

[In:] *O filozofii Fryderyka Nietzschego*, red. Roman Kozłowski i Karolina M. Cern, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2006, s.105-119.

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Nietzsche in Russia

The reception of F. Nietzsche's thinking in pre-revolutionary Russia in the context of the national mentality of the time

A metaphor in foreign uniform

Until today, the reception of the philosophy of F. Nietzsche in Russia, has largely been limited to a comparative analysis of his thinking with those of individual Russian thinkers. The aim of my treatise however, - from the standpoint of a conceptional sociologist - is to demonstrate how what can be called a national conditioning, and to be more precise a specific national Russian mentality, influenced the reception of the philosophy of Nietzsche and how, in pre-revolutionary Russia, only some elements were selected from his ideology in order to form concepts that were closer to the Russian philosophy and way of thought.

By way of introduction to this topic, we could specify this with a coinage of words accordingly: like attempting to put a metaphor into an already tailored foreign uniform. In fact, the kind of specifics that came along with the ideas of Nietzsche, were as uncomfortable for Russian culture, as a tight-fitting uniform might be on a person. Thus, it was necessary to cut apart and section this uniform to fit the Russian mentality. Indeed, this would not have been done for the first time in Russia, for the same situation took place, for example, in relation to the philosophy of Kant, adapted as it were by I.Vvidiński¹.

It is true, of course, that the philosophy of F. Nietzsche itself enjoyed great popularity in Russia at the turn of the century, largely due to its iconoclastic aspects. However, this reception itself was quite ambivalent. On the one hand, there was such a fascination with the thought of Nietzsche, that, regularly, all of his works would be read in the original, some

¹ See S.A. Niżnikow, *O specyficie rosyjskiego neokantyzmu. Uwagi o filozofii wiary A.I.Wwiedińskiego*, transl. H. Rarot (in:) „Colloquia Communia” 77 (2), p. 29-38.

fragments even being learned by heart.² Thus, Nietzsche was regulated to the likes of Plato, Socrates and Kierkegaard, as a consistent realizer of proclaimed ideas into practice (M. Bieriajev). On the other hand, provocative, amoral aestheticism, based on vitalism could be discerned in Nietzsche, and this must have been alien thought to the majority of Russian intellectuals, who recognized, instead, a need for social and religious involvement of philosophy and art, this being, indeed, its highest value. Interestingly enough in fact, Nietzschean ideas have been analyzed primarily on the premise of literature and literary criticism³, largely by Russian symbolists like: V. Ivanov, D. Mierzkovski and A. Biely. Mierzkovski, together with W. Rozanov, Filosofov and Sologub was included among the group of „orgiasts”, i.e. writers, poets and thinkers inspired by the ideas of Nietzsche, who spread decadent aestheticism and metaphysics of the sexes, practicing the cult of Dionysius. Viatcheslav Ivanov, the most influential co-originator of Russian symbolism, a poet and a theoretician of culture as well as a religious thinker, himself played a significant role in the popularizing of Nietzsche’s ideas. His fascination with the philosophy of Nietzsche directed his interests to antiquity, the European Middle Ages, the Italian Renaissance and to the works of the romantic poets. He looked into the history of man as well, in Dionisian categories (e.g. „Hellenic religion of suffering god”, 1904)⁴. By the time he had then implanted a primitive fascination of his works in other artists and theoreticians, he himself overcame this type of thinking, as manifested, for example, in his discussion with Mikhail Gershenzon, a historian of Russian social thought and recorded in „Correspondence from two corners” (1920), where he maintained that it is the belief in God that enlivens culture and not when some new categories are imposed on it. Apart from the reception of the ideas of Nietzsche in literature, another trend can be observed at that time: the periodical „Bogoslavskij viestnik” containing polemic articles devoted to Nietzsche were being printed.⁵

More comprehensive studies regarding Nietzsche as a philosopher appeared not earlier than the first two decades of the twentieth century, also known as the „Age of Silver” in Russian culture. One of the most significant works of this period are by L. Shestov „Dostoyevski and Nietzsche. Philosophy of Tragedy.” (1903) and, by G. Rachynski

² Przyznaje się do tego m.in. M. Bachtin w rozmowie z W. Duwakinem (See W. Duwakin, *Rozmowy z Michaiłem Bachtinem*, transl. Anna Kunicka, Warszawa 2002, p.53.) i M. Bierdiajev, który czynił to w 1887 r. (See A. Ostrowski, *Bierdiajev. Egzystencja w perspektywie eschatologicznej*, Lublin 1999, p. 27).

