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Stolovich's "Pluralism v filosofii i filosofii pluralizma, [Pluralism in Philosophy and Philosophy of Pluralism]" and Stolovich's "Istoriia russkoi filosofii: Ocherki, [History of Russian Philosophy: Essays]" - Book Review

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“our conviction in the existence of both ‘I’ and ‘Thou’ in the fullest degree is confirmed in the state of love” (p. 50). As a “[s]upreme metaphysical feeling of world harmony, the feeling of Absolute being through the harmony of two human beings” (p. 127) love is analyzed in a separate chapter inspired by Solov’evian philosophy of love.

Another metaphysical object which is discussed in the book is Russia. Kurashov defines Russia’s national identity as the “national substance in general ‘minus’ the attributes of the all-human substance” (p. 204). In his opinion, it is best reflected in the traditions of the Russian nation. Here the reader comes across quite paradoxical and highly debatable statements concerning the “essence of Russianness. “ One learns, for instance, that a person “who never drunk vodka [is] not quite Russian” (p. 227), and that individuals can be Russians “by genes, but not Russian in spirit” (p. 254). Such theses, in my view, have not been supported by sound argumentation. The same objection refers to the author’s understanding of orthodox religiosity and its relation to other confessions (pp. 248-249). In spite of these shortcomings, however, VI. Kurashov’s monograph overall represents an original contribution to Russian religious philosophy and to its creative transformation in post-Soviet times.

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Leonid N. Stolovich, *Pluralism v filosofii i filosofii pluralizma*, [Pluralism in Philosophy and Philosophy of Pluralism], Tallinn: Ingri, 2005, 336 pp.

Leonid N. Stolovich, *Istoriia russkoi filosofii: Ocherki*, [History of Russian Philosophy: Essays], Moscow: Respublika, 2005, 495 pp. Reviewed by Mikhail Sergeev.

Professor Emeritus of Tartu University, Estonia, Dr. Leonid N. Stolovich is a specialist in aesthetics, theory of value and history of philosophy. He authored more than forty books and five hundred scholarly articles which appeared in twenty languages. *Pluralism in Philosophy* and *History of Russian Philosophy* are his two latest works. In my view, they are related to each other with respect to their central theme.

The first book, *Pluralism in Philosophy and Philosophy of Pluralism* makes a case for, and methodically develops the notion of “systemic pluralism” in philosophy. Prof. Stolovich writes here “about conceptual pluralism and not about ontological pluralism of being.” (p. 19) It may seem that in this context “systemic pluralism” is a contradiction in terms since, as the author points out, “*systematicity* presupposes a certain kind of *monism* which is opposed to pluralism by definition! On the other hand, isn’t it [true] that *any system* is the system [composed] of various elements?” (p. 19)

Prof. Stolovich resolves the apparent contradiction by presenting his definition of “systemic pluralism.” In his view, “if the elements which are encompassed by the system, are

heterogeneous and seemingly... incompatible with each other, then the system of such elements forms a *systemic pluralism*.” (p. 19)

In the first section of his book prof. Stolovich discusses the notion of “systemic pluralism” in relation to other ideas such as, eclecticism, tolerance, wisdom and others.

In the second part of the book he lays the foundation of his approach to philosophy and religion. In a chapter called “Pluralism of theological agnosticism,” (pp. 125-138), for instance, prof. Stolovich applies the notion of “systemic pluralism” to religion. Here he claims that “theological agnosticism conducts an uneasy dialogue with religion and atheism and represents a certain kind of conceptual pluralism.” (p. 127) According to prof. Stolovich,

Theological agnosticism... is based on the impossibility to prove rationally the existence of [a personal] God... and [it] has two manifestations. One of them is doubt in the existence of God, the affirmation of the impossibility to settle the very question of his existence. The second type of theological agnosticism presupposes, on the other hand, faith in the reality of God, but develops a thought of him being unknowable, unfathomable. (p. 128)

