level of words and notions. It is clearly chaotic and not well understood even by its followers. But it is there. The first question that we should ask is – why? On the basis of so many analyses of the former revolutions as radical changes we can formulate a weak diagnosis. There is something wrong with the present state of social structure. There is an overwhelming feeling that the roads to politics are closed or that politics itself became so closed in its circle that we are unable to do anything. We are supposed to vote from time to time and that is all. There is a widespread feeling that we are not represented. The glorious idea of representation has reached the bottom. We can go on and talk about the destruction of political parties, about political lying etc., but what we really want is to change it all.

At the same time, as the thread of tradition is not broken, we would like to have some kind of democracy. Current antidemocratic movements and antidemocratic thinking are only marginal. What we should be afraid of are not the outspoken enemies of

democracy, but rather the signs of revolt from within democracy; or, perhaps not afraid, but happy and pleased. Finally somebody says that all this is unacceptable. But due to the two shadows: that of revolution and that of totalitarianism, Europe will try, for as long as possible, to outlaw revolution.

These mistakes have their roots in the wrong understanding of the past. Radical change took place more often than we can remember or imagine. Sometimes it lasted very shortly, sometimes it took several decades. Sometimes its results were immediate, sometimes slow. Let us think about the revolutions of 1848. All of them apparently failed, all were either physically defeated or simply lost their impetus. But historians (Eric Hobsbawm) can see now how important 1848 was. It produced a radical change consisting of an enormous victory of the bourgeois. It constituted the real end of the aristocratic age and the arrival of a new age of capitalism and capitalist society.

Similar impact had the revolution of 1905. It was also quickly stopped by force and we do not even remember the names of its leaders. It was a high point in the socialist debate concerning the way of achieving socialist goals: by force or via parliament. But it changed the moral and spiritual atmosphere in Russia and – probably – without other hindrances would have ended in creating constitutional democracy in this country. Revolution failed, as did all of them, but its long-lasting outcome was very important.

These two examples show that although revolutions always finally fail to produce what was intended, they – with very few exceptions – make radical change possible. To conclude: there are two prevailing forces of social and political history: revolution and tradition. I would like to stress that, contrary to the prevailing opinion, in longer periods of time they can not only coexist but also, by mutual provocation, become stronger and more effective.



## **ANATOMY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND THE ILLUSIONS OF BREAKING WITH THE PAST. TRADITIONALIST CRITICISM OF PITIRIM SOROKIN**

By **MAREK JEDLIŃSKI**

*The article takes up the critical analysis of the Russian revolution carried out by Pitirim Sorokin, a Russian-American sociologist and thinker. From the perspective of a traditionalist ideological position and based on the observation of the events of 1917, he reconstructed an anatomy of the revolution, which mainly exploded within the scope of sensual culture. He paid particular attention to the illusions created by the revolutionaries. The author warned against the deception of the leaders of the revolt and their promises to make progress in all areas of life. The consequence of the revolutionary break with tradition included moral depravity, the collapse of the economy and state structures. According to Sorokin, this proved the illusory nature of a project to break with the past.*

Key words: Sorokin, traditionalism, revolution, Russia, Bolsheviks

The article presents a critical evaluation of the revolution, made by one of the representatives of traditionalist thought: the Russian-American sociologist and philosopher Pitirim Alexandrovich Sorokin.<sup>1</sup> The events of 1917-1923, which took place in Bolshevik Russia, gave rise to Sorokin's reconstruction of an anatomy of a typical revolution. His reflections are cognitively rich, because they are the result of an eye-to-face confrontation with turbulent historical changes. In the introduction to the monumental 'Sociology of Revolution' (1925) the author said: 'For five years the author of this book has lived in the circle of the Russian Revolution. Day after day during this time he has watched it. This book is a result of this observation.'<sup>2</sup> In a slightly earlier published book 'Современное состояние России' (1922) he described the experience of the Russians in the following words: 'During the period of eight years we did not live, but we threw ourselves in unrestrained fever, lost ourselves in great drunkenness, burned with wild lechery.'<sup>3</sup> A characteristic feature for Sorokin was going beyond the sociological paradigm, making historiosophic reflections,

<sup>1</sup> This article were published (in a slightly reworded form): *Filosoficheskiye pis'ma. Russko-evropeyskiy dialog*, 2/2019, p. 36-47.

<sup>2</sup> Pitirim A. Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, (Philadelphia-London: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1925), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, (Praga, 1922), p. 3.

applying value judgments, which led to a negative expression of the revolution: 'For five years I was in its element, for five years I looked exactly in its ... Having seen them, I recognized the faces of the past «deep» revolutions. I understood one thing: it is the face of the beast, not the superman, Antichrist, not God, the vampire, not the liberator...'<sup>4</sup>

## **PENETRATING THE TISSUE OF THE REVOLUTION**

Sorokin was not only an observer of events, but he also interpreted them. He had a well-grounded and emotionally advanced position – uncompromisingly critical of all revolutions, not only the one in Russia. The author expressed the conviction that an expert on revolutions cannot be a dispassionate witness of events, even if equipped with the most perfect research instruments. Nor will historians working on the most reliable sources become an expert as they focus on the analysis of the revolution solely as a phenomenon or a historical event, and are located as somewhat outside it. In order to understand the mechanisms of its functioning and the motivation of revolutionaries, one must be inside it. One should empathize with its atmosphere, observe the moods and statements of its participants and have the ability to understand the mental changes that trigger it and those that are its consequence. Only then can the researcher realize that this is not just one of many accidental historical events, but a real change in the life and way of thinking of the masses.

Every revolution is such a breakthrough phenomenon, extreme, demolishing the current image of the world and the sphere of respected values, that one cannot limit oneself to a simple analysis of facts. Also due to its totality, one should not be indifferent to it – moreover, its global dimension drags nearly everyone into the whirlwind of the events. The standpoint of an impartial observer, a non-involved researcher, seems in this case completely inadequate, and even harmful – or so Sorokin concluded. The science representative faces a dilemma of accepting or rejecting the project of destroying the existing culture. Over time, the revolution embraces all areas of life – including science. In this context, Sorokin did not conceal that he set a specific task for himself, related to the

<sup>4</sup> Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 106.

In the book 'Sociology of Revolutions' the author alternately quotes specific statistical data, providing it with expressive comments. Making a historical analysis and describing the results of individual revolutions, he noted: 'The practical deduction of all that has been said above is, that he who desires the extermination of his people, the decrease of the birth rate, the deterioration of the racial fund of the nation, the destruction of its noblest elements, the degradation of the survivors, plague, cholera, typhus, syphilis, psychical illnesses, should prepare a violent revolution and render it deep-rooted and widespread. It is one of the best ways to achieve the abovementioned effects. Those who do not desire them can uphold reforms, not bloodthirsty revolutions.' (Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 228).

defense of the values he shared and that his research was guided by a specific intention: to expose the false premises of illusionist arguments that the pathological phenomena of a particular revolution never scarify the purity of the revolutionary idea itself.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the idea itself contains the element of the total destruction of tradition, cultural heritage, the entire existing world, one built with difficulties by previous generations.

The conviction as to the destructive influence of the revolution will be repeatedly expressed by Sorokin in a very expressive way. On the one hand, the author of 'Sociology of the Revolution' could be accused of axiological entanglement and ideological bias, manifested in the narrative style. On the other hand, one should ask whether, as representatives of a completely different era, enriched with historical knowledge, we have the right to speak on this subject, from the perspective of a safe and comfortable time gap separating us from the said ferment, and whether we are in any way entitled to nonchalantly deprecate the testimonies of those who participated in the events of the time.

## **INHERITED TRADITIONALISM**

While discussing Sorokin's scientific concepts, in order to understand the background of his expressive opinions, it is necessary to take into account the impact of his life experiences and the cultural environment (respected ideas) in which he grew up and what he subsequently inherited. Although the phenomenon of overlapping correspondence between professed values and the conclusions drawn in academic work is well known and concerns almost all researchers, in the case of Sorokin the degree of involvement of the axiological academic achievements was extremely visible and even glaring. Sorokin was a colorful biographer: he was brought up in a spirit of fervent Orthodoxy, he became a revolutionary (SR), he was repeatedly imprisoned after 1905, eventually he was promoted to a post (secretary) in Kerensky's government, and after its fall, the Bolsheviks sentenced him to execution; he waited in the cell for the execution for six weeks, which he eventually avoided after submitting his self-criticism. He devoted the rest of his life to academic work.<sup>6</sup> In 1922, the Bolsheviks sent him to the West<sup>7</sup> where he worked at Harvard since 1930 until he retired.

Sorokin wrote in his autobiography that he came from lands (a small village in the Vologda Guberniya), which was dominated by community thinking, traditional morality,

<sup>5</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> See: Pitirim A. Sorokin, 'Sociology of my Mental Life,' in *Pitirim A. Sorokin in Review*, ed. Philip J. Allen, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1963), p. 3-30; cf. Barry V. Johnston, *Pitirim A. Sorokin. An Intellectual Biography*, Lawrence, (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Jerome Davis, *The Russian Immigrant*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), p. 172-173.

based on Orthodoxy, one shaped over the centuries and the principle of mutual help between members of agrarian communities.<sup>8</sup> He quickly lost the youthful fervor of radical redevelopment of the existing cultural order – his activities in the Socialist Revolutionary Party remained but an episode against the background of Sorokin's whole life.<sup>9</sup> However, for a long time, observing the bloody course of the civil war of 1917-1923, experiencing wandering, and then working academically, he shaped his worldview, which should be called traditionalist.<sup>10</sup> He expressed it fully in a book with the eloquent title *The Crisis of Our Age* (1941), thus joining the ideological current initiated by the French contestants of the French Revolution (such as de Maistre and de Chateaubriand).

### **TRADITIONALIST RETURN TO THE PAST – PROGRAMMATIC ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY**

The overriding slogan which united traditionally-minded thinkers (not forming any school) was the crisis of European culture. Traditionalists did not agree with its current state, rebelled against the present time, intentionally turning to the past, and even demanding the return of the past (among other things, this postulate differed from the conservatives).<sup>11</sup> They believed that man would never find the sense and purpose

<sup>8</sup> See: Pitirim Sorokin, *Dal'nnyaya doroga. Avtobiografiya*, trans. A. V. Lipski, (Moscow: Moskovskiy rabochiy - TERRA, 1992), p. 15, 17.

<sup>9</sup> He did not fail to emphasize that his critical evaluation of the revolution did not result from a failure to lose privileges or assets. On the contrary: he came from the layer of the exploited people (peasantry) and lived in poverty. The course of the revolution made him aware of the fact that its victims were the masses of workers and peasants. See: Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 106.

<sup>10</sup> Maria Wodzyńska-Walicka described Sorokin as the epigone of the Slavophile school, or a retrospective utopist, mentally stuck in the nineteenth century. See: Maria Wodzyńska-Walicka, 'Spóźniony słowianofil. Pitirima Sorokina filozofia kultury', *Archiwum Historii Filozofii i Myśli Społecznej*, 27/1981, p. 162.

<sup>11</sup> Arnold Toynbee, described a man who wants to revive past times, is nostalgic and is dissatisfied with the present world, noticing the constant crisis in it, as an archaist. This characteristic could also refer to a traditionalist (see Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, vol. VI, [Oxford University Press, 1956], p. 49-59, 94-97). In this context, Karl Mannheim made an interesting distinction between conservatism and traditionalism, assuming that traditionalism is a life attitude (in contrast to politically understood conservatism) and a general tendency to stick to the patterns of old, proven, vegetative ways of life, perceived as universal values. His 'instinctive' form can be treated as an initial reaction to the introduced changes, all reform initiatives. The conservative can accept the present world and introduced changes under certain conditions, the traditionalist's response to the applied novelties will be violent and contesting in principle; he will demand the restoration of the past, even from the distant past. Cf. Karl Mannheim, 'Conservative Thought', in *From Karl Mannheim*, ed. K. H. Wolff, (New Brunswick-London: Transaction Publishers, 1993), p. 280-285.

of his own existence in himself, in his temporally limited being and the still-elimination of the present; this sense transcends it, it is embedded in the past, of which religious tradition is an important part. As René Guénon the French traditionalist of the interwar period remarked, this is a mental movement characterized by consistent anti-modernity.<sup>12</sup> Traditionalist philosophers in the era of European modernism, whose beginning dates back to the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries, recognized destructive skepticism, a sense of being lost and a desire to make constant changes. Meanwhile, the sense of certainty can only originate from something that is permanent, repetitive and which was initiated in ancient times. They warned against a revolutionary, unknown idea and blind belief in the progress of *ad infinitum*. They expressed their opposition to the domination of matter over the spirit, capitalist calculation and technology over the ancient rhythm of life organized through the cultivation of land. They claimed that man should be spiritual, live in accordance with tradition, close to God and in a community. The crisis of European culture was compounded by the increase of human pride, lack of humility and naive faith in the possibilities of human reason, which led to rebellion against the authority sanctioned by the past and community thinking. Traditionalists, such as Guénon in the book *La Crise du Monde moderne*, recognized Cartesianism in the area of philosophy as the symbolic embodiment and the cumulating of these negative tendencies, which consisted in an excess of individualism.<sup>13</sup> His assumptions were in harmony with the religious ferment caused by the Reformation, which then involved the masses, ultimately resulting in social revolutions. From now on, the elites and masses in Western Europe would co-cultivate visions of the reconstruction of the world (including communism), succumbing to a sense of some lack and unrestrained desire to destroy what they find.

## DISOBEDIENCE REFLEX IN SENSUAL CULTURE

Pitirim Sorokin shared the diagnosis made by traditionalist thinkers: the West is in a state of deepening crisis, which is manifested by revolutions.<sup>14</sup> His work would be ordered by the conviction that the greatest increase in history in revolutionary moods in Europe had occurred only at the moment of a total departure from the prior ideational culture and the transition to sensual culture (this took place in the modernism period, reaching its apogee with the outbreak of the French Revolution).<sup>15</sup> According to the

<sup>12</sup> See: René Guénon, *Le règne de la quantité et les signes des temps*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. 284-285.

<sup>13</sup> See: René Guénon, *La Crise du Monde moderne*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1956), p. 70-71.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Marek Jedliński, 'Wokół kryzysu kultury europejskiej i jej przeobrażeń historycznych (myśl Pitirima Sorokina)', *Sensus historiae*, 4/2016, p. 51-62.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, vol. III, (New York: American Book Company, 1937), p. 535-536.

author, the history of the world was shaped by these two main types of cultural systems.<sup>16</sup> Representatives of ideational culture perceive reality in a non-sensual (and immaterial) way: what really exists is absolute and immutable, while goals and needs have a spiritual dimension. The representatives of sensual culture recognize as really existing everything they experience with the help of the senses; what really exists is variable and is subject to constant transformations: however, goals and needs are limited to the visible world.<sup>17</sup>

Sorokin, in describing the mechanism of the revolution, often used a rather peculiar methodology, by means of which he tried to show an analogy between cultural (social) transformations and natural phenomena. Biological reductionism appeared in the use of terms such as reflex (reaction) or instinct. The author himself made it quite clear that he was looking for inspiration outside of the humanities, being impressed by the achievements of Russian biologists or medics such as Ivan Pavlov and Vladimir Bekhterev. It should be noted that the terminology used, and through which he described the revolutions, was to explicitly emphasize their sensual character, resulting from the rejection of tradition (mainly the religious), and stressing the spiritual dimension of man. Revolts erupted primarily within the limits of sensory culture – in ideational culture they happened very seldom and had limited range. This did not mean that people of the Middle Ages had no reason for rebellion. Nevertheless, the power relations and status of the hierarchy resulting from tradition were not questioned by them – for fear of the punishment that a supernatural being could have imposed. Only the emancipation of reason and secularization, meaning a moving away from the ideational culture, led to a kind of inflation of the disobedience shown to authority and a contesting of the hierarchical order sanctified by tradition – especially during revolutionary ferment.

Sorokin emphasized that the described phenomenon (called by the researcher the fading of the reflex of obedience) was each time intensified shortly before the outbreak of a revolution: 'As a rule the extinction of the reflexes of subordination begins prior to revolution.'<sup>18</sup> However, already in the course of the revolutionary conflagration, the disappearance of obedience is progressing at a staggering pace – then the edifice of traditional order and hierarchy, erected over the centuries, may be scattered in just a few days. This was shown by events in Russia, when authority suddenly lost its significance: 'The Czar is overthrown. In Russia all other authorities enjoyed but a reflected light; the masses acquired reflexes of subordination to them only as a result of subordination of the Czar. These belonged to a first-rate category of reflexes; the others only to second- and third-rate categories engrafted on the reflexes of subordination to imperial authority.

<sup>16</sup> The author also mentioned the intermediate, idealistic type, possessing both ideological as well as sensual features.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Pitirim Sorokin, *The Crisis of Our Age. The Social and Cultural Outlook*, (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1941), p. 19-20, 80-132, 298-308.

<sup>18</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 119.

The annihilation of these was the destruction of the foundation of the complex structure of the reflexes of subordination. Naturally all other authorities would be engulfed in its downfall, and such was the case. After the reflexes of subordination to the Czar were extinguished those of his agents followed suit: the reflexes of subordination of soldiers to officers and generals; workmen to directors of factories and other enterprises; of peasants to landowners to nobles to representatives of city and «Zemsky» self-government; of all subordinates to everybody in authority.<sup>19</sup>

The disobedience of the masses and all destructive activities were suppressed in ideological culture by orders and prohibitions formulated within the transmission of generations – traditions (such was the function of the social regulator, by e.g., the Decalogue). It was cultivated by the community, thus guaranteeing a historical increase in value. The author emphasized that in the ideational culture, higher human spiritual needs were elevated to the pedestal, minimizing those resulting from its natural constitution. Meanwhile, sensual culture allowed for the absolutization of material needs, reducing the human to the ‘function of the stomach’. This implied an increase in expectations and claims. A man without fear of the invisible instance wanted to fight for his own particular interest.

## UNIVERSAL REASONS FOR REVOLUTION

Sorokin, regardless of his axiological involvement, did not forget about the important reasons for the revolution, ones resulting from unfulfilled goals and life needs. As early as in ancient times, had Aristotle in *Politics* explained that rebellion is caused primarily by the hungry masses. In Sorokin’s language, it would simply be the inability to satisfy the superior instinct, that is, the survival of the species through food. In this example, it is easy to recognize the following regularity: ‘In analyzing the causes of revolution it is best to begin with those causes which produce the revolutionary perversion of the behavior of individuals.’<sup>20</sup> Rebellions as a result of hunger even occurred in the Middle Ages, i.e., in a dominant ideational culture. Another important cause of the revolt may refer to a failed war, exhausting material resources. Both circumstances – hunger and unsuccessful war – existed in Russia.<sup>21</sup> The wartime devastation of the economy and the drastic reduction of the standard of living are not a sufficient reason for the outbreak of internal unrest. The masses are able to bear enormous costs, provided that the war turns out to be victorious and they will have a sense of pride. The disaster is caused by a destructive armed conflict,

<sup>19</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 121-122.

<sup>20</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 367.

<sup>21</sup> See: Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 376-377; Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 43-44.

additionally humiliating the ruled and above all the masses. A man also retains his dignity, possessing something material – therefore, the important reason for the revolt is taking away property and depriving people of the right to possess (Bolshevik policy). Conditions for a violent eruption of social anger also create a growing stratification of material resources: when the rich become even richer and the poor even poorer. At the same time, Sorokin emphasized, citing numerous examples from history, that the violation of the traditional hierarchical order by the masses was often culpable by the aristocracy itself (the ruling classes) – alienated, sluggish, ideologically inertial. The image of the pre-revolutionary elite is sometimes alarming: 'Pre-revolutionary epochs literally strike the observer by the incapacity of the authorities and the degeneracy of the ruling privileged classes.'<sup>22</sup> The rulers usually suffer an atrophy of the will – confronted then with the vitality of the masses, they cannot prevent revolutions.

## ILLUSION OF PROGRESS

The author made a positive valorization of ideational culture, assuming that only within its framework can a man achieve the fullness of humanity, understood by Sorokin in spiritual terms. In this sense, sensual culture appeared in his eyes as a regression. Revolutions within this culture are massive and violent – spontaneous.<sup>23</sup> They lead to the involution of the mental abilities of the population and its reduction to the level of creatures guided exclusively by biological needs, caused by collective reflexes (nervous system stimulation). That is why people return to magic then; critical thinking disappears. Instead of creativity (culture), imitation (nature) begins to dominate.<sup>24</sup> There is, therefore, a rejection of not only ideational culture, but even culture as such.<sup>25</sup> A man becomes a prisoner of nature again – that is why the revolution (especially in the first stage) does not bring freedom but pushes man back to the world of necessity. This is its great illusion. It ruins the institutions which are the brakes of human passions: '[...] the revolutionary perversion consists in the biologization of the behavior of the multitude, as a result of this extinction.'<sup>26</sup>

According to Sorokin-the traditionalist, the fraud of the revolution lies in the naive belief in the self-esteem of man and the conviction that liberation from the power of religion will bring about a rapid and independent moral improvement. In this context, according to the author, the Bolshevik struggle against tradition and religion was a continuation of the negative tendencies initiated by the intelligentsia in the pre-revolutionary period:

<sup>22</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 399.

<sup>23</sup> See: Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 32-33.

<sup>24</sup> See: Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 170-176.

<sup>25</sup> See: Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 60.

<sup>26</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 35.



a long-lasting process of atheism, even among workers and peasants, was the result of the influence of the Enlightenment currents on the Russian higher classes. Then the intensification of the fight against religion after 1917 led to a historically unprecedented moral deprivation of many layers of society. Sorokin, as a traditionalist, believed that the healing of the situation could only take place by returning to the former moral order: 'The more powerful the destructive-biological and bestial role of the revolution is, the stronger the antidote should be applied in the form of religion.'<sup>27</sup>

### **DEPRAVITY AND REVOLUTIONARY FRAUD**

According to the author, historical analysis shows that the destruction of an order sanctioned by religion brings with it the most moral depravity of all: 'These facts show clearly how completely the restraining moral, legal, and religious habits are wiped out of human consciousness in times of revolution, and this applies not only to the makers of revolution, but to the entire community.'<sup>28</sup> Initially, there is usually a colossal increase in plunder, robbery, thievery, fraud, corruption – Russia, for example, has turned into a 'cloak of crime.'<sup>29</sup> The announced mobilization and increase in discipline or productivity is an illusion; instead, laziness flourishes – the masses pretend to work.<sup>30</sup> Every revolution, as argued by the Russian-American researcher and thinker, deems the most hideous lie, cynicism, hypocrisy as the virtue, and institutionalizes the gap between word and deed. It acts mesmerizingly on its followers, deludes the naive actors and extras of the tragedy of the revolution with catchy slogans, rewarding and advancing the worst of the people, revealing the worst tendencies: 'Revolution usually leads to the development of great cupidity and rapacity. Bribery and corruption blossom as never before. There is a deluge of the basest, most selfish actions [...]. Truly enough some naive people, carried away by the flow of fine revolutionary parlance, mistake words for reality. But it has been said long ago, it is not words that matter, but acts. The deeds of the actors and understudies of the revolutionary dramatic stage are in direct opposition to their words.'<sup>31</sup> From the very first day of the explosion, the revolution creates its legend and myths, which it transmits to subsequent generations, unaware of the devastation it caused. If it were different, the revolt of 1917 would not have happened: 'History has tragically cheated the illusionist believers once more.'<sup>32</sup> According to Sorokin, every revolution is founded on

<sup>27</sup> Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 85.

<sup>28</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 145-146.

<sup>29</sup> Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 62.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 102-104.

<sup>31</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 159.

<sup>32</sup> Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 19.

a great, deceitful deception: 'The influence exercised by such Tartuffes is immense and has not been taken enough into consideration as a social factor. So was it in the past, is now, and will be in future times. Never, perhaps, is this so sharply accentuated as during revolutionary epochs. Up to a certain degree revolution can be nicknamed the «Great Tartuffe». Why so? Because no other Tartuffe claims the merit of so many virtues and no other possesses so few. No one is so ready to create false values: crime and brutality and dubbed heroic deeds; pygmies grow into giants; babblers into heroes; persons of lax morality are canonized; parasites looked upon as saviours.<sup>33</sup>

Sorokin, on the example of the civil war of 1917-23, exposed specific illusions and deceptions of the revolution, citing many figures. The Bolshevik operation resulted in large-scale wastage, degradation of arable land, industry and, as a result, at least 3 million deaths from hunger (already in the first stage of the revolution). Numerous statistical data prove that revolution does not lead to a fight against poverty: 'All these reasons are more than sufficient to explain why revolutions, especially social revolutions, lead to pauperism and famine [...]. Socialists and communists and other adherents of a hypertrophied state intervention would do well to think of this.<sup>34</sup> The despotic Soviet statism meant the exploitation of the working masses, the Bolshevik slogans of the liberation of workers and peasants were a grim joke as they quickly became victims of terror.<sup>35</sup> The entire economy and the state fell into disrepair due to the implementation of the political management principle which aimed at humiliating the old ruling class by giving (in the first stage) the helm of power to the former subordinates – after a short period, the peasants and workers were also deprived of power.<sup>36</sup> Incompetence and provisional management became a standard: 'It will be easily understood that such an absurd distribution became one of the causes of the economic and industrial disorganisation.<sup>37</sup> The revolt also concerned education: 'Good pedagogues, students, eminent professors were thrown out if they happened not to be communists, and instead of them were put «red teachers», «red students» and «red professors» who had no knowledge, no experience.<sup>38</sup>

## **CAPITULATION BEFORE TRADITION**

Sorokin, in the course of every revolution, recognized the repetitive pattern and tendencies proving that the consistency and prosperity of the revolutionary project is

<sup>33</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 360.

<sup>34</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 333.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 31.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 19-21.

<sup>37</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 273.

<sup>38</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 273-274.

illusory. The anti-traditionalist edge of the revolution is dulled by history itself. Usually in the second stage of the revolution, unexpected tendencies are revealed: 'On the other hand if during the pre-revolutionary periods, and during the first stages of revolution, the *Ancien Régime*, Religion, Church, the old aristocrats, the old social order and traditions, are abused, we can be sure to find a great liking for the pre-revolutionary *régime*, a religious revival, growing sympathy, towards all that had been mercilessly persecuted, and insulted during the first period.'<sup>39</sup> Dilemmas arise that undermine the maximalism of the revolutionary project: 'And so men are taught by inexorable teachers; hunger, cold, illness, want and death; they stand before a double dilemma: to perish and die, continuing the revolutionary debauch; or to find a new outlet.'<sup>40</sup> According to the researcher, at one point regular fatigue creeps into the world of permanent, revolutionary chaos. This is due to too much disorder. Doubts arise and the question as to whether the relics, anachronisms, old wisdoms from which they wanted to cut themselves off had only a negative role. This means undermining the dogma of the revolution: 'Now the demand for unbridled liberty is superseded by a desire of «order»; the longing for «deliverers» from the *Ancien Régime* is succeeded by a longing for «deliverers» from the revolution; or, in other words, for organizers of order.'<sup>41</sup> The Bolshevik revolution, for example, has proved that the aggressive and artificial application of change brings paradoxical reactions: the international struggle against native culture and tradition has brought an increase in nationalist moods.<sup>42</sup> Sorokin, as a traditionalist, claimed that anarchizing, destructive revolutionary freedom is in contradiction with the secretive desire of man to live in a calm and predictable world. Tradition may bring this predictability. That is why, unexpectedly, the vanguard of the revolution and the masses begin to unknowingly rebuild the institutions that they once despised, whose existence had caused rebellion.

Why is this happening? Well, no social and cultural organism, as Sorokin argued, was created by accident. It is the result of a centuries-old orientation in the world and building predictable interpersonal relationships: 'Social order is never casual, but is the result of centuries of the adjustment of humanity to its environment, and of its individual members to each other; it is the outcome of centuries of efforts, experience and strivings to achieve the best possible forms of social organization and life.'<sup>43</sup> There is no society that could break with the past without painful consequences: 'Only an ignoramus, or a man immersed in the fantasies of his own brain, can imagine that such an order, built up and existing for centuries, can present nothing but an immense nonsense, a misunderstanding,

<sup>39</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 355.

<sup>40</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 409.

<sup>41</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 409.

<sup>42</sup> See: Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 98.

<sup>43</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 410-411.

a complete mistake.<sup>44</sup> The consequences of rejecting evolutionary development and all reforms, are very costly and painful, but sometimes the consequences are needed to appreciate the past and to return to the world ordered by tradition: 'Only, if after having paid that contribution it has not perished completely, will it acquire in a certain measure the possibility to exist and live; but not by cutting itself loose from the past, not by brutal mutual struggles; but, on the contrary, by a return to most of its former foundations, institutions, traditions.'<sup>45</sup> According to the author, history mocked the communists, 'forcing them to recreate what they were destroying with their own hands.'<sup>46</sup> He believed that every revolt brings back the past, albeit in a changed form, giving the revolutionaries the illusion of a radical rebuilding or destruction. According to Sorokin, a real (consistent) revolution is illusory. It is not possible because it would mean endless changes, which cannot be carried out on a living social tissue. This Russian-American researcher and thinker believed that the course of the Bolshevik revolution and civil war was, in this context, a *classic* example of a repetitive pattern of revolt, making it an anatomical analysis of a typical revolution.

<sup>44</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 411.

<sup>45</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 413.

<sup>46</sup> Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 29. Sorokin hoped in this context for the rapid fall of the Bolsheviks. See: Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 56-57.

## THE SHOCKS OF HISTORY. THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF REVOLUTION AS EMERGING FROM LEV KARSAVIN'S VIEWS

By **LESZEK AUGUSTYN**

*The range of issues discussed in this article oscillates around the response the Russian revolution called forth in Lev Platonovich Karsavin (1882-1952), the nature of that reaction being theoretical and, of necessity, philosophical and political as well. In his writings, not only was he concerned with the outbreak and the immediate aftermath of the revolutionary turmoil, but he also remained a keen commentator on its dramatic course and the long-term repercussions. In this paper, Karsavin's reflections, whose primary goal was to fathom the nature and pinpoint the characteristic hallmarks of the Russian revolution, have additionally been re-evaluated against the broader backdrop of this Russian thinker's philosophical views, especially those that pertain to historiosophical and religio-philosophical dimensions. It must be stressed here that the employment of thus augmented analytical approach is the only way to fully appreciate Karsavin's perspective on the phenomenon of the Russian revolution, as well as its historical paths and its anticipated future ramifications.*

Key words: Lev Karsavin, Russian revolution, Eurasianism, Russian philosophy

The violent seizure of political power in Russia by the Bolshevik party could not have failed to call forth resonance amidst the current crop of Russian thinkers of that time, and even more so, given the fact that that dramatic political crescendo came to a head on the heels of a long run-up characterized by revolutionary unrest. Of course, the attitudes exhibited by those intellectuals were to a large extent inflected by the prevailing circumstances, increasing political reprisals, in particular. Par for the course, the radical and destructive character of such violently transformative developments galvanized intellectual dissent, moral outrage and a desire for counteraction. In time, the authorities chose to crack down on the particularly vocal, and henceforth inconvenient segment of the Russian intelligentsia, religious philosophers included. Such citizens were subjected to persecution and exiled outside the borders of the Bolshevik Russia, with such a forced mass exodus taking place in 1922. One of the exiles leaving the homeland was Lev Platonovitch Karsavin (1882-1952) – a distinguished medievalist, historian of philosophy, culture philosopher and a religious thinker. He had hitherto been active exclusively in academia and in the field of intellectual commentatorship, but some time following his forcible expatriation, his activity became visibly politicized. It is arguable that the stimulus for, and inception of his interest in current affairs could be attributed to his subsequent

exposure to Eurasian concepts, which, for a stretch of time, profoundly preoccupied his mind. That new intellectual enthusiasm led him to work on philosophical underpinnings for the Eurasian ideas; he was also impelled to elaborate the still disputed scope of the new discipline. Thus, the revolutionary transformations in Russia and the attendant concerns about the future of his homeland thrust upon him the need for taking a politically involved stand.

To address the issue of transparency, it merits a note here that both the concept of the 'phenomenology of revolution' and the exact wording of this designation, used in the subtitle of this paper have been sourced from the nomenclature proposed by this Russian thinker. In 1927, Karsavin published an extensive article bearing this very title.<sup>1</sup> Henceforth, assisted by the presence of the Russian thinker, we are well equipped to pit ourselves against the phenomenon of revolution as such, as well as trying to fathom 'the phenomenology of revolution.' What do these two concepts signify? What are their implications? However, before we embark upon the process of elucidation of these questions, we need to insert one caveat: notwithstanding the manifest and unquestionable merit with which we credit Karsavin's views and observations *per se*, our study is not focused on merely cataloguing them. Rather, we wish to peruse his writings with a view to extracting implicit information shedding light on the true character of the Bolshevik revolution, recounted by an eyewitness to those events keenly absorbed by this thinker's mind. Still, it almost begs the question whether the Karsavin-pioneered 'phenomenology' truly expands and enhances our perception of that revolutionary upheaval, helping us to better comprehend its unique, phenomenological parameters. We need to self-consciously bear in mind that it could very well be to the contrary: the phenomenological thinking could prove to be a distorting vantage point, begetting misunderstandings and confusion. Should the latter transpire to be the case, we will need to posit the query whether Karsavin's philosophical-political misconceptions are nonetheless redeemed by the cognitively and speculatively appealing alternative take on the reality under investigation, as well as by the practical cautionary tale reminding us of the need for further critical scrutiny and clarification.

## **1. THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF DISEASE**

A vivid resonance of the fundamental premise of Karsavin's phenomenology of revolution can be discerned in the overarching generalization that each particular revolution bears the hallmarks of revolution as such. But what is the actual referential pattern of the above formulation? Any initial attempts to address this question

<sup>1</sup> Lev Platonovitch Karsavin, 'Fenomenologia revolucii', *Evraziskii vremennik*, 5/1927, p. 28-74. When readers are in need of supplementation, useful information on this conception can be found in an article 'Osnovy politiki', featured in the same issue of *The Eurasian Chronicles*.

direct our attention to philosophy of history, whose framework and constructs should be in aid of analysing the existence of historical entities from the point of view of spatiotemporal manifestations of disintegration, which otherwise could be treated as the upshot of the dissolution of a fundamental harmonious state of unity. This perspective stands to reason, as every autonomous concrete element, albeit fragmentary, embedded in the historical process, should be understood as a reflection of the unity constituting the supreme form of pan-unity. Therefore, every individual constituent part must be recognized as a unity interactively integrated within a larger unified lattice; by extension, the impact of such lower-tier elements propagates itself to unities of higher orders, both directly and remotely. In other words, every segment is 'a unity reflecting the sum total of unities,' and on the empirical level it manifests itself in 'contracted' form. Likewise, historical time is subject to subsumption within the compass of the meta-historical overarching temporal pan-unity. By the same token, every cognitive consciousness – perceived both as a moment of pan-unity and its individual, 'contracted' counterpart – never abandons the habitat of its assigned place in terms of space and time. Hence, any random event is informed by and expressive of the meaning of the dynamic model of the historical entity, i.e. the ever-evolving historical process. (As a digression, it is worth reminding here that the idea of 'contraction' – Lat. *contractio*, Russ. *stiazhenie* – is a metaphysics-related word encountered in the literary output of Nicholas of Cusa.) On the strength of the above approach, the phenomenology of revolution contributes to the revelation of metaphysical premises, which in this case obviously pertain to Karsavin's version of the metaphysics of pan-unity. Plausibly, the metaphysics of pan-unity may constitute a springboard for the elaboration of the symphonic personality theory; at least, this is Karsavin's conviction.

Thus, in essence, revolution as such is one of the manifestations of the 'state' or the 'activity' of a symphonic personality. For the sake of academic integrity it must be underscored here that the concept of symphonic personality was significantly entwined, if temporarily, with Eurasian ideas; nonetheless, this ideology should solely be treated as a 'source of inspiration'<sup>2</sup> for the emergence of the notion of 'symphonic personality' and not as a fully-fledged implemented policy. Karsavin's reflections feature the term 'symphonic personality,' which is occasionally interchanged with 'communitarian personality.' Envisioned as one of the key instruments facilitating philosophical explorations, it was pioneered in 1927. There is patent coincidence of this date and the period in which Karsavin showed profound affinity with Eurasian ideas and became a dedicated advocate of the ideology they were spawning.<sup>3</sup> There is even much to warrant the contention that

<sup>2</sup> Roman Bäcker, *Międzywojenny eurazjatyzm. Od intelektualnej kontrakulturacji do totalitaryzmu?* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 2000), p. 100.

<sup>3</sup> The term 'communitarian' (*sobornii*) – for clarity, a nomenclatural heirloom bequeathed by A. S. Khomiakov, one of Karsavin's female-side ancestors; the range of denotations includes: the congregation of multiple elements into one, unity in multiplicity, pan-unity, concord, harmony, etc.

the impulse for the formulation of the notion of symphonic personality originated from the philosopher's exposure to Eurasianism.<sup>4</sup> However, it must be added here that the 1929 publication of Karsavin's *On personality (O ličnosti)* discharges the term of the undesirable association with the Eurasian provenance, thus allowing for the survival of its purged, strictly philosophical pertinence.<sup>5</sup> Still, from the very inception of its currency, the concept of symphonic personality was called into question by its detractors. What seemed the most indictable to it was its dubious totalitarian and impersonal profile. It may, however, have been so that this disparaging interpretation stemmed from the purely 'external,' empirical understanding of the individual-based brand of hierarchism, rather than appreciating Karsavin's unique 'dialectical' angle, prioritizing the relationship between individual parts and the integral unity, as well as between 'the higher' and 'the lower' personalities.<sup>6</sup> But even though the final settlement of this dispute is still pending, and some of the aspects of the symphonic personality theory could possibly be out of sync with the precepts of Karsavin's philosophy of personalism, they could at least lend themselves as a tool for analysing the behaviour of social units, which also includes revolutionary upheavals.<sup>7</sup> And since the phenomenon of revolution is part and parcel of this analysis, we will proceed along these lines.

In his text entitled *The Church, Personality and the State (Tserkov', ličnost' i gosudarstvo, 1927)* Karsavin pioneers and elaborates on these metaphysico-social considerations, and they represent a key element of his sensibilities.

Mediating between the unique, collective personality of the whole Church and individual personalities are personalities who unify the sundry entities, and, in the process, the unifying personalities become unities for the individuals. In

– the essence of *sobornii* is reflected by the German *symphonisch*, equivalent to English *symphonic*, cf. Lev Platonovitch Karsavin, 'Apologetičeskii etiud', in Lev Platonovitch Karsavin, *Malye sočinenia* (Saint Petersburg: AO Aleteia, 1994), p. 378.

<sup>4</sup> Yulia Bilialovna Melich, *Personalizm L. P. Karsavina i evropejskaia filosofia* (Moscow: Progress-Tradiciia, 2003), p. 217.

<sup>5</sup> Sergei Sergeevitch Khoruzhii, 'Zhyzn' i učenje Lva Karsavina', in *Lev Platonovitch Karsavin*, ed. S. S. Khoruzhii (Moscow: Rosspen, 2012), p. 57-58, 69. In the *On Personality* treatise, the holistic perspective is maintained, as the world bears out the personal dimension of its identity through humanity, with the latter representing the former's 'pan-unitarian symphonic personality' establishing 'the hierarchical unity of symphonic personalities of varied orders, individual personalities included'; cf. Lev Platonovitch Karsavin, 'O ličnosti', in Lev Platonovitch Karsavin, *Religiozno-filosofskie sočinenia*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Renessans, 1992), p. 98.

<sup>6</sup> As claimed by Igor Ivanovitch Yevlampiev, in *Istoria russkoi metafiziki v XIX-XX vekach. Russkaia filosofia v poiskach Absoluta*, volume 2 (Saint Petersburg: Aleteia, 2000), p. 196.

<sup>7</sup> Sergei Sergeevitch Khoruzhii, *Filosofia Karsavina v sud'bach evropeiskoi mysli o ličnosti*, in *Lev Platonovitch Karsavin*, p. 213.



order to differentiate between individual personalities, the unique, collective all-encompassing personality of the Church, and the unifying agents, the last group is referred to as communitarian or symphonic personalities.<sup>8</sup>

It is worth emphasizing here that excerpts from *The Phenomenology of Revolution* are characterised by a heightened level of specificity in the author's speculations, narrowing the focus down to the realm of politics:

From an empirical standpoint, a symphonic personality externalizes itself through various qualitative profiles [Russ. *kačestvovania*], demonstrating varying levels of intensity and bias, be it political, economic, religious or otherwise. As regards methodological aspects, it is imperative that the analytical point of departure zoom in on the qualification dominating in a particular stage of development. In the case of a revolutionary period, what attains the most pronounced qualitative prominence is the political dimension, as matters concerning politics bear on the unity most profoundly.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, when it comes to the marrow of history – conceived as both our reflections on the vicissitudes of life and as its structured exploration within the organized framework of the relevant academic discipline – it derives its salience from personality. We need to be mindful of the distinction into individual personalities and their symphonic counterparts. As regards our research objectives, the latter types of personality are exemplified most interestingly by the phenomena of nation and culture. And a symphonic personality can be defined as '[...] a system of interconnecting transactions between individuals effectively giving rise to a particular symphonic identity; it is a system that is vividly and cogently expressive of the individuals' cohesion, affording this group a profile of union impossible to replicate among other analogous associations (other «nations» or other «cultures»).' <sup>10</sup> Henceforth, in this very understanding, a symphonic personality is 'superior' to an individual personality.

Symphonic personalities *per se*, along with the systems channelling them, surpass both temporally and spatially empirical, individual personalities. The empirical actualization of each symphonic personality invariably incorporates both its past, in the form of tradition, and its future signified by aspirations, hopes and ambitions. Yet the full breadth and depth of a symphonic personality, its very symphonic scope or collectiveness, transcends empirical expression.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Lev Platonovitch Karsavin, 'Tserkov, ličnost' i gosudarstvo', in Karsavin, *Malye sočinenia*, p. 419.

<sup>9</sup> Karsavin, 'Fenomenologia revolucii', p. 33.

<sup>10</sup> Karsavin, 'Fenomenologia revolucii', p. 34.

<sup>11</sup> Karsavin, 'Fenomenologia revolucii', p. 34.

The realization of such a concrete symphonic personality presupposes 'consensual commitment from a multiplicity of individual acts.' Little wonder, then, that the virtue of 'fullness' defined here along the lines of axiological and ontological perfection, is attainable only in the Christian Orthodox Church. And when a symphonic personality is trammelled by some 'political qualification,' it is taken hostage to a series of empirical constraints. When it comes to the paradigm of empirical necessities, they are exemplified by the fact that the existence of each social organism – which conforms to the definition of an empirically expressed symphonic personality materialized by virtue of its individual, contributing agents – is contingent upon the principle of coercion and power. The ruling class constitutes an empirical expression of the will and consciousness of the symphonic personality. Thus, if dissenting sentiments start bubbling up with increasing ferocity, members of society at large invoke and act on the proverb that 'A fish always rots from the head down,' to wax a bit colloquial. Galvanized by this guideline, disaffected and politicized nations or societies, succumbing to knee-jerk radicalism, make a beeline for the abolition of the old ruling class, allegedly increasingly 'steeped in corruption,' even though the rebels as such are in the dark about the ultimate goals of the revolution.

When Karsavin sits in judgement on the nature of revolution, he blames it on a malady-stricken symphonic personality. In one of his descriptions of such a problem, this thinker presents, or, to put it more appositely, diagnoses it with a view to gauging 'the level of intensity,' which is defined by him as the distance separating a historical identity (i.e. supra-individual symphonic personality) from the absolute (i.e. pan-unity). This way of reasoning alludes to the moment of the most advanced stage of organic development in the historical dimension, which means 'the apogee of historical individuality;' therefore, this kind of reference entails the presupposition of a broader theory of historical entity. Thus, the absolute becomes the ultimate point of reference on the scale reflecting empirically-historical perfection. And were we to examine the phenomenon of revolution against the backdrop of this benchmark, such an upheaval would merit the diagnosis of declining strength. No wonder, the author of *The Philosophy of History (Filosofia istorii, 1923)*, choosing to make his text wax polemical, writes:

For example, some are inclined to look on revolution as an expression of strength. However, there is much to warrant the opposite thesis: revolution is a symptom of diminishing strength. [...] Revolutionary turmoil does not do anything constructive. Of course, it regurgitates ideas formulated previously, which nevertheless does amount to some activity. However, if we compare the accomplishments of a revolution with the legacy of more peaceful periods, the latter will prove more deserving. Thus, a realization will dawn on us that a revolutionary reaction has more to do with hysteria, and, for all I know, such

behaviour demonstrates a strung-out mental disposition and an inability to seek attention or realize one's ambitions otherwise.<sup>12</sup>

Reading on, we find out that the author does not mince his words painting a graphic picture of the violent escalation of the 'revolutionary disease'. Revolution here is portrayed as an abscess – swelling and festering, rupturing, and finally being removed. In this instance, the medical imagery may strike us as somewhat offensive and disgusting:

The long and short of revolution can be summed up in the fact that all nourishing juices of the statehood hitherto in existence concentrate and organize as one abscess, isolating itself from the healthy tissues (*piemia saccata*) and persisting as an entrenched, old-guard regime; but the healthy tissues are deprived of any nourishing sap of statehood. As, at some point, the abscess ruptures and the pus oozes out profusely, the healthy tissues should neutralize the pus and secrete a new kind of sap; however, this ineluctably precipitates the elevation of body temperature and harrowing afflictions. A good remedy to be considered is drainage of the wound – the removal of the pus by means of emigration.<sup>13</sup>

The above description pertains to the anarchistic phase of a revolution, and it appears to be a period of particular intensity of the disease, hence the heightened fever.<sup>14</sup> This rebellious stage is dominated by inordinately egoistic attitudes, which customarily come along in the wake of the debilitating dismantlement of the old order. In addition, this period sets the stage for some resolutions made on the spur of the moment, and it puts in train some mechanisms conducive towards a long-awaited recovery. Otherwise, the only alternative left would be to passively succumb to the process of degeneration, ultimately leading to death.

## 2. HISTORY AND REVOLUTION

Anatolii Vanieyev, a fellow political prisoner and a guardian of historical heritage, while reminiscing about Karsavin's stance on metaphysical matters, offers the following

<sup>12</sup> Lev Platonovitch Karsavin, *Filosofia istorii* (Saint Petersburg: AO Komplekt, 1993), p. 202.

<sup>13</sup> Karsavin, 'Fenomenologia revolucii', p. 51.

<sup>14</sup> The metaphoric application of the trope of fever to symbolize revolution appears also in Crane Brinton's *The Anatomy of Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1965), p. 16-18. (The book was first published in 1938). Obviously, in this respect the deployment of this metaphor is confined only to the conceptual template, with no insinuation of any affinity whatsoever with social organicism. For more information on this issue cf.: Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Revolucja rosyjska*, trans. J. Bożek (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2017), p. 185-186.

emphatic characterisation: 'Karsavin's cogitation on abstract issues is always anchored and rooted in the fabric of concrete realities. His ideas emerge from, or, to use a better expression, are the fruit of philosophical and religious meditation on his own life and the history of humankind.'<sup>15</sup> Therefore, it is fully justified to distinguish two distinct dimensions in Karsavin's metaphysical thought: the individual (lyrical), and the universal (historical). The latter domain, not in all but in the predominant number of cases, seems to be the better framework for the exploration of the metaphysics of history. The following lines telescopically sketch out the very rudiments of the metaphysics of history.

According to Karsavin, it is humankind that takes pride of place, indeed, when it comes to any historical analysis, but he adds a twist to this commitment as for him the ultimate personality embodied in humanity is a symphonic one. Still, this ultimateness is not tantamount to humanity's perfection. He clarifies further that in his vision a historical reality should be viewed as 'humankind's dynamic, ongoing pan-unitarian evolution towards perfection through imperfection.'<sup>16</sup> Thus the history of humanity can be pictured as a lower-tier counterpart of the ultimate pan-unity. The former stands for the consolidated multiplicity of symphonic personalities, which this Russian philosopher contextualised in relation to the absolute (i.e. God) and evaluated in terms of the sophiological level of all creation – i.e. 'the ecclesial personality'. The entirety of the reality of one entity manifests itself and instantiates itself as a distinctive specificity of this and this entity only through moments of pan-unity.

Hence, if we invoke the notion of an omnitemporal and omnispatial entity as a premise for further predication, it must be assumed that from the perspective of eternity every such 'instance,' every historical moment, or every temporary state of an entity is identical in the case of all entities. In fact, each 'one and only' entity, representing an individualization of pan-unity is a manifestation of pan-unity. This connection can be accomplished directly (as an individual personality) or indirectly (as collective personalities, social personalities, symphonic personalities...). On a historical level, all such moments of pan-unity are considered to be individualizations of higher personalities. The world is comprised of a multiplicity of personalities, whose natures are individual, social (restricted to human entities) and symphonic (concerning our relations to other people and the universe). The philosopher asserts that the replication of the same pattern is responsible for the formation of the complete structure of the quiddity of the world, i.e. of all things created.

Imperfect humanity presents itself as a system of its personalities, each of which (culture, nation, family, etc.) individualizes it in a specific way, by the same token

<sup>15</sup> Anatolii Anatolevitch Vanieiev, 'Očerĳ zhyzni i idei L. P. Karsavina', *Zvezda*, 12/1990, p. 140.

