

SERBIAN-RUSSIAN CULTURAL RELATIONS IN PHILOSOPHY – ORIENTATION ATTEMPT

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„I might be wrong but concerning philosophy Russia represents only repetition, fantastic warps and serious deformations of European thought. Even¹ in the last twenty years, in the Bolshevik period, Russia has not given one book, one page capable of truly illuminating one philosophical problem. What I happened to read in translation from newer Russian writers, be they theoreticians or historians, was merely a banal application of Marxist formulae. Russia did have artists of genius like Tolstoy. In the end, it was not me who observed the deep and serious fissure cut out and left behind in the Russian mind through a deficit of logical-scholastic education – from which European culture drew all of its great benefits“ (Benedetto Croce²).

„The particularity of Russian philosophy, which is so indifferent towards ordinary ‘school philosophy’, is very often the reason for a careless relation towards her. In contemporary times, however, that nonchalant relation has retreated. For today, more than ever, what the world requires is one thing *needful*³, which has always comprised the life of Russian philosophy“ (Vasily V. Zenkovsky, 1922⁴).

In the following text we offer a reflexion of cultural relations between Serbia and Russia, in view of the way they refract through theoretical culture of philosophy. The history of Russian and Serbian culture, or, the history of relations towards our historical relations, including thinking about those

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¹ It is clear that Croce directs his attack at Soviet Marxism. The cutting edge of his critical point of view, however, runs through Russian philosophy as such. Out of the statement given by Croce, as a moment implied, it also follows that the range of his criticism encompasses the religious and philosophical thinkers of the Russian ‘Silver age’ (Серебряный век), namely doctrines that include ideas of ‘all-unity’, ‘God-Manhood’, ‘Sabornicity’, ‘Sophiology’, ‘Ungrundology’, ‘Groundlessness’ etc), not only extravagant Leninists and their epigons.

² Bogdan Radica, *Agony of Europe*, Belgrade 1940 = Богдан Радица, *Агонија Европе*, СКЦ, Београд ³1995 (1940), 174-175 — in Serbian Cyrillic. The conversation between Radica and Croce took place during the third decade of last century, within the context of Tomáš G. Masaryk’s reception of the ‘Russian idea’. Radica asks Croce whether he still holds the same standpoint in relation to Russian philosophy as voiced ‘twenty years ago’. The two erudites are most probably thematizing the following works by Masaryk: idem, *Slavjanofilism I. S. Kirejevského*, 1889; idem, *Zaklady marxizmu filosoficke a sociologicke*, 1898; idem, *Rusko a Evropa (The Spirit of Russia)* 1919. The Italian translation of the study *Rusko a Evropa* appeared in Rome in 1925.

³ Allusion to the verse of the Holy Scripture of the New Testament: ‘Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful (hreiá hē enós)...’ (Lk 10, 41-42).

⁴ At the Orthodox Faculty of Theology of Belgrade University archpriest Vasily Zenkovsky taught psychology and pedagogy and then history of philosophy in the period from 1920. to 1923. He was a prolific writer at the time: publishing, for instance, in the magazine *Christian life* then edited by blessed Fr Justin Popovic (e.g. idem, ‘The Return to Religious Ethics’, *Christian life* 10-11 [1924] 420-429; 466-473). Whilst in Belgrade he published *The Psychology of the Child* (1923); previously in Zagreb he published another important work: *Russian Thinkers and Europe* (1922) = Василије В. Зењковски, *Руски мислиоци и Европа*, translation: Марија и Брана Марковић, ЦИД, Подгорица 1995, 14 [in Serbian Cyrillic] = Василий В. Зењковский, *Русские мыслители и Европа*, Париж ²1955 (second enlarged edition [in Russian Cyrillic]). See also in English: idem, *Russian Thinkers in Europe*, Michigan 1953.

relations, we leave in the background (as implied moments [which have to be presupposed due to limited exposition space]). Our goal is envisaged with another and different intention in mind. That is to say, the goal is seen as condensed articulation of main reasons for which this relation, as far as philosophy is concerned, appears as a problem for us – ‘today’. However, our exposition is *no more* than a proposal for commencing a long overdue debate on the subject. For this reason we opt for a structural cross-section of the problem (keeping the diachronical cross-section in reserve). We shall expound a (1) *description* of state of affairs, then a (2) *diagnosis* of the problem and, finally, offer a (3) *prescriptive* proposals for overcoming the ailing state of Serbian-Russian affairs (when the philosophical aspect is at stake).

1. Let us take philosophy to be a universal form of critical self-consciousness. Hence, if philosophy is taken as a ‘paradigm’ of universal possibilities of self-reflected discourse, then one may procure a useful framework for all-encompassing observation of the problem of *Serbian-Russian relations* (in and through philosophy, of course). Being a conceptual expression of mediation of the universal and particular (on the level of concretization of interests, goals and problems of cultures) – the ‘paradigm’ of philosophy, *inter alia*, may be utilised as a very indicative framework for *manifesting* characteristics of the Serbian-Russian ‘relation’. The main problem, however, is not a purely ‘theoretical’ question: viz. the relation of universal and particular (local) in philosophy ‘in itself’. We have something else in mind: namely, when *Serbian-Russian* cultural relations are in question, the problem in the *philosophical* sense appears through the following *paradox*. Let us take a look (at the price of oppositional generalisation): on one hand, the fact of self-specific (*samobitni*) origins in Slavic culture and Orthodox spirituality (which are denied by no one as such) are recognised as *pivotal points* for deducing and stabilizing identity⁵ (from personal to national and general cultural identity), whilst, on the other hand, precisely those origin points (and their transmission structures) are not only brought into question but *negated* (ignored by certain influential groups, to say the least) – when philosophy and philosophers are concerned.

