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Personalism in Russia

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The article deals with personalism – one of the Russian schools of thought which originated from the ideas of Leibniz’s follower Gustav Teichmüller and brought together many prominent Russian thinkers. This paper presents chronological and geographical framework of the expansion of personalism in Russia. It is shown that Russian personalism has undergone gradual changes from Leibniz’s philosophy to existential personalism that unravels the mystery of personality as the conceptual measure of human existence. In this form personalism has also found expression in Russian theology.

Keywords: Russian philosophy, personalism, being, substance, personality, theology.

Introduction. Russian philosophical studies have recently made much progress resulting in interesting publications on various Russian schools of thought. Existentialism, cosmism, symbolism, Imiaslavie – are the schools that are mostly represented in contemporary scientific works. But the study of Russian philosophical thought of the late XIX – early XX century would be incomplete without yet another school or rather ideological movement which is Russian personalism. Among its followers were, just to name a few, Nikolai Alexandrovich Berdyaev and Nikolay Onufriyevich Lossky – prominent thinkers, who are usually attributed to other philosophical schools: N.A. Berdyaev being viewed as an existentialist and N.O. Lossky – as an intuitionist. Nevertheless any philosopher would hardly fit in a comprehensive scheme of strict “party affiliation”. Certain elements of a thinker’s worldview can be attributed to various schools and movements only according to the way

this thinker tackles particular problems. As for N.A. Berdyaev and N.O. Lossky, in their writings we see that their more mature theories stemmed specifically from personalistic ideas.

Berdyaev and Lossky were not the only ones, who shared these personalistic notions of personal existence as the foundation of being. Among others were such notable Russian philosophers as Aleksey Alexandrovich Kozlov, Leo Mikhailovich Lopatin, Pyotr Evgenievich Astafyev, Sergei Alekseyevich Alekseev (Askoldov), etc. Many famous Russian scientists, artists and writers: Nikolai Vasilievich Bugaev, Nikolai Yakovlevich Grot, Lev Shestov, Sergei Nikolaevich Bulgakov, Vyacheslav Ivanov, Andrei Bely – had a similar leaning towards personalistic ideas. Personalism was a well-known and influential movement in Russian intellectual life which had its own printed newspapers and associations. Having existed in Russia for more than half a century and then having influenced the development of

the European philosophical thought personalistic ideas turned out to be quite relevant in the XX century.

The origins of personalism in Russia.

The German philosopher Gustav Teichmüller was the one to introduce personalism in Russia. He taught in the University of Göttingen, where he was friends with personalist philosopher H. Lotze. In 1871 Teichmüller was invited to teach at the University of Dorpat which was known by the name of Yuryev from 1893 to 1918 (currently the University of Tartu). A circle of disciples quickly gathered around the new professor. Teichmüller's ideas were propagated and developed by the members of his department: Evgeny Alexandrovich Bobrov, Vikenty Frantsovich Lutoslawski, Jakob Friedrichovich Ohse as well as their students. Thus emerged Yuryev school of thought, the proceedings of which, Teichmüller's writings for the most part, eventually became well-known in the Russian academia.

Teichmüller's basic idea is the concept of "substantial "self" as a determinant element of being of any substance (similar to Leibniz's monad). According to Teichmüller, the aspects of substantial being, viewed as a whole, shape the diverse being of the world. This distinction between "self" and self-being is the characteristic feature of Teichmüller's personalism. Though yet not fully expressed in categories, however quite traceable is the idea which became a guiding one in Russian personalism: "personality and individuality are not one and the same". N.A. Berdyaev would claim that personality is the very essence of individuality in its existence, the determinant center piece of individual existence. Neither Leibniz, nor Lotze, nor Kant had this idea. It was Teichmüller who for the first time ever introduced it to the world.

The origins of the name "personalism".

The notion of personality as well as the associated

notion of "personal being" is usually considered to be a bedrock of the whole concept of personalism. For this reason personalism is usually defined as a philosophical movement based on the living essence of personality as a principium of being. However neither Teichmüller, nor his followers had always called their school personalistic. Their ideas formerly went by other names. Teichmüller used to call his views "Leibniz's idealism" while E.A. Bobrov called his – "critical individualism". It was not until J.F. Ohse, who used the term "personalism". In his work "Personalism and projectivism in Lotze's metaphysics" he defined his views as "critical personalism". However, judging by the later publications, this work was much underestimated. The ideas of G. Teichmüller, the head of Yuryev school of thought, gained much more popularity. A.A. Kozlov thought of his version of Leibniz's philosophical doctrine as new blood in philosophy. His own view similar to the one of Teichmüller he called "panpsychism", thus emphasizing his basic idea of universal sensitivity of substances (monads).