³ W. Sołowjow pisząc już 1899 o nadczołowieku, drukuje swój esej w *Mirze Iskusstwa*, poprzedzony wcześniejszymi rozprawkami nt. twórczości Mickiewicza, Lermontowa i Puszkina.

⁴ Zob. *Historia literatury rosyjskiej XX wieku*, pod red. A. Drawicza, Warszawa 1997, p. 75.

⁵ Podaję tę informację za J. Dobieszewski, *Wątki nietscheańskie w myśli rosyjskiej i radzieckiej*, „Colloquia Communia”, nr 3-6 [2-23], 1985, p.81.

„Nietzsche Tragedy (1900), as well as a collective work „Problems of Idealism” (1903), which was the manifesto of the neoidealism of Russian intellectuals and combined the ideas of Marx, Kant and Nietzsche. There are lectures, as well, on the thinking of Nietzsche and Christianity (e.g. M. Bahtin gave lectures on the thinking of Nietzsche in Nevel (1918-20) and in Vietbsk (1920-21)⁶.

From the very beginning, beyond a mere fascination, the ideas of Nietzsche, have provided somewhat of a stimulating leven and, according to J.Dobieszewski, they helped elicit already existing Russian ideas, especially as far as the criticism of traditional Christianity⁷ was concerned. In many aspects though, they proved to be a *too tightly fitted uniform*. In fact, out of all of the philosophers who undertook the risk of interpreting the thinking of Nietzsche more intensely, none analyzed his ideas as a whole and none subsequently identified himself with his way of thinking. Of course, some attempts have been made to designate Dostoyevsky, Leontiev or Rozanov, „a Russian Nietzsche”, however, these have resulted only from a superficial similarity of their thinking.⁸ Most evident in L. Shestov and V. Ivanov, are a choosing of certain elements from his thinking that introduced a new composition, sometimes changing the meaning.

One can discern, of course, some similarity in the choice of „Elements”, or common planes, but the subsequent making of a new Russian uniform, arranging all of the elements into one unity, was often quite as different as was the varied Russian religious philosophy. However, it was this philosophy that was the national filter that affected the reception of Nietzsche’s ideas in this and not in any other way. It was this philosophy, - and this is most significant in this context - that determined the choice of the „elements”, i.e. such and not any other of Nietzsche’s ideas.

⁶ See W. Duwakin, *Rozmowy z Michaiłem Bachtinem*, op. cit., p. 392-393.

⁷ J. Dobieszewski, op.cit., p. 82.

⁸ Konstantin Leontiev, who created his works in the 70-ies and 80-ies can resemble (according to M. Bierdiajev), F. Nietzsche due to his passionate criticism of Western culture. However, after a thorough analysis of the objections he made, we can see most essential differences in relation to the standpoint of this German philosopher: according to Leontjev the individual is directed by misunderstood individualism and egoism, forgetting about the sense of history. Nietzsche discerns first of all “depriving an individual of individualism”, the total subordination to social standards and mass culture. Also corrective measures to help in this crisis situation are different: Leontiev suggests using cultural standards of Russia since Russia still possesses the characteristics which have already been lost in Western Europe, and for Nietzsche it is the vision of superman as the supreme achievement of individualism. Another “Russian Nietzsche” i.e. Dostoyevsky, especially in L. Shestov’s opinion could be a spiritual ally of Nietzsche in his fight against the laws of Necessity and the truths of Reason. It seems that the source of their philosophising could also be the same – experiencing despair. But even here there is no total congeniality: Nietzsche revalues so far proclaimed ethics which limits individualism, Dostoyevsky – science, imposing the “truth” and “falshood” categories on the individual. V. Rozanov is discussed in the present treatise.