Overall, Prof. Stolovich concludes:

Being situated somewhat between theism and atheism, theological agnosticism possesses tolerance which is based on the appropriateness of pluralistic worldview. It defends freedom of conscience of a person who is free to profess any religion or not to be religious at all. Theological agnosticism is not the lack of faith. Without believing in the supreme power which stands above the world, it is filled with faith in universal human values, including [those in] the moral sphere. (p. 138)

In the last section of his book prof. Stolovich applies the notion of “systemic pluralism” to the history of philosophy by analyzing a variety of philosophical systems in its light. Here one reads, for instance, about kantianism and marxism, personalism and pragmatism, scientism and postmodernism. A separate chapter of this third section is devoted to Russian philosophy. (ch. 2, pp. 214-66)

The second book by prof. Stolovich, *History of Russian Philosophy* continues this theme. It represents a broader, already a book-length overview of Russian thought from the perspective of “systemic pluralism.” A famous two-volume classic *A History of Russian Philosophy* which was written by a Russian émigré and an Orthodox priest Vassilii Zenkovskii in 1940s, emphasized Christian influences, spirit and character of Russian philosophical speculation. Soviet textbooks on the subject, on the contrary, focused on the secular and anti-religious trends in Russian thought – seeing the evolution of Russian intellectual tradition as moving inevitably and progressively toward

atheism. In contrast to those two polarizing perspectives, the book by prof. Stolovich, written already in post-Soviet times, postulates the impossibility in principle to reduce Russian philosophy to its either religious or secular sources, Orthodoxy or atheism. According to prof. Stolovich, modern Russian thought displays a considerable variety of trends, schools and approaches which cannot be reduced to any one underlying theme, principle or intuition.

Such a pluralistic standpoint finds its proper manifestation in the way the book itself is structured. There are chapters here on such traditional topics as: philosophical thought in medieval Russia (11-17th c.) and philosophy in the century of the Enlightenment (18th c. – Lomonosov, Novikov, Radishchev, Skovoroda); Westerners and Slavophiles (Chaadaev, Stankevich, Belinskii, Gertsen, Kireevskii, Khomiakov, Aksakov, Samarin). Other 19th century topics include: anthropological principle and social radicalism (Chernyshevskii, Dobroliubov, Pisarev, Lavrov); in search of idealism (Dostoevskii, Fiodorov, Leontiev, Tolstoy); philosophy of total-unity in the works of Vl. Soloviev and his followers (S. N. and E. N. Trubetskie, Bulgakov, Florenskii, Ern, Karsavin); philosophy of ideal-realism (Lopatin, Losskii, Frank). One also finds in the book chapters on 20th century thought: existentialist philosophy (Berdiaev, Shestov); neo-kantianism (Vvedenskii, Lapshin, Stepun, Gessen, Iakovenko); phenomenology (Shpet); religion, philosophy and politics (Il'in, Fedotov); as well as marxism (Plekhanov, Bogdanov, Lunacharskii). Separate chapters are devoted to philosophy and aesthetics (Bakhtin, Losev) and the thought of Russian artists, poets and writers (philosophical thought of the first half of the 19th century – Karamzin, Pushkin, Baratynskii, Tiutchev, Venevitinov, Odoevskii; philosophy and artistic creativity – Rozanov, Merezhkovskii, Vyach. Ivanov, Andrei Belyi, akmeism, futurism, formal school).

Overall, this new pluralistic approach to the study of Russian thought seems to be more in tune with the spirit of the new democratic – post-tsarist and post-Soviet – Russia. As prof. Stolovich himself points out in the first book *Pluralism in Philosophy*:

Pluralistic philosophy contains the possibility to provide a theoretical ground for human freedom and political democracy... Pluralism which presupposes tolerance, and tolerance which does not lead to the cessation of pluralism, can be considered as a social ideal of the highest value. (p. 317)

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