

National Culture: On the Hermeneutical Contours of “Fateful Question” in Russia

Vasili V. Lipich, Tamara I. Lipich, Elena N. Motovnikova, Pavel A. Olkhov,
Vitali V. Penskoj and Svetlana I. Shatokhina
Belgorod State University, Pobeda Str. 85, 308015 Belgorod, Russia

Abstract: The study is dedicated to investigation of one of the cross-cutting issues of the European and, in particular, Russian social idea of the 19th century its national-cultural identity. The contribution made in this history of this issue by the half-remembered or interpreted with some Universalist enhancement A. Grigoriev and N. Strakhov. In this regard, the researchers pay special attention to the methods and methodological approaches of the comparative-historical analysis and the literature-philosophical hermeneutics, contextual and situational-event-driven analysis (case studies). In the course of the study, performed by the researchers, it was established that the issue of the national-cultural identity in the Russian social idea of the 19th century cannot be represented in the conceptually completed form in a diagram or universalistic form. The statement of this question and searches for the answers to it during the 19th century were distinguished through wide variety. Within this variety special attention shall be paid to the mean line developed as the literature-philosophical criticism by the nationalists (‘essentialists’) A. Grigoriev and N. Strakhov who raised this question and proposed to solve it from the perspective of the mystical-Christian understanding of the spiritual fundamentals of the historical behavior and historical relationships between the nations. Thereby the tradition of the integral social thinking hermeneutics-responsive, rational and free was established. The researchers of the study believe that such understanding of the issues of the national-cultural identity is quite topical not only within the history of the social idea but also within the modern perplexed global world that requires updating the theoretical grounds, the new theoretical vitality.

Key words: The spiritual foundations of culture, national uniqueness, national prejudices, social hermeneutics, hermeneutics

INTRODUCTION

Almost from the very beginning of the 19th century, the two ontological drives began acting intensively and contradictorily. The first of them, striving for integrating in the common European tradition of the Enlightenment to actively master its conceptual priorities that up to then were the pupil’s destiny of the ‘curious Scythians’ (A.S. Pushkin). Another drive, a not less deep one national spiritual consolidation. Both drives were enhanced by the events of the years 1812-1814 and promoted to some vital duality, quite wide spread of both the moral double think and the socio-ethical protest and cultural game. We can easily find the cleat and sincere reflections of these drives, for example, in the Pushkin’s heritage. Being nearly the contemporary of the 19th century, Pushkin lived his life glorifying the ‘days of Catherine’ and singing the double requiem to Napoleon and Byron (“To the sea”), poeticizing the Russian old days or echoing as a sardonic Christmas fairy tale the return of Alexander I from Warsaw where he satisfied the Polish Sejm with the promise to grant the Poles the

constitution and apply it to the Russian nobility (“Fairytale. Noel”), etc. At those days, the systematic national philosophical tradition was only started up; the carrier of the supreme ideals and values as well as the area of disputes concerning any vital issues was the intelligent and free Russian word, Russian literature (Walicki, 1979; Wachtel and Vinitsky, 2013). One of the cross-cutting issues occupying the Russian idea at those days was the issues of the national-cultural identity (Rabow-Edling, 2007; Rabow-Edling, 2005; Horujy, 2010). The statement thereof cannot be presented in a certain conceptually completed form; this was the question about the future of the Russian idea that could not be reduced to the issue of its imitativeness or specific originality. How this question was raised and which answers to it were found requires special investigation, more exactly the research rehabilitation. During the last decades, time after, the schematism in understanding of this issue as the battle of philosophical proto-parties of the Slavophiles and Westernizers prevails; the history of this issue often appears in some universalistic way as the history of dependence on nationalism as a prejudice, releasing from

it and persisting in it. Such linear, politically committed approach shall be reduced by the ontological measure of non-linear, hermeneutically correct understanding of the issue (Haarmann, 2007). The national in the interconnection with the relevant reasoning (Lowell, 1896).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodological priorities of the study are determined by the necessity of the 'second navigation' with respect to the issue of the national cultural identity of the Russian idea. In this regard, the researchers pay special attention to the methods and techniques of comparative-historical analyzes and literature-philosophical hermeneutics, contextual and situational-event-driven (case studies) of the famous, half-remembered and significantly interpreted materials of the history of the Russian idea of the 19th century.

