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## Perspectives of Social Philosophy

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*Understanding of the problems and perspectives of the Russian society does not fit into the traditional philosophical forms. The Russian culture confronts the task of constructing a social philosophy of a new type. This is what is discussed in this article.*

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Russian philosophy has always stressed its humanitarian orientation. However its concepts of humanism have always remained extremely vague. That is why its humanitarian orientation was also indistinct, and quite often just illusory.

In a post-perestroika period Russian philosophy (and social philosophy in particular) cannot any longer remain on a level of indistinct humanitarian concepts, humanistic slogans and myths. It is necessary to draw the ideas of man and people as close as possible to the reality of human relationships and social forms taking shape in these relationships.

However this is a very complicated task to a number of reasons.

The first of them – not in importance, but in order – is that the concept of sociality in general and of social philosophy in particular turns out to be ambiguous. Moreover in the process of a consistent analysis it proves both on a common-sense and on a theoretical level to be alien, even the opposite to the notions of humanitarianism,

individualism, personality, etc. Thus the concept of sociality appears rather not a means of concretization of the understanding of people, but an obstacle on this path.

There is only a seeming paradox in this situation. Behind the strange logics of the concepts there is real Russian history, in particular the history of the last seventy years, when the social forms were not only alienated from the living human individuals, but this quasiindependence of them was in itself interpreted as an expression of the unity of individual and group interests, as the focal point of the values of a just society.

Social philosophy must show society its reality, offer the people perspectives of activity. But to fulfil its duty it has to rethink the concept of sociality, till it with the Individuals human meaning. And this means it has to rethink its own sociality itself in the first place.

Let us pose a question: a non-social philosophy at all possible?

Of course, nowadays the majority of philosophic teachings do talk of man and the being of man in society in one way or another. But very few philosophic trends can say what particular man do they have in mind. And it's understandable. What can one tell a man about himself and his perspectives operating with abstract notions of history, humanism, society, sociality, etc.

This is particularly true of Russian philosophy, though it is not alone in this. It was invariably inattentive to the social being of real people, unprofessional in the analysis of their life forecasts. It is hugely responsible for the fact that the inhumane conditions of people's life and activity on the level of ideology and psychology were regarded as a noem.

### **Making even with past**

Clarification of Russian social philosophy's perspectives is of course closely connected with the analysis of its former illusions and delusions. And this analysis unlike the kitchen talks and the heated meeting debates should be, if possible, methodologically accurate. In this case there arises a situation of the social philosophy turning on social philosophy itself as a special cultural-historical subject. As a result of such a consideration the tendencies of practice, thinking, behaviour of people expressed directly or in a transformed way in social-philosophy patterns make take shape; social-philosophic dogmas and myths will stand out as stable links of the social being of people not overcast by separate figures and names, political campaigns and ideological «dislocations».

In the last years a dehumanized character of Russian social philosophy is a rule explained by subordination to Marxist ideology. To a certain it's true, and the problem lies exactly in acquiring in the means to measure up this extent.

First of all it is probably important to stress the responsiveness of Russian philosophy to some social ideas of Marxism. Then it is necessary to bear in mind that Marxism that had overmastered Russian social thought, was one the dogmatic versions of a complex and far from uniform set on Marx's ideas. It is necessary also to remember that the social teaching of Marx was most actively employed in Russia not in its theoretico-methodological, but in a politico-ideological part, that many complicated conceptual systems of Marx's research were interpreted and propaganded (including the education system) in extremely simplified and hackneyed forms: it was true of all the methodology of social analysis, of concepts of the social process periodization, of the notions of determinism, personality, social systematics, culture, etc.

Marx's methodology does employ the techniques of reduction of the individual being the people to abstract social forms (to cost, public forces reproduction, classes, groups, their relationships). In his work the meaning of these techniques is seen first of all in finding of the original logical carcasses for consideration of particular problems, in construction of the original ontologies, or in description of a situation which is purely economic, for example, the logic of things when it is possible and necessary to distract attention from the individual human content of the events and clarify the general outline of the process.

It is true that Marx himself had founded the tradition of incorrect use of his methodology, when in the course of a political polemic he operated by such reduced and simplified notions of the people's being. But that belongs to the history of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Our task today is to understand why the vulgarized Marxism happened to become an official ideology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Russia, why on the foreground a concept of abstract, dehumanized and deindividuated sociality was

firmly established, why is it in fact maintained until today (i.e until the 21<sup>st</sup> century) and what it is necessary to do understand its nature, to reason it out and overcome methodologically?