The aforementioned *tendency* surely is a paradoxical one. It has certain strength and no short tradition in Serbian theoretical thought (Russians themselves are not spared of such processes either [an eminent Russian philosopher, Mikhail Maslin, spoke recently of the paradox of ‘expulsion of Russian philosophers from Russian philosophy⁶]). In other words, the paradox

⁵ Next to the *reflexive* meaning of the concept of identity (deduced through reflecting conditions of possibility of consciousness about particularity and irreducibility of the personal self) – as unseparable, we also add the *narrative* meaning of the concept of identity, which we take as ‘the story about who we are’. As the aforementioned thinker Maslin stated: ‘We may also add that the Russian idea is in many ways tied to the questions of the Russian people about themselves: who are we as such, where do we come from and whereto are we going?’, v. Mikhail A. Maslin, *On the Unity of Russian Philosophy*, St Petersburg 2006 = Михаил А. Маслин, *О единстве русской философии*, из цикла: Семинары по русской философии, Русская христианская гуманитарная академия, Санкт-Петербург 28.04.2006 — in Russian Cyrillic (= DVD видео формат + <http://www.rchgi.spb.ru/seminars/seminar.htm>).

⁶ Mikhail A. Maslin, *op. cit.*

is contained in the fact that both sides: supporters of affirmation and supporters of 'negation' (or 'nominal' acknowledgement) of those pivotal points of 'origin', both ('have to') *refer* to it equally. However, the prevailing ways of *referring* are established either through neo-romantic rhetoric (mythologization), or resistance to those self-specific pivotal points through another type of rhetoric (through neo-enlightenment critique of the 'lazy [Orthodox] East', which is itself parasitic on myth: *mythos* of enlightening humanity through reason from 'the West').

In a word, the problem is not only in the dispute itself, but also in the way (mode) of dispute. Let us generalise the aspect of extreme tendencies: the problem is contained in the fact that the argument unfolds through *ideologised* discourses under the sign of 'mythologisation' which, to aggravate the problem further, mostly pass (or trespass) below or outside the level of *institutional* or instituted⁷ responsible (self)reflexion. This means that the results and viewpoints of both 'parties' are in advance condemned to modest success or, rather, to failure. This is what we propose to call the '**state of affairs**', or a *conditio relationis serbica et russica in philosophia* (or, more accurately, still outside – ad extra – philosophy [if it is to include disciplined and regular reflexion on the Serbian-Russian relation: a philosophical relation too, which legitimately may aspire to include the particularity of *Slavic* and *Orthodox* points of identity origin as non-discardable sources of meaning – meaning with philosophical potential and relevance]).

The aforementioned propositions and suggestions may be illustrated by means of the following examples: again under signs of a paradox of sorts.

First, since the foundation of the Serbian philosophical society in 1898⁸ (1938) until the present, that is for 112 (72) years, the Faculty of Philosophy of Belgrade University has not managed to found a Chair for *Russian* or *Slavic* philosophy (or at least a subject in domain of facultative-optional teaching [not to mention a subject for Serbian philosophy at the Faculty of Philosophy at Moscow State University, let us add not without a note of self-irony]). However, such is the case within the ex-Yugoslav and, of course, Serbian⁹ theoretical-cultural area as a whole. If we repeat our thesis that it is 'generally' taken as undisputable that the Serbian national (spiritual, cultural, social... etc) corpus, similarly to the Russian one, draws origin roots from the

⁷ By distinguishing the 'institutional' and 'instituted' we refer to the fact that there is no institutionally posited regular and official dialogue on these problems, *although* there is 'permission' – more accurately, there is no serious hinderance – to discuss these matters *from time to time* through certain institutions (our gathering being one such case, for instance). The question is, then, whether this is intended: guided indifference, or, simply, a cumulative negative effect due to years and years of neglect of the matter?

⁸ That occurred just one year after the publication of the seminal study: Vladimir Solovyev, *Justification of the Good*, St Petersburg 1897 = Владимир С. Соловьев, *Оправдание добра*, СПб. 1897 (Москва 21899) — in Russian Cyrillic.

⁹ We know of one exception only. Namely, the obligatory subject *Slavic philosophy* – taught at the Faculty of Philosophy of Nikšić University (Montenegro): introduced at the end of the 90-ties of last century (on initiative by Bogoljub Šijaković, the other professors and lecturers being Nikola Milošević, Radomir Đorđević and Radoje Golović). But this only proves that 'nulla regula sine exceptione'.

Orthodox-Slavic areal (Orthodoxy taken to have immanently integrated classical *Greek* culture¹⁰), and if we reiterate that Russian culture (to put it lightly) is *significant* (one of its prominent currents establishing itself by recurring not only to Greece but to Byzantium as well¹¹), *then* such a state 'at home' is indicative of a bizarre as much as unfavourable situation. This situation is explainable. However, it needs to be *overcome*.

Of course, the first step should be rising the problem-matter to *self-consciousness* and then *orientation* through updated contemporary thematization¹² of meaning and importance of that Orthodox-Slav 'layer' too of our inherited legacy – including integrative capacities and aspects of its ideas and ideals (let us indicate towards one exemplary instance: namely, that would ask for a new thematisation of the [kerygmatic] culture of expressing messages on the all-value of meaningful and deified Man in Christ as given through historical experience and theoretical language of Orthodox spirituality (the Greek layers notwithstanding, of course): in our case Slavic-Serbian and Slavic-Russian Orthodoxy – to mention only the primary value of *theosis* (deifying life in Christ), the prime value at least of Russian religious philosophy, which overdetermines its axiological field).