<sup>16</sup> Karsavin, *Filosofia istorii*, p. 137.

self-individualizing systemically and in a hierarchically descending order down to concrete individuals, representing 'quoad nos' relatively-last personalities.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, it behoves us to acknowledge that the notion of pan-unity stands the philosopher in good stead for designating the static sense of existence, while the dynamic nature of being is alluded to by triadism – the ontic process of coming into existence. Thanks to this arrangement, the whole of manifest existence is underpinned by such a dynamically understood tripartite structure. The tri-unity of existence is legitimized by the theological doctrine of The Holy Trinity as well as by the principle of metaphysical personalism (the theory of personality). Here, the scheme of things postulates the operation of a three-stage process: 'proto-unity' – 'self-differentiation – self-unification (*pervoedinstvo – samoraz'edinenie – samovossoedinenie*).<sup>18</sup> In the case of every personality (as well as every historical entity realizing its development within the framework of its grand hosting matrix), it is worth noting that any instance of historical evolution towards perfection should also be assayed against the touchstone of 'the perfect personality,' which is 'the supreme crystallization of the ideal instance of personality as such, i.e. God incarnate, Jesus Christ.'<sup>19</sup> (This concept connotes a self-sacrificing divinity, who through self-differentiation and self-unification shows the path for imitation to all creation and patiently awaits the response; let us face it, as illustrated by such love, profound existence boils down to life-through-death). Such Karsavin's quintessentially original understanding of 'development' must not be simplistically misconstrued as a version of progressivism. It must be so because every historical juncture is a 'contracted' manifestation of perfection, and henceforth it nullifies the purely historical ideal of self-actualization. Still, crisis is a perennial element of the dynamism of the historical process. Karsavin's attempt at the elaboration of his version of the history of philosophy strives to achieve an expanded time-continuum transposition of the rules underlying the metaphysics of pan-unity.<sup>20</sup> This philosophical enquiry addresses the nature of 'pan-unity-materializing-in-time.' In other words, historical investigation sets its sights on the incessant development of humanity encapsulated by empirical, 'contracted' individualizations, which usually serve as the conduit for the manifestation of the pan-unitarian dimension of humanity.<sup>21</sup> Any investigative approach fixated exclusively on empirical development is doomed to incompleteness; therefore, historical examination should integrate discrete, disjointed moments by relating them to the one, and only

<sup>17</sup> Lev Platonovitch Karsavin, *O načalah (Opyt hristianskoi metafiziki)* (Petersburg: Scriptorium, Mera, YMCA-Press, 1994), p. 194.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Khoruzhii, 'Zhyzn' i učenje Lva Karsavina', p. 52.

<sup>19</sup> Karsavin, *Filosofia istorii*, p. 265.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Sławomir Mazurek, *Rosyjski renesans religijno-filozoficzny. Próba syntezy* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Filozofii i Socjologii PAN, 2008), p. 136.

<sup>21</sup> Karsavin, *Filosofia istorii*, p. 125.

one, ever-evolving humanity. Such an approach aims for a rendition of the historical process which is dialectical in character. That notwithstanding, the comprehension of that 'self-revealing-in-contraction' higher unity, which in our case is a collective historical personality, can be only 'imperfectly expressed as a rationalized dialectical process or a systemic unity.'<sup>22</sup> And it was the flaw of such a dialectically rationalist take on history that constituted the besetting sin of Hegelian philosophy.<sup>23</sup> It was so because the denotative scope of the notion of 'proto-unity' subsumes everything from the indeterminate to the determinate, from the absolute, inaccessible sphere of what is transcendently remote from our experience to the tangible realness of that which has been revealed. All this immediately conjures up associations with *Deus absconditus* and *Deus incarnatus* (*God that remains hidden*, and *God that is incarnated*) – the two aspects of the primordial unity, the two faces of the absolute. Hegel equates both realms, in a sense circumscribing the former within the latter, with the result that his knowledge remains locked at the purely conceptual level. But the attainment of the third stage – Hegel's synthesis and Karsavin's 'self-differentiation' and 'self-unification' cannot be restricted only to the cognitive domain, needing to extend to the ontological sphere and ensuring 'realness of knowledge.'<sup>24</sup> In Hegel's version, the synthesis seems rather impoverished by dint of the preponderance of the determinate in its content.

If we turn these theoretical considerations to practical account and scrutinize a concrete revolutionary reality, at the same time aligning this vantage point with the rather debatable sensibilities of the Russian thinker, we may get the impression that whatever has been hitherto attempted in trying to understand the phenomenon of bolshevism has been rather lopsided and exceedingly restrictive. What needs acknowledging here is that the historical fabric of bolshevism was double-lined and that there were two sides to it: 'the bad' and 'the good', 'the left' and 'the right': '[on the one hand we have] the blunt, coercive rationalism, which merits refutation from the perspective of both objective and absolute points of view, [and on the other we have] moral and religious bathos along with the nation-building fervour, which are all-too-positive in the light of both objective and absolute criteria.'<sup>25</sup> No wonder that the revolutionary transformations in Russia call for a more balanced and diversified approach. The issues must be re-imagined with more scope – both horizontally and vertically – by employing Karsavin's philosophy of history. There is no point in marginalizing the holistic and specific character of the Russian revolution.

Apart from such features conditioned by the local and historical circumstances, thus being the product of a particular time and place, the Russian revolution exhibits general hallmarks shared by other similar disruptive developments and is susceptible to

<sup>22</sup> Karsavin, *Filosofia istorii*, p. 127.

<sup>23</sup> Karsavin, *Filosofia istorii*, p. 271.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Melich, *Personalizm L. P. Karsavina i evropejskaia filosofia*, p. 105.

<sup>25</sup> Karsavin, *Filosofia istorii*, p. 238.

evaluation against universal patterns and assessments. The plausibility of this dimension of analysis is mandated by the significance attached by Karsavin himself to the then century-old theory, propounded by a Sabaudian thinker Joseph de Maistre. It has been noted that, with high probability, Karsavin's theory of symphonic personality is beholden to this ultra-Catholic theorist of revolution, and that the level of indebtedness for inspiration here is probably higher than that owed by Karsavin to Khomiakov.<sup>26</sup> Without risking any exaggeration concerning theoretical interpretation, it can be claimed that the approaches exhibited by De Maistre and Karsavin alike were impregnated with religious premises. The former perceived a nation as a living organism, the subject of historical developments and a representation of humanity. Does it not go without saying that Karsavin had a lot of affinity with that stance? As regards the very nature of revolution, both thinkers underscored its reflection of a 'structural' fracture: it consisted in the departure of the 'external' sphere, represented by the ruling class from the 'internal' social movement. Even though the former's members have at their disposal a theoretical programme and implement well-advised governance practices, the latter represents a dynamic revolutionary process operating at a deeper social level. Moreover, the thinkers shared a deep conviction that it was the revolutionary establishment that was swayed by the revolution, not the other way around. In the traditionalist optics espoused by de Maistre, revolutionary leaders figure large as agents of divine Providence, whereas Karsavin looks on them as historicised individual agents, who ineluctably contribute to the actualization of the higher symphonic personality. Whichever is the case, revolution as defined by de Maistre can be perceived as a punishment, either fearfully awaited or breaking out all of a sudden; in both scenarios it severely afflicts humankind, united in iniquity and deserving God's chastisement. A less severe and more local iteration of this predicament should concern a particular nation being subjected to the punishing hand of Providence.

In keeping with the above, De Maistre subscribed to the providential character of the great French Revolution, and he viewed its activists as unwitting functionaries executing God's plans. All the more so because the character of that revolution could have been construed as a punishment visited on people by the absolutely sovereign ruler, whose nature jibed with de Maistre's vision of God. This retribution lent itself exquisitely to being portrayed as vicarious suffering in the sense of humans volunteering self-sacrifice for the sake of the future; such a sentiment is borne out by some of this Russian thinker's declarations.<sup>27</sup> Provided this perspective is valid, we can judge that while France

<sup>26</sup> Sergei Sergeevitch Khoruzhii, 'Karsavin i de Mestr', *Voprosy filosofii*, 3/1989, p. 90-91.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. e.g. below fn. 45. The thinker's interpretation of the persecutions in the Soviet Union, the suppression of freedom of philosophical thought included, demonstrated a paradoxical pattern of thinking. He wrote: 'Under the circumstances, philosophy is being afforded a wonderful opportunity to thrive as its struggles are real and substantive,' Lev Platonovitch Karsavin, 'Filosofia i V. K. P. Po povodu stati A. V. Kozhevnikova', *Voprosy filosofii*, 2/1992, p. 77.

had once been 'rescued' by the Jacobins, now, in the new circumstances, Russia could take advantage of the 'salutary' mission of the Bolsheviks. At least, there is much in evidence that this opinion is reflective of Karsavin's mindset. Yet despite a significant degree of concurrence in the opinions of the two philosophers, the Russian intellectual emphatically noted that de Maistre 'did not transcend the time he lived in' and, to add insult to injury, that he was an apologist for the papacy. Karsavin was fully entitled to such criticism, on the strength of his intimate knowledge of the specificity of that different historical period, his awareness of the volatility of religious sentiments and the political pressures besetting his French counterpart. Nevertheless, in his critique, the Russian thinker pointed out many significant redeeming factors contributing to the elaboration of the new interpretation of revolution as a watershed embedded in the past but simultaneously reaching forward to the future. This idea was later expatiated upon by Karsavin himself:

[De Maistre] demonstrated that the solution was not to be discovered in the limited character of the newly established order, but at the same time the solution could not replicate the limitations of the past order; the resolution must not completely sever connections with the past, but some synthesis of what is old and new must be worked out; it can be achieved through overcoming rationalism and Catholic submissiveness.<sup>28</sup>

But before the future comes and takes concrete shape – either way, welcome or unwelcome to the philosopher – we need to grapple with the current shape of Russian history, I mean, relating the Bolshevik revolution, its direct aftermath and far-reaching ramifications.

### **3. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF REVOLUTION? THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION**

Let us take as hard and open-minded a look as possible at the problem of the Bolshevik revolution, for we need the steppingstone of the historical facts to advance a step further and philosophize about their idiosyncratic qualities from the vantage point of Karsavin's thought. As we have demonstrated, revolution is a disease afflicting historical entities. In order to neatly encapsulate such a development, the Russian philosopher employs the notion of symphonic personality, and particularly the process of its disintegration. And reverberating in his words is the tone of a cautionary tale, as if he were channelling Danilevski or Leontiev:

<sup>28</sup> Lev Platonovitch Karsavin, 'Zhosef de Mestr', *Voprosy filosofii*, 3/1989, p. 114-115.



What I call a revolution is a protracted process of degeneration affecting the ruling class, the debilitation of [the country's] national and state-related vitality and the supersession of the former establishment with a new ruling class. I regard such an upheaval as a dangerous disease of the symphonic personality; rather than lead to the institution of a new form of statehood, it may bring on its demise, whereby a nation dissolves into primitive ethnographic substance.<sup>29</sup>

It follows from the above that revolutions are transitional periods punctuating the continuum of human history. And given a specific set of circumstances, such milestones are inescapable. To better understand the phenomenon of revolution, we can adopt a two-pronged approach: the classic historical investigation can be coupled with metaphysical analysis; when it comes to our Russian thinker, he never neglects the metaphysical interpretation in his examination of history. The metaphysics of history seeks to 'justify a historical juncture' as a moment of pan-unity.<sup>30</sup> Such is the nature of metaphysical research that it tries to comprehend each 'unit' of reality by relating it to a broader, superior unity. And each such unit exists as an original – one and only – manifestation of the complete entity. Such a metaphysically enhanced study of history will warrant, or at least suggest the attribution of some religious or metaphysical significance to revolution, thereby expanding its meaning beyond the purely historical realm.

Let us then embark on the analysis of how the generic revolutionary process is externalized through its historical concretizations. In other words, we will be scrutinizing the ways in which 'revolution', conceived as a set of general rules and attributes, manifested itself in the concrete Russian revolution. Taking a leaf out of Karsavin's book, we will distinguish the fundamental stages of a generic revolution, highlighting the implications of each of the five watersheds. The example of the Russian revolution crystallizes a long-drawn and agonizing sequence of transformations leading to the 'metamorphosis' of the nation, which translates into the emergence of a new national entity. From a theoretical point of view, we cannot rule out the nightmare scenario of a 'deleterious' revolution, in whose wake there follows complete demise of the infected entity, be it a society, nation or a civilization. As historical entities develop in an organic way, the disease of revolution may irredeemably damage their integrity. But as Karsavin believed, that was not the case in the example of the Russian revolution. Still, even though the disease is not lethal, its course is truly severe. When Karsavin discusses the Bolshevik upheaval, he pictures it as something actually 'transitional' in the sense of it 'ushering in' the post-revolution phase. (This term designates the immediate aftermath of the revolutionary disruption, fraught with the repercussions of the recent revolutionary ferment, yet people are increasingly rising to the

<sup>29</sup> Karsavin, 'Fenomenologia revolucii', p. 41.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Khoruzhii, 'Zhyzn' i učenje Lva Karsavina', p. 48

challenge of restraining and transcending the natural and violent patterns of conduct for the sake of 'conscious and unfettered self-determination'.<sup>31</sup> Based on the familiar, Russian example, the thinker under discussion undertakes to retrace the complete course of the disease of revolution, which intermittently besets historical entities. Despite underscoring this generality, he never loses sight of the event's local specificity, emphasizing its originality, its 'universal exceptionality' and highlighting the historical salience of the events taking place.

The first phase of revolution is prompted by the degeneration and decline of the old ruling class. Indeed, what underpins revolution is the 'creeping' crisis of power. The first dissonance seeding revolutionary dissent is the dissolution of the old order, the alienation of the social establishment, the government included, from the populace. To defer to Karsavin for the opposite term, we can say that there is a 'self-differentiation' of the symphonic personality, which signifies a rupture and disunion at the very core of national life. The intelligentsia, both their pro- and anti-government segments, show signs of similar internal dissolution. It must be borne in mind here that, even in the new grand scheme of things, the intelligentsia represent a holdover from the pre-revolutionary era. Thus, this class retains a suspicious identity mired by the association with the old ruling establishment: 'As the philosopher emphatically opines, the revolutionary ideology of the intelligentsia is a product of the erosion of the previous state ideology, it is a stillborn of the barren soil.'<sup>32</sup> Thus with the country's elites having lost their 'desire to rule', the government does not represent the ultimate power. This leads to the eclipse of the 'ethos of statehood'. The impairment of the desire to rule – political *abulia* – becomes a tangible token of the collapse of the government. The spreading crisis impinges on the remaining segments of society, but the impact has a different character:

The gradual decline of the old version of statehood is paralleled by the atrophy of this idea among the populace. Yet in this case, as long as it is clear that the revolution is not a fatal condition, the dream of statehood, otherwise the desire for power, is not completely extinguished. 'The nation in the throes of revolution' exhibits passive resistance primarily towards the remnants of the old order, going to any lengths to avoid subjugation (see: the scale of the problem of defection from the army). That said, the same nation actively wreaks havoc with remnants of the old system through rebellion, as well as defying the resurgence of any old elements of governance adopted by the new, self-declared authorities. The nation's repudiation of the old forms of political practice leads to the demolition of the socio-economic, religious and moral systems, and people's entire lives are snatched up by the turbulent eddy of a revolutionary torrent. The nation

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Lev Platonovitch Karsavin, 'Osnovy politiki', *Evrziskii vremennik*, 5/1927, p. 239.

<sup>32</sup> Karsavin, 'Fenomenologia revolucii', p. 42.

is looking for new leaders, trying to reinvent itself through experiments full of adventurous derring-do and creativity.<sup>33</sup>

Though the organism reacts to the disease plaguing it in such a fulminating way, in all likelihood such a response could very well be a blessing in disguise. The revolutionary malaise need not necessarily be lethal, even though it invariably wreaks genuine havoc. Furthermore, what exacerbates revolution even more is the prevailing 'atmosphere of war.' The thinker states that 'revolution feeds off a military conflict or spawns multiple wars, but sometimes both could be the case.'<sup>34</sup>

At some point in Karsavin's output we encounter what makes the impression of a throwaway aside, relevant though: 'Euphemistically speaking, a revolution is an act of betrayal, which quickly morphs into an obsessive state.'<sup>35</sup> The finger of suspicion regarding the breach of trust of national interests is pointed at the ruling class, primarily the governmental circles. However, if the rulers display susceptibility to such criticism, it paradoxically bespeaks their weakness and irresoluteness as well as proneness to concessions, which further dents the authorities' autonomy. The haunting sense of betrayal, indignation and anger provoked by the very thought of such a violation ignite and stoke up the fires of revolution. Generalized distrust never ceases to loom in the minds of the populace, always impeaching the leaders for presumptive, grave disloyalty. Such resentments keep festering. All these antecedents inform and set in train further revolutionary escalation; thus our analysis proceeds to the next revolutionary milestone.

Admittedly, the arrival of the second stage of a revolution is heralded by rampant anarchy. This is a tempestuous stretch of time, witnessing the devolution of the historically instituted forms of government. There are profound social and political changes, at whose core lurks '[...] an agitated and creative process, representing a purposeful desire entertained by the elemental forces of statehood to re-assert themselves, and all this is accompanied by the ambition to install a new ruling class along with new authorities, which amounts to slow and painful birthing travails.'<sup>36</sup> But, in actual fact, revolutionary anarchy does not represent absence of government, because it does exist, albeit in dispersal. It is reasonable, therefore, to invoke the notion of panarchy to describe this period in which every social entity perceives themselves as legitimately invested with authority. This generalized perception leads to egoistic attitudes exhibited by particular social groups. In this respect, then, panarchy is a time of extensive paradigmatic confusion, leading to the atrophy of hierarchical thinking in social life.

<sup>33</sup> Karsavin, 'Fenomenologia revolucii', p. 45-46.

<sup>34</sup> Karsavin, 'Fenomenologia revolucii', p. 65.

<sup>35</sup> Karsavin, 'Fenomenologia revolucii', p. 47 (in the original text the sentence is spaced out).

<sup>36</sup> Karsavin, 'Fenomenologia revolucii', p. 48.

The inception of the third stage of a revolution is marked by the prominence of 'a class of bullies, ambitious people and fanatics' who come to the fore on the national stage. This represents the resurgence, in a distorted version, of course, of the polarization into the governing and the governed. When it comes to the membership of the class wielding top power, it is still monopolized by the pre-revolution opponents of the government, except that those best ensconced are in fact the least suitable. As they are usually devoid of any experience of officialdom and statesmanship, they cannot tailor their actions to novel ideas, for as newcomers to the world of politics they cannot develop any new policy in the first place. Therefore, doomed to regurgitate fossilized, abstract ideology, the new pretenders to power morph into previous, 'stale' doctrinaires. If there are any changes materializing in this revolutionary stage, they are always driven by the principle of radicalization. Thence stems the roller-coaster dynamism of fluctuating circumstances; however, the ever-growing political pressure, catapulting people to power, is also responsible for the same process in reverse. The only survivors at the helm of the government are its most radical elements – unscrupulous ruffians, stooping to violence, and revolutionary fanatics: 'the saints, the Jacobins and the communists.' This 'revolutionary ruling class', which must be seen as distinct from the 'new reformed ruling circles,' which the former may evolve into, fashions itself after the social profile of the intelligentsia and aspires to a very primitive statehood model. In order to consolidate their leadership role, such circles resort to powerful measures and require the assistance of 'a simple yet cruel organization or a political party.'<sup>37</sup> Of course, the party must be revolutionary in character. The institution of such an organization may even hint at gradual revitalization of the ruling class. And if that party enforces successful control over state institutions, or even the whole system of national administration, it may succeed in establishing rapport with the nation. Thus, the broadly conceived state institutions at large afford an environment conducive to the reconciliation and fusion of 'the old' and 'the new' citizen. We may also surmise that this crucible of revolution offers a platform for the formation of a completely reformed ruling class. It must be concluded, then, that the creative elaboration of rules of governance takes place, first and foremost, within the framework of the nation and only by virtue of its sentiment of contribution.

Drawing on the above, we know that the consolidation of the party's power lays the foundations for a bottom-up grassroots-engaging process, resulting in the concretization of political power in the hands of specific authorities. But should the party rigidly adhere to its ideology, the outcome is counterproductive and such an organization puts its future in jeopardy. The strengthening of the party's position gradually leads to the dwindling of the zealous fixation on struggle, the ideology shrivels down to rhetoric, and finally partisan fervour withers. The rulers are left with 'sheer power.' Thus, when the doctrinaire ruling class – epitomized by Bolshevik communists – accomplishes its task by abolishing

<sup>37</sup> Karsavin, 'Fenomenologia revolucii', p. 53.

the old political system and safeguarding the nation against the resurgence of the former regime, this organization, by the same token, will have disclosed its 'merely ancillary role and conditional *raison d'être*'.<sup>38</sup> Karsavin entertains the conviction that the ideology of the ruling class negatively reflects on the revolution, whereas life, the dynamism of multifarious social phenomena, exposes and debunks abstractions and clamours for its own expression through concrete participation in shaping history.

This participatory zeal ushers in the fourth stage of the revolution, where we witness the 'emergence of individuals who have forsaken their ideology and significantly compromised their consciences.' The situation described by the philosopher induces us to formulate fundamental questions: Why, for the time being, did the Bolsheviks get the upper hand? What made the Russian nation give such overwhelming support to bolshevism? In order to find answers to such queries, it needs to be emphasized that 'the Russian nation may have embraced bolshevism, but it did not subscribe to communism'.<sup>39</sup> Instead, the Bolshevik ideology was regarded as a temporary evil. In that time of harrowing sadness and existential historic insecurity, the nation was yearning for the establishment of a strong system of governance (anything other than that is not worth having!), and at that point in time the only candidate for the role of saviour was the Bolshevik formation. The Russian nation had a straight choice: to delegate power to the ruling class or to entrust this responsibility to the army, which would become the carrier of the new statehood and embody the will of the nation. When revolution fatigue was increasingly in evidence, as a consequence, the once massive grassroots involvement in political life was slowly grinding to a halt. This abatement of political agitation, with political apathy effectively characterizing citizens' profiles of social participation, arose from the desire for the consolidation of power in the hands of a civilian government, or the army; in addition, what reinforced that trend was the reassuring sentiment that the gains of the revolution would have suitable guardians.

The last challenge, and at the same time the fifth milestone of a revolution, is the state of anticipation before the arrival of a new national government and a new ideology enshrining both nationhood and statehood. It means that the political system of the Soviet Union starts evolving towards its post-revolutionary iteration.

The nation should give shape to its new government, and this new formation, in association with the ruling class, must put a strong grip on the power slipping out of the hands of the current leaders. Likewise, the new leaders should put an end to revolutionary doctrinarism, infuse the idea of statehood with a new meaning, as well as legitimizing one's own validity on the grounds of transparent, concrete and realistic ideas. The revolution in and of itself

<sup>38</sup> Karsavin, 'Fenomenologia revolucii', p. 61.

<sup>39</sup> Karsavin, 'Fenomenologia revolucii', p. 61.

is incapable of bringing forth new ideas; instead, its nature is best defined as a formal process, if we may say so, whereas ideas germane to nationhood, the circumstances of life, the system of absolute values are rooted in the innards of national consciousness [...]. Therefore, the new doctrine regarding the statehood-nationhood issues resumes bonds with the past and realigns the nation with its historically established path, from which it strayed during the revolution, or on occasion even prior to its outbreak.<sup>40</sup>

By virtue of such developments, we may witness the commencement of the long-heralded and long-anticipated organic process of moving forward and re-committing Russia to the rightful trajectory of its historical development: it looks as if after the period following the violent, precipitous 'differentiation' this country were to experience slow 'reunification'. Karsavin tries to respond to this state of affairs by advancing a proposal or even a political offer based on the basis of Eurasian ideas.

At this point of our analysis, in order to better elucidate the phenomenology of revolution, it befits to channel the Russian thinker and stress the character and significance of the ontology of such a socio-political upheaval: 'The infirmity of a symphonic personality and its atrophy is the upshot of the disruption of its personal entity in the empirical sphere. And it is in this realm that personal entities are associated with statehood, which in turn is consolidated by the ruling class and the government.'<sup>41</sup> Yet the revolutionary transformation of a nation is marred by the labour pains inseparable from the emergence of a new ruling class, a government and a new definition of statehood. Moreover, the new order cannot take root without the footing of past traditions; in addition, it must seek out ideas 'invested with absolute significance, capable of legitimizing and validating the new scheme of things.' For this task to be accomplished, common cause must be made with the Eurasian ideology, whereby this idea itself is given an opportunity to vindicate itself. At least, this is what motivates Karsavin, who is the champion of Eurasianism.

This state of affairs proved to be a serious thorn in the side of Marxist ideologues, and it was particularly difficult for the Bolshevik government to transact with the Eurasian movement. In this context we register the need for fine-tuning the definitions of 'communism', 'bolshevism', and the 'Bolshevik communism' synthesis. Should we reckon with the presence of two dimensions in the case of these distinctions, namely the European and the Russian angles? In no way is this suspicion absurd, and in the light of such an interpretation bolshevism is deemed a very late product of the unilateral and inorganic process of the Europeanization of Russia. In the wake of the protracted process of occidentalization, the Russians transmuted Europeism (a proviso needs to be made here that the term is blighted by imprecision as the term should be treated

<sup>40</sup> Karsavin, 'Fenomenologia revolucii', p. 64.

<sup>41</sup> Karsavin, 'Fenomenologia revolucii', p. 68.

here as denotative rather of the Russian mindset ‘watered down’ with Europeanness) into a new ideo-political construct – Bolshevik communism.<sup>42</sup> The trajectory of this process is bookended by the era of progressive Tsar Peter the Great and contemporary Bolshevik communists.<sup>43</sup> And if we assume that the Europeanization of Russia signified a slow process of the de-christianization of culture and the de-absolutization of the Russian ideal, it laid the groundwork for the future victory of the Bolshevik party, which is for all to see in history. The Russian revolution was, therefore, affected by domestic Russian travails with the problem of Europeanization. ‘The Russian revolution – as we can read in the commentary on the Eurasian cause – may be interpreted as a popular revolt against “European subjugation.”<sup>44</sup>

But what was the factor that effected this distortive axiological shift so unique to the Russian revolution? What was that change attempting to challenge, and in whose name was it executed? Because Bolshevism disavowed any intrinsically absolute values, it brought to the ultimate prominence the maximization of relative objectives. One could say that it marginalized ideas and supplanted them with an ideology. These contentions are expatiated on in an article *The Religious Essence of Bolshevism (Religioznaia sushchnost’ bolshevizma, 1925)*, where Karsavin strives to look on the phenomenon of revolution from the vantage point of religion. The added bonus of such a religious interpretation is the investment of revolution *per se* with the rationale and a peculiar virtue of meaningfulness. According to the precepts of Karsavin’s phenomenology, it must be tentatively presumed that the qualitative classification typical of revolution is governed by political criteria. In the case of the Bolshevik revolution we have to do with a kind of preponderance whose maximalist nature (where the sheer pursuit takes absolute priority over the accomplishment of one’s goals) takes on secularized form of a relationship with the absolute or stems from the elevation of relative things and issues to absolute status. Underlying this historical and cultural development is the aforementioned process of the Europeanization of Russia, which saw the secularization of religious ideal and absolutization of relative values. Thus, the Europeanization of Russian culture became the Europeanization of the Russian ideal. But what is the Russian ideal? *The Russian Idea (Russkaia idea, 1925)* offers a clue allowing insight into this enigma: ‘We must aspire to the ideal of the ultimate good, in terms of both goals and means, to the good surviving into the future, but it must be achievable through decent measures. So if our goals are beyond attainment because that would necessitate evil, we have to be prepared to suffer and die [...].’<sup>45</sup> How can we respond to this other than by means of a lofty and universal pronouncement: this is a declaration

<sup>42</sup> Lev Platonovitch Karsavin, ‘Evropa i Evrazia’, *Sovremennye zapiski*, 15(2)/1923, p. 314.

<sup>43</sup> Lev Platonovitch Karsavin, ‘Russkaia idea’, *Russkaia literatura*, 1/1993, p. 142.

<sup>44</sup> Claire Hauchard, ‘L. P. Karsavin et le mouvement eurasiens’, *Revue des études slaves*, 68/1996, p. 359.

<sup>45</sup> Karsavin, ‘Russkaia idea’, p. 142.

worthy of a history-steeped Christian, someone who is wedded to the Christian take on the philosophy of history. However, the empirical historical practice becomes more tangled and the professed moral rectitude is vulnerable to trials and tribulations. Even though the Russian ideal refers, first and foremost, to the sphere of the absolute and prioritizes moral obligation, the historical realization of this model is inflected by the sly operations of the 'canny spirit of Russia,' and so much so that the end product is maximalist thinking. Bolshevism constitutes the last known to date form of Russian variation on the theme of the maximalist mindset. And 'the last' implies that there must have been some preceding it – the first and all those in between; indeed, Karsavin states, 'The Russian have all along been Bolsheviks, from the very inception of their history.'<sup>46</sup> From time immemorial they have always thirsted for something beyond the actualities of life, for a reality that allows them to defy their confinement by the empirical sphere, hence their unquenchable desire to transcend the ambient reality of the present. They have always been incorrigible maximalists. The religious criteria of cultural genealogy pertain also to the political systems of modern times. Apparently, the Bolshevik communism has so far been the last and most uncouth and uncultured form of a Russian religious ideology.'<sup>47</sup>

Of course, our thinking about the Russian revolution should by no means gravitate towards envisioning it as the crowning glory of the historical process, but rather as a watershed ushering in new forms of historical existence. Bolshevism does exhibit a capacity for nation-building, but then again it is not free from its own limitations. There is no gainsaying (and Karsavin would have been the last to do so) that the energy exuded by this ideology is truly 'superhuman,' and that its reach spans two continents. But, in fact, these are only material and historical manifestations of some religious and cultural aspirations with their roots and nourishing sap steeped in the Russian idea.

As if confounding all the predictions of its immediate doom, bolshevism is still going strong as a genuine force for shaping history (elsewhere the philosopher acknowledged that socialism displayed an enormous 'surge of creativity'<sup>48</sup>). However, it still cannot rid itself of the blight of the western European, rationalist, communist idea. And from a practical point of view, contemporary bolshevism perceives its agenda perfectly in synch with its original ideal, and 'in a perfectly Russian way,' to boot. To be more specific, it treasures this ideal as a boon for the whole of humanity and a history-embodied reflection of the absolute. Therefore, even though the ideal of the future wellbeing of humanity is still part of its agenda, present-day implementation of bolshevism is warped and corrupted. Translation: it is too abstract and too westernized. One may get the impression that the

<sup>46</sup> Lev Platonovitch Karsavin, 'Religioznaia sushčnost' bolshevizma', trans. fr. Ger. W. Kurapina, *Zvezda*, 7/1994, p. 170.

<sup>47</sup> Karsavin, 'Religioznaia sushčnost' bolshevizma', p. 171.

<sup>48</sup> Lev Platonovitch Karsavin, 'Socializm i Rossia', in *Mir Rossii. Evrazia*, ed. L. I. Novikova, I. N. Sizem-skaia (Moscow: Vysshaia shkola, 1995), p. 294.



Bolsheviks do not grasp, or simply refuse to acknowledge that 'whatever is international is only a symbol of what is national.' This blindness on their part has destructive implications: 'Communist bolshevism strives to be creative but... destroys everything that does not conform to its naive, ludicrous theories and formulas.'<sup>49</sup> We have every right to assert that the cardinal sin of bolshevism is its addiction to the communist doctrine. There is also another problem since this ideology deploys the wrong measures to realize its own goals. The consequences of this state of affairs must be disturbing: '[Bolshevik communism] goes to heroic lengths to ruin and ravage everything and, having no creativity, it only recycles banal patterns developed in an alien culture and an irrelevant past.'<sup>50</sup> Hence, Karsavin registers a sense of inquisitive intrigue stemming from such blatant inconsistency in determining the goals and choosing the means. The answer can be detected in the very ideal of communist bolshevism: the Communists endeavour to crack the code of the absolute truth, but that ambition is frustrated through the deployment of means that are abstract, rationalist and pseudo-scientific.

The adherents of communism are fixated on the idea of universal wellbeing for the whole of humankind, and they cannot stop imagining 'the future paradise on earth.' 'Nevertheless, the average Russian displays a more Bolshevik mindset than the communists themselves. He or she asks: Why is [the currently living] humanity pushed to the sidelines in the Bolshevik scheme of things? Why do the Bolsheviks set their sights only on people of the future?'<sup>51</sup> The exemplary Russian from this quotation channels Karsavin's sensibilities: they both believe that good is an attribute of pan-unity, so if we are committed to universal amelioration of the human lot, we cannot sacrifice anyone's wellbeing. This sentiment is lucidly reflected in Ivan Karamazov's system of values, and the character himself is a very important element of Dostoyevsky's *dramatis personae*. Striving for the ultimate good, we must not make any concessions to evil. Therefore, contemporary bolshevism is not sufficiently Bolshevik, that is of Russian provenance, let alone orthodox or Christian. What is even worse, the Russian communists do not have any clarity regarding the essence of their ideal. Indeed, bolshevism is firmly rooted in the bedrock of Russian religious thought. Thus, adherents of Russian Christianity, permeated with the spirit of the Eastern Church, deem the whole cosmos the body of Christ. Thanks to this mindset, the believers feel exhorted to disseminate religious enlightenment far afield, and they feel responsible for the transformation of this world: '[...] I am not contending that the Russians will be able to shed illuminating light on everything. But if they succeed in contributing to enlightening the world in any measure, it will already constitute a miracle; if this miracle is to materialize, we must first remove the scourge of communism.'<sup>52</sup> However, such a straightforward

<sup>49</sup> Karsavin, 'Religioznaia sushchnost' bolshevizma', p. 173.

<sup>50</sup> Karsavin, 'Religioznaia sushchnost' bolshevizma', p. 173.

<sup>51</sup> Karsavin, 'Religioznaia sushchnost' bolshevizma', p. 174.

<sup>52</sup> Karsavin, 'Religioznaia sushchnost' bolshevizma', p. 174.

transposition of religious ideas to the domain of politics is a rather rare occurrence in the realm of history. But then again, this infrequency is a blessing, as such attempts tend to be disastrous.

Even though against the backdrop of the Bolshevik tragedy Karsavin remained defiantly sanguine, as well as encouraging the same good cheer in others, the philosopher's hope turned out to be naive and outright dangerous; it amounted to wishful thinking, too weak to survive the test of the brutal, political realities. The grand finale of the dialogue between the thinker and the Russian authorities was marked by his sentencing and deportation to the labour camp of Abez, situated in the Komi Republic. Extensive scrutiny of Karsavin's stance on the historical (i.e. political) and historiosophical significance of the Russian revolution seems to prompt the conclusion that this assemblage of his forms a historical theodicy. In its entirety, it looks like a theory that accepts, and at the same time tries to look beyond, the observed realities in order to 'rationalize' the period of the Bolshevik revolution by means of addressing the full spectrum of the enormously convoluted nature of that historical situation. In other words, the philosopher wrestles to categorize that revolution as a transitional event, which, nevertheless, had its necessary mission to fulfil on the way to accomplishing higher good in historical terms. Were we to grant validity to this stance, it would be imperative that the communist ideology be repudiated, whereas bolshevism as such should be accorded the status of a transitional form of Russian rule. The aforementioned contention is justified not only on the basis of facts, but it also has sound historiosophical footing. At the same time, chief among other misgivings is the question of how to tackle the conundrum of the practical side of the above separation. Karsavin's thoughts are permeated with discernible conflicting atmospherics of both historical necessity and immediate imperatives. Therefore, the above phrase 'should be accorded' is perfectly illustrative of what is the most problematic as well as tragic in Karsavin's worldview. Little wonder he saw fit, and admittedly felt fully warranted in doing so, to pass this meaningful comment: 'We do not claim that the Bolsheviks represent the ideal power-wielding establishment, nor do we wish to assert that they form a good government. Nevertheless, all options considered, they are the best for Russia for the time being.'<sup>53</sup>

#### **4. THE EURASIAN CONTEXT**

It must be remembered that the article entitled *The Phenomenology of Revolution* falls into the subsection of Karsavin's output dealing with Eurasian issues. Therefore, attention will be paid here to those ideological strands of Eurasianism that lend themselves to illuminating the topic of revolution. Since the time when the first manifesto is published –

<sup>53</sup> Karsavin, *Filosofia istorii*, p. 307.

*The Exit to the East (Iskhod k Vostoku, 1921)* – Eurasianism has been enfeebled by a lack of philosophical underpinnings, but the 1923 explicit articulation of this shortcoming kick-starts the philosopher's contemplation of commitment to intellectual activity on this front. When it comes to the existing body of literature on Eurasianism, it is confined to disjointed, 'casual remarks and unorganized philosophical characteristics', but remarkably thin on the ground is 'philosophical analysis, or philosophically reasoned validation.'<sup>54</sup> The Russian thinker will attempt to upgrade the conspicuously flawed philosophical premises, and it goes without saying that he will draw on his own conceptions. After all, he has already authored such theoretical works as the oft-quoted *The History of Philosophy* and a lecture covering the propaedeutics of Christian metaphysics *On Principles (O načalah, 1925)*. Of course, there have been numerous lesser publications as well, but the year 1925 marks the landmark moment of Karsavin's commitment to the new ideology and the commencement of his involvement with activism and publication with a view to furthering this new movement. 'The Paris years', a dub being perfectly interchangeable with 'the Karsavin years' of the Eurasian movement, span the 1925-1929 stretch of time.<sup>55</sup> The philosopher will remain a card-carrying member of the movement until its split and the emergence of the two antagonistic factions: the pro-Bolshevik and the anti-Bolshevik ones. When it comes to his own political sympathies before he definitively quits his participation in the movement, the former option is markedly more up his alley. It is also worth mentioning here that the erstwhile active membership in the Eurasian movement will finally prove to be one of the first incriminating engagements he gets indicted for by the Soviet Union authorities (from 1928 to his arrest in 1949, the philosopher resides in the Lithuanian Republic), which finally leads to the apprehension and conviction of this 'Lithuanian Plato.'<sup>56</sup>

Let us now revisit our core theoretical concern. In the mid-twenties of the 20th century Karsavin decides to abandon the role of distinguished historian and theorist of culture and exchanges it for the mantle of 'a politician' and 'a futurist', primarily preoccupied with present-day challenges. It is worth bearing in mind that Eurasian aficionados are predominantly interested in recent historical developments, and Fyodor Stepun encapsulates that prospective slant of this ideology in the term of 'futurism.' Karsavin is captivated by this inclination towards the future, and this sensibility sets the stage for the subsequent years of his activity. Moreover, being future-oriented signifies dedication to a higher culture, commitment to a new, multiethnic, multicultural, symphonic personality,

<sup>54</sup> Karsavin, 'Evropa i Evraziia', p. 307.

<sup>55</sup> However, to pinpoint the beginnings of Karsavin's immersion in Eurasian ideas, we need to move back to 1923, when this thinker produced the previously quoted review entitled *Evropa i Evraziia* pertaining to the following two initial collections on Eurasian ideas: *Iskhod k Vostoku. Predčustva i sviershnia* (1921), *Na putiah. Utvierzhdenie evraziicev* (1922).

<sup>56</sup> Vladimir Sharonov, 'On vsiegda byl russkim...', *Russkaia mysl'*, 18th May 1990, p. 2.

along with engaging in the restoration of the Russian state, which is being envisioned as furnished with new Eurasian statehood. The philosopher cultivates the conviction that due to the Russian revolution the Eurasian issue is invested with some universally applicable, human meaning. This pronouncement turns the spotlight on and elucidates 'Russia's historical mission.'<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, in the light of this statement, the Bolshevik revolution should not be viewed in a particularized way as a merely localized event; instead, it should be perceived as a Russian response to the acute crisis consuming the whole of Europe.

It should not surprise anyone that Karsavin finds the surrounding reality worthy of philosophical investigation. But unfortunately there is a price tag to the pursuit of philosophy in a time of crisis. Karsavin's world of ideas, particularly his fundamentals of the metaphysics of history, is subsequently thrust into a face-to-face confrontation with a concrete reality – the world of politics. We know that the confrontation escalates into a collision and later on ends in rejection and a retreat to neutral positions. It is also speculatively possible that the elaboration of Karsavin's vision for the Eurasian movement may have been influenced by Vladimir Solovyov's ideas.<sup>58</sup> And yet the Russian nation's religious mission identified and elaborated on by this author of *The Three Forces* and consisting in the creation of a future synthesis of the Muslim East and the civilization of the West, gradually gives way to anti-occidental sentiments. That said, Karsavin himself never completely abandons the European perspective – there is no such option, for every symphonic personality, as a moment of pan-unity, reflects, if not contains, a higher pan-unitarian form, and it does it in its own unique way. Yet it must be remembered that in order to come to terms with the negative effects of 'the revolutionary disease,' a genuine ideology' is a must. Thanks to its expatriate-community offshoots, the Russian nation finally manages to forge such an 'organic system of ideas' in the form of the Eurasian ideology.<sup>59</sup> In addition, it must be noted here that this ideology fed off Karsavin's ideas.

Trying to assess the relevance of Karsavin's take on the significance of the Bolshevik revolution, one cannot help but reserve their judgement and register doubts as to whether this philosopher rashly jumped to his conclusions. It seems that this actually was the case. The Eurasian 'inclination towards the future was responsible for the premature consignment of the communist party to the past, treating it as a spent force and a 'departing' form of government. Such a perspective required this philosopher-cum-Eurasian-ideologue to designate the basis for the future political system. Thus, if the ruling class is appointed to wield power by the historical entity, the people, i.e. the entities making up one integral

<sup>57</sup> Karsavin, 'Osnovy politiki', p. 188.

<sup>58</sup> Martin Bajssvenger (M. Beissvenger), '«Eretik» среди «eretikov»: L. P. Karsavin i Evraziistvo', in *Lev Platonovitch Karsavin*, p. 163; Vladimir Solovyov, 'Trzy siły', trans. R. Papiński, *Przegląd Filozoficzno-Literacki*, 2(2)/2002, p. 33-43.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. 'Evraziistvo. Opyt sistematičeskogo izloženia', in *Puti Evrazii. Russkaia inteligencija i sud'by Rossii*, ed. I. A. Isaev (Moscow: Russkaia kniga, 1992), p. 352.

unity, then a collective state is protected from despotism and will not follow that path. But even though the fabric of Russian society is fundamentally demotic, populace-based, Russia-Eurasia must embrace the option of a strong state. This conceptualization of government is necessary in order that the rulers give a new direction to the 'bathos of the revolution.'<sup>60</sup> Eurasianism, therefore, should harness the revolutionary impetus to its own goals, with the phrase 'its own goals' meaning 'with a view to benefitting the nation.' For the Russian social circles of the day, particularly the expatriate community in exile, this pronouncement sounded particularly challenging:

We really must find out and fully fathom the nature of that which is taking place here, tease out the truth residing in it, and finally act on it. Nevertheless, 'to find out and fully fathom' must not be tantamount to unequivocally «changing the signposts» [Russ. *smienit viehi*], and, having forfeited dignity, becoming lackeys to the communists.<sup>61</sup>

Since the revolution is an accomplished fact, all we have to do is acknowledge and make the best of it. We must preserve all the gains of the revolution for the future generations. The new Eurasian system – an ideocracy – could be modelled on the Russian structure of governance, combining the one-party structure with some participatory modification, based on delegation of power to councils. We must be mindful not to opt for the Marxist path but to render it religious, orthodox in character.<sup>62</sup> The adoption of such an agenda lets politics, intrinsically belonging to the empirical sphere, continue the implementation of the main, ideal and absolute mission of culture, which is called upon to transform the world through the agency of religion. This ambition must, however, reckon with the constraints imposed by the imperfect empirical reality. Nevertheless, religious modification can make a difference, as even bolshevism may, to an extent, exert positive influence on the future providing it lets religion inform its political profile. This, however, cannot be said for Marxist communism, which remains a dogmatically rigid and inflexible element of the pseudo-synthesis parading as a system of governance. Bolshevism is of Russian provenance, whereas communism is the stillborn of the 'decline' of western civilization. Such sentiments can be found – expressed in no uncertain terms – in the blueprint for the Eurasian programme, crafted and drafted predominantly by Karsavin:

<sup>60</sup> Karsavin, 'Osnovy politiki', p. 215-216.

<sup>61</sup> Lev Platonovitch Karsavin, 'Uroki otrečenoj very', *Evraskii vremennik*, 4/1925, p. 85. Moreover, we must take notice of the fact that the tenor of the previously quoted fragment clearly indicates Karsavin's dissociation from overtly pro-Bolshevik slogans proclaimed at that time by 'the smenovechovce' (*Smena Veh*, 1921). Was it, then, purely rhetorical subterfuge on his part? For all we know, such a state of affairs fuelled serious controversy in Eurasian circles.

<sup>62</sup> Hauchard, 'L. P. Karsavin et le mouvement eurasiens', p. 364.

As long as the Bolsheviks have not honestly and irrevocably abjured their abstract ideology, they are no different from the communists and, therefore, continue to represent a threat. Anyway, Russia could not make do without them now and will still need them until right there someone else comes across, and, if push comes to shove, will oust them, subsequently commandeering their power; and this will be the least detrimental to Russia.<sup>63</sup>

As soon as communist ideas, rendered beneficial to humanity by dint of their liberation from the tyranny of the abstract, either harmonize with the aspirations of the Russian nation or even reflect the natural and organic part of this people's worldview, they can effectively figure in the synthesis to come. As there is no returning to the past, and the current reality is deeply disappointing, Eurasianism propounds a third option for the way forward for Russia, but this solution refuses to make any concessions to a temporary alternative; therefore, as the philosopher envisioned, the future should be neither 'white' nor 'red', but brand new.<sup>64</sup>

## 5. POLITICS AND METAPHYSICS

In order to achieve a better understanding of historic-political realities, it is crucial that we rise above what their literal dimension signifies and inspect them from the outside, inasmuch as this change of perspective is possible. Arguably, there is no point in arguing with such a postulate. Rising to the challenge of an unbiased stance on reality or temporary 'suspension' of one's judgement – *epoché* – could very well open up the door to 'inclination towards the future'. The following observation pertains particularly to emotions engendered by political issues:

Hatred, even that justified (if such a thing is plausible), is bad counsel. In order to adequately assay the potency and longevity of communist bolshevism, and to estimate the strength needed to challenge its ideas, we have to rise above our tendency to melodramatic oversimplifications on this issue. We must refrain from demonizing this system, always trying to discover whatever good we can find in it, even if it exists in grossly contaminated form, for the strength of this system does not lie in its evil, but in the portion of good it contains.

<sup>63</sup> 'Evraziistvo. Opyt sistematičeskogo izložhenia', p. 351. This document, published in 1926, enlightens many ideas and political convictions held by Karsavin, concerning both the years witnessing the Bolshevik revolution and the ways and means of recovering from its legacy; particularly informative is Chapter VIII *Smysl russkoi revoliucii* (*The meaning of the Russian revolution*).

<sup>64</sup> Lev Platonovitch Karsavin, 'Armia i revoliucia. (Po povodu knigi gen. Ju. N. Danilova 'Rossia v mirovoi volnie 1914-1915 g.'; 'Slovo', Berlin 1924)', *Yevraziskaia hronika*, 8/1927, p. 45.

Thus, beyond the nonsense and ruthlessness of the rebellion, beyond the bizarreness of communist enterprises and revolutionary rhetoric, we should discern symptoms of new life and then nurture it without compromising one's belief in the absolute values.<sup>65</sup>

But on the other hand, is it not so that Karsavin's cognition itself is immune to yielding to adulterating subjective admixtures of both individual and collective provenance. In his phenomenology of revolution he does not balk at employing very strong language. In actual fact, his formulations do evince strong emotional colouring. Therefore, let us return to the question advanced at the beginning of our analysis: What is the new takeaway from Karsavin's 'phenomenology' with respect to our understanding of the 'phenomenon' of revolution? Without a doubt, he allows us to look at revolution from the angle established by his philosophy, to perceive revolution from Karsavin's 'prosopological' perspective rooted in the philosophy of personalism. Apparently, it also affords a very interesting historical angle, which is no mean contribution *per se*. Furthermore, Karsavin's description indicates the multi-stage sequential nature of any revolutionary upheaval and ideological ossification of the leaders. At the same time, he refuses to abandon the delusion that the present moment carries, both presumptively and empirically, seeds of the future. He also emphasizes both the endogenous and exogenous nature of revolution's chief motives, indispensable factors fuelling it, as well as outlining varied revolutionary models. Yet it is not possible to turn a blind eye to the excessive forbearance which characterizes Karsavin's attitude to nihilistic (allegedly a communist contamination) and murderous activity of the Bolsheviks. Life may emerge from death, but if the rulers demand this measure of self-immolation from the masses, it amounts to the perpetration of mass murder. Therefore, to remain mealy-mouthed in the face of Karsavin's own reticence would not be a decent act.

It still generates a measure of puzzlement why Karsavin's attitude to the atrocities of bolshevism is such, given the fact that this philosopher does not mince his words when it comes to the expression of moral indignation at revolutionary developments. It seems that this stance is informed by treating evil along the lines of transgression and retribution.<sup>66</sup> If punishment is the consequence of guilt, it offers, by the same token, the means to achieve redemption (which is perfectly in keeping with de Maistre's beliefs). And if a historical entity is imperfect, the guilt must be socialized and borne in solidarity by every member of the community (reading Dostoyevsky, one can see how poignantly conscious he was of this universal distribution of such a burden!). Then should it come

<sup>65</sup> Karsavin, 'Uroki otrečennoi veri', p. 83.

