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Facing the absurd: On Lev Shestov's Angel of Death

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A quest for meaning: Existential and psychoanalytic interconnections

In the European cultural and intellectual tradition of the 20th century the developments of two revolutionary movements in the human sciences, psychoanalysis and existentialism, have been distinctly linked and interconnected.[1] Since the 1880s the work of the Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky had been appreciated in French intellectual circles where he became known for his insights into murder, hallucination and madness. In particular, Freud's article 'Dostoevsky and Parricide' (1928) helped to make the Russian writer a seminal figure for the psychoanalytic community (Terras, 1985, p. 103).[2] In his studies on Dostoevsky, Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, Freud related creative act to psychoanalytical theory. He observed that the creative faculty draws on drives and fantasies buried in the unconscious, and that they may provide the clue to understanding the imaginative mind as well as individual works (Phillips and Kurzweil, 1983, p. 1).[3] As a method of investigating the mind, and especially the unconscious mind, psychoanalysis attempted to trace back patients' mental life to their early infancy. Traces of Freud's discovery of the unconscious can be found in French philosophy and literature of the mid. 20th century, in which the focus moved from abstract universal theories to individual experience. As R. D. Laing and D. G. Cooper (1964), who saw affinity between psychoanalysis and many of the existential themes, pointed out, existentialism, assisted by psychoanalysis began to 'study those situations where man has lost himself since infancy' (p. 46).[4] This exploration was characterized by 'the sudden disclosure of a universe that seemed devoid of any pre-established meaning' and needed to be explored in order to become meaningful (Fotiade, 2001, pp. 2–3).[5]

The philosophy of existence is deeply rooted in the western philosophical tradition. From Nietzsche the existential writers adopted the idea that in the absence of God humans take responsibility to define their own meaning in life; consequently our existence determines our thinking. While the term 'absurd' is now mainly associated with the writings of Albert Camus (1913–1960), it takes us back to the first half of the 19th century, to the works of the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, who was the first to use the notion of the absurd as a philosophical concept.[6] One of the first philosophers who introduced this line of thought in France in the 1920s was the Russian émigré philosopher Lev Shestov (1866–1938) (Fotiade, 2001, p. 3).[7] According to Boris Groys (2012), 'Shestov made an essential contribution to creating an intellectual atmosphere in France' in the first half of the 20th century (p. 34).[8] In particular, some of the Russian philosopher's 'observations are relevant for the psychoanalytical research developed later and to certain new trends in psychology' (Finkenthal, 2010, p. 43).[9]

Lev Issakovich Shestov was born to a Jewish family in Kiev, and studied law and mathematics at the Kiev and Moscow Universities. His first book, entitled *Shakespeare and His Critic Brandes*, was published in St. Petersburg in 1898. In 1919, in the chaotic aftermath of the October Revolution when life in Russia became unbearable for those who didn't conform to the new ideology, the philosopher and his family were forced to flee the country for good. During many years in exile, eventually settling in Paris, Shestov lectured on Russian philosophy and literature at the Sorbonne University and wrote his most important works, *In Job's Balances* (1968b), *Kierkegaard and Existential Philosophy* (1969b) and *Athens and Jerusalem* (1966).

In mid-20th century Paris a new literary and philosophical movement, concerned with the subjective angst of living, striving to incorporate both science and religion as its essential components, was rising in the circles of French intellectuals. Influenced by Schopenhauer, who viewed human history as an absurd struggle for existence, the French existential writers began to perceive our existence itself as absurd. Camus (1955) wrote that 'thinking is learning all over again to see, to be attentive, to focus consciousness…' (p. 30).[10] The French writer, who always maintained that there is nothing beyond reason apart from a 'meaningless and unceasing struggle', was struck by what he defined as the 'denseness and strangeness of the world' (Camus, 1955, p. 34, p. 20). Camus became deeply intrigued by Shestov's daring attempts to expand his thought into the area of the unthinkable, to 'the theme of the irrational' (Camus, 1955, p. 49). In *The Myth of Sisyphus* he asserted that 'to Chestov, reason is useless but there is something beyond reason' (Camus, 1955, p. 38).[11] 'The theme of the irrational', wrote Camus, 'as it is conceived by the existentialists, is reason becoming confused and escaping by negating itself' (Camus, 1955, p. 49). Continuing Kierkegaard's line of thought, Camus (1955) observed that from the moment the absurdity of existence is recognized, it becomes a passion, and possibly the most harrowing of all (Camus, 1955, p. 27). This brings to mind Freud's essay 'The Future of an Illusion' (2004), where Freud also echoed Kierkegaard (1946, pp. 41-42), when referring to Tertullian's expression *credo quia absurdum*, he stated that the philosophers and artists' admission of absurdity is contrary to reason (Freud, 2004, pp. 33–34).[12]

