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## Gustav Teichmuller, a German-born Founder of Russian Personalism

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*The article gives a portrait of one of the little-known philosophers – Gustav Teichmuller, German by ancestry, and Russian for the role he played in the development of Russian philosophy. It shows that the most important life events, the flowering of his intellectual activities took place while staying in Russia; here occurs the final formation of his system of philosophical personalism that later had an influence on many representatives of Russian philosophy.*

*Keywords: russian philosophy, G. Teichmuller, being, person, personalism.*

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**Introduction.** In Russian history there are a lot of foreign names: Russian French, Russian Germans, Russian Italians. Having brought the seeds of European civilization to the Russian soil, they contributed to the development and prosperity of the country. One of these Russian Germans was a philosopher of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Gustav Teichmuller. Famous experts on Russian philosophy do not write much about him. N.O. Lossky gives only a passing mention to Teichmuller: “The system of Kozlov is close to the system of Leibniz’s follower Teichmuller (Teichmüller) (1832-1888) who was at one time a professor of the Dorpat University” (Lossky, 1991, p. 306). V.V. Zenkovsky devotes some more attention to Teichmuller. Reporting the same thing he adds that Teichmuller who entirely belonged to the German philosophy had the “direct influence on two students – E. A. Bobrov (1867-1933) and J.F. Ohse (1860-1919) who

have written, however, nothing significant (Zenkovsky, 1991, p.176).

So, who was professor Teichmuller to Russia? Was he the invited “entirely German” popularizer of Leibniz’s monadology and Lotze’s personalism? But many Russian personalists considered his ideas quite independent, included them in the rank of the outstanding (A.A. Kozlov, 1894, p. 524). What this German thinker managed to sow in the minds of Russian philosophers? Or more precisely, what made his ideas to be in tune with the Russian frame of mind in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century?

**Biography.** Gustav Avgustovich Teichmuller was born in Braunschweig on the 19<sup>th</sup> of November, 1832, in the family of a lieutenant of the Prussian army. He received classical education at the local gymnasium and even at school took an interest in philosophy, especially aesthetics. From 1852 he studied philosophy at

the University of Berlin under the supervision of professor Trendelenburg, a well-known specialist in ancient philosophy. For some time Teichmuller studied at Tübingen University where he enriched his knowledge of philosophy, natural science and classical philology.

In 1856, in the city of Halle he got his Ph.D. degree for his research paper “Aristotelische Einteilung der Verfassungsformen” (“Aristotle’s Classification of Forms of Government”). Being left destitute after his father’s death young scientist was employed by general Werther as a resident tutor. Within a year general was appointed as a German ambassador in St. Petersburg. Together with Werther Teichmuller came to Russia where after two years he left his job as a tutor and got a Greek and German language teacher position at the school at St. Anne’s Lutheran church in St. Petersburg. Teichmuller got married in the Russian capital. In 1860 he returned to Germany and obtained employment as Privatdozent at the University of Göttingen where he made friends with H. Lotze, the personalist-philosopher, and G. Ritter, the famous historian of philosophy.

Teichmuller’s first wife, to whom he was tenderly devoted, died in 1862. Struck by her death Teichmuller took on a long journey through Europe and the Eastern countries, which lasted for about one year and a half. He visited France, Spain, Greece, Italy, North Africa, Palestine and Asia Minor. On his return to Göttingen he resumed his teaching and in 1867 got a title of Professor Extraordinary. In autumn of the next year he was invited to take the same position at the University of Basel, where he was elected as Dean of the Department of Philosophy in 1870. In Basel he made numerous philosophical and social acquaintances. Teichmuller always looked back on this life path period of his as the most pleasant one.

In April, 1871, Teichmuller was invited to the Department of Philosophy at the University

of Dorpat, later the University of Yuryev (now the University of Tartu). Seventeen years till his death Teichmuller stayed in Dorpat. The University of Dorpat, based on the report of curator von Bradke to the Minister of Education, unlike other universities had a fairly conservative attitude towards politics. In terms of science, as it was stated in the report, the university did not fall behind any of the foreign universities, except the University of Berlin (E. V. Petukhov, p. 24). A forty-year-old professor arrived at such a reputable and respectable university and occupied the post of the Head of the Department of Philosophy and Education after the death of his predecessor Ludwig Heinrich Strumpell (1845-1870). Based upon certain cases of special investigations, the attitude towards foreign professorate of the “Baltic majority” was not always adequate (E. V. Petukhov, 1906, p. 59-60). Presumably, the newly arrived professor also happened to experience certain prejudice on the part of his colleagues of Baltic origin.

