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MICHAŁ BOHUN

Institute of Philosophy
Faculty of Philosophy
Jagellonian University in Kraków
Email: michal.bohun@uj.edu.pl

THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY AND THE RUSSIAN THOUGHT THE (RE)CONSTRUCTION OF THE IDEA

MICHAŁ BOHUN

Institute of Philosophy
Faculty of Philosophy
Jagellonian University in Kraków
Email: michal.bohun@uj.edu.pl

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This article attempts to determine the extent to which the investigation in history of philosophy can produce beneficial impact upon the systematic (theoretical) philosophical enquiry. Taking the history of Russian philosophy as an exemplary domain, there will be an attempt made to propose certain metaphilosophical resolutions regarding the essence and the idea of social philosophy. This essay is aiming to take into consideration two essential problems: 1) the thesis about the primacy of social and historical thought that plays the predominant role in Russian philosophy; 2) departing from the political model of Eric Voegelin the concept of political gnosis will be proposed accordingly

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Today more than ever before the serious-minded are convinced that philosophy has practical tasks. The life of both the individual and the community is not molded by their mere needs and fortunes but also at all times by the strength of dominant ideas. Ideas are spiritual powers.

N. Hartmann, *New Ways of Ontology*

The essential insistence to refine and specify what the philosophy is and what it is preoccupied with, what objectives philosophers attempt to attain and what method is to be employed in order to bring the pursued goals to fruition has always coexisted with the philosophical reflection since its nativity. The philosophy from its foundation has always been self-reflexive and the questions that concerned the meaning and status of this domain, its existence-oriented or social utility, its significance for the culture, are also fundamental problems for the philosophy alone. This self-reflection clearly differentiates the philosophy from other scientific disciplines that examine just certain

problems, formulate a hypothesis, proposing new theories that replace the former ones. Conversely, the reflection on the workshop, on the method, on the essence or on the social function of the given discipline is only auxiliary to the relevant research activities. Chemists and historians do not need to take into the consideration the particularity of their discipline, they do not have to justify and elucidate their work and do not even need to be familiar with the history of the domain of knowledge they cultivate. For example, one can successfully cultivate historical science without taking into account the history of historiography. On the other hand, it is impossible in my opinion to cultivate philosophy with no regard to its history. Likewise, any attempt to eliminate the metaphilosophical problems out of the philosophical scope of deliberation would result with the significant dispossession of the philosophical tradition, the philosophers would be deprived of the traditional area of thought as well as, as far as I can see, lacking any kind of foundation.

These remarks refer, both, to philosophy as a whole and its particular subdivisions or disciplines. Although this essay affects only the segment of the philosophy, it is a notable part of the particular importance for human life. This particular segment of the philosophy attempts to comprehend human practical involvement, commitment, and desire to change the world or to preserve some of its qualities. It stems from man's active attitude towards reality and the fact that human is a moral being that inhabits a community with a certain structure and order. To put it bluntly, I would like to take into consideration a metaphilosophical intuition associated with the question of the essence and objectives of the social philosophy. However, instead of raising the question of what social philosophy is, I will rather consider purpose and aspirations of the social philosophy.

The proposed answers emphasize the practical nature of this discipline, the social commitment of the philosophers (or, to put it broadly, the intellectuals) and the responsibility that lies on individuals considering the complex nature of the world of human affairs and actions. In this sense, the 'reconstruction' of the idea of social philosophy – a wording

that can be traced in the title above – is not merely an attempt to reinstate and clarify of what this discipline is. It is, in addition to it, an imperative and prerequisite for its reformulation or even reconstruction from the scratch, with an account for the consistent historical grounding. This is the first objective I would like to articulate here: an endeavor to expose two great dimensions of philosophical thought: metaphilosophy and praxis that together constitute the domain of social philosophy.