Significantly, for Shestov, the idea that life has meaning didn't necessarily contrast with the recognition that life is absurd. Precisely, for him to acknowledge life's absurdity became an opportunity for a fearless venture into an unknown redemption that discovered a hidden and mysterious meaning. Inspired by the idea of a struggle, taking place within the confines of one's mind, which could provide an opportunity for a creative transformation, the philosopher's thought courageously fought against the autonomy of reason.[13] In Shestov's view (1969a), a person begins to think 'philosophically' when there is no lifeline any longer left available to him (p. 197).[14] Thus, the despair that seizes the man *facing the absurd* pushes him beyond the boundaries of good and evil, into the territory of the unknown. Convinced that consciousness cannot eliminate unhappiness from existence, the Russian thinker saw the aim of his philosophy as the liberation of the mind of man by taking it 'out on the shoreless sea of imagination, the fantastic tides where everything is equally possible and impossible' (Shestov, 1920, p. 38).[15] He developed a philosophical perspective that rests on the absurd, or 'the ugly reality' as he described it (Shestov, 1969a, p. 148).[16] The power of philosophy for him was in the articulation of the personal experience of the author's life in his or her work.

Shestov's parable of the angel of death and his philosophy of tragedy

There is life, and there, a step away, is death', proposed philosopher and psychologist William James (1917, p. 15).[17] In the vein of Schopenhauer, James saw the notion of moral progress as illusory, and asserted that 'our judgments concerning the worth of things, big or little, depend on the *feelings* the things arouse in us' (p. 1). Unlike Freud, James, whose work influenced Shestov's early thought, in his essay 'The Will to

Believe' (1896) defended man's right to adopt a believing attitude in religious matters.[18] James suggested that 'our passional and volitional nature' is at the root of all our convictions (James, 1917, p. 17).[19] James's observations, especially his interest in personal experience taking precedence over doctrine, resonated with Shestov's vision.

Throughout the years of his exile in France up to his death at the age of seventy-two in Paris, Shestov was haunted by what he called 'the nightmare of godlessness and unbelief which has taken hold of humanity' (Martin, 1970, p. xiii).[20] Between 1919–20 Shestov composed a parable of the Angel of Death, possibly drawing on his reading of the tales of the sages of the Talmudic era, and inspired by M. U. Lermontov's poem 'Angel of Death' (1941).[21] In an article dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Dostoevsky's birth Shestov wrote:[22]

> …the Angel of Death who descends towards man to separate his soul from his body is all covered with eyes. (…) It happens sometimes that the Angel of Death, when he comes for a soul, sees that he has come too soon, that the man's term of life is not yet expired; so he does not take the soul away, does not even show himself to it, but leaves the man one of the innumerable pairs of eyes with which his body is covered. And then the man sees strange and new things, more than other men see and more than he himself sees with his natural eyes; and he also sees, not as men see but as the inhabitants of other worlds see: that things do not exist "necessarily", but "freely", that they are and at the same time are not, that they appear (…) the new vision seems to be outside the law, ridiculous, fantastic, the product of a disordered imagination. (…) And then begins a struggle between two kinds of vision, a struggle of which the issue is as mysterious and uncertain as its origin (Shestov, 1968b, pp. 58–59).[23]