In the context of our reasoning it's good to remind of «forgetting» by the philosophy of bolshevism of all those aspects of the teaching of Marx, which reflected the nature of alienation of individuals from their social bonds, the antihumane nature of the socialized to the extent of a complete break from the individual being men of economics, production, state, ideology, science. Practically any work that tried to establish a pronounced connection of sociality with the individual being of the people, and even more so that had found that sociality – its life-giving and perverted forms – in the content of that being itself met with a hidden «inner-science» or an open, official and ideological opposition.

This organized «forgetfulness» (or lack of understanding) a number of important aspects of Marx's research, that went on in Soviet philosophy until the mid-eighties looked, especially in the West the works, using the techniques of Marx's methodology for characterization of the alienated forms of sociality, power, knowledge, culture were widely acknowledged(1)

Questions of this kind even if posed by Russian philosophers of a previous decade, never reached the pages of books and magazines on the territory of USSR. It was said: philosophers are silent (i.e. «if they were not, everything could be different).

Now these questions can be discussed anywhere without restrictions. But it does not mean at all that they are being answered in any way. We can repeat them. And will have to admit: Society still functions as if independently of the people, individuals still, as of the old times, realize their being as if outside sociality.

The official dogmatic Marxism has lost its positions in Russia. And one could regard the issue

of Marxism closed. But the problem of sociality outgrows the problems of the relationships of Russian culture with Marxism. We have to look for some other, deeper (in historical and spiritual aspects) roots of reproduction of abstract sociality. But....

The scores of Russian social philosophy with Marx's concepts and his methodological programs is still intact. Rejection of the dogmatic Marxism has by no means deepen the potentials that could, for instance, be used for the analysis of an alienated sociality, for clarification of realistic perspectives of its humanization (2). Work with such motives as the «universal» labour and the creativity of everyday life, sensual-supersensual nature and individuality could prove to be quite useful for rethinking of the existing patterns of activity and reasoning ... (3).

Secondly, lack of understanding of Marxism on the part of Russian philosophy can be interpreted as its generic feature, i.e. as a feature not related directly to Marxism, but predetermined by the back of a tradition of an in-depth penetration into the logical and methodological «structure» of other conceptions, and the underrating is general of the logicomethodological aspect of a philosophical culture.

It is good to remember that philosophy of Dilthey and Rickert did not receive a notable response in Russia in a pre-October period, though in those conceptions perspectives of the social philosophy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were outlined. It happened because the social-philosophical problems were posed primarily as methodological issues, i.e. seemingly irrelevant to the vital social and human problems. Methodology of understanding and study of sociality seemed to the Russian philosophy too abstract, speculative, remote from immediate needs of reality.

Methodological search carried out by Dilthey, Rickert, M. Weber, and some phenomenologists was closely related to the

attempts to reach a better understanding of the problem of sociality through working out of the techniques of reflecting the reproduction, understanding the specific, particular, individual in the life of men. The fate of anthropology, and hence of social philosophy was being decided on this methodological frontier. However Russian philosophy stayed indifferent to this search. It, as was already mentioned, seemed too remote from the needs of the real life. But alongside with that they seemed alien also to the spiritual tradition of understanding sociality with its leaning on the directness of feeling, irrationality of the moves of the soul and the man's contacts with world.

It is important to bear in mind that within this spiritual tradition an individual man was subordinated to the idea of conciliarity, appeared to stay in its shadow. The problem of personality seemed to dissolve in the idea of conciliarity, vanished or was in some mystical way solved within the latter. Let us refer here to such an experienced dialectician and phenomenologist as A.Losev, who spoke of the undeveloped interest of Russian philosophy to the subject of an individual man (4).

We may also remember IN.Berdyayev in this connection, who focussed his attention on the topic of an individual man, but treated it as isolation from the discussion of sociality, in fact ignoring the importance of the latter for the understanding of a true being of an individual.

Leaving aside for moment the religious and moral aspects of the conciliarity idea, one can mention that it reduced sociality to jointness, to the immediate collectivity. The ideas of sociality as a disjointed, having various means of establishing human ties reality remained dim. This situation, naturally blocked the way to the individuals to mastering the means of self-assertion, hindered the evaluation of social sciences.

### **Without sociology**

Modern social philosophy is oriented to a practical research work of social-humanitarian disciplines: there lie its pragmatic and theoretical interests, there are the possibilities for application of its methodological hypotheses, for testing its world outlook projects. In other words, nowadays the interdependence of social philosophy and social-humanitarian disciplines is not only obvious, but seems to push the traditional link of social philosophy with general philosophic constructions into the background, it reduces and transforms the effect of abstract philosophical definitions upon the picture of social process created by social philosophy.

Orientation of social philosophy to a particular movement of social-humanitarian knowledge, its immersion into the working of social-humanitarian disciplines are «suffered» by a social philosophy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In its dramatic experience there is a rejection of a specific method of learning a social life, «naturalization» of social sciences, attempts to substitute a philosophy of society by a sociology, crisis of the sociology's claims to leadership, realization of the need of society and science to substantiate the practical and theoretical activity of men, and of real human communities.