The specific character of Russian religious philosophy

The question that now arises, is the following: what, specifically, is the character of the Russian philosophy. Within the history of Russian philosophy, one can discern the presence of followers of Hegel, Kant, of positivism, intuitionism, phenomenologicalism and even of Leibnitz. However, this is a specifically Russian phenomenon, created in the 19th century tradition of religious philosophy, largely because only this proved satisfactory to the Russian peoples themselves and gave answers regarding religion, morality and the fate of Russian society after the fall of the patriarchal Orthodox Church. Philosophy coming into existence at that time, either justified traditional religiousness or tried to look for a new kind; in each case this was justified from a religious point of view.⁹

„Russian religious philosophy” then, is, as the discerning researcher, A. Tikholaz, put it ”an ontological gnoseology, sophiology, „religious materialism” or Platonism expressed in a new way, or cosmic symbolism.¹⁰

Within this, there are certain aspects of anthropology here, but quite specific ones, as the ideas of self-sufficiency of the human being are alien to it. Rather, Russian thinkers are closer to the idea of spiritual collectivism, „conciliar” ideas (*sobornost*). These conciliar ideas are about an organic unity of humanity, which is set against western individualism and egoism. This conciliar way of Russian thinking explains the untypical attention directed by the Russians to the social sphere and with this at the social issues.

In this way, Russian religious philosophy is subordinated to the tasks related to world transformations, *search for some higher truth*, i.e. truth in its practical shape, making it possible to transform life on earth. That is why this is not „pure cognizance”, passionless theoretical control of the world, but this is always a manifestation of a religious way leading to redemption.

One should not think, though, that Russian thinking is concerned exclusively with personal redemption, because the religious problem of man in Russian philosophy is transformed into a problem of the redemption of the whole of mankind. That is why Russian philosophy is a *religious philosophy of history and eschatology*. Speaking in general terms, Russian philosophy deals with the problems of human fate and a providential sense of history. And the fate of this mankind, as seen by Russian thinkers, depends directly on the historical destiny of Russia itself.

⁹ See A. Tichołaz, *Platonizm w Rosji*, transl. H. Rarot, Wydawnictwo UJ, Kraków 2004.

¹⁰ Ibidem.

Fate in Nietzsche and Russian religious philosophers

As was pointed out before, the most crucial issue in Russian religious philosophy is man and his destiny in society and history. This is not language analysis transformed into analytical philosophy, enunciating preciseness and accuracy similar to theorems of natural sciences (thus, in consequence separating philosophy from everyday practice), nor care to excession over form of expression finally leading to aesthetic over-refinement and lastly, lack of communicativeness when received, but, instead, it is anthropology and history of philosophy. And it is this penchant, itself with roots in the history of philosophy, which conditions a choosing of these and no other fragments of the entire thinking of Nietzsche, it is this searching process that determines man and society (or conflict with it).

In Nietzsche himself, the idea of fate results from an ontology that assumes the world is a chaos of events, yet stresses the dynamism and pluralism of existence. The destination of the world is unknown, for it is not governed by any rules. The only thing of necessity in such a world - as Moryn M. mentions - is the requisite of accidentality and riddles, the conflict of forces in an irregular form. There is no point in rebelling against such a necessity, however, submitting oneself to its inevitability is also alien to the concept of a superman. This type of being definitely seeks to confirm the lack of power in the world, because this will enable him (at least potentially, if not practically - H.R.) to design some order of values and meanings reflecting his own inner side.¹¹ However, even he realizes that, in an encounter of his individual will with the cosmic will, it is rather the latter who will succeed. This process does not presuppose resignation, but, rather, is an affirmation of fate and of ourselves, in reality. It is this fate that destroys rational, illusory projections designed by ourselves („I am the one I want to be”) and discovers an „ourselves” as being identical with our fate.¹²

This attitude toward fate, of various representatives of Russian religious philosophy can be defined as *odium fati*.¹³ From this very position, Nietzschean thinking about fate was itself interpreted and rejected. At the outset, his *amor fati*, was seen as a new and rather mysteriously incomprehensible concept, especially in comparison to what was written up to that point about the concept of fate, but, very soon, it was interpreted by the Russians from the typically Russian point of view. For example, according to M. Fiodorow, one of the radical representatives of this type of thinking, *amor fati*, was nothing less than the lack of courage to

¹¹ Zob. M. Moryń, *Wola mocy i myśl. Spotkania z filozofią Fryderyka Nietzschego*, Poznań 1997, p.154.

¹² Zob. K. Wieczorek, *Wieczne powroty Fryderyka Nietzschego*, Katowice 1998, p. 42.