Thus, in Shestov's perspective, the miraculous power of that 'monstrous absurdity' can carry us beyond the limits of human comprehension and of the possibilities, which that comprehension admits (Shestov, 1966, p. 66).[24]

From his early writing Shestov adopted a view that a traumatic event in the life of a thinker can radically change their ways of thinking and their ability to understand reality. Whether he was writing about Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche or Kierkegaard, the philosopher's thought was preoccupied with tragic experiences in the lives of his characters, derived from their biographies. This provocative approach to human existence and a deep insight into the human psyche gained from the literary work of Fyodor Dostoevsky had a profound impact on the formation of Shestov's convictions. 'The philosopher seeks what is difficult; he seeks struggle. His true element is problematic, the eternally problematic,' wrote Shestov (1968a, p. 271).[25] When analysing a literary or philosophical text, Shestov directed his attention to an event in the author's biography, which could reveal their inner conflict. For example, he described Dostoevsky's close encounter with death in 1849 as a 'life-changing' experience, the effects of which would stay with the writer for the rest of his life.[26] Convicted of political crimes against the Russian state Dostoevsky was sentenced to death, but in the very last moments before the execution the writer was pardoned in exchange for eight years (later shortened to four) in a prison labour camp in Tobolsk, Western Siberia. The years of penal servitude that followed, spent in the company of murderers and thieves,[27] and the brutality of life in the prison barracks left physical and psychological scars upon the writer that lasted more than a decade (Shestov, 1969a, p. 103).[28]

With the emphasis on this disturbing, traumatic event in Dostoevsky's biography, Shestov explored its consequences for the writer's work. He observed that from the earlier years onwards in his writing Dostoevsky depicted scenes that are sombre and painful, telling stories of the lives of the humiliated and insulted (Shestov, 1969a, p. 149).[29] But, from Shestov's point of view, Dostoevsky's most significant novel

is *Notes from Underground* [*Zapiski iz Podpolya*] 1864, which was written some years after the writer's release from the penal colony in Siberia. According to Shestov, Dostoevsky wrote this novel at the time when he was going through 'one of the most horrible crises, that only the human soul is capable of preparing for itself and bearing' (Shestov, 1969a, p. 148).[30] Metaphorically speaking, in those last moments before imminent death, the Angel of Death visited Dostoevsky and left him a new pair of eyes that would provide the writer with a brand new insight and a future vision for his later work. As the result, Dostoevsky, 'enlightened' by his near-death experience, was 'on the eve of a great spiritual upheaval', about to embark on yet the biggest struggle of his life – the challenge to discover a new doctrine in his philosophical vision. When Dostoevsky abandoned all his past 'lofty and beautiful' ideas and principles, he saw that the only remaining certainty for him could be found in reality, the ugly reality that he had never seen before, where his teachers were convicts and criminals (Shestov, 1969a, p. 198). Thus, according to Shestov's interpretation, it was Dostoevsky's life experience, and his ability to embrace the absurd reality of his life that led to the significant transformation of his worldview, which was expressed in all his subsequent work. Four of his most well-known masterpieces, written in the years following his release from the prison camp, depict murder explicitly: *Crime and Punishment* [*Prestupleniye i Nakazaniye*] 1866, *The Idiot* [*Idiot*] 1868, *The Possessed* [*Besy*] 1872, and *The Brothers Karamazov* [*Bratja Karamazovy*] 1880.

The second thinker, whose solitary spiritual and creative life quest captivated Shestov's philosophical vision, was the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900). What Shestov considered especially valuable in Nietzsche's writing was the German thinker's personal and passionate approach to truth as opposed to the abstract and theoretical methods of traditional logic and epistemology (Martin, 1969, p. xxii).[31] He wrote that 'One can reject or accept Nietzsche's teachings, agree or disagree with his morals, but knowing his fate, knowing how he came by his philosophy, and what price he paid for his "new word" – one cannot be either resentful or hostile' (Shestov, 1898, p. 10).[32]