The second objective of this essay is an attempt to emphasize the significance of the history of philosophy with respect to the metaphilosophical studies. In a way, the history of philosophy is the most essential and the most tangible field of metaphilosophy, because it is embedded in the viable past. I strongly believe that the preliminary objective of the history of philosophy does not amount to producing the collection of the superfluous discarded ideas and surmounted views considered as a museum exhibits or as a catalogue of the great philosophers' notable quotes. The goal of the history of philosophy is to elucidate how the philosophy is recognized when it is questioned by the philosophers themselves. The questions and the issues raised are more remarkable here than the answers. The philosophical nature of these enquiries and problems lay in the fact that they don't make definitive and comprehensive decisions available, let alone explanatory systems. Taking into account two different approaches, two separate manners of understanding these philosophical questions distinguished by Nicolai Hartmann, I find the systematic reflection on issues that cannot be easily unravelled more appealing than the procedure of the structural approach, that compels the observance of the system resolutions. Systems fade away, questions and problems remain viable (Hartmann, 1955, pp. 1 – 3).

I would like to demonstrate this complementary relation between the metaphilosophy and the history of philosophy, departing from the example of the history of Russian philosophy. I am convinced that the reconstruction of the idea of social philosophy that I would like to propose coincides with certain, often explicitly expressed qualities of the Russian thought. It reveals the unique character of Russian philosophical thought, which, in turn, endeavours

to expose a practical dimension of philosophy. This thought no longer can be considered as an academic theory, quite conversely, it becomes an authentic effort taken to transform the world. The great number Russian philosophical investigators has always emphasized such merits of this field as anthropocentrism, criticism, social commitment, apprehension for the philosophy considered as a practical field, panmoralism (the domination of ethical reflection and urge to recognize the ethical criterion as a source of meaning and truth). These qualities coincide with the elements forming the idea of social philosophy proposed here. That is why the Russian philosophy will be considered as an exemplary illustration of the particular metaphilosophical concept. The practical life orientation of Russian philosophers is another example of the convergence between metaphilosophy and praxis.

The concept of social philosophy, that will be considered here, stems from the theoretical model of political gnosis, which has been originated by Eric Voegelin as a result of his historical and philosophical studies. However, it must be strongly marked at this point that this sketch will not take the account of the general views of this author and his reflection concerning the history of political thought, his criticism of modernity, his endeavor to unmask the political gnosis that the Western civilization crisis is enrooted in – the crisis initiated at the beginning of the modern era and presently encompassing more and more poignant form. I leave aside the views of Voegelin, one of the most insightful critics of the modernity, who was tremendously effective in exposing religious foundations and references to modern political doctrines and common ideologies. In a way, my effort can be considered as an axiological reversal of his concept. The issues that in Voegelin's view falsify the political gnosis, the issues that are described as the source of many devastating consequences, these issues express, in my terms, the positive aspects of social philosophy. Conversely to enquiring about dispassionate, detailed description of the world that imitates the model of scientific studies, the social philosophy presupposes that the social world is a human product, the effect of the collective work of people who are trying to change and improve it.

Voegelin himself would probably evaluate my views expressed above as a symptom of political gnosis in its purest form, as a false belief contaminated with such sins of modernity as activism, immanentism, anthropocentrism and criticism. However, at this point the particular conceptual structure formed by Voegelin is employed in my discourse with crude intention to illustrate the main features of the political gnosis that I will consider merely as a historic model. The particular elements of that model can be adapted and applied so as to reconstruct the idea of social philosophy (Voegelin, 1952). That is why, I will not include in my discussion the problem of the gnostic (in Voegelian sense of the word) character of modern social and political thought. What is more, I will not take into account the fundamental question of whether philosophy is a gnosis itself, or some other form of intellectual heresy.