<sup>66</sup> To get a broader understanding of this approach towards evil cf. Adam Sawicki, *Poprzez bunt i pokorę. Zagadnienie cierpienia i śmierci w eschatologicznych koncepcjach myślicieli rosyjskich. Fiodorow – Bułgakow – Niesmielow – Karsawin – Bierdiajew* (Białystok: Wydawnictwo Politechniki Białostockiej, 2008), p. 258.

as a surprise that this world of ours is doomed to violence and suffering? The adoption of this logic could recast all that heinous Bolshevik activity, all this explosion of evil (as penalty for guilt?; through the Bolsheviks meting out the punishment to themselves and others likewise?) as a temporary, cleansing and salutary process, thereby furnishing the Russian revolution with a welcome vindication. In this way, the Bolshevik agenda would be compatible with the conception of history as pan-unity materializing through history's imperfections.

Let us wrap up our explorations in a both cautionary and missionary way, acknowledging that even though historically understood man has always been the architect of his fate, this brand of architecture must be forged collectively; thus, the intervening communitarian and 'societal' circumstances must not be ignored. It could not be otherwise, given the fact that the empirical world is still lagging behind the ideal of unity, manifesting itself as symphonically arranged human lots. There is nothing to indicate that this discrepancy will redress itself soon, and even though historically we have hardly ever been prepared, we had better strive for this preparedness for impending 'historical shocks.' This is the drift of the Russian revolution's cautionary tale, this is the purport of the philosopher's fate. And if the option of revolution, this 'monstrous change,' represents 'the method of operation of the whole European world,'<sup>67</sup> then even 'an escape' to Asia, which was advised by Eurasian aficionados as a peculiarly Russian response to the revolution, could not successfully ward off the evil of the upheaval's deleterious aftermath. The idea of such a retreat finally turned out to be an intellectual chimera. Thus, effectively, the political hopes entertained by the philosopher proved premature, although as a human being he staunchly continued to stick to his guns of hope. And stick he did, till the end of his own history, which started getting too personal for comfort. Karsavin's case is a telling testament that the politicization of metaphysics does not deliver the anticipated, beneficial rewards. Thus, in order to provide against inevitable disillusionments lying in wait in the realm of human history, we can only forearm ourselves with metaphysical hope. Then, does hope follow in the footsteps of history? Even if it does, let's face it, on its way hope is invariably banished.

TRANSLATED BY Mariusz Szerocki

<sup>67</sup> Marcin Król, *Jaka demokracja?* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Agora, 2017), p. 184.



## PHILOSOPHY IN THE TIME OF REVOLUTION

By **MARCI SHORE**

*This text explores the problem of alienation during the time of the Bolshevik Revolution. It discusses Hegelianism, Husserlian phenomenology, and Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovsky's idea of *остранение* [ostranenie, estrangement, defamiliarization] as attempts to resolve the problem of the distance between consciousness and being, of the subject's lack of connection to the world. Both Husserl and Shklovsky believed that alienation could be remedied through a purer, more vivid form of seeing. Could revolution be understood as an experience of ostranenie?*

Key words: Bolshevik Revolution, alienation, phenomenology, ostranenie [остранение], Hegel, pure seeing, Hegel, epistemological question

Petrograd, 1917. *Ten Days That Shook the World*. 'Adventure it was,' writes John Reed, 'and one of the most marvelous mankind even embarked upon, sweeping into history at the head of the toiling masses, and staking everything on their vast and simple desires.'<sup>1</sup>

What was 'everything'?

\* \* \*

Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud agreed on little. What they did agree on, though, was profound: Man was unhappy in the modern world. He was unhappy by virtue of his alienation not only from the world, but also from himself. Thinkers as different as Hegel, Marx, Freud, Kafka, Lukács, Heidegger, and Arendt shared an understanding that the great problem of modernity was the problem of alienation. Modern philosophy was preoccupied with our estrangement from our own world, with our inability to ever fully know it. For Freud the problem went deeper: not only could we never fully know the world, but moreover we could never even fully know our own selves. The self was hidden from the self. What mattered most, Freud told us, was precisely what was concealed from consciousness. 'What have I in common with Jews? I have hardly anything in common with myself,' wrote Franz Kafka in January 1914.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John Reed, *Ten Days That Shook the World* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Franz Kafka, *The Diaries of Franz Kafka 1914-1923*, ed. Max Brod (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), p. 11.

The problem – Hannah Arendt believed – dated at least to Immanuel Kant, who destroyed the classical identity of thought and Being, thus rendering us bereft of anything to hold onto and any home in the world.<sup>3</sup> Good intentions notwithstanding, Kant left us with a gaping abyss between the *Ding-an-sich* and the world as it appeared to us. The *Ding-an-sich* was, and would forever be, beyond the reach of Kant's '*Ich denke*.' How could we feel at home in a world that would ever remain at a distance?

Enlightenment rationality, with its promise of empirical groundedness in the natural world, ultimately failed to resolve the crisis of homelessness. To the young Emmanuel Levinas, who spent his childhood during the First World War in Kaunas and Kharkov, it felt as if 'the ascent of science toward the regions of pure objects [wa]s equivalent to a leap into nothingness.'<sup>4</sup> Georg Lukács and his fellow members of Sunday Circle, young intellectuals in early twentieth-century Budapest, suffered painfully the impossible distance between subject and object. Lukács longed for totality and blamed nineteenth-century positivist science for fragmentation and relativism.<sup>5</sup> His friend Anna Lesznai ascribed the 'inhumanity of individualistic, capitalist society' to 'the fact that its individual members are solitary atoms whose vital relationships are not with other men, nor with nature, but with abstract institutions.'<sup>6</sup>

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Lukács and Levinas found two very different resolutions to the problem of alienation. Lukács found Hegel, for whom alienation had its origins in the sin of individualism. To fail to be at one with the universe, to decline to self-identify with History, was to suffer from alienation. The philosopher Jay Bernstein argues that Antigone plays such a central role in *Phenomenology of Spirit* because she does what is forbidden: she asserts the individual against the universal and thereby alienates herself from the totality. Hegel promised the resolution of *Entfremdung* in a restlessly forward-moving *Geist*. '*Das Wahre ist das Ganze*': only from the perspective of wholeness could we arrive at truth. *Geist*, proceeding dialectically onwards and upwards, would eventually bring us to seamless reconciliation of subject and object. Arendt described *Phenomenology of Spirit*

<sup>3</sup> Hannah Arendt, 'What Is Existential Philosophy?' in *Essays in Understanding 1930-1954*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), p. 163-187, quotation p. 172.

<sup>4</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, 'Freiburg, Husserl, and Phenomenology' in *Discovering Existence with Husserl*, trans. Richard A. Cohen and Michael B. Smith (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> Mary Gluck tells this story movingly in *Georg Lukács and His Generation 1900-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985).

<sup>6</sup> Qtd. in Gluck, *Georg Lukács and His Generation 1900-1918*, p. 25.

as the last great attempt to (re)unite thought and Being and thereby 'reconstitute a world now shattered into pieces.'<sup>7</sup>

For Lukács, it was Marxism that made explicit how to reach Hegel's promised land of reconciliation. 'It is not the primacy of economic motives in historical explanation that constitutes the decisive difference between Marxism and bourgeois thought, but the point of view of totality,' Lukács wrote, '...the all-pervasive supremacy of the whole over the parts.'<sup>8</sup> For Marx, alienation in conditions of modern capitalism took on specific, tangible forms. Work on the assembly line had resulted in 'the work of the proletarians ha[ving] lost all individual character.'<sup>9</sup> 'This fragmentation of the object of production,' wrote Lukács, 'necessarily entails the fragmentation of its subject.'<sup>10</sup> Capitalism had effected a shift from use-value to exchange value. Wage labor had reified man into a commodity, a means of exchange. 'Man's own activity, his own labour becomes something objective and independent of him,' Marx explained.<sup>11</sup> As a result, 'a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a 'phantom objectivity.'<sup>12</sup>

Marx and Engels subjected Hegel's dialectical metaphysics to a revision inspired by Enlightenment understanding of science. For Marx, both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat experienced the self-alienation caused by reification. The difference was that the bourgeoisie seemed not to mind and in fact felt comfortably affirmed, whereas the proletariat 'feels itself destroyed by this alienation and sees in it its own impotence and the reality of an inhuman existence.'<sup>13</sup> In both cases, the problem was in some sense a technical one, engendered by the material conditions of industrial capitalism. And a technical problem allowed for a technical solution. Reconciliation could come about in only one way: the proletariat must acquire class consciousness, understand that no single problem could be solved without solving them all, rise up and overthrow the bourgeois, abolish private property, and eventually establish a classless society free of exploitation, in which everyone would work according to his ability and receive according to his need. At this point freedom and necessity, the 'is' and the 'ought,' subject and object would all be exquisitely synthesized. The Marxist utopia was the overcoming of all antinomies. The

<sup>7</sup> Arendt, 'What Is Existential Philosophy?', p. 164.

<sup>8</sup> Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), p. 27.

<sup>9</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party' in *Modern Europe: Sources and Perspectives from History*, ed. John S. Swanson and Michael S. Melancon (New York: Longman, 2002), p. 72-88, quotation p. 76.

<sup>10</sup> Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 89.

<sup>11</sup> Qtd. in Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 87.

<sup>12</sup> Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 83.

<sup>13</sup> Qtd. in Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 149.

proletariat, Lukács believed, was destined by History to become the first 'identical subject-object of the historical process.'<sup>14</sup>

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Levinas sought a path to connect the self with the world through a phenomenology very different from Hegel's. Edmund Husserl shared Levinas's desire to revolt against the fanatical objectivity of the natural sciences: 'Positivism, in a manner of speaking, decapitates philosophy,' he believed.<sup>15</sup> In Husserl's phenomenology Levinas found a method that 'wants to recover the lost world of our concrete life.'<sup>16</sup> He was drawn by Husserl's slogan, '*Zu den Sachen selbst!*'<sup>17</sup>

'Back to experience, to seeing,' wrote Husserl in 1910.<sup>18</sup> 'Philosophy as a Rigorous Science' clarified Husserl's ambition: the achievement of epistemological certitude. Husserl rejected the proverb that it was impossible to dance at two weddings at once. He wanted absolute truth – that is, he wanted both absolute subjectivity and absolute objectivity. To Husserl, Kant's epistemological modesty was an existentially unbearable fatalism. Husserl's 'things' were perhaps not the same as Kant's 'things.' Understandings of just what *die Sache* were differed—the foundational questions, the physical objects in the world, our experience of these objects. Yet what mattered above all was that *die Sache* – unlike *das Ding* – was not beyond our reach.

In June 1917, during the chaotic period of 'Dual Power' following the February Revolution, the first All-Russian Congress of Soviets convened in Petrograd. There, with some pragmatic resignation, the Menshevik Irakli Tsereteli announced, 'В настоящий момент в России нет политической партии, которая говорила бы: дайте в наши руки власть, уйдите, мы займем ваше место.'<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 199.

<sup>15</sup> Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> Levinas, 'Freiburg, Husserl, and Phenomenology,' p. 37.

<sup>17</sup> 'Wir wollen auf die 'Sachen selbst' zurückgehen.' Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen: Prolegomena zur reinen Logik*, vol. 1 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1993), p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Edmund Husserl, 'Philosophy as a Rigorous Science' in *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965), p. 71-147, quotation p. 96; Edmund Husserl, *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2009), p. 24. Originally published as 'Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft,' *Logos*, 1/1910-1911, p. 289-341. A Russian translation was published the same year: E. Husserl, 'Filosofiya kak stroгая nauka,' *Logos*, 1/1911.

<sup>19</sup> 'At the present moment, there is no political party in Russia that would say: give power to us, go away, we will take your place.'

Lenin, famously, interrupted: 'Есть такая партия!'<sup>20</sup>

Lenin's 'Есть!', while uttered in a context very different from a German university, captured the spirit of Husserl's answer to the epistemological question: Yes, we can!

Husserl's language was very visual; he was obsessed with *reines Sehen*. The task of phenomenology would involve learning to see clearly and distinctly. Its method was the 'phenomenological reduction.' This 'reduction' involved stepping outside of *die natürliche Einstellung*, the state in which we generally lived our lives, simply moving about the world without truly seeing it, un-self-reflectively assuming its existence. Instead we adopted *die phänomenologische Einstellung*, in which we put the objects of the world – including our own empirical ego – 'in brackets' (*Einklammerung*), suspending any convictions of, or skepticism about, their mind-independent reality. Once we had bracketed this realist-idealist question, we could concentrate on a precise description of our intuitions – that is, what we, as purified transcendental egos, saw.

Most of our lives we spent in the 'natural attitude,' seeing without truly seeing. 'We stand in the world as practically active beings,' wrote Adolf Reinach, Husserl's personable and gifted young assistant, shortly before the First World War. 'We see it, and yet we do not see it.'<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless we could learn to *look*. What phenomenology promised was the possibility of truly seeing the world. 'And if we seek to go back to the things themselves [*die Rückkehr zu den Sachen selbst*], to pure, unobscured intuition of essences,' Reinach wrote, 'then this intuition is not meant as a sudden inspiration and illumination... it requires particular and great efforts to emerge from the distance at which we stand vis-à-vis the objects and attain a clear and distinctive apprehension of them.'<sup>22</sup>

*Reines Sehen* was arduous, but possible. It was possible because consciousness was not only potentially self-conscious, but also transitive: consciousness always took an object. The very structure of consciousness was not solipsism but intentionality; and intentionality functioned as a kind of micro-teleology, or a string with a magnet attached. Consciousness was always reaching out to the world, apprehending the object. This experience of direct apprehension, of the givenness of the object, Husserl called *Evidenz*. The concept of *Evidenz*

<sup>20</sup> 'There is such a party!'

<sup>21</sup> Adolf Reinach, 'Concerning Phenomenology,' trans. Dallas Willard, *The Personalist*, 1(2)/1969, p. 194-221, quotation p. 195 (lecture given in Marburg January 1914); Adolf Reinach, 'Über Phänomenologie,' in *Sämtliche Werke* Band 1: *Die Werke* (Munich: Philosophia, 1990), p. 531-550, quotation p. 531. 'Wir stehen als praktisch handelnde Wesen in der Welt – wir sehen sie und sehen sie doch auch nicht... Wir wissen, wie mühsam es ist, wirklich sehen zu lernen'; 'können wir schauen lernen' (p. 531, 532).

<sup>22</sup> Adolf Reinach, 'Über Phänomenologie,' p. 531-550, quotation p. 550. 'und wenn wir die die Rückkehr zu den Sachen selbst anstreben, zur zur reinen, unverdeckten Intuition der Wesenheiten, so ist Intuition dabei nicht gedacht als eine plötzliche Eingebung und Erleuchtung. Ich habe es ja heute fortwährend betont; es bedarf eigener und großer Bemühungen, um aus der Fernstellung, in der wir an sich zu den Objekten stehen, herauszukommen zu ihrer klaren und deutlichen Erfassung.'

(‘self-evidence’) was intrinsically relational. For Husserl, in the beginning was the relationship: the relationship between subject and object preceded its parts.

(Lukács, decades after the Bolshevik Revolution, described Husserl’s phenomenology as a quixotic attempt at a ‘third way’ – that is, an attempt to claim that rather than deriving subject from object or object from subject, we could begin with the fundamental relatedness of subject and object. Lukács rejected this idea: One had to choose, he insisted, between idealism and materialism.<sup>23</sup>)

For Husserl the epistemological question was a Kierkegaardian Either/Or: either the attainment of absolute truth, or consignment to the madhouse. In his eulogy for Husserl, Lev Shestov explained that his friend had always understood the stakes as all or nothing. For Husserl, Shestov wrote, ‘[s]elf-evidence reveals the eternal structure of being, laid bare by the phenomenological reduction.’<sup>24</sup> Shestov translated Husserl’s *Evidenz* into Russian as очевидность, a translation arguably superior to the original: ‘visible to the eye’ was precisely what Husserl had in mind. Shestov himself rejected Husserl’s philosophy, yet to the end retained not only a deep respect, but also a deep empathy for Husserl’s passionate struggle to reach truth: ‘Either self-evidence is the ultimate court of appeal, at the bar of which the human spirit receives its full and definitive satisfaction, or else our knowledge is illusory and false, and sooner or later a realm of chaos and madness will appear on earth.’<sup>25</sup>

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Husserl spent the years of the First World War in Germany. On the other side of the war, in Russia, literary theorist Viktor Shklovsky shared Husserl’s understanding of the natural attitude, although he did not use this phrase. ‘We do not sense the familiar, we do not see it, but recognise it,’ Shklovsky wrote in 1914. ‘We do not see the walls of our rooms, it is so hard for us to spot a misprint in a proof – particularly if it is written in a language well known to us, because we cannot make ourselves see and read through, and not ‘recognise’ the familiar word.’<sup>26</sup> Words ‘fossilize;’ fossilization deadens sensation. ‘Now we have callouses on our souls,’ Shklovsky wrote.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Georg Lukács, ‘Existentialism or Marxism?’, in *Existentialism versus Marxism: Conflicting Views on Humanism*, ed. George Novack (New York: Delta, 1966), p. 133-153.

<sup>24</sup> Lev Shestov, ‘Mémorial of Husserl’, in *Russian Philosophy* vol. III, ed. James Edie, et al, (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1965), p. 248-276.

<sup>25</sup> Shestov, ‘Mémorial of Husserl’, p. 260.

<sup>26</sup> Viktor Shklovsky, ‘The Resurrection of the Word (1914)’, trans. Richard Sherwood, *Russian Formalism: A Collection of Articles and Texts in Translation*, ed. Stephen Bann and John E. Bowlt (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971), p. 41-47, quotation p. 41-42.

<sup>27</sup> Shklovsky, ‘The Resurrection of the Word’, p. 44.

Shklovsky shared, too, Husserl's dissatisfaction with the natural attitude: the failure to see clearly was intolerable. Husserl feared the abyss of a life without certitude of truth. Shklovsky feared the abyss of nihilism – not the catastrophic nihilism of war and revolution, but rather the dull nihilism of sleepwalking: 'And so, held accountable for nothing, life fades into nothingness. Automatization eats away at things, at clothes, at furniture, at our wives, and at our fear of war.'<sup>28</sup> It was art that could save us, that could 'restore to man sensation of the world.'<sup>29</sup> Art could redeem us from nihilism through fracturing familiarity and disrupting recognition. The language of poetry was 'difficult, 'laborious,' impeding language.'<sup>30</sup> This language jarred us, made things strange, alienated us from what had been familiar, and in this way disrupted our habitual (non)perception of the world. 'And so, in order to return sensation to our limbs, in order to make us feel objects, to make a stone feel stony,' Shklovsky wrote, 'man has been given the tool of art.'<sup>31</sup> This process of making the familiar feel alien Shklovsky called *остранение*, a concept that embraced both the sickness and the cure. *Ostranenie* described a problem – our estrangement – but also the means to overcome it.

This idea of estrangement suited futurism, the literary spirit of the moment. 'The aim of Futurism,' Shklovsky wrote, 'is the resurrection of things – the return to man of sensation of the world.'<sup>32</sup> This was especially true in revolutionary Russia. In May 1913 the Italian futurist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti had announced the slogan '*parole in libertà*': words were to be liberated from syntax. The following month Apollinaire published '*L'Antitradition Futuriste*, calling for '*mots en liberté*.'<sup>33</sup> The Russian futurists Aleksei Kruchenykh and Velimir Khlebnikov went a step further: they announced that the future belonged to *slovo kak takovoe*, 'the word as such.'<sup>34</sup> Now words were to be liberated not only from syntax, but also from their referents. This was just at the moment when the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure had declared that the relationship between signifier (*signifiant*) and signified (*signifié*) was an arbitrary one.<sup>35</sup> In 1919 Shklovsky's friend Roman Jakobson gave a lecture to the Moscow Linguistic Circle on Khlebnikov's poetry. Form became primary; it conditioned content. This new poetry self-consciously drew attention to its own construction through

<sup>28</sup> Viktor Shklovsky, 'Art as Device' in *Theory of Prose*, trans. Benjamin Sher (Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1990), p. 1-14, quotation p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> Shklovsky, 'The Resurrection of the Word', p. 46.

<sup>30</sup> Shklovsky, 'Art as Device', p. 13.

<sup>31</sup> Shklovsky, 'Art as Device', p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> Shklovsky, 'The Resurrection of the Word', p. 41-42.

<sup>33</sup> Guillaume Apollinaire, 'L'Antitradition Futuriste', in Mary Ann Caws, *Manifesto: a century of isms* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

<sup>34</sup> See Vladimir Markov, ed., *Manifesty i programmy russkikh futuristov* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1967), p. 53-58.

<sup>35</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in on General Linguistics*, ed. Charles Bally, Albert Echehaye and Albert Riedlinger, trans. Roy Harris (Chicago: Open Court, 1996).

the обнажение of the device: 'Здесь ясно осознана поэтическая задача, и именно русские футуристы являются основоположниками поэзии 'самовитого, самоценного слова,' как канонизованного обнаженного материала.<sup>36</sup> Shortly thereafter Jakobson left for Prague and articulated the Prague Linguistic Circle's thesis that '*the organizing feature of art by which it differs from other semiotic structures is an orientation toward the sign rather than toward what is signified.*'<sup>37</sup> Poetic language was language self-conscious of itself: it was words that drew attention to themselves as signifiers. The self-referentiality was intentionally unsettling.

Husserl, Shklovsky and Jakobson shared an uncanny ability to keep philosophy and literary theory in the foreground and the First War World in the background, even as they found themselves in the center of that war, even as they lost friends and family, even as the world around them went up in flames.<sup>38</sup> In other respects they were radically different personalities. Husserl was the serious German professor, with a wife who waited on him and kept order in the house. Shklovsky and Jakobson were young bohemians, filling their lives with sex and vodka and cavalier disregard for bourgeois convention. Yet their attempts to resolve the problem of alienation through an intensification of experience were remarkably close. The most striking kinship is that between Husserl's phenomenological reduction and Shklovsky's *ostranenie*. The divergent technicalities are less essential than the shared desire to affirm the reality of our experience of the world. The relationship between the 'natural attitude' and the 'phenomenological attitude' was in essence the relationship between recognition (узнавание) and seeing (видение). The aim of *ostranenie* was the aim of Husserl's bracketing: to shake us out of our habituatedness to the world, to make us self-conscious about the contents of our own consciousness, to bring us to awareness of our experience. Husserl and Shklovsky were optimists: both believed that alienation could be remedied. For Shklovsky the solution to alienation was paradoxically another kind of alienation: we must be thrown off, disoriented, shaken.

<sup>36</sup> Roman Jakobson, *Noveyshaya russkaya poeziya* (Praga: Politika, 1921), p. 9. [Here there is a clear consciousness of the poetic task, and and precisely the Russian futurists have emerged as founders of the poetry of the 'self-sufficient, self-valuing word' as canonized, laid-bare material.]

<sup>37</sup> The Prague Linguistic Circle, 'Theses Presented to the First Congress of Slavic Philologists in Prague, 1929,' in *The Prague School: Selected Writings, 1929-1946*, ed. Peter Steiner, trans. John Burbank et al. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), p. 3-31.

<sup>38</sup> Viktor Shklovsky, 'Sentimental'noe puteshestvie: vospominaniia 1917-1922,' in '*Eshche nichego ne konchilos' . . .*, ed. V.P. Kochetov (Moscow: Propaganda, 2002), p. 21-266. In English: Viktor Shklovsky, *A Sentimental Journey: Memoirs, 1917-1922*, trans. Richard Sheldon (Champaign, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 2004); Roman Jakobson, *My Futurist Years*, ed. Beng Jangfeldt and trans. Stephen Rudy (NY: Marsilio Publishers, 1992); Roman Ingarden, 'Moje wspomnienia o Edmundzie Husserlu,' *Studia Filozoficzne*, 29, 2(183)/1981, p. 3-24. Galin Tihanov argues for the importance of the First World War in shaping Shklovsky's thought in 'The Politics of Estrangement: The Case of the Early Shklovsky,' *Poetics Today*, 26(4)/2005, p. 665-696.



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Revolution is a moment of *ostranenie*. The familiar becomes strange. Values appear as *Evidenz*, suddenly seen with disconcertingly lucidity. Time is transformed, as if one were experiencing temporality for the first time. John Reed's *Ten Days That Shook the World* remains an unsurpassed account of the Bolshevik Revolution for enabling a kind of *Nacherleben* of this jolting vividness.<sup>39</sup>

In January 2014, as Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovych responded to protests with violence and repression, activist Victoria Narizhna began to feel a need to do *что-то яркого*, something flamboyant, something vivid, something that could be seen clearly.<sup>40</sup> The protests she organized became part of the Ukrainian revolution now called by the name of the main square in Kyiv, 'Maidan.' Never in her life had she experienced the emotions she felt during those months of revolution, Victoria said, 'never. That there could at once be such astonishing joy, astonishing sensations, relationships, insights into what – as it turns out – people are capable of.'

'In revolutionary times the limits of what is possible expand a thousandfold,' wrote Lenin in 1917.<sup>41</sup>

For Jean-Paul Sartre the present was less a dimension of time than a limit, the border between the *en-soi* and the *pour-soi*. The limit of the determinate past was the border of the present, which was the moment of the beginning of the *pour-soi*. 'In contrast to the Past which is in-itself, the Present is for-itself,' he wrote.<sup>42</sup> Revolution is the *obnazhenie* of this border between the *en-soi* and the *pour-soi*; it shakes us into awareness of this border-crossing, illuminates the moment when we pass from the realm of facticity into the realm of the possibility of negating facticity – that is, into the realm of transcendence. This is what Hannah Arendt calls natality.<sup>43</sup> It is a revelation of the human capacity to begin something new, the consequences of which cannot be foreseen.

<sup>39</sup> On *Nacherleben*, see Wilhelm Dilthey, 'The Rise of Hermeneutics,' trans. Frederic Jameson, *The New Literary History*, 3(2)/1972, p. 229-244.

<sup>40</sup> I tell this story in the chapter 'Black Lizard on Red Square' in *The Ukrainian Night: An Intimate History of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), p. 190-196.

<sup>41</sup> Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, 'Letters from Afar,' in *Revolution at the Gates*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 2002), p. 15-55, quotation p. 40.

<sup>42</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, 'Phenomenology of the Three Temporal Dimensions' in *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washing Square Press, 1956), p. 107-129, quotation p. 120.

<sup>43</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 247.

## **SELF-LIMITING CATASTROPHISM. RUSSIAN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT AND THE PROBLEM OF REVOLUTION AS UNPRECEDENTED EVIL**

By **SŁAWOMIR MAZUREK**

*The notion of unprecedented evil gained some popularity in the contemporary human sciences, especially in the Holocaust studies. The feeling that certain historical events are the manifestation of exceptional evil, however, isn't something typical for the 20th century or unknown to earlier generations. The French Revolution and the partition of Poland were also perceived in their time as the manifestations of unprecedented evil. The author of the paper gives a concise 'phenomenology' of the experience of unprecedented evil, which includes – as he observes – also an attempt at neutralizing this experience by means of a philosophical, moral or religious explanation. Then he compares four different interpretations of the experience in question: French providentialism, Polish romantic messianism, the historiosophy of the Holocaust constituting the part of political correctness and, eventually, the historiosophy of the Russian Revolution elaborated by Russian religious thinkers in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He claims that while French and Poles tried to discover the hidden meaning of exceptional historical catastrophe and Jews denied it had any meaning, Russians emphasized that even the greatest catastrophes shouldn't be treated as unprecedented evil. This stance – he concludes – constitutes the distinctive feature of the Russian interpretation of the Revolution.*

Key words: revolution, Russia, catastrophe, evil

### **I**

At least three times since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Europeans, or at least a significant part of them, whose voice could not be ignored, recognized the catastrophes they were witnessing as a manifestation of evil incomparable to anything in the past. The French Revolution and the Partition of Poland were perceived in this way by their victims and all those in the Western world who sympathized with them. These days it is commonly accepted that the 20<sup>th</sup>-century extermination of Jews was an eruption of exceptional evil. The Bolshevik Revolution, by which we mean the process of brutal social restructuring in Russia initiated by the coup d'état led by Lenin in October 1917, is usually not enumerated among similar catastrophes. The conviction that it was a crime – or a series of crimes – incomparable with any other event and revealing things about humanity that humans would rather remain unaware of, would be articulated by individuals but it never became

common nor was it accepted as an obvious truth by any significant fraction of Western opinion. Still, it would be of no surprise to anyone if just the opposite were the case. It is not at all difficult to present arguments for attributing to the Russian Revolution the ominous status of unprecedented evil. It was accompanied by atrocities and acts of homicide almost from the beginning; later, organized homicide became necessary to keep the socio-economic system created by the Revolution working. The most prominent expert in the history of the Revolution, Richard Pipes, claimed straightforwardly that the execution of the Tsar's family was the first act of modern homicide, which means it was an event opening a new, ominous era.<sup>1</sup> Pipes clearly suggests that the 'novelty' introduced by the Bolsheviks consisted in breaking the relation between guilt and punishment. The members of the Tsar's family as well as many thousands of ordinary people were murdered not because they were – be it by the standards of the executioners – guilty of anything but because within the *new social project* there was no place for them.<sup>2</sup> The Bolsheviks, according to the same historian, would exterminate the innocent fully consciously and because they thought it was the most effective means of terrorizing the masses.<sup>3</sup> If the Bolsheviks' methods and mentality have been characterized rightly here, and the whole practice of the exchangeability of the positions of the executioner and his victim that was typical of the Stalinist terror seems to confirm this, then the Bolshevik Revolution was a moral transgression more extreme than Nazi crimes. In the latter case, the Nazis killed people that they considered – in accordance with their criteria – guilty; thus, no matter how faulty from the point of view of the distinction between good and evil their definition of evil was, they did not question the very relation between guilt and punishment, and, consequently, their immoralism was less extreme than that of the Russian communists.

The reasons why the Bolshevik Revolution has not been recognized as unprecedented evil are many and diverse. One of them is related to the responsibility for the evil of the Revolution that – and this is easy to prove – is shared by the Western left and the intellectual circles that supported it. For a long time they did trust the Bolsheviks and obstructed the flow of information about their crimes; they mythologized the gains of the Revolution, and, finally, they supported it directly (in the case of the zealots who managed to enter the Soviet Union: often with a fatal ending). One may come across the opinion that the Holocaust was not a crime against humanity committed by the Germans, but a crime against the Jews committed by humanity. No matter how justified this might be, an analogous opinion about the Bolshevik Revolution – that it was a crime against the nations of the Soviet empire committed by humanity – seems to have more solid grounds. Hitlerism has never had as many advocates in the West as Stalinism had, and an attempt at justifying the Holocaust by means of the arguments formulated by Sartre,

<sup>1</sup> Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), p. 788.

<sup>2</sup> Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, p. 788, 820.

<sup>3</sup> Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, p. 820-822.

Shaw or Romain Rolland in order to justify the Gulag is hardly imaginable indeed. Many more or less direct heirs to that left, who today declare solidarity with it, are obviously not interested in making the truth of its enormous guilt widespread.

Another reason which definitely should not be ignored, even though initially it may appear awkward, is the scarcity of the photographic and film documentation of the Bolshevik crimes. We, people of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, tend to think that whatever has not been photographed did not really happen. In Bolshevik Russia, in contrast to inter-war Germany, a camera, the mythical 'Leica,' was a rare luxury indeed, and the Chekists, even if they had an actual device, definitely would not have photographed themselves against the backcloth of stacks of corpses. That would not only be against the rules they were to obey but also against Soviet man's basic instinct for self-preservation, which made him produce as little material evidence of his actions as possible.

A very important, perhaps essential, reason for *denying the Bolshevik Revolution the status of unprecedented evil* is to be sought, however, in an objection formulated by a few great Russian thinkers against such an interpretation of the Revolution or any other historical event. Despite the fact that historical catastrophes may amount to unprecedented evil not only in the eyes of their victims, it seems reasonable to say that they should first be recognized as such by the very victims. There is something awkward about a situation whereby they acquire the recognition of unprecedented evil when this is clearly denied by the victims themselves. This kind of denial, in fact, is specific for the interpretation of the Revolution, and, more generally, of 20<sup>th</sup> century catastrophes, offered by a few Russian religious thinkers. I will attempt to present their perspective and reveal its originality. For that purpose it is necessary to relate it to the three instances of the experience of a historical catastrophe as unprecedented evil that have been mentioned so far. Prior to that, I will try to sketch *an ideal model of the experience of unprecedented evil*. If it proves useful for the following analysis and makes possible a comparison of the different types of the experience in question we will have obtained evidence of its correctness.

## II

Let us note at the beginning that the phrase *the experience of unprecedented evil* will be used either in accordance with its narrower or broader definition. The former refers to an intuition that a given event is a manifestation of evil that is incomparable with anything that has ever occurred; the latter concerns the intuition itself as well as its rationalization and philosophical-religious interpretations of the event in question. In our considerations – unless stated otherwise – we use the term in its broader meaning.

It is obvious that parts of the experience may but do not have to follow one another in chronological sequence; they may constitute either clear and distinct stages of the whole or its overlapping, nearly synchronous 'strata.' We call them 'nearly synchronous'

because any rationalization and reinterpretation must be preceded by a primary intuition. In accordance with countless literary statements and personal documents, such an intuition is not an arbitrary assumption made for the sake of some speculations, but rather something that really occurs. A rationalization of such an intuition is not an attempt to justify it – the intuition is irresistible enough not to require a justification – but rather a means of making it accessible, at least partly, to others. Thanks to rationalization, which transforms the original intuition into a better or worse supported thesis, the intuition ceases to be something purely subjective and becomes communicable inasmuch as it loses the irresistibility of an indirect insight. A manifest naivety or a bias characterizing many arguments that are put forward in the phase of rationalization does not signify dishonest intentions. Supporting arguments do not have to be methodologically flawless because they play merely an auxiliary role in communicating to others some truth of great importance, which originates from a direct, lived experience rather than from rational deliberation. Confrontation with unprecedented evil, however, is an experience so depressing and traumatic that there arises a need to neutralize it at least to some extent by means of a philosophical and religious explication of the events in which the manifestation of unprecedented evil was noticed. The final stage, the essence of which rests in searching for the meaning of the events, is an attempt to repress the intuition that initiated the whole experience.

This is the way one may describe the complete experience, taking into account its components and the way they are interrelated. In some cases, as we shall see later, some of these may be reduced or skipped, the reductions and omissions remaining, obviously, always meaningful.

Exceptional evil may be considered systematically only as something that happens to a *historical subject* (a nation, a state, religious community, civilization or, finally, humanity as such). In other words, only such a subject may be confronted with this kind of evil. It has never occurred that evil done to a single individual, no matter how cruel, be considered publicly as evil that overshadows all other instances of evil. (Needless to say, Christ was not an individual human being, but – and this makes a difference – Logos incarnated.) Shestov might consider killing Socrates a hideous crime and evoke this example many times in his writings, but he never claimed that nothing equally evil happened ever after. On the contrary, he emphasized repeatedly that a confrontation with extreme evil, which turns human existence and the world into an absurd, is an experience that sooner or later becomes universal, one that everybody has their share in.

The reason why only a historical subject may be thought of as a victim of unprecedented evil should be sought in the necessity to compare the event that we consider as an instance of such an evil with the past as a whole, or, in other words, the need to see the event on the background of the past. This is, strictly speaking, impossible as long as our knowledge about the past is problematic and incomplete; we may, however, still hope that we do possess sufficient knowledge in reference to historical subjects, while

the absurdity of similar hopes in reference to individuals is more than obvious. In every moment we have at our disposal a certain holistic vision of grand history, i.e., the events in which historical subjects are actors, no matter how simplified, distorted or controversial this may be. Nothing of this kind can be claimed about single human existences that have been born, are experiencing evil and are being consummated by time. While there is a universal history of mankind, a universal history of individual human beings has been – so far – beyond our reach.

Is also the very experience of unprecedented evil - as described earlier and in the meaning assumed by us here - reserved for a historical subject? Experience in its narrower meaning, the primary intuition of confronting *summum malum*, a subjective feeling that an evil unique of its kind has happened to us definitely is not. Most of us have experienced the depths of despair directly. It is often accompanied by a conviction that one has fallen victim to exceptional evil, even if this conviction is not something essential to despair (which is debatable). That is why an attempt to comfort a despairing person by evoking others who are in despair in order to make relative the person's suffering and the evil that has happened to them is doomed to failure. This is not the case, though, with the experience of unprecedented evil in its broader meaning. Even if it cannot be said to be rigorously restricted to a historical subject, such a subject is definitely more prone and susceptible to it than a single individual. We have said that rationalization is part of the experience that interests us in its broader meaning and, as we have noted, unprecedented evil may be considered rationally and coherently mainly in reference to a historical subject. Although rationalization itself does not have to be methodologically perfect, it does not have to be perfectly *rational*, it does constitute a significant limitation.

Still, it is not the only reason why a historical subject claiming that it has fallen victim to *summum malum* is much more credible than an individual making the same claim. A single person presenting themselves as a victim of an unparalleled evil would be immediately accused of an egotist exaggerating of their own suffering. A historical subject narrating their own experience is not equally susceptible to accusations of subjectivism. A historical subject is at once a collective subject, whose ontology is a problematic issue, which remains open, and, in consequence, the principle of identity pertaining to such a subject is weaker. Every claim about its experience is a claim made by some individuals that form this subject and - rightly or wrongly – claim the right to represent it. The statement made by these individuals does not have to be (and often is not) a report about their personal experience. As a statement of an individual about others it gains an aspect of objectivity, remaining at the same time – as long as these individuals belong to one community – an auto-referential statement. Thus, a historical subject turns out to be both a victim to and a witness of evil, and in some other cases – the victim and perpetrator at once.

This tight connection between the experience of unprecedented evil and historical subjects helps to understand the relation between the experience in question and

modernity, which we have already mentioned here. Its absence in the pre-enlightenment era may be accounted for with reference to the influence of Christianity, which is based on the belief that *summum malum*, the crucifixion of God incarnated, has already occurred. Modernity stands not only for the weakening of the influence of Christianity but also the intensification of historical consciousness, the spectacular manifestation of which is the increasing significance of the philosophy of history at the price of the shrinking of some other philosophical areas, including the philosophy of being. In history, which is all the more often the main subject of reflection, one tends to search for harmony and order, both of which used to be sought for in the universe or in the structure of being. Also the distortion of harmony – i.e., evil – must manifest itself in a historical dimension rather than, as it has been so far, in an ontological or moral sphere. The presence of evil is experienced as the presence of evil in history and the presence of evil in history – as the emergence of unprecedented evil. *A modern, deeply historicist consciousness replaces the fall that precedes history with the summum malum that happens in history.* The fact that actually only a historical subject can be thought of as a victim of unprecedented evil, in alliance with typically modern historicism and orientation toward historiosophy, does not necessarily lead to this conclusion – there is no logical connection here – but it does privilege it. While modern consciousness may experience the presence of evil, also in history, in many ways, the one we are talking about here is the most typical one; even though it is not an inevitable result of the tendencies of modernity, it definitely is their creation, unknown in earlier times.

### III

One may debate whether the first of the cases of unprecedented evil that we will consider before looking at the Russian case, being the most important case for us, does not contradict, to an extent, what we have established so far. De Maistre, who articulated the experience of the (French) Revolution as unprecedented evil specific for the French conservatives and advocates of the *ancien régime* is, better than anyone else, known as a staunch opponent of the Enlightenment and, consequently, as one may add, of modernity. To this charge one should reply that it does not imply that de Maistre himself was not part of modernity. He was part of it and was influenced by it just as all the later enemies of modernity inspired by his thought until these days have been. His historiosophy remains in an easily detectable relation with Bossuet's rigorous providentialism of over a century earlier; but mentally de Maistre belongs to a different world: he knows that the 'eternal' social order is not incontestable or guaranteed once and for all and that because of the Revolution it became problematic, which means that the consciousness of de Maistre is much more decisively marked by the sense of being historical than the consciousness of his predecessors, including Bossuet.

The exceptional, incomparable criminality of the French Revolution is for de Maistre something obvious and irresistible at first sight. Many a time does he claim *expressis verbis* that revolution is the crime of crimes, while his tone and his evident emotional engagement exclude a possible suspicion that we are dealing with a display of rhetoric here, even if its impeccable form might prompt us to do so. 'Now what distinguishes the French Revolution and makes it an event unique in history is that it is radically *bad*. No element of good disturbs the eye of the observer: it is the highest degree of corruption ever known; it is pure impurity.'<sup>4</sup> The passage evoked, one of many similar in 'Considerations on France', is nothing other than an expression of the experience of unprecedented evil in its narrow meaning. When it comes to its rationalization, de Maistre indicates two crimes, each of which is, in his view, a violation of divine and human rights so extreme that their very occurrence is a sufficient reason to recognize the Revolution as unparalleled evil. The first is regicide, a repugnant murder committed on the sovereign by the whole nation; the second – the attack on the Church and religion, which had something in common with an act of collective apostasy and endowed the Revolution with an evidently satanic aspect. De Maistre's proposed interpretation of historical catastrophe recognized as unparalleled evil is of a religious-philosophical kind and its essence and the most specific trait at once rest in a combination of providentialism with an extreme anthropological and historiosophical pessimism. According to de Maistre, man is an essentially evil creature, predestined by his own corrupt nature to commit crimes. The evidence of this is history itself – a chain of unimaginable atrocities and massacres, among which the Revolution may stand out but is not contrary to historical norms. At the same time, this bloody chain of human history remains under the control of Providence; it is, then, only a mask hiding a providential order: crimes are punishments bestowed by Providence and their victims often are wrongdoers who deserve their lot. In this order the Revolution is a punishment for the sins of the old regime and, at least from a certain moment, also a punishment for the crimes that took place in the earlier phases of this very Revolution. It is exceptional in that it is an intervention of Providence that is particularly perceptible, almost tactile, as evidenced by numerous coincidences, fatalisms that could not be avoided, and even by the very scale of evil. For de Maistre it is a proof that the Revolution foretells a great transformation of the world, a rejuvenation that will be accompanied by the reign of a new religion or rebirth of Christianity. The neutralization of unprecedented evil in his historiosophy occurs by placing the evil in a universe which is at once evil and under an absolute control of Providence, and by recognizing it as an announcement of an epoch-making transformation as a result of which the Universe will become a little less evil.

For the experience of unprecedented evil shared by Polish romantics and then Polish people as a whole in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the perspective of Mickiewicz is even more

<sup>4</sup> Joseph de Maistre, *Considerations on France*, trans. R. A. Lebrun, (Cambridge: University Press, 1994), p. 38.



representative than that of de Maistre for the French conservatives. In some respects, by way of digression, Mickiewicz appears to be a perfectly symmetrical antithesis to de Maistre. While the latter sees radical evil in the French Revolution and hopes for a control of the chaos that it brought about through the restoration of the monarchical order in a new Christian era, the former sees the order of the ancient regime as the source of evil that led to the Partition of Poland. The pre-reflective, spontaneous feeling that it is a crime having no match in history, richly evidenced by Polish romantic literature, finds its rationalization in the thesis about the unprecedented nature of the Partition as an attempt to kill a nation. Nobody has managed to express it better than Krasieński – inspired by Mickiewicz, not Mickiewicz's equal as a poet but his match as a thinker – in the introduction to a poem 'Przedświt' [Daybreak]. 'A child is he who speaks that it is a political crime – it is a much deeper crime, for it is religious, going beyond the secular sphere to the divine circles – to destroy a State created by man, by his desires it would be a political crime; but to dissolve a holy nation and to wish to kill it while the realization of the idea of humanity on earth cannot be complete without this nation is a crime against the divine truth, eternal truth, it is a sacrilege indeed!<sup>5</sup> A historiosophical-religious reinterpretation of the Partition of Poland, which was meant to neutralize the feeling that it was *summum malum*, is to be found in Mickiewicz's messianism, which, depending on the interpretive aspect we choose to focus on, either emphasizes the redeeming meaning of the suffering of Poland, or highlights its historical mission as a nation-carrier of the idea of freedom. In the former case, the suffering of Poland is endowed with a higher mystical meaning; in the latter – the fact that Poland fell victim to extreme evil is recognized as the source of moral duty that makes the whole nation responsible and equally each and every single member to fight against evil, at least political evil, wherever it appears. In any case, the Partition of Poland always turns out to be the apogee of evil, which ultimately serves the victory of freedom and facilitates the coming of the era of a universal brotherhood of peoples.

Both varieties of the experience of unprecedented evil in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – the Polish and French – described here were 'complete' in that they contained all the elements of the ideal model. This is not the case with the 20<sup>th</sup>-century examples we are now going to discuss. At this point we withhold from answering the question as to whether this difference tells us anything essential about both centuries.

One of the characteristics of the experience of the Holocaust as unprecedented evil is the scope of this experience. The feeling that it was a culmination of historical evil is not only common in our civilization but also, from a certain moment, constantly present. It is a truth that on the one hand is beyond any debate and on the other is constantly repeated and recalled as if it required unceasing reconfirmation. While the French Revolution was considered as the apogee of evil by a handful of conservatives, separated from other people, who observed the revolution at least with interest, and the Partition of Poland by

<sup>5</sup> Zygmunt Krasieński, *Dziela literackie*, ed. P. Hertz, vol. 1, (Warszawa: PIW, 1973), p. 150.

the victims themselves and partly by the progressive European opinion, the Holocaust came to be considered exceptional evil by the overwhelming majority of the people in the West. Consequently, it became overgrown with an enormous number of interpretations, of which the one that became the component of political correctness is considered as representative for the contemporary experience of Holocaust as unprecedented evil. It entails all the claims about the Holocaust that can be declared publicly without any justification, and the negation of which is considered unacceptable independent of the justification provided. The original intuition that the Holocaust was *summum malum*, which found expression in countless reports and works of art, is rationalized by way of indicating that the Holocaust was the first attempt in history to exterminate a whole nation, which was the end in itself, and one not serving any further purpose. The fact that this standpoint, if understood literally, gives rise to many questions and proves contrary to the beliefs that are fundamental for our civilization, at least as undisputable as the thesis about the exceptionality of the Holocaust (to mention just a few - why would killing a nation be worse a crime than killing a single person? Why should a crime serving another purpose be a lesser evil in comparison with an 'aimless' crime?) only confirms our conviction about the predominantly persuasive nature of the rationalization of the experience of unprecedented evil in its narrow meaning. Differently than in both the cases we have discussed, here one does not proceed from a rationalization to interpretation meant to neutralize the original intuition by inscribing exceptional evil into a broader historiosophical or religious schema which makes it 'explicable' and 'meaningful'. In contrast to that, such procedures are immediately and unconditionally condemned as a relativization of the Holocaust. One can hardly imagine the indignation caused by a possible attempt to neutralize – in the way de Maistre did by recognizing the victims as guilty, or Mickiewicz did by claiming that the victims have extraordinary moral obligations towards others – the original intuition that the Holocaust was unprecedented evil. The most striking feature of the experience of the Holocaust as unprecedented evil (or, more precisely, the experience of unprecedented evil starting with the recognition of the Holocaust as *summum malum*) is giving up any historiosophical-religious neutralization of the primary intuition, which hides the effort to preserve this intuition in its original form unmitigated by time or reflection, and – as far as it is possible – to convey it to others.

The experience of the Bolshevik Revolution as unprecedented evil seems in this context highly peculiar, mainly because, in point of fact, it never took place. Independently of the above mentioned circumstances that favour the recognition of revolution as such an evil, only a few of the thinkers writing about it were ready to perceive it in this way; the others either refrained from formulating similar conclusions or warned about formulating them.

Unprecedented evil in the Revolution was definitely noticed by Vasily Rozanov (1856-1919), one of the most original writers and thinkers of the first phase of the Russian religious-philosophical renaissance, and Marian Zdziechowski (1861-1938), a Polish neo-

romantic pessimist, remaining under the strong influence of Russian thought. Rozanov made revolution the main, if not the only theme of his famous work 'The Apocalypse of Our Times.' He gathered in this eccentric text, being an apocrypha, a diary, and a series of political polemics at the same time, motives present in his earlier books, and presented the Revolution not as a historical catastrophe but as a historical episode of a cosmic catastrophe. According to Rozanov, the Russian Revolution is the end of a long term process of the destruction of the human world, civilization and even the universe by Christianity, the hallmark of which is the opposition God-nature, an acosmism manifesting itself in the condemnation of sexuality.

Christianity, which ignores nature and does not recognize the rights of the body – in contrast to paganism, which understood human needs well – could not become a solid foundation for societies. Not only did it disintegrate them – the two millennia of Christendom formed an era of 'permanent revolution,' unending social unrest and upheavals – but also led to the atheisation of humanity. In a long turn it is impossible to remain loyal to a religion that is contrary to nature; thus, humanity turns away from Christianity and because displacing paganism was followed by the attributing of the features of Christianity to religion as such, breaking with Christianity meant breaking with religion in general. Such a deep disorder in the human world must influence the state of the universe, part of which is man, in which case a revolution foreshadowed not only the end of the current social order and civilization but certainly also the end of the universe: an overwhelming implosion of being. Rozanov would often succumb to the pessimism of his own prophecies and, deprived of hope, was awaiting a catastrophe that would engulf him along with the whole universe. Sometimes, though, he would momentarily switch into an extreme optimism and, in accordance with the rule *credo quia absurdum*, would assume that the turmoil he was witnessing preceded not an apocalypse but rather a regeneration of the world along with the rebirth of cosmic paganism.