¹³ S. G. Siemienowa, *Oodium fati kak duchowaja pozycja w ruskij religioznoj filosofii*, (w): *Poniatije sud'by w kontiektie raznych kultur*, pod red. N.D. Arutionowa, Moscow 1994, p. 26-29.

look straight into the enemy's eyes, the propensity of which should be despised as the manifestation of contemptible fear.¹⁴

In this context, such passiveness, as a sort of ecstatic fatalism can be discerned even in L. Shestov's writings (...), an outstanding religious thinker, who succumbed to Nietzschean inspiration and was sometimes called (not rightfully, according to A. Sawicki), an advocate of the *amor fati* idea, which can also be understood as a consent to fate with all its cruelty. In fact, this passiveness was discerned by a contemporary critic of his writings, Ivan Razumnik, who referred to Shestov as an ideologist of decadence, an advocate of a passive attitude towards social phenomena.¹⁵ According to S. Sawicki, however, himself an interpreter of Leo Shestov's thoughts, the whole philosophy of this thinker is „a protest against the injustices of fate.”

Sawicki also writes that Shestov never propagated the apotheosis of passiveness, but that, however, the active attitude he assumed - while not in the spirit of social activity typical of the anthropocentric trend in religious philosophy - was an internal dynamism of „fate”.¹⁶ When this activism was manifested by Shestov in his work, he „overstressed” the passive sense of the *amor fati* idea in Nietzsche, as submission to eternal laws. According to Nietzsche, in fact, a dignified person supposedly - in his opinion - possessed an innate ability to foresee „his destination in a submissive, even cheerful and loving humility towards outside forces such as might come at anytime, or anywhere, even in a simultaneously abrupt manner”.¹⁷

For M. Bierdiajev (1874-1948), another well-known representative of Russian religious philosophy, Nietzschean *amor fati*, as a Dionysiacal trait, is cosmic enchantment, aimed at assimilating into „the mother, cosmic bosom”¹⁸, a merging with impersonal collectivism, a mean-spirited willingness to be set free from pain and personal suffering.

According to V. Solovjov (1853-1900), the actual originator of Russian religious philosophy, the material, „sinful” world is governed by Fate. The task of man is to save this world from the inevitability of Fate, through transforming it into a higher plane, from an evolutionary point of view, as when it materializes into the Kingdom of Heaven. In this context, Nietzschean philosophy on man must, to him, have seemed extremely passive. Thus

¹⁴ M. Fiodorow, *Filosofija obszczonego diela*, Moscow 1913, T. II, p.162 oraz S. G. Siemienowa, *Oidium fati ...*, p.26.

¹⁵ A. Sawicki, *Absurd. Rozum. Egzystencjalizm w filozofii Lwa Szeszowa*, Kraków 2000, p. 210.

¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁷ L. Szeszow, *Ateny i Jeruzolima*, transl. C. Wodziński,p.125.

¹⁸ M. Bierdiajev, *O rabstwie i swobodzie czelowieka*, Paryż 1972, p.33.

resulted the objection raised in an essay in 1899, „The idea of superman”, where it is pointed out that in the concept of superman, Nietzsche mystifies creative predispositions of man, by absolutising them, in all, however, ending in a failed attempt. For this reason, Solovjov attempted to substitute in them an active-Christian content. Man, as seen by him, undergoes cosmic evolution, in an infinite number of stages of growth of the soul and the spirit. The body will not be subject to any further changes, apart from some modifications in the way his organs function. While man, under present conditions is mortal, in other future conditions, he will be able to reject this fate. In his opinion, a true superman, should primarily be a *victor over death*. Even if in the distant future, he should endeavour to change these conditions, which presuppose the occurrence of death.¹⁹ However, when biological human existence is subordinated to fate, this is not the only existence in time and space ending in death. Also physical love closes man into the birth and death circle. The sweetest compensation for the²⁰ suffering related to mortal existence, is Eros, who holds man into the biological jacket of fate. Solovjov here again suggests creative metamorphosis of erotic energy, which can be directed at the transformation of human nature and the world („Sense of love). Even today, one can defeat death in a manifestation of platonic, or „spiritual love” which transforms a man and a woman in love into a „total man”. True spirituality of a man who restores this unity in a „true androgynism” is, at the same time, rebirth, redemption and resurrection.²¹