Voegelin argues that each gnostic adherent (a follower of the false theology of citizenship) repudiates and rejects the existing world. It appears to me that equal merits might be allocated to entire social philosophy as a whole. This is because this domain stems from the belief that there is something fallacious about the collective existence. The social philosophy as a discipline originates as a diagnosis of the crisis that overwhelms the society. It is an agency through which this crisis is about to be understood and overcome. Pitirim Sorokin, the Russian co-founder of the American sociology, goes even as far as to emphasize that the greatest historiosophical visions and profound reflections upon social reality usually flourish in periods of war, disasters, major socio-cultural and economic crisis, or at times (or also immediately after such periods) when the former structures of life are disrupted (Sorokin, 1963, pp. 3 – 4). Perhaps this belief might refer as well to philosophy, as such. The philosophy originates from questions conveying uncertainty regarding the human existence. It emerged when mythological and religious explanatory schemes declined and human life and man's place in the world ceased to be evident. The new doubts, hesitations and fear were becoming more prevalent, contrary to the preceding confidence and common rules of conduct. To put it very plainly: when there's no ground to go astray, nothing happens (these are indeed

the notable Hegelian blank, empty, non-historicizable spaces) – everything proceeds on as in a rut, each single thing is arranged in the right place. There is no need to concern about it, deliberate and give consideration to the revealed circumstances, let alone re-establishing new meanings and discovering new truths. It is not until certain interference arises, a disturbance, a problem that alerts the affinity to think and explore new paths. This explains the creative potency of the crises which stimulate the philosophy, political thought, and art and promote the emergence of new great visions or alternative solutions.

It is proposed here, that the criticism (exposing the existing situation) and crisis closely converge together to combine unity. It is worth to recall, that both of these concepts are related etymologically, both stemming from the common Greek etymological root (Gr. word *Krino*: division, differentiation, distinction). Social philosophy is a critical reflection upon the situation that demands for adjustments and transformations. The main objective of social philosophy might be defined as exploring alternative ways in which the crisis (regardless of its nature) is to be overcome. To put it another way, social philosophy is the self-awareness of the crisis and critical deliberation upon the society – the society that at least throughout the last two centuries has been defined in the Western terms as declining. When there is no concern about the future of the political community, the political and social thought becomes banal and repetitive.

The second element that formulates the structure of the Gnostic thinking stems from the beliefs about the sources of the crisis. Voegelin argues that Gnostic adherents do not consider the criticized state of affairs as natural, nor as a consequence of the imperfect nature of man. The crisis is disarray in the world's order, which arise from peoples' actions. One must simply arrange the world differently to remove the evilness. The social philosophy attempts to reorganize the social world. However, it does not aspire to salvation of the humanity or even to the transformation of the society into one sound and sustainable structure. Human defects cannot be eliminated so that is why the institutions, laws, rules, actions and habits are of such a high im-

portance. Only as a result of the operative force, the conflicts in the community can be neutralized and diverging objectives unified (yet, never absolutely, only to the certain extent). The principles that synchronize the community should be prudently composed, so as to suit different individual tendencies and ambitions. It is not easy because people have different inclinations and different objectives. Nevertheless, in my view, the social philosophy takes as an assumption all those issues that Isaiah Berlin considered as pluralism of values. The social world is a field of collisions and conflicts that is why it is so vital to sustain the procedures and basic axiological principles acknowledging that the differences and complexities emerging from the human world are natural and enduring. This undertaking arise from the conviction that, in spite of those differences, one must live, communicate and interact together without losing a sense of solidarity. The conversion of the community does not amount to transforming people into angels, quite the reverse, it attempts to adjust the rules of coexistence. The political action aims at building such structures that bind community together without ruining the pluralism and without eliminating the sphere of freedom. Is it possible? The answer to this question is connected with the third element, considered by Voegelin as a component of the political gnosis.

He argues that the gnostic adherents believe they have a capacity to eliminate the evilness completely. The aspirations of the social philosophy are, of course, less elevated. The purpose of the social philosophy does not merely involve criticism, but also adjustment, as it is assumed that the corrective actions, even though they are difficult, are by the same token meaningful. The alleged strategy is confined to minimalism. It is not a universal happiness and prosperity for all, or even endeavor to maximize the subjective well-being of people who constitute the community. However, even a partial transformation, might contribute to make the existence less oppressive. The main objective is to strive for harmony between the private domain of freedom and the public realm of compromise and concessions. First of all, the principal point considered here is that the man is about to become not only the con-

scious and responsible, but also a critical agent involved in the social world.