The European rationalism and the movement of "native soil": Some contemporaries discovered in the Russian literature of the Pushkin period the complete embeddedness into the universalistic European rationalism. Thus in 1837 in Germany, there was issued the book of essays about the Russian literature by G. Konig in which the researcher thoroughly analyzed the spiritual searches of the Russian writers and noted in the new literature generation spreading of the 'German taste and German literary trends', made conclusion as to their striving for deeper penetration and 'philosophical substantiation of the German spirit' (Konig, 1837). The movement towards the ideological identity required self-determination of the Russian national culture with respect to the cultural achievements of the European enlightenment and Romanism and vice versa. As the prerequisite and consequence of these trends, special interest in the own literature sources and in the modern literature works in terms of distinguishing their folk's elements was raised. By characterizing the Russian literature of the 19th century Mamardashvili (1990) said that it 'attempted to "give birth to a whole country from words meanings from the truth"'. One of the phenomena of this complex process was the literature-philosophical movement of the 'nationalists' that occupied in the disputes concerning the national issue "the position that emphasized the conceptual historicity and the specific of the issues of the national itself" (Motovnikova, 2014). The history showed that romanticism has become that "borderline situation" that promotes to creation of the new values, ideals on the basis of which our national culture was created (Lipich, 2014). This was absolutely

clearly understood by Grigoriev (1990b) that thought that 'the folk character of literature as a nationality is an unconditional, inherent concept' and wrote, in particular: Our Russian Romanticism cast in our unique forms was not just a literary but a vital phenomenon, the whole era of the moral development, the era featuring its own color that gave birth to the specific view of the world. Although, the romantic trends arrived from the outside, from the Western life and literatures, it found in the Russian character the soil ready for reception, thereof and thus, represented in the absolutely original phenomena' (Grigoriev, 1990a). In his literary-philosophical researchers, Grigoriev showed that the era of the universal 'objective' truth remained in the ancient Homer times and carrying back from the branched national-cultural diversity to an abstract unity is an artificial and false idea. On the contrary, the modern humankind is multi-faced in nationalities and 'the more an artist is able to sincerely express his feelings and vivid thoughts the more distinctively a Christian soul faces the ideal common to all Christians and the unique living, i.e., cultural identity' (Krivushina, 2002; Horujy, 2010; Rabow-Edling, 2005; Rabow-Edling, 2007).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Spiritual Foundations of national behavior: hermeneutics of diversity: In the form of the literary criticism the essentialists A. Grigoriev followed by N. Strakhov raised the question not from the external perspective about the 'national interests', 'national identity features', 'national character', etc. but hermeneutically, from the perspective of the mystical-Christian understanding of the spiritual fundamentals of the historical behavior and historical relationships between the nations, thereby creating the new tradition of holistic thinking, response-rational, hermeneutical "free conservatism" (Olkhov, 2010). This tradition was not the invention of anything completely new or imitation of the half-remembered. During the Polish rebellion of 1863 (Walicki, 1979; Sugar, 2002), Strakhov (2007b) called for not just preventing the attempt of violation of the state integrity but taking a close look at the causes of the interethnic hostility: "Let's try to understand the spirit of the Poles, put ourselves in their shoes and look from their perspective". Strakhov (2007b) wrote: "to be able to fight for the united state one shall be sure that it has the vital grounds in the folk itself, has clear prospects for development and prosperity. Going deeply into the 'inner mood of the two nations', trying to 'trace the sources of inner pain to be felt by mutual struggling', he assume, he challenged the public opinion

and the authorities to take care of ‘how the attitudes of the nations shall be changed to make it possible to hope for moral healing’ (Strakhov, 2007b). Such statement raised a number of reproaches towards the researcher on the part of compatriots and the censor repressions of the journal, however, Strakhov (2007a) held to his own: “we would be ashamed if we would defend the integrity of Russia only on the basis of its tribal and state power; if repeating the well-known saying: Russia is all in the future, we only had hope that we would sort everything out with time become more ‘Europeans’ and not worse than the rest. No, we have to necessarily believe that we have the deep roots of the unique culture that the power of this culture was and still is the main engine of our historical life”. We believe that these roots shall be seen in the history of organic thinking in its common proto-European images and forms.