Second, this by no means implies that there is 'no' reception of Russian (or Russian Orthodox) philosophy into Serbian cultural surroundings (nor does this imply that only its Christian form has been received) – to the contrary. But the reception process transpires, so to speak, at the *margin* inscribed by force of conscious-unconscious *indifference* of certain scientific-cultural institutions. Let us clarify our point. We take the term 'margin' to mean not only neglected (or 'rejected') passionate amateurs – 'marginals'. Rather, we take it to mean an interiorized neglect: namely, the *marginalisation of expert work* on Russian-Serbian philosophical culture-relations *within institutions themselves*, where work transpires either in patchy fashion or through projects of relatively isolated groups, or, rather – individuals. This is then a marginalisation moment of those institutions *themselves* (establishments otherwise called to conduct that kind of reflexion as well) – a marginalisation *from within themselves*. *That* is the margin we are primarily speaking of. It is not analogous to the image of a Don Quichottean enthusiast but, rather, it is alike to the tolerated subject (the individual 'from' the institution and-or the institution 'itself') – a subject analogous to grey zones of disordered interregni of transitional society in general.

This explains, let us add en passant, why the medium of expressing the 'margin' (*margo* in both meanings of the term: extra-institutional and quasi-institutional) is primarily posited as paper presentation or isolated public lecture et cetera, however, *not* as regular symposia of academics or

¹⁰ Demetrios J. Constantelos, *The Greeks: Their Heritage and Its Value Today*, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline, Massachusetts 2006, 25f, 83f, 109f.

¹¹ As is it suggestively appears through readings of disparate authors such as K. N. Leontiev (1831-1891), G. Florovsky (1893-1979), S. Averincev (1937-2004) or S. Horuzhy (*1941) and many others.

¹² A conference discussion of these questions, as envisaged in our gathering, is precisely a small step forward in the needed and favourable direction.

conferences of scientific teams of experts and the like. Simultaneously and to the contrary, and strangely enough, *such a* margin is not modest in strength, and its production results are not modest either. Moreover, Serbian reception of Russian philosophy transcends limits of locality. In other words, in certain intellectual respects and instances it displays respectable levels achievement¹³ (especially so if we acknowledge factors of unfavourable starting positions and detrimental conditions for work on reception and re-reception of Russian philosophical thought currents, and if we bear in mind the circumstance of Anglo-Saxon language dominance which ipso facto shuts-out texts written the Serbian 'vernacular').

Hence, our margins are not of 'marginal' scope of achievement (Moreover, in a sense, they have the power of *delegitimizing* Potemkinian 'dabbling' in Russian thought [there and where such installations appear as non-authentic and non-founded]). Let us refer briefly to the head of the Chair for Russian philosophy of Moscow State University (MGU), Professor Mikhail Maslin (*1947). His judgement is that '*Everything** that is essential in Russian philosophy of the Silver epoch¹⁴ Serbian culture has managed to take over in translation (only a few works remain...)'¹⁵. The context of Maslin's statement, furthermore, grounds its interpretation. The word uttered by the Russian scholar was given in light of the fact that the publishing house of Vladimir Medenica (*1953) has so far made available in print over 120 books from the field of Russian culture, particularly from the more specialised area of Russian religious philosophy. As we have indicated, our judgement rests not only on the criterion of quantity. That is to say, one should also take into account certain promising theoretical-reflexive accomplishments of (re)reception of Russian philosophy in the contemporary cycle of Serbian culture. The project of Medenica, i.e. the programme Logos – Ortodos, of course, is not the only item to be displayed, no matter how exemplary it truly is. We have room only for the briefest mention of all theoreticians that have (despite marginalisation in the defined sense) managed in three cycles of reception (1920-1940; 1945-1975; 1980-2010), through translation, studies and organisation of

¹³ It is unnecessary to here enumerate and list all successful projects and all persons... Nevertheless, we shall mention multianual endeavor of Nikola Milošević, Vladimir Medenica, Radomir Đorđević, Bogoljub Šijaković, Ilija Marić, Milan Subotić and others on *scientific* stabilization of this domestically neglected and rather mistreated field of spirit: the field of self-reflexion of Byzantine Orthodox-Slavic *foundations* and sources of Serbian or Serbian-Russian philosophy. For further reading: Bogdan Lubardić, 'Serbian Religious Philosophy: Persons, Ideas, Currents', in B. Šijaković (ed.), *Serbian Theology in the XX Century – research problems and results*, Orthodox Faculty of Theology, Belgrade 2009, 7-56 = Богдан Лубардић, „Српска религијска философија у XX веку: главни токови, личности, идеје“, у Б. Шијаковић (уред.), *Српска теологија у двадесетом веку – истраживачки проблеми и резултати*, том 4, ПБФ БУ, Београд 2009, 7-56 — in Serbian Cyrillic.

¹⁴ This is an era of awakening of philosophy for religious and spiritual-symbolic experience. The era itself encompasses the period, *stricto sensu*, from the 1890-ties to 1920/30-ties of last century (including post-periods of recycling ideas and models of that Renaissance epitomized in the 'Silver' turn of Russian thought: countering semi-positivism and revolutionary socialist radicalism of the majority of Russian intelligentsia).

¹⁵ Statement taken from our personal conversation with professor Maslin during his visit to Serbia last year. For a more general account see: Vladimir Medenica, 'Encyclopedia of Russian Philosophy', *Pravoslavje* 1024 (15.04.2009) 33 = in Serbian Cyrillic Владимир Меденица, „Енциклопедија руске философије“, *Православље* 1024 (15.04.2009) 33.

meetings, to work on maintenance and development of Russian-Serbian philosophical relations: from Dušan Stojanović (1895-1949) via blessed Justin of Ćelije (1894-1979)¹⁶ to Nikola Milošević (1929-2007) (let us, nevertheless, mention three prominent figures).

The paradox at this point, let us reiterate, is the *non-institutional* or *quasi-institutional* –‘grey’ status of Serbian-Russian ideas, projects and contents — in fact: people of institutional importance precisely.

2. What are the ‘**reasons and causes**’ for this? We shall select only three out of many reasons and causes of the state of affairs described.