Shestov's method of reading Nietzsche's writing, as in the case of Dostoevsky, focused on the investigation and exposure of the author's internal conflict and aimed to reveal the tragic essence of this crisis. He argued that like Dostoevsky, Nietzsche 'had come from penal servitude – from the underworld into the tragic reality, from which there is no return to the world of the commonplace' (Shestov, 1969a, p. 317).[33] Up until the age of thirty Nietzsche, in Shestov's words, 'sat in a corner, contemplating the ideas of others' (Shestov, 1969a, p. 250). In the early 1870s he studied Greek literature and culture; his writing was mainly influenced by the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) and the music of Richard Wagner (1813–1883) (Shestov, 1969a, pp. 239–240). Shestov (1969a) observed that in his youth Nietzsche was a proud man, who thought of himself as worthy of a destiny marked by achievements of 'serious and important deeds', but after falling ill it occurred to him that it might not be possible (p. 243). The bitter realisation brought on Nietzsche's 'shamefully and disgustingly unhappy' state (p. 245). 'This highly perceptive philosopher', wrote Shestov, became 'confused and flustered, like a child who has lost her way in a forest' (p. 249).[34] If before the illness Nietzsche 'preached goodness', 'invoked truth' and 'sang hymns to beauty', by contrast on this new path he encountered 'much struggle', 'wavering' and 'doubt' (p. 272). That poignant moment when Nietzsche's consciousness is confronted by the impenetrable uncertainty of his life is the vital point in Shestov's analysis, as it is here that the Russian philosopher's idea of an opportunity to creative transformation, symbolized by receiving the 'second eyesight', comes into focus. The tragic and painful experience provoked Nietzsche to seek a new, 'free' vision;[35] and, according to Shestov's telling, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–1885) Nietzsche discovered the 'philosophy of tragedy' (Shestov, 1969a, p. 310).[36] Hence, Zarathustra represented Nietzsche's struggle of hope against hopelessness; he 'gained courage to re-baptize what we regard as evil in us and call it goodness' (Shestov, 1969a, p. 312). In Shestov's account, Nietzsche's rebellion against morality became his new and great 'declaration of rights', for the sake of which he undertook all his 'underground work' (p. 315).

Nietzsche, like Dostoevsky, chose to look absurd reality in the face, and attempted to give a voice to an indefinable and unthinkable truth (Shestov, 1969a, p. 204).

The discovery of Kierkegaard's writing in the last decade of Shestov's life reaffirmed his own conviction in the abolition of the ethical opposition between good and evil, and also brought his close attention to the stories about faith in the Bible. He observed that Kierkegaard, as well as Nietzsche and Dostoevsky, persistently connected his philosophy not with the general mood of the epoch in which he lived but with the conditions of his personal existence (Shestov, 1982, p. 181).[37] Closely related to Kierkegaard's philosophical thought, one of Shestov's major themes in the final period of his life became the opposition of rational knowledge to the truth revealed in faith. For Shestov, Kierkegaard's faith in the Absurd became an 'insane struggle for possibility' (Shestov, 1982, p. 194). Based on the analysis of Dostoevsky and Nietzsche, Shestov developed the core idea of his philosophy of tragedy, proposing that despair may have an 'immense, colossal power', and there, in the horrors of life one can find a guarantee of the future (Shestov, 1968b, p. 217).[38]

The gift of the angel of death and parallels with Freud's psychoanalysis

Throughout his life Shestov was in close contact with his younger sister Fanya Isaakovna Lovtzky (1873–1965), a psychoanalyst, who was analysed by another Russian psychoanalyst Sabina Spielrein (1885–1942), the famous patient of Jung. Fanya became a student of Max Eitingon (1881–1943), a dedicated follower and a friend of Sigmund Freud. In 1922 Fanya introduced Shestov to Eitingon, with whom he maintained a warm friendship for the rest of his life (Hazan and Il'ina, 2014, p. 137).[39] It is apparent from the two friends' correspondence that Shestov and Freud knew of each other, and Freud read Shestov's work. However, according to Aaron Schteinberg, the 'mutual inter-penetrability' of the ideas between the two thinkers was likely to have a disinterested, 'dis-synergic' character, in other words, there didn't seem to be an impulse of mutual attraction between the two men (Rubitel, 2016).[40] Nevertheless, Fanya Lovtzky gave her psychoanalytical appraisal of her brother's work (Schteinberg, 1991, p. 244).[41] According to her, 'in analysing his literary patients Lev was using them as masks', because 'what he was really occupied with was himself, with his auto-analysis. In his work on himself, he anticipates psychoanalysis' (Lovtzky, quoted in Valevicious, 1993, p. 91).[42]