V. Rozanov (1856-1919), a well-known writer and thinker, however, maintains that whatever determines to take from man his natural joy and life force, is rather culture than nature. As can be seen more clearly, in his work „Apocalypse of our times”, primarily, he refers to Christian culture, which, by imposing the doctrine of the Cross, Golgotha and the Tomb, broke the happy ties that connected people with the earth. As early as in the Old Testament (and even at an earlier date - in Egyptian religions) it was allowed or even demanded, that man manifested the sweetness of procreation in fertility. This was an example of the reconciliation of what is earthly with what is heavenly, a reconciliation of human and divine elements, because the ties of the body to God are stronger than the ties of the mind, and asexual people are most often even atheists (Opawszyje listja). However, Christian culture, instead of focusing on defeating death, proclaiming the joyful religion of light and life

¹⁹ S. G. Siemienowa, *Oidium fati...*, p.29.

²⁰ Ibidem.

²¹ M. Łoski, *Historia filozofii rosyjskiej*, transl. Henryk Paprocki, Kęty 2000, p.127. Ale, jak pisze J. Dobieszewski, ów androgynizm nie jest tylko duchowym połączeniem dwóch pierwiastków, ani też wyłącznie „zewnątrznym zmieszaniem kształtów, lecz strategią życia, której najdalszym, ale i najważniejszym horyzontem jest zjednoczenie osoby i życia, ducha i ciała, Boga i człowieka. Owe zjednoczenie dokonuje się zarówno za sprawą Boga, jak i za sprawą samego człowieka”. Zob. J. Dobieszewski, *Włodzimierz Solowjow. Studium osobowości filozoficznej*, Warszawa 2002, p. 328.

suggests its cult. Rozanov by no means seeks to completely escape the determinism of Christian culture, but counsels that it should not be submitted to in a passive way. Instead, one should recall early Christianity, Christ and discern, in some historical forms of this religion, an attempt to be united with the world.

On the other hand, according to V. Ivanov, mentioned above, the subjugation of people through culture (including the Christian one), is never entirely complete. He claims that „*human consciousness can be entirely immanent in relation to culture, but on the other hand, it can be comprised equally of immanence and of transcendence...For the believer though, faith from its essence is distinct in relation to culture in the same way as nature is distinct in relation to it, in the same way as love is distinct.*”²² In another place, he writes that Nietzsche - and Rozanov following him - commit a tragic mistake when they do not discern incredible possibilities of human spirit, which, after all, are promised by Christianity.²³

For M. Bakhtin (1895-1975), a world-famous literature specialist and aesthetician, who could even be called a religious philosopher, in some ways, as manifested in and shown by his work „Towards Philosophy of Action” (1918-21), which shows that culture cannot totally determine man, because he has an ability to exceed beyond its determinants. Moreover, in the historical form of human mental activity, the focus and value given to various events depends upon the decisions made by the subject evaluating it. The world of nature, on the contrary, is dynamic, as Nietzsche mentions, and is composed of events (*sobytije bytija*). These form a being in transition, who is becoming and man’s participation (in the being - the world’s occurrence as a whole) which, consciously taking on an active, creative attitude in life (life without alibi) similarly to Nietzsche’s superman, „does not mean the same as an irresponsible yielding oneself to the being, being seized by the being. According to Bakhtin, Nietzsche’s philosophy resolved itself into such a seizure by a being. According to him it was reducing contemporary Dionysiacal traits into absurdity. Becoming lost in supraterrrestrial will to power undergoing transformations without any plan must have resulted in the situation that the affirmed being „subordinated to itself the approving One.” It became lost to this, forgetting at the same time about its exclusivity and uniqueness, which is the most important of life values.”²⁴

²² W. Iwanow, *Michaił Gerszenzon, Korespondencja z dwóch kątów*, „Znak”, 1990 nr 2-3, p. 16.

²³ W. Iwanow, *Po zwiędzdam*, Sankt Peterburg, 1909, p.9.

²⁴ M. Bachtin, *W stronę filozofii czynu*, transl. B. Żyłko, Gdańsk 1997, p.75.

Practicism and moralism

Anthropological and social inclination is thus accompanied by practicism and moralism in Russian philosophy, determining in this way, the character of the reception of the ideas of Nietzsche.