A. The first reason is to be seen in the *ambivalent* relationship forged by Serbian culture in its *widest* (spiritual, cultural, social and political-economic) sense towards the East vis-à-vis West polarisation. As a cultured historical nation we have so far, generally speaking, failed to integrate this polarisation itself – or liminal divide – in a satisfactory way, namely, transforming it in the sense of a *positive synthetic and mediational value* and/or *direction pointer* for Serbian cultural development. Instead of being ‘East to the West and West to the East’¹⁷ (as is given by the motto) we have non-critically ‘aligned’ ourselves in commonsensical disjunctive ways: either for one party (Serbian westernizers) or for the other (Serbian neo-and-quasi-slavophiles) – to our own impairment of tragic proportions, as witnessed by modern and recent history. It is for this reason that the demand for thinking-through and, possibly, realising this ‘ideal’ – but *critically*, is in order today still (also in order is the possibility to *discard* this demand-ideal, but that too is to be executed through insistence on pro et contra thinking, so as to avoid short-cutting the mediation process...).

Speaking in more concrete terms, and turning ‘inwardly’ further, we might add that the ambivalent relation towards the East – West polarisation is, in fact, a mirror reflection of an ambivalent relation towards the question of our own cultural identity in the widest sense of the term. Bearing this in mind we propose that the theme of gatherings such as ours¹⁸ should exceptionlessly be enlarged (even as precondition) to accommodate the question of *Serbian-Serbian* relations in culture. And the situation not rarely is such that the Serbian-Serbian culture-space is being turned into a facade of wishful mirror perceptions, or deceptions (namely: our intra-Serbian culture-space is being either devastated by projects of suspect worth, or simultaneously hyper-

¹⁶ Bogdan Lubardić, *Justin of Ćelije and Russia: Ways of Reception of Russian Philosophy and Theology*, Beseda, Novi Sad 2009, 211 pp = Богдан Лубардић, *Јустин Ћелијски и Русија: путеви рецепције руске филозофије и теологије*, [библиотека Савремено богословље, књига 15] Беседа, Нови Сад 2009, 211 сс

¹⁷ Bringing to consciousness the possibility to *inscribe our own* spiritual-historical *experience* (through such mediation) – making it simultaneously useful, instigative and meaningful for others – might be concordant to what was intended, or should be intended, by the syntagm (or floskule) ‘above East and West’ (D. Mitrinović, N. Velimirović, M. N. Đurić and a pleiad of others following that trace...).

¹⁸ The author refers to the ISAC fund sponsored gathering ‘In Shadow of Gas and Politics: Serbian-Russian Cooperation in the domain of Culture and Religion’ (held March 31st, 2010 in Belgrade’s Media Center).

compartmentalised into self-contained elitist groups) *rather than* grounded in *essential* dialogue of *all* consciousnesses and consciences – ones with the others: *face to face*, despite different spiritual, theoretical or ideological perspectives respectively.

The point is that (philosophical) ‘relationality’ towards the (Greek)Orthodox, Slavic and Russian side of the ‘equation’ of our identity should no longer be established ‘wildly’ – in quasi-institutional and marginal mode – *nor* showed over to the Faculty of Theology, or elsewhere, and then taken for granted, for that is simply not sufficient nor proper methodologically (although the resistance of the margin, let us bear in mind, is necessary and systemically undeletable), nor should it be established ‘violently’ – through majorisation and then repression of one group at expense of the other (as our 20th century aptly displays). Simply, such (un)doing must end and disappear.

B. The second reason follows from the first (inasmuch as we limit ourselves to the ‘grand narrative’ on the relationship of Serbia and Russia in philosophy). The first reason, then, we name as ambivalence due to the challenge (rather, temptation) of almost disjunctive polarization ex Oriente *contra* ex Occident (polarization geopolitical as much as geopoetical: and ‘geophilosophical’, if you will). The second reason we name as *ideologization*. We take ideologization to cover traumas of discontinued or, more precisely, violently severed dialogue procedures between the two formations of (inter)nationally posited establishments of philosophy: Serbian and Russian. We have mentioned cycles of (re)reception of Russian philosophy. Now we may widen our perspective by stating that each cycle of reception was overburdened by socio-political violence which, moreover, spilled over into the theoretical domain (and it is safe to say that this was a feed-back mechanism, in fact). *Simultaneously*, the Russian-Serbian philosophical dialogue, let us remember, *continually* (from the very beginning) remains outside institutions which per definitionem are to serve such a communicative-dialogical purpose: in a word, it remains extra universitatis (if and when it is placed ‘within’ or allowed ‘inside’, then, as we said, it is in a ‘grey’ or ‘tolerated’ status).

Let us, then, view the following disregarded fact. Namely, the reception of Russian philosophy as a *form of dialogue of Serbia and Russia*: as possibility even of a *SerboRussian form of philosophy* (if we acknowledge that is only a matter of time before Russia receives our reception of Russian philosophy) – that and such reception precisely, therefore, is disappearing — apart from rhizomically penetrating the public sphere through people and works of the alternative (by fate or by verdict marginalized through and into grey zones of institutions, or through and into subcultural ‘resourcefulness’).

We are saying the following: if we scrutinize the self-understanding of *established* Serbian philosophical thought about the great yet ‘clumsy’ brother from the East, the relation towards philosophy of Russia or philosophy from Russia (apart from atypical experts and works) is ‘allowed’ to transpire *outside* its distrustful gaze (which is, let us note in passing, identical to the quoted attitude expounded by Croce).