Interestingly, L.M. Lopatin also used "non-personalistic" nominations of the new doctrine. He called his philosophy different names: in one instance – the system of specific spiritualism, in another – monistic spiritualism; in yet another case – "idealistic, spiritual theory". However the content of his ideas always stayed the same. In his search for the accurate nomination he tried to underline his main idea that the world is the multitude of animate inner active centers, each one representing the unity of substance and creative causality. Another follower of the ideas of A.A. Kozlov – N.V. Bugaev called his theory "evolutionary monadology". N.O. Lossky and S.A. Askoldov (Aleksseev) would rather associate themselves with intuitivism. As a matter of fact, it was not until the beginning of the XX century that Berdyaev started to use the term "personalism" on a regular basis.

Nevertheless, it is undisputable that the views of the abovementioned philosophers were interconnected and had the same roots. The main philosophical authority for all personalists of the early period was Leibniz. His philosophical doctrine is clearly felt in the attempts of Yuryev school philosophers, Kozlov and Bugaev to build a monadological model of the world. These elements of monadology were also adopted by Lopatin and Astafyev.

Leibniz's ideas are not so evident in the philosophies of Berdyaev and Askoldov, however the former is closely related to Lopatin's views on creative causality and freedom while the latter is clearly connected to the views of his father A.A. Kozlov. In their early works both S.A. Askoldov and N.O. Lossky would make reference to Kozlov's ideas about the panpsychic unity of the world, transformation (metamorphoses) of substances that subsequently embrace all the possible incarnations in their eternal growth. N.O. Lossky even dedicated one of his articles to the thorough coverage of the ideas of A.A. Kozlov. As for N.A. Berdyaev, suffice it to recall his theory of the Ungrund – the existential nothing which, according to the philosopher, precedes the Trinity and then influences all of its creative acts in the world, thus defining a measure of freedom in every living creature. What is it, if not Leibniz's philosophy?

So it is evident that the connection of related ideas which stemmed from Leibniz's philosophy of Teichmüller existed in Russia. Terminological variety of nominations of the doctrine should not be confusing in this case. The key point is the genetic and logical link between the ideas which grow one from another. And this is what characterizes a philosophical school or movement. Content-wise it was still personalism as an idea of primacy of personal being of all forms of existence, including human.

Chronological and geographical framework of the expansion of personalism in Russia. Initially the center of personalism was the University of Yuryev, where even after G. Teichmüller's death in 1889 his ideas were developed by his students under the guidance of J.F. Ohse. Moscow philosopher and writer A.A. Kozlov was the first one to adopt the views of the German philosopher in Central Russia. In 1880 he came across one of Teichmüller's writings which left him deeply impressed. In his article on Teichmüller Kozlov called him "a star of the first-magnitude" and encouraged Russian and European philosophers to learn from this "outstanding thinker, who remained in the shadow, particularly in our literature, for too long" (A.A. Kozlov, 1894, p. 523). He promoted his own belief system partially borrowed from Teichmüller both in oral discussions and on the pages of printed publications. Kozlov's ideas which he presented in such a fascinating manner became a sensation in highbrow Moscow. Teichmüller and Kozlov quickly gained followers among the professors in the University of Moscow – the philosophers L.M. Lopatin and P.E. Astafyev and the mathematician N.V. Bugaev.

In 1891 Kozlov moved with his family to Petersburg, where a small circle of philosophers including his son S.A. Alekseev (Askoldov), N.O. Lossky as well as many young intellectuals among the students of the University of Petersburg formed around him. Thus, Petersburg became another center of personalism. Pre-revolutionary Russia teemed with the ideas of human rights and freedoms. It was clear that these were the views of N.A. Berdyaev, D. Merezhkovsky and A. Bely – the new generation of liberal intelligentsia, essentially influenced by personalistic ideas.