Strakhov (2007a, b) and Grigoriev (1990a, b) raised the question of the fundamentals of the spiritual confrontation between the ‘own and Foreign (strange)’ the depth of which was unclear to most of contemporaries. Even today, a century and a half later, despite dissemination within the scientific world, the investigation and discussion of the nature of national prejudices and stereotypes is often hardly perceived by the Russian society. It may be that indeed the ‘increased striving of the modern people for recognition of their national identity even if within the limits of a stereotype acts simultaneously as a response to depersonalization of a human and kind of weapon in fighting against this problem also with the use of literature’ (Filyushkina, 2005). However, recognizing the right of any human and nation to appreciate its exclusiveness and originality if it is required for happiness and calmness, we cannot ignore the unfree, irrational character of this ‘national honor’, rising above the own ‘us’ though diminution of the ‘them’. The modern studies show that origination of a stereotype, primarily a negative one, is pre-conditioned by historical reasons and this stereotype persists (sometimes for ages!) even when these reasons vanish and the society forgets about them” (Filyushkina, 2005; Walas, 1995). Strakhov (2007a) was keen enough to understand and express this in the philosophical-historical hermeneutic context, in substance, long before all cultural-anthropologic verifications. “Neither culture may take itself for sick just the same as neither religion may take itself for heresy and neither heresy takes itself for a wrong belief. This is why it is not surprisingly that ‘the Poles can hardly see us other than as Barbarians’”. This is absolutely understandable. It is inevitable in case of fighting and confrontation. As is known, the Austrians are a rather educated nation but as

for the Italians, at the height of hostility, they were rather “brutissimi”. And the Poles were not far to seek calling us Barbarians. Europe caressing them calls us that daily in the numerous magazines. Let’s put it straight: Europe does not understand us and makes us prove with our strength and our blood that we have rights of existence and development. However, we know that these rights are as extensive and sacred as no one else’s in the world”.

However, if the alternative of mutual understanding and respectful patience is to ‘prove with our strength and our blood that we have rights of existence and development’ then apparently, our duty to the literary and philosophical tradition is not to warm up the emotions, not to escalate the ‘fateful question’ but on the contrary to develop the hermeneutic fundamentals in the social studies. The already existing examples of the social-economic hermeneutics (Bauman, 2010) shall be followed by the national-cultural ones.

CONCLUSION

The study performed may be considered as kind of experience in rehabilitation of rising the issue of the national-cultural identity as it was stated in the history of the Russian idea represented by its most sharp-sighted (Grigoriev, 1990a, b; Strakhov, 2007a, b). There is no need to say that this experience is not completed it all we would be glad to assume that it will become the structural component of the talk about the advantages of the Russian intellectual legacy of the 19th century that these advantages may be demanded in the social studies of the 10’s of the 21st century. Namely, the following appears to be topical.

The issue of the national-cultural identity occupying the Russian social idea in the 19th cannot be historically perceived and understood in some conceptually completed form in a diagram or universalistic form as the issue of the battle between the philosophical proto-parties of the Slavophiles and Westernizers, dependence on nationalism as a prejudice, releasing from it and persisting in it. The linear, politically committed approach to understanding of this issue shall be reduced by the non-linear, hermeneutically correct understanding of the issue.

The statement of this question and searches for the answers were distinguished through wide variety. Within this variety special attention shall be paid to the mean line developed as the literature-philosophical criticism by the nationalists (‘essentialists’), A. Grigoriev and N. Strakhov who raised this question asymmetrically to tradition of the European rational metaphysics of the national from the perspective of the mystical-Christian understanding of the

spiritual fundamentals of the historical behavior and historical relationships between the nations. Thereby, the tradition of holistic social thinking that is responsive-rational and free was.

The proposed hermeneutic understanding of the issue of the national-cultural identity was complicated and rather promising within the context of disputes about the national held by contemporaries of A. Grigoriev and N. Strakhov and appears to be rather topical in the modern perplexed global world that requires updating the theoretical grounds, the new theoretical vitality (Groff and Smoker, 2014).