The ways of such (non)reception may be projected as follows: (1) reception of 'white' philosophy (i.e. Russian religious-philosophical emigration in Kingdom of Yugoslavia) and simultaneous reception of 'red' philosophy (subversive activity of Russian radical intelligentsia from the plane of socialist philosophy); (2) 'break-down' of 'white' philosophy (then persecution leading to attempts of whipping out remnants of such thought, imprisonment being the price of resistance) and triumph of 'red' philosophy; (3) establishing the Soviet modality of Marxism (characteristically through Leninist-Stalinist DIAMAT and HISTMAT) and *directed indifference* towards every other form of philosophy, including forms of Russian philosophy anterior to Soviet Marxism; (4) abandonment of reception of *Soviet* type Marxism in name of the 'other' Marx and beginning of the revisionist phase inaugurated through the *praxis*¹⁹ turn of Yugoslav philosophy (breaking of relations with Soviet-Russian philosophy, however, did not lead to rehabilitation of traditional Russian philosophy [nor to a renewal of the Serbian dialogue with that thought], to the contrary, that trace was 'overknitted' for the second time: that was, therefore, a *potentialising* – not an overcoming – of the first abandonment or first severing of relations); (5) end of 'praxis' Marxism through its dissolution in the semi-chaos (or, let us say, 'melting-pot') of the post-modern turning of the situation of philosophy.

That ending is the beginning of the situation within which we (still) find ourselves *presently*, and which is also being described. The post-modern situation introduced two main actors onto the *official* scene of philosophy in Serbia²⁰: on one side, continental European philosophy (namely, French post-structuralism and the Frankfurt critique-theory of society, with additives of hermeneutics and phenomenology) and, on the other side, philosophy of the 'islands', i.e. philosophy of Britain and North America (the so called analytical-logical philosophy, ordinary language philosophy, and the like). On the third side, for one has to take into account those 'defeated', bridges were left for (ex-and-crypto) Marxists to use in order to crossover, via the praxis model, and thus reach the next (second, third) generation or phase of the Frankfurt philosophical school (which itself forged inner synapses with the praxis school²¹) and by that token themselves enter into post-modern times (saving 'face' in and by that process²²). This process, in fact, no matter how tentatively, posited bridges between two main orientations of philosophy in Serbia (i.e. ex-Yugoslavia and FRY). However, these were not bridges of equality in strength of orientation (and result) nor paths established in virtue of theoretical cooperation (besides, the analytical current – towards the end of the 90-ties – almost 'devoured' the continental current). More importantly,

¹⁹ Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Rise, Growth, and Dissolution*, translation: P. S. Falla, Oxford University Press, New York 1978 = Lešek Kolakovski, *Glavni tokovi marksizma I-III*, vol, 3, translation: R. Tubić, BIGZ, Beograd 1985, 535-540 — in latinic Serbian.

²⁰ Our expert public is still *debating* the conditions of *possibility* (or impossibility) of *Serbian* philosophy in distinction to reception of 'universal philosophy' ('as such') into Serbian cultural and historical horizons.

²¹ Let us mark one vivid example, namely, the engagement of Jürgen Habermas (1968, 1973) in the Korčula seminars of the 'praxis' group and his endorsement of their philosophy of humanistic Socialism (1963-1975).

²² An example of such transformation or evolution is given by a post-structurally and deconstructively informed philosophy of left humanism of later Miladin Životić (1930-1997)

having our topic in mind, these passages were (and still are), in fact, ‘flyovers’ wrought through consensus of all three sides (analytical, continental and post-praxis groups), amongst other things, on continuing the – generally speaking – *prowestern*²³ culture politic of philosophy (such a culture politic, for us, is not problematic as such, but it is so if exclusively such: namely, if it is a mode posited through an aprioristic exclusion of dialogue with our own self-specific [samobitnosni] eastern aspects, if not points of origin). Nevertheless, such a situation, say in the last 15 years, seems to be changing for the better (for the time being, still, without more serious systemic frames and adequate strategies of exploration programmes and projects).

In the case at hand this means Russian philosophy is *still* treated as follows: either as a lag of the East itself in respect to the West, or as a relict of exotic religious and imperial (Russ. samoderzhavie) past – Russian religious philosophy in particular²⁴. In that sense, Russian philosophy is read as the discourse of and from the *right* (which she is not, certainly not only ‘that’: not even in cases where she is nominally of ‘right’ provenance, for instance in works of Ivan Ilyin [1883-1954], for she is always of a *spiritual-personalistic* brand (and, inasmuch, irreducible to the plane of politicisation, although this prevents us not from deconstructive alertness); and it is known that *religious* philosophy, for instance the thought of Lev Shestov [1866-1938], has inspired even the Russian revolutionary left [I. G. Lezhnev, V. A. Bazarov et alii]).

Such approaches reduce the *spiritual* information of Russian (and Serbian) philosophy as such, reducing it away into socio-political registers of ‘left’ counter ‘right’. That is analogous to primacy of the socio-political in philosophy. However, the price payed is the omittance of deeper reflexions which could *synthesize spirituality as a possible ideal-type value for the effort of philosophy*. The price, therefore, is not thinking-through the Russian idea in its integral and dynamic fullness²⁵ — Orthodox Christianity notwithstanding (which might transitively hold for the sought-for ‘Serbian idea’). As professor Maslin said, answering the question of identity and character of the *Russian idea*²⁶: ‘The Russian idea – is a religious philosophem, it is not a geometrical theorem which is set to prove something: hence, it is a specific genre with a

²³ Although pro-western culture politics of Serbian philosophy included (and do include) critical consciousness of deconstruction of *westerncentric eurocentrism*, that and such deconstructive self-awareness did not by same token seriously pose the question of systemic and systematic rehabilitation of suppressed and underrated ‘traces’ – *roots!* – of *our* Orthodox-Slavic Byzantine and Neo-Byzantine philosophical East as origin points – apart from cases of exemplary and indicative exceptions, as we said

²⁴ In its Marxist-Leninist form it has since drawn little interest, apart from expert archivist idiosyncratics.