By the end of the XIX century emerged yet another center of personalist movement – Kazan. In 1896 E.A. Bobrov, a lecturer in philosophy in the University of Yuryev, was invited to teach

at the University of Kazan. There he had been teaching various philosophical courses and actively publishing his writings on Teichmüller's ideas up to 1903, when he moved to Warsaw. On invitation of Victor Ivanovich Nesmelov he used to deliver lectures in Kazan theological academy. At that time its chancellor was a young archimandrite Anthony (Khrapovitsky). Both Nesmelov and Anthony Khrapovitsky were by then the followers of personalism.

Therefore by the end of the XIX century in Russia there were three established centers of personalistic philosophy: Moscow, St. Petersburg and Kazan. To that we should also add the whole Russian reading public, who approved of the new ideas and sentiments.

Printed publications of personalists in Russia. Like many other schools of the end of XIX – the beginning of XX century Russian personalism evolved around its printed newspapers. A.A. Kozlov published his journal "Philosophical trimonthly" (№ 1–4) which in fact was the first philosophical journal in Russia. Thereafter, when due to illness Kozlov could not prepare journal issues regularly, he published the journal "Svoe slovo" (№ 1–5) from 1888 to 1898. The centerpiece of this publication were "Conversations with the Petersburg Socrates" written in the shape of philosophical dialogues under the name of Platon Kaluzhsky. The main character of the dialogues who promoted the author's ideas was a certain Socrates s Peskov with the characters of Dostoevsky acting as his opponents.

L.M. Lopatin was the editor of the famous journal "The Issues Relevant to Philosophy and Psychology" for a good while. This journal with the articles of Lopatin himself as well as his associates was published from 1889 to 1918. Notable discussions, thorough reviews, comments upon the publications – all of these things helped to promote personalistic ideas in Russian

philosophical environment. L.M. Lopatin was a member of philosophical society at the University of Petersburg; he also was the head of Moscow psychological society. Kozlov's and Lopatin's ideas blended into one typical school of thought due to similar features were well-known to the reading public. This is evident in how often their names, views and publications were mentioned in the articles and reviews in other journals: "Living Life", "Europe's Journal", "Vek", "Theological Journal", etc.

The ideological content of Russian personalism. The central figure of early Russian personalism is considered to be A.A. Kozlov. He was the first one to succeed in creating a unique personalistic system and provide a valid review of practically all basic ideas of personalism. Owing to his masterful literary style he attracted everybody's attention to the issues of "Svoe slovo". Of an extrinsic value were "Conversations with the Petersburg Socrates" written in the shape of philosophical dialogues with the characters of Dostoevsky acting as their participants. In his "Conversations" Kozlov outlined his views to the fullest extent with special consideration to the basic concepts of panpsychism which were the concepts of substance and being. The concept of personality was however almost never mentioned. It was also poorly covered in the philosophy of L.M. Lopatin. Both he and Kozlov base their ontological theory on the concept of substance. Just as Leibniz they affirmed the existence of countless substances (monads) in the world. According to these philosophers, each substance is unique and inimitable while all of them as a whole comprise a holistic system, a hierarchy of substantial unity existing as a result of creative activity of the Absolute Substance – God. Perhaps, the reason why Russian personalism is so hard to identify is that the concept of personality is not emphasized on its early stages. So the upshot is that there is no person in personalism. But,

as a matter of fact, the presence or absence of a certain notion does not suggest identification with a certain school or movement.

First Russian personalists adopted the concept of personality as specific individual manifestation of being from the existing concept of substance. Kozlov interpreted substance as “permanent being versus volatile, independent versus dependent” (A.A. Kozlov, 1888, p. 7). In his judgement world is a multitude of various substances. L.M. Lopatin comes to a similar conclusion: “The world from any perspective is a coherent body or a system of independent things, creatures and also *forces* which determine being and the interconnection of events” (L.M. Lopatin, p. 29). Thus, constantly emphasizing the independency and isolation of each of many substances, in fact, they accurately reproduced the fundamental principle of Leibniz’s philosophy. He defined the first principle of creation being not universal but rather individual, the prototype of which is human personality. Consciously chosen philosophical pluralism of Leibniz may therefore be considered the basic principle of any personalism regardless of whether it involves the concept of personality or not. “Russian thinkers underlined two aspects in Leibniz’s philosophy – individualism and spiritualism”, although “theoretical, especially metaphysical individualism was not a dominant one in our philosophy of the 80-90-s. However, caused by our common thirst for individuality, it was still in demand, so quite a few Russian philosophers moved towards Leibniz’s individualism” (T. Rainov, p. 288).