Marian Zdziechowski, in his turn, was not bothered by similar episodes of optimism, particularly not in the 1930s. Shocked by the scale of the Bolsheviks' crimes and appalled by the Soviet utopia, which in his view was a bestial undertaking aimed at creating a new human being not only deprived of individual features and totally disciplined but also one prone to cruelty, Zdziechowski openly called the Revolution a literal manifestation of demonic powers. Gradually he would become deeply convinced that by bringing to light the evil deeply hidden within human nature, the Revolution finally discredited humanity, which, by the way, was not to be praised for the former, exceptionally unjust, social order. Revolution proved, in his view, that the history of mankind ended with the victory of evil. The pessimism of Zdziechowski's diagnosis, which in its most extreme version may perhaps be compared only to some nihilistic interpretations of the Holocaust, could be mitigated only by introducing an eschatological perspective, a belief that God would soon put an end to the scandal of human history and the earthly reality so that the triumph of the good might occur in a different realm of being. At the end of his life, however,

Zdziechowski, as evidenced by his private correspondence (he never declared it publicly), lost religious faith and along with it – any eschatological hope.

Nevertheless, the belief that the Russian Revolution was unprecedented evil was criticized by the most prominent Russian thinkers. The most famous of them, Nikolai Bierdiaiev, was of the opinion that social revolutions were phenomena known in history since time immemorial, so just another revolution could not be considered an unparalleled event. Evgenii Trubetskoi (1863-1920) expressed similar views about historical catastrophes in general, highlighting at the same time that they always have beneficial consequences as they facilitate the outburst of creativity and religious revival. Historical upheavals help rid us of the illusory values which we attach ourselves during periods of stability; the Russian Revolution was another upheaval of this sort, one comparable with the Peloponnesian War or the turmoil in the era of Renaissance. The most subtle argument against the claim that revolution is unprecedented evil and at the same time against searching for this kind of evil in any historical event, was formulated by a leading representative of the philosophy of pan-unity, Semyon Frank. The idea as to the exceptional nature of evil we are confronted with was, in his view, a relic of a progressivist belief in the epistemological superiority of modernity over the whole past, whereas this superiority was no more guaranteed by the fatalism of progress, by way of which we are always closer to the aim of history than our predecessors, but by an initiation that is accessible only for us in the form of meeting *summum malum*. Both strictly progressivist and extremely catastrophist models of history are wrong, even though both hide a grain of truth. To a limited extent and in some areas progress is possible; meanwhile we are threatened by a catastrophe, which, however, cannot be ultimate because creation is indestructible by way of its inherent divine element – the light shining in the darkness of St John's Gospel.

Russian thinkers tried to suppress the intuition which gives birth to the experience of unprecedented evil before it ever comes into being. Their objection against the absolutization of historical evil was not always so evident and so well supported as in the case of Frank, but it definitely was voiced more often by these thinkers than by others. This motive is original enough to be recognized as a feature specific to the Russian diagnosis of the Revolution. Is its presence related to any important inclination within Russian religious thought? To answer this question, let us evoke another question that we formulated in this paper and yet left unanswered. We asked whether the fact that the 20<sup>th</sup>-century experience of unprecedented evil is 'incomplete' when compared to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century one adds something to our overall understanding of both centuries. It surely does. The difference tells us something about the 19<sup>th</sup>-century trust in the philosophy of history and about the loss of this trust in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The 19<sup>th</sup> century operates with philosophical strategies allowing one to – at least to some extent – endow with meaning even unparalleled evil and mitigate the trauma of encountering it. The 20<sup>th</sup> century either disowns these strategies or preserves them but in a reduced form and with a number of reservations. This is attested to by the difference between the reactions to

the Holocaust and to the Russian Revolution described here by us. The consequences of both resolutions, however, turn out to be paradoxical. The recognition of the Holocaust as absolute evil, in connection with the definite rejection of a neutralizing, historiosophical reinterpretation seems at first to be an act of breaking with the illusions of historiosophy that modernity is capable of; however, if Frank's critique is correct, it is merely a relic of one of the most dogmatic varieties of historiosophy. The perspective of the Russians, which – at least because of the involvement of religious elements – seems to preserve more of the historiosophical heritage, ultimately turns out to be a more nuanced and successful attempt to disentangle these illusions. An effort to break radically with the philosophy of history leads to the conservation of its residue, while preserving some of its elements allows for the liberation from its most delusive schemas. Still, the refusal to absolutize historical evil does not indicate insensitivity to the presence of evil in general – it is perhaps the last thing one might accuse Russian thinkers of. By refusing to identify the Revolution with unprecedented evil they oppose the aforementioned, specifically modern tendency to historize evil, while the canonical historiosophy of the Holocaust fits perfectly into this tendency, just as Polish messianism and the providentialism of de Maistre do.

## THE RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS OF THE LATER FICHTE AS A SOURCE OF ANARCHISM AND REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS

By **IGOR I. EVLAMPIEV**

*The paper challenges common belief according to which Hegel is a key-figure in the development of ideas of anarchism and revolution in Russian political and sociological thought. The main claim of the paper is that in the case of many thinkers (especially Herzen and Bakunin) much more important factor was religious and philosophical ideas of late Fichte. A central idea of Fichte – who perceived his own philosophy as a comeback to the primary Christian thought – was potential unity of man and God. To achieve this unity and (in this way) perfection is – according to Fichte – the aim of every man. Bakunin followed this idea and claimed that every man is able to achieve perfection and establish interpersonal relationship without external power of state. This claim leads to rejection of state as an obstacle on the road to perfection and free, interpersonal relationships, which are in accordance with idea of anarchy. The author of paper proves that influence of Fichte is obvious even in the case of late works of Bakunin, in which he rejects any idealism, metaphysics and religion.*

Key words: Johann Gottlieb Fichte, authentic christianity, Mikhail Bakunin, Russian anarchism

In searching for the philosophical sources of Russian Marxism, Bolshevism and the very theory of revolution itself contemporary historians of philosophy unanimously point to the philosophy of Hegel as being the main foundation of revolutionary ideas. This is, first and foremost, connected with the fact that Marxism drew extensively from Hegel's system, especially from its historical outlook. V.I. Lenin was hugely interested in Hegel's ideas ('Philosophical notebooks,' with the summary of certain fragments of 'The Science of Logic,' often considered to be one of Lenin's chief philosophical works), and this was to be an important factor defining the leading role enjoyed by Hegel amongst the sources of the Bolshevik teachings.

By a strange course, this high rating of Hegel as a thinker was to find its dissipation across the entirety of Russian philosophy, also along its religious course. Hegel was and still is, to a large degree, considered to be the most important Western thinker to impact on Russian philosophy of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Besides, historians of philosophy are well acquainted with the fact that the philosophy of Hegel was closely connected with the philosophy of other representatives of German idealism of the beginning of the nineteenth century – Kant, Fichte and Schelling. Their ideas arrived in

Russia at the same time as those of Hegel. However, in accordance with the prevalent model of explanation, Russian thinkers, though initially fascinated with the clearly Romantic ideas of Fichte or the natural philosophical notions of Schelling, while growing 'mature' started to move towards Hegel's system, as one that seemed more consistent, logical and fruitful.

I consider the formulated stereotype to be deeply flawed, distorting our understanding of the development of Russian philosophy. It is not accurate even in reference to the development of revolutionary ideas in Russia. Certain important components of revolutionary ideology simply cannot be understood without recourse to Hegel, yet it is Fichte who was the most important German philosopher in Russia, one displaying the deepest and most effective impact on the majority of Russian thinkers. I shall demonstrate this in this paper on the example of one of the important components within the revolutionary current of Russian philosophy – the anarchist theories of Mikhail Bakunin.

However, I shall start with another example. If one is to look carefully at the main supporters of Hegel in Russian philosophy, then one can see that their 'Hegelianism' in no way disturbed their *personalist* outlook and their recognition of the metaphysical absoluteness of human personality. This is true even in the case of Boris Chicherin, the chief Russian Hegelian of the nineteenth century, but of far more interest is an exploration of the aforementioned combination in the views of A. Herzen. In the book *My past and thoughts* Herzen left a detailed description of his passion for Hegel's philosophy, which had gripped the representatives of the Stankevich circle and thinkers close to it. The high value that Herzen himself attributed to the philosophy of Hegel raises no doubts; nonetheless, if one analyses his views carefully then one can see that he 'corrected' Hegel a little with the support of the ideas drawn from the philosophy of Fichte, which enabled him to claim that in Hegel's philosophy, despite the widely held opinion, the significance of a separate personality is not reduced.

Herzen directs at Hegel a fair number of critical comments. 'Hegel is often inconsistent with his own principles,'<sup>1</sup> he was to ascertain in his work *Diletantism in Science*. He was even more critical in his approach to Schelling, considering Schelling's big bow in the direction of nature-philosophy (*Naturphilosophie*) to be mistaken. He does not say much about Fichte and all he does say is in a similar vein: Fichte was for him the *model philosopher*. In giving a general evaluation, in 'Letters on the study of nature,' of the history of new European philosophy, Herzen named at most a few thinkers who, in his opinion, had determined the entirety of its content. He writes: '...after Bruno philosophy has one great biography del gran Ebreo the teachings 'of the great Jew' (Spinoza),' and he adds as a comment: 'Should one also include Leibniz and Fichte?'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Herzen, *Sobraniye sochineniy* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1954-1965), vol. III, p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> Herzen, *Sobraniye sochineniy*, vol. III, p. 241.

It is important to note that Russian thinkers were sharply critical of Fichte's early system, mainly of his highly subjective idealism, but they saw in his later teachings that Fichte himself had departed from subjective idealism and had created a religious-philosophical model of man, one based on the principle of the *identity* of man and God. Man, in the later Fichte, represents the whole and adequate earthly manifestation of God. This teaching has a highly normative character: man is still not God but he *should become God*. Thus, Fichte attracted Russian thinkers with the way he demonstrated the absolute significance of personality and presented it within the framework of a Christian worldview – i.e. the worldview of the true Christianity that he reinstated within his philosophy, setting it in opposition to false, orthodox, historical Christianity. Hegel was also perceived as the creator of an absolute 'scientific' system in which definitive knowledge of the world and man was offered and which could become the basis for the movement towards the realization of an ideal of a social order. Both of these strivings equally: the desire to prove the absolute significance of human personality and the desire to find absolute knowledge leading to the creation of 'paradise on Earth' are the most characteristic tendencies in Russian culture and this conditions the eternal significance of the two German philosophers for the history of Russian thought.

Nonetheless, the attitudes toward Fichte and Hegel were not the same. The idea of the absoluteness of personality and the idea of absolute knowledge leading to a social ideal were too different and could only be combined with difficulty. A deep understanding of personality and its internal contradictions leads to the awareness of the impossibility of its rational cognition, and in such a case a move towards an ideal, towards a 'paradise on Earth' appears extremely complex (although the ideal itself is not refuted). As a result, deep thinkers placed before such a philosophical choice more readily took the side of Fichte despite being fascinated by the words of Hegel and his 'absolute systematism' (S. Trubetskoy's term). The decisive move in the direction of Hegel was made only by the Russian followers of Karl Marx; as I have already mentioned, it was to be the Marxist history of philosophy, particularly during the Soviet epoch, that was to create the said stereotype of the indivisible supremacy of Hegel within Russian thought of the nineteenth century, which has created a most distorted picture of both Russian philosophy as a whole and its various representatives.

Especially graphic is this distortion in the evaluations that have arisen in reference to Mikhail Bakunin's philosophical position and his anarchic theory of society. Bakunin represents a typical example of the collision of vectors of influence, ones coming from Fichte and Hegel. Fichte was Bakunin's first 'philosophical love,' and we believe it remained with him for the whole of his life, contrary to the general opinion that he fairly quickly overcame his fascination with the ideas of Fichte and adopted the philosophy of Hegel as an ultimate basis for his views.

Bakunin's letters of the 1830s show that he was in that epoch simply consumed by Fichte's ideas, for he attempted to convince all of his friends of the necessity to study his



works and to adopt the particular version of Christianity that Fichte had developed within his philosophy. 'I am man, and I will be God!<sup>3</sup> – this was Bakunin's slogan at that time. He was to expand it in detail revealing his views in a letter to A.A. Beer of the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 1836, in which he refuted categorically traditional Christianity, the religion of the divine 'code' and 'duty'; which demanded from man a renunciation of his direct temporal thoughts and feelings for the sake of a greater immediacy in relation to God. Bakunin found the real God within himself, and this God could demand nothing that would contradict the unique, innermost thoughts and feelings of man. 'But no, there is a God, I have found him in myself. This God demands dignity from me, he desires for me to be free for he himself is free. He wants for me to develop eternally my moral and intellectual abilities; for every creature that does not think and does not feel is an animal and he is the enemy of animalism. Such is the true God'<sup>4</sup>.

In accordance with Christianity thus understood, man should strive to disclose the fullness of his earthly essence, and not surmount it thanks to some 'heavenly' essence. Within such a conception Jesus Christ is simply the first man who brought about such a disclosure of his essence and it was only in this sense that he became God: 'Jesus Christ is great and possible only as a true man; as God he is ridiculous and comical. He was born a man, like we; we should become God like him'<sup>5</sup>.

It is not difficult to see that it is here that the most important theses of Fichte's work, *The Way towards the Blessed Life*, are most precisely reproduced. Fichte views human consciousness as a phenomenon which has the form of the existence of God, who on his own is above all that exists, meaning it is a non-existing God: '...consciousness, or we ourselves, is divine existence as such and is united absolutely with the divine existence.'<sup>6</sup> God appears in every personality in all of his fullness: 'It is not that the divine essence divides itself on its own; it is placed in each and every «person», and possibly, if only the person liberates it is, a truly singular and immutable divine essence will manifest itself exactly as it is in its very self; only this essence appears in every 'man' in a countenance different and unique to him alone.'<sup>7</sup> The individuality of single persons is absolutely valuable for they express the diverse aspects of the endless internal fullness of God, therefore a genuine (true) religion cannot demand from man a rejection of his own individual characteristics; quite the reverse, it bestows on him religious consecration: 'The striving to be something else than that which we were destined for, however grand and sublime this other would seem, is the height of amorality, just as is all the compulsion which we create for ourselves

<sup>3</sup> Mikhail Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyeh sochineniya i pis'ma*, (Moscow: Mysl', 1987), p. 70.

<sup>4</sup> Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyeh sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 66.

<sup>5</sup> Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyeh sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 77.

<sup>6</sup> Jochann Gottlieb Fichte, *Nastavleniya k blazhennoy zhizni*, trans. A.K. Sudakov, (Moscow: Kanon+, 1997), p. 57.

<sup>7</sup> Fichte, *Nastavleniya k blazhennoy zhizni*, p. 126.

in this, and all the unpleasantness which we endure and undergo because of this, the very core of the indignation against the divine order protecting us and the opposition of our will to the will of God<sup>8</sup>. These are Fichte's ideas that are subsequently and consequently expressed in Bakunin's philosophical views.

At a decisive moment in his philosophical development, Bakunin moved over towards Hegel's system and enthusiastically learnt from it. This turning point can be clearly seen in his letters. In May 1837 he wrote: 'Hegel has given me a completely new life. I am totally absorbed by him. I am increasingly aware that science is the true verse of my life, that it should be the fundamental principle for all of my acts.'<sup>9</sup> The most notable manifestation of the temporary transfer of Bakunin from Fichte to Hegel is the change in the presentation of the relations between man and God. If earlier he was of the conviction that every human personality is one and the same with God, that it carries within itself God and summons up to reveal God in itself, then now, under the influence of Hegel, he understood God as an objective Spirit, which endlessly surpasses an individual personality, and into which human personality enters without failure, but does not definitively express all of its fullness. 'My friends, all people live in God, but God does not live in every man.'<sup>10</sup> Bakunin now considered the main task of man to be not personal efforts at the manifestation of God within himself, but the participation (possibly insignificant and unnoticed in his personal characteristics) in the general work of mankind striving for absolute truth.

However, at the same time Bakunin continued to repeat the Christian thesis of Fichte's later religious teachings: Life is blessed<sup>11</sup> (once he directly referred to and cited the German philosopher<sup>12</sup>). One may state that Bakunin's evaluation of Fichte's philosophy as a phenomenon eminent and eternal was not shaken by his temporary fascination with Hegel's system. Communicating in a letter to A.A. Beer (the end of February – beginning of March 1840) that he had been reading about the life and works of Fichte, Bakunin states that Fichte is 'the genuine hero of the new times,' and admits that he had always liked him deeply' for his ability to gain his goal, and he ends with the express ascertainment: 'Yes I feel, with a deep sense of joy I feel that old, intense, inspired state of the spirit reviving in me, I am returning to my living source, I am again becoming myself.'<sup>13</sup> One may conjecture that the words refer to the return to the views of Fichte following the short-lived fascination with the philosophy of Hegel.

This assumption is confirmed by another of Bakunin's letters, one written at the very

<sup>8</sup> Fichte, *Nastavleniya k blazhennoy zhizni*, p. 128.

<sup>9</sup> Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyeh sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 84.

<sup>10</sup> Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyeh sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 91.

<sup>11</sup> Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyeh sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 88, 90, 91, 93, 96, 127, 128 and *passim*.

<sup>12</sup> Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyeh sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 85.

<sup>13</sup> Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyeh sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 134.

same time (13<sup>th</sup> of March) and addressed to his sisters, Aleksandra and Tatyana. Bakunin refers here to Fichte's thesis on God's embodiment in every man and he develops it in an original way in the direction that quite soon will blossom into his conception of anarchy as the best form of social system.

Every man should live through grace, truth, through the internal love of his life. Besides general religion, besides the general unity of man with God, everyone has in the deepest innermost recesses of his internal life a direct, personal attitude to God exclusive to him – an attitude which constructs *the genuine me* of man's *internal genius*. The genuine me can never contradict the content of the general Christian religion because just as the latter is the embodiment of God in the finite spirit, in man in general, so the true me is the embodiment of God in the individual peculiarity of each individual person. The genuine *I* is the *personality* of man, a personality that can never be sinful or false for it is the direct unity of man with God. And therefore the whole of man's life, all of his strivings should manifest themselves in his individualism filled with sin, and lies should disappear into the implementation of his living and eternal personality. The whole of his life is nothing other than a search for himself, for his own personal, human virtue and felicity [...].<sup>14</sup>

Here one comes into an indirect contact with the ideas of Hegel and Fichte in Bakunin's thought. When talking of 'universal religion' and the 'universal unity of man with God,' he most clearly has in mind the philosophy of Hegel but the whole sense of these deliberations lies in the admission of the inadequacies, the incompleteness of such a conception, which has to be supplemented by the idea of a direct personal relationship with God within the 'I'. In emphasising that the genuine manifestation of God in man is his unique *personality*, his *individual peculiarity* as a separate person, Bakunin clearly engages in an argument with the Hegelian understanding of religion and in an abrupt form reinstates the main premises of Fichte's teachings to his thinking. Here he understands the necessity for the supplementation of the idea of personality as a form of divine manifestation, the idea of the spiritual unity of personality, but now he conjectures this unity in accordance with the philosophy of Fichte as secondary in relation to personality and its activity in relation to the revelation of God in one: 'People's personalities should be completely independent and free. If within these independences there is instilled an all-penetrating and inseparable unity of a common tendency, of a common life, then they would sense it, and this sensation would be called love.'<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyе sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 135-136.

<sup>15</sup> Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyе sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 135.

These very philosophical ideas were to lead Bakunin to the conception of social organisation in the guise of anarchy. Highly characteristic is that the gradual transfer of social-political problems into the centre of Bakunin's interests in no way lessened the significance of the religious construct of his views. He understood democracy, as a universal form for the construction of society, as a religion, as the genuine Christianity of Fichte, showing that every man is potentially God and therefore people possess an equal significance in their striving to become God himself. In his work *The reaction in Germany* (1842) Bakunin writes:

...only when the 'democratic party' is convinced that democracy is not contained merely in opposition to the powers that be, some particular constitutional or political-economic transformation, but instead signifies the complete revolution of the whole world order and foretells something still unknown in history, a completely new life, and only when it has understood that democracy is a religion and by comprehending this it itself becomes religious, imbued with its own principles not only in thinking and in judgements but also in their actualization in real life, into the tininess of its manifestations, only then will a democratic party be able to conquer the world.<sup>16</sup> This 'new life,' 'unknown in history,' which Bakunin sees as the aim of a genuine democracy is, obviously, the religiously consecrated life of people manifesting God within themselves. This way of thinking is no less clearly expressed in a much later article 'Communism' (1843), where Bakunin interprets 'genuine true communism' as a process of the 'implementation of a free and fraternal society, the implementation of God's Kingdom on earth,' and as the 'real temporal manifestation of what constitutes the divine essence of Christianity'.<sup>17</sup>

And, finally, the thesis (from a letter to his brother Pavel, 1845) which defines the very essence of Bakuninian anarchism: 'To liberate man – this is a solely legitimate and beneficial influence. The lot of all religious and philosophical dogmas! They present total illusion. Truth – this is not theory but a fact, life itself, these are the relations of free and independent people, this is the holy unity of love resulting from the mysterious and infinite depths of personal freedom'.<sup>18</sup> Although here Bakunin is turning aside all 'religious and philosophical dogmas,' the content of this thesis can only be understood on the basis of Fichte's ideas about God as appearing within every man. And all the more so that in five years, in a letter to I. Skurzhevskii, Bakunin in a decisive manner confirms his devotion to earlier Fichtean ideas – Fichte's genuine Christianity and his practical activism- and unequivocally turns away and even mocks Hegel for his 'grasp of God by means of science' and 'empty abstractions':

<sup>16</sup> Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyе sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 209.

<sup>17</sup> Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyе sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 237.

<sup>18</sup> Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyе sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 242-243.

You are mistaken if you think I do not believe in God; but I have totally rejected any attempt to understand him by means of science and theory. There was a time when I exclusively involved myself in a single philosophy. In the course of several years running I had no other aim than science, my head was filled with the most empty of abstractions, [...] I thought only about the absolute and could not say a word without the most abstract of expressions: subject, object, the self-formation of ideas etc., and, for example, there was a moment of madness when it seemed to me that I understood something and knew; but returning to common sense and life itself I was finally to become convinced that life, love and action can only be comprehended by means of life, love and action themselves. [...] I seek God in people, in their freedom, and now I also seek God in revolution.<sup>19</sup>

Further on, in the selfsame letter, Bakunin writes: '... We all are in need of religion, in all the parties its shortage can be felt. Only a few people believe in what they are doing, the majority either act according to an abstract system, as if living life were merely an application of some wretched abstractions, and therefore they are so powerless, or guided by their own material interests.'<sup>20</sup> Here an 'abstract system' anticipated by Hegel's system, clearly opposes 'living life' – the key notion of Fichte's religious system, repeatedly used in his cycle of lectures *Characteristics of the present age* and *The way towards the blessed life*.

To understand the depth and logicity of Bakunin's subsequent negation of the state, traditional religion and all other forms of authoritarian rule over man, one must take into consideration the Fichtean foundation of his views; in any other instance they appear as straightforward nihilism. But Bakunin's views never had anything in common with nihilism; he possessed a deep positivist faith – a belief that each man had God within himself and was called upon during his life to reveal him (God) by means of his personality. For it was this uncompromising belief in the divine declaration of each of those living today that distanced Bakunin and his conception of anarchy from Hegel's philosophical and social theory. For Hegel history had a providential character and inevitably led to the 'Kingdom of Heaven on Earth,' but the 'guile of worldly reason' does not presuppose the possibility that *all people* find a place in it. Only individuals at any moment of time can rise out of their necessity to the needs of the objective Spirit, marching within history, and sharing with him the eternity and endlessness of the coming perfection. That is why in Hegel's philosophy of history the empirical manifestation of the divine Spirit is the *state*, which ensures at least an external control of the Spirit's claims over people while they continue to reside in imperfection.

<sup>19</sup> Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyeh sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 247.

<sup>20</sup> Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyeh sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 248.

In the final variant of his socio-political teachings, Bakunin completely refutes the religious basis for the idea of personality and stands in opposition to any form of religion and religious philosophy. Nevertheless, in 1864, in a programme work *The international secret society for the liberation of humanity*, while he acknowledges relative significance of historical religions in revealing the inner essence not of God but of Humanity, he still points to the necessity of inventing a new religion by mankind:

...socialism should follow in the footsteps of all religions that proclaim faith in God, for socialism is, in religious terms, a belief in the fulfilment of man's vocation on earth. [...] The 'Great Revolution of 1789 and 1793' substituted the dogmas of the Nicaea Council with a mere three words: liberty, equality, fraternity – a fruitful symbol that encapsulated the whole future, the whole of the nobility and happiness of mankind! This new religion, the earthly religion of the human line, is in opposition to the heavenly religion of divinity! At the same time it is the implementation and the radical denial of the ideas of Christianity.<sup>21</sup>

This thesis about the 'implementation' of the ideas of Christianity in the form of Socialism is fully comprehensible only when seen within the context of Fichte's teachings, in which historical Christianity is denied and a true, genuine Christianity is proclaimed in the form of teachings about man's fulfilment of his divine destiny on earth, i.e. 'the Divine Heavenly Kingdom on Earth'.

Here Bakunin emphasises the distinction between his comprehension of the ideal of freedom, equality and brotherhood as the 'new religion,' and the understanding advanced by the French Enlightenment thinkers. He rejects Jean-Jacques Rousseau's view that 'the freedom of one limits the freedom of others,' for it was based on individualism, on the notion of the self-sufficiency of a separate, independent individual, establishing a social order in conjunction with other individuals in the act of 'social agreement.' Being a true follower of the great German philosophers, Bakunin opposes the schematic individualism of the representatives of the Enlightenment with the dialectical idea of the mutual conditionality of individual freedom and the spiritual unity of personalities. In this respect Bakunin is closer than ever to the Fichtean version of fixed dialectic: '*...freedom becomes true and total only in the integrated mutual unity of everyone in everyone else. There is no isolated freedom, freedom is by nature mutual and social. In order for me to be free, it is essential that my rights and my human essence be recognised, and their image, if one may formulate it so, be reflected in the mirror of the free consciousness of everyone else. I could be really free only amongst people who are as free as I am.*'<sup>22</sup> Here Bakunin employs the notion of the mutual recognition of personalities, which is central in Fichte's conception of the

<sup>21</sup> Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyе sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 265.

<sup>22</sup> Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyе sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 273.

state and law, and which most clearly differentiates this conception from the notion of the 'social agreement' advanced by the representatives of the Enlightenment.

Interestingly, the notion of *recognition* as a necessary condition of human existence, is also to be found in Hegel, but here it is a result of the clash of individuals (the collision of their desires directed towards the same things), their struggle not for life, but for death, ending in the division into masters and slaves (this idea was to constitute the crux in the interpretation of Hegel as found in the works of A. Kojève). The Hegelian concept of recognition turn out to be close to the Enlightenment idea of the mutual limitation of the external, 'aggressive' freedom of individuals (their desires to possess material things) with the help of 'social contract.' Fichte, though, has in mind something completely different. The external freedom of man is, in his view, secondary in relation to the internal freedom expressed within creative activity, while the internal freedom is not limited by the analogical freedom of another individual, but rather *is intensified* by it and is possible only *in coordination with the freedom of others*. Therefore, the act of recognition is in the philosophy of Fichte an act of love and an act of becoming familiar with one's self in another, i.e. 'God incarnate.' And this was to be the conception that Bakunin reproduced.

In his much later works expounding the concept of anarchism, Bakunin would persistently refute metaphysics, idealism and religion, and would claim that he stood on a materialist (yet realistic) position. But this cannot be taken to be anything more than a genuine self-delusion, even though Soviet historians of ideas adopted this 'materialist turning' on the part of Bakunin in good faith.<sup>23</sup> Bakunin's theory transformed itself only in its external form while in its philosophical fundamentals it was to remain unchanged, and it may be deemed comprehensible and plausible only within the general framework of Fichte's later religious teachings.

Bakunin's anarchism became not only a clear manifestation of the impact of Fichte on Russian philosophy, but it also took on the character of a *universal model* explaining the relations between personality (individual) and society, therefore, *it may be found, in various variants, in an array of thinkers*. With minor exceptions, one may divide all the eminent Russian thinkers of the nineteenth century into two large groups: those who based themselves on the philosophy of Hegel and as a result diminished the significance of human personality in relation to religion, the church and the state, and those who based themselves on Fichte and consequently admitted of the absolute priority of the individual (personality) in relation to the indicated institutions. The influence of Schelling needs to be seen as a contributing factor, one enriching the outlook of Russian thinkers but not one that changed the fundamental opposition. The very fact that the name of Fichte is encountered reasonably rarely in the philosophical works of the nineteenth century when compared to references to Hegel and Schelling may be explained purely in

<sup>23</sup> Vladimir Pustarnakov, 'Bakunin kak filosof', in *Bakunin: pro et contra*, (St. Petersburg: RKhGA, 2015), p. 697-698.

terms of reasons of censorship; for Fichte had the firm reputation of being an 'atheist' and a 'revolutionary'. Nonetheless, Fichte's 'line' within Russian philosophy was to turn out to be far more fruitful and original than the lineage spawned by Hegel.

What is most unexpected is the presence of an anarchic conception within the views of F. Dostoevsky. By way of proof I shall submit a single fragment from the preparatory materials for the novel *The Devils*. Dostoevsky talks here about a society of perfect people, ones similar to Jesus Christ (i.e. revealing God in themselves) and therefore existing on the basis of completely different laws than those of contemporary imperfect mortals. 'Just imagine that all are Christs, - and would there be the present-day vacillation, bewilderment, pauperism? Whoever does not understand it will understand nothing of Christ and is no Christian. If people had not the slightest idea about the state and none whatsoever about sciences, then they would all be like Christs, and then, would there not indeed be immediately paradise on Earth?'<sup>24</sup> In the drafts for the novel *The Devils* the idea that if 'all were Christs' the world would be completely different than it is at present, appears several times.<sup>25</sup> We shall note that Dostoevsky is not even saying that people would be 'similar to Christ' but that they will in fact 'be Christs,' that is they will literally repeat Christ as man that God manifested himself in. In total accordance with the spirit of Bakunin's ideas, the passage from Dostoevsky quoted above shows that the future perfect people will have no need for a state to properly organise life. Dostoevsky portrays such an 'anarchic' society in more detail in the short story 'The Dream of a Funny Man.' And finally, one may recall the contents of Ivan Karamazov's article which is discussed by the participants of the meeting in the cell of the *starets* Zosima at the very beginning of the novel *The Brothers Karamazov*. Ivan conjectures in his piece that in the future, given the correct development of society, '[i]t is not the Church that should seek a concrete position within the State [...] but, on the contrary, every temporal state should become nothing other than a Church itself, and thereby should reject every purpose at odds with the Church and its aims.'<sup>26</sup> It hardly requires pointing out that within this context 'the Church' for Dostoevsky was not the historical, Christian Church (Orthodox or another denomination); here, just as in the passages quoted earlier, what is implied is a spiritual society of perfect people who have 'become Christs' and who consequently have no need of the state as an institution of coercion.

Leo Tolstoy has already long ago been confidently ascribed to the 'anarchist' ranks due to his negative attitude towards the state and other social institutions as well as his advocacy of a morality of individual self-perfection. This point of view was to become especially popular thanks to the book by I. Il'in *On resisting evil by force*, where the author

<sup>24</sup> Fiodor Dostoevsky, *Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy*, vol. XI, (Leningrad: Nauka 1972-1990), p. 192-193.

<sup>25</sup> Dostoevsky, *Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy*, vol. XI, 193; cf. 106; p. 182.

<sup>26</sup> Dostoevsky, *Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy*, vol. XIV, p. 58.



equated Tolstoy's anarchism to nihilism.<sup>27</sup> This, undoubtedly, is a huge distortion of the views of this great writer and thinker, although such an identification of the two ideas was to become commonplace in literature devoted to Russian anarchism. The reason for this is the same – the incomprehension of the deep philosophical bases of the anarchic model of society, its rootedness in Christianity, understood in its primordial sense as the teachings on the identity of man and God. The impact of Fichte on Tolstoy has not been investigated in depth so far but it is quite obvious that Tolstoy's religious teachings correspond to the religious views expounded by Fichte – both thinkers wanted to return to a primordial, undistorted Christianity, the centre of which was not the idea of the ineradicable nature of sinfulness (that is the imperfection) in man, but the idea of the possibility and necessity for his perfection in this earthly life. Already in his early youth (he was at the time only eighteen years old!) Tolstoy formulated a higher aim for life as resting: 'in consciously utilising one's abilities to strive for the development of all that exists.'<sup>28</sup> This goal – the perfecting of all that exists through one's own self – perfection – was to remain with him to the very end and evolve into religious teachings at the end of his life. In this sense, the rejection and negation of the state by Tolstoy is not 'nihilism' but a deep-rooted positive belief in the possibility and potential of everyone to become perfect. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the problem of the correlation between the ideas of Fichte and Hegel was to be finally clearly presented. Boris Vysheslavetsev wrote a special book devoted to the philosophy of Fichte; in it he carried out a straightforward comparison of the systems employed by Hegel and Fichte. Vysheslavetsev drew an unequivocal conclusion in relation to Fichte. He considered his ideas to be the anticipation of the most original philosophical concepts of the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, in particular the philosophical ideas of F. Nietzsche and H. Bergson.<sup>29</sup> Hegel was, according to Vysheslavetsev, to remain devoted to the stereotypes of new European rationalism, with all of its inadequacies, arousing criticism of the non-classicist thinkers of the second half of the nineteenth century. Vysheslavetsev's book, unfortunately, was not to change the flawed stereotypes in understanding the main components of Russian philosophy, but it did give the system arguments for a correct evaluation of Western influences; today we should finally recognise Fichte's influence on Russian philosophy to be one more significant than that of Hegel, Schelling, or even Kant.

<sup>27</sup> Ivan Il'in, *Sobraniye sochineniy*, (Moscow: Russkaya Kniga, 1993-1999), vol. V, p. 103-107.

<sup>28</sup> Leo Tolstoy, *Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy*, vol. 46, *Dnevniky 1847–1854*, (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaya Literatura, 1937), p. 30.

<sup>29</sup> Boris Vysheslavetsev, *Etika Fikhte. Osnovy prava i npravstvennosti v sisteme transtsendental'noy filosofii*, (Moscow: Pechatnya A. Snegirevoy, 1914), p. 87, 390-428.

## LEO TOLSTOY AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION: A MODERN LOOK

By **INGA MATVEEVA**

*The article analyzes the main points of the 'indictment' against the religious teachings of Tolstoy. As the main arguments for the inconsistency of Tolstoy's true religiosity, there was always, first, the absence of a mystical element in his teaching, without which religion is impossible (known statements of the writer's 'formalism' of ethics) and, second, his denial of immortality, which is also an axiom for any religion. The reason for this kind of accusations, in our opinion, is a misunderstanding of the basic principles of Tolstoy's religious teachings.*

*Careful study of religious treatises and journalism Tolstoy leads to the conclusion of the mystical nature of his religious teachings. Tolstoy not only does not deny, but also completely accepts the mysticism, typical of the great systems of philosophy: from Plato and Plotinus to Fichte and Schopenhauer. Genuine, serious mysticism, having a justification in complex philosophical systems, suggests the possibility for a person to move from the terrestrial reality existing in space and time to another reality where the higher meanings of human life are realized. The article argues that the deep understanding of Tolstoy's religious and philosophical doctrine makes the conclusions about Tolstoy as the main ideologist of the revolution unfounded.*

Key words: Leo Tolstoy, the religious teachings of Leo Tolstoy, Russian philosophy, Russian revolution

The year 2017 – the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian revolution – resurrected with renewed vigor one of the eternal Russian questions: 'Who is to blame?' Among the numerous answers broached, V.V. Rozanov's famous accusation, one addressed to Russian classical literature, still holds sway:

We are, in essence, played out in literature. 'So well written'. And the whole thing concerned the fact that he 'wrote well', and what he 'wrote' – nobody cared about it. In content, Russian literature is just such an abomination – an abomination of shamelessness and impudence – like no other literature.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vasilii V. Rozanov, 'Apocalypse of Our Time', in Vasilii V. Rozanov, *Collected Works*, (Moskva: Ephemeral, 1994), p. 415.

The common intention of Rozanov's work – that Russia was ruined by Russian literature – was picked up by V.T. Shalamov half a century later:

Russian humanist writers of the second half of the 19th century bear the great sin of the human blood shed under their banner in the 20th century. All the terrorists were Tolstoians and vegetarians, all fanatics are the pupils of Russian humanists' (from the 'Manifesto on «New Prose»').<sup>2</sup>

In the opinion of many thinkers and publicists, it is Russian literature, which in generating destructive ideas, provoked the grandiose historical upheavals experienced by Russia in the 20th century. The name of Leo Tolstoy in these accusations takes almost the first place.

One of the main 'reproaches' for Tolstoy, contained in the writings Russian philosophers, was his denial of culture. According to P.B. Struve, Tolstoy betrayed 'almost all art anathema'.<sup>3</sup> A little later N.A. Berdiaev in the article 'The Spiritual Bases of the Russian Revolution' (1918) repeated the traditional accusations against Tolstoy with maximum sharpness, unambiguously linking his name to the revolution: 'The Russian revolution was to exterminate our entire cultural layer, drown it in a natural folk darkness. And Tolstoy is one of the perpetrators of the defeat for Russian culture.'<sup>4</sup>

Another major accusation was Tolstoy's 'numbness' as a thinker and writer in relation to a stranger. According to Berdiaev, 'in the name of the happy animal life for all, he rejected the person and rejected any super-personal values'.<sup>5</sup> The absolute will of the author, which does not accept any other will or personality, was singled out in Tolstoy's works by D.S. Merezhkovskii:

One could almost say that in all his works there is only one person, the only hero is himself. From Nikolenka to the old man Akim, from Levin to Pierre Bezukhov, from Platon Karataev to Uncle Ieroshka, he is all the same, Tolstoy. His face is reflected in all these faces, as in mirrors, it dissolves into all of these faces, like a white ray of sun turns into a multicoloured rainbow.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Varlam Shalamov *o literature: Pis'ma A. Iu. Shreideru [Manifest o 'novoï proze']*; *Koe-çto o moikh stikhakh*, ed. Shreider, in *Voprosy Literatury*, 5/1989, p. 241.

<sup>3</sup> Petr B. Struve, *Leo Tolstoy*, in *Russkie mysliteli o Lve Tolstom*, (Tula: Iasnaia Poliana, 2002), p. 215.

<sup>4</sup> Nikolai A. Berdiaev, 'Dukhi russkoi revolutsii', in Nikolai A. Berdiaev, *O russkikh pisateliakh*, (Moskva: Vysshaia Shkola, 1993), p. 101.

<sup>5</sup> Berdiaev, 'Dukhi russkoi revolutsii', p. 98.

<sup>6</sup> Dmitrii S. Merezhkovskii, 'Leo Tolstoy i revolutsiia', in Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii. Griadushchii kham*, (Moskva: Respublika, 2004), p. 350-351.

In Tolstoy's religious views, they saw the reduction of the teachings of Christ to a set of ethical rules and norms. According to A. L. Volynskii,

Tolstoy takes the teaching of Christ beyond his marvellous metaphysical basis. Tolstoy cuts, so to speak, with the knife of reason, the doctrine that appeared before people in the mystical light of eternal life, of immortality.<sup>7</sup>

It is for this reason that most of the thinkers refuted that Tolstoy had a 'metaphysical imagination'.<sup>8</sup>

In modern works, the publicist pathos of these accusations does not weaken, and the origins of the Russian revolution continue to be directly considered in connection with Tolstoy's work and activity. According to the opinion of the publicist and writer D.L. Bykov, 'without Leo Tolstoy no revolution could have occurred'; The Lord, through investing in a prosperous landowner and aristocrat, Leo Tolstoy, the fantastic talent for creating the grand Russian work 'War and Peace', comparable to the 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey', 'thought to obtain a Russian novel, but received a Russian revolution'.<sup>9</sup>

Why is Tolstoy invariably ranked as the culprit, the ideological instigator of social upheaval in Russia? The revolutionary situation at the beginning of the 20th century coincides with Tolstoy's incredible popularity and influence both in Russia and abroad. Tolstoy is a world renown writer, the creator of a whole religious trend – Tolstoism, and at the same time is a constant character in all periodicals. According to N.N. Strakhov,

the slightest news of what is being written and how they live in Iasnaia Poliana, newspapers place on a par with the best delicacies they treat their readers to, that is, on a par with political news, with fires and earthquakes, scandals and suicides.<sup>10</sup>

Tolstoy turns into an object of close attention – a figure that largely determines the mass consciousness. Indeed, any word of the elderly man from Iasnaia Poliana was, in the 1900s, immediately picked up by the writer's numerous visitors, the followers of his ideas and thinkers of opposing convictions. This is how the detailed sophisticated mythology about Tolstoy the writer and activist was to be created.

<sup>7</sup> Akim L. Volynskii, *Nravstvennaia filosofia gr. L'va Tolstogo*, in *Russkie mysliteli o Lve Tolstom*, (Tula: Iasnaia Poliana, 2002), p. 60.

<sup>8</sup> Struve, *Leo Tolstoy*, p. 214.

<sup>9</sup> Dmitrii Bykov, *Russkaia revoliutsia kak zerkalo L'va Tolstogo*, in Dmitrii Bykov, *Blud truda. Esse*, (Sankt -Petersburg: Limbus Press, 2007), p. 244-245.

<sup>10</sup> Nikolai N. Strakhov, *Tolki o Lve Tolstom*, in *Russkie mysliteli o Lve Tolstom*, (Tula: Iasnaia Poliana, 2002), p. 67.

In Russian literature, 'Tolstoy's mythology' is comparable only with Pushkin's (on a world scale - with the 'mythology' of Goethe). But if Pushkin left a lacuna, not saying all 'about himself' forcing the writers and explorers of his life and work to reconstruct the poet's inner world, in the case of Tolstoy everything was different. Tolstoy is one of the most outspoken writers; he himself said everything he could about himself. However, despite the amazing openness of his inner world, the possibilities of 'mythologization' proved inexhaustible. Only here the mythmakers did not follow the path of reconstruction, but the path of interpretation. Russian writers, philosophers, public figures and painters laboured to create the complex, detailed 'mythology' of Tolstoy: Tolstoy's life and work used to be and continues to be an inexhaustible source of memoirs and artistic interpretations, fundamental academic research, and countless articles.

Tolstoy was for the whole generation of his closest and younger contemporaries a pillar, a foundation, a guarantee of world stability. One can provide plenty of statements of the way Tolstoy's contemporaries expressed this notion. I.A. Bunin recalled his dialogue with A.P. Chekhov: 'When Tolstoy dies, everything will go to hell! (...) – Literature? Bunin asks. 'Including literature' answers Chekhov.'<sup>11</sup> In an article devoted to the Tolstoy's 80th birthday, A.A. Blok inquired anxiously: 'And if the sun goes down, Tolstoy dies, the last genius passes away – and then what?'<sup>12</sup>

The words of T. Mann can be considered as the apotheosis of this kind of evaluation: 'In the days when the war raged, I often thought that it would hardly have dared to break out if in 1914 the sharp and penetrating gray eyes of the old man from Iasnaya Poliana were still looking at the world.'<sup>13</sup>

In Russian journalism, with the development of revolutionary events from the beginning of the twentieth century, the idea that Tolstoy was one of the inspirers of these events, that his views had led not to the moral renewal of mankind, but to the destruction of order and the reign of chaos and anarchy, was to arise increasingly often. Tolstoy's confrontation with the existing social system and power is expressed in the famous words of A.S. Suvorin (May 29, 1902): 'We have two tsars: Nicholas II and Leo Tolstoy. Which of them is stronger? Nicholas II can do nothing with Tolstoy, cannot shake his throne, whereas Tolstoy undoubtedly shakes the throne of Nicholas and his dynasty.'<sup>14</sup> Tolstoy's position in Russian social life was to inseparably link his name and his sermon with the coming upheavals.

<sup>11</sup> Ivan A. Bunin, 'O Chekhove', in Ivan A. Bunin, *Sobranie sochinenii. Okaiannye dni*, (Sankt-Peterburg, 1994), p. 317.

<sup>12</sup> Aleksandr A. Blok, *Solntse nad Rossiei. (Vos'midesiatiletie L'va Nikolaievicha Tolstogo)*, in Aleksandr A. Blok, *Sochinenia v dvukh tomakh*, vol. 2, (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1955), p. 73.

<sup>13</sup> Tomas Mann, 'Tolstoy. (K stoletiiu dnia rozhdeniia)', in Tomas Mann, *Sobranie sochinenii v desati tomakh*, vol. 9, (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1959-61), p. 621.

<sup>14</sup> Aleksei S. Suvorin, *Dnevnik*, (Moskva: Novosti, 1992), p. 316.

P.B. Struve recognized as unprecedented the powerful influence of Tolstoy on the generation that had matured in the 1880s and who had entered social life in the 1890s. However, according to Struve, this influence was destructive:

... Tolstoy is one of the most powerful destroyers of our old order. He was indifferent to politics in the narrow sense, he preached such general ideas and expressed such thoughts on private issues that were of immense political importance, and this preaching was inherent in all the power that the genius and authority of the genius gave. (...) According to his social ideas, Tolstoy in relation to existing society is a great revolutionary.<sup>15</sup>

Lev Shestov used the 'zoological' metaphor borrowed from Heine to designate Tolstoy's 'destructive' aspirations: '... Negroes have a belief that a sick lion tries to catch a monkey and tear it apart, and in this way is cured. Tolstoy, usually, also gets cured this way'.<sup>16</sup> The severe criticism which Tolstoy directs towards the state, the Church, the institution of marriage, etc., is explained by Shestov as purely motivated by selfish reasons – by the great writer's desire to get rid of the fear of death: 'He attacked cultured society, progress, medicine, the Church and here with the indefatigability and force of a man who had just looked death in the face, who struck right and left, showing no mercy to anyone and anything'.<sup>17</sup>

In its final form, the 'guilty verdict' on Tolstoy was formulated only in emigration, and most vividly in I. Il'in's work 'On the Resistance to Evil by Force' (1925). This work is especially important for our topic: in analyzing the ethical and religious teachings of Tolstoy in detail, Il'in attempts to show 'strictly theoretically' which of Tolstoy's principles are the cause of his 'nihilistic' attitude toward religion, the state, and law.

The Il'in's main thesis lies in the fact that Tolstoy's teachings do not offer a clear and consistent attitude in relation to the problem of evil and the higher goals of human life. 'Count L.N. Tolstoy and his adherents accept and consider their flight from this problem as a way of resolving it'.<sup>18</sup> In Il'in's opinion, Tolstoy's mentality is internally contradictory and easily refuted by strict philosophical criticism. Considering that the whole positive part of Tolstoy's teaching is reduced to a formal morality of personal self-improvement, Il'in concludes: 'Tolstoy's morals as a philosophical doctrine have two sources: firstly, the living feeling of merciful compassion, called 'love' and 'conscience' by him and, secondly, the

<sup>15</sup> Struve, *Leo Tolstoy*, p. 220-221.

<sup>16</sup> Lev Shestov, *Razrushaiushchii i sozidaiushchii miry (po povodu vosmidesiatiletija Tolstogo), Russkaia mysl'*, 1/1909, p. 43.

<sup>17</sup> L. Shestov, *Razrushaiushchii i sozidaiushchii miry*, p. 43.

<sup>18</sup> Ivan A. Il'in, 'O soprotivlenii zlu siloiu', in Ivan A. Il'in, *Sobranie sochinenii v desiaty tomakh*, vol. 5, (Moskva: Russkaia kniga, 1993-1999), p. 89.

doctrinaire reason, called by him 'mind'.<sup>19</sup> It is the dominance of formal reason, according to Ilyin, that does not allow Tolstoy to see the complexity of life and leads to the dominance of abstract concepts and principles in his teaching.

Paradoxically, the opinion of this émigré fighter against Bolshevism, the ideologist of the white movement, converges with the opinion of the main ideologist of Bolshevism, V.I. Lenin. In the famous article 'Leo Tolstoy as a Mirror of the Russian Revolution' written to mark Tolstoy's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday (1908), Lenin recognizes the main feature of the writer's views as his internal contradictions, and, like Il'in, emphasizes his ideal of personal righteousness as the most important negative feature in Tolstoy's worldview:

The contradictions in works, views, teachings, in Tolstoy's school really scream out at one . On the one hand, he is a brilliant artist who has produced not only incomparable pictures of Russian life, but also first-class works of world literature. On the other hand, he is a landlord who fools for Christ's sake. On the one hand, he represents a remarkably strong, direct and sincere protest against public lies and falsity, on the other hand, a Tolstoyan, that is a dissipated, hysterical whiner, is how a Russian intellectual is called who, in publicly beating himself on the chest, says: 'I'm foul, I'm nasty, but I'm making moral self-improvements; I do not eat meat anymore but eat rice cakes instead.'<sup>20</sup>

It is clear that in Soviet times the viewpoint of Lenin completely determined the attitude towards Tolstoy, however, with the revival of Russian religious philosophy and its heritage post 1990, the opinion of Il'in and his close thinkers, such as D. Merezhkovskii, P. Struve, V. Zenkovskii and others, came to the fore in the comprehension of the topic 'Tolstoy and the Revolution.' But the general vector of assessments remains the same: Tolstoy is still recognized as being the most important ideological provoker of revolutionary events, even though an 'inconsistent' thinker. In the Soviet period, this led to a general positive assessment of Tolstoy the thinker, nowadays, on the contrary, to a negative one (in the manner of D. Bykov as quoted above).

However, an attentive attitude to the accumulated historical experience forces us to be cautious about judgments that repeat only what was said a hundred years ago.

The main points of the 'indictment' against Tolstoy, contained in the works of his critics, we would formulate as follows:

First, Tolstoy sharply criticized the autocratic regime in Russia and thereby contributed to the protest moods in society.

Second, Tolstoy denied state power and the state system, that is, he was an adherent of anarchism.

<sup>19</sup> Il'in, 'O soprotivlenii zlu siloiu', p. 90.

<sup>20</sup> Vladimir I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 55 tomakh*, vol. 15, (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1958-1966), p. 181.