Man is a social being, which means that they ought to consider the society and take others into account while performing their activities. The social philosophy is aiming to reflect the society not only as an existing fact (the social sciences as has always dealt with that issue with greater or lesser success), but also as an object of common concern and measures, as a product of human activities and aspirations.

Another element to be taken into account is the variability of the world. The order of things is ever altering. According to Voegelin, the political gnosis supplements this common-sense assertion with problematic belief that the balance of changes is positive, and that one day, the path of the evolutionary or revolutionary change will result in a perfect world -the world deprived of evil. As in the previous case, the social philosophy does not share this optimism, assigned to gnosis by the German-American scholar. What counts for the social philosophy is the conviction that the history is a sequence of the meaningful and profound changes (even if it is an accidental cause that appears to be their ultimate reason). I am deeply convinced that it is possible to identify a sort of progress in the history of the mankind, although the mere idea of the progress is a subject of everlasting disputes and refutations. The idea of progress has been a matter of harsh criticism since it has been originated during the classical period of Enlightenment, however, what matters for the social philosophy is chiefly a certain intuition associated with the idea of progress. It states that the history constitutes the alternating sequence through which people express their desire to improve their own destiny. It is simply a hope that one can live a better life, though such belief is regarded by many as utopia. Thoughts on freedom, equality, solidarity, the aspiration to have impact upon one's own life - all these desires are not meaningless - or else they wouldn't be an integral component of the human condition. Perhaps, all these matters can be eventually reduced to the desire for happiness. Be as it may, the social philosophy should not ignore that desire.

One of the basic goals of the social philosophy is to rethink the World as a better place, as well as to involve actively, in order to improve

the human condition. Full excellence and satisfaction of all requirements are not possible, but it is worth to strive to make one's lives enhanced and improved.

Is it possible? According to Voegelin the positive response to that question is crucial for the political gnosis. In his view, the gnostic adherent believes that changing the world and the order of things lies within the human capabilities, and in this case this faith goes even as far, so as to reach the idea of self-salvation. The social philosophy addresses this issue differently. It's not the salvation that is at stake, but the belief that people create the social world, belief that people take part in the historical process. Nothing and no one is to substitute them. The social philosophy puts forward that all the agencies, the social world is comprised of - the culture, the institutions, the values, the traditions, the laws, the constitutions of social life and so on - are the products of the people's efforts, since there is no other world for the human beings than the one that has been formed by themselves. The social philosophy, like philosophy in general, breaks with mystical and obscurant views, accepting as true the belief that people are dominated by some supreme powers. The social world is a correlate of human actions and renunciations. Since there is no other world than the human world, it is a culture that constitutes this world - the culture considered broadly - as everything that people create and learn.

The last point I would like to give emphasis to, concerns gnosis as such. Gnostic adherent assumes that any salutary transformation of the world or one's own life results from the possessed knowledge - the knowledge that might be labelled as absolute, both in terms of accuracy and its boundlessness. Again, one might notice some internal relationship between political gnosis, as it was defined by Voegelin, and philosophy, which stemmed from the efforts associated with knowledge that is characterized as certain and universal. Social philosophy is of course, an equivalent form of knowledge about the human world and the rules which govern it. However, similar to the corresponding philosophy in its classical form, the social philosophy has a dual nature: it is simultaneously knowledge and art, theory and practice, reflection and action. It is

an attempt to describe and to understand the social world. In this respect, this domain complies this task more efficiently, in my opinion, than so-called social or political sciences, distracted by details of the public debates and limiting their aspirations with media reports. The social philosophy shapes its theories as more convincing, precisely because of the second aspect of it: its normative or practical merits. This aspect reveals objectives, patterns, visions and human dreams about well-ordered society expressed in a systematic manner. Social philosophy is, both, a description and a dream, a theory and a persuasion.