Therefore at the bottom line of personalism lies recognition of various separate unique individualities including humans distinguished by their spiritual essence. The extent and form of expression of human spirituality affords ground for defining character and scale of a person. Such is the philosophical creed of personalism. Russian

personalism, to this extent, perfectly corresponds with the given determinant attributes. That is why we believe it is better to characterize personalism as a school of thought based on the ontological principle of multiplicity (pluralism) as well as the autonomy of all existential and substantial forms including human personality.

Stages and forms of personalism in Russia.

Apparently personalism can be tackled in two ways. One way is substantiation of the universal nature of individual “prapersonal” being in its most primitive forms. This way inevitably leads to ontological anthropomorphism – the transfer of characteristics of personal being onto everything existent in the world; this also involves personalization of non-personal world elements. This kind of personalism can be called metaphysical, in Aristotelian sense of this word, as a synonym of general theoretical knowledge. However, it lacks a thorough analysis of human existence, the personal and the social. That is why metaphysical personalists rarely addressed anthropological and sociological theories.

There is another way which leads to personalism. It involves enhanced studying of the expressions of free human personality as well as justification of the exceptional nature of its existence as a supreme value – the apex of creation. Personal existence is connected with the expression of individual qualities of a person. Their utmost growth, creative evolution of personality and world as a whole are viewed as a central task of every human. This kind of personalism is unalterably axiological and existential in nature. In fact it is existential, as human essence which is personality, according to personalists of this type, is a goal of human existence rather than something that is given. The concept of personality has a dominant value in this kind of personalism, while all the other categories such as “world”, “nature”, “society”, etc. are secondary.

According to such division we can point out two stages of development of Russian personalism. The first stage (and therefore the first type) is represented by G. Teichmüller and his followers as well as A.A. Kozlov, L.M. Lopatin, P.E. Astafyev, E.A. Bobrov and N.V. Bugaev. Their primary objective was to build a universal hierarchical world model as an organized multitude of isolated individual substances. Their philosophical doctrine stemmed from German personalism of H. Lotze and G. Teichmüller being, as everything German, thorough and precise. The basic philosophical categories such as “being”, “space”, “time”, etc. were analyzed scrupulously. Ponderous and notional structures far from the spiritual and social issues were raised on this solid foundation.

The second stage and type of personalism is linked to the existential ideas of N.A. Berdyaev and his followers. Berdyaev's thought that a personality being a carrier of inimitable existence is always richer than the world is the axiom of existential personalism. The second stage of Russian personalism was naturally focused on the needs of human existence. This type of personalism became popular and widespread in Europe. Through N.A. Berdyaev it became the source of French and the derivative English, Swiss and Arabic personalism as well as other personalistic schools of the XX century. Thus, Russian personalism linked the XIX and XX century movements and took a special place in the history of this school of philosophy.

Theological personalism. Another distinctive feature of Russian personalism is that it emerged on a religious ground and thus evidently tilted towards theological issues. The idea of Leibniz and Teichmüller that the world is controlled by the Supreme Substance – God became common for all Russian personalists. They viewed God as the most perfect, infinitely developed substance possessing all possible

excellences and absolute knowledge. God is the first principle of creation, the superior purpose which attracts all the spiritual substances. This argument reinforced by references from the Holy Scripture and patristic literature became much weightier among personalist philosophers of the XX century, so there was no longer a doubt of their affiliation to Christianity. This led to the fact that eventually personalistic philosophy with its range of problems and terminology started to be used in theological research.

Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky (while still being a hieromonk) was the first Russian theologian to address human personality in his master's thesis “Psychological evidence in favor of freedom of will and moral responsibility” (1887). In his work he gave a critical review of Fichte's, Kant's and Schopenhauer's ideas but was quite improving of the ones of H. Lotze. Anthony Khrapovitsky's main idea was based within the framework of personalism. Having created men in His image and likeness God bestowed upon them the ideal world, i.e. His thoughts. That is why the cognition of oneself and God means active penetration of “self” for any person. Finding God means accepting own personality. Khrapovitsky comes to an epistemological conclusion that “cognition is the process of objectification of our self-cognition and the conviction in its certainty” (Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), p. 60). Metropolitan Anthony's “Dynamic Epistemology” became the foundation of his personalistic anthropology of “moral monism”: a man has individual existence as a subject of moral deeds.