Shestov's 'auto-analysis' could be stimulated by a deep spiritual crisis he went through at the end of 1895, which was possibly due to exhaustion and the stressful atmosphere at his father's textile factory, where he worked, or brought on by some tragic events in his personal life (Baranova-Shestova, 1983, p. 22).[43] Though the exact cause of the nervous breakdown is not known, the experience clearly left a trace in Shestov's mind, as twenty-five years later, on the eleventh of May 1920 the philosopher marked the anniversary of this significant event in his life in his 'Diary of Thoughts' [*Dnevnik Myslej*], describing it as the moment when 'the time fell out of joint' (Shestov, 1978, p. 252)[44]:

> This year it is 25 years since the 'time fell out of joint', or more precisely, it was 25 years last fall at the beginning of September. I'm writing it down so I won't forget. The most important events in life – and no one but you knows anything about them – are easily forgotten.[45]

Shestov repeatedly and indirectly kept returning to the personal crisis in his writing. It is likely that this traumatic event in Shestov's life became a spiritually transformative experience for the writer, leading to the development of a new insight, which he would later attribute to the method of his writing.

As we have seen, the thought of the Russian philosopher manifested itself as an original attempt to confront the unendurable horrors of life. In an effort to find a way to diminish the burden of psychological and

existential suffering, he moved away from the established norms of philosophical investigation. As a way of 'awakening to the absurd evidence of self-subsistent existence' (Fotiade, 2001, p. 91), the philosophy of Lev Shestov became 'the process of embracing an experience of not knowing', and his analysis aimed 'at discovering another dimension' (Rubitel, 2016).[46] Similar to psychoanalysis, it strove to find meaning in apparently meaningless experience (Rubitel, 2016).

In his famous essay 'The Future of an Illusion', contrasting religion with science, Freud drew a sharp distinction between 'reality' and 'fantasy' (Black, 2006, p. 4).[47] In parallel, Shestov contrasted science with philosophy, putting the latter in the domain of the creative activities of man. In one of his letters to Eitingon, Shestov wrote:

> Since my first conversation with you I was assured that psychoanalysis didn't at all prevent you from being open to other fields of human creative activity. Art, literature and philosophy were as close to you as if they had been an object of your constant studies. This made my communication with you very useful and important, not only to me, – but to everyone who met you (Hazan and Il'ina, 2014, p. 163).[48]

Possibly the most consistent of all existential thinkers (Pattison, 1999, p. 191),[49] Shestov referred to his philosophy as an art, and sought to restore the value of imagination for the process of thinking. The parable of the Angel of Death and the acquisition of 'new eyes', following a life-threatening experience allowed him to imagine how the philosopher's or the artist's vision could break through the destruction and chaos of the absurd reality, and, in face of the inevitability of death, reaffirm human life. The idea of receiving a new vision, even if only a step away from madness, which would allow an individual to see things outside the law of reason and preconceived self-evident truths, provided a symbolic meaning to the Russian thinker's lifelong struggle for the right of man to the mysterious and divine gift of a 'created freedom' (Shestov, 1982, pp. 251–252)[50]:

> He to whom the Angel of Death has given the mysterious gift, does not and cannot any longer possess the certainty which accompanies our ordinary judgments and confers a beautiful solidity on the truths of our common consciousness. Henceforth he must live without certainty and without conviction. He will have to give his mind over into strange keeping, become inert matter, clay of which the potter must shape what he will (Shestov, 1968b, pp. 102–103).[51]