This knowledge supplemented with utopia does not, of course, aspire to salvation. Despite the fact that it does not have any simple and political implications, it is still something more: a testimony that reflects the condition of human being, this strange creature willing to repair the world and enhance own fate.

Therefore, the reconstruction of the idea of the social philosophy, emphasizes the following elements: (i) a critical judgment of the contemporary society and its history, combined with the awareness regarding human flaws and deficiencies of the institutions formed by people. This awareness does not only convey the belief that the human world is not perfect, but also becomes a diagnosis of the upcoming or experienced crisis. (ii) the crisis can be overcome, because the crisis pertains to the formations created by people themselves. The forms constituting the human co-existence rather than sin or fate shape their lives. (iii) the flaws that become the source of the crisis are not absolute. One can refute them. Any structure can be modified, improved. The crisis can be avoided or overcome. The forms of human life reflected in legal norms and institutions ought to be altered. (iv) the amendments more or less successful constitute the human history. History is a continuous course of human efforts to improve their own lives. The excellence is not accessible to us, but one can improve various elements of common life. (v) no one is to substitute people in this task. History is a product of human creativity, or rather the combination of actions and renunciations of people. History is a representation of the consequences of human actions that lead to good or bad results. (vi) It must be studied and understood.

Knowledge is a central problem in the philosophy. However, this knowledge is associated with action. It is knowledge of the human that exists in the world, and above all that exists with others, together or separately. Philosophy is an art of life that penetrates life in urge to comprehend it and transform it. As a result, the knowledge becomes the wisdom.

Metaphilosophy lacking a historical foundation is empty and infertile. The investigation of the history of philosophy facilitates and revitalises reflection on its essence. For each of the above-mentioned structural elements of the idea of social philosophy, one is able to add a number of historical examples and enhancements. This would however entail one to write an entire, comprehensive book, rather than a short article. Therefore a concise example of Russian philosophical thought would allow me to demonstrate that such concepts of social philosophy are present in the history of philosophy, and even that they penetrate and determine the entire scope of the philosophical thinking. However, I would like to demonstrate that, due to my observation shared by numerous distinguished experts on Russian philosophy and Russian philosophers themselves, the distinctiveness of Russian philosophy is articulated precisely by the attitude that prevails in the model of social philosophy mentioned above. I also want to indicate that the objective of the history of philosophy is not just recovering the past and the telling the story of how different issues were once considered. The history brightens the philosophy from inside. It teaches not only what the philosophy has been, but above all what it is as such. It specifies the position in the culture that philosophy occupies or should occupy.

I would like to make few general comments on the specific nature of Russian philosophy as an illustration to more abstract speculations, presented above about the nature of social philosophy. The concept of Voegelin would be, on one hand, only a theoretical framework that enables to reconstruct the idea of the social philosophy, on the other hand, the departure point that can help to comprehend the concise history of Russian philosophical thought. First of all, there should be a strong emphasis put on the specific quality of Russian philosophers' attitude, the remarkable tendency to convergence

theory with practice, as well as a particular totality of philosophy, labelled by the Russians as *integrity* (rus. *cel'nost'*). Philosophy is not limited to the realm of academic teaching and abstract considerations detached from tangible matters. The philosophy is considered as a vital element of the practical life. The philosophy is bound to understand life which cannot be encapsulated in sophisticated treatises. The philosophy is a measure to change life, to make it better or more bearable. That attitude can be easily traced as common when studying Russian philosophers' pursuits to explore more practice-oriented ways of literary expression, in art criticism or political pamphlets.