Third, he preached an individualistic morality that called people to personal perfection, but ignored the spiritual unity of people and their social solidarity.

Fourth, Tolstoy eliminated religion from people's lives (replacing it with a kind of 'surrogate'), and along with it all spiritual values, and this contributed to the spread of nihilism, the rejection of all values. Tolstoy sees only the 'animal' personality of man, but does not see its highest destiny.

Fifth, Tolstoy did not recognize the existence of a significant evil in the world and therefore did not expect any struggle to arise with it.

On the first point there can be no doubt – Tolstoy's journalistic articles and much of his fiction (especially the novel 'Resurrection') criticize the existing power and the existing social order uncompromisingly and, strictly speaking, call for their destruction. The contemporary state of Russian society is seen by Tolstoy as a situation of 'terrible choice':

(...) whether to continue, despite all the disasters that have been undergone, obey, following the example of the Eastern nations, its irrational and depraved government or, as all Western nations have been doing so far, who recognized the harm of the existing government, overthrow it by force and establish a new one.<sup>21</sup>

A glance at Western countries makes people (non-working) who are accustomed to their prosperous, well-off life think that the way of overthrowing the government and establishing a new government is quite acceptable and natural especially if we consider the good 'the military might and success of industry, trade and technical improvements and that external brilliance, which, with their changed governments, the Western nations have reached'.<sup>22</sup> However, the very idea of 'establishing a new power', according to Tolstoy, will not lead to change, an improvement in life, if we are to bear in mind the good for all. The main principles, to which any power sticks according to Tolstoy, are violence, deception and robbery. And the change of power, that is, the change of the monarchy to a government of any kind and nature, can lead to nothing, for 'people who limit the arbitrariness of power and make up the congregations, being the owners of power, naturally fell within the same power-corrupting influence that the autocratic rulers had'.<sup>23</sup> According to Tolstoy, wherever there is power, there will be manifest the violence of some people over others, therefore 'power itself must be destroyed'.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Leo N. Tolstoy, 'O znachenii russkoi revolutsii', in Leo N. Tolstoy, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 90 tomakh*, vol. 36, (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1928-1958), p. 320-321.

<sup>22</sup> Tolstoy, *O znachenii russkoi revolutsii*, p. 321.

<sup>23</sup> Tolstoy, *O znachenii russkoi revolutsii*, p. 322.

<sup>24</sup> Tolstoy, 'K politicheskim deiateliam', in Leo N. Tolstoy, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 90 tomakh*, vol. 35, (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1928-1958), p. 205.



It seems that Tolstoy's second point of reference is undoubted; it rejects not only Russian autocracy, but any state power in general, considering even that a despotic regime is less harmful than a democratic one, because the latter is trying to involve the whole nation in the political process and thus 'corrupts' it.

With regard to the third point of the 'accusations', one very typical of Tolstoy's critics, one can note that the same Il'in who unequivocally accused Tolstoy of individualism and subjectivism in the book 'On the Resistance to Evil by Force', in his earlier article 'The Basic Moral Contradiction of War' (1914) gave a very different characterization of his ethics. Il'in acted as a sincere 'defender' of the writer from the unfair criticism of V. Soloviev in his work 'Three Conversations on War, Progress and the End of World History: 'according to Il'in, in Soloviev's work 'the deep and substantive moral aspirations of Leo Tolstoy were transferred without understanding to the form of an unjust caricature.'<sup>25</sup>

The main moral contradiction of the war, according to Il'in, is generated by the requirement to kill the enemy, whereas in the act of murder there is a destruction of spiritual unity, connecting people and making their life meaningful and good. Il'in sharply contrasts 'love' that connects people, and 'violence' that destroys this connection ('continuity', 'soul affiliation'). 'Violence', according to Il'in, is terrible because

every tear in the social and spiritual stuff, every act of rejection, resentment and violence multiplies in the souls of people (...), is transmitted from the soul to the soul, especially if the power of love does not have time to extinguish its destructive flames and heal the gaps that have arisen.<sup>26</sup>

Il'in rightly sees the reason for Tolstoy's rejection of violence, not in the ideal of personal righteousness, but in the need to preserve and strengthen people's universal spiritual connection.

As the central principle of his ethics, Tolstoy believed in the inseparable spiritual unity of people, as opposed to the widespread opinion of the individualistic character of his morality; it is this unity (which he calls God) who lives in man. The idea of the unity of people is most clearly expressed in the ethical-philosophical book 'The Way of Life' (1910).

All living creatures are separated from one another by bodies, but what gives them life is one and the same in all. (...) It is not enough to say that in every person there is the same soul as in me: in every person lives the same thing that lives in me. All people are separated from each other by their bodies, but all are connected by that only spiritual principle, which gives life to all. (...)

<sup>25</sup> Ivan A. Il'in, 'Osnovnoe nravstvennoe protivorechie voiny', in *Sobranie sochinenii v desiati tomakh*, vol. 5, (Moskva: Russkaia kniga 1993-1999), p. 25.

<sup>26</sup> Il'in, *Osnovnoe nravstvennoe protivorechie voiny*, p. 15.

When you think about those millions and millions of people who live the same life as me, somewhere tens of thousands miles away about whom I will never know anything and who do not know anything about me, then involuntarily you ask yourself: if there is really no connection between us and we will die without knowing each other? It cannot be. The truth is that this simply cannot be. Strange as it may seem, I feel, I know that there is a connection between me and all the people in the world, both living and dead. What exactly this connection is, I can neither understand nor express, but I know that it exists. (...) Only then does a person understand his life when he sees himself in every person.<sup>27</sup>

A principle not allowing one to call the ethical and philosophical system of Tolstoy 'individualistic' and 'subjective' is herein expressed. If in their spiritual essence people are in a certain unity, personal efforts to strengthen and improve their own spiritual essence lead to the perfection of all. For Tolstoy, love is the main force that connects people, and it has not an animal, but a spiritual and even a divine-mystical character. Love leads a person to understand that his being is not limited by his body and is infinite, that is, it encompasses all that is living.

The views of Tolstoy understood in this way have an obvious religious meaning, in connection with which the fourth 'accusation' is also false. Church critics of the writer persistently argued that he had no deep religiousness; but in fact, the goal of Tolstoy's religious teaching was not an opposition to the official Church, but the desire to clear the original meanings of the Christian teaching from later historical distortions and stratifications.

As the main arguments for inconsistency within Tolstoy's true religiosity, was always, first, the absence of a mystical element in his teaching, without which religion is impossible (the known statements on the writer's 'formalism' of ethics) and, second, his denial of immortality, which is also an axiom for any religion. The presence of mystical elements in the religiousness of Tolstoy has only been touched on but will be discussed later. As for the idea of immortality, in Tolstoy's texts we find contradictory statements on this subject, but the categorical denial of the idea of immortality invariably arises only in connection with criticism of Church dogmas.

In Tolstoy's later diaries, we find numerous pieces in which the idea of immortality becomes the starting point for an explanation of the various phenomena of ordinary human life. For example, in the entry for December 7, 1895, we read:

<sup>27</sup> Leo N. Tolstoy, 'Put' zhizni', in Leo N. Tolstoy, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 90 tomakh*, vol. 45, (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1928-1958), p. 47-49.

Life is an increase of love, the expansion of one's limits, and this expansion takes place in different lives. (...) This expansion is necessary for my inner life, and it is necessary for the life of this world. But my life cannot be manifested in this form, it manifests itself in innumerable forms. I am able to see only just this one.<sup>28</sup>

Here is how Tolstoy relates the idea of immortality to the possibility of suicide:

It would be good to write a story of what is experienced in this life by one who had killed himself in a preceding one: how he, stumbling upon the same demands he had had in the previous life, perceives what it is necessary to fulfil. And in this life he is more intelligent than others, for remembering this lesson.<sup>29</sup>

Finally, the accusation laid against Tolstoy that he does not recognize the evil in the world and denies the struggle with it must also be recognized as unfair, conditioned by a reluctance to understand the writer's teachings in their entirety. In one of Tolstoy's most important philosophical works, the treatise 'On Life' (1887-1888), the theme of the permeability of earthly human life with evil and suffering sounds like a refrain. In this book, 'life' itself is repeatedly defined by Tolstoy as 'the pursuit of evil for good', but the author does not suggest that we ignore the evil, he considers it quite natural for a person immersed in earthly life to experience the surrounding evil and suffer from it:

My whole life is a desire for good for myself, (...) my mind tells me that the good cannot be for me, and whatever I do, whatever I achieve, everything will end with the same thing: suffering and death, destruction. I want the good, I want life, I want a reasonable sense, but there is just evil, death, nonsense in me and in everything around me. How to be? How to live? What should I do? 'And there is no answer.'<sup>30</sup>

Many people realizing the power of evil in the world decide to fight against it using the methods of this world, that is, through 'resistance to evil by force', but Tolstoy believes that such a position signifies a retreat from the solution of the problem: the elimination of one manifestation of evil with the help of violence which generates other manifestations of it and does not lead to the eradication of evil in the world. According to Tolstoy, the goal is to make efforts aimed at revealing the highest, spiritual, divine, virtuous life within a man and the directly in his earthly existence. The higher life does not have space-temporal certainty,

<sup>28</sup> Leo N. Tolstoy, 'Dnevnik 1895', in Leo N. Tolstoy, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 90 tomakh*, vol. 53, (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1928-1958), p. 74.

<sup>29</sup> Tolstoy, 'Dnevnik 1895', p. 79.

<sup>30</sup> Leo N. Tolstoy, 'O zhizni', in Leo N. Tolstoy, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 90 tomakh*, vol. 26, (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1928-1958), p. 339-340.

as does the earthly life, and its laws cannot be understood within the earthly life. Here is how Tolstoy describes the transition from earthly, animal life to a higher, intelligent life:

Spatial and temporal forces are definite forces, finite, incompatible with the concept of life; the power of striving for good through submission to the brains is a force that rises to the height – the very power of life for which there are no temporal or spatial limits. (...) A person begins to live a true life, that is, he rises to a certain height beyond the life of an animal and from this height sees the illusory nature of his animal existence, which inevitably terminates with death.<sup>31</sup>

This central element in Tolstoy's religious philosophy helps to clarify many of the misunderstandings associated with the evaluation of his work. In the traditional descriptions of the writer's religious teachings, his main characteristics are recognized as follows: formalism, pure moralism, rationalism and, as the most important, denial of the mystical element of religion. The latter seems especially obvious, taking into account the numerous fragments of Tolstoy's writings, in which he severely criticizes the false 'mysticism' of traditional Christianity.

However, a careful reading of Tolstoy's treatises leads one to the directly opposite conclusion: Tolstoy's teachings are radically mystical in nature. Tolstoy not only does not deny, but also completely accepts the mysticism, typical of the great systems of philosophy: from Plato and Plotinus to Fichte and Schopenhauer. Genuine, serious mysticism, having a justification in complex philosophical systems, suggests the possibility for a person to move from the terrestrial reality existing in space and time to another reality where the higher meanings of human life are realized. The higher reality is 'mystical', since it is impossible to comprehend and describe it with the help of the traditional forms of rational knowledge that science practices. It is not accidental that the most important theme of Tolstoy's philosophical contemplations is the denial of the claims of science to an absolute knowledge about life and all the basic components of human existence.

After we have understood the main idea of Tolstoy's religious-philosophical doctrine, it is not difficult to see the internal justification of the principle of 'non-resistance to evil by violence'. After all, evil is the 'law' of the earthly world and of our earthly life – in this life there is also a 'law' of resistance to evil. But if a person has reached the highest, spiritual life, he has passed into another reality, where the laws of earthly existence no longer function. And just as in this higher reality there are no characteristics of space and time, so there is neither the law of the fundamental nature of evil, nor the law of the resistance to evil within it.

<sup>31</sup> Tolstoy, 'O zhizni', p. 361.

Thus, only people completely immersed in earthly reality and in ordinary (animal) life can give earthly evil an absolute value and accordingly consider the physical struggle with evil ethically necessary and obligatory for everyone. If we admit the existence of a higher spiritual and mystical life, to which the true religion reveals the path, then we must recognize that neither evil itself nor the principle of (physical) resistance to evil is religiously justified, and the rejection of it, as Tolstoy does, is necessary for the acceptance of this true religion.

We have already said that D. Merezhkovskii, in his early work, addressed Tolstoy with accusations that he was unaware of the 'mysteries of the spirit' area and that he knew only the 'world of the flesh', that is our earthly world. However, in later works, written in exile, Merezhkovskii offered a completely different, much deeper understanding of Tolstoy's world outlook. In his reflections on Tolstoy there is a fundamental turn, he realizes the need to separate the ethical norms governing human behavior in the earthly world from the religious ones that describe our being in the higher spiritual world: '... non-resistance to evil by violence' is a doubtful truth in ethics, but unquestionable in religion. From great violence to little – this is the ethical way, and the religious goal – the denial of violence is absolute.<sup>32</sup> This correctly reflects the meaning of the correlation of the ethical and religious components in Tolstoy's teachings.

In his book 'The Kingdom of God Within You' (1890-1893), Tolstoy claimed that the transition from the lower life to the higher life is a long and difficult process, and very few people could fully realize it. All people are, in this sense, on different levels of perfection; therefore, the moral precepts for people are different. This means that the principle of 'non-resistance to evil by violence' must be understood as a limiting requirement. Those who are only moving towards perfection must be guided by 'commandments', which do not require complete removal from the laws of the lower being.

In the Sermon on the Mount Christ has expressed the eternal ideal toward which it is proper for men to tend, and that degree of its attainment, which can be reached even in our time.

The ideal consists in having no ill-will against any one, in calling forth no ill will, in loving all; but the commandment, below which, in the attainment of this ideal, it is absolutely possible not to descend, consists in not offending any one with a word. And this forms the first commandment.

(...)

The ideal is never, under any condition, to make use of violence; the commandment which points out the degree below which one should not descend to - not to pay for evil, but to suffer insults, to share the last penny. And

<sup>32</sup> Dmitrii S. Merezhkovskii, 'Leo Tolstoy i bolshevizm', in Dmitrii S. Merezhkovskii, *Tsarstvo Antikhrista. Stat'ii perioda emigratsii*, (Sankt-Peterburg: RKhGI, 2001), p. 150.

this is the fourth commandment. The ideal is to love enemies, who hate us; the commandment which points out the degree of the attainment below which it is possible not to descend, is to do no evil to our enemies, to speak well of them, to make no distinction between them and our fellow citizens.

All these commandments are indications of what we are fully able not to do on the path of striving after perfection, of what we ought to work over now, of what we must by degrees transfer into the sphere of habit, into the sphere of the unconscious. But these commandments fail to form a teaching, and do not exhaust it, and form only one of the endless steps in the approximation toward perfection.

After these commandments there must and will follow higher and higher ones on the path of perfection, which is indicated by teaching.<sup>33</sup>

Apparently, here Tolstoy is flexible enough to understand moral precepts and norms. The commandment of 'non-resistance to evil by violence' he recognizes as an ideal requirement, which refers only to the transformed, perfect state of man.

Thus, if we pay due attention to Tolstoy's religious and philosophical teaching, all the accusations from which drawn are conclusions as to him being almost the main ideologue of the revolution lose their validity. There remains only his publicism directed against autocratic power, but in it Tolstoy did not say anything new regarding the criticism of the tsarist regime that had not been expressed both before and after him. Contemporary accusations of Tolstoy as one of the main 'provocateurs' of the revolution clearly demonstrate, on the one hand, the reluctance to truly understand and accept the heritage of this great writer and thinker and, on the other hand, a continuing misunderstanding of the true causes of revolutionary events.

<sup>33</sup> Tolstoy, 'The Kingdom of God is Within You', in trans. L. Wiener, *The Complete Works of Count Tolstoy*, vol. 20, (Boston: L. C. Page and Company Inc., 1905), p. 104-105.

## **THE NEVER WRITTEN HISTORY OF A MOSCOW EXISTENCE OF 1919. THE WARSAW SCHOOL OF THE HISTORY OF IDEAS IN THE LIGHT OF MARINA TSVETAEVA'S NOTES**

BY **DOROTA JEWDOKIMOW**

*What characterises Marina Tsvetaeva's notes of 1919 the most is them being anchored within a material reality, in 'existence' and everyday life. The main topic, the dominant point of existence in Moscow in 1919, is that of hunger and its impact on the decisions, actions and emotions of the poet. Hunger becomes the central nexus in her personal description of the revolution. The second attribute of her notes is their strong personalisation, indicating the uniqueness of her individual experience and the lack of a possibility for generalisation. These two main features in Tsvetaeva's description of the revolution move her to some extent beyond the area of interest of the historians of ideas from the so-called Warsaw School of the History of Ideas, rather making her notes a marginal text. However, the main premises of the Warsaw School in their general frame, envisage the possibility of development in the output of particular authors, enabling analysts to extend the scope of the phenomena researched.*

Key words: revolution, bodiliness, history of ideas, historical anthropology, historicism

The main subject of this text is that particular excerpt on historical reality which was the October Revolution of 1917, as well as the effectiveness of the tools created by the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas, regarding the text analysis dedicated to this. I shall verify the effectiveness of these tools in relation to the particular source material which are private memories and notes of Marina Tsvetaeva, written during the initial years following the events of October 1917. This material is special in many respects. Firstly, we are dealing with autobiographical and intimate notes, whose author was one of the most distinguished Russian poets of the 20th century. It presents an individual perspective on viewing the revolutionary reality. The description of this perspective as well as a reconstruction of the notes' content forms the first part of my reflections. In the second part, I shall reconstruct the main premises of the most influential school of the Polish history of ideas. While presenting the main methodological premises of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas, I take into consideration the wider European context of its development, as well as areas which are the source of its limitations. The fundamental question formulated within the frames of this text is, whether the perspective of viewing the reality inherent in the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas is apt in respect to the highly personalised notes on the realia of the day as made by the poet. Can a text of this

kind constitute primary material for analysis made by a historian of ideas, or can it only serve as an auxiliary text?

### **‘NOT A REVOLUTION, NOT BOLSHEVISM, NOT – THE YEAR [19]19’**

Marina Tsvetaeva’s notes assembled from early childhood, only 15 notebooks, comprising the years 1913-1939, have remained until now. The other notebooks were irretrievably lost during Tsvetaeva’s numerous journeys and relocations. Those notes were highly valued by the poet because, as she put it, her real self was manifested in them.<sup>2</sup> Despite their biographical, historic and cultural value, for decades they were kept in a closed archive and were not accessible. For the first time they were published between 2000 and 2001. According to the editors of their first edition, they contain ‘at most an accurately written bare existential experience, one not rendered by any artistic objectives.’<sup>3</sup> A large part describes revolutionary events. The author gives a detailed account of Moscow daily life in the first years after the outburst of the 1917 revolution. The notes made during the first years of the revolution are characterised by their variety; on the one hand they are an account of the special emotional and intellectual relationship between Marina Tsvetaeva and her daughter Ariadna Efron, while on the other, the author describes the material environment, the conditions of life and the prices of specific groceries. In Tsvetaeva’s notes, the year 1919 is crucial for understanding the nature of the revolution. In her perception, this was the year that fully expressed the nature and consequences of the upheaval which took place in Russia.

‘Oh, one day I’m going to write a history of the Moscow existence in 1919. I don’t know any other revolution;’<sup>4</sup> Marina Tsvetaeva was to write. On the one hand, such a history will never be written, on the other the detailed description of the ‘Moscow existence of 1919’ written by Marina Tsvetaeva and saved in her notes of this period is just such a history. That ‘existence’, in the light of Tsvetaeva’s words, becomes the quintessence of the revolution and its substance, as well as the centre of her individual experience. Writing about ‘existence’, the poet obviously indicates all that composed the conditions

<sup>1</sup> Marina Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 1, (Moskva: Ellis Lak, 2000), p. 409.

<sup>2</sup> ‘From the spiritual things, I tremble the most for the notebooks of Ala, my books of notes, the next dramas and the poems far behind. In Ala’s notebooks and in my books of notes and the dramas there is me, more me: the first two – my everyday life, dramas – my feast, and the poems – my incomplete confession, less accurately, less me’ (Marina Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 2, (Moskva: Ellis Lak, 2001), p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> E. B. Korkina, M. G. Krutikova, ‘Predislovie’, in Marina Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 1, (Moscow: Ellis Lak, 2000), p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 2, p. 15.



of everyday life in Moscow, the material environment determining the functioning of a subject. In making that 'existence' (in Russian быт) the centre of her experience of the revolution, she clearly and frequently separates it from what she calls 'existing' (in Russian бытие), thus situating the material order somehow beyond the ontological order; 'the life of the body' becomes separated from 'the life of the soul', although when read thoroughly that relationship becomes complicated.

Tsvetaeva meticulously describes the conditions of her life in Moscow:

I am writing in my attic – probably on the 10th November 1919 – since everybody has started to live in the new way, I have known no dates. Since March I haven't heard from Seyroga,<sup>5</sup> I last saw him on the 18th January 1918 [...]. I live with Ala and Irina (Ala is 6, Irina is 2 years and 7 months old). [...] There's no flour and no bread, under the writing table I have 12 pounds of potatoes 'borrowed' from the neighbours – the full stock. [...] I live on gifted dinners (for the kids). [...] My day: I get up – sawdust – buckets – jugs – clothes – kids' dresses and tops everywhere. I saw. I heat. I wash potatoes in icy water and boil them in the samovar.<sup>6</sup>

I have to add potatoes to the flour; 2/3 of potatoes and 1/3 of flour. This way you make perfect bread. – Really? I have to tell my mother. I have no mother, no husband, no flour. [...] To whom shall I give the soup from the canteen: Ala or Irina? Irina is smaller and weaker but I love Ala more. Besides Irina is already in a bad shape anyway and Ala is still coping, I feel pity for her.<sup>7</sup>

The poet and her daughters' days are filled mainly by attempts to get food. However, the detailed descriptions of everyday life is in Tsvetaeva's opinion incomplete, as it lacks the essence of the inner life: 'The life of the soul – Ala's and mine – stems from my notes, poems, dramas and her notebook. I wanted to write only a day.'<sup>8</sup> The actual 'existing' is situated beyond all that defines the everyday existence: 'The poems are the existence – it cannot be different.'<sup>9</sup> Tsvetaeva definitely separates 'the life of the soul' from daily life and besides, a day is only a day, whereas actual life takes place in the soul and is expressed within the lyrical output. The existence of the revolution does not affect her to some extent as the poet separates her consciousness from existence. That dissociation may be a way of self-defence against a dominant material reality. The poet makes that part of her experience which actually becomes the dominant part of her everyday life,

<sup>5</sup> Sergey Efron, the poet's husband.

<sup>6</sup> Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 2, p. 7-8.

<sup>7</sup> Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 1, p. 309.

<sup>8</sup> Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 2, p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 1, p. 311.

one unreal and marginal. She applies a similar defence mechanism towards the existence and the death of her younger daughter Irina. In the notes regarding Irina, there repeatedly appears information about her retarded intellectual development, which should probably be verified considering the conditions of her development. Her early childhood passed in extreme deprivation. When Tsvetaeva would leave the flat with her elder daughter, the younger daughter was left alone, tied to an armchair for reasons of safety. Eventually she died in a shelter near Moscow.<sup>10</sup> The poet makes the very life and death of Irina unreal: 'Irina was never a reality for me, I never knew or understood her. [...] The death of Irina is as unreal for me as her life. – I don't know the illness, I didn't see her ill, I was not present at her death, I didn't see her dead and I don't know where her grave is.'<sup>11</sup> Thus, the area of the poet's experience is divided into two separate spheres, the real and the unreal, where the unreal is usually related to difficult and even traumatic experiences. This may indicate that the mechanism of obscuring reality was actually a defence mechanism for the poet, who spent the first years of the revolution in extreme conditions.

However, in the notes, we find numerous parts which contradict the binary division of the area of experience and express the feeling of a strong connection between 'the life of the body' and 'the life of the soul', which made the poet extremely vulnerable to the external conditions of her life. This connection is explicitly expressed in the statement of Konstantin Bal'mont, quoted by Tsvetaeva:<sup>12</sup>

Oh, this is going to be a shameful page in the history of Moscow! I do not say it about myself as a poet but about the one who works. [...] Since I was nineteen I have been sitting over dictionaries instead of having fun and falling in love. I am literally starving. What is further ahead is only death by starvation. Fools think that hunger is the body but they do not know that in our vulnerable organisms hunger is the soul and now all the burdens lay on the soul. I am crushed, I am grieving, I cannot write.<sup>13</sup>

The connection of cognitive and emotional activity with the physiological is present also in the Tsvetaeva's descriptions. In April 1919 Tsvetaeva records a 'tragic incident': 'I lost (the ground swallowed) 500 roubles. [...] Oh, it's a real disaster, real grief! But misery is blunt, hitting the head like a hammer. For a second I looked at the hook in the kitchen with serious hope. How easy it is. I was really tempted.'<sup>14</sup> Within the context of this occurrence,

<sup>10</sup> Marina Tsvetaeva placed both her daughters in a shelter. Motivated by the advice of people from her closest environment, she assumed that this would be the best way to save her daughters from the hunger which the inhabitants of Moscow were suffering from.

<sup>11</sup> M. Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 2, p. 85.

<sup>12</sup> A Russian symbolist poet.

<sup>13</sup> M. Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 2, p. 16.

<sup>14</sup> Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 1, p. 317.

Tsvetaeva indicates the sensitive connection between 'the life of the soul' and 'the life of the body', which is created, according to her, by 'nerves'. 'Nerves', strong emotions, manifest themselves at the moment when the life of the soul is expressed in the life of the body. A detailed record of this sensation can be found in the letter which was written by the poet to her husband Sergey Efron on the 2nd November 1917. She was on a train from the Crimea to Moscow when she learnt about the expanding wave of the revolution which entailed more and more victims. Fearing for the life of her husband, she wrote: 'The throat clenched as if with fingers...'<sup>15</sup> her emotional reaction becomes at the same time a strong bodily sensation. Emotions, called 'nerves' by Tsvetaeva, become the element connecting the body and the soul. Tsvetaeva's descriptions fully correspond with the statements of contemporary psychology, where affective phenomena are defined as conditions composed of the assessment of the situation, a physiological reaction, readiness to act and the sensation described as an affect.<sup>16</sup> Thus, what the poet, a vigilant observer of her own inner conditions, calls 'nerves', is defined by the contemporary emotion psychology as phenomena affectively involving both cognitive and physiological functions.

In Tsvetaeva's description of the revolution, strongly personalised bodily sensations related to felt emotions, which the poet calls 'nerves', start to play an important role. In Tsvetaeva's notes this connection is ambiguous; for on the one hand, the poet separates both kinds of experience and on the other demonstrates their inseparability. The attempts to separate both areas of experience may be considered a defence mechanism helping her to survive in an extreme situation. The poet considers everyday life and existential conditions as the background to her experience of reality and later describes her complete immersion in existence and her absolute dependence on that existence.

In Tsvetaeva's notes, the ultimate moment of the 'existence's' dominance is the year 1919, when the material consequences of the revolution were most noticeable in the lives of the inhabitants of Moscow. This year is defined by Tsvetaeva as the moment of the actual experience of the revolution. At the same time she indicates that her experience of the post-revolution reality is not a sensation that fits into the framework of 'good taste', not being a subject to aestheticisation.

I perceived the year 1919 in a slightly exaggerated way, the way people will perceive it in one hundred years time: not a single grain of flour, not a single piece of soap, I clean the pipes myself, I wear shoes twice the size of my feet – in this way some hurting good taste novelist is going to describe the year 1919.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> M. Tsvetaeva, *Sochineniia*, (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1988), vol. 1-2, vol. 2, p. 468.

<sup>16</sup> Nico H. Frijda, 'Różnorodność afektu: emocje i zdarzenia, nastroje i sentymenty', in *Natura emocji*, eds. Richard Davidson, Paul Ekman (Sopot: GWP, 2012), p. 56.

<sup>17</sup> Tsvetaeva, *Zapisnye knizhki*, (Moskva: Zakharov, 2002), p. 164.

Such a perception of the revolution in the poet's opinion cannot be the content of a book. Personally, she is not able to write a book about the revolution.

Is there now in Russia – Rozanov is dead – a really discerning observer, who could write a book about the Hunger – a human who wants to eat, who wants to smoke, who feels cold, about a human who has got much and who does not give, about a human who has little and who gives, about the old generous – greedy ones, about the old skimpy – generous ones and finally about me: a Poet and a Woman – alone, alone, alone – like an oak, like a wolf, like God, amidst all the plague of Moscow in 1919. [...] I would write it myself if not for the soul of a woman in me, if not for my short-sightedness, my individuality, which do not allow me to see things as they are. [...] I will never write a work of genius, not because I lack the talent [...] but because of my individuality, some – I would say – the peculiarity of my nature. [...] It is not that I cannot become separated from myself and what is mine, that I cannot see anything else; I can see and I know what is different.<sup>18</sup>

However, this 'different' was less attractive for Tsvetaeva than what the essence of herself was. In her statement the poet deeply individualises her experience giving it an individual and unique character which cannot be subject to generalisation. Individuality, peculiarity, individualism and femininity, in the view of Tsvetaeva, become an obstacle making her unable to create a work dedicated to the revolution's realities, showing things as they were. Thus, the statement of the poet implies that the actual value of a work is its ability to create generalisations, universalising its content. At the same time what appeals to her are specific and individual things.

What characterises Marina Tsvetaeva's notes of 1919 most is being anchored in the material reality, in 'existence' and everyday life. The main topic, the dominant point of the existence in Moscow in 1919, is hunger and its impact on the decisions, actions and the emotions of the poet. Hunger becomes the central nexus in her personal description of the revolution. The second attribute of her notes is their strong personalisation, indicating the uniqueness of her individual experience and the lack of a possibility for generalisation. These two main features of her description of the revolution move her, to some extent, beyond the area of interest of the historians of ideas from the so-called Warsaw School of the History of Ideas, or they make a marginal text of her notes. However, the main premises of the Warsaw School in their general frame, envisage the possibility of development, which occurred in the output of particular authors, enabling analysts to extend the scope of the researched phenomena. In its development, the history of ideas becomes closer to the history of culture and in this form provides the right tools for researching the personal notes of the poet.

<sup>18</sup> Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 2, p. 38-39.

## **HISTORY IS CREATED BY PEOPLE, NOT BY DWARFS<sup>19</sup>**

Demarcating the boundaries of the output of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas, which I define as the starting point for my reflections on the research methods applicable to the revolution notes of Marina Tsvetaeva, will always imply some arbitrariness of selection regarding both the time boundaries of the phenomenon, as clearly defined as they may seem, and defining the main postulates formulated within the frames of the school. The term Warsaw School of the History of Ideas was used at the very moment when the phenomenon of the school expired. The occurrence of this term is significant as to some extent it is the acknowledgement of the Warsaw School's existence as a separate, internally coherent phenomenon. Besides acknowledging the existence of the separate school of the history of ideas, after its expiration, its achievements were recapitulated. The best known and, in my opinion, the most valuable summary of the work of the Warsaw historians of ideas is a text written by Andrzej Walicki,<sup>20</sup> who describes the school both from the internal perspective as its creator and participator and from the outside as a historian of ideas. The main premises of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas listed by Walicki are duplicated in subsequent studies. When analysing the premises he reconstructed within the wider perspective of the development of the European humanities, particularly historiography, it turns out that they expressed a general way of thinking which emerged in post-war Europe. In my opinion, we should understand the postulates formulated by the intellectual entourage formed around Bronisław Baczko within this wider context. Jerzy Szacki pinpoints this course of interpretation of the Warsaw School, when he writes:

The authors contemporary to us were the representatives of the most influential schools of intellectual history, who started to publish their first (or their most important) works at roughly the same time: Gadamer and Koselleck, Skinner and Pocock, historians of mentality from the next generation of the Annales School, Foucault and other post-structuralists, Ricoeur, de Certeau etc. The sixties and seventies are the years of an extraordinary abundance in this regard.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The discussion *Warszawska Szkoła Historii Idei. Powstanie, przekształcenia, kontynuacje*, organised by the editors of *Przegląd Humanistyczny* on 17th October 2011 at the premises of the Faculty of Polish Philology of Warsaw University, in *Wokół dorobku warszawskiej szkoły historii idei*, ed. A. Kołakowski, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2013), p. 27.

<sup>20</sup> Andrzej Walicki, 'On Writing Intellectual History: Leszek Kołakowski and the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas', *Critical Philosophy*, 2/1984.

<sup>21</sup> The discussion 'Warszawska Szkoła Historii Idei. Powstanie, przekształcenia, kontynuacje', p. 52.

Szacki situates the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas in the wider context of the development of humanities, exceeding its interpretation within the narrow frames of contemporaneity of the Polish People's Republic. Situating it in this way does not marginalise its achievements by putting it in the shadow of other European intellectuals' output, but allows us to fully appraise its achievements. The accomplishments of particular representatives of the school, who originated from the Warsaw School and created their output after 1968, therein contributing to the European humanities, are especially significant in this regard. 'In this context Kołakowski, Baczko, Walicki and Pomian are especially important, although this is the case not because for a moment did they belong to the same school.<sup>22</sup> From this point of view, the history of ideas was only a phase in the development of the humanities and a phase in the creative development of its particular authors. Although it was a short period of time, the importance of this phase is undeniable. Most of the methodological premises formulated at those times lost their validity under the influence of various 'turns', schools and studies which emerged in subsequent years. However, we have to admit that the tendencies which emerged during that time were necessary from the point of view of the process of forming the contemporary humanities. Additionally, most of the methodological premises shared by the Warsaw historians of ideas, being at the same time dominant points within the European humanities of the 1960s, were developed in subsequent decades, projecting the main directions and subject areas of contemporary humanities.

Among the premises shared by the Warsaw historians of ideas Walicki lists among others the turn to historicism, placing at the centre of interest a human and their problems, acknowledging the outlook on life as the main subject of analysis and interdisciplinarity. Adopting the particular approach towards the analysed reality, defined as 'the approach of an understanding observer of a historical process', the non-involvement approach is also significant. Reproducing those premises regarding the wider context of the European humanities along with the presentation of their development in subsequent decades is absolutely impossible here. Thus, I shall limit my presentation to some particular elements which were arbitrarily and subjectively considered important within the context of the issues I am dealing with.<sup>23</sup>

The first of the characteristics of the Warsaw historians of ideas listed by Walicki was the turn towards historicism, the choice of which was justified by Walicki within the categories of the reaction to the political situation of the Polish People's Republic:

<sup>22</sup> The discussion 'Warszawska Szkoła Historii Idei. Powstanie, przekształcenia, kontynuacje', p. 52.

<sup>23</sup> Andrzej Leder presents a significant and interesting comparison of the Warsaw School of Historian of Ideas with the output of the 'moderate post-structuralism'. The course of reflection he presents is an important complement to this text. Cf. Andrzej Leder, 'Droga powrotu. Warszawska szkoła historii idei z perspektywy umiarkowane poststrukturalistycznej', in *Warszawska szkoła historii idei. Tożsamość, tradycja, obecność*, ed. P. Grad, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2014), p. 43.

The historical approach, with its inevitable element of historical relativity, seemed to us a more reliable weapon against any form of dogmatism than replacing one dogmatic ideology with another. In other words, historicity has become for us an antidote to rigid, reified forms of dogmatic thinking, both Marxist and non-Marxist.<sup>24</sup>

However, historicism, the choice of which was explained by Walicki as the reaction to the dominant political system, was to become something more in the work of historians of ideas. It was to become the source of what we can call contextualism, acknowledging the influence of all elements which defined the specificity of the times in which there were created, on the structures of the thinking of individuals and groups, and the tight connection between a thought and its historical, including material, context.<sup>25</sup> The historicism of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas postulated acknowledging the fact that problems and issues which human thought deals with were permanently rooted in real existential and historic experience. Jerzy Szacki in his retrospective view of the Warsaw School's tradition pinpoints the discrepancy between its premises and the European thought developing at the same time. Szacki underlines the fact that 'at the same time somewhere else in intellectual history was occurring the turn towards contextualism, which was analogical in some aspects, because it was then when the *Begriffsgeschichte* of Koselleck and the Cambridge School started, not to mention the history of mentality in the spirit of the *Annales*<sup>26</sup> School. At the same time also the representatives of the Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School turned towards history (in the 1960s the first 'summer schools' were organised and in the 1964 the first of 25 issues of *Trudy po znakovym sistemam* published). The turn towards historicism led the Soviet semioticians of culture towards acknowledging that all cultural research is historical research; something that was expressed in the subject of the last, the 25th, issue of *Trudy* edited by Iurii Lotman of 1992, entitled *Semiotics and Culture*. A significant result of Soviet semioticians' historical reflections was acknowledging the influence of the historical-cultural context of the very researcher on their understanding of texts written in the past. From their perspective analysing history

<sup>24</sup> Andrzej Walicki, 'Leszek Kołakowski i warszawska szkoła historii idei', in *Przegląd Filozoficzno-Literacki*, 3-4/2007, p. 37.

<sup>25</sup> Some analysts of the tradition of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas consider its references to the historical context of ideas' development ostensible and declarative. Marcin Poręba, during a discussion, compares the works of particular representatives of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas to '*Ideengeschichte*, which [...] was created as an opposition to *Geistesgeschichte* by distinguishing the factor of thoughts and ideas and regarding it as autonomous to the maximum extent, separately from the historical and cultural context as much as it is possible' (Discussion: 'Warszawska Szkoła Historii Idei. Powstanie, przekształcenia, kontynuacje', p. 29-30.)

<sup>26</sup> Jerzy Szacki, *Marksizm po bardzo wielu latach, in Warszawska szkoła historii idei. Tożsamość, tradycja, obecność*, ed. P. Grad, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2014), p. 40.

becomes actually a dialogue between the past and the present. A historical text becomes dynamic under the influence of the questions formulated from the point of view of the researcher's times: it comes back to life and generates new meanings.

The correspondence of the thought of the Warsaw historians of ideas with the European thought of that time was expressed also in the anthropological turn, shifting the researchers' area of interest towards the human; something Walicki regards as one of the main premises of the school. By the end of the 1960s the development of research into the category of *mentalité* had accelerated rapidly in France, where 'historians felt the need to stop the expansion of positivistically run humanities into history, they wanted to inhibit the process of the appropriation of the area of history by 'beyond-human' or 'over-human' history.'<sup>27</sup> The 1960s are the beginning of the process of radical change within studies into history, ones that took place under the influence of deep historiographical reflection. The most important consequence of those changes was making the content of human consciousness the subject of historical research. It was the human and their problems, who were placed at the centre of historical reflection in the second half of the 20th century. The anthropological turn was the most significant achievement of post-Second-World-War European historiography. Among the participants and initiators of the change which led to the emergence of 'the new image of history as historical anthropology, as a human science',<sup>28</sup> were also Polish intellectuals. The method of work of a historian of ideas is the method of 'translating theoretical problems of philosophy into the language of human moral problems.'<sup>29</sup> Andrzej Walicki formulates the so-called 'anthropocentric hypothesis', according to which 'the core of every outlook is always a particular human and social philosophy. Of course, it is not always conscious: often – or even usually – the central problems relating to a view of the world have a mystified form, they are 'crypto-problems', disguised in an ostensibly 'purely metaphysical,' 'purely scientific' or 'purely artistic' subject area.'<sup>30</sup> What underlies this way of thinking is the belief that all kinds of history are created by humans. This results from the special nature of the very subject of history which is a social human living within a changing world. This is not a new idea. Mikhail Bakhtin claimed that 'a text is the primary fact (reality) and the starting point of every discipline of the humanities.'<sup>31</sup> A text is the point of focus of both historians and representatives of other disciplines of humanities, but it is not a text which is the actual subject of the research but, according to Bakhtin, 'the real object is a human in their social essence, expressing

<sup>27</sup> Wojciech Wrzosek, *Historia – kultura – metafora*, (Wrocław: FNP, 1995), p. 145.

<sup>28</sup> Aron Guriewicz, 'Historia i antropologia historyczna', trans. B. Żyłko, in *Konteksty. Sztuka Ludowa*, 1-2/1997, p. 13.

<sup>29</sup> Walicki, 'Leszek Kołakowski i warszawska szkoła historii idei', p. 40.

<sup>30</sup> Andrzej Walicki, *W kręgu konserwatywnej utopii*, (Warszawa: PWN, 1964), p. 10.

<sup>31</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Estetyka twórczości słownej*, trans. D. Ulicka, ed. and foreword E. Czaplejewicz, (Warszawa: PIW, 1986), p. 418.



themselves through speech or other means.<sup>32</sup> Marc Bloch, one of the founders of the Annales School, wrote: 'the subject of history is naturally a human, or rather humans.'<sup>33</sup> Małgorzata Szpakowska refers to the opinion on this key issue, as formulated by Baczeko – the leader of the Warsaw historians of idea, saying: 'I remember Baczeko repeating that history is created by people, not by dwarfs. I think that he made us learn this opinion very well.'<sup>34</sup> According to Szpakowska its consequence was the movement on the part of the next generations of historians of ideas towards cultural anthropology. In this context, because of the strongly individualised nature of Marica Tsvetaeva's notes, the question as to whether the centre of interest of historians of ideas was a human or humans, an individual or a group, becomes significant.

In the 1960s historians of ideas focused in their research on particular authors, thinkers, philosophers and social activists, yet in starting their analysis from an individual they aimed at a reconstruction of specific structures of thinking, something that is analysed below. At the same time, in dealing mostly with philosophy, what they reconstructed was mainly a part of the cultural reality in which only a few people participated. It was the time of the turn in the reflection on the relations between individual and collective issues within the French Annales School. This turn was definitely constituted in 1969, when Jacques Le Goff and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie replaced Fernand Braudel as the editors of Annales. Then the transition from the dominant trend of macrohistory, which was focused on the history of medium continuity, on social time, collective movements, the history of economic conjunctures and social processes, which was being formed under the influence of Fernand Braudel, to that of microhistory, took place. It was a shift from 'history without people' to an anthropology-oriented history: the history of society and the history of culture. In western Europe this turn de facto took place after the formal expiration of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas. The most significant works which were to become the classics of microhistory, were written in the 1970s: Montaillou. The promised Land of Error by Le Roy Ladurie (1975), The Cheese and the Worms by Carl Ginzburg (1976), The Great Cat Massacre by Robert Darnton (1984). All those authors let particular people, the actors of the described events, speak. The created historical anthropology was a kind of historical literature, using such anthropological inspirations like approaching the past in the 'micro' scale, from the point of view of 'ordinary people' and their daily life, using historical sources such as photographs, diaries, letters, artefacts etc. and applying anthropological methods in historical research.

Historical anthropology defined in this way, focusing on 'ordinary people', is opposite to the history of ideas. This opposition was verbalised by Darnton, who wrote:

<sup>32</sup> Bakhtin, *Estetyka twórczości słownej*, p. 418.

<sup>33</sup> Marc Bloch, *Pochwała historii, czyli o zawodzie historyka*, trans. W. Jedlicka, (Kęty: Wydawnictwo Marek Derewecki, 2007), p. 49.

<sup>34</sup> Discussion 'Warszawska Szkoła Historii Idei. Powstanie, przekształcenia, kontynuacje', p. 27.

Where the historian of ideas traces the filiation of formal thought from philosopher to philosopher, the ethnographic historian studies the way ordinary people made sense of the world. He attempts to uncover their cosmology, to show how they organized reality in their minds and expressed it in their behavior.<sup>35</sup>

This opposition was formulated probably with regard to the history of philosophy defined rather traditionally, representing the purely analytical, ahistorical approach, which the Warsaw historians of ideas radically resigned from. Within the frames of the history of ideas applied by the Warsaw School, one which was anthropology-oriented, this opposition was reduced and softened. This was especially so regarding the subject of research which for them was outlook on the world:

the cultural entirety analysed by them was the very view of the world. And according to Walicki, it was not a common view of the world, which is incoherent, fragmentary, actually not possible to reconstruct but a view of the world as an ideal model which additionally is different from an ideology because a view of the world understood like this is not a tool serving the interests of some class or a group but a kind of an expression [...] of life attitudes, individual and collective ones, organised around an idea; an expression manifesting itself in various areas of life and various layers of ideas; from theological to philosophical ones, in artistic activities and even some economic opinions. Views of the world defined as entireties are inapprehensible for traditional academic disciplines.<sup>36</sup>

In this point historical anthropology and the history of ideas become closer because of the subject of their research. Both of them analyse a specific model of the reality which underlies individual activities and is expressed in cultural texts.

What is situated at the centre of the experience of the revolution described by Marina Tsvetaeva is the experience of hunger, which is a bodily experience. The poet's thoughts, activities, intentions and emotions are connected with everything that forms her everyday life, her material environment. This experience becomes highly individual and cannot be generalised. Those main characteristics of Tsvetaeva's notes make them a marginal text both in the analysis performed by historians of ideas and cultural anthropologists. The text is either completely invisible for them or its nature is secondary, serving only as a reconstruction of the essential context of forming the content of the consciousness of the inhabitants of Moscow in the times of the revolution.

<sup>35</sup> Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History*, (New York: Basic Books, 1999), p. 3.

<sup>36</sup> Jacek Migasiński: Discussion 'Warszawska Szkoła Historii Idei. Powstanie, przekształcenia, kontynuacje', p. 28.

## CONCLUSION

Shifting Tsvetaeva's notes, along with their essential content, which is the bodily, subjective and unique experience of the revolution, towards the centre of interest of historians of culture took place under the influence of the transformations of the European humanities which occurred in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as in the first decade of the 21st century. We can regard those transformations as the consequence of 'the anthropological turn', which took place in post-war historiography formulating the postulate of defining a human in a holistic way along with their relations to their environment, but at the same time contradicting this definition by rejecting the central role of the content of human consciousness, expressed in language, as the subject of the research. The radical change occurred in the 1990s mainly within the reflection related to the experience of the Holocaust, or Shoah. Then the shift towards non-discursive experience which regained the value omitted in the research on the language representation of reality, which is a form of its transformation and construction, took place.

In today's humanistic and philosophical reflection, the path of confronting experience with language and discursiveness is very significant. It seems that the problem of non-discursive, liminal experience has dominated other voices [...]. Unavailable, absent and impossible experience is a form of a liminal experience which became apparent along with the Holocaust and is seeking its space for expression, visibly transforming the area of humanistic reflection.<sup>37</sup>

It is the very subject area of the Shoah, where the issue of the cognitive possibility and adequacy, not only the lack of the representation of its experience, as well as the problem of testifying those dramatic events, became especially clear. The substantial closeness of experience and testimony is reflected in their common etymology in the Polish language.<sup>38</sup>

The humanities of the beginning of the 21st century, undergoing the next phase of its development, focused on bodiliness and materiality, 'turned towards things', moved in a direction opposite to the one determined by the historians of ideas of the 1960s. The trends of the new humanities stemming from 'this affective turn', 'the turn towards things' or neomaterialism open up an important perspective for research.<sup>39</sup> All these trends, on

<sup>37</sup> Dorota Wolska, 'Doświadczenie – ponownie rzeczywista kwestia humanistyki', in *Nowoczesność jako doświadczenie*, eds. Ryszard Nycz, Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska, (Kraków: Universitas, 2006), p. 44.

<sup>38</sup> Wolska, 'Doświadczenie – ponownie rzeczywista kwestia humanistyki', p. 50.

<sup>39</sup> See: Athena Athanasiou, Pothiti Hantzaroula, Kostas Yannakopoulos, 'Towards a New Epistemology: The «Affective Turn»', in *Historein*, 8/2008; Bruno Latour, *We have never been modern*, trans. C. Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); *Rzeczy i ludzie. Humanistyka wobec materialności*, eds. J. Kowalewski, W. Piasek, M. Śliwa, (Olsztyn: Instytut Filozofii Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego w Olsztynie, 2008).

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the one hand, radically contradict the premises of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas, but on the other constitute its extension, make it possible to extend the scope of phenomena being the subject of historical, or wider humanistic research. They restore a significant part of the experience of reality, make visible what was earlier unavailable for the eyes and make audible the voices which were marginalised and considered as merely background in the research of historians of ideas. However, analysing the complex relations between the new courses of the humanities and the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas, which would take into consideration the important role of its intellectual background which is Marxism, from which researchers were resigning or to which they were returning, would require a separate study.

## A STORY OF DISILLUSIONMENT: GEORGE SANTAYANA'S VIEWS ON THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND COMMUNISM<sup>1</sup>

By **KATARZYNA KREMPLEWSKA**

*The paper traces the evolution of George Santayana's views on communism and the Russian Revolution on the basis of his correspondence and his reflections contained in his only treatise in political philosophy – Dominations and Powers (1951). It seems that the thinker's initial hopes related to the revolutionary changes in Russia were inspired by a Platonic dream of a universal commonwealth where spiritual life in all its human diversity could bloom due to the partial alleviation of the burden of necessity achieved by means of rational and competent governing. The actual development of the Soviet state in the totalitarian direction is reflected in Santayana's all the more bitter reflections on the causes of the collapse of the ideal of human paradise, the impossibility of a successful, practical realization of any socio-political utopian scheme, as well as the costs of such attempts.*

Key words: George Santayana, communism, the Russian Revolution, utopia

Communist views were relatively popular in the America of the 1930s, particularly amongst the intelligentsia, even if they were never to become part of a dominant worldview.<sup>2</sup> One of the most influential American thinkers of all times, John Dewey, is considered by some to have been initially communist-friendly if not influenced by communist ideas, especially in his progressive theory of education and his anti-individualist idea of the overall 'socialization' of man. And conversely, his books such as *Schools of Tomorrow*, *How We Think*, and *The School and Society* were translated and published in Russia as early as in 1919-1921. The author himself was invited for a guided tour of the Soviet Union in 1928. He was impressed by the Soviet 'experiment', as he called it, with its new education system. As one may read in his *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, Dewey clearly thought of education as a vehicle for conveying pro-social values and attitudes, a tool for shaping worldviews. He considered the spirit of economic competition and individualism so typical of capitalism to be a major obstacle on the way to education reform. Definitely not utterly uncritical and not without reservations about the communist system in Soviet Russia, he still sounds

<sup>1</sup> The text is part of the project financed by National Science Centre, Poland, project number 2016/23/D/HS1/02274.