REFERENCES

- Bauman, Z., 2010. *Hermeneutics and Social Science (Routledge Revivals): Approaches to Understanding*. Taylor and Francis Ltd.
- Filyushkina, S., 2005. Natsionalny stereotip v massovom soznanii i literature (opyt issledovatel'skogo podhoda). *Logos*, 4 (49): 141-155 (In Russian).
- Grigoriev, A.A., 1990a. *Vzglyad na russkuyu literaturu so smerti Pushkina. Sochineniya*. Moskva: Hudozhestvennaya literatura. V 2r. T. 2. Stat'i. Pisma pp: 48-124 (In Russian).
- Grigoriev, A.A., 1990b. *Posle "Grozy" Ostrovskogo. Sochineniya*. Moskva: Hudozhestvennaya literatura. V 2r. T. 2. Stat'i. Pisma, pp: 212-245 (In Russian).
- Groff, L. and P. Smoker, 2014. Spirituality, religion, culture and peace: exploring the foundations for inner-outer peace in the 21st century. *The International Journal of Peace Studies*, 19-1. http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/ijps/vol1_1/smoker.html.
- Haarmann, H., 2007. *Foundations of Culture: Knowledge-construction, Belief Systems and Worldview in Their Dynamic Interplay*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften.
- Horujy, S., 2010. Slavophiles, Westernizers and The birth of Russian philosophical humanism. G.M. Hamburg and R.A. Poole (Eds.), *A History of Russian Philosophy 1830-1930: Faith, Reason and the Defense of Human Dignity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp: 27-51.
- Konig, H., 1837. *Literarische Bilder aus Russland*. Stuttgart und Tubingen.
- Krivushina, V.F., 2002. K probleme mezhkulturnogo obscheniya v iskusstve. *Apollon Grigoriev i Gans Georg Gadamer. Credo New*. No. 3 (In Russian). <http://credonew.ru/content/view/286/27/>.
- Lowell, J.R., 1896. *Our literature (1889). Prose works*. Vol. VI. Boston.
- Lipich, V.V., 2014. A.S. Pushkin-romantik i problema formirovaniya natsionalnogo samosoznaniya. *Research Result. Series Social Studies and Humanities*, 1: 46-53 (In Russian).
- Mamardashvili, M., 1990. *Kak ya ponimayu filosofiyu*. Moskva: Progress (In Russian).
- Motovnikova, E.N., 2014. Natsional'ny vopros: opyt sotsial'noy germenevtiki N.N. Strakhova. *Voprosy Filosofii*, 11: 69-78 (In Russian).
- Olkhov, P.A., 2010. Svobodny konservator: na podstupah k filosofii istorii N.N. Strakhova. *Filosofia i Kultura*, 8: 103-109 (In Russian).
- Rabow-Edling, S., 2005. The Role of "Europe" in Russian Nationalism: Reinterpreting the Relationship between Russia and the West in Slavophil Thought. Susan P. McCaffray and Michael Melancon (Ed.) *Russia in the European Context, 1789-1914: A Member of the Family*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp: 97-109.
- Rabow-Edling, S., 2007. *Slavophile Thought and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism*. SUNY Press.
- Strakhov, N.N., 2007a. Pismo k redaktoru "Dnja". I.S. Aksakov N.N. *Strakhov: Perepiska*. Ottawa: Ottavskiy universitet, pp: 173-179 (In Russian).
- Strakhov, N.N., 2007b. Rokovoy vopros. I.S. Aksakov N.N. *Strakhov: Perepiska*. Ottawa: Ottavskiy Universitet, pp: 157-167 (In Russian).
- Sugar, P.F., 2002. *Nations and nationalisms in East-Central Europe, 1806-1948: A festschrift for Peter F. Sugar*. Slavica.
- Walas, T., 1995. *Stereotypes and Nations*. Cracow: International Cultural Centre.
- Walicki, A., 1979. *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Wachtel, A.B. and I. Vinitzky, 2013. *Russian Literature*. John Wiley and Sons.