Andrzej Walicki, one of the greatest contemporary experts in Russian philosophy, has always emphasizes the practical and human-oriented character of the Russian philosophical thought. We might go even as far as to regard it as a "blend" of philosophy and social thought, which principally results in philosophical concern about man and his action in the society. The Russian philosophy is dominated by questions about man's fate in history, ideals and objectives of the historical development, the perfect model of the society and, last but not least, the destiny of Russia and its purpose in the world. The historiosophy is strongly fused here with ethics. In addition, this tendency is usually supplemented by kind of a moral tension involving intensive absorption with practical and socio-political impact of philosophical ideas on the problem of the common existence (Walicki, 2015, pp. 20 – 22). The crucial mission of the philosophy cannot be reduced to a theoretical framework that reflects the world, but aims to occupy man with work that makes the transformation of the world and improvement of their own lives possible. This practical pathos appears in the Russian enlightenment and dominates throughout the nineteenth century. The social-orientation in philosophy is connected, not only with the subject of philosophical reflection, which finds man as a social and historical being as a central issue, but also, if not primarily, with a specific understanding of the social engagement of philosophy, social commitment of the philosopher and even moral duties that go along with this occupation.

The philosophy in Russia is not an academic science, detached from everyday life, concerned with specific problems and employing esoteric language. Philosophy, like an art, is a social service that cannot be separated from other spheres of life and should be involved in enhancing the world. One must be aware that this belief has also dominated Russian literature, at least starting with Nikolai Gogol. But it must be remembered that the great examples of the Russian literature of the nineteenth century – Gogol, Turgenev, Dostoyevsky, Leskov, and Tolstoy – cannot be just considered as a manifestation of the social service principles, but they contain as well a powerful dose of a philosophical reflection. One could even argue that, at the particular period, it was a literature and literal criticism that took over the assignments of philosophy. This phenomenon had its origin in the weakness of the academic philosophy as such, as well as in the unfavourable attitude of the Russian authorities towards philosophy, after 1848. Today, no one doubts about the philosophical nature of the literary works of such giants as Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy. And they were not an exception. By the same token, the Russian literary criticism since Vissarion Belinsky (the peer of Gogol) can be described as a great sample of philosophical thought. Such important figures from the history of Russian philosophy as Belinsky, Nicholas Chernyshevsky, Nicholas Dobroliubov, Apollon Grigoriev, and Dmitri Pisarev – were all literary critics and not professional philosophers. The non-academic nature of the Russian philosophy and its profound connection with literature are the most convincing indications of its practical nature and social alignment.

The extraordinary pathos and moral subordination of entire philosophy to ethics are the central qualities of Russian philosophy. As noted by Nikolay Lossky, one of the most important Russian philosophers of the twentieth century, Russian philosophers, even when involved in the remote branches of philosophy, never lose the account of the moral issues conveyed. The ethical reflection and awareness of the moral responsibilities that philosophy must satisfy encompass even the most abstract metaphysical speculations or research in the theory of knowledge. In this context, Lossky evokes the wording that derives from dissertation of

the professor's exam of another Russian philosopher, Vasyly Zenkovsky. Zenkovsky argued: "The ethical endeavours are of the particular importance when it is the dialectics of Russian philosophical research involved. Even radical positivists and naturalists cultivate ethics as an independent or even principally predominant orientation. The primacy of ethics can be apparently singled out in Herzen's works even more evidently it might be traced in the writings of Lavrov and Mikhaylovsky, Tolstoy and the like. The ethical personalism to this day is the most distinctive achievement of the Russian thought" (quoted after Lossky, 1994, p. 440). One might only add here that this ethical dominant the Russian philosophical personalism entails: anthropocentrism, and moralistic maximalism of the religious (the idea of theosis and the idea of the Kingdom of God) or immanentist and anti-religious (utopia of a perfect society character) nature.