Consequently, Shestov took up the cause to fight for his 'created freedom' on behalf of the living individual, as for him, 'human tragedy, the terrors and sufferings of human life, the experience of hopelessness, were the source of philosophy' (Berdyaev, 2015, p. 127).[52]

Conclusion

For Shestov, despair and death, as the greatest mysteries of human existence, invoked an idea of a spiritual and creative transformation. His method of interpreting other thinkers' writing with the focus on the breaking point in one's life and a discourse in one's creative activity, viewing it as an opportunity to questioning one's assumptions and beliefs, was an attempt to relate his own experience to that of others, going through the same transformative process. In his mature work, the philosopher developed his idea a step further, when he understood the experience of facing the tragic reality of life as an opportunity for an individual to discover an 'unfathomable creative force', which could open up the prospect of having a self in which there is something eternal (Patterson, 1982, p. 55)[53]. The parable of the Angel of Death, which captured the imagination of Shestov's contemporaries, widened the field of philosophical investigation into the area of the unconscious, becoming an existential revelation. Similar to the psychoanalytic point of view,

the philosopher viewed freedom as an achievement of a personal development. But unlike Freud's psychoanalysis, which aimed at attaining a deeper analytical understanding of the human psyche, grounded in reason and logical systematization, Shestov's philosophy aspired to find a cure to enable man to withstand the pressure of the tragic reality of human existence by breaking free from the constraints of rational thought.

In the past century Shestov was a pioneer in using psychoanalytic ideas to think how the personal experience of philosophers and artists influences their thought.[54] Today, Shestov's interdisciplinary method of reading literary and philosophical texts (as an artist, philosopher, self-made psychologist, and a literary critic) may provide a valuable resource in the sphere of adult education in the humanities. Ultimately, the philosopher's provocative, metaphorical thought makes an important contribution to the work of other thinkers, learners and educators who perceive learning as a multidisciplinary, transformative lifelong educational process.

Notes

1. According to R. Fotiade, existential philosophy and existentialism were originally two distinct trends of thought dominating the French philosophical debates during the 1920s and 1930s. In the 1930s Jean Wahl contrasted existential thought ['*philosophie de l'existence'*, '*philosophie existentielle*'], which had been previously introduced by Kierkegaard, to existentialism. The term 'existentialism' [*l'existentialisme*] entered the French philosophical vocabulary in the end of the 1930s, mainly in relation to Heidegger. Later, however, the two trends converged, and the term 'existentialism' was used by the philosopher Gabriel Marcel in the early 1940s. R. Fotiade, *Conceptions of the Absurd: From Surrealism to the Existential Thought of Chestov and Fondane* (University of Oxford: Legenda, 2001), p. 14.

2. V. Terras, (Ed.). *Handbook of Russian Literature* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 103.

3. W. Phillips and E. Kurzweil (Eds.), *Literature and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 1.

4. R. D. Laing and D. G. Cooper, *Reason and Violence: A Decade of Sartre's Philosophy 1950–1960* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1964), p. 46.

5. R. Fotiade, *Conceptions of the Absurd: From Surrealism to the Existential Thought of Chestov and Fondane* (University of Oxford: Legenda, 2001), pp. 2–3.

6. Kierkegaard adopted the contradictory statement *credo quia absurdum* [I believe because it is absurd] from *De Carne Christi* (ca. 203–206) by the North African Christian philosopher Tertullian (c. 155 – c. 240 AD).

7. R. Fotiade, *Conceptions of the Absurd: From Surrealism to the Existential Thought of Chestov and Fondane* (University of Oxford: Legenda, 2001), p. 3.

8. B. Groys, *Introduction to Antiphilosophy*, trans. D. Fernbach (London, New York: Verso, 2012), p. 34.

9. M. Finkenthal, *Lev Shestov: Existential Philosopher and Religious Thinker* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), p. 43.

10. A. Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. J. O'Brien (London: Penguin Books, 1955), pp. 30, 34, 20, 49, 38, 49, 27.