<sup>2</sup> Guenter Lewy, *The Cause that Failed: Communism in American Political Life*, (Oxford University Press, 1990).

optimistic about the future results of the 'experiment'.<sup>3</sup> By way of digression, Dewey was among the signatories of a letter to Franklin D. Roosevelt supporting the diplomatic recognition of the USSR. In point of fact, as Guenter Lewy notes, a few years later, in the 1930s, Dewey, alongside other prominent intellectuals of the time – Horace Kallen and Morris Cohen, to mention just two – belonged to the group of the so-called liberals or progressive liberals in America that were against both fascism and communism.<sup>4</sup> What prompted Dewey to condemn Stalinist Russia decisively were the infamous Moscow trials. Dewey became overtly hostile toward the faction of 'radical liberals' (centered around the *New Republic*), which supported the Stalinist regime, and in the 1940s was actively engaged in a campaign against it. Lewy mentions Dewey as a perfect example of the liberal intellectuals who advocated certain left-wing ideas and yet 'allegedly suffered from the so-called red terror'.<sup>5</sup>

Leaving the intricacies of the ideological engagement of the American intelligentsia aside, it did not escape the attention of Dewey's early readers, his contemporaries – Corliss Lamont (1947),<sup>6</sup> Jim Corc,<sup>7</sup> or George Santayana – that some features of his evolutionary naturalism bore semblance to the dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels. And this holds true despite the fact that Dewey's acquaintance with Marxism was most probably – just like Santayana's – second-hand. Santayana, who as a philosophy student took part in the early stage of the formation of the pragmatist movement in America, later parted ways with his colleagues, the pragmatists, and developed his own system of philosophy, namely a nonreductive sort of materialism/naturalism, which assumed an irreducible realm of spirit. An 'exile by nature,' as he would call himself, in 1912 Santayana resigned from Harvard University and moved to Europe. He wandered from Oxford to Paris and Nice, paying occasional visits to his homeland, Spain. In 1940, while in Italy, he was denied permission to travel to Spain and found himself 'imprisoned' in Rome. After the Second World War, the philosopher – who was in his mid-80s at that time – decided to spend his remaining years in the Eternal City, devoting himself exclusively to writing.

The thinker's 'situatedness' in-between America and Europe granted him a privileged, broad perspective, which characterized his astute yet synthetic criticism of culture and politics. Already during his Harvard years Santayana came to be recognized as an uncompromising and hence, controversial critic of American intellectual life.

<sup>3</sup> John Dewey, 'Impressions of Soviet Russia', in *1927-28, vol. 3 of The Later Works of John Dewey 1925-1953*, ed. Joe Ann Boydston, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), p. 203-241.

<sup>4</sup> Lewy, *The Cause that Failed*, p. 48-49.

<sup>5</sup> Lewy, *The Cause that Failed*, p. 58.

<sup>6</sup> Charles W. Tolman and Brad Piekkola, 'John Dewey and Dialectical Materialism: Anticipations of Activity Theory in the Critique of the Reflex Arc Concept', *Activity Theory*, 1(3-4)/1989, p. 43-46.

<sup>7</sup> Jim Corc, 'John Dewey, Karl Marx, and Democratic Socialism', *The Antioch Review*, 9(4)/1949, p. 435-452.

Interestingly, after Santayana severed his professional relations with American academia, he came to be perceived by some as a recalcitrant intellectual, a solitary sage, perhaps a little outlandish but all the more alluring. Thus, a number of intellectuals and activists, some of them of leftist and emancipatory sympathies – such as Horace Kallen, Kenneth Burke, Sydney Hook, Max Eastman, or W.E. Du Bois – exchanged letters with Santayana, sought inspiration in his ideas, and sometimes cared to travel across Atlantic to meet the old thinker in his cell in a Roman nursing home.

Notwithstanding the fact that Santayana cannot be regarded as an expert either on Russian history or on Marxist philosophy (his familiarity with these was – just like Dewey's – most probably second-hand, mediated by Stalin's works and the secondary sources that he read), he was an important figure in the Anglo-Saxon intellectual milieu of that time, an open-minded and insightful observer and commentator of the events of the day, and an author of *Dominations and Powers* – a treatise in political philosophy. An initial inquiry into his correspondence and the magnum opus *Dominations and Powers* suggests that his approach to communism underwent an evolution – from a moderate skepticism not deprived of some rays of hope to a disillusionment, which finally reinforced his initial skepticism and merged with his disapproval for any attempts at a practical realization of utopian ideologies.

One learns from Santayana's correspondence that he was acquainted with some of Stalin's writings as well as those of the American communists' of the day – in particular two books by Max Eastman – 'Stalin's Russia and the Crisis in Socialism' (1940) and 'Marxism: Is It Science?' (1940).<sup>8</sup> Santayana followed also the pragmatist philosopher Sydney Hook's engagement in American left-wing intelligentsia. The letters he exchanged with Eastman are evidence of his interest and appreciation of his colleague's work, even though he straightforwardly declares that he never belonged to Eastman's 'camp.' Typically of the era, Santayana refers to the left-wing, often pro-communist activists in the United States as 'radical liberals,' whereas the label 'liberals' includes, among others, the representatives of the mainstream pragmatism (like John Dewey) with its pro-social and progressivist spirit. When John Gray, then, in *Post-Liberalism*, describes Santayana as one of the most insightful critics of liberalism, one should keep the distinction in mind and note that the criticism in question concerns in particular certain aspects and tendencies within the historical development of what we call 'liberalism' today. Santayana, as I read him, was a selective critic (and an advocate at once) of liberal ethos and civil society.

What is important, the author of *Dominations and Powers* noticed a number of assumptions common to pragmatism and communism. Besides the fact that he finally rejected Soviet Russia's totalitarian ambition and method (even though, as we shall later

<sup>8</sup> Letters of 17 March 1940 to Max Eastman and of 21 December 1940 to Nancy S. Toy, in *The Letters of George Santayana: Book Six, 1937-1940*, ed. William G. Holzberger, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), p. 425.

see, he initially shared in some illusions about its future perspectives), he presented his own materialism as incompatible with the so-called dialectical materialism, just as his naturalism differed fundamentally from the Deweyan, evolutionary type of naturalism, of which he was one of the first critics. In point of fact, these two incongruences are not unrelated. To put it in a nutshell, Santayana was critical of both philosophies on account of what he recognized as their 'ingenuity.' The materialism/naturalism declared by these doctrines was, in his view, a cover-up for a crypto-idealistic, if not crypto-religious philosophy of an instrumental kind, which reduced reality to the field of action. Both represented what he called a 'dominance of the foreground' – a biased perspective (in one case the perspective of the proletariat engaged in a class war, in the other that of social experience), which they proclaimed to be absolute so that they might better represent certain interests. Dewey's anthropocentrism, or rather – action-centrism or activism – overshadowed the recognition of the autonomous realm of nature and thus, in Santayana's reading, Dewey abandoned naturalism for an idolatry or a 'religion' of social progress.<sup>9</sup> One of the main targets of his critique of liberalism was, by the way, its progressivist strand. As for Marxism, he denied it the status of being 'scientific.' In one of his letters he wrote: 'I entirely accept historical materialism, which is only an application of materialism to history. But the phrase carries now an association with the Hegelian or Marxian dialectic, which if meant to be more than the doctrine of universal flux, is *a denial of materialism*.'<sup>10</sup> In another letter, addressed to Max Eastman – the already mentioned leftist intellectual and editor, who later was to become a staunch opponent of communism – he wrote: 'That Marxism is not a science, for me is a truism. It is a last revision of Hebrew prophecy, as Hegel's system is also.' Kołakowski, by way of digression, also considered Marx's 'faith in the 'end of history' ... not a scientist's theory but the exhortation of a prophet.'<sup>11</sup> Rather than being a genuine materialism or a science, Marxism seemed to be 'an idealism that prefers material images... in formulating its dream... [A]n idealist who uses mechanical or economic or pragmatic terms remains a dreaming idealist.'<sup>12</sup> The 'dream' was harmless unless it became dogmatic, hubristic, and usurped the rights to a forceful transformation of human reality with no or little respect to its costs. Santayana's sensitivity to arrogance in philosophy and his distrust toward utopian visions was rooted both in his conviction about the limitations of reason

<sup>9</sup> George Santayana, *Obiter Scripta: Lectures, Essays and Reviews*, eds. Justus Buchler and Benjamin Schwartz, (New York: Scribner's; London: Constable, 1936), p. 213-240.

<sup>10</sup> Letter of 18 September 1937 to Harry Slochower, in *The Letters of George Santayana: Book Six, 1937-1940*, ed. William G. Holzberger, p. 76.

<sup>11</sup> Leszek Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, trans. Paul S. Falla (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), p. 307.

<sup>12</sup> Letter of 31 December 1940 to Max Eastman, in *The Letters of George Santayana: Book Six, 1937-1940*, ed. William G. Holzberger, p. 430. Kołakowski clearly shares this opinion of Santayana: 'Neither Marx nor Engels are materialists in the exact or historical meaning of the word' (Leszek Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, p. 332).



(which, by the way, co-existed with his appraisal of rationality) and his idea of contingent reality; both ideas, by the way, were rejected by Marx. Throughout his essays and the treatise *Dominations and Powers*, he recommends humility and warns of the dangers carried by certain overtly ambitious doctrines for the visions of which there was neither need nor readiness in the real life of peoples.

Having said this, one should not lose sight of Santayana's intellectual openness and the fact that he enjoyed the belief that there was no one, specific political option that might be recognized as universally valid and the best for mankind. Neither did he ever claim to be a living depository of universal truths. Thus, on some occasions he did express hopes that Marxism and, specifically, the Russian Revolution, might indeed bring desirable changes to humanity. There are a number of examples in his writings.

He had no principal 'hostility' to socialism and communism, according to his letter of 1921 to Horace Kallen, even though he decisively dismissed the idea that they ever might or should become universal and lasting. At that point Santayana seems to have thought that at certain places and in specific historical moments communism might be justified as a sort of *cathartic medium*. While communism should be accepted 'only when inevitable',<sup>13</sup> there was a possibility, he admitted, that the early twentieth century was just the right moment for a communist revolution in a crisis-ridden Europe. Or at least – it was not unthinkable. What hopes did he attach to communism? That it might cater for the most basic needs of the many and do away with the vice of capitalism, without encroaching on certain liberties cherished by civil societies, such as freedom of speech, opinion, association, etc. As he would confess a few years later:

I am more drawn by the *Zeitgeist* ... towards communism than I was towards liberalism in the old days. Communism would turn the world, physically and spiritually, into one vast monastery, giving the individual sure support and definite limited duties while leaving him free and solitary in the spirit. That doesn't seem to me a bad ideal, even if certain selective forms of society might have to dive under while the universal brotherhood prevailed. It would not, in any case, prevail equally, or forever.<sup>14</sup>

The premises of these and similar wishful speculations rest in his critical assessment of what had happened to liberal ideals in the democratic *and* capitalist world, and his premonitions of future weaknesses and perversions of liberalism, which, by the way, as the development of what we call neo-liberalism has proved, were not far off the mark. His

<sup>13</sup> Letter of 21 November 1921 to Horace Kallen, in *The Letters of George Santayana: Book Three, 1921-1927*, ed. William G. Holzberger, p. 39.

<sup>14</sup> Letter of 26 December 1945 to Horace Kallen, in *The Letters of George Santayana: Book Seven, 1941-1947*, ed. William G. Holzberger, p. 203.

diagnoses uncovers widespread nihilism, agency crisis, and the hypocrisy of governments, which are alienated from the interests of those whom they are meant to represent and form a sort of parasitic organisms instead. He sounds sensitive to the working conditions of the poor, the so-called modern slavery, and does not spare the mentality of the elites some bitter words.<sup>15</sup> 'Conviction has deserted the civilized mind,' Santayana says in his final book, 'and a good conscience exists only at the extreme left, in that crudely deluded mass of plethoric humanity which perhaps forms the substance of another material tide destined to sweep away the remnants of our old vanities, and to breed new vanities of its own.'<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, he notices a sort of nemesis of ideology in that the 'banners of humanitarianism and equality' previously put forth by liberals, 'have now been snatched from their hands by a return wave of communism and dogmatic unanimity.'<sup>17</sup> This is where he is immediately concerned with the dangers inherent in the communist ideals. While their rise was not unrelated to the inertia of liberals, it seems dubious to Santayana whether 'unanimity and communism [may] coexist with' what he valued most in the society and what he called 'vital liberty.' Marx was right unveiling the class nature of liberalism – '[...] liberalism secured vital liberty for the rich and for the geniuses, ... for the liberty fostered by prosperity is intellectual as well as personal.' However, it was 'on the varied fruits of this moral and intellectual liberty that the spirit of unanimous mankind might feed at first.'<sup>18</sup> This sounds like the evidence of skepticism about the possibility of a successful and long-term implementation of *any* social and political ideal, accompanied by the concern as to the self-defeating tendencies inherent in literally all ideologies.

Nevertheless, Santayana did flirt with the idea of universal communism. In a response to the question 'Through whom might wisdom rule the world?'<sup>19</sup> we read:

Perhaps the Soviets ... they are a real power, with an autonomous army.... Secondly the Soviets are theoretically international... Thirdly, they represent the Dictatorship of the proletariat, that is, of the nondescript masses of human beings without country, religion, property, or skill. *We are all born proletarians, and remain such all our lives long in our physical being and in respect to those radical animal wants which are alone coercive. The dictatorship is therefore not artificial here, but simply a recognition of the fundamental conditions of our existence.* At that level, and in those respects, we live under the control of universal material forces; it would be childish not to recognize them and irrational not to confront them with foresight and method. Lastly, such foresight and method

<sup>15</sup> See: George Santayana, *Dominations and Powers: Reflections on Liberty, Society, and Government*, (New York: Scribner's; London: Constable, 1951), p. 379-380.

<sup>16</sup> Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 254.

<sup>17</sup> Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 310.

<sup>18</sup> Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 310.

<sup>19</sup> Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 453.

are foreshadowed in the Soviet doctrine of Historical Materialism. ... if the management [of economy] were competent, a universal communism, backed by irresistible armed force, would be a wonderful boon to mankind.<sup>20</sup>

While the motivation behind Santayana's hopes related to communism seems to be Platonic, the passage testifies first, to Santayana's metaphorical use of the term 'proletariat' and, second, to his (materialist) idea of politics as managing necessity.<sup>21</sup> Having recognized the rudimentary material slavery, the homage humans pay for staying alive and the inevitable situation of bowing to necessity, Santayana speculates on the possibility that communist regime – *under the condition of a genuine economic competence* – might free people from the shackles of narrow-minded materialism and the spirit of competition, thus liberating them to spiritual life. To stress it again, Santayana accounts for the term 'proletariat' *metaphorically*, saying that all people are potentially proletarians inasmuch as they are incarnate beings who suffer and have certain fundamental needs. This – and only this – may constitute the basis for unanimity or brotherhood. 'Proletarians thus tend to become equal in the only thing in which equality is possible – in their misery. And this is a great bond' and the source of the idea that 'all men are equal by nature.'<sup>22</sup> The supposed promising aspect of communism is that it recognizes and addresses this condition and aims at overcoming it by way of just distribution of the costs of necessity.

Now, these speculations are usually accompanied by some reservations and Santayana's skepticism seems to be growing with time. As mentioned previously, the thinker never sided openly with the communists, and the so-called Moscow trials, which shocked American public opinion at the end of 1930s, confirmed the viability of his ultimate distrust toward revolutions and utopias at large.

First of all, for the Soviet ideal to be meaningful and beneficial, the Soviets, he says, would have to guarantee pluralism of opinion and 'renounce all control of education, religion, manners, and arts.'<sup>23</sup> Freedom of expression, religious affiliation, travel and migration, etc., are plainly the conditions of possibility for the spiritual liberty that is at stake. This is where a paradox appears. In reference to the previously mentioned unanimity of all people, it turns out that

We are proletarians and unwitting communists only *in the absence of these things* [the liberties listed above] []; *in their presence, we all instantly become aristocrats.*

<sup>20</sup> Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 455. My emphasis.

<sup>21</sup> See: Katarzyna Kremplewska, 'Managing Necessity: George Santayana on Forms of Power and the Human Condition,' in *The Life of reason in an Age of Terrorism*, ed. Charles Padron and Krzysztof Skowroński, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), p. 28-42.

<sup>22</sup> Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 369.

<sup>23</sup> Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 455-456.

Everything except the mechanical skeleton of society, all culture in the German sense of this word, must be left to free associations, to inspiration founding traditions and traditions guiding inspiration. ... a just universal government would not disturb them.<sup>24</sup>

Elsewhere the idea is restated in a different way: 'The real equality between men is ... [either] an equality in misery... [or] an equality in spiritual autonomy.'<sup>25</sup> In the former case we are proletarians, in the latter – we are 'aristocrats.' Only and exclusively in an environment of natural diversity would 'the principle of spiritual wealth in spiritual liberty ... be vindicated.'<sup>26</sup>

Another issue tackled by Santayana is that of *moral representation* and *rational authority* being a challenge for the government. The latter involves the recognition of the authority of facts, the former 'lies in furthering the interests, not in catching the votes, of the people represented.'<sup>27</sup> Communist praxis contradicted both principles, leaving many of its former advocates disillusioned. Unable to thrive in the situation of liberty and assert its popular legitimacy, the communist regime resorted to large scale violence showing its totalitarian face. Santayana came to a conclusion similar to that of Andrzej Walicki, who argued that there is a genetic relation between totalitarian enslavement and the attempt to materialize the Marxist idea of freedom. The idea itself entailed a full and rational control over socio-economic forces, a "collective mastery over people's own fate."<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the freedom in mind concerned not the concrete individuals of here-and-now, but an abstract, future community of humans who have reached identity with their abstract, ideal essence. Meanwhile, Santayana believed that doing away with an element of unreason in the human world was an impossibility and 'could only come at the price of eradicating the bodies which are the material basis for unreason to flourish.'<sup>29</sup> Stalin, victorious in World War II, remarked Santayana,

adopted the policy of vetoing everything that did not conduce to the extension of communist domination... [T]here is a militant thirst for the political assimilation of all peoples to the social regimen of Russia, *which in that claim forfeits all rational authority. Rational authority according to my analysis, can accrue to governments only in so far as they represent the inescapable authority of*

<sup>24</sup> Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 455-456, my italics.

<sup>25</sup> Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 368.

<sup>26</sup> Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 368.

<sup>27</sup> Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 381.

<sup>28</sup> Andrzej Walicki, *Marksizm i skok do królestwa wolności* (Warszawa: PWN, 1996), p. 19.

<sup>29</sup> Till Kenzel, 'Santayana, Self-knowledge and the Limits of Politics', in *The Life of Reason in an Age of Terrorism*, ed. Charles Padrón and Krzysztof Piotr Skowroński (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), p. 98.

*things, that is to say, of the material conditions of free life and free action. In the Marxist theory this almost seems to be involved in its materialistic character; yet in Russian practice it is not the authority of things but nominally the material class interests and militant Will of the proletariat and really the ambition of the self-appointed inner circle of the Communist party that not only rule absolutely but intend to keep the whole world unanimous by 'liquidating' all dissentients. And half by the wonderful power of propaganda and mass-suggestion and half by systematic extermination of all other ways of thinking, this artificial unanimity has actually seemed to cover vast regions of Europe and Asia like a blanket of Siberian snow. The depth of it is unknown, but the silence is impressive. It is not, then, by the authority of universal physical conditions of existence that the Russian government would exercise control over all nations in military and economic matters; it would be rather by a revolutionary conspiracy fomented everywhere that it would usurp a moral and intellectual domination over all human societies. Such baseless pretensions cancel the right which economic science might have to guide a universal material economy.*<sup>30</sup>

In reference to what one of the contributors to the collection of essays entitled *De Profundis*, Alexander Izgoev, noted, namely that life itself proved the ultimate critic of communism and there is no superior critic than life,<sup>31</sup> let us note that Santayana suggests that communism – as a materialization of Marxist doctrine – finally rendered itself illegitimate in a manifold way: first, by proving incompatible with or contradictory to its own emancipatory spirit (liberating people into the spiritual richness of their human nature), second, as failing against the tribune of moral representation and rational government, third, as disavowing the myth of the scientific authority of Marxism, and finally – as proving incompetent in practice and hence, failing from the viewpoint of the authority of facts. The origins of the failure rest equally in the erratic assumptions of Marxism and in the inevitable perversities of its practical application. Among the 'myths' of Marxism that Santayana opposed were the ideas that 'there can be a perfect identity between collective and individual interests,' that it is possible to remove all the sources of antagonism among individuals by enabling them to merge with the social 'whole,' and that there is a prospect of a full emancipation of man, or, in other words, the attainment of his ideal nature.<sup>32</sup> That would entail bridging the gap between necessity and freedom, which means not simply alleviating the burden of the so-called human condition, but rather doing away with the human condition whatsoever. This is where Santayana is most

<sup>30</sup> Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 457. My emphasis.

<sup>31</sup> Alexander. S. Izgoev, 'Socialism, Culture and Bolshevism', in *Out of the Depths (De profundis)*. A Collection of Articles on Russian Revolution, trans., ed. William F. Woehrlin (Irvine, California: Charles Slack JR Publisher, 1986), p. 126.

<sup>32</sup> Kofakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, p. 108.

clearly at odds with (orthodox) Marxism. Even though he believed necessity may and should be understood to some extent, the recognition of human finitude was part of his philosophical credo. Marx, in turn, 'did not believe in the essential finitude and the limitation of man... Evil and suffering, in his eyes,... were purely social facts.'<sup>33</sup>

Looking back at the early correspondence with Kallen, Santayana thinks communism should 'be accepted only when inevitable, and confined to the community to which ... [it is] fitted, and by no means to be set up by the philosopher as ideals compulsory at all times and places over all men.'<sup>34</sup> These limitations pertain to any grand socio-economic and political design and stem on the one hand, from the limitations of reason, and on the other from the contingency and unpredictability informing reality. The (arbitrary) conceptual schemas on which such grand projects are based cannot be but provisional and at best adequate for a specific place and limited time. 'We think .. in aesthetic or moral terms [the so-called 'dynamic units'] which correspond to no lines of cleavage or motion in nature.' Consequently, when the application of an ideal turns out a disaster, 'we are consumed with astonishment and indignation at what we think the folly and wickedness of mankind, whose actions and sentiments are so strangely oblivious of the units we wished to preserve.'<sup>35</sup> As for the discernment of the dynamic/operative 'units' of reality, in this case the central categories of scientific materialism such as class struggle, it has been questioned by many, including some of the authors of *De Profundis*, Santayana's contemporaries, like Petr Struve, who called the doctrine of class struggle a 'bad publicistic cliché, appropriate only for use by demagogues.'<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, as noted by Semen Frank,

the people, in the sense of the lower classes or, in general, the masses of the population, may never be directly guilty of political failure [...] for the simple reason that in no social order, nor in any social circumstances, is the people the initiator and creator of political life. Even in the most democratic state, the people is always the fulfiller, the instrument in the hands of some directing and inspiring minority.<sup>37</sup>

And not unlike Santayana, who speaks of the strategy of blaming the 'folly' of the people for the failures of the Russian Revolution, Frank asks, ironically, 'what kind of

<sup>33</sup> Kotakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, p. 338.

<sup>34</sup> Letter of 21 November 1921 to Horace Kallen, in *The Letters of George Santayana: Book Three, 1921-1927*, ed. William G. Holzberger, p. 39.

<sup>35</sup> Letter of 21 November 1921 to Horace Kallen, in *The Letters of George Santayana: Book Three, 1921-1927*, ed. William G. Holzberger, p. 39.

<sup>36</sup> Petr Bergardovich Struve, 'The Historical Meaning of the Russian Revolution and National Tasks', in *Out of the Depths (De profundis). A Collection of Articles on the Russian Revolution*, p. 212.

<sup>37</sup> Semyon Lyudvigovich Frank, 'De Profundis', in *Out of the Depths (De profundis). A Collection of Articles on the Russian Revolution*, p. 221-222.

politicians are these, who, in their programs and their mode of action, deal with some kind of imagined, ideal people, and not with the people as it really exists!<sup>38</sup>

The very question of *the people* and *the proletariat* on the behalf of whose authority the Bolsheviks reached for power seems to the American thinker highly problematic. Many years later he returns to this issue and asks:

does the proletariat exercise any power at all? Or do the vested interests at work regard the special interests of the proletariat or of their own prestige or chosen ambition? Here is a revolution entangled in the complexities of its own success and carried by its organized instruments into enterprises of which it cannot plan the course or see the end. Meantime, what may we expect the spiritual condition of the people and the character of the liberal arts to become in this future realm of equality and unanimity? The temper of the communist masses ... may give us some hint of it.<sup>39</sup>

As for the question who exercises power – Santayana's answer is: a sect, a party of conspirators, who, notwithstanding their 'apostolic zeal,' remained essentially politicians, counting not so much on the loose lost orphans of society as on the organized working class, that could be indoctrinated, trained and mobilized into a political army.<sup>40</sup> In a letter to a friend, Santayana, utterly disillusioned, wrote: 'It is already notorious that in Russia the governing clique lives luxuriously and plans 'dominations' like so many madmen....There would be no 'communists' among factory hands if they knew their true friends.'<sup>41</sup> Moreover, he notices some crypto-religious features of the whole enterprise:

In such a conspiracy there is the same intrepid consistency or internal rationality as in any theocracy... Both reform and reason would thus be banished from the scene, and eclipsed by faith and by prescribed action ... the undertaking is not only horrible in its methods but vain in its promise...<sup>42</sup>

The moral and spiritual condition of the communist form of society that was being established on the ruins of the Russian past seemed dubious for Santayana, who already during the Civil War in Russia spoke of the tragic destruction of institutions and values, and the subsequent dissolution of the (inherited) cultural, social and/or national unity. Meanwhile, when a moral unity is missing in a society,

<sup>38</sup> Frank, 'De profundis', p. 221.

<sup>39</sup> Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 349.

<sup>40</sup> Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 347.

<sup>41</sup> Letter of 2 May 1952 to John W. Yolton, in *The Letters of George Santayana: Book Eight, 1948-1952*, ed. William G. Holzberger, p. 443.

<sup>42</sup> Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 321.

the government cannot be rational; it can never be an art; for the country supplies no guiding purpose to its rulers... That has been happening in Europe under our eyes; for it is materially impossible that the proletariat should govern itself systematically; it can only flow like a swollen river.<sup>43</sup>

The lack of economic competence in the new Soviet system and the inefficiency of a state-controlled economy, one deprived of a free market, seemed to this thinker from Ávila an equally important problem. Not unlike his Russian contemporaries, the authors of the *De Profundis* collection, Santayana doubts in the possibility of decent wages for workers and free social services.

But how, if all profit on land and equipment is abolished is the state to continue paying always higher wages for shorter hours of work, and supplying a more complete system of free social services? Evidently when a government has assumed possession of all means of production and controls all business, it cannot distribute... more than industry, so organized, will produce; and it will probably... produce rather less than was at first produced by rival capitalists and private enterprise.<sup>44</sup>

The central planning of the economy, doomed to failure, according to John Gray, is one of the key features of totalitarianism. Its Soviet variety may be better characterized as 'an economic chaos contained in a political state of nature,' rather than as a despotism or a tyranny.<sup>45</sup> Thus, it brings about a moral degradation of its participants, who become unwilling perpetrators in this self-reproducing system.

Rational leadership, according to Santayana, ideally would entail not the destruction of what had been established in the past but rather critical, selective continuity and reform. It should be disinterested and knowledgeable, 'steady and traditional, yet open to continual readjustment,' aware of the limitations of reason and its own inability to 'define or codify human nature: that is the error of militant sects and factions. But it can exercise a modicum of control over local and temporal impulses and keep at least an ideal of spiritual liberty and social justice before the public eye.'<sup>46</sup>

Valerian Murav'ev noted that Soviet communism involved discontinuity not only through the negation of history and tradition but also of actual reality, and their

<sup>43</sup> Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 380.

<sup>44</sup> Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 381-382.

<sup>45</sup> John Gray, 'Totalitarianism, reform and civil society', in *Post-Liberalism. Studies in Social Thought* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), p. 163.

<sup>46</sup> Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 382.



replacement by an abstract ideological construct.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, Santayana ascribes to the revolutionaries 'hatred of any view that recognized realities.' In particular it was the past that 'was the great enemy, the dreadful past.' The annihilation of values involved in this process gave birth to a new kind of man, whom Santayana calls *a momentary man*, one who can afford no other past – and consequently no other destiny – than that prepared for him by the state. 'The undifferentiated proletariat,' the mass of 'momentary men,' 'would glorify undifferentiated existence. Such may be the ultimate voice of revolutionary democracy.'<sup>48</sup>

The undifferentiation in question appears as if in response to the demand for equality and unanimity. The unanimity sought by communists disregards the fact that human needs and the ways humans realize their vital liberty 'are centrifugal and divergent, so that the goods they pursue are incompatible existentially.'<sup>49</sup> In a striking semblance to what René Girard says about the relation between undifferentiation and war, Santayana clearly sees that '[t]he more equal and similar all nations and all individuals become, the more vehemently will each of them stick up for his atomic individuality... But when all are uniform the individuality of each unit is numerical only.'<sup>50</sup> In other words, equality rather than leading to brotherhood results in atomization or atomistic individualism and, possibly, in mutual hostility.

*Uniformity between classes or between nations is not favorable to peace, except as it destroys units capable of action. There must be organic units at some level or there would be no potential moral agents or combatants; but similarity in these units, if they live in the same habitat, renders them rivals and therefore, in spite of their brotherly likeness to one another, involves them in war.... Similarity is therefore a danger to peace, and peace can be secured only by organization. But the collateral completeness of similar units excludes organization; and then war becomes inevitable at the first shock of competition, unless some higher power, itself organized, stifles the conflict.'*<sup>51</sup>

Let me note that these reflections of Santayana find resonance in the already mentioned diagnoses of Soviet totalitarianism by John Gray, who emphasized the reduction of the society to the Hobbesian state of nature, where (equal) agents predate against one another in competing for goods, which are in permanent scarcity.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile, cultural and intellectual pluralism along with the institutions of civil society are being annihilated.

<sup>47</sup> Valer'yan Nikolaevich Murav'ev, 'The Roar of the Tribe', in *Out of the Depths (De profundis). A Collection of Articles on Russian Revolution*, p. 166.

<sup>48</sup> All quotations in this paragraph: Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 350.

<sup>49</sup> Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 310.

<sup>50</sup> Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 180.

<sup>51</sup> Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 364-5-6. My italics.

<sup>52</sup> Gray, 'Totalitarianism, reform and civil society', p. 185-186.

Perhaps the most mature expression, synthetic and yet pregnant with meaning, of Santayana's final views on the Russian Revolution and its totalitarian fruits is contained in the passage quoted below.

The same nominal humanitarianism, inwardly contradicted by a militant hatred towards almost all human institutions and affections, has descended from the wealth-loving liberals to the poverty-hating communists. The moral inspiration of communism is brotherly, pacifistic, ascetic, and saintly. Christianity was originally communistic, and all the religious orders continue to be so in their internal economy and discipline. It is built on tenderness, on indifference to fortune and to the world, on readiness for sacrifice, on life in the spirit. It cannot be militant. But what is now called communism is more than militant, more than a doctrine and a party bent on universal domination; It is ferociously egotistical, and claims absolute authority for the primal Will of a particular class, or rather a group of conspirators professing to be the leaders of that class. This class, far from embracing all mankind, does not include all the poor, nor the fundamental rural population that traditionally till the soil and live on its products, but enlists only the uprooted and disinherited proletariat ... Thus the authority of the 'Communist Party' usurped without previous delegation, like the authority of conquerors and bandits, proclaims itself to be absolute and to extend prophetically over all mankind. And whose interests meantime does it serve? At bottom only the imaginary interests of a future society, unanimous and (like the Prussians of Hegel) perfectly free because perfectly disciplined to will nothing but what the State wills for them. Meantime, in order to clear the ground for that ideal plenty in peace, war must devour millions of the faithful communists themselves, as well as millions of their surprised and unconverted fellow creatures; there must be slaughter of enemies, forced migrations of whole peoples, disappearance of institutions, civic and religious, destruction of all traditions...<sup>53</sup>

To conclude, whatever Santayana's initial hopes were when related to communism, they were motivated predominantly by the idea of the spiritual (cultural, moral, intellectual) gains and greater personal liberty related to a more competent economic order and more just distribution of the costs of necessity. The hopes waned and gave way to harsh criticism along with the recognition of the totalitarian nature of Soviet communism and its detrimental influence on the spiritual and moral condition of society. Did Santayana's disillusionment with Soviet communism make him abandon altogether his ideal of a universal commonwealth? It seems not. In a letter to a friend, written a few months before his death, he mentions his 'playful speculations' about a model of what a rational

<sup>53</sup> Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 320.

government might be.<sup>54</sup> He continues to dream about a possible multi-national/cultural, universal 'empire,' where the military, economy, and healthcare would be controlled by the state with the support of scientific knowledge, making – at least to an extent – natural necessity less burdensome and more justly distributed. The commonwealth he speaks of is perhaps only to a small degree influenced by the Marxist doctrine, in which the thinker continues to see some aspects as promising. It is also unclear what the scope of state intervention in the economic life of the people would be. Nevertheless, Santayana insists that governmental control should by no means extend further than the already mentioned spheres of common life, while securing freedom and encouraging diversity in all the remaining ones. Such a commonwealth – a new *Pax Romana*, as Santayana at times called it – would secure internal peace for its subjects and cater for a *modus vivendi*. These, however, remain, as he would note, merely 'playful speculations.'

<sup>54</sup> Letter of 2 May 1952 to John W. Yolton, in *The Letters of George Santayana: Book Eight, 1948-1952*, ed. William G. Holzberger, p. 443.

## THE EVOLUTION OF MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY'S VIEWS ON MARXISM – AN INSPIRATION FOR POLISH MARXISM REVISIONISTS

By **JACEK MIGASIŃSKI**

*The author, at the beginning of the paper, acknowledges that influence of Merleau-Ponty's ideas on Polish revisionists in the 1950s and 1960s was indirect. Then he introduces two views on social relations and history: first, phenomenological and existential one and, second, a dialectical and revolutionary one. Next he analyzes how the French philosopher turned towards Marxism under the influence of political life in France in the 1930s and during occupation, as well as due to theoretical inspirations (Hegel, young Marx). In the second part of the paper, the author discusses Merleau-Ponty's attitudes towards Marxism and communism. The first attitude, held by Merleau-Ponty till the year 1950, was the so called 'waiting for the right moment' (attentisme); the second attitude called 'double refusal' of communism and anti-communism was held till the end of 1950s and eventually evolved into position of acceptance of the social-democratic parliamentarism. In the conclusion of the paper, the author discusses a possible influence of Merleau-Ponty on Polish revisionists. He also emphasizes differences between living and political conditions of intellectuals behind the 'iron curtain' and those in liberal and democratic countries.*

Key words: waiting for the right moment (attentisme), double refusal, social-democratic parliamentarism

It is difficult to say precisely to what degree the evolution of Merleau-Ponty's political views may have inspired at least some members of the so-called Warsaw school of historians of ideas to revise their position on Marxism, or whether there had existed any direct contacts in the matter. In fact, it is generally assumed that these revisionist trends were rather the effect of mounting social and political pressure in Poland between October 1956 and March 1968, as well as the theoretical evolution of the Warsaw school itself. As contemporary commentators often point out, however, a strong inspiration here were the writings of Gramsci, Lukacs, Mannheim, Garaudy and Goldmann, which indicates that the wind of theoretical change had indeed come from the West, and predominantly from France. Thus, Merleau-Ponty could have played a role, although today it is hard to say how strong his influence was, or for whom (if at all) he was a direct inspiration. Nonetheless, there exist some tangible traces of his presence –

I mean here the inclusion in the then iconic anthology *Filozofia egzystencjalna*<sup>1</sup> [*Existential Philosophy*] of fragments of *Phenomenology of Perception* (in Pomian's translation) and an excerpt from *Signs*, a book that addresses political themes, in a translation completed during a seminar, which suggests that it was collective. (I have a personal reminiscence connected with this: at the turn of the 1960s and 70s Leszek Kołakowski's former assistant Tadeusz Mrówczyński presented me with a heavily pencil-marked copy of *Signs*). Also, a series of articles devoted to Merleau-Ponty by another Kołakowski associate, Jacek Syski, appeared between 1978 and 1984 in the periodical *Humanitas* edited by the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Polish Academy of Sciences and published by the Ossolineum publishers. Two of them, *Fenomenologia genetyczna i historyczność*<sup>2</sup> [*Genetic phenomenology and historicity*], *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: fenomenologia, historia i polityka*<sup>3</sup> [*Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Phenomenology, History and Politics*], specifically addressed the French philosopher's views on Marxism and communism, his dual vision of history and the influence on this vision of Marx's early writings. Assumedly, these reflections were the crop of earlier seminar debates.

Thus, I do not maintain that the maturation of Merleau-Ponty's political views had any direct impact on the theoretical positions of his then Polish readers, but I do claim that it was possible, and that from this perspective it might prove instructive to take a closer look at this process, if only in analogy to the evolution of the views of Polish Marxism revisionists. Especially in view of the fact that Maurice Merleau-Ponty was a philosopher of prime magnitude and stood in the foreground of a philosophical trend that raised much interest in his day.

As we know, Merleau-Ponty was an eminent French phenomenologist, whose writings like *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), *Eye and Mind* (1961), *The Visible and the Invisible* (1964, posthumous) or *The Prose of the World* (1969, posthumous) inspired many trends in French post-war philosophy, and today belong to the 20th-century philosophy's classical canon. However, alongside these phenomenological writings, Merleau-Ponty, practically throughout his post-war life, also published articles on the current themes of his day, and essays and books which directly addressed domestic and international politics or criticised the philosophical premises of his era's political ideologies. This direction in his pursuits is best reflected by works such as *Humanism and Terror* (1947), *Sense and Non-Sense* (1948), *Adventures of the Dialectic* (1955) or *Signs* (1960), in which he evolved from consent with the Marxian vision of history and sympathy towards the communist movement to a critically distant stance. The question that immediately arises here is whether his political views and political philosophy stemmed from his original philosophy – phenomenology –

<sup>1</sup> *Filozofia egzystencjalna*, eds. Leszek Kołakowski, Krzysztof Pomian, (Warszawa: PWN, 1965).

<sup>2</sup> Jacek Syski, 'Fenomenologia genetyczna i historyczność', *Humanitas*, 4/1980, p. 113-143.

<sup>3</sup> Jacek Syski, 'Maurice Merleau-Ponty: fenomenologia, historia i polityka', *Humanitas*, 9/1984, p. 177-198.

or were circumstantial, a response to the current political situation and not a product of philosophical reflection?

This is not the place to track down the sophisticated thought processes by which Merleau-Ponty arrived at his original phenomenology, therefore I will limit myself only to one of its aspects. The phenomenology he postulated and practiced was a genetic phenomenology<sup>4</sup> particularly inclined to seek the 'genesis of sense', or the seeds of intelligence, in man's relations with the natural world and the world of human production – relations that were not only the effect of activity by the human subjects inhabiting these worlds but a process wherein both sides of the relation interacted. Seen this way, Merleau-Ponty wrote, 'It is impossible to superimpose on man a lower layer of behaviour which one chooses to call 'natural', followed by a manufactured cultural or spiritual world.'<sup>5</sup> Nature turned into culture, which was the proper and universal environment for a fully human existence in the world, and culture in the course of its evolution acquired certain universal regularities which were sometimes referred to as 'the laws of history'. Not even the most individual and ideal human act could be separated from the historical context in which humans lived. It was impossible to determine where the influence of the external, historical determinants of human social life ceased and the sphere of individual spontaneity began, as history existed only for the subject that experienced it and the subject existed only in a historical context. This vision, which Merleau-Ponty called his 'existential conception of history', differed both from materialism (understood as objectivistic determinism) and historical spiritualism. 'History does not walk on its head, but it is also true that it does not think with its feet', he wrote citing Marx.<sup>6</sup> According to Merleau-Ponty history was governed neither by absolute logic nor absolute contingency, and he concluded that, 'we confer upon history its significance, but not without its putting that significance forward itself.'<sup>7</sup> In this context – and, under Sartre's influence, succumbing to the day's existentialist trends – he held the issue of freedom and responsibility for especially important. However, for Merleau-Ponty freedom was always freedom in a certain situation, a motivated freedom, which meant that where the initial situation was ambiguous, open and uncertain (as it was most of the time), what counted was what the human subject actually did and not what its intentions were. The issue here was responsibility – not for any abstract values that might motivate activity, but the effects of activity that caused the initial situation to change (for better or worse) although they were unforeseeable at the outset of the activity. If one felt responsible for the effects of one's activity, one had to keep abreast of certain common tendencies

<sup>4</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. C. Smith, (Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, Taylor & Francis e-library, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 170.

<sup>6</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. xviii.

<sup>7</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 401.

that appeared in collective life and were forwarded by history. One had to delve into the very flesh of history (*la chair de l'histoire*) – because although contingency could not be avoided, one could guide one's sense of responsibility by reason instead of leaving it to pure voluntarism.<sup>8</sup>

Of course this dialectical position shows a strong Hegelian influence. Merleau-Ponty belonged to a generation of French intellectuals touched by the so-called 'Hegelian bite', not least thanks to a several-year-long cycle of Paris lectures by the Russian-born French philosopher Alexandre Kojève, which he also attended. In these lectures, Kojève offered an interpretation of *Phenomenology of Spirit* that was by no means neutral or objective, but by all means 'revolutionary', as it was inspired by Marx's early writings. In this interpretation, the aggressive activity of specific people was elevated to the rank of a historical driving-force, and their relations were, in Kojève's opinion, best described by Hegel in his 'master and slave' construct, which belied the Enlightenment-typical liberal belief that human relations based on free and rational decisions which led to a social contract. This conception was based on the firm conviction that history acquired significance thanks to the 'slyness' of the applied means, because the historical effects of human activity were never that what had been intended, and therefore the whole historical process could not be based on the harmonious fulfillment of a rational plan. Kojève believed that violence was an inherent element of social life, and that the best tool with which to bring about a historical change of universal, pan-human significance was revolution. Merleau-Ponty came to share these views despite the fact that his phenomenologically-founded intersubjectivity conception contained the possibility of dialogue and coexistence, and was therefore somewhat distant from them. In fact, Merleau-Ponty's reflections on social relations and history offer a dual perspective: a phenomenological and existentialist one, where building community is seen as an opportunity for positive evolution, and a dialectical one, where it is a hotbed of conflict bred in 'master-slave' relations and the only hope for attaining human ideals is revolution. Doubtless these two intertwining perspectives were also enhanced by circumstances unrelated to Merleau-Ponty's work, like the demands of the social circles in which he moved, and the political situation of the day. Nonetheless, already in his major philosophical work, *Phenomenology of Perception*, he included an extensive footnote on historical materialism, where he argued that this doctrine could be expounded in 'another language' than that of economic determinism. This interpretation allowed Merleau-Ponty to identify historical materialism with the existential theory of history, which reached beyond the economism/spiritualism alternative because it included a 'constellation of psychological and moral motives' in the sphere of battling economic forces, thus making the doctrine somewhat ambiguous but better suited to the ontological structure of reality. It was only in times of revolution that things became clear and one could see the

<sup>8</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Introduction' in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, trans. R. McCleary, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 20.

fundamental meaning of production relations with greater precision. Generally, however, Merleau-Ponty concludes that historical materialism 'does not base history and ways of thinking on production and ways of working, but more generally on ways of existing and co-existing, on human relationships.'<sup>9</sup> Already this positive view of one of Marxism's possible variants was a sign that the transition from philosophy to politics would be a natural step for the French thinker, but when he actually made it, it was also under the pressure of non-philosophical circumstances.

Without going into details, let us say that the academic community at the exclusive *École normale supérieure*, where Merleau-Ponty took a posting in 1935, harboured predominantly leftwing sympathies and eagerly read 'young' Marx and Lukács,<sup>10</sup> and that in the latter half of the 1930s public opinion in France under Leon Blum's Popular Front strongly sided with communism and the Soviet Union on the crest of rapidly spreading pacifist and anti-fascist moods (expressed in declarations by A. Gide and R. Rolland). Also, many French intellectuals were becoming involved on the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War.<sup>11</sup> However, it was the experience of the war and occupation that cemented Merleau-Ponty's political viewpoint and made him decide to join the current political debate (in a theoretical dimension). Most of his experiences and observations came from his time as a soldier in the 1940 campaign, and his subsequent involvement (with Sartre) in the 'Socialism and Freedom' group, which was tied to the French Resistance. He wrote about this in several texts published shortly after the war, the most notable of which was the article *La guerre a eu lieu* [There was a war]. In this strongly emotional and very personal text, Merleau-Ponty clearly outlined the motives that drove his political choices and why he held these choices for the only right ones in the current historical situation. He sharply criticised the day's 'socialist professors' – whom he described as 'clerks' – for their optimism, which was far removed from the realities of war and the violence it brought, and declared that it was this critical stance towards them that allowed him to reach the truth contained in Marxism,<sup>12</sup> as the occupation of France could in a sense be seen as analogous to a Marxist revolution. However, he was not ready to accept every Marxist 'truth' without question, and openly admitted that the war had also changed his views on Marxism. What most needed correcting in Marxism, he wrote, was its simplistic and dogmatic belief that all history could be ultimately brought down to the economic logic of class struggle, in which ideological conflict was only a 'superstructure' of minor importance. Class struggle, Merleau-Ponty observed, was neither more important nor

<sup>9</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 153.

<sup>10</sup> Raymond Aron, *Marxismes imaginaires. D'une sainte famille à l'autre*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> Herbert R. Lottman, *The Left Bank: Writers, Artists and Politics from the Popular Front to the Cold War*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

<sup>12</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sens et non-sens*, 5th edition (Paris: Les Editions Nagel, 1966), p. 245-247, p. 249-261.



more real than ideological, national or cultural conflict, which could not be reduced to the class dimension and which, as Marx himself had pointed out, had historical import and influenced the course of history. Another of Merleau-Ponty's texts from the same period (1946) suggests that it was precisely his awareness of the revolutionary character of the war and first post-war years that led him to conditional approval of Marxism alongside his own 'existentialist' vision of history.<sup>13</sup> This pro-Marxist stance did not mean, he wrote, that the values of the pre-war era had lost importance, that we now had to reject human ideals like freedom, truth, happiness or transparency in human relations. However, the lesson of the war had brought the knowledge that without a certain economic and political foundation and involvement in the realities of human coexistence values and ideals were only words. Could these ideals be pursued without violence? Could tyranny be eliminated from political life? Could political and social relations resolve into personal relations between individuals? For Merleau-Ponty these questions still remained unanswered, but the experience of the war had made him sure of two things: that absurd forms of tyranny like anti-Semitism or fascism had to be utterly rooted out from social life, and that the introduction of real freedom to human social life did not stand in opposition to the highest values of culture.<sup>14</sup> However, acceptance of violence as an inseparable element of true historical change could not be tied to explicit support for any institutional power, political party or state, because these pursued their own interests, which did not necessarily coincide with the pursuit of freedom. Here, Merleau-Ponty specifically suggested that one should not choose between the 'God of the East' and the 'God of the West', but instead adopt a kind of 'polytheism'.<sup>15</sup> Because only such 'polytheism' was suited to the ambiguous nature of history, towards which one ought to display an attitude of caution in order to be able to interpret its general tendencies properly without succumbing to dogmatism, which petrified history and served the interests of particular forces, not those of humanity. This rather enigmatic position meant that Merleau-Ponty generally accepted the Marxian interpretation of history (enriched by his own existential vision), and simultaneously distanced himself from it. The fact remains that after the war he manifested himself as a politically active left-wing intellectual, co-founding with Sartre the influential periodical 'Les Temps Modernes', whose political strategy he then helped shape, among others in widely-read and influential political editorials and articles, in which he reflected on the applicability and appropriateness of 'Marxist politics'. From then, Merleau-Ponty's relations with Marxism divide into two phases: in the first, approximately until 1950, he showed approval for the Marxist tactic of waiting for the right moment (*attentisme*) and supported the 'realistic' policy of peace between the West and the Soviet Union, and was therefore seen as a communism sympathiser; in the second, which extended almost until the end of

<sup>13</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, trans. John O'Neill (Beacon Press: Boston), p. xlii.

<sup>14</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Sens et non-sens*.

<sup>15</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. xlii.

the 1950s, political developments in the world made him increasingly critical of the USSR, the countries of the 'Eastern Bloc' and the French Communist Party, this soon evolving into criticism of Marxism itself and declarations of support for the traditional values of Western culture.

Merleau-Ponty's political position during the first phase is best represented in his books *Humanism and Terror: An Essay on the Communist Problem*, and *Sense and Non-Sense*. In the first, he starts out with a critical analysis of Arthur Koestler's novel *Darkness at Noon*,<sup>16</sup> which revolves around the 'Moscow trials' in the 1930s, during which the defendants, prominent Bolshevik executives, publicly admitted to crimes they had not committed (treason, sabotage, espionage). He then goes on to discuss 'the communism issue', i.e. the current condition and future prospects of Marxism, in the context of a victorious communist revolution in one country, and finally asks about the appropriate response to the communists' *realpolitik*. According to Merleau-Ponty, Koestler had failed to adequately portray the mentality of people like the Moscow trial victims, who thought in Marxist categories. Therefore, basing on a stenogram from the 1939 trial of Nikolai Bukharin, he presents his own interpretation of the event – and, more broadly, the Marxist vision of history and politics – which he holds for dialectic and in line with correctly-understood Marxism.