Both thinkers cited above - Lossky and Zenkovsky - were authors of the most prominent synthesis of the history of Russian philosophy written by these eminent philosophers in the twentieth century, in the realm of pre-revolutionary Russia or inspired by the emigration circles. In this sense, their assertions do not only have a value of the historical hypotheses, but are also an illustration of their own philosophical attitude. This interpretation is clearly emerging as a testimonial of those who are absorbed into the historical process. It is an attempt to understand and describe the philosophy taking the pure practice as an internal reference point that is categorised as a mere activity and does not presuppose any historiographical distance. Zenkovsky indicates anthropocentrism as a central feature of Russian philosophy. And here as well, one can differentiate the strong connection between Russian philosophy and the idea of social philosophy described above: "The Russian philosophy is not theocentric (although many of its advocates are profoundly and truly religious) nor cosmocentric (although the problems of natural philosophy prompted the attention of Russian philosophers since its initial phase) - it is mostly captivated by the problem of man, their destiny and their ways [in the world] as well as with the meaning and purpose of the history as such" (Zenkovsky, 1991, p. 16).

However, this anthropocentrism, has a special character. The man is considered as a centre of the philosophical reflection, being primarily a moral being, operating in the world, striving to realize their goals and values, changing the world and being held responsible for all these prerogatives. Anthropocentrism is defined as a domination of practical philosophy and moral orientation that can be reflected even in the most abstract ontological and epistemological studies (in this regard Zenkovsky's and Lossky's views are coherent). According to Zenkovsky, "panmoralism" is a fundamental quality of the Russian philosophy. Apparently, the domination of ethics and moral values orientation take different shades. It is on the one hand, the orthodox and expressed explicitly Tolstoy's panmoralism that acknowledges the virtuous man living here and now as the highest value and considers Christianity as an immanent expression of morality, on the other hand, it is a hidden panmoralism, latent, pervading works and speeches that have at first glance nothing to do with morality and ethics as a philosophical discipline.

Due to Zenkovsky, the Anthropocentrism in Russian philosophy results with an additional, essential implication: it is absorbed with social issues and raises a particular awareness to the historiosophical concerns. Russian idea - says Zenkovsky - is almost completely absorbed with the historical studies, especially when considering its inevitable and immediate decline (Zenkovsky, 1991, p. 16). Social issues draw the philosophy towards current and political problems, while the classical and conventional issues, cultivated by the *philosophia perennis*, cease to be equally appreciated. The historiosophy that, on the contrary, converts to the religious or secular apocalyptic teaching has a specific maximalist and nihilistic spirit. These merits, in my opinion, can be viewed as deficiencies affecting the academic philosophy, encapsulated in the ivory towers. Perhaps the benefits of a philosophy, that avoids abstract and technical speculations of metaphysics and gnosiology, are what is more essential for the society.

The Russian neokantist, Boris Yakovenko (whose works were contemporary to the above mentioned authors) concluded in his work, intellectually inspired by Tomas Masaryk (and

the financial support of the government of Czechoslovakia), that this attention to practical issues, such as life and social activity, is standard for all the nations at the initial phase of the philosophical formation (this idea greatly reflects the unity of the Slavic philosophy in the nineteenth century) and periods when the processes of socio-cultural and political transformation can be observed. The philosophy is exposed then via journalism and literature striving to understand and explain the progressions taking place (Jakovenko, 1938). Consequently, it can be labelled as "Gnostic" correspondingly to the social philosophy. It is assumed that one can change the world as long as they are able to apprehend it and assuming that this apprehension is possible by means of active being in the world.

However, Jakovenko is more reserved than Lossky and Zenkovsky when attempting to describe the peculiarity of Russian philosophy. He does not consider practical and moral orientation as an inherent Russian quality, but as a permanent component that shapes the philosophy in various countries. This author even argues that Russian philosophy is deficient in traditions and exceptional merits of a general nature. According to him, so far (the 30s of the twentieth century), there had been no principal, universal and stimulating idea developed in Russia, which would be an expression of a Russian spirit and that at the same time would give rise to self-apprehension. There is no such thing as a Russian genre of philosophy likely to be recognized as harmoniously developing a whole (Jakovenko, 1938).