11. The Russian philosopher first became known in France as Leon Chestov.

12. S. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. J. A. Underwood (London: Penguin Books, 2004), pp. 33–34. In *Philosophical Fragments or Fragments of Philosophy* (1844) Kierkegaard wrote, 'The Reason says that the Paradox is absurd, but this is mere mimicry, since the Paradox is the Paradox, *quia absurdum*' (1946, pp. 41–42).

13. Shestov drew inspiration for his notion of the 'struggle' from Plotinus's *Enneads* (I, 7), in which the ancient philosopher says that 'a great and final struggle awaits the soul'. Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. with an intr. and com. E. O'Brien, S. J. (Indiana, Indianapolis: Hackett Publ. Company Inc., 1964), p. 41.

14. L. Shestov, *Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Nietzsche*, trans. B. Martin and S. Roberts (Ohio University Press, 1969), p. 197.

15. L. Shestov, *All Things Are Possible* (London: Martin Secker, 1920), p. 38.

16. L. Shestov, *Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Nietzsche*, trans. B. Martin and S. Roberts (Ohio University Press, 1969), p. 148.

17. W. James, *Selected Papers on Philosophy* (New York: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1917), p. 15.

18. In 1910 Shestov wrote an article 'The Logic of Religious Creation: William James', based on his reading of the work of the American philosopher and psychologist.

19. W. James, *Selected Papers on Philosophy* (New York: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1917), p. 17.

20. B. Martin, Introduction to L. Shestov, *A Shestov Anthology*, ed. B. Martin (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1970), p. xiii. Martin cites S. Bulgakov in 'Nekotoryje cherty religioznogo mirovozzrenija L. I. Shestova' (1939).

21. M. U. Lermontov, *Polnoye Sobraniye Sochinenij*, Vol. II (Leningrad: Hudozhestvennaya Literatura, 1941), p. 146. Lermontov's poem *Angel Smerti* [The Angel of Death] was first published in 1857 in Germany and in 1860 in Russia. According to my knowledge, it has not been translated into English.

22. The article 'Overcoming Self-Evident Things' ['Preodoleniye Samoochevidnostej'] was first published in Journal *Contemporary Notes* [*Sovremennye Zapiski*], 1921, no 8–10. Later, it was included in Shestov's volume *In Job's Balances* (1929). An English translation by B. Martin was published by Ohio University Press, 1968, pp. 56–150.

23. L. Shestov, *In Job's Balances*, trans. B. Martin (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1968), pp. 58–59.

24. L. Shestov, *Athens and Jerusalem*, trans. B. Martin, ed. R. Fotiade, 2nd edn (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2016), p. 66.

25. L. Shestov, *Potestas Clavium*, trans. B. Martin (Ohio University Press, 1968), p. 271.

26. See also Freud's article 'Dostoevsky and Parricide' (1928).

27. At the time no segregation had been introduced yet between ordinary and political criminals.

28. L. Shestov, *Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Nietzsche*, trans. B. Martin and S. Roberts (Ohio University Press, 1969), p. 103.

29. L. Shestov, *Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Nietzsche*, p. 149.

30. L. Shestov, *Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Nietzsche*, p. 148.

31. B. Martin, Introduction to L. Shestov, *Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Nietzsche* (Ohio University Press, 1969), p. xxii.

32. L. Shestov, *Manuscripts*, MS201-1, Lausanne, Dec. 1898, p. 10. The Lev Shestov Archive, The Sorbonne Library, Paris. My translation.

33. L. Shestov, *Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Nietzsche*, trans. B. Martin and S. Roberts (Ohio University Press, 1969), p. 317.

34. From the age of thirty-four to forty-four Nietzsche suffered painful and loathsome attacks of an incurable disease. L. Shestov, *Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Nietzsche*, trans. B. Martin and S. Roberts (Ohio University Press, 1969), pp. 303–304.

35. That is, free of pre-conceived ideas, universal truths and dogma.

36. L. Shestov, *Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Nietzsche*, trans. B. Martin and S. Roberts (Ohio University Press, 1969), p. 310.