In Nietzsche himself, as it is known, there is almost no social aspect and the problem of moralism, most often, is reduced in its interpretations to residual form. It is claimed that an adored, outstanding person is beyond good and evil as defined by the societies existing so far. That person is responsible for himself, shapes the values of his/her life, becoming individual and original in an egoistic way. It is not very often, that a positive moral programme has been discerned in Nietzsche. It is only after writing in defence of Nietzsche, as was done, for example, by Stanisław Łojek, that one can find out that there is a positive side of the theories of the German philosopher. *„A significant characteristic of the morality proposed by him, which results, among other things from its perspective shape, is that it is not possible to teach it, or rather that teaching can take place only by giving an example”*.²⁵

The practical and moral approach represented by the Russian, Shestov, makes him interpret the Nietzschean idea of superman not as someone who will appear only after the last man, but as the „underground man”, many times described by Dostoyevsky, an outcast, an exile who cannot fulfill himself in worldliness, the one who is outside worldly morality and chooses the absurdity of a god. As he writes in his book „Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche” it is Nietzsche that was such an „underground man” both in his literary work and in his life, and the idea of superman was really masking that truth. In another place, he even directly discerns moralism in the German thinker, claiming that specific aristocratic traits in the Nietzschean man are an attempt to translate into another language, the idea of good (the ultimate principle of and end of everything, ie. the will of power) always assuming the position of a preacher.²⁶

In Solovjov's writings, the author of „Apology of Good. Moral Philosophy” among other things, the concept of superman is one of the most dangerous temptations of contemporary intellectual life. Admittedly, Nietzsche, as Solovjov writes in his essay „Literature or Truth”, is right when he claims that the whole dignity of man lies in the fact that he is more than mere man and that he leans towards something higher. This is not a new concept, for it was already mentioned by the Apostle Paul, the only difference being that the latter was able to indicate the real superman and refer to Him by name - Christ. For Nietzsche

²⁵ See S. Łojek, *Obrona Nietzschego. Rzecz o odpowiedzialności*, Kraków 2002, p. 59.

²⁶ A. Sawicki, op. cit., p.207.

though, there is no one specific person, as he writes about superman in general (.....), and has nothing practical to say about him, although his goal is to expound on the making of superman. The practiciness of a philosopher - Russian or intellectualist - who has always been interested only in those conceptions which allow a realistic hope that they could be adopted in *this* life in a simple and certain way, is revealed this way.

Apart from that, not everyone is potentially a superman according to Nietzsche. And even if he himself was a superman within the realm of his possibilities, for this idea to become reality, one must have „*a stronger point of support than one's own wish, feeling, or abstract thought*".²⁷ Moreover, Solovjov blames Nietzsche for not considering himself a real superman, and, although he did not experience any life tragedy, he did not reevaluate his values and expected, by teaching about superman, to become a prophet and the originator of a new religion (which, for a philosopher is unnatural must lead towards catastrophe). If one might regard him as a real superman, it was more from the standpoint of superphilology. This philological element, and only this philology, is visible in all Nietzsche's ideas, thus: „*a true superman bore a simple, common name in his country... but the superman created by the professor from Basel, cannot be Henry or Otto: his name must be Zarathustra - not even Zoroaster, but just Zarathustra in order that one could smell linguistics from a distance... Superman is only the subject of academic teaching, a newly founded cathedral at the Philological faculty*".²⁸

Russian religious philosophy was not a monolithic formation and, as one can see, the perceptions of the Nietzschean idea of superman through this heterogenous point of reference was also different. The least typical position regarding this issue was taken by V. Ivanov in his essay „Crisis of Individualism" from 1917. Similarly to other Russian thinkers (especially M. Bierdiajev, Shestov and M. Bakhtin) he described a post-renaissance individualism as a manifestation of antic and Christian visions of man and his role in the world. What happened there however, was the supremacy of „civilisation" over culture, ruling the „critical" principle of the „organic" one, forgetfulness about the spiritual synthesis of mankind. This modern era individualism (or humanism), makes human „ego" the master of everything. Very often, Nietzsche's mental effort, the character of Zarathustra and superman are interpreted as the greatest achievement of this individualism. Ivanov, however, discerns in Nietzsche something

²⁷ W. Sołowjow, *Literatura czy prawda*, (in:) *Wybór pism*, t. III, transl. J. Zychowicz, Poznań 1988, p.160.