However, although Koestler may have not found the right formula to fittingly transmit the dramatism of the Moscow trials, may have not benefited much from Marxist theory despite having once been a communist, and may have failed to address the here-discussed issues extensively – he at least pointed to 'a problem of our times': the problem of the inevitability and possible legitimization of violence, both in the internal relations of societies reflected in their domestic politics, and on the international plane. And because Merleau-Ponty saw the situation in German-occupied France and the post-war reprisals against France's collaborators as rather analogous to a Marxist revolution, he believed that insight into the Moscow trials – an important episode of a Marxist revolution that had actually taken place – could prove helpful in clarifying the issue of violence, including the French communists's attitude to violence. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty claimed that neither exalted communism sympathisers with their glorification of violence employed in the name of revolutionary ideals, nor anti-communists with their disgust at what they learnt about the Moscow trials, saw the problem of violence in the right perspective. In their elation, the former were forgetting that violence brought terror, suffering and, ultimately, death, and was therefore neither 'good' nor 'beautiful' for the people who lived under its reign (unless, at most, as an element of a historiosophical or artistic vision); while the latter in their pursuit of the 'eternal principles of pure morality' were ignoring the fact that western liberalism had been founded on colonialism and forced labour in the newly-won territories, which bred suffering and death, and that it was not communism that had

<sup>16</sup> Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, trans. D. Hardy, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941).

'invented' violence, which was a much earlier phenomenon. The problem rested not in deciding whether to accept or reject violence in contemporary world, but in determining if violence had a tendency towards permanence or whether there existed a kind of violence that culminated in its own self-annulment.<sup>17</sup> Merleau-Ponty, who believed that every crime must be judged not as an isolated event but in its historical and situational context, concluded that precisely Marxism was able to transgress Koestler's falsely outlined alternative between an 'oceanic state' and mechanistic sociological scientism founded upon the objective laws of history, and that it was Marxism that – no matter how uncertainly, tensely and dialectically – offered a vision of self-annulling violence. Of course, Merleau-Ponty did not mean Marxism in its official version, which functioned as the political ideology of the Soviet Union and its French representation (because it was this variant of Marxism that he criticised for its mechanistic scientism), but the Romantic-Promethean Marxism mainly present in its author's early writings.

It was this Marxism that embraced the 'existential logic of history' which underlaid 'the inseparability of objective necessity and *the spontaneous of the masses*', it was for this Marxism that history constituted 'the manifestation of human values'<sup>18</sup> in a process which, despite its possible deviations, did not allow it to renounce its primary goals nor give up its role as an element of historical awareness. Thus, Marxism was 'a theory of concrete subjectivity and concrete action – of subjectivity and action committed within a historical situation.'<sup>19</sup> Moreover, Merleau-Ponty held it for absolutely natural to accept the Marxist thesis that such a concrete, historically-involved subjectivity was the proletariat, which illuminated its historical *praxis* by 'theoretical discussion', and that the 'historical situation' was shaped by class struggle.<sup>20</sup> However, Merleau-Ponty did distinguish between the theoretical perspectives of Marxism and the realities of communism as evidenced by the Moscow trials, or the problem of the possible transgression of the alternative between the stance of a Commissioner, a representative of objective historical laws who treats people as tools for their effective implementation, and that of a Yogi, the personification of escape into inner life – an alternative between submission and betrayal.<sup>21</sup>

The distinction between Marxian theory and its then only practical application (in the USSR) is visible throughout the entire book and gives it an ultimately ambiguous sense. On the one hand, Merleau-Ponty saw Marxism as the only theory or historiosophical vision that approached the problem of violence realistically and simultaneously remained faithful to universalistic and humanistic ideals. Unlike liberalism, which *de iure* removed violence from public life and human awareness in the name of humanistic ideals but was

<sup>17</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. 49-50.

<sup>18</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. 15-16.

<sup>19</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. 22.

<sup>20</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. 18.

<sup>21</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. 24.

*de facto* founded upon it (colonialism, exploitative labour, unemployment), and without falling into anarchism, or mindless, confrontational and subjective voluntarism, Marxism with its focus on the necessary material needs of the human condition, which inevitably brought conflict and struggle into human relations, was based on the belief that the persecution of humans by humans and conflict (more precisely – class conflict) were permanent components of human history. This was, in fact, a rather pessimistic vision as it pre-assumed the constant presence of violence and terror in all civilizational change, and equally in the most open despotism and various forms of dictatorship exercised in the name of ‘the people’s good’ and ‘objective truth’, as in the naive-utopian mystifications of liberalism. However, Merleau-Ponty noted, the pessimism (realism?) of Marxism only referred to our ‘initial’ situation, because Marxism strove to resolve the problem of human coexistence ‘above the tyranny of absolute subjectivity, absolute objectivity, and the pseudo-solution of liberalism’. And Marxism held the key to this in its theory about the historical role of the proletariat.

It is at this point that Merleau-Ponty emphatically cites Marx’s Promethean theses about this role: the proletariat occupies a privileged position in human history because as a social class it is a conglomerate of human strivings and economic facts, a pan-historical class which, through its own activity, strives to abolish all classes and therefore carries a ‘promise’ of humanism which enables its ‘realisation’; the proletarian masses do not yet have a clear vision of global revolution, but they do possess a unique ‘instinct’ that can drive revolution, thanks to which they are already beginning to form a global community, a community of ‘workers of the world’ which marks the onset of truly human coexistence.

Of course revolution could not take place without violence, and in this sense, Merleau-Ponty wrote, violence gave the beginning to all systems. However, he noted, revolutionary violence should be the preferred kind because it led to humanism, because Marxist theory excluded violence at the conclusion of the revolutionary path similarly as ‘esthetes’ excluded it at its outset, and because the task of Marxism was to seek violence that transgressed itself to build humanity’s future. And such violence was the violence of the proletariat – people capable of mutual recognition above all differences in order to build humanity. Therefore, bloodshed and dictatorship were justified if they enabled proletarian rule – and only then; justified, because such dictatorship was one exercised by people of the ‘purest’ humanity. Merleau-Ponty agreed that this theory carried the traits of a totalitarian ideology, but noted that it differed from a truly totalitarian ideology like fascism, which glorified the violence of a particular race or nation, in that it addressed pan-human values. For Merleau-Ponty, Marxism’s claim that the proletariat was the carrier of historical sense represented its humanitarian side.<sup>22</sup>

In his reflections, Merleau-Ponty made no references to any existing economic surveys of the European and global situation of his day, instead, not wishing to remain

<sup>22</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. 113-114, 117, 128.

only on an abstract and utopian level, he concentrated on Marxism's political meanders in the only country where it had become reality. Consequently, he based on those of Lenin's writings in which the author justified the doings of the Bolsheviks during and immediately after the revolution: the revolution had not automatically abolished class divisions, which remained in existence although the proletariat had long since come into power. This meant that the communist party had to maintain a state apparatus capable of keeping opponents of the new ruling class in check, and there could be no talk of freedom, democracy or rejecting violence. In a revolutionary situation it was necessary for there to be a party that instructed the proletariat as to its own nature and exercised dictatorial rule 'on its behalf' – whereby, as Lenin said, it had to be 'a party made of iron'. Therefore, Merleau-Ponty concluded, the 'violent intervention of subjectivity in history' was understandable and warranted.<sup>23</sup>

Merleau-Ponty's references to Russia during and after the Bolshevik revolution may be seen as a search for argumentation behind his efforts to legitimise the then internal and foreign policy of the Soviet Union. Even bloody repressions against opposition within the party were understandable, as at a time of revolutionary tension or external threat there were no clear boundaries between political deviation and objective betrayal, humanism was suspended and government became terror. In borderline situations – and, as Merleau-Ponty observed, the USSR knew only borderline situations – opposition could be taken for treason because it really did weaken the state (which the German invasion in 1941 confirmed), and, although the Moscow trials were cruel, based solely on anticipation and a 'drama of subjective honesty and objective treason', they nonetheless contributed to a future victory.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps conducting war in the face of opposition could have been possible in a developed democracy, but in a country which was only just coming out of forced collectivisation and industrialisation the existence of an organised opposition which aimed to overthrow the revolutionary government was unacceptable. According to Merleau-Ponty, Stalin's policy differed in no significant way from Lenin's at the outset of the revolution, or the model proposed by Trotsky – each saw terror as an unavoidable instrument in overcoming historical contingency and the pursuit of 'humanity's future' because all revolutionaries believed that deception, trickery and violence were unavoidable elements of their cause. However, only revolutionary Marxists believed

<sup>23</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. 117.

<sup>24</sup> Here Claude Lefort, in a sense a student of Merleau-Ponty, who in his commentaries showed full understanding for the French thinker's conclusions, posed two objections: 1) it was wrong to see Germany's invasion as an *a posteriori* justification of the Moscow trials, because currently available data showed that Stalin's purges did not strengthen the Soviet Union, but weakened it; 2) it was also wrong and purely arbitrary to assume that the party leadership and government were more concerned about 'the interests of the revolution' than their own as the ruling elite. Claude Lefort, *Sur une colonne absente. Ecrits autour de Merleau-Ponty* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), p. 83, footnote.

that this violence had any sense and could be exercised rationally and intelligibly, thus safeguarding them from falling into 'vulgar relativism'. Here, Stalinism distinguished itself only by its focus on one concrete situation and not the general historical perspective – revolution in one country, fascism and the stabilisation of capitalism in the West. Summing up the issue of his 'understanding' for Soviet policy, Merleau-Ponty concluded that political instinct suggested support for the USSR as it was – which, although it resorted to historical deception, was nonetheless able to uphold its existence and stop the Germans – rather than visions of an ideal revolutionary state that declined and perished in the war in the name of proletarian humanism, leaving future generations with reminiscences of heroism and fifty years of Nazi rule.<sup>25</sup>

However, Merleau-Ponty's 'political realism' did not completely override his critical instinct, because he also saw – and condemned – the USSR's evident deviations from the principles of Marxism. Despite censorship, the facts about Soviet life that were known to the West presented a relatively comprehensive picture, and it was disturbing. Over the past few years, social divisions in the Soviet Union, instead of gradually waning, had 'considerably accentuated', the awareness and aspirations of the masses playing 'an insignificant' next to the dominating interests of the party leadership. Serious political dispute was 'never appears publicly', political contestation was considered a 'crime against common law' and punished by death. Dialectic had in fact been 'replaced by scientific rationalism', as if it had been found to 'leave too much scope for divergences'. Upon a general overview of the Soviet system, it was 'difficult to maintain that it is moving toward the recognition of man by man, internationalism, or the withering away of the State and the realization of proletarian power'. Generally speaking, communism 'is underwritten less and less by class spirit and revolutionary brotherhood', and 'more and more shows its dark side'. National communist parties 'struggle for power without a proletarian platform' and were succumbing to chauvinism, there was 'growing tension between intentions and action, between behavior and the thought behind it'. The revolution had 'come to halt', and was upholding and nurturing a 'dictatorial apparatus'.<sup>26</sup>

Merleau-Ponty illustrated these general conclusions with diverse third-source statistics showing the many aberrations of Soviet social, economic and political life.<sup>27</sup> Instead of listing them here, I will only cite his sarcastic remark that, 'the U.S.S.R. is not the proletarian light of history Marx once described'<sup>28</sup>, and that life in the Soviet Union 'is the opposite of proletarian humanism'. The 'objectivistic' theory which justified this phase of the revolution 'would not be a Marxist theory', while the revolution itself had become 'an

<sup>25</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. 112-113.

<sup>26</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. xx-xxi.

<sup>27</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. 118-120.

<sup>28</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. 141.

almost purely voluntary enterprise'<sup>29</sup> All this led Merleau-Ponty to the resigned conclusion that 'the Marxist transition from formal liberty to actual liberty has not occurred and in the immediate future has no such chance.'<sup>30</sup> It also led him from basically rhetorical questions – whether the revolutionary struggle 'struggle is still a Marxist struggle' and if we 'still have the slightest reason to believe in a logic of history at a time when it is throwing overboard its dialectical rudder – the world proletariat'<sup>31</sup> – to open doubt whether communism 'is on the path' to creating a classless society<sup>32</sup> and the declared conviction that 'history has not taken this turn.'<sup>33</sup>

As one can see, Merleau-Ponty was quite hesitant in his political views in the first post-war years. This was not only because he was watching the political developments of the day closely, but also because the resulting observations had led him to adopt the now prevailing approach to the Marxian theory, which differed from the doctrine's classical sources. Thus, according to Merleau-Ponty, the fundamental component of Marxism, class struggle, was now acquiring a new meaning, or losing its dominating position. Today there were no longer any 'workers of the world' to stand up against capitalism in all the world's countries, but a proletariat divided by 'national, geographical, psychological' characteristics and accustomed to 'class cooperation'. A proletariat too weak to play the part of an 'autonomous historical factor'. On the other hand, there existed a state founded on socialist production methods (the USSR), which, however, adhered to traditional strategies and diplomacy in its relations with other (capitalist) countries and made no moves to unite the world's dispersed proletariat against capitalism. This ran against the basic assumptions of the Marxist approach to history but, Merleau-Ponty insisted, was not tantamount with the rejection of Marxism. All it meant – as Marx himself admitted – was that chaos, barbarism and absurdity were possible effects of historical evolution, and that historical contingency did not necessarily have to give way to the monolinear influence of 'essential factors'. It did not, however, mean that the justifiably abandoned 'Kantian' political model, which paid no heed to effects but only intentions, should be replaced by a totally relativistic 'skeptical' model, nor that it was now still possible to pursue Marxist politics in the classical way. All that remained was to monitor current developments without pre-assuming that they carried any universal import, and even in readiness to accept that they signify chaos and non-sense.<sup>34</sup>

In these reflections Merleau-Ponty also referred to concrete political examples. Admitting that his knowledge was too scant to allow any final conclusions about the

<sup>29</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. 136-137.

<sup>30</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. xxiii.

<sup>31</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. 123.

<sup>32</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. xviii.

<sup>33</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. 147.

<sup>34</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Sens et non-sens*, p. 287-288, 292-299.

USSR's internal politics, he nonetheless agreed that by all indications the country had stepped on the traditional political path of imperialistic states, the only difference being its collective economy and resulting imposition of 'state socialism' on countries under its control. Consequently, he declared that history had separated what Marxism had once united – the humanistic ideal and collective production – and one could either stand on the side of abstract humanism and against the only country which had managed to introduce a collective economy, or on the side of collective production and the country that represented it.<sup>35</sup> 'The decline of proletarian humanism' exemplified by the case of the Soviet Union was not 'a crucial experience which invalidates the whole of Marxism',<sup>36</sup> Merleau-Ponty observed, pointing out that even if Marxism lacked the force to convince us that its path led to 'man will be the supreme being for man'<sup>37</sup>, and even if it was incapable of shaping global history, it still remained important as 'as a critique of the present world and alternative humanisms'.<sup>38</sup> Without Marxism, the beautiful idea that 'man realizes himself within history'<sup>39</sup> would never have seen light of the day, and although it was perhaps true that 'no proletariat will arise to play the historical role', the reasons why Marxism found support were clear despite 'vicissitudes of experience'.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, Merleau-Ponty stated, 'it is impossible to be anti-Communist' – although 'it is impossible to be a Communist' who 'renounce liberty'<sup>41</sup> for the Soviet model. Nonetheless, the troubles of communism at that time did not justify a bellicose stand towards it but called for 'a practical stance of comprehension without adherence',<sup>42</sup> and without top-down justifications. 'Communism should be thought about and discussed as an attempt to solve the human problem and not be treated as an occasion for heated argument', Merleau-Ponty wrote.<sup>43</sup> It was necessary to adopt a wait-and-see approach to communism – without illusions about the purity of its intentions, but supportive of all signs of the proletarian movement's rebirth around the world – and work towards averting war between the US and USSR.<sup>44</sup> Hence also the 'provisional' character of the West's policy towards the Soviet Union, as suggested by Merleau-Ponty in 1946/47: 1) Despite the violence present in the USSR, all criticism of communism or the country based on facts isolated from the broad context of Soviet social life had to be regarded as an 'act of war', as it was in fact 'threaten the very existence of the U.S.S.R.: 2) Humanism

<sup>35</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. 152.

<sup>36</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. 153.

<sup>37</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. 155.

<sup>38</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. 153.

<sup>39</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. 79.

<sup>40</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. 156.

<sup>41</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. xxi.

<sup>42</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. 148.

<sup>43</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. 177.

<sup>44</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Sens et non-sense*, p. 302-303.



excluded a preventive war against the USSR as this would not only be a war against a power that could perhaps threaten Europe, but would 'destroy the principle of a socialist economy', which were indisputably 'progressive' from the point of view of humanistic ideals. 3) World War Two was over and the Cold War did not automatically make the USSR an aggressor, hence the existence of the USSR was reconcilable with the independence of the Western states and the choice was not 'between war with the USSR or submission to it'; indeed, the case would be different 'if it happens tomorrow that the U.S.S.R. threatens to invade Europe and to set up in every country a government of its choice', but this was not the issue today.<sup>45</sup>

In a brief commentary to the here-presented and, for us, especially important early phase in the evolution of Merleau-Ponty's political views, let us note that his ambiguous position at the time, his clear sympathies for communism on the one hand and reserved stance towards developments in the USSR on the other, probably stemmed in equal measure from his Promethean faith in the historically privileged (or ahistorical) position of the global proletariat, as his empirically unfounded conviction that collective economy stood above capitalism not only in the economic, but primarily in the axiological sense, as it led to the realisation of humanistic ideals – a belief he derived in *deus ex machina* fashion from dogmatic theory. Consequently, although Merleau-Ponty certainly lacked neither insight nor a critical instinct, his submission to the pathos of the Soviet revolution and his sense of social justice resulted in the appearance of metaphysical, messianic and dogmatic traits in his thought. As we know, however, his was not an isolated case among the leading intellectuals of the day, and besides, his criticism was soon awakened by a variety of developments in the world, beginning a new phase in the formation of his political beliefs.

These developments included the 1950-begun Korean War, in which the communist side was the aggressor, the October 1956 'thaw' in Poland and the Hungarian uprising in the same year, but also the disclosure in the West of the existence of concentration camps in the 'motherland of the revolution', or the break with Sartre in effect of a misunderstanding, supposedly around the editorial skills of the 'Les Temps Modernes' team. Moreover, in 1955 Merleau-Ponty came across an unpublished sociological work which minutely examined the daily life and economy of East Germany from 1945, and this led him to reflect on the future of the revolution in the 'people's democracies' after Stalin's death. This he analysed in greater or lesser detail in a series of published articles, later collected (with the exception of those concerning politics) in the volume *Signes*, and offered a more theoretical elaboration in the book *Les aventures de la dialectique* [Adventures of the Dialectic].

In January 1950 Merleau-Ponty wrote the article *L'U.R.S.S. et les camps*, in which he outlined his first conclusions about the existence of Soviet concentration camps – against

<sup>45</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, p. 179-185.

the European radical left's still-prevailing insane belief that the reports were either lies or 'one of the Soviet régime's finest title to glory'. In the article, Merleau-Ponty stated outright that the Soviet repression apparatus was evolving into a separate supreme authority, estimated the number of camp prisoners at ten to fifteen million, and concluded that there could be no talk of a socialist system when one in twenty people were incarcerated in concentration camps. If there were so many 'saboteurs, spies and shiftless presons' thirty-two years after the revolution and after countless 'purges' that were to sanctify the country, then it was the system itself that 'unceasingly recreates *its* opposition', and in which, to use Marxian terms, the 'mode of production' was stifling the 'force of production'. This meant that despite the nationalisation of production means and the disappearance of 'private exploitation of man by man', the social and economic gap between the ruling elite and the working population was so enormous, that one could on no account speak about socialism in this case. Nonetheless, Merleau-Ponty's earlier sympathies for Marxism led him to relativise his views on the application of such methods in the USSR and by other totalitarian regimes. Admittedly, he condemned as 'the height of cant and trickery' the Soviets' 'Corrective Labour Institutions', which were to mask the reality of the camps, 'where men are dying of work and hunger', but staunchly refused to level communism with fascism in this respect regardless of whether the latter appeared in a milder or radical version. A classless society built upon a 'miraculous' transformation of the 'economic base', which the communists had hoped for (and which was in fact being built by repression and imprisonment in concentration camps), was, of course, a crass illusion, but Nazi camps pursued no re-educational or correctional functions after the gas chambers appeared, while the Soviet ones did – at least in theory. Before the gas chambers, the German camps were similar to the Russian ones – but this did not justify the conclusion that communism was fascism, because the Nazis based their ideology on the values of German nationalism, Aryan racism and the cult of their Führer, whereas the communists were guided by 'the humane inspiration of Marxism', i.e. 'the recognition of man by man, internationalism, classless society'. And this meant that 'we have nothing in common with a Nazi and the same values as a Communist', Merleau-Ponty stressed, adding that criticism of repression in the USSR which ignored what was happening in Spain or Greece, or the forced labour in the colonies, only 'gives absolution to the' capitalist system and therefore stood in exact opposition to communist values.<sup>46</sup>

Merleau-Ponty's break with Sartre and the ultimate end of their friendship was evidently politically rooted. Sartre took a pro-communist stand towards the Korean War and the invasion of Laos, while Merleau-Ponty, who was for the peaceful coexistence of both political and economic systems, showed understanding for the US operation in Korea. This culminated in a 'family quarrel' at 'Les Temps Modernes', where in 1952 Sartre published the extensive article *Les Communistes et la paix* – in which he declared full support for the

<sup>46</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'The U.S.S.R. and the Camps' in Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 264-269.

French Communist Party – without consulting Merleau-Ponty, who ran the periodical at the time. In effect, when Merleau-Ponty submitted an article, Sartre rejected it and, after an exchange of letters, Merleau-Ponty left the editorial team, never to return. The incident is important insofar as Merleau-Ponty's rejected article was probably the nucleus of his *Les aventures de la dialectique*.<sup>47</sup>

The earlier-mentioned sociological analysis of the situation in East Germany, authored by B. Sarel, came to Merleau-Ponty's attention after the publication of *Les aventures*, and also influenced his change of attitude towards communism and Marxism. It forced him to ask the (rhetorical?) question whether we were not at a stage where the alternative between revolution and counterrevolution, between the USSR and the rest of the world, had ceased to be valid, where the coexistence of both systems had to entail acceptance of pluralism and the rejection of communism's claims to be the one and only truth. Figures quoted by Merleau-Ponty concerning the management of East German state industry, the position of the country's employees, the role of trade unions and the communist party, and the earnings of executives, technical staff and workers in the said state industry clearly showed that society in the German Democratic Republic was not classless (nor even close to a classless model) and production relations were by no means harmonious. There were growing antagonisms between workers and senior technical staff, a widening wage gap between 'élite' and regular workers, mounting social divisions (masked by simulated political debate) – and in fact the true political sovereign was not the proletariat that was theoretically designated for this role, but party bureaucracy. Here, Merleau-Ponty concluded, we had a new system of proletarian exploitation and not 'proletarian rule', and 'the rest of the world' would do better to employ other forms of political and social emancipation than those the USSR had imposed on its subordinated 'peoples' democracies', which perhaps worked in poorly-developed countries but not in advanced ones like Germany.<sup>48</sup>

Merleau-Ponty reacted to the Hungarian events with words full of empathy and pathos, but refused to abandon his axiological position. Indeed, he felt he had to 'pay homage' to the Hungarians and speak about their sacrifices in a 'full voice', so that their effort would not be wasted. And to speak in a full voice meant admitting that there could be no talk of communism when the communist authorities had the entire proletariat against them and used military force to crush resistance, that Stalinism had corrupted the very 'socialist' heart of the system, and that de-Stalinization could not be limited to a retouche or tactical manoeuvre, but had to be a radical transformation in which the system questioned itself. At the same time, however, he carefully and critically followed the main points of Khrushchev's address at the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPSU (in which

<sup>47</sup> François Ewald, 'Sartre, Merleau-Ponty – zerwanie', trans. J. Migasiński, *Sztuka i Filozofia*, 10/1995, p. 22-48.

<sup>48</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'The Future of Revolution' in Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 291-292.

Khrushchev only pretended to lay bare the 'errors' of Stalinism), believed Togliatti's and Gomulka's assurances that de-Stalinization would entail a reform of the system, and hoped the defeat of communism would prove a historical experience enabling the left to fulfil its social ideals. Communist dictatorship suffered defeat because it did not want to be a historical trial but the end of history, a universal model for humanity's future. But it did not fail to leave its mark on history, which would now never reverse to its previous shape, just as it did not after the fall of the French Revolution, which also left lasting traces despite its downfall.<sup>49</sup>

The evolution of Merleau-Ponty's political views found theoretical expression in his book *Les aventures de la dialectique*, which he wrote over July 1953 and throughout the following year. In its philosophical layer, it was an attempt to define the essence of dialectics in the light of chosen theoretical conceptions and his own analysis of the historical processes of the day. In the political layer, in which he tried to define his personal stance towards Marxism and communism, he examined the role of dialectics in Max Weber's writings, made approving, though somewhat reserved, reference to Lukács dialectical equilibristics in *History and Class Consciousness*, criticised Lenin's philosophical writings on dialectics, Bolshevik practices in this respect and the dialectic variant proposed by Trotsky, to wind up with a 140-page polemic with Sartre's essay *Les communistes et la paix*, titled, *Sartre et l'ultra-bolchevisme*. Here, I will leave aside Merleau-Ponty's lecture on his understanding of dialectics as well as his investigations into the application of dialectics by various theoretical schools, and focus specifically on his political views. For this aim, I will resort to an interpretative key provided by Raymond Aron, who suggested that Merleau-Ponty's book be read as three critiques: of orthodox communism and its theoretical base, dialectical materialism, of Sartre's 'ultra-Bolshevism', and of Merleau-Ponty's own earlier political position.<sup>50</sup>

In the first of these critiques Merleau-Ponty reiterated his known views on naturalistic Marxism in the Leninist variant, but in his criticism of the Soviet revolution went so far as to question the very sense of the Marxist revolution concept. In his view, instead of seeking the answer to the 'riddle of history' in the dialectic of the mutual dependencies between human desires and activity and the inertia of things that took place from the level of the natural world to that of social institutions, Leninism, which in this respect went out from Engels and Plekhanov, simply set the world of things and the world of human relations alongside each other, situating in the first the dialectical driving-force of all progress, including social. This naturalisation of dialectics, its placing in the sphere of fundamental natural being and 'blind' social mechanisms – therefore, on the side of the 'object' and not the 'subject' – was why 'Lenin's gnosiology' had fallen behind not only the 'young Marx', but also Hegel (as in the so-called rebound effect theory). This version of Marxism,

<sup>49</sup> M. Merleau-Ponty, 'On De-Stalinization' in Merleau-Ponty, *Signes*, p. 293-308.

<sup>50</sup> Aron, *Marxismes imaginaires*, p. 64.

which coupled dialectics with materialist metaphysics and Hegelian remnants with naive scientism, replaced living history, or interpersonal relations embedded in the world of things, with an 'ersatz nature' of economic and social mechanisms, as nontransparent as the 'first'-nature proper. However, 'objective' regulations needed interpretation and decisions about which of them to employ in the current activity, which only paved the way for inevitable necessity and effected in constant oscillation between the objectivism of the 'iron rules of history' and the pure voluntarism of politics. This led to the replacement of politics founded on comprehensive social praxis by technocracy and the proletariat by professional revolutionaries, as well as the recognition of the party apparatus as the source of historical advancement and an oracle in all spheres of life, including science and culture. Nonetheless, the replacement of dialectics by naturalism could not be seen as an 'error' by Marxism's epigones, as it was Marx himself who, in expounding his ('scientific') economic theory of historical progress in his later writings, had annulled his first, 'philosophical' period. Thus Marxism offered no solutions to the problem it itself posed, failed to reconcile the contrasts it itself had brought to light, and was unable to mount a revolution that would constantly put what it had created to critical assessment. Seen this way, communism's non-dialectic ambiguities put the very concept of revolution in question, and the contradictions of the Soviet revolution and Bolshevism in general appeared to be rooted in Marx's ontological realism.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, also needed of revision were the basic concepts of Marxism, like the idea of the proletariat as a 'self-reductive' class, visions of a homogeneous society, or revolution based upon sufficient, 'mature' productive forces. A proletariat that 'reduced itself' was a myth if it had to have representatives in the form of the party and its leadership, which, moreover, ultimately turned against this proletariat. Revolution as constant self-criticism, as the negation of the *status quo*, had to resort to violence, but if this violence managed to institute anything worthwhile, it ceased to be self-criticism and the idea of a classless society would have to be suspended infinitely. Merleau-Ponty conceded that there were historical 'peaks' and 'glorious moments' in which one could really speak about revolution, as people in such times lived according to the theoretical prescriptions of dialectics, but reminded that such moments were extremely rare and brief. In reality, the only revolution according to the Marxian model we had had the chance to experience had brought economic, social and political immaturity and the destruction of order, which in turn posed the question whether all revolution was not tainted by inherent immaturity, and whether Marx's philosophical visions should not be abandoned in face of their defeat in reality. Marxism's proclaimed synthesis of the subjective and objective had dispersed into two extreme opposites: fierce objectivism, which belied the humanistic sense of revolution, and the concept of permanent revolution, which, by absolutising destruction and negativism, annihilated the positive sense of revolution and

<sup>51</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Les aventures de la dialectique*, (Paris: Gallimard 1955), p. 87-89, 98-99, 114-119.

its very idea. Revolution that had room for freedom and necessity was a figment of the imagination, and in reality when revolution materialised, it betrayed itself. The experience of Bolshevism was so profound that it encouraged abandonment of the proletarian revolution conception and proletarian philosophy of history as means of achieving true, intersubjective human community in which humans recognise other humans.<sup>52</sup>

To put it most concisely, in his critique of Sartre Merleau-Ponty undertook to show that, despite his non-membership in the communist party, Sartre's current political stance was in fact 'ultra-Bolshevistic' (unconditional approval of the policies pursued by the USSR and its acolytes in the West), and that the theory by which he legitimised Bolshevism conformed with his ontology, already contained in *Being and Nothingness*. Sartre's mistake was that he did not see the true nature of the Soviet regime, and held its justifications in Lenin's pre-revolutionary writings for an adequate description of the system. In other words, that he considered real communism, from which the dialectic of history had evaporated, as the proper heir and carrier of the revolutionary idea. Hence, on one hand, the utopianism of Sartre's analyses of communism, and, on another, his consent to a 'terroristic' vision of history. If Sartre had been right to (unknowingly) reveal the non-dialectical face of existing communism, then he was wrong to perceive it as the materialisation of Marxism's visions. Such communism, Merleau-Ponty wrote, had to be 'secularised', i.e. deprived of the positive prejudices about it, to which it would have been entitled if there had existed a philosophy of history, and humanity should seek other historical paths than communism. This absence of dialectics was, of course, something Sartre neither noticed nor criticised, because it was also absent in the deepest layers of his philosophy. Sartre's dichotomous ontology of being and nothingness, which based the sense of historical events on the intentions and arbitrary undertakings of isolated and aware subjects who related to the world of things as its negation and annihilation, enabled an understanding for and acceptance of Bolshevik practices. Regardless of how fair this critique of Sartre was, especially in its 'philosophical' part (there are some arguments against it), Merleau-Ponty considered Sartre's ontology to express 'extreme idealism', which, precisely owing to the absence of dialectics, was indistinguishable from its mirror image - 'extreme realism', which in turn was caught up in the 'unfathomable necessity' that ruled the world of things.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Les aventures de la dialectique*, p. 121-129, 278-279, 300; Aron, *Marxismes imaginaires*, p. 78-89.

<sup>53</sup> M. Merleau-Ponty, *Les aventures de la dialectique*, p. 131-271 (there is an excerpt in Polish: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Sartre i ultrabolszewizm', trans. Piotr Graff, Jacek Migasiński, *Krytyka*, 41-42/1993, p. 221-233 and Aron, *Marxismes imaginaires*, p. 98-116. See also: Małgorzata Kowalska, 'Merleau-Ponty vs. Sartre. L'existentialisme, le marxisme et le probleme de l'humanisme reel', in: *Histoire de la philosophie politique*, sous la direction de Alain Renaut, vol. 5, *Les philosophies politiques contemporaines (depuis 1945)*, (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1999), p. 57-72.

These reflections led Merleau-Ponty to the book's backbone – a somewhat camouflaged critique of his own recent political views. Whereas in *Humanism and Terror* he described his position as 'attentism', which meant theoretical support for communism but without political involvement, he now proposed a stance which he called 'a-communism'. In the attentist variant, the left was to back the communists' activities, but refrain from violating the global 'truce' between communism and anti-communism. Now, this refusal to make an ultimate choice was to be replaced by 'the choice of double refusal' – refusal to choose communism as well as anti-communism. This was neither simple opportunism nor naive pacifism. Merleau-Ponty believed (another question is, if rightly), that anti-communism could not be the choice because that would lead to war. But neither could communism be the option today, because perceiving its actual development through the prism of a future classless society was an illusion, and because the revolution had been 'betrayed' not by Stalin's mistakes or human failure, but its own inner contradictions. And these contradictions we owed to Marx himself, who first betrayed his youthful dialectical philosophy. This was precisely why the non-communist left with which Merleau-Ponty identified himself could no longer put the stamp of liberalism on an essentially crypto-communist standpoint. Without abandoning its critique of capitalism, it should re-approach Marxist issues in other categories than a choice between proletarian rule and the free market, and – this is Merleau-Ponty's main conclusion – in doing so resort to the well-tested parliamentary game, as parliament was the only known institution that guaranteed a minimum on opposition and truth, which were so indispensable for the freedom cause.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, Merleau-Ponty's political evolution led him to a European social-democratic position. In 1960,<sup>55</sup> several years after he proposed the 'a-communist' perspective, he described Marxism as a 'secondary truth' which retained 'considerable heuristic value' and was 'inspiring', but did not reveal what it said it would reveal, and therefore belonged to the category of 'classical' theories which one could not fully believe today, just as one could not be a pure Cartesian. Merleau-Ponty himself admitted in an interview that he believed not so much in the moral, as the *historical* superiority of Western civilisation's liberal values over the value systems that were emerging in the undeveloped countries, because only adherence to liberal values could, for example, cause all the world's people to have enough to eat.<sup>56</sup> In this way, Merleau-Ponty returned from the 'heavens' of ideology to the 'earth' of experience, which he was able to so creatively interpret in phenomenological terms.

And we, having thus forayed into the French thinker's political evolution, can now focus on the question about its possible inspirations for Polish revisionists – in recognition

<sup>54</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Les aventures de la dialectique*, p. 302-312 and R. Aron, *Marxismes imaginaires*, p. 66-77.

<sup>55</sup> In the *Introduction to Signs*: Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 9, 11.

<sup>56</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Signes*, p. 335-336.

of the impossibility to categorically confirm such direct influence, but in acceptance of its potential impact, and in full awareness of the evident differences in the empirical, psychological and theoretical situation of both milieus. Because the war Merleau-Ponty experienced in France had an incomparably milder course than the one underway in eastern Europe, and the choices he had to make, although decisive in their historical sense, were not as radical and self-involving as those the later Polish revisionists were confronted with at the time. They could not afford 'attentism' towards Marxism – if they chose it, it meant personal involvement (there were, of course, cases of opportunism), and this involvement was not merely ideological, but took on a real, political dimension. This is why their disenchantment with Marxism (both in face of the realities of 'socialist construction' and in effect of their own theoretical evolution) was more dramatic and 'vital'; and did not only concern the Marxian theory. When after the war Merleau-Ponty professed his views in a democratically-ruled country, he was able to do so openly and without being censored, and relied on second-hand information about the empirical verifiability of Marxist politics. In a reality ruled by ideological and political oppression, those Polish Marxists who evolved into revisionists in effect of their disappointment with the realities of the doctrine – whose corruption they could observe with their own eyes – were forced to express this disappointment in-between the lines of their reflections on other, unrelated issues. By the time they could speak openly, they were no longer able to adopt a 'double refusal' attitude as Merleau-Ponty did, and were removed, or removed themselves (ideologically and most often also personally) from circles that harboured even distant sympathies towards Marxism as a political doctrine of current import. Nonetheless, I believe that despite all these differences, and because it found such comprehensive and uncamouflaged expression in his writings, the evolution of Merleau-Ponty's political views constitutes a historically interesting example of settling accounts with Marxism – in a way that is also open to Polish revisionists.



## WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY?

By **SZYMON WRÓBEL**

*In this essay the author attempts to define the history of philosophy. He rejects four existing propositions according to which the history of philosophy is (1) the story of great problems or questions, (2) the history of intellectual systems, (3) the history of 'celebrated names,' or (4) the story of concepts that are 'essential' for the philosophical project. Instead the author argues that the history of philosophy is a theatrical spectacle in which the philosopher is a designer positioning the stage decor and drawing on dead philosophers to build a personal dramatic work in search of his or her own intellectual genealogy.*

Key words: Genealogy, geophilosophy, history, concepts, theatre

*The divergence, the difference between Dionysus and Apollo, between ardor and structure, cannot be erased in history, for it is not in history. It too, in an unexpected sense, is an original structure [une structure originaire]: the opening of history, historicity itself.*

Jacques Derrida<sup>1</sup>

### TEMPO

Similarly to Michel Foucault in *The Order of Discourse* – his Inaugural Lecture at the Collège de France<sup>2</sup> – I express my wish that I could have slipped surreptitiously into a discourse which has no beginning and which never ends. This is partly because we never choose our beginning nor our end, but even more because the author of this paper takes a role of a 'historical man' or simply an 'old man,' whose soul – as Nietzsche put it in his text *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life* – is merely that of conserving and honouring the antiquarian, or it is a soul indulging itself in a monumental consideration of the past or even a soul reclining all too comfortably in the seat of judgment.<sup>3</sup> That is why my paper is not going to be about the monumentality of antique examples, nor the objectivist

<sup>1</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'Force and Signification', trans. Alan Bass, in Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Orders of Discourse', trans. Robert Sawyer, in *Social Science Information*, 10/2 (April 1977), p. 7-30.

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, 'The Use and Abuse History for Life', in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, trans. Reginald John Hollingdale, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 57-123.

passion of collectors, nor about the critical passions of people infused with a love of justice. Historians all too often appear to us as those who constantly denounce something rather than present us with a gift. This should change. History should also be part of the ethics of hospitality and it should be founded on reciprocity; it should afford the logic of donation and it should master the artistry of giving. History ought to provide us with the gift of time; it ought to give us time or better still – it should retrieve time.

I expect the historian to prove his skill in retrieving the philosopher's time, in regaining the time lost through the philosopher's absence in debates on the philosopher. I expect the historian to exert the power to reinstate the scattered traces of the philosopher's past existence, and I equally expect the historian to exert his will to revitalize the seemingly dead and obsolete texts, and to unfold the anachronistic time that has never lapsed and today – as it has remained imperfect – calls for 'operational time' for its recovery. In other words, I expect the historian to be able to roll out the ball of static time. Make no mistake, I do not hope for the reminiscence, resonance or reconstruction of the philosopher's scenes of fight, but instead I hope to find and realize the time lost to the philosopher in thinking, time, which constantly loses itself in thinking about philosophy as a form of thinking which has long been overcome. Perhaps what I expect from the historian is something truly impossible, for what I expect is the resurrection of a seemingly dead thought. Some neo-platonic philosophers have used the word *complication* to signify the original state preceding any development, expanse, or time. In such a meaning, this noun of action from *complicate* 'to fold together, fold up, roll up' embraces multiplicity in one and affirms one in multiplicity. As such it also signifies the time of becoming for philosophy. Even today, medicine uses the word to denote the unexpected evolution of the disease, the intensification of the production of symptoms within a body under change.

My paper on time will unfold at two speeds. The first speed is that of a fallen being, permanently occupied and constantly short-changing itself within the trivialities of universal opinions, a being almost indiscernible from the surrounding buzz. First is thus the speed of the subject who arrives before the time for the actual answer. It is the speed of the subject who has no time to reactivate the primordial time, i.e., to unfold the rolled-up time of complication. The second speed is that of the emerging or slowly reactivating subject, the subject who does not blot out the traces of its arbitrariness and injustice, the subject itemizing the 'inherited estate' which was bequeathed to him as yet another heir to the intellectual property and interim proprietor of powers, i.e., the subject pursuing genealogy of quality for the primordial institution imprinting his identity. Borrowing from Carlo M. Cipolla – the greatest theorist of stupidity since Erasmus of Rotterdam – I would accept his principle *allegro ma non troppo* as a formula for this elaboration: 'fast but not too fast,' 'joyfully but not too joyously,' 'forward but not intrusively.'<sup>4</sup> After all, moving forward does not exclude weaving one's way, wandering, deviating or even drifting away (*deriving*).

<sup>4</sup> Carlo M. Cipolla, *Allegro ma non troppo*, Il Mulino 1988.

## HIGH TEMPO: HASTY CONSIDERATIONS

First, hastily, I will verify and reject the four most widespread opinions on what the history of philosophy is.

For one, the history of philosophy is often mistaken for the history of grand questions or problems, great difficulties or controversies, and, finally, aporias. If that were to be true one is immediately compelled to ask legitimate questions such as: 'Precisely how are these questions formulated?' Or, 'What are they about?'; 'What objects do they refer to?'; and the like. Indeed, questions such as 'What is truth?'; 'What are the sources of knowledge?'; 'What are the limits of human knowledge?'; 'What does it mean to be?'; 'What is reality?'; 'What is the subject?' – are all questions exciting human reason. At the same time, thanks to this excitement, they engage human reason in endless controversies and confront it with haunting dilemmas.

Is not it for this fact that so-called 'people of science' keep telling us – philosophers – that philosophical questions and problems are either 'infantile,' immature or 'improperly formulated,' or that they are 'delusional,' non-empirical,' or 'unverifiable'? While the very same 'people of science' are perhaps likely to admit that these questions are an irreducible part of the human desire for knowledge – our cognitive interest, they are still openly unappreciative as regards the computing power of the human intellect. The history of philosophy is becoming a history of an increasing awareness of the problems and increasing awareness that these very problems are unsolvable. 'The real philosophical problem,' – says Hans Georg Gadamer, – 'is an insoluble problem.'<sup>5</sup>

The very 'insolvability,' however, should perhaps be the least concern of this style of philosophical thinking for when we ask the 'historians of great philosophical questions' – such as Leo Strauss or Hans Georg Gadamer any further, the questions tend to complicate and intensify the problems, e.g., is the list of these and similar questions exhaustive and finite? What, indeed, is a question in philosophy? To what does a philosophical question expose the subject of cognition and the subject of speech? How does a philosophical problem arise? How do philosophical questions emerge within the historical process? What factors condition the prosperity of certain problems? What brings an end to the prosperity of certain problems? How come, for example, that 'body' becomes a philosophical problem, and 'philosophy of the body' becomes a leading philosophy? Is there in the world at least one object barred from becoming the subject of philosophical thinking?

To deepen the complexities let us ask even further: how does a philosophical question establish its status as a universal question, rather than remain purely private, personal or occasional? How does a 'personal problem' of a 'private academic' raise itself to the level of a philosophical problem? Kant, for example, inaugurates his philosophy

<sup>5</sup> Hans Georg Gadamer, 'Begriffsgeschichte als Philosophie', in Hans Georg Gadamer, *Kleine Schriften III*, (Tübingen: Mohr), p. 237-250.

by asking, 'What is a synthetic judgement *a priori*?' Apart from being seemingly 'universal,' the question reveals Kant's 'provincialism,' his entanglement with his 'here and now,' and a cognitive motivation to a degree determined by the epoch. Does a seemingly 'impartial' epistemological question really substitute or replace the 'situation' or 'actuality' of the philosopher? Has philosophy always silenced (concealed) its political and economic situation by pretending to be independent and detached from the situation? If so, the history of philosophy would be the history of those concealments, silences, and unspoken conditions of thinking, the articulation of which was Kant's strong demand.

Every philosophy appears in a certain situation. The philosopher always emerges owing to certain prosperity, a constellation of interests and cognitive claims of various, often conflicting social groups. The philosopher, however, ascends not so much as a result of the situation nor as a founder of the situation, but more as a vessel and bridge for the interaction of forces and interests, the place of flow of those forces, the place without which the situation itself would not be complete. Socrates in Athens, Machiavelli in Florence, Hobbes in England, Spinoza in Amsterdam, Kant in Königsberg, Heidegger in the fallen Weimar Republic, Marx in early capitalism, Deleuze in turbocapitalism – are all not the victims of the situation but strong elements of this situation and a part of the philosophical theatre, which itself is largely a part of the theatre of politics.

Of course, this is not a simple transmission. I am not at all close to the idea that a theory of cognition is a theory of society as was articulated *inter alia* by Jürgen Habermas.<sup>6</sup> I am also not a great enthusiast of setting the 'history of ideas' or 'sociology of knowledge' as great rivals of the 'history of philosophy.' In a sense, I regard both of these disciplines as depraved versions of the history of philosophy. I know what philosophy is and I sense what a sociology of knowledge could be. The former gives priority to knowledge over society, the latter suggests the opposite, that society is superior to knowledge. The sociologist of knowledge and the historian of ideas both do something equivocal: they pretend to be philosophers, that is, they deal with concepts, but in fact they are sociologists, for they deal with the conditions of the existence of society. Speaking in the language of Louis Althusser, for theme determination in the last instance constitutes precisely this enigmatic whole – 'society.' For example, in the works of this historian of ideas, the idea of freedom is no longer an idea or even concept, but an imaginary or even phantasmic condition for the existence of society.<sup>7</sup>

For this reason, the history of philosophy cannot be part of the history of human knowledge written against the background of the history of society. The sociologist of knowledge is a scientist and his results are important in the field of scientific knowledge,

<sup>6</sup> Jürgen Habermas, 'The Idea of the Theory of Knowledge as Social Theory', in *Jürgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), p. 67-89.

<sup>7</sup> Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, trans. Kathleen Blamey, (The MIT Press Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1998).

whereas the historian of philosophy is a philosopher. This is a fundamental difference which changes the way things are – the scene, the actors, and the script of the drama. Regardless of how we see the ‘mission’ of philosophy, regardless of whether we perceive the philosophy as an ideology, i.e., a justification of time and place (Karl Mannheim), utopia, i.e., the fight for a new time and place (Karl Marx), expression, i.e., the word of the monad (Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz), or a refusal to participate in some actual world (Michel de Montaigne), or still – as a search for a place for philosophy in absolute democracy (Baruch Spinoza), that is, whatever the initial superstitions, the philosopher above all attempts to understand himself – his place on earth – by transforming his own historical memory.

Science can be made without memory, even if its subject is – as in the case of the history of science, the history of ideas, or the sociology of knowledge – memory itself. That is why, I would venture to claim that the relationship between philosophy and time (epoch) is a union of *revealing concealment* and *openness by closure*, which means that philosophy not only transforms the antinomy of its time (society) into the antinomy of intellect (abstract questions), but above all it arouses a certain kind of a ‘view of reality,’ it arouses some kind of sense, ‘the concept of another Real,’ ‘concept,’ which is the most difficult to excite.

The philosopher is someone who questions the sense of reality in order to arouse a ‘new concept of the Real’ that is significantly different from the imaginary reality of the environment surrounding us. The philosopher wishes to liberate us from the tyranny of reality for the concept of the new Real. I do not think that it is possible to formulate a more revolutionary and perverse, and therefore more *complicated*, program of epistemological and social dismantling. The historian of philosophy is not free from this disassembly and must respect and even himself propose an alternative concept of the ‘real’ and thus – of the historical reality of philosophy. In paraphrasing my favourite phrase of Niklas Luhmann’s I would say that ‘The ‘real’ is what one does not see when observing reality.’<sup>8</sup> So what is, expressed in philosophical language, in the nature of the Real for the historian of philosophy?

Well, in repeating the lessons of Jacques Lacan, for the present we can say, the Real is what does not fit into the symbolic system, and therefore it is above all – the language itself. There is no place for the real in language, as it is constantly breaking the structure of symbolization. The ‘Real’ causes that the process of symbolization, which leads to the emergence of an image, does not occur at all; it is this occurrence that drives this very process. If we were looking for an analogy to this notion in the philosophical tradition it would be Kant’s ‘thing in itself.’ Certainly, philosophy is a great waking to the Real.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Niklas Luhmann, *Observations on Modernity*, trans. William Whobrey, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 23.

<sup>9</sup> For the three registers: real, symbolic and imaginary, refer to Lacan’s work: Jacques Lacan, *On the Names-of-the-Father*, trans. Bruce Fink, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013).

Let us return to our main problem, because this is not the end of the series of questions addressed to great historians. We persist in asking: do we have any catalogue, encyclopaedia or even a lexicon of the ways to understand the significance of these puzzling philosophical problems? In my hasty investigation I was able to find three possible meanings.

First of all, the philosophical problem is understood as a problem entangled in the form of paradox. In a paradox, our thinking on the basis of premises considered true and our reasoning commonly considered to be legitimate, we come to the negation of one of the premises or to the conjunction of two contradictory claims. In other words, when the values of variables, i.e., defined sets of situations and concepts, generate questions that cannot be answered without disrupting the convictions taken earlier for granted on the basis of the same set of situations and concepts. This is illustrated by the famous paradox of the liar attributed to Eubulides of Miletus: 'If a liar says he is lying, it follows that he is lying and not lying at the same time.' No answer is satisfactory here.