²⁵ For the inauguration of the idea itself – the idea of Russia in world history – see Vladimir Solovyev, *Russian Idea*, Moscow 1888 = Владимир С. Соловьев, „Русская идея“ (1888) = printed in the magazine Вопросы философии и психологии (Москва 1909), that is in the collection Путь (Москва 1911) — in Russian Cyrillic.

²⁶ Maslin bears in mind the *philosophical*, that is *historiosophic* horizon of grounding the Russian idea, continuing in the footsteps of Solovyev, then Berdyaev, Solzhenicyn (and others), namely in the pathways made by the following work: Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*, Paris 1946 = Николай Бердяев, *Русская идея*, YMCA-Press, Париж 1946, or Alexander Solzhenicyn, *Russia under Avalanche* = Александр Солженицын, *Россия в обвале*, Москва 1998 — in Russian Cyrillic.

history of its own' — then, referring to Ilyin, he adds the following words of Ilyin: 'The growth of the Russian idea is the growth of Russia itself'²⁷. In that sense the aforementioned disregard (or suspension) of Russian-Serbian dialogue in philosophy – dialogue on possibilities of creatively projecting self-specific originary ideas and ideals viewed spiritually – acquires an appearance of couched but implemented consensus of the liberal and social left in philosophy to leave things as they are – *to accept the status quo* in relation to disregarding the spiritual layer of culture identity (where philosophically thematized spirituality is made redundant a priori since it is viewed as para-philosophical discourse of the right), let alone in regard to displacing Serbian-Russian origins in Slavic-Byzantine and Greek-Byzantine *Orthodoxy*.

As we see, the status quo takes us back to the period of the 20-ties and beginning of the 30-ties of last century, that is, to the locus of *trauma*. Namely, it takes us to the *principle and first question of the whole matter itself*: what is and who is Russia to us, and *what are we to her* – particularly in respect to our spiritual common ground. By the same token we are led to the following question as well: are we possible without the tutoring intervention or such influence of westerncentric history of philosophy (and such philosophy of history [Athens → Rome, 'then' → Tubingen → Paris → London...]) under the sign of reducing the past and future of an integral Europe and Euro-Asia to the 'West'.

In a word: are we possible in philosophy *without* this externally generated *representation* (without *such* externality) which is (not without mono-directional epigonic acceptance) 'forced' upon us – or educationally implemented into us – as our own *self-representation*!? (at the price of, for instance, liquidating the effects and accomplishments of a millennial²⁸ ascent of our own self-specific culture in terms of Byzantine and Neo-Byzantine synthesis). Or, to put it bluntly (selecting an aspect prone to irritate the politically correct sensibility): are we possible as a *communion* (Slav. *sabor*) of selfaware brothers-sisters – if yes, then, in what sense, and, how are we – tapping in to that potential – today to continue fertilising our capacities, seeking promising orientations of our social and intellectual being – or, is such a reality and-or possibility irrevocably bygone, *if* it was ever there in the first place?

[Let us clarify: in referring to communion(ality) as *sabor*, we have not in mind the ideology of 'saborization' in terms of mono-dimensional Neo-Slavophilism. Something other is at stake. — Let us illustrate. The epoch-making event of communal gathering of citizens of Serbia (not only Serbian

²⁷ Mikhail Maslin, op. cit.

²⁸ Hegel conceived of Byzantium as a millennial death-throw of the civilisation and culture of Rome. He did not seriously ask himself, however, *how* it was possible for this 'death-throw' (or, rather, this magnificent 'endurance' in culture) to be so millennially *vital*. The shocking 'illiteracy' of an (over)influential Hegel – in relation to mis-understanding the non-omittable value of Byzantine *Greek East* for the West itself – for instance, may be gleaned indirectly through the following masterful studies (to indicate only the tip of an iceberg): Klaus Oehler, 'Die Kontinuität in der Philosophie der Griechen bis zum Untergang des byzantinischen Reiches' – and – idem, 'Renaissancehumanismus und byzantinisches Mittelalter', in K. Oehler, *Aufsätze zur Geschichte des griechischen Denkens*, C. H. Beck, München 1969, 15-37, 328-335.

citizens) – all of them in number and count – around the image and work of blessedly reposed Patriarch of Serbia Pavle (1914-2009) – beyond and without any sort of politicizing or party dimension or motive, whatsoever, manifested the materialisation not only of ‘need for’ communion (sabornicity) but, also, exposed the being itself of otherwise deeply displaced (omitted, repressed, forgotten) yet vital communionality of the sabornic type – as essential expression of fundamental togetherness of people *under the precondition of realised holiness*²⁹ (taken as the all-value of societies informed by Christianity, Serbian society notwithstanding). In that sense we indicate towards the ‘communionality’ = ‘sabornic’ dimension of our relations – towards this dimension as essential substrate, and potential (a dimension rarely noticed due to politicological or politicizing views on society: views dictated by agenda’s of everydayness, and buried by it)].

Coming back to the context of our philosophical circumstances (or lack of such) it could be demonstrated that contemporary Russian philosophy, both ‘neo-western’ and ‘neo-Russian’, in the least, does have achievements wholly legitimate, competitive and relevant for the current philosophical debate in general (however, we cannot further open this perspective due to our primary goal).

In this sense we speak of successive (not necessarily irreversible) disappearing (‘aphanasis’ of sorts) of Russian philosophical ideas from the established scene of Serbian philosophy (or, even of rooting-out of such ideas, in guise of couched consensus to never allow it to reach that ‘scenic’ place). We also speak of its paradoxical yet resilient rhizomic subsistence on margins of institutions (or instituted [established] and institutionalized [establishment] margins) – however, not on margins of life.