In my opinion, Yakovenko's assumptions are too harsh and too critical. Throughout his historical research Yakovenko himself seems to depart from his own conclusions. In fact, while studying his work, it is difficult to identify any arguments that would visibly falsify my hypothesis. In addition to it, the contemporary approaches emphasizing pragmatism, anthropocentrism, activism and moralism as singular features of Russian philosophy are remarkably recurring. I will recall one example here: the academic textbook published recently (2005). The authors highlight the passion for a man as a specific feature of Russian philosophy – man explored beyond one's own internal domain and considered rather as a component of hu-

man society or a creator and recipient of the culture. These issues are to be found mostly in the context of the historiosophical considerations, addressing both the problem of Russian and the whole world's history. All these domains of philosophical reflection – the anthropological, social, cultural and the historical one – are recognized as taking the perspective of morality, as a reference point (Maslin-Zotova, 2005, p. 6).

The abovementioned distinctive component of Russian philosophy, the human being issue, presupposes that is an existence of a man, rather than their essence, to be taken into account. That gives the Russian philosophy the genuine focus on the practical and social issues. As a philosophy cantered on human life, the Russian philosophy has always managed to avoid scholastic and abstract speculations. The theory, the intangible structural considerations are treated with reserve. It is more a philosophy of innovation and commitment – a philosophy that wants to create and build – either the earthly "crystal palaces" as in the case of Chernyshevsky's utopia, or the God's Kingdom (Maslin-Zotova, 2005, p. 6).

Is therefore Boris Yakovenko accurate, when claiming that there is no single common idea that illustrates the spirit of Russian philosophy? In my view, this statement is too strong, as evidenced above. The scepticism of the Russian philosopher is justified when limited to the Russian academic philosophy. But at this field it is difficult to presuppose any spectacular uniqueness. Russian philosophy, especially the academic one, was created in due with the European standards and involves nothing extraordinary or anything that might undermine the value of Russian philosophizing as such. In my opinion, the philosophy in Russia constitutes a part of the universal philosophical discourse. It is a component of the Western philosophy, comparably to the philosophy in Poland and Slovakia. The mutual inspiration, the influence of the ideas, the enhancement of the theories and methods originated in other countries is a standard practice in science and this might be applied to philosophy as well. The uniqueness of Russian philosophy is rooted in something else – in its practical attitude as well as in the awareness to the social, historical and ethical issues. The

sphere of such interests is inescapably more local and historically and culturally biased than the theoretical and abstract investigations, prevalent at the field of ontology or epistemology. Yakovenko himself redefines the identity of Russian philosophy not as something that has been achieved and completed, but as a task apt to be attained by the Russian philosophy. The Russian neokantist believes that the specific assignment of the Russian philosophy might be defined as a pursuit to overcome the fundamental contradictions that Western philosophy encounters on each single step. Russian philosophy eager to formulate the final solutions as well as the actual synthesis of the contradictory views of the European thought.

In my opinion, this view must be revised. This synthesis, to which Russian philosophy aims, is, to put it in Kantian terms, an ultimate objective unattainable and unreal as such, though it constitutes a horizon of human efforts and aspirations, the efforts and aspirations of Russian philosophers in this particular case. Contrary to Yakovenko, I would attribute the values of Russian thought and the objectives it is involved with elsewhere. It is not a synthesis, but a collision of contradictions, problems tackled and studies considering the excessive solutions. This is why, precedent to the emergence of notable Vladimir Soloviev that is until the second half of the nineteenth century, there was actually no complete philosophical systems developed in Russia. However there was a systematic and profound discussion carried with respect to the social, moral and political issues. Questions that have been raised regarded Russia and its place in Europe, the European constituents of its culture and its historical destiny. These questions and problems comprised (and partly still comprise) a unique character of the Russian thought. On the other hand, the assumed unity and integrity, is principally addressing the steady convergence of theory and practice, attempting to consider philosophy and human life as coherent issues. This applies both to the public activity performed in the historical domain as well as to the integrity of man's powers and capacities to apprehend and act. It is precisely why these two ideal types described above – the social philosophy and the Russian thought soundly combine together.

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