

Development of Kant's Ideas in A.V. Veideman's Theory of Knowledge*

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Abstract—The article gives an assessment of Veideman's theory of knowledge. It describes the biographical details of philosopher's life. The article explores the work of A. Veideman's "Thinking and being. The logic of sufficient reasoning", which is one of the main works of the philosopher. It also includes an assessment of the monograph "Thinking and being. The logic of sufficient reasoning" by V.E. Seseman.

Keywords—A. Veideman; thinking; being; the Russian Neo-Kantianism; the theory of knowledge; epistemology; ontology; Neo-Kantianism; Hegelianism

I. INTRODUCTION

Russian neo-Kantianism is a multifaceted crystal, the examination of the facets of which can represent the detective story of life of the Russian clerisy of the twentieth century. In the specific conditions of public consciousness in Russia, neo-Kantianism became the essential scientific school for the Russian clerisy, which managed to put down deep roots on Russian soil. This unique phenomenon requires special investigation, which, I am sure, will eventually allow a rethinking of the role of neo-Kantianism in modern world. The picture of Russian Neo-Kantianism is a map with many unexplored patches, the revelation of which will provide answers to many questions.

The work of A.V. Veideman, to whom this article is dedicated, is one of such unexplored areas.

II. AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF THE PHILOSOPHER'S LIFE

In his biographies "Tragedy as the essence of art, religion and history" and in his last monograph "Justification of Evil" A.V. Veideman published data on his life journey, starting with the last classes of gymnasium up until 1939. He wrote about student life, about friends and like-minded people: Pyotr Kirillov, Vasily Seseman, Nikolay Boldyrev, Sergey Hessen. Veideman's memoirs are unique in the sense that to some extent they allow to recreate the atmosphere of Neo-Kantian studies among graduates of the St. Petersburg University in prerevolutionary years. [1] Yet in his monographs A. Veideman didn't mention details of his

private life at all.

According to autobiographical evidence, A.V. Veideman belonged to the family of the Baltic Germans. His grandfather, Yuli Veideman, left his hometown Mitava (nowadays Jelgava) in Courland and moved to St. Petersburg at the end of the nineteenth century. Veideman family was proud of their German origin and association with the German culture.

A. Veideman was born in St. Petersburg, on Pochtamtckaya Street in the house of his godfather, merchant A.K. Pampel. "My father," Veideman wrote, "belonged to those Germans who in political sense were more Russian than German, and in religious — more orthodox than Protestants." [2].

Love to everything German co-existed in the family with partiality to the Russian culture, language, to "aestheticism" of an Orthodox Church service. His mother, Vera Avtonomovna Tekhnitskaya, combined the width of Russian soul, good education and religiousness, but religiousness was "in impulses and transitions." The religious difference of parents in the family contributed to the fact that their three sons received very liberal religious education that led to studying of the Scripture within the walls of 9th (Vvedenskaya) Classical Gymnasium.

The philosopher was the representative of two great cultures: Russian and German, two branches of Christianity: Orthodoxy and Lutheranism, which have defined his spiritual lifestyle and, perhaps, evolution of his philosophical outlook from neo-Kantianism to Hegelianism.

It is also important to note one essentially important point in philosophical work of Alexander Viktorovich, which consists of the fact that he was inspired by the spirit of the Greek philosophy, which is laced with the idea of Cosmopolitanism. According to Veideman, this idea could help create elitist "special republic supranational, common to all mankind, within which alone authentic science, art and literature would be feasible." [3].

III. THINKING AND BEING: LOGIC OF SUFFICIENT REASON

In October, 1926 (although, according to the cover, it was 1927) in Riga the first monograph by A.V. Veideman

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“Thinking and being. Logic of sufficient reason” came out. The publication of this monograph became the basis for defense of doctoral thesis in 1927 at the Kovensky University. Veideman's plans consisted in attempt to open new page of “the Russian scientific original philosophy”, to offer new “philosophical scientific technique.” He claimed to be original, rejected any hints of his ideas having direct link with I. Kant or neo-Kantianism, especially with G. Cohen, whom he considered to be “the greatest” philosopher of the present. [3].

A. Veideman's research “Thinking and being (Logic of sufficient reason)” is the main work written by the unfairly forgotten domestic philosopher. The title of the work itself speaks volumes. Using it, the domestic philosopher highlights the fact that he is on the forefront of the main problems of the present times, and that he will examine the ontologo-gnoseological perspective, which was being developed in his day by many famous philosophers.

However, the work gives more than what the title promises. It is a whole system of philosophy, which not only covers gnoseology (logic), ethics and esthetics, but also implies the application of these theoretical disciplines to specific problems of culture (for example, to the problem of upbringing and other). In all honesty, only the first logical part of the system has been comprehensively developed, but it is this part that remains fundamental, predetermining the structure of the whole system in general.

A.V. Veideman's system, by his own admission, represents an attempt to replenish Kant's criticism with the help of Hegel's ontologic dialectics and to correct Hegel's metaphysics with the help of Kant's criticism. The main flaw of the Kant's doctrine, according to Veideman, is that Kant hasn't gone far enough in order to raise the issue of knowledge, content with the question of possibility of mathematics and natural science and not having questioned the essence of knowledge per se. It was this methodological shortcoming that has led him to the tenacious dualism of thinking and being, mind and experience.

The mind isn't immanent in the knowledge of reality; it criticizes that knowledge as though from the outside. Gnoseology becomes detached from ontology (metaphysics), it becomes pointless, and therefore the criticism, ultimately, inevitably comes down to either unscrupulous positivism or skepticism and agnosticism.