As a professor in ordinary, Teichmuller delivered the courses lectures in logics, history of philosophy, aesthetics, philosophy of religion, philosophy of history, pedagogy and history of pedagogy. He gave lectures in his native language because most of the students of the University of Dorpat (the University of Yuryev from 1893) came from Estland. The number of Russian students was one third as much as the number of Jewish and Polish ones; there were only two or three of them in the whole class. They had to study German at the University, mostly from the same teachers’ lectures. The disciplines at the University of Yuryev started being taught in Russian language no sooner than in 1893. It is also then when Russian started to drive German out of academic communication of the teachers themselves, particularly during thesis defenses.

Teichmuller did not live to see all of these changes. Although he did speak Russian,

having learnt it to a rather decent extent in St. Petersburg, he neither used it in teaching, nor in writing research papers. Judging by opinion of E. A. Bobrov, Teichmuller's lectures excelled at strict substantiation, sharpness of thought and excellent style. Imposing his students with complex philosophical questions he could show the solutions to them lucidly using the examples from life and art. The fact that Teichmuller was requested to deliver a commencement address at the university in 1876, speaks of the high scholastic authority of his. The theme of this address "Darwinism and philosophy" Teichmuller chose by himself. Such choice was determined by scientific discussions that the philosopher had with his close friend, naturalist K. E. Baer, who took a bow here in Dorpat. Teichmuller's personal traits played a substantial part in establishing contacts with the students and staff of the University of Dorpat. One of his closest students characterizes him as follows: "It was a man who has suffered lots of evil and injustices in his life while never having done wrong or done harm to anyone. Empathetic, he spent lots of money to help indigent students. He was a skilled and influential speaker and teacher, a kind and patient mentor." (E. A. Bobrov, 1985, p. 200)

The new-comer professor who possessed such extraordinary qualities quickly gathered a circle of fellow-thinkers among his students around him. The best known ones are E. A. Bobrov and W. F. Lutoslawski who both got their master's degrees (the first one in 1881, the second – in 1887) for writing research papers evidently resembling Teichmuller's ideas. J. F. Ohse was also one of his students; he defended his doctoral thesis on philosophy of Lotze in the last year of his research advisor's life. After his teacher's death he was chairing the department from 1889 to 1893. Gustav Teichmuller died on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May, 1888.

**Review of works.** Teichmuller's creative work makes about 20 volumes, not counting small articles and reviews in periodicals. Literary work of Teichmuller is divided into three periods. His first works issued in Germany before coming to Dorpat are entirely faithful to the traditions of Trendelenburg and devoted to Aristotle. Teichmuller did not seem to think of becoming a system philosopher and did not claim for any conceptuality. Only in Dorpat there appeared his original works. There began the second and far more fruitful stage in his work. As he himself said jokingly, absence of entertaining society that could detract him from the scientific work made him a thinker and writer against his will. First of all Teichmuller expanded the area of his study on the history of philosophy to investigation of pre-Socratics and Plato. By analyzing the Greek originals he recreated the philosophy of Anaximander and Heraclitus. Teichmuller succeeded in writing the history of philosophy without any scholasticism easily and naturally not only because of his writing talent, but first of all due to his deep knowledge of ancient, patristic and modern philosophy. Already in this period in the historical and philosophical studies of the philosopher there appears peculiar "teichmuller" categorical apparatus (the concept of "projectivism", "personalization" etc.).

In the late 70's Teichmuller moves to the systematic exposition of his views, firstly, on particular philosophical problems. Thus, the works "Emancipation of Women" (1877), "The Essence of Love" (1880), "Pedagogic" (1881), "The Immortality of the Soul" (1884) is not the presentation of the system, but its sketches. The central work, the work of his life, that brought recognition and fame to the philosopher was "The Real and the Apparent World. A New Foundation of Metaphysics" (German edition in 1882, Russian translation in 1913). This is a whole encyclopedic work expressing the author's

philosophical credo. After that he published his “Philosophy of Religion” (1886) and prepared for publication “New Foundation of Psychology and Logic” (published in 1889 after the death of the author). During the last years of life Teichmuller was working on the extensive work “Theologic” or philosophical doctrine of God. This task he could not fulfill.

In general, the philosophical system of Teichmuller is integral and consistent. It is rather difficult to perceive it, as it is expressed in very specific terms. Besides, Teichmuller’s personalism rests on a solid critical basis of analyzing the history of philosophy. In many cases Teichmuller distracts to the objections to the predecessors explaining the causes and consequences of wrong views, which also complicates reading his texts.