V.I. Nesmelov, a professor of philosophy at Kazan theological academy is considered to be a predecessor of Berdyaev's existentialism and personalism for a reason. N.A. Berdyaev thought very highly of him. “Nesmelov is a real phenomenon of Russian religious philosophy which originated at theological academies,

being altogether one of the most prominent religious thinkers" (Op. cit.: A. Zhuravsky, p.3). During his chancellorship at Kazan theological academy bishop Anthony Khrapovitsky praised Nesmelov at various times and also identified his theological system as "philosophical music". The content of V.I. Nesmelov's philosophical ideas was expressed in his two-volume work "The Science of Man" (first volume came out in 1898, the second – in 1903). The ultimate message of this work is that the truth of God's existence is revealed to a man only in a form of Supreme Personality, so man is also destined to be a personality. This divine call is given to men through the ability not only to create material world but above all to create themselves. Thus men gain the likeness of God.

V.N. Lossky, a famous XX century theologian, was also related to personalism. In his youth he was influenced by the ideas of his father N.O. Lossky. Besides V.N. Lossky sympathized and even revered certain works of N.A. Berdyaev. Just as Berdyaev he made a distinction between the notions of "individual" as reflecting the natural and "personality" as reflecting the supernatural in a man. "When we say "personality", "personal" we rather mean individual. We usually consider these two concepts to be almost synonymous. We equally use both of them to indicate one and the same thing. However, to a certain extent individual and personal mean quite the opposite. Individual means eternal fusion of personality and the elements inherent in nature as a whole, while personality, on the other hand, implies something different from nature" (V.N. Lossky, p. 92).

It means that personalistic philosophy in Russia left its imprint not only on secular but also religious literature. Owing to this Russian theology of the XX century was complemented with anthropological issues as well as the corresponding framework of categories:

"personality", "self-consciousness" and "creativity".

Conclusion. After the Revolution of 1917 most Russian personalists were forced to move abroad, where their ideas found a rather keen response and acknowledgment. These ideas certainly had an impact on European philosophical thought. For instance, N.A. Berdyaev played a major role in the shaping of French personalism. He was on friendly terms with Jacques Maritain, Emmanuel Mounier and other young French philosophers of the thirties also acting as their tutor. We can find evidence of his influence on the shaping of French personalist movement in his "Self-discovery": "Not just once have young representatives of this French movement professed how much they owe me" (N.A. Berdyaev, 1990, p. 260). Berdyaev attended the first-ever meeting of editors of "d'Esprit". In the first issue of this journal he published his article "The truth and lies of communism".

Unlike later French personalist movements Russian personalism never associated itself with Marxism and the ideas of social equality. In his article "Personalism and Marxism" he tried to warn the philosophers of "d'Esprit" from falling for the ideas of Marxism. He argued that "Marxism is anti-personalistic, totalitarian and deeply hostile to the concept of personality" (N.A. Berdyaev, 1935, p. 3). His own project of reorganization of society, the so called "personalistic socialism" which seemed hopelessly utopian in the thirties, was however successfully implemented in the social projects of Western civilization turning out as "Swedish" or "Swiss" socialism – a society in which personal rights are among the top priorities.

The fate of personalism in Russia was quite different. Individualism inherent in personalists and Leibniz's philosophy failed to strike root here. It was foreign both in pre- and post-revolutionary Russia and apparently still is nowadays. However

the West, where individualism had become the fundamental principle since Renaissance and Reformation, did accept, develop and implement many ideas of Russian personalism. The paradox

is that while Europe is now based on the principles of Russian personalism, Russia, being a country with vigorous personalistic tradition in theory, is far from it in practice.

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Персонализм в России

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Статья посвящена одной из школ русской философии, к которой принадлежали видные мыслители России, – персонализму, первоначально выросшему из лейбницевских идей Густава Тейхмюллера. Рассматривается хронология и география распространения персонализма в России. Показывается, что русский персонализм постепенно перешел от лейбницианства к экзистенциальному персонализму, раскрывающему тайну личности как смыслового мерила человеческого существования. В этой форме персонализм смог найти приложение и в русском богословии.

Ключевые слова: русская философия, персонализм, бытие, субстанция, личность, богословие.