The experience of Russian philosophy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is a tragic one. It seemed at time it ceased to exist altogether. But this experience though tragic was not an experience of work on a concrete understanding of social process, its aspects, stages and states. On creation and application of cognitive and active forms clarifying the elements and ties of social reality.

Russian social philosophy throughout the whole of the 20<sup>th</sup> century remained a philosophy were not under the direct pressure of watchful authorities and intended to give a clear definition of some approaches to social reality, to show

its problem «crosssections», to uncover enough material, conceptual apparatus to be able to reproduce a detailed picture of the communal life of the people, to present various models of the evolution of society, Assumptions and suppositions uttered by philosophers in those cases pointed to some paradoxes and contradictions, formulated people's reactions to events, but on the whole they remained on the level of commonplace constataions and hypotheses.

One of the reasons for this was the defectiveness of social science as a complex or system of social-humanitarian disciplines and, in the first place, the underdevelopment ( and from the twenties to sixties a virtual nonexistence) of sociology.

Sociology as a science began to develop in Russia long before the revolution of 1917. By its results and potential it was in the beginning of the twentieth century quite compatible with the sociology of Europe and America. But at the same it should be mentioned that its influence on social philosophy, science, culture, everyday thinking of the Russian society was minimal. It correlated quite well with what N. Berdyaev characterized as the «ascetic abstinence the limits of the utilitarian needs for aims moral, social, or religious.»

The lack of differentiated ideas of sociality in society's conscience was to a great extent determined by an insufficient structural organization of social reality itself, immaturity of practice employing the economic, legal, moral standards for a construction and reproduction of various relationships between the people and groups. It is possible that in the course of time sociology could have exerted a much greater influence upon the practice and the society's conscience in the aspect of clear differentiation of social ties and the notions of them, but the course of historical events «smeared» that perspective. After the October revolution sociology was pushed back to the periphery of social life and thought,

and then in the person of its later dissolved in other forms of social thinking; «sociology» as a name itself dropped away from scientific and cultural use.

Hard pressure of practice, ideology and philosophy of bolshevism upon social-humanitarian disciplines resulted in their practically total loss of taste to independent theoretico-methodological work and the very ability to obtain realization of their subjects, tasks, perspectives, etc. Psychology closed on a cognitive-pedagogical problematics leaving the subject of personality and its development completely outside. Pedagogy was busy mostly with teaching and formation of social individuals in the spirit of their adjustment to the dominant political and ideological stereotypes. Psychiatry in its personality – and social understanding just never started. Economics found itself completely dehumanized, which lead afterwards to «convulsive» attempts to complement it with a «human factor».

Being unable to exercise its independence in theoretico-methodological constructions some social sciences tried to compensate their defectiveness by experimental (in a wider sense empirical) work of a natural-science type or character. Attempts of this kind were made in psychology as well as in economics, and archeology, though they did not have any contributed to further «smearing» of issues of the content and forms of social-human subjectiveness studied by sciences in their joint and separated activity).

The characteristic calls to establish ties between practice and science, and to follow real life, topical interests of society more than anything else testify to the fact that the ideologists and quite a number of «social scientists» believed (and believe to this day) that social reality was something given, directly available for change and interpretation.

An illusion of the immediate perception of social reality characteristic for Russian conscience and Russian social philosophy was preserved throughout the bolshevik period and has even outlived it. Until today in scientific and other circles there are widely spread notions according to which the vision of reality appears and exists without special personality and research efforts, and the understanding of social reality is possible without specific work of sociology, economics, history, psychology, without clear definition of their subjects and methods, their integration, without social and philosophic understanding of the state of social-humanitarian disciplines and perspectives of their evolution.

This illusion in the period of reformation that started in late eighties confirms the widespread belief that transformations in the Russian society can be fulfilled at the simultaneous reduction of social and humanitarian education, corresponding areas of research, with just «commonsense» as a safe foothold. Numerous supporters of this view don't understand (do not want or are unable to understand) that undifferentiated, unreflected, vague and «ambiguous commonsense» is a part of unstructured, undeveloped to a sufficient degree, and hence elusive and uncontrollable sociality. The lack of understanding of what is the real group composition of the Russian society, what true interests determine its dynamics fully corresponds to the helplessness of people in determining their abilities, means, rights and boundaries of activity.

What on the of social philosophy manifests itself as the lack of the picture of social being, including specific characteristics of human individuals with their forces. Means and forms of activity, on the level of separate social-humanitarian disciplines takes the form extremely vague definitions of their subjects and methods, their specific description and social-reformation

appears as vagueness of notions of real standards of human behaviour and reducing them to the form of a commonly accepted norm, on everyday practical level turns out to be a chaotic tangling of social ties, a social and personal irresponsibility of people.