**Attitude to the prior philosophy.** As the basis of philosophical systems’ division Teichmuller uses “being” – the basic concept of his philosophy. He divides all the variety of philosophical systems into four areas: materialism, idealism, positivism and Leibnizianity. Materialism, in his opinion, randomly projects human existence outside and believes in the independent existence of empirical objects without valid reason. Therefore, according to Teichmuller, materialism cannot claim to be a scientific philosophy. To materialism, or rather to its “fun”, he refers Darwin’s naturalistic ideas (G. Teichmuller, 1894, pp. 25, 31). To materialism Teichmuller also refers positivism that represents the world in the form of phenomena not corresponding to any real substance (substantiality). More sharply and frequently Teichmuller criticizes idealism for substantialising the ideas or concepts emerging in experience, and for impotence to explain individual existence. To idealism Teichmuller also refers Spinoza’s doctrine, the main theoretical defect of which he sees in the failure to explain how an unextended thinking substance can

conclude anything about the extended matter, not being included in its being.

The fourth direction in philosophy highly estimated by Teichmuller, is connected with Leibniz’s idea that the world is a multitude of individual substances or monads that according to the principle of spiritual existence are homogeneous with human beings. This universal panpsychism simply charms Teichmuller. He notes enthusiastically that the only true solution, in his opinion, is Leibniz’s solving of the problem of space and time: monads are spaceless and timeless, space is only a phenomenon, extended substance is something illusory. Only reality can be attributed to our soul or to something analogous to it. Acknowledging these principles as the starting points of his metaphysics, Teichmuller thoroughly criticizes Leibniz’s philosophy. In particular, it excludes interaction of monads because of their closed nature (“monads have no windows”); he marks the preestablished harmony as a weak point. Teichmuller sees the main drawback of the system in the absence of any satisfactory definition of being.

**The concept of “being”.** Doctrine of being is the basis, the alpha and omega of Teichmuller’s philosophy. Having thoroughly examined the history of the concept, he came to the conclusion that from ancient times philosophers “very much neglected” the definition of the being-concept (G. Teichmuller, 1913, p. 28-35). The philosopher denotes falseness of a widespread admission of the reality of outer extensional things and shows that this admission rests on the naive human and animal projectivism of their own mental activity products outside. He also challenges the ideas of Fichte and Lotze that the concept of being can be drawn from one of the mental activities such as thinking. According to Teichmuller, the source of the concept of being can be found only in “intellectual intuition” that is raw consciousness of the perceptive and the active “self” at the

same time. It is the only thing our experience directly provides us with. The concept of being is represented differently on its maturity stages: in a child, who does not yet talk, it is vague like that of an animal; it reveals itself quite plainly as language acquires ideas and opinions, and finally it can be discerned by a reflective philosophical mind.

Teichmuller states that every opinion contains elements of being. The example he used to illustrate this: “I see a green field” gives us three plain correlative components of being. “I” defines a simple act of consciousness; “see” reflects the sense of our actions and states, and “green field” is all the perceptions and feelings are contained in our activity. “We can only *guess* the being of all the other things; we are *directly* aware of our own being only, and *this very knowledge about ourselves, about our activities and their contents, is all that we mean by being, and there is no other source of cognition of this concept.*” (G. Teichmuller, 1913, p. 100, author’s italics – G. R.).

So being is the act of consciousness and consists of three fields: activities (or “the real being” in his terminology) in the first place, any kind of content (“the ideal being”) in the second place, and substances (or “the substantial being” as he called it) in the third place. Having analyzed all the components of being, Teichmuller came to a conclusion that the substantial being (substance) is the fundamental type. It can be found in our own personal consciousness and is defined as “self” that acts as a basis for the unity of activities and their contents. This “self” sees, hears and analyzes its perceptions, “always stays consistent and identical in all the things, thus going beyond time and space” (G. Teichmuller, 1913, p. 94). All the other “selves” are identical with each another by means of existence; they differ only by means of quantity, according to the appearance of their peculiarities. The main feature

of Teichmuller’s personalism takes roots in the theory of “the substantial self” that is defined as a crucial component of being. The idea that is to become the pole one in Russian personalism that “personality and individuality is not one and the same thing” is yet without a distinct category though is already explicitly discernable. Personality is the essence of individuality in its being, a cornerstone of individual existence. This idea appeared in works of neither Leibniz, nor Lotze.

There is another important problem left for Teichmuller: how come is our being penetrated by being of other substances? Leibniz solves it assuming that there is a wonderfully arranged by God ideal connection of our states with the states of other monads of the world that defines every single of them as a mirror of the universe. Teichmuller searches for another explanation and finds it in the application of the law of causality applied by analogy to the being of lots of other creatures. “That is why, if we have to think of some other essence beside “self”, we can make it up only by a model of “self”. These other “selves” for us are like “you” or “he, she, it” altogether with their activities and contents, they also form a “substantial unity” that correlates with our “self”. Like us, they are supersubstantial, consistent and spaceless. “Self” can comprehend itself as a single only then when it has found “you” as the second “I”... “I” and “you” are correlative, and one cannot be imagined without another” (G. Teichmuller, 1913, p. 159).