37. L. Shestov, *Speculation and Revelation*, trans. B. Martin (Ohio University Press, 1982), p. 181.

38. L. Shestov, *Potestas Clavium*, trans. B. Martin (Ohio University Press, 1968b)**,** p. 217; *Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Nietzsche* trans. B. Martin and S. Roberts (Ohio University Press, 1969), p. 310.

39. Max Efimowitsch Eitingon, a son of a wealthy Jewish fur trader from Russia, supported Shestov and his family in every possible way for many years. V. Hazan and E. Il'ina (Eds.), *Istseleniye dlya neistselimyh: Epistolyarnyj dialog L'va Shestova i Maksa Eitingona* (Moskva: Vodolej, 2014), p. 137.

40. A. Rubitel, 'Lev Shestov and Psychoanalysis', paper presented at The Thought from the Outside, conference held at Pushkin House, London on 9th June 2016 to mark Lev Shestov's 150th Birthday Anniversary, p. 3.

41. A. Schteinberg, *Druzia moikh rannih let (1911–1928)* (Paris: Syntaxis, 1991), p. 244.

42. F. Lovtzky, quoted in A. Valevicious, *Lev Shestov and His Times* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), p. 91. A. Valevicious quoted from A. Schteinberg, *Druzia moikh rannih let (1911–1928)* (Paris: Syntaxis, 1991), p. 244. It is well known that a great contribution to the birth of psychoanalysis was the self-analysis that Freud subjected himself to.

43. N. Baranova-Shestova, *Zhizn' L'va Shestova*, Vol. I (Paris: La Presse Libre, 1983) p. 22.

44. L. Shestov, 'Dnevnik Myslej', *Kontinent*, no 8, 1978, p. 252. Shestov quoted Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (Act 1, Scene 5): 'The time is out of joint, O cursed spite, That ever I was born to set it right!'

45. L. Shestov, 'Dnevnik Myslej', *Kontinent*, no 8, 1978, p. 252.

46. R. Fotiade, *Conceptions of the Absurd: From Surrealism to the Existential Thought of Chestov and Fondane* (University of Oxford: Legenda, 2001), p. 91. A. Rubitel, 'Lev Shestov and Psychoanalysis', paper presented at The Thought from the Outside, conference held at Pushkin House, London on 9th June 2016 to mark Lev Shestov's 150th Birthday Anniversary, p. 3.

47. D. M. Black (Ed.). Introduction to D. M. Black (Ed.), *Psychoanalysis and Religion in the 21st Century* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 4.

48. From Shestov's letter to Eitingon, dated 24/06/1931. V. Hazan and E. Il'ina (Eds.), *Istseleniye dlya neistselimyh: Epistolyarnuj dialog L'va Shestova i Maksa Eitingona* (Moskva: Vodolej, 2014), p. 163. My translation.

49. G. Pattison, *Anxious Angels. A Retrospective View of Religious Existentialism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999), p. 191.

50. L. Shestov, *Speculation and Revelation*, trans. B. Martin (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1982), pp. 251–252. According to Shestov, Dostoevsky and Nietzsche (as well as Plato) were among the rare few endowed with the second pair of eyes from the Angel of Death. The new eyesight helped them to reveal the unthinkable realities of their existence that they were not able to see before.

51. L. Shestov, *In Job's Balances,* trans. B. Martin (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1968), pp. 102–103.

52. N. Berdyaev, 'The Fundamental Idea of Lev Shestov's Philosophy', in N. Berdyaev, *The Brightest Lights of the Silver Age. Essays on Russian Religious Thinkers*, trans. B. Jakim (Ohio: Semantron Press, 2015), p. 127.

53. D. Patterson, *Faith and Philosophy* (Washington, D. C.: University Press of America, 1982), p. 55.

54. Some academics today, for example, R. Fotiade, A. Rubitel and V. Paperny, associate Shestov's style of writing with the psychoanalytic line of literary and philosophical scholarship.

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