In brief: the picture is not simple. It is not as if one type of relation towards *philosophia russica* was replaced by ‘another’, as rook and king in chess rouquade: namely, anti-Russian thought has not simply replaced pro-Russian thought, for Russian philosophical thought has always already been ‘disappearing’ in our (philosophical) institutions, particularly so through the triumph of Soviet Marxism and then through a victory *over this Marxism*. But on the level of the ‘margin’ (for we are forced to use this awkward term), note the paradox, Russian (traditional) philosophy, it seems, has been rejuvenating

²⁹ Let us expand this point: through this event the Serbian people conducted a ‘legitimation’ of *communionality* (sabornicity) – *under condition* that the cardinal value is verified sacrifice for the other purified from all fallen interest. That is to say, only such – authentic – persons, as *events*, may provoke manifestations of meta-partisan, meta-particularistic, meta-populistic but also meta-ideological self-projections of the Serbian people. In that sense, the Serbian Orthodox Church was ‘legitimised’ and ‘criticised’ *simultaneously* (although the term legitimacy is to be used only conditionally in this instance, for the Church is not constituted through procedures of civic legitimisation in the political sense). Therefore, our Church was ‘legitimised’ through the message that only *such* a person and *such* communionality (sabornic [social] by virtue of purity and sacrifice for the other) may truly gather ‘all’ individuals of the social-political community in(to) that ecclesial-communional sense. Through the same message, furthermore, the Church was potentially ‘delegitimized’ (namely, in case that bearers of ecclesial responsibility fail or keep failing to accomplish *such* a way of sacrificial identity in Christ). Finally, it was perceivable that bellow or through the political body of the Serbian people, or despite it, run *communionality* currents of sociality or, better, *sabornic togetherness*.

itself, reaching the contemporary situation in image of its (unconsidered) proposals – a situation which is both open and uncertain..., nevertheless attuned to life (at least in terms of everpresent cascading otherness, and novelty, in relation to our closed and local state of consciousness).

Apart from many things, such a situation is the result of 'inability' (or simply lack of practical wisdom in politics of life) to maintain a minimum set of premises for control and critique of one ideology 'about' Russian philosophy (anti-Russian tendency) counter the other (pro-Russian tendency), and vice versa — note: in institutional manner (i.e. via systemic and methodologically disciplined stabilisations of critical conceptuality, adequate social practice following suit). If this were to be accomplished, reception of Russian philosophy – purged from ideology and rhetoric – would become philosophical. More precisely, such an approach would consolidate its philosophical status and complementary scientific-critical modalities. Under the expression 'minimum set of premises' we presuppose the following: namely, rising to philosophical awareness the viewpoint that *dialogue* with Russian philosophy represents *one of the fundamental* (if not constitutive) moments in dialogue of self-aware Serbian philosophy (or Philosophy of Serbs) with 'itself' – *if* it is not completely to trivialise or ignore the side of its Orthodox-Slavic origins: *if* Serbian (philosophical) culture is not to complacently abide in epigonic as much as occidentopetal fate (again, let us reiterate, we argue not against the West but against non-critical westernisation as main stream tendency – in the name of *integral* Greek-European culture).

That is to say, such a dialogue with *itself* through *others* (such a dialogical string as moment) is not an 'option' but 'condition of possibility' of founded and fundamental nurture and upbringing of one's own identity in philosophical culture. On pre-condition, of course, that we resist the idea that the medium of philosophy is totally immune ('pure') to *history of experience* — experience of concrete human beings philosophically thinking in particular history and particular language – together (dare we say 'communally' [saborno]).

C. Next to ambivalence produced by the work of East – West polarisation, also next to ideologisation of discontinuity (discontinuity through ideologisation notwithstanding), we introduce our third reason. We name it by means of (and as) the phenomenon of globalisation. This extremely complex and multi-layered process (culturally and politico-economically strung out from internetaphysicised markets of ideas to the idea of global condition as condition of a world reduced to a 'super-market' mediating influence, money and power) we determine more closely through two interconnected challenges which, as such, indicate towards its spiritual-cultural side. The first is the challenge of universally pandemic *detraditionalisation* of ways of formulating and appropriating identity (which is somehow, and nevertheless, sought in representations 'about' tradition – origin). The second challenge is the crisis of identity itself – as such. However, let us add another perspective. Both challenges transpire under the sign of a global 'return' of religion and spirituality in the post-secular phase not only of ideology but of philosophy

itself³⁰: running under a strong inscription of discourse of *otherness and difference* (let us emphasize: this crisis appears not through rejection of traditional identity but precisely through unsuccessful and problematic attempts of reinterpretation and reintegration of traditional reference points of identity, in our case [over]determined by the philosophical question about the place and role of the O/other: other as God and God as communal other adjacent to me, or 'other of the other'..., let us say).

As we see, the chain of reasons and causes thus closes (into) a circle. This circle is 'closed' in terms of the starting problem gaining in complexity. However, precisely for those reasons that *circulus* is potentially openable (under condition of appropriate thought and action).

In a word: here and now, from perspective of the contemporary spiritual situation of our age, speaking from our analysis of the case, the question of reflected and official Serbian-Russian dialogue in philosophy is not to be a question of intentions for things to 'be' better (one way or another), for it is rather, or simultaneously, a *question of incapacity to pose that question as such* – due to impact pressure of post-Yugoslav culture-trauma, on one hand, and trauma of acceleration of agendas of meta-nationally set globalisation, on the other. *It is in such fashion* (systemically-and-structurally: not by subjective examination of intent) that we wish to understand the following: namely, the fact that, for instance, the promotion of the most important ever compendium of history of philosophy in Russia – promotion of the *Encyclopaedia of Russian Philosophy* (Moscow 2007 [Belgrade 2009³¹]), despite attempts to make encounters possible – was attended by *no one*³² from the Serbian philosophical establishment. More precisely: no one managed to *officially* acknowledge, receive or by one word note its presence (including oversight of possibilities to meet four pre-eminent Russian philosophers of the order of current and *official* (sic) mediators of its meanings and tasks³³. This is just one, although nutshell-type example of non-rational or wholly irrational spending of precious historical time and human resources of our big (in will for

³⁰ The meaning of the syntagm 'post-secular philosophy' is aptly articulated by Blond: „In fact, all ontical statements on reality and proper description are not even incorrect: they are simply weak' (since the secular gaze, by fixation of the ontical, liquidates its deeper and more meaningful groundings). Phillip Blond (ed.), *Post-Secular Philosophy: Between Philosophy and Theology*, Routledge, London 1998.