Up to this point Teichmuller is quite logical and convincing. But when he decided to extravagate from individual being, he had no choice but to jump. Just as Augustine, and later Descartes, stated: “I think, therefore I am”, he forgets to add the main thing: “I am in thinking”. All the rest, even the being of our own physical essence – as Teichmuller’s case

has shown – cannot be derived deductively based on introspective point of view. It is up to either solipsism or a rupture in rational reasoning. In an attempt to avoid solipsism Teichmuller sacrifices reasoning and takes on a stance that he discarded as a philosophical approach – belief.

The specific of Teichmuller's "substanciology" is similar to Leibniz's monadology. Substances are distinguished by the way of being and the abilities of cognition. Self-cognition (or self-consciousness according to Teichmuller) makes cognition of other substances possible. The components of being are kind of entwined with a mark or a hint of what is available to thinking substances from their individual consciousnesses and of how everybody augments images, ideas, opinions and conclusions about other indigenous substances, since every one of them is, as a matter of fact, a self-contained substantial "self". Individual forms of being are subject to the supreme substance – God who for one is a nondeterministic, absolutely free Creature possessing in its entirety the knowledge of Self and all the other substances. God is the one, who determines the kind of being of every single substance.

**A system of substance, space and time.** Everything else in Teichmuller's philosophy – a system of space and time, movement and causality – derived from his concept of being and did not play a crucial part in the development of ideas of his followers. Teichmuller sorts these problems out to the field of phenomenology asserting that time and space are not substantial and do not exist on their own outside of being, as well as that they are not kinds of activity, as such activity belongs to the thinking substances only. Unlike Kant, he shows that the ideas of time and space do not originally belong to people; they are not inherent and develop gradually in the process of character building. According to Teichmuller, time and space likewise cause-and-effect

relationships are spatial forms of arrangement for ideal content that emerge as a consequence of our activities. Similarly, the movement is no more than the alteration of visual and tactile-muscular activity when comparing images that arise in consciousness of a subject that is untimely and identical to its own "self".

Thus, Teichmuller's world of metaphysic is a variety of eternal, spaceless and timeless substances (essences) that to a varying degree *reflect* nature and qualities of a consistent, pervasive supreme Substance.

**A doctrine of an individual, personality and society.** The concept of personality as an individual manifestation of human being is touched upon briefly in the writings of Teichmuller, likewise in the works of other early Russian personalists (A.A. Kozlov, L.M. Lopatin, and N.O. Lossky) – for the most part it is absorbed in the concept of substance. Emphasizing self-sufficiency and isolation of each several substance they reproduced the basic principle of Leibniz's philosophy: the principium of all is not general, but single, individual. Teichmuller adds one more thing to this: individual being depends on "self" that is the spiritual center of all in itself. Concerning human relations it meant that personality was recognized of infinite value, as opposed to society being a soulless conglomerate. Teichmuller wrote: "Humanity consists of single, individual souls, every one of which comprises a peculiar substance with its own center". "One should search for sublime destination of human efforts in science, art and love that can be sustained in an individual soul only, in a personality, which thinks, creates and acts" (G. Teichmuller, 1895, pp. 153, 159). For Russia of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with all its political and spiritual impersonalism it sounded like a revelation.

**Conclusion.** Later on, philosophical pluralism of Teichmuller that he had chosen

voluntarily received recognition and further development not only among his closest students but also in existential personalism of N. Berdyaev and L. Shestov. They were not exactly the followers of Leibniz to the very letter, but in the spirit they shared the ideas of Leibniz's individualism and personalism of Teichmuller who raised a question: who is a human: a spawn,

an appendix of the world and society or a free, creative creature, a person? In the new school this antinomy was resolved in favor of superiority of personal human being manifestation. Gustav Teichmuller, the German thinker, who has left an imprint on Russian philosophy in general can be justifiably considered the forebear of this philosophical branch.

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## Густав Тейхмюллер – немецкий родоначальник русского персонализма

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*В статье дан портрет одного из малоизвестных философов – Густава Тейхмюллера, немецкого по происхождению, русского – по той роли, которую он сыграл в развитии философии России. Показано, что важнейшие жизненные события, расцвет его интеллектуальной деятельности происходят во время пребывания в России, здесь происходит окончательное формирование системы его философского персонализма, впоследствии повлиявшей на многих представителей русской философии.*

*Ключевые слова: русская философия, Г. Тейхмюллер, бытие, личность, персонализм.*

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