Hegel managed to overcome this radical flaw of Kant's doctrine: he recognized equivalence of being and thinking and thereby restored internal oneness of the system of philosophy. But he went to the other extreme, detached metaphysics from gnoseology, knowledge — from its subjective basis — the cogitative subject itself. Because of this his metaphysics once again fell into dogmatism. Other essential shortcomings are also connected with its dogmatism: on the one hand, its logical evolutionism, which equates historical and logical development (history of philosophy and the system of philosophy), on the other hand, its naturalism, which destroys the borders between the world of nature and the world of culture.

The only way to help Hegel's system get rid from the mistakes that have ruined it, according to Veideman, is to recognize essential correlative connection between gnoseology and metaphysics, the subjective and objective origin of knowledge, while, nevertheless, keeping the status of fundamental identity of being and thinking. [4].

“Thinking,” notices the domestic philosopher, “can't take any form other than being, but on the other hand, only the form of thinking itself can be the essential form of that content. Form and content of knowledge are connected by necessary correlation, but at the same time they incessantly transition into each other. The form breeds content, i.e. content is none other than development and revelation of the form. In other words, thinking doesn't comprehend some transcendental subject; it also doesn't reconstruct something given to it from the outside, it builds or generates the object from its own depth and on the basis of its own pattern.” [4].

All principles and categories of thinking are bound together by ratios of correlativity and identity. Each subsequent category arises from the previous one as adversarial to it and as a correlate that sufficiently complements it, but at the same time it reveals and confirms only the things that can potentially appear in the previous one, albeit in the fetus form. In this sense both members of correlation are but different aspects of the uniting identity. That's what Alexander Viktorovich wrote about in his first philosophical work “Thinking and being. Logic is of the sufficient reason.”

As, for example, the basic principles of logic are connected — the principle of identities, the principle of non-contradiction, and the principle of excluded middle. The principle of identity is the cornerstone of self-assertion of thinking. But certainty of this self-assertion is possible only if assumed A is in contraposition to the contrasting not-A. This condition establishes the principle of non-contradiction. At the same time need for correlation between A and not-A shows that the primary act of self-assertion of thinking includes both A and not-A equally in full disclosure and marks their systematic unity. It is this third uniting moment that represents, in Veideman's interpretation, the principle of excluded middle.

All three principles, being the categories of qualities, outline the sphere of logic. Opposed to them, as their dialectic negation, is the category of quality that characterizes the field of mathematics. To systematic unity quality and quantity are brought in the categories of the relation, which establish them into the structure of natural science. To each of these areas of knowledge that logically develop from one another their own particular systematic unity and method are inherent (logic — deduction, mathematics — trductio, natural science — induction).

Consequently, according to A. Veideman, the process of dialectic development of thinking isn't limited to transition from one group of categories to the others that are logically connected, and also leads from general to specific, i.e. it is characterized by gradual increasing complexity, enrichment, and the partition of content of knowledge. Mathematics concretizes logic, and mathematics is being concretized by

the natural science (regarded as descriptive natural science or the doctrine about the organic nature).

These three steps of specification of scientific knowledge in Veydeman's interpretation are consistent with modal categories: categories of opportunity, reality and need; or in other aspect: origin of logicity (analyticity), "sufficiency" (syntheticity) and "sufficient reason". But sufficient reason — in relation to its entity — means not the last prerequisite of knowledge, but the idea of systematic unity that determines the unconditional purpose and the very structure of dialectic development of knowledge.

IV. FEEDBACK FROM FELLOW SCIENTISTS TO A. VEIDEMAN'S CONCEPT

One of his close friends and colleagues, Vasily Emilyevich Seseman, gave the following assessment of A. Veydeman's concept: "Veydeman's general philosophical concept is characterized by architectonical symmetry and logical coherence of all its structural elements. Dialectic connection of separate systems is carried out with the strictest consistency. In development of the scientific idealism and apriorism, which has grown because of neo-Kantianism of the Marburg interpretation, it marks a new stage, which is characterized by overcoming a narrow methodologism of Cohen and Natorp and transformation into idealistic metaphysics". But it seems to us that one shouldn't stop at this stage [5].

According to V. E. Seseman, the author is absolutely right insisting on inextricable link of gnoseology and metaphysics (ontology). But recognition of this link obliges him to go beyond that gnoseological and logical stop, which the scientific idealism leans on.

Also Seseman points out that the principle of identity of thinking is quite legitimate within the logical theory of science; for scientific thinking only the things that are imprinted in concepts are real. But in the metaphysical theory it can't be accepted without preliminary critical analysis, otherwise the philosophy risks slipping once again into that dogmatic rationalism, for which Veydeman fairly reproaches Hegel. Meanwhile, it is this critical analysis of concepts of thinking and being and their interrelations that we don't find in Veydeman's system. As a result of not separating the gnoseological and ontologic problem a number of other concepts that the author uses remains insufficiently established: the concepts of analyticity, intuition, truth, beauty and etc. Author's general concept, undoubtedly, would benefit in definiteness and distinctness had he revealed his attitude toward other modern philosophical theories that equally strive for revival of critical metaphysics: in particular toward phenomenological school. [6].

A.V. Veydeman's work "Thinking and Being: The logic of sufficient reasoning" is in fact a system of philosophy that combines such schools like Marburg neo-Kantianism, phenomenology, and Hegelianism. This heuristic concept has received excellent feedback from fellow academicians A.L. Radlov, professors N.V. Boldyrev, V.A. Belyaev, who

unanimously recognized it as an independent, authentic and relevant research [6].

V. CONCLUSION

Russian Neo-Kantianism still has not revealed its diversity. It still needs research and proper historical assessment. The study of A. V. Veydeman's work is a small step towards the revelation of white spots on the map of Russian Neo-Kantianism.

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