²⁸ W. Sołowjow, *Literatura czy prawda*, op. cit., p.162.

entirely different: a religious thinker and even a co-originator of the Russian idea.²⁹ His admiration for the superman kills the man, this proud „ego” in ourselves is rejected by us to pursue a goal that accepts and carries the whole weight of the world, as Atlas does (whereas individualism proclaimed freedom of individuals, lifting various limitations and burdens, even religion was to be treated as free of any community obligations in mystic experience). Superman is not therefore, something individual but common and even religious, he has a conciliar spirit, and he refers to a sense of responsibility for others (even for the whole world).³⁰

The idea of superman cannot be looked into only from the angle of a mental exercise, and its practicality, or its negative or positive moral implications. The issue of superman is related also to the problem of a devaluation of the hitherto existing values of European culture, to the problem of nihilism, which, according to Nietzsche, constitutes a necessary stage embedded into the structure of cultural reality. This state or stage can only be accelerated in order to reach the state of „total nihilism” and then bring to light a new opposing rule, that is, will to power.³¹ Any action taken to delay nihilism is also nihilism (at least partially). Accelerating total nihilism and proclaiming new principles of culture is a task for superman. He can reach this objective not through anger but through laughter and irony.³² It is through laughter though, that heavy, meaningful aspects of life can be changed into light and unimportant ones.

In this regard, the positions of individual Russian thinkers can be seen as partial nihilism. They do not provide criticism of the whole Christian culture together with its basis as was done by Nietzsche, but only its historical (patriarchal and Orthodox Church related) form. The lost freshness of culture, according to V. Ivanov, can be regained not through revolution, but only thanks to faith in God, since „to live in God means not to live exclusively in relative human culture, but *through some part of our being to grow out of it outwards, towards freedom ... it is enough to set off, find some trace, and the rest will be given to us. The surrounding objects will move by themselves, the voices will move away, the new horizons will open*”.³³

Another way to refresh culture is to trust man himself. As M. Bahhtin puts it, it is the creative man himself who makes choices of new or forgotten truths depending on one’s

²⁹ W. Iwanow, *Rodnoje i wsielienskoje*, Moscow 1994, p. 13.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 22.

³¹ K. Wiczorek, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

³² F. Nietzsche, *Tako rzecze Zaratustra, Książka dla wszystkich i dla nikogo*, transl. W. Berent, Warszawa 1905, 1, 2, 30.

³³ W. Iwanow, M. Gerszenzon, *Korespondencja z dwóch kątów*, „Znak”, 1990, 2-3, p. 17.

axiological sensitiveness, rejecting at the same time the meaning of others.³⁴ It is through him that the senses belonging to the past will be referred to and be enlivened in a new form. Of course, provided that he accepted and not rejected the basic value (in his world of life values) – the duty of realization of his uniqueness, his unique place in the being which means that he accepted the life *without alibi in the being. It is “inside the existence”, transcending continually his actual state that man strives for learning, art of justice* since they motivate him to go beyond himself and they justify also the correctness of expression of the place of actual values in his life. Thus social standards and value that came into being in a definite historical period (and that became later general cultural values, the treasury of mankind), can be significant for a definite subject living in another historical period only when that subject recognizes them as his own.³⁵ Thanks to his definite structure (but not psychological or physical) man will know which of these standards should be realized and when, and which should be rejected as incompatible with his axiological sensitivity.³⁶

The total criticism of European culture, taking on the form of Zarathustrian laughter is interpreted by the thinkers and representatives of symbolism as a spiritual illness. By destroying old values one destroys himself, it is kind of suicide. It is presented vividly by A. Blok, an outstanding representative of symbolic poetry in the “Age of Silver” in Russia, in his essay of 1908 entitled “Irony”. The poet says that man is almost absent in such a laughter, “only his lips are giggling”, his body is still alive whereas the spirit is already dead.³⁷ Freedom, according to V.Ivanov, obtained as a result of such forgetting of old values is empty, and those who do not remember their origin are runaway slaves and can never be referred to as free born people.³⁸

Criticism of rationalism

Another crucial issue which is present in the reception of Nietzsche philosophy is the criticism of rationalism, which is in the Russian people, in Russian religious philosophy, in most cases the result of analysis of complicated relationships of faith and reason. Generally pure discursive thought is here “the dispersion of being”, since it results in making

³⁴ H. Rarot, *Filozofia moralna Michaila Bachtina*, Lublin 2002, p. 111.