The second understanding of the philosophical problem takes the form of an undecidable. Undecidables for Derrida are units of appearances, false verbal, nominal or semantic properties, which can no longer be understood within the binary philosophical opposition, which they resist despite being part of it, they are both an inherent part and a 'disorganizing' and 'dismantling' part, never forming a solution in the form of speculative dialectics. Generally speaking, an undecidable situation – an anomaly, appears when the problem cannot be solved with the binary conceptual apparatus. We then often resort to calling it *aporia* – a logical or intellectual wasteland, indicating either helplessness or a non-encompassable difficulty.

The philosopher is tempted to think that reason is aporetic by nature. What sustains our faith in apologetic reason is perhaps Kurt Gödel's 1931 article *On Formally Undecidable Propositions of Principia Mathematica and Related Systems I*, wherein Gödel reveals that it is impossible to presume that mathematics can be based on a set of axioms sufficient to systematically derive an infinite number of true statements in a given domain.<sup>10</sup> Truth be told, Gödel himself reveals much less to the mathematicians than he does to the philosophers by modestly proposing that the axiomatic method is bound by certain limitations, so that even ordinary arithmetic of natural numbers can never be fully formalized.

Finally and thirdly, philosophical problems are called antinomies, i.e., according to the interpretation of Kant they are irremovable problems deposited at the junction of reason (transcendental dialectics) and intellect (transcendental analytics). Important in Kant's statement is that antinomy is not a mistake but an indelible feature of reason. The traditional notion of error – being the product of external determinism – Kant replaces

<sup>10</sup> Kurt Gödel, *On Formally Undecidable Propositions of Principia Mathematica and Related Systems*, trans. Bernard Meltzer, (Edinburgh-London: Oliver and Boyd, 1962).

with the notion of false problems and internal illusions. These illusions are considered unavoidable, and even resulting from the nature of reason. Reason cannot refrain from knowing things in themselves, even though the cognitive interest should be limited to phenomena.

As a summary, we conclude that the history of philosophy seen as a history of great philosophical questions would have to be a history of paradoxes, of indecidables like the Deriderian *hymen* – the entrance to the vagina and simultaneously the gate to it or *pharmakon* – medicine and poison at a time, or simply of the antinomy of human reason. Philosophy would thus balance on an inconclusiveness, conflict, or source difference which are not contained in its history and yet sanction history – comparable only to some *Ursprache* of an indefinite, always ambivalent, fluid semantics.

Sigmund Freud in his work *The Antithetical Sense of Primal Words* sought the analogy between ancient languages and dream-work which engages the same means of contradictory meanings.<sup>11</sup> Fear 'of philosophy,' but also the 'fear in philosophy,' would thus bear all the signs of fear of the unintended return of the same, the fear of a *doppelgänger*, who, though having all the qualities of the subject, is not the subject itself. Anxiety in philosophy would be 'the fear of ambivalence,' because even though in a *doppelgänger* we recognize what is known to us – all the while enjoying the pleasure of recognition – we still find in it something that does not belong to us: something eerie – *unheimlich*, uncanny.

Philosophy would thus belong to this fear and its work would belong to these contradictory meanings resembling dream-work (*die Traumarbeit*) and pertaining to the infinite (or beyond-finite) claims of human reason. I do not dare to settle at the moment whether or not philosophy is forever doomed to implement in its regime the processes of legitimation by paralogy.<sup>12</sup> I only remember the critical and disciplined remarks of Émile Benveniste concerning the hypothesis of the antithetical sense of primal words: if primal words in the ancient times had double meanings, they would not be a language at all, i.e., they would not be a structure consisting of a finite number of discrete units that could combine into hierarchical sequences to express any meaning.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'The Antithetical Sense of Primal Words', trans. Joan Riviere. in Sigmund Freud, *Collected Papers*, vol. 4, (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), p. 184-191.

<sup>12</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> Émile Benveniste, *Indo-European Language and Society*, trans. E. Pahner, (London: Faber & Faber, 1973).

**ANSWERS**

However, the history of philosophy does not exhaust its potential in the history of the grand questions which expose human reason to antinomies. Suffice it to say – as the second answer to the question of the history of philosophy – that the essence of philosophy is also to be found in structural history, the history of responses to these paradoxical questions which produce philosophical positions, i.e., large systems (systematics), intellectual formations, those persistent and difficult to eradicate thought communities. Idealism, materialism, pantheism, determinism, object-oriented philosophy, Thomism, hermeneutics of suspicion, Platonism, etc. – are the names of those difficult to eradicate ‘answers’ to embarrassing questions. In opposition to these great philosophical positions and systems, philosophy deals mostly with the multiplication of controversy by becoming a sower of scepticism, agnosticism, anarchism, atheism or criticism advocating the not-knowing subject. Non-depraved philosophy keeps away from the throne of knowledge.

Philosophy is also a dogma, and a dogmatic subject is one that is said to know. The history of philosophy, understood as the history of philosophical dogma, or better still, as Imre Lakatos would have it, of ever since degenerated research programs,<sup>14</sup> is a history of communalization and generalization of errors (opinions). A productive research program is recognized as a result of its ability to discover new and amazing facts: the program that degenerates itself, manifests itself in the absence of hyperplasia, the lack of cognitive vitality, the constant return of the same.

A history of philosophy thus understood can be confronted with a subsequent set of verifying questions. First of all, in this variant, the constellation of different philosophies creates a system – one philosophy, the moments of which would be the historic philosophies known both by the name and family names. Questions arise: what makes such a system consistent? What is this system founded upon? What eliminates the differences and establishes its ‘structure?’

Moreover, a history of philosophy understood as the history of particular systems often defines these systems by resorting to its forming ‘sequence,’ for example, Descartes – Spinoza – Leibniz – Kant (modern rationalism), or: Kant – Fichte – Schelling – Hegel (German transcendentalism), or perhaps not a linear but spatial sequence, i.e., based on common motivation: Marx – Nietzsche – Freud (philosophy of suspicions). Or, to refer to the most ‘controversial’ example proposed by Roland Barthes: Sade – Fourier – Loyola.<sup>15</sup> Let us bear in mind that in this sequence Barthes recognized three great logothetes, i.e.,

<sup>14</sup> Imre Lakatos, *The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes: Volume 1*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

<sup>15</sup> Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, trans. Richard Miller, (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1974).



founders of a language designed to use fully grammatical speech emerging from sheer nothingness. Simon Critchley's *The Book of Dead Philosophers*<sup>16</sup> serves as a 'history of philosophy' understood as a 'history of philosophers' dying' – from the Tales of Miletus and Solon to Derrida and Debord. Here there comes a sequence of life that is a sequence of death. Here, we learn the answer to the question 'how to live?' by observing the individual philosopher's reaction to his ultimate situation: death. Here, we learn philosophy by watching always the individual 'answer' of a philosopher to the question of 'how to die?'

So I ask: just how many possible sequences can be found in the history of philosophy? How many 'stories' does the history of philosophy comprise? How many tenses and speeds does it use to speak to us? Does every history of philosophy – understood as the history of great systems – assume and conceal the problem of another sense, of another history?

Finally, and what is perhaps the most important, is understanding within the history of philosophy the understanding of the entire movement of history, i.e., embracing the whole of philosophy. Would, in this sense, the history of philosophy be a philosophy of 'the whole of philosophy' – playing out and discovering all the scenes of its coming into the world? It was Hegel who noticed that the 'whole' is a 'big excuse of self-knowledge.' The Hegelian spectre, spirit, ghost and genius is one of the most powerful spectres for the philosopher of history. Ever since Hegel we are constantly accompanied by the illusion of the end, the closing, rolling up of philosophy, and thus the closure of its history. From Hegel, every great philosophy appears to us and enters the stage of history as the end of history.

I would like to ask the historian of philosophical systems, whether or not a system has its history (genesis) at all. Again, Hegel taught us the ascension from 'ghost figures' to the 'category of logic,' from *The Phenomenology of Spirit* to *Science of Logic*. And only within the category of self-derived spirit do we feel the space of the work and the meaning of the system – as long as it is understood as the whole presence of the concept.

Yet, there are more questions to follow this sequence. We also need to enquire about the logic of the passing of the figures of spirit, one into another. Can we trust the assertion that even though philosophical systems, unlike logic or mathematics, do not provide a continuous process of cognition, and even though the continuous change of positions does not translate itself into the steady progress of science, the very problems (apologies) which these systems address have always been the same and will always be recognizable? Well, we may only wish that such an assertion were true for it would be so reassuring for our critical conscience.

Unfortunately, to give but one example, the question of freedom in Plato is the question of 'choosing a soul' before birth when it 'chooses' its destiny; in Hobbes – it is the question of the ability to act without resistance in an environment subjected to the law of the sovereign (sovereign right); in Kant – the question of being able to act in harmony with moral law that is above the law of nature; in Marx – the question of the instrument of class

<sup>16</sup> Simon Critchley, *The Book of Dead Philosophers*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2009).

domination, i.e., 'the will of the bourgeoisie' aimed at a mystification of the exploited and forcing them to accept their fate; and finally in Freud – the question of the drives and their stories – fate, and therefore the individual 'conflicts and wrestling with impulses' entangled in life. The question of freedom is therefore never the same question. The methodological imperative of the historian of philosophy should thus be – to strive to understand the real questions and their real motives, and to avoid at all costs any treatment of these questions and answers as abstract formalities.

Gadamer gives us a collection of great examples on how this principle can be applied. The subject – to refer to the most instructive example – is the Greek *hypokeimenon* – that is; the substratum or the 'underlying thing.' This word was introduced by Aristotle to describe what – in comparison to the varying forms of the appearance of being – does not change and is at the basis of those variable qualities. Does this *hypokeimenon* underlie everything in the modern meaning of the *subiectum*, signifying the stream of *cogitatio*, the kind of self-reflection, self-knowledge?

From Gadamer's point of view, the question of how the subject derives from his infinite isolation is a question resulting from a misunderstanding of the notion of substance and the growing predominance of subjectivity and self-consciousness over consciousness, which is always a consciousness of something. That is what drives Gadamer to insightfully conclude that new questions arise from erroneous wrong, incorrect, inaccurate, incomplete, inexact reading! The explanation of concepts by history is possible only in so far as concepts are still alive in the presence of language. Language, however, does not remember itself, and even more so: it is the essence of language not to remember where it belongs.<sup>17</sup>

## IDIOSYNCRASIES

Is there another way of thinking about philosophy and its history? Let us abandon the history of philosophy understood as the history of rash and hasty answers to embarrassing and abstract questions, in favour of the history of philosophy understood as the eventful history of great names set either in chronological order or within a certain problematic field. This is a history of philosophy understood as a history of singularity and peculiarity. It is what Paul Ricoeur refers to as idiosyncratic history.<sup>18</sup> Now, in such a history of philosophy, Spinoza – to give but one example – is not part of the assumed lineage, the movement of philosophical thought, but the place of collapse of that movement, the focal point contemplated for its own sake.

<sup>17</sup> Gadamer, *Begriffsgeschichte als Philosophie*.

<sup>18</sup> Paul Ricoeur, 'The History of Philosophy and Historicity', trans. Charles A. Kelbley in Paul Ricoeur, *History and Truth*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), p. 63-77.

## WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY?

Philosophy is not so much a collection of abstract questions 'detached' from political and economic reality, nor it is a collection of 'answers' to anonymous problems, instead it is a collection of 'reactions' to the problems of a particular time and place. The history of philosophy becomes a history of isolation and solitude and that of simultaneous socialization and communitarianisation.

The history of philosophy is always the history of a philosopher who always has a specific face. The philosopher has to be secluded and solitary in order to find real time, not just the imagined political and economic order to which he belongs. Here we come back to the concept of the Real. A philosopher wishing to find a new formula for a 'new real' must leave the reality imagined as real. The philosopher is, however, also a figure of socialization, for he invents and designs new forms of community, new collectives, new democracies, which in a deeper sense realize the still unfulfilled and constantly postponed 'ideal of democracy', i.e., 'real democracy'. It is this dual function of the philosopher that I refer to as *revealing concealment* and *openness by closure*.

It should be noted quickly that in this variant, the history of philosophy is not so much a biographical history as it is philosophemic, i.e., searching for and searching through the meaning (interpretation) of the work of some idiosyncrasy. Here, history is *into* philosophy, not *alongside* or *above* it, whereby a philosopher is not consumed by his own history. Idiosyncratic history has nothing to do with the division of the history of philosophy between biographical and doxographic, that is, either focussed on the biographies and lives of philosophers or on their views. Beginning from Diogenes Laertios' *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* (3rd century AD) to the book of Rüdiger Safranski dedicated to the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche – *Nietzsche. A Biography of his thinking* (2000),<sup>19</sup> a singular history is a history which idiosyncratically combines the life of a philosopher (*bioi*) with his thinking (*gnomai*), in such a way that life is only a life of thought, and thought is only a thought that reveals itself in his life. While life is lived only in a thought, thoughts are lived in another thought.

Philosophers (Aristotle, Spinoza, Descartes, Nietzsche, Derrida) are as if 'parts of the whole' or they are 'partial objects' that represent the always absent whole, the absent structure. Philosophers are not timeless essences nor anachronisms, nor even time-disintegrating entities, nor even subjects desynchronizing time, but vessels of always momentary conceptualisations of the problems of their actuality and holistic history of philosophy. Philosophers are mere 'exertions' or 'interventions' to expand histories and to dismantle historicity.

There are doubts which now need to be voiced with regard to such a project. First of all, I would like to ask: in what lies the relationship between a philosophical text and its

<sup>19</sup> Diogenes Laertios, *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, ed. Dorandi, Tiziano, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Rüdiger Safranski, *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*, trans. Shelley Frisch, (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002).

commentary? Philosophy reminds me of discipline in the state of eternal digression and digressiveness. Philosophy, and even more so – the history of philosophy, is symptomatic to a belonging to the era of commentaries. As such, it needs to address the following, more intense questions: what is time in philosophy? Is philosophical time only a time of coexistence that even though does not exclude ‘before’ and ‘after’, it nonetheless imposes ‘before’ and ‘after’ on itself in geological order? ‘Philosophy – say Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in this context – is becoming, not history; it is the coexistence of planes, not the succession of systems.’<sup>20</sup>

Let us raise more questions: Does philosophy have its own autonomous territory, its *modus operandi*, i.e., its *modus* of becoming – especially in comparison and comparison with art, science, and politics? Does philosophy know and implement in its activity the principle of sovereignty? Or is it that philosophy has only its *opus operatum* (work fulfilling or done) but it does not have a set sequence of moves to achieve this ‘accomplishment?’ Is philosophy by nature and from the very outset an extraterritorial activity, with the philosopher being an ‘orphan,’ a ‘homeless creature,’ ‘eternal wanderer,’ or a nomad who makes homelessness his only virtue? Are we to assume that each and every philosophy, and even more – the history of philosophy is manifold, multifaceted, a kind of theatre *variete*? In this approach, ‘philosophical works’ would only be ‘quanta’ of the history of philosophy, and always delusional philosophical alliances with science, art or politics would be moments of momentary philosophical supply, but also – were they to be ‘normal practices’ – they would be moments of betrayal of their own practice.

At the end of this sequence, I ask the historians: what, indeed, is the community of philosophers understood as a timeless community of idiosyncrasies; non-ethnic, non-linguistic, non-national, albeit logocentric (Derrida) or even phallogocentric? Or, is philosophy genderless? Does this literary community of peers reading peers (their letters or diaries) – this ‘sect of literate bibliophiles’ – qualify as a community at all? Would it not be advisable to assume that philosophical thinking and a philosophical community of friends requires more effort and more activity, such as liberating the virtual meanings of those most alien, inimical, and hostile of thoughts, and the effort to overcome and revive concepts to the gold standard of chemistry or mathematics?

What else would explain why today, at the cost of alienating itself, philosophy is trying to familiarize animals: it lets animals into philosophy and lets thought out of philosophy, thereby becoming the zoosphere of hospitality?<sup>21</sup> Is it not the reason why philosophy should, in fact, be seen as a stage, i.e., a ‘place’ of constant contamination, infection and virulence, where ‘thoughts’ are welcomed simply to be abducted by alien forces?

<sup>20</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. H. Tomlinson, G. Burchell, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

<sup>21</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 25-51.

## CONCEPTS

We have thus arrived at my fourth hasty hypothesis: that the history philosophy is the history of concepts. Again, it is Hans-Georg Gadamer who observed that the history of concepts is, in fact, philosophy, and that perhaps philosophy should consider itself the history of concepts due to the fact that it is always made *in* concepts and *by* concepts, whereby there are no other problems in philosophy than the sole question: *what are the concepts?* It is possible that what we are dealing with in addressing this audacious response to the question of 'what is philosophy?', is the attempt to raise a certain philosophical discipline, namely – ontology, to first rank. Is conceptuality really the essence of philosophy? Is the 'concept itself' not the very subject of philosophy from Plato to Deleuze? After all, what we call 'philosophy' is merely a collection of enigmatic utterances by Western-educated individuals which render us helpless in the assessment of the measure of responsibility for the use of the very concepts. Is there any such thing as responsibility for using concepts?

Such use allows abuse, and the nature of concepts is enigmatic. Obvious and problematic as it may be, the fact that the concept is the subject of philosophy – real, general and necessary being, and not individual and contingent, permeates the philosophical tradition from Aristotle to Hegel. 'In the third book of *Metaphysics*,' – observes the great historian Gadamer – 'Aristotle describes the characteristics of philosophy, and in particular *metaphysics* – the first philosophy ('philosophy' means knowledge in general): all other sciences have a positive domain of knowledge, they have their objects.'<sup>22</sup> Except for conceptuality, philosophy does not have a constricted object of knowledge. This is its curse, but also a moment of glory.

I find even this answer far from satisfying. First and foremost, my difficulty is that concepts are always something different than we think. There is a history of concepts, which means that even concepts have their time. Throughout history concepts have been static patterns in the world and moving 'concepts in the head,' they have been sets of generic features, the properties of construction modelling the use of expressions in different situations, they have been the effects of the use of generic names, the areas in space based on non-integrated coordinates, the geometric space of the differences and similarities of a certain constellations of beings, they have been prototypes and measures of deviation from those prototypes, they have been the descriptors of changes in intensity and saturation (supersaturation) and in the essential order of a certain set of features, they have been a cognitive form of representation in the mind, or semantic construction on the sets. Granted, there is no single perception of 'concept,' or in English tradition – *the notion of concept*. Instead what we have are their many stories. The notion of concept cannot be explained without outlining the context in which it appears, and the 'correctness' of

<sup>22</sup> Gadamer, *Begriffsgeschichte als Philosophie*.

a particular notion of 'concept' cannot be assessed without simultaneously assessing the view on the world in which it plays a role.

Here we reach to the essence of my argument and to the heart of my obstinacy, my complication, and my illness. Philosophy understood as a conceptual cognition of concepts should not have its history, it should take the form of ultra-structuralism, or structuralism *avant la lettre*. But even this philosophy – a philosophy that desires to hold back time, to congregate time, or even to be beyond time – is actually playing with time and at a certain time. This brings new problems and raises new questions.

First of all, what is the founding moment for a new conceptual formation – paradigm, *episteme*, of this institution called 'philosophy?' Historians of science have sensitized us to the 'appearance' of the immutability of the meanings of the basic terms of science, and we come across this very same 'appearance' in philosophy. To avoid this appearance, one asks: how does it come about in our 'institution' (academic philosophy) that we abandon a certain topic or type of thinking and leave it for another topic or another type? It was Michel Foucault, the archaeologist and genealogist, who asked: how is it that culture discontinues existing thinking and starts thinking something different and differently? Deleuze and Guattari add that – 'A philosopher sometimes suffers from an amnesia that makes him almost sick.'<sup>23</sup> The fact that concepts are ill is a fundamental issue in philosophy. We will return to this in a moment.

On the basis of the above-mentioned list of questions regarding time of concepts, we can conclude that the history of philosophy cannot be only about a genetic understanding of concepts nor even about their structural understanding necessary to see the concept in tension and in the tense movement with other concepts, but above all about understanding and observing the moment when concepts collapse, the moment when the meaning of a concept is distorted and it passes into other-meaning.

Distortion makes the relationship between the word and the concept dislocated and words begin to slip away in the form of new conceptual forms. The introduction of this distortion into the field of philosophy is a way of doing philosophy and a form of validation for new philosophical concepts, and thus it stands for very philosophical inventiveness. Therefore, the history of concepts finds fulfilment in liberating a concept from its scholastic ossification in order to release the immemorial, forgotten, or as yet unrecognized meanings, and to reclaim the living virtualization of speech.

Certainly, the process of concept creation does not begin with zero, since conceptualization is thinking in the language we speak. The history of philosophy as the history of the language using concepts becomes the history of the practice of human speech – a very special one, practiced on the periphery of speech. For philosophy, language is neither a tool nor a universe of meanings, it is not even a world but a trauma. The essence of trauma is that it always happens 'too early,' and its understanding always comes 'too late.'

<sup>23</sup> Deleuze, Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, p. 29.

as a result, the subject is always in a state of desynchronization, in the eternal state of delay or acceleration, thus causing everything to happen not 'in accordance with time.'

It is no different with the language which we speak before we begin to understand it. The primary trauma of separation – the matrix of all future traumas, is closely related to the birth of language. A word is the true source of trauma, as it signals the proximity of the other and the need to guess its 'mumble,' 'babble,' or 'chatter.' Philosophy is the search for speech outside of this mumbling, the search of time beyond time, i.e., the right time to play and act, not so much 'in time,' but 'inside time,' 'in accordance with time,' without delay and without acceleration. Philosophy is the search for the right tempo: *allegro ma non troppo*.

Language is not just an all-encompassing, ever-present interpretation of the world, it is much more. It is not just that the world is a world for us and has always been interpreted within language. Just as it is not simply that the history of philosophy is the history of language games, in which philosophical problems are articulated. As Ludwig Wittgenstein has rightly suggested: 'Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language'<sup>24</sup> and in this sense, philosophy is an activity demanding a therapy, but it is also a form of therapy itself.

The history of philosophy is always the history of thinking out the conditions of thinking. One of these conditions is language. Philosophy, however, always lacks language and philosophy is always born out of language deficit. Therefore, the main problem not only of philosophy, but also of the history of philosophy is the problem of the mutation of thoughts and, therefore, the problem of novelty in philosophy – the possibility of a new thought, and the 'conditions of producing what is new' or still the conditions for a differentiation (conflicting) of thoughts, and a stratification and expansion of concepts. The Derridian '*différance*' may have never meant anything else but this conflict is at the heart of language.

The philosopher asks maniacally: what is the renewal and what is the sense in questioning what exists? The historian goes on to ask: is every renewal always connected with, and is the consequence of the virulence of the existing system of concepts? What is the *clinamen* – deviation, aberration, deflection of the historic 'falling' of concepts? What infects the system of philosophical concepts with a virus? And lastly, is philosophy not merely a constant hunger for language, an effort to find non-correct language, the language of exceptions, the language of a state of emergency, the language of anomalies and the language of transformations?

I would venture to say that thinking philosophically is reserved only for those who are not satisfied with the available forms of language expression. What this means is that the historian of philosophy must experience the same hunger for language as the

<sup>24</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, (Chichester West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

analysed philosopher. As a rule, thought tries to think of something that is impossible to say, and this thought should not be disturbed in its disclosing, even if the price of this thought is an apparent or blatant agrammatism.

The funniest thing in the history of philosophy is perhaps that the entire history of philosophy is not so much a history of interpreting the world, nor attempts to change it, but the history of producing effective antibodies to its own activity, i.e., the effort to 'collapse the concept.' The history of philosophy is the history of medications and means of overcoming the non-dialogic character of philosophy. The dialectic, hauntology understood as the calling in and talking with ghosts – the spectres of the past, the reterritorialization of the deterritorialized area of philosophical play, and even the renewal of dancing with concepts – are all philosophical pharmakons.

The institution of philosophy calls us to 'speak real' and not to break the concepts away from dialogic speech, it calls us to fund the conceptual hygiene of the ideal language, the communication community, the community of new communications mediated by the new media. Dialogue and its doubles are the names of today's practices of immunizing philosophy, which are reactions to foreign bodies. After all, 'philosophy is abhorrent to discussions,'<sup>25</sup> and even Socrates constantly prevented any discussion. Socrates' atopicity should be understood not only geographically but also grammatically.

## SECOND TEMPO: UNHURRIED REFLECTIONS

Towards the end, which is due to come almost imperceptibly slow in its movement, I shall formulate non-defiant, unhurried answers. At this point, however, allow me to repeat what I have proved to be my problem, my illness, my *complication*: what is the history of philosophy, if it is not the history of great problems, nor intellectual systems, nor idiosyncrasies (great names), not even concepts representing the machinery of philosophical device, so what is philosophy?

My first unhurried reply is as follows: the relation of philosophy to the history of philosophy has always been and remains the main theme of philosophy. For centuries the history of philosophy was above all the art of positioning. The historian had to remember how in his *Metaphysics* Aristotle settled and judged Plato's work, how Spinoza wrote about Descartes in his *Descartes' Principles of Philosophy in Geometric Order*, and what Hegel saw in Spinoza listing his name in *Lectures on The Philosophy of History*, what was Nietzsche's Übermensch to Heidegger, what the word *Geschlecht* meant to Derrida when he was reading Heidegger, etc. Let us concede that 'we' – historians of philosophy, have done nothing else but conflicted these proper names and that we have done so in endless chains. Thucydides was placed against Plato, Spinoza against Hobbes, Nietzsche against

<sup>25</sup> Deleuze, Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, p. 21.



Freud, Foucault against Lacan, Agamben against Derrida. We have made a gym out of history of philosophy, an atlas and an economy of force. Perhaps it is time to let go of this art of positioning oneself through the positioning of other names. Perhaps the time has come to take a break from further visits to the gym.

Here, I would like to defend the 'other history of philosophy,' i.e., the history of philosophy, which is no longer about the art of conflicting positions, which is not about the reconstruction of the linear history of great subjects, nor is it about the 'dialectic' and the dialectical transition of one name to another, but it is about philosophy understood as a theatrical spectacle in which the philosopher is a scenographer setting the scenery and constructing the drama for the actors on the stage. These actors are general concepts, categories, forms, ideas, definitions, analytical and synthetic sentences, or merely figures of the spirit. The history of philosophy in this variant is the art of searching for moments when a given thought is incited, and when it ignites and excites the intellect or brings culture to the verge of crisis. Hence the importance of the Nietzschean category of *Entstehung* – so strongly emphasized by Foucault<sup>26</sup> – that is, allowing the philosopher to 'jump out from behind the curtain and onto the stage,' or, in other words, allowing the new voice to 'storm into the scene,' or, better still, allowing a new actor to emerge.

For Nietzsche *Entstehung* means above all birth, the art of begetting oneself. As a result, the history of philosophy is transformed into the geometry of stage tensions and the reconstruction of the proper place of philosophical activity. The drama of philosophy is written on the stage: entering the stage – taking place – interpellation directed to the audience – leaving the stage – another return to the stage in the new moment of prosperity and a new (dis)guise. I would also risk the assertion that only the theatricalization of philosophical language allows for the change of the flat dimension of philosophical concepts and styles of speaking into a spatial process of thinking – full of resonance, reflections, shifts, dislocations, unpredictable returns, but also abrupt stops and even collapses.

Foucault recognized in Deleuze the first philosopher of the theatre – stage philosophy, he recognized in him also an actor who walks on stage in the disguise of a currently read philosopher. All the books of Deleuze on conceptual forms – *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay about Hume's Human Nature* (1953), *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962), *Kant's Critical Philosophy: The Doctrine of Government* (1963), *Proust and Signs* (1964) *Bergsonism* (1966), *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (1968), *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975), *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (1981), *Foucault* (1986), *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1988) – allow us to see the figure of Gilles Deleuze in his acting role, revealing him always on another stage, in a disguise – that of Hume, Nietzsche,

<sup>26</sup> Michel Foucault, *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, in Michel Foucault, *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Donald F. Brouchard and Sherry Simon, (New York: The New Press, 1998).

Kant, Proust, Bergson, Spinoza, Kafka, Bacon, Foucault, or Leibniz. Deleuze behaves as if he thoroughly read and digested the comments of Georg Fuchs contained in *The Stage of the Future* (1904), and earlier *Considerations of a German on the Stage Art of the French Tragic Actors* Wilhelm von Humboldt (1800). Theatre, stage, audience, and critique were for both Humboldt and Fuchs the best material for the study of the various types of human behaviour and passions that they compared in the two adjacent pedigrees and breeds, the French and German.<sup>27</sup>

Deleuze not only plays scenes from Kant or Leibniz, Kafka and Proust in the theatre, but filters their theatre through his own philosophy and repeals the great philosophical denial; he allows the words of Kant and Leibniz, Spinoza and Nietzsche to flow to their furthest boundaries. Deleuze's thinking is in the guise of the characters-philosophers by realizing their thoughts in pantomime and stage play. 'Thought has to think through what forms it – writes Foucault – and is formed out of what it thinks through. The critique-knowledge duality is perfectly useless: thought says what it is.'<sup>28</sup> Surely one needs to think problematically, not dialectically. Certainly, a-categorical and non-categorical philosophy needs to be invented. Certainly, when the three elements: the clinamen of the philosophical falling of concepts, the philosopher's denaturalization, and his stage action all begin to resonate, then philosophy becomes a trance, and then the investment in philosophy (the casting of our *libido* in philosophy) begins to pay off. We begin to understand that it is worth the effort to play with thinking.

Derrida, in his famous text devoted to Freud – *Freud and the Scene of Writing*, notes that in following Freud's theatre of the subconscious the life of psychoanalytic apparatus can neither be understood as the transparency of meaning nor as the opacity of power, but as a difference in the work of the forces.<sup>29</sup> This is similar to the history of philosophy. When we consider that the enigmatic ambiguity of the writing (the record) is inscribed in the very beginning of life, just as in philosophy is with the writings of the pre-Socratics the memory of whom is, to say the least, uncertain, and whose main conceptual body is composed of *arché* (ἀρχή), *physis* (φύσις), *logos* (λόγος), *the he* (το ον) *rhizai* (ρίζαι) *stoicheia* (στοιχεῖα), *philia* (φιλία) and *neikos* (νεῖκος) which respectively correspond with the beginning (principle and power), nature, reason, being, roots, elements, the elements, and finally love and strife, all staged between change and quiescence, being and non-being in the great world of the universe (*sphaĩros sphairos*), in space (*kósmos, kósmos*, order) – then history can only defend itself against such a 'beginning' and its own mythical entanglement with such a beginning, and against the entanglement of *logos* in *mythos* (μῦθος – story, fairy tale) by engaging in a certain economy of postponement, repetition,

<sup>27</sup> Georg Fuchs, *Die Schaubühne der Zukunft*, (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1905).

<sup>28</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Theatrum Philosophicum', *Critique*, 282/1970, p. 885-908.

<sup>29</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'Freud and the Scene of Writing', trans. Alan Bass, in Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

and resonance. In this resonance, the very idea of the beginning becomes enigmatic, i.e., the myth of the first time.

For Freud the reminiscence is present not one time but it constantly repeats itself and is deposited in all sorts of signs. Sign (*Zeichen*), record (*Niederschrift*) and transcription (*Umschrift*) are the main features of the history of philosophy, i.e., the work of the biographers of thought and the doxographers of idiosyncrasies. To paraphrase Derrida from the motto appended to this text, I would say that this state of initial conflict and this difference between *logos* and *mythos*, *philia* and *neikos*, *arche* and *physis*, *writing* and *footnote*, *doxography* and *biography* are not erased in history because they are not contained within history. It is, in a very unusual sense: the opening of history, the historicity itself.

## GEOPHILOSOPHY

As a result of this theatricality I repeat after Deleuze and Guattari: there is no history of philosophy, and at most there is its geography (topology), its geophilosophy understood as the topology and sequencing of philosophical figures. Deleuze and Guattari seemingly lull our vigilance when they say: 'The philosopher is the concept's friend; he is the potentiality of the concept.'<sup>30</sup> We realize, however, that philosophy is born within the drama of bringing forth and giving away concepts as well as their images (icons and idols), their conceptual figures.

Here, I deliberately avoid the category of 'creation,' which seems to be insufficient and to cloud our thinking. Philosophy is happening in a triangular drama, in which the elements are the plane of immanence, concept and conceptual form. Imagination is the beginning of thinking, the plane of immanence is the act of finding the territory of thought, and the conceptual form is a dynamic value – the way the philosopher becomes – the way he manifests himself and thinks. 'Concepts are not waiting for us ready-made, like heavenly bodies. There is no heaven for concepts.'<sup>31</sup> This heaven must be born by itself. It comes not without effort and not without cruelty to oneself. Not without joy, too, which is the joy of man forgetting the moment of his death. This is the joy of the new pace of philosophical action, which is already a stage activity: *allegro ma non troppo*.

'First – the authors of *What is philosophy?* bitterly admit – concepts are and remain signed: Aristotle's substance, Descartes' cogito, Leibniz's monad, Kant's condition, Schelling's power, Bergson's duration [*durie*].'<sup>32</sup> This is how Aristotle, Descartes, Leibniz, Kant, Schelling, and Bergson become substance, *cogito*, a monad, condition, potency,

<sup>30</sup> Deleuze, Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, p. 56.

<sup>31</sup> Deleuze, Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, p. 56.

<sup>32</sup> Deleuze, Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, p. 56.

persistence. What they have in common is the movement whereby they become 'conceptual personae.' The historian of philosophy has no other task than to intercept this motion, redirect and harness it into the motion of his own story. Let us remember that 'Not only do Descartes, Hegel, and Feuerbach not begin with the same concept, they do not have the same concept of beginning.'<sup>33</sup> This does not bother them, however, to participate in the same undertaking. We are left with a topology, understood as a 'cross-section' of conceptual personae, a stratigraphy of philosophy, but not with history, understood as a linear flow of time. Is it through the conceptual personae – substance, *ego cogito*, spirit, non-potentiality – that the philosopher becomes something else? An animal, an idiot, an artist, an intensification of life, his own grave? We do not know that yet.

Deleuze and Guattari rightly say that philosophy is neither contemplation nor reflection nor is it communication. The authors focus on a fabrication of concepts. A fabrication of concepts is, however, the production of the effects of truth. This is due to the fact that concepts are inseparable from truth. We are therefore left to consider the fabrication of truth, which – it would follow – means that we must rethink the relationship of philosophy to other 'apparatuses of the fabrication of truth,' with psychoanalysis at the forefront. In this productivity and multiplicity of apparatuses for creating the effects of truth, they do not find any other place than this one: philosophy is a relentless incentive to brave speaking, an incentive to enter the scene of oration, it is – to once again refer to Foucault – the dispositive of truthfulness.<sup>34</sup> The history of philosophy is, as a result, the history of disintegration, reconfiguration, and finally a renewal of the scenes of courage. The primordial stage of philosophy is the configuring stage, i.e., merging and assembling the political conditions of courageous speaking with the uniqueness of the subjective constellation which fills the stage with oration.

We are, therefore, on the stage and we should be interested in the future of philosophical spectacles, the construction of not yet fulfilling philosophical theatres, in the form of practicing the creation of scenes and theatrical machines. The questions asked by Niccolò Sabbatini – the Italian Baroque architect – How much space does one need to set the stage?, How does one make the heavens?, How to arrange the lights and shadows to depict a scene?, How to paint the decorations?, How to space the seats for the spectators?, How to raise the curtain that covers the stage? How to put the lights off the stage and on the stage? How to seat the audience? In what order do the scenes and actors disappear and reappear? How does one show the whole stage in flames? How to open and close the trap door on the stage? How can one make a person change into a stone or

<sup>33</sup> Deleuze, Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, p. 56.

<sup>34</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others I. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982-1983*, trans. Graham Burchell, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Michel Foucault, *The Courage of the Truth: The Government of Self and Others II. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1983-1984*, trans. Graham Burchell, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

something similar? How can one show that stones or rocks transform into people? How does one create clouds in an instant? How does one make the shadow or ghost appear and disappear quickly in different places on the stage – these are the very questions of the philosophical theatre and its conditions for possibility. i.e., the conditions for the fabrication of the ‘new real’.<sup>35</sup>

At this theatre the work of Pseudo-Hippocrates *On the Laughter of Democritus* is to be read as a necessary introduction to Plato, and the book by the Bavarian Jesuit Franz Lang *An Essay on Stage Performance* (1727) is to be recited all aloud alongside Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) as an introduction to transcendental aesthetics.

## ESTABLISHMENT

What does this mean and how does the subject indulging in oration – this stage philosophy –, enter the scene of the philosophical theatre of thought? Here we come to my last conclusion, an unhurried reply: the history of philosophy can be written only as a pedigree, i.e., genealogically. The philosophical anamnesis in such writing is the search for a retroactive relationship with the philosophical figures of the past. The only freedom in philosophy is the freedom to create a series of pedigree. Building one’s own pedigree series, self-generating sequences of kinship, is the only goal of historical writing. Building a personal *Herkunft* – to refer here to another key concept for Nietzsche – i.e., lineage, origin, historic affiliation to race or social type is our only imperative and ethical commitment to ourselves and to history. Building one’s *Geschlecht* in reading and studying is our main vocation. Our real effort is searching for our own gender, genus, lineage, and thus finding our own ‘natality’ or ‘parentage.’ It does not matter what names fall into the sequence. Even Peter Sloterdijk’s sequence laid out in his *Critique of Cynical Reason*,<sup>36</sup> comprising Diogenes of Synope, Lucian the Mocker, the lying Mephistopheles (Goethe), seducing the Great Inquisitor (Dostoevsky), or Anyone (Heidegger) is a substitute topic, it is the secondary scene of philosophy.

The aim of philosophical anamnesis, and thus the genealogical writing of the history of philosophy is to recover the understanding of one’s situation in the world, one’s political-normative position. It is not about the Bergsonian myth of the restoration of being nor about narrative memory nor about imaginary mystification, nor does it aim at creating a grammatical unity of the narrative, nor at the paramnesia of the starting point,

<sup>35</sup> Niccolò Sabbatini, ‘Manual for Constructing Theatrical Scenes and Machines’, trans. John McDowell, in *The Renaissance Stage: Documents of Serlio, Sabbatini and Furttentbach*, ed. Barnard Hewitt, (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1958), p. 37-137.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, trans. Michael Eldred, (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

for example, reconstructing the memory of the pre-Socratics. It is about recalling and reminding, about the infinite movement of memorizing and forgetting, in other words: the history of saving and erasing. It is about borrowing names from outside the series and making obsolete the already transcribed names in the lineage. Anamnesis is all about establishing oneself as a philosopher because the effect of genealogical activity is to sort out the past by giving it the sense of future necessity, so that the subject establishes their presence by reactivating the presence of others. Thucydides revived Nietzsche no less than Nietzsche had revived Thucydides by immersing himself in the reading of *The Peloponnesian War*.<sup>37</sup> The history of philosophy aims, therefore, at an assumption by the subject of his own historicity as documented by addressing another on the public stage.

The conclusion I would like to draw from both a hasty and slow-speed history of philosophy is far from destructive. The history of philosophy appears here as the history of failures of the human intellect, albeit necessary ones. We are the offspring of apories, if only for the fact that witnessing our own intellectual failures has to some extent made us the subjects. The question remains, however, as to whether these failures are only a shameful and humiliating thing, for they are traumatic events befalling us on the stage and in front of the audience, occurring in language which itself is a primordial trauma – the trauma of acting on stage and of stage trauma in acts of speech, or – on the contrary – this trauma may translate itself into our success and bring us glory.

My own history of revealing myself as a philosopher and bearing witness to the process of the aging of philosophy would allow for the following answer. Failure is the only reason for the ontology of success, provided that it becomes an open incentive to not only rebuild philosophy but also our own anthropological projects, i.e., our visions of what we can be in the world and what we can do with our lives. For the historian of philosophy, even if he is to remain a ‘partial object’ – inconsistent and incomplete, even if he is to be exposed to sequences of antinomies and even if he finds himself on an alien stage, the failure of a certain version of himself, i.e., his philosophical form, appears to be a great achievement and perhaps the only faculty worth saving. The failure of the stage philosopher is simply an invitation to rebuild the stage and the theatre itself, i.e., a production of the real. After all, the stage machine is a philosophical machine. The philosopher does not have his own stage, he is an eternal wanderer without territory, an actor on a journey. Perhaps this is the only perceptible generosity of the venture in which we participate: history gives us time to establish ourselves. This is not a ‘rush’ but it is not ‘unhurried,’ for this is stage tempo: *allegro ma non troppo*.

<sup>37</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), p. 112.

# BOOKS

**Waldemar Bulira, *Teoria krytyczna szkoły budapeszteńskiej. Od totalitaryzmu do postmodernizmu* [The Critical Theory of the Budapest School. From Totalitarianism to Postmodernism], (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2018) pp. 568.**

Waldemar Bulira's book is the first Polish monograph on the philosophical and political identity of the Budapest School: the group of students and associates of the most eminent 20<sup>th</sup>-century Hungarian thinker, György Lukács. Bulira relates the school first of all to Ágnes Heller, Ferenc Fehér, Györg Márkus and Mihály Vajda, though also takes into consideration numerous other Hungarian philosophers of the turn of the century, with whom the group was more or less close connected. Despite the fact the term *Budapest School* has been well established for a long time and no-one, including those mentioned above, would disagree as to their affiliation, Bulira's book is actually also the first worldwide monograph devoted to the accomplishments of the so-called school, if we disregard analyses of the their thought characteristics presented in individual articles.

Bulira describes his monograph modestly as a contribution to the research of the history of science and sociology of knowledge. In fact, his study turns out to be extremely important not only from the historical and sociological, but also the philosophical and political perspective. In the *Introduction* to his book Bulira convincingly presents the significance of the Budapest School within the history of contemporary philosophy and points out the reasons as to why it would be a misunderstanding to regard it as a just local phenomenon. What determines that significance in his opinion is already the philosophical calibre of György Lukács, the prototype of Naphta from *The Magic Mountain* by Thomas Mann, as Bulira writes, 'the diligent student and sometimes even relatively close friend of such thinkers as Wilhelm Dilthey, Georg Simmel, Emil Lask, and first and foremost Max Weber.' (61) As a teacher and also a critically assessed mentor of the representatives of the Budapest School in the sixties, who influenced essentially the directions in the development of twentieth century Marxism, this at least since publishing his *History and Class Consciousness* in 1923, Lukács determined likewise essentially the directions of their own philosophical quests. Insofar as the 'heglizing' interpretation of Marxism delivered by him in that book found its continuation in the 'critical theory,' developed by the Frankfurter School, the common denominator of the accomplishments of Ágnes Heller, Ferenc Fehér, Györg Márkus and Mihály Vajda turns out to be, according to the monograph's author, their own critical theory of society and their own criticism against the current condition of the modern world.

The main question, one which organizes the structure of the monograph, concerns the very existence of the Budapest School and, subsequently, the legitimacy of regarding the work of Lukács' students within any given period of their philosophical activity as its shared possessions. A positive answer to the question as to the existence of the school



seems obvious only in regard to the first of those periods, which took place in Hungary and consisted in criticism against the official Marxist ideology imposed on the countries of so-called real socialism by the Soviet Union. What settles the originality of Bulira's book, is his repetition of that question in regard to the subsequent periods of the alleged existence of the Budapest School, which began with the 1977 emigration of most of its representatives.

The question, whether the further philosophical activity of Ágnes Heller, Ferenc Fehér, Györg Márkus and Mihály Vajda may be considered still shared possessions of the school or rather works of independent authors, fully aware of their (intellectual, theoretical) independence, Bulira breaks down into four detailed questions, which he attempts to answer in the four relevant chapters of his book. The first three of them discuss the three theoretical topics, on which the School representatives' reflexion focused, to some extent harmoniously, within chronological order: totalitarianism, post-Marxism and postmodernism. After researching both the similarities and differences in their approaches to these topics, Bulira dedicates the fourth chapter to the practical aspect of the critical theory of the Budapest School. He analyses here the numerous political interventions which had for their subject the negative – in the opinion of the Budapest School – tendencies and phenomena of the (post)modern world, among others biopolitics, relativism or fundamentalism. Equally regarding these 'interventions' Bulira puts the question central to him: whether it is possible to find a common denominator for them. He asks, too, whether the criticism of the Budapest School was nothing but negative, or if it contained – at least at some stage – constructive elements?

The monograph's main thesis is that despite the theoretical discrepancies between some group members as well as their own numerous reservations and objections, the personal philosophies of the Budapest School share something more than just an attachment to the critical tradition. The author claims, that 'the character of this theory (meaning both the selection of the issues and the manner of their analysis) was to a large extent a result of the privileged epistemic position of the school's members, available to intellectuals in exile.' (538) Bulira describes very convincingly in his book, how that position influenced their – also common – attitude to the other currents of Marxist critical theory, especially to the so called New Left. In his monograph he relates this term to the wide spectre of radical currents within the scope of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century Left in its broad sense and outlines, that it was as a whole nothing but a phenomenon of the Western world. The subject of his insightful reconstruction becomes, in this context, primarily criticism of the representatives of the Budapest School contra the Greens and the antinuclear movement in West Germany.

As Bulira points out, among the members of the school, first of all Fehér and Heller in their joint book of 1986 *Doomsday or Deterrence? On Antinuclear Issue* criticised sharply the readiness of German antinuclear movements to make far-reaching political concessions to the Soviet Union. They criticized as well the attempts of those movements to legitimize this readiness by their declared determination to avoid nuclear catastrophe. According

to the argumentation of the Budapest School, as reconstructed in the monograph, such an allegedly 'comprehensive' political attitude of the German radical Left turns out to be in fact nothing but the readiness to restrict the political freedom of Western societies by exposing them to Soviet political influence. In the essay *Eastern Europe under the Shadow of a New Rapallo*, Bulira writes, Feher and Heller interpreted that attitude and the irrational anti-Americanism inextricable from it, as 'on the one hand, an expression of the revival of German nationalism and, on the other hand, an effective tool in the hands of the Soviet authorities.' (428)

At the same time, as Bulira points out, both the critical theory of modern society and the political interventions of the representatives of the Budapest School was to become a subject of radical criticism from the New Left. What the Western leftist radicals perceived as the betrayal by them of the 'workers' affair' was merely that the School members focused their analysis of totalitarianism on not so much its fascist or Nazi version, but rather its Soviet model. The monograph herein presented delivers an outstanding reconstruction of the author's so-called 'critical theory of totalitarianism' developed by the Budapest School and sheds clear light on the originality of their analyses of the Soviet system. Bulira discusses the definition of that system given by Feher and Heller in their joint book of the same name, as a 'dictatorship over needs,' and states that according to its theory, 'the totalitarian nature of the Soviet system is embodied primarily by the politicization of society, which is possible due to the process of the top down defining its citizens' needs.' (538)

Bulira's monograph makes use of very rich source material. It contains not only the numerous works of the Budapest School from the researched period, but also a broad secondary literature, which consists of detailed studies into topics of theoretical as well as practical interest for them. Such a source basis enables the author to both exhaustively present the philosophical ideas of the representatives of the Budapest School and to throw clear light upon their theoretical, historical and political context. What lies behind Bulira's ability is not only his delivery of a thorough comparative analysis of these ideas, and ability to convince one of their contemporary significance, but also his own research experience in this area. He has been for many years both an interpreter and translator of the works of the representatives of the Budapest School. In addition, due to his direct philosophical contact with Ágnes Heller, Bulira himself turns out to be an animator of some of her political interventions, which he records in the form of deepened interviews.

As a monograph of the critical theory of the Budapest School, Bulira's book contributes to understanding the meaning of the political experience shared in the second half of the 20th century by other countries of the East-Central Europe. Of particular interest from the point of view of the Polish reader are the elements of the comparative analysis of these experiences regarding the Budapest School of Critical Theory and the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas. Interestingly, the author focuses in his comparison mainly on their similarities and differences in fulfilling the criteria; allowing him to speak in both cases about their formation as scientific 'schools.' Nonetheless, the important

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questions put by him about the directions of critical reflection taken by Ágnes Heller, Ferenc Fehér, Györg Márkus and Mihály Vajda on the experience of a totalitarianism of Soviet provenience certainly deserve reappraisal with regard to the ways of giving up Marxism and the critical review of that experience taken by Leszek Kołakowski, Bronisław Baczko, Jerzy Szacki and Andrzej Walicki. Bulira's monograph constitutes an excellent starting point for such a comparative analysis, one allowing the pointing out, on the one hand, of the limits of the intellectual answer to this experience and, on the other hand, the characteristics and significance of its critical review typical for the Warsaw historians, but perhaps equally for representatives of other East-European post-Marxist schools as well.

By Andrzej Gniazdowski



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# AFTER REVOLUTIONS



There lies a double allusion in the journal's title: to the well-known poem by Fyodor Tyutchev – eagerly read by one of the leading representatives of the Warsaw School, Andrzej Walicki, and earlier by his mentor Hessen – and to the specific status of the intellectual from the periphery. In the poem Cyceron, Tyutchev writes that 'whoever has to live in a fateful moment deciding on the lot of the world then they shall be invited to a feast of the happy gods and shall be their joint reveller and interlocutor.'

The Russian Revolution seems to have moved within the last decades from the sphere of a distant present to that of a historical past. For historians of idea and philosophers it remains a vital problem; while the discussion concerning its meaning – or its absurdity – is far from conclusive. Whether the articles in the volume offer any definitive answer to the question as to the meaning of the Russian Revolution or not, they are nonetheless rich in valuable insights that may constitute potential premises for just such an answer in the future.

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