Thus the immediate perspectives of social philosophy seem to be sufficiently clear. First of all confronts the task of creating such a picture (model, ontology) in which basic structures of social being will be represented as the forms of activity, communication, self-realization of people. Such an ontology must have an antinaturalistic and in this sense metaphysical orientation. The meaning of such a metaphysics is to stress the lack of coincidence of everyday of society, to demonstrate processuality, dependence of social ties on constantly reproducing itself life and activity of people.

Metaphysics of this kind inevitably becomes a methodology fixing the subjects and methods of sciences of men and society, and at the same time acquiring in the concepts of specific disciplines the understanding of the patterns of human life, «entangling» into an ever appearing and vanishing picture of social being lighting on a screen of social philosophy.

### **Gaps and problems**

A tradition of an individual «finish» of sociality was never formulated in Russian social philosophy, and correspondingly there was no social-conceptual formulation of individual being, it was not represented in elementary social forms of action, communication, means of human activity, instruments and dimensions of human behaviour.

The absence of this tradition points indirectly to vagueness of these forms (means, instruments, dimensions) in the practical life of society itself. Both professional and everyday experience of human behaviour point to their

unformulatedness. The culture of their application in the sense of habit, rules, understanding of their social value has not become a constant of human relationships.

Still less can sociality be represented as a system of stimuli for individual activity. In its basic components and relationships it acts not as an «intensifier» but rather a restriction for individual activity. Its institutions are meant for such an operational regime which does not require on the part of the individuals any introduction of new ideas and «construction» of social ties.

At the present moment already a «third attempt» is being made in Russia to create a civil society and a legal state. What is the message of this «revision of never learned», this «return to the unperformed»? Apart from other things it tells that the elementary means for the solution of this problem are still unformed: both everyday, practical, clarifying the value of individual life of the people, and structural, normative providing coordination and subordination of various human forces. All previous unsuccessful attempts as well as today's difficulties once again prove: a civil society and state are impossible where the civil, i.e. in the first place personal ties do not form an inseparable part of everyday sociality, where the elementary legal or rational standards do not connect and balance the actions of various people.

Social philosophy can longer in an «indirect way» through its insufficiency and «incompleteness» of social knowledge describe this situation as such. By all means society (though not in a very clear way) does express its demand for a more detailed social and philosophic description of its perspectives and, correspondingly, for an analysis of the barriers which systematically block its way to a civilized development.

The insufficiency of social philosophy, «incompleteness» of social knowledge, the

need of society to have a detailed structural representation of its being and conscience, and the very unformulatedness, vagueness of this need are tangling into a «problemat knot» which social philosophy would have to disentangle in the first place. And only having resolved this problem situation would it be able to approach the more complicated methodological issues, to determine the world view perspectives.

We can try to express the same in the language, which is traditional for the Russian social philosophy, i.e. through the notions of conciliarity and spirituality.

The idea of conciliarity proves to be wider than the idea of immediate communality, monolith sociality. In the social form of individual being of men, their indirect connection, their practical and spiritual development acquires ever greater importance for «coming to council» and maintaining of social ties in their independent activities. This «coming to council» requires from the individuals the ability to adjust correctly their own actions to the actions of others, practical and spiritual skills of bringing them to proportion.

This issue of the ability of the individuals to bring to proportion their real actions and forces, to use in their everyday activity some clear social measure points to the rational aspects of spirituality. Rationality appears not just a pragmatic estimation of people, things, and situations, but rather a means of uncovering social values and human meanings of a current or future action. Rationality as a specific ability of men is wider than calculation of useful effects (e.g. exchange): it sets a system of coordinates, connecting the near and far removed actions of the people, their projects and self-accounts. This rationality appears to be a significant aspect of existence of spirituality, « a boundary zone» between the «high» spirituality (as it is usually referred to) and the practical needs of the people.

The complexity of today's problems in Russia, their mosaic and polyphonic character demand of course a new strategy of human behaviour. But this strategy must have a cultural and historical foothold and first of all in everyday forms of human activity. Otherwise social reforms can become an eternal return to the issues of elementary forms of human interaction.

Social philosophy's real work in human experience begins when it points to its insufficiency, its limited character. Insufficiency for what? For clarification of problems people themselves are trying to find a solution to. This is how the real being of sociality is « carried out» beyond the limits of the «natural», traditional and wellknown.

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## Перспективы социальной философии

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*Понимание проблем и перспектив российской социальной философии не «вписывается» в традиционные философские формы. Российская культура противостоит задаче конструирования социальной философии нового типа. Эта тема обсуждается в данной статье.*

*Ключевые слова: социальная философия, философская традиция, социология, обществознание, социальные перспективы.*

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