³⁵ M. Bachtin, *W stronę filozofii czynu*, transl. B. Żyłko, Gdańsk 1997, p. 73.

³⁶ M. Bachtin, *W stronę filozofii czynu*,... p. 33.

³⁷ See M. T. Riumina, *Estietika smiecha. Smiech kak virtualnaja riealnost'*, Moscow 2003, p. 251.

³⁸ W. Iwanow, M. Gerszenzon, *Korespondencja...*, p.18.

differentiations, finding discrepancies opposing God and his work. It has then to be completed in the form of superrational intuition, i.e. act of faith.³⁹

As it known, Nietzsche also criticised rational cognition and primacy logical thinking before emotional and intuitional insight into the essence of phenomena and the way they are created. This insight was possible, according to him, in the state of experiencing Dionysian element, whereas rational description of reality was called by him “socratism”. Rational cognition is related to one, universal point of view invariable in time of the cognising subject. In the world of variety of phenomena and manifestations of life, such a cognition cannot be maintained. One can talk only about perspectivism, about including to knowledge of subjective assessment of knowledge, irrational elements, because what is illogical is necessary for people. Life as a manifestation of unpredictable power to will cannot be systematised into notions, eternal truths, systems of values. Truth is a product of life activity of the cognising subject, it is not determined, however, by the vision of redemption or meeting God.

Russian philosophers discern Nietzsche as their ally, but only for a short moment. Shestov, according to A. Savicki, following the way of thinking of Nietzsche, concentrated on refuting “eternal truths” of Reason which judges everything according to its own will and does not undergo any judgement at the same time. Truth could only be, according to him, of existential character (related to life and human activity), it was creative and not reproductive. But when he starts talking about the relationship of the subject activity and the dynamism of God, i.e. that it is the revealed truth about redemption generates the subject activity, he rejects the Nietzsche that we know in the West of Europe. From this new standpoint, in his work “Athens and Jerusalem”, Shestov discerns Nietzsche as a deep religious thinker, since the former dealt with Luther. According to him the Lutheran almighty God providing support to man rejecting reason, is substituted by Nietzsche by “power to will”. In some other place Shestov wonders if power to will does not happen to be the Lutheran “sola fide”.

Bierdiajev, who often tried to combine the ideas of Kant, Marx and Nietzsche, in his work “Opyt eschatologiczeskoj mietafizyki” maintained that Kant was right dividing the world into the external worlds of phenomena and “nomens”, but he made a mistake making it unknowable. Cognition of phenomena in their objectivized form is a consequence of sin, leaving God and mutual alienation of individuals. The result of objective cognition is that we

³⁹ P. Evdokimow, *Poznanie Boga w Kościele Wschodnim*, transl. A. Liduchowska, Kraków 1996, p. 14.

consider real only those things which can be seen as secondary, rationalized, objectivized and question the reality of primitive, not objectivized and not rationalized.⁴⁰

In V. Solovjov ("Criticisim of abstract principles"), dogmatic, abstract rationalism is helpless, it cannot know the truth about the world. The measure of truth here is the cognising subject and its basis - reason and not the nature of things and phenomena. The actual cognisance of truth consists in exceeding borders of subjective thinking and entering the sphere of existing unity of all that exists i.e. the Absolute. It is possible because all-unity is not something absolutely external in relation to the subject. There is an internal relationship between them. The facts that we experienced become real and the notions of abstract thinking have real, positive, general dimension only thanks to religious basis.⁴¹

Conclusions

The perspective vision of the world proclaimed by Nietzsche, which only now in the times of cultural pluralism and the pluralism of views on the world have become something self evident, must have been present in the reception of the ideas of this German thinker. In the above treatise the ideas of Nietzsche were outlined in the historical and national aspects and seen as the original product of Russian thinking – religious philosophy that came into being and was practised in pre-revolutionary Russia. Their partial, biased reception can prove that in the pre- global world there must have existed national cultures which were manifested also in the universal "world of philosophy". The problem that has to be solved is whether in the global world this socio-cultural trend will also be discerned.

Transl.

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⁴⁰ M. Bierdiajew, *Opyt eschatologiczeskoj mietafizyki*, p.77 za : M.Łoski, *Historia filozofii rosyjskiej*, transl. H. Paprocki, Kęty 2000, p. 268.

⁴¹ M. Łoski, *Historia filozofii rosyjskiej*...., p. 110.