³¹ At the same time this was the European premiere of the translation of this Russian book into one of the non-Russian languages. Vide: Mikhail Maslin (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Russian Philosophy*, Belgrade 2009, 1010 pp = Михаил Маслин (гл. ред.), *Энциклопедија руске философије*, Логос – Укрониа, Београд 2009, 1010 сс = исти, *Русская философия: Энциклопедия*, Алгоритм, Москва 2007 — in Serbian, that is Russian Cyrillic.

³² It is possible this was a mere 'play of circumstance' (most probably so). But this precisely goes to prove our point. Of course, this 'nulled' number does not include several colleagues who accompanied our Russians, however, through different types of forums during their stay in Serbia (April 2009) — reception at the Faculty of Theology in Belgrade, or outside Belgrade: gymnasium in Ruma, monastery of Ćelije (Valjevo), parochial communities, of-the-shelf panels and the like. To be honest, and for the record, the lectures of professor Sergey Horuzhy given in 2002 at the Institute for Philosophy of the Faculty of Philosophy of Belgrade University, were appropriately publicized and well attended, at the time.

³³ M. A. Maslin, P. P. Aprishko, P. V. Kalitin, A. Gatcheva = M. A. Маслин, П. П. Апришко, П. В. Калитин, А. Гачева

deed) small (in realisation) possibly Serbian-Russian philosophical culture environment – simultaneously a postponement of commencement of new encounters.

This is where we have to pause, not only for reason of limited space, but for reflecting possibilities of '**prescriptions**', or remedies for problems described and diagnosed in relation to our circumstances when Russian philosophers, *as our others*³⁴, are at hand, or stake.

3. It is not needful to repeat or emphasize the possibilities and means of theoretical remedies for the predicament described, for they are already implied in what has been said. Therefore we offer only several propositions from the plane of concrete executive-organisational forms of possible treatment of the condition which is not hale and hearty.

First: both the Russian and Serbian state, together, should – because they can – use appropriate mechanisms to procure and offer *material help* aimed at supporting projects of dialogising the Serbo-Russian cultural relationship (the philosophical form notwithstanding). Priority must be given to stable and long term modalities of realising such programmes.

Second: in this sense, for *example*, ways should be sought for making the Russian hall in Belgrade become more than a congenial yet sporadic 'host' to enthusiasts of Russian-Serbian dialogue in philosophy, but, more than that, to become promoter of *stipends or financial and marketing services* in function of upgrading such activities; or, instigating the Russian cultural attaché to mediate the work of Russian and Serbian experts in terms of helping scientists to make proper contacts in efficient ways, also opening paths to reach adequate and authentic information on possibilities offered by the Russian state (major commerce corporations and scientific-explorative formations included) – dedicated to the aforementioned relation (of course, this is already being done, but one has the impression that matters can be directed more directly and enterprisingly, certainly when the more philosophical cultural-national space is in question).

Third: we should try to found an all-encompassing *institute for Serbian-Russian studies* in Belgrade, and this pioneering venture should be backed by both sides reservelessly. This can be viewed within the context of a (so far unvoiced) proposal to accommodate a haven for Serbian reception of Slavic and-or Russian philosophical culture *inside* already *existent institutions*, primarily the University itself (needless to say, we are not referring to the Chair for Russian studies at the Faculty of Philology). Although full freedom for work on Russian thought is secured at the Institute for Philosophy, we still hold that installing a *facultative subject course* in foundations of Russian (or Slavic) philosophy is not impossible yet much needed (if we wish to continue connecting history of philosophy with self-specific self-understanding of philosophy of history). We should make sure that our Russian colleagues are

³⁴ As coined by Door Liesbeth Koetsier in her dissertation *Nous autres, Russes. Traces littéraires de l'émigration russe dans la NRF 1920-1940*, Faculteit der Letteren, Universiteit Utrecht 2006.

instigated to make analogous steps: for instance, on the level of inter-faculty and inter-institute contracted forms of *scientific exchange* and cooperation.

Such cooperation could yield significant possibilities for mutual exchange of ideas and knowledge, and corresponding experiences in *thinking*. Not of lesser importance, such cooperation would allow the possibility of projects aimed at *philosophically* thematizing our *common* problems, inside an orientation which would refrain from deleting the Serbian-Russian synthesis through a discourse of calculated disregard (under the sign of surplus in strength), nor would it overlook this synthesis due to lack of knowledge concerning its creative and critical potential. Taking such a path might help us not only to avoid the West 'counter' East or red 'counter' white polarisation, the accompanying reflex of ideologisation³⁵ notwithstanding. It would perhaps be a 'third' way: a way mediating red and white through the colour of firmament blue — blue as symbol of openness and breath in which all evil sink into depths, where all oppositives are reworked into cooperative *differences* — after all, it could be analogous to a flag: the Serbian and Russian *tricolore*. It could be a way of new 'communionality' (Slav. *sabornost*), not necessarily the way of new 'dialectics'.

³⁵ A helpful insight into ways of overcoming the ideological divide between warring West and East, albeit on the plane of Christian spiritual theory, is given in the 'EastWestern' synthesis proposal of Gorazd Kocijančič, *Between East and West. Four Contributions to Ecstatics*, Ljubljana 2004 = *Med Vzhodom in Zahodom. Štirje prispevki k ekstatiki*, KUD Logos, Ljubljana 2004 — in Slovenian.