

Contemporary Russian Studies of the Life and Works of Hermann Cohen*

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Abstract—The article analyzes the current state in the field of domestic historical and philosophical research of the founder of the Marburg school of neo-Kantianism Hermann Cohen. It is indicated that a truly productive study of the work of Hermann Cohen in Russia before the October revolution did not take place. The current period of attitudes towards the study of Cohen's creativity is defined as *cohenophilology*.

The process of sufficiently intensive analysis of Hermann Cohen's theoretical and practical philosophy by domestic researchers is also noted, when works are published on the presentation of the critical philosophy of the founder of the Marburg school as a system of transcendental idealism. A separate aspect of the analysis of the work of Hermann Cohen at the present stage was the study of the work of Russian students of the German philosopher. These studies are designed to demonstrate how independently and productively Russian Cohen's followers developed the concept of their teacher.

Finally, the article highlights that moment in the modern Russian studies of G. Cohen, which is associated with an attempt to present the concept of the German thinker as a concept that begins the tradition of the modern philosophy of dialogue.

Keywords—*H. Cohen; Russian and German neo-Kantianism; the system of transcendental philosophy; cohenophilology*

I. INTRODUCTION

The history of the relationship of the founder of the Marburg school of neo-Kantianism and Russian philosophy has lasted for more than a hundred years, and I would like to dwell on the nature of this relationship today. It should be noted that the head of the Marburg school of neo-Kantianism, Hermann Cohen, is a symbolic figure for the history of Russian philosophy, and at the same time — mysterious. All those who address the analysis of the role of this German thinker in the history of Russian philosophy at the end of the 19th - beginning of the 20th centuries face a seemingly paradoxical situation. Despite the enormous prestige among Russian philosophers, especially the young ones, who every year, beginning in 1895, replenished the student audience of the Marburg master, and some began, under his leadership,

the path to scientific heights with defenses of dissertations (O. Buck, D. Gavronsky, N. Hartmann, S. Rubinstein and others), a truly productive study of the work of Hermann Cohen in Russia before the revolution did not take place.

It is necessary to agree with the opinion of one of the leading contemporary researchers of the creative work of H. Cohen, who assesses the character of the pre-revolutionary works, that “a calm, objective understanding of the creative work of the leading German neo-Kantian Hermann Cohen from Russian researchers and followers did not take place. The analysis and assessment of his ideas were mainly addressed only fragmentarily and most often with a predetermined, narrowly focused goal: either for the purposes of philosophical polemics or to clarify certain social and political issues. Let's hope, he declares with optimism, that such a bleak picture will soon change and the Russian philosophical community will receive high-quality translations and research from one of the prominent German thinkers of the late XIX-early XX centuries.” [1].

If we try to find out, in general, the attitude of Russian religious philosophy, the most influential and authoritative trend in Russian philosophy to Cohen at that moment back in time, then we can clearly state that the head of Marburg neo-Kantianism did not cause the same opposing respectful-hating interest¹. The reason for such little attention from the Russian religious philosophers, in my opinion, is not that they know Cohen less than Kant, because he is a contemporary of most Russian philosophers of the Silver Age, and not that they consider him a less significant figure for serious philosophical discussion, but rather because Cohen is simpler than Kant, the metaphysical and psychological prerequisites of his “baseless” principle of philosophizing are found, the basic system principles are easier to identify, it is more understandable to follow awns of reasoning. In other words, Cohen is more open and comprehensible, it is easier to criticize him, and therefore he is less dangerous as an ideological opponent.

What do Russian religious philosophers see as “simplification” and “perversion” of Kant by Cohen? It should be pointed out, first of all, to two areas of philosophy,

¹ Some nuances of the Russian philosophers to Kant attitude, see: V. Belov, Ju. Karagod, “Florensky and Kant — the Metaphysics of Faith vs the Metaphysics of Reason”. [2]

*Fund: The publication has been prepared with the support of the “RUDN University Program 5-100”

where Cohen, in the opinion of Russian philosophers, made the most serious changes in transcendental criticism. In the epistemology, Cohen, in contrast to Kant, more consistently conducts anti-ontologism through overcoming Kantian psychologism and the thing-in-itself and antimetaphysicality through the intensification of transcendentalism. As a result of this “correction” of Kant, life with its unpredictable and permanent changes is completely under the authority of the system of schemes, reality becomes a theoretical document that, according to P. Florensky’s caustic remark, is issued “only in H. Cohen’s office, and is not valid without his signature by the seal” [3].

II. MODERN DOMESTIC RESEARCH: FROM COHENOPHILOLOGY TO COHENOLOGY

As for the modern period, in my opinion, the attitude to the study of Cohen’s creativity goes through a stage, so to speak, of cohenophilology, by analogy in cantophilology. Cohenology is a completely natural stage, which, undoubtedly, is required for a more correct and comprehensive assessment of Cohen’s philosophical system in terms of its scale (logic, ethics, aesthetics, philosophy of religion and, quite likely, psychology) and at the same time fundamental nature.

Therefore, an important point on this path are the translations of the works of a Marburg neo-Kantian and the development of correct terminology for such kind of translations. For example: H. Cohen “The theory of Kant’s experience” [4]. If we consider that before the October Revolution of 1917, only one small work by Cohen on the essence of the Jewish religion was translated and published, then such a modern, large translation work inspires confidence that the study of the work of an outstanding German philosopher will receive a serious creative impulse. A rather intensive analysis of the theoretical and practical philosophy of Hermann Cohen is carried out by domestic researchers. Here we should highlight works devoted to the presentation of the critical philosophy of the founder of the Marburg school as a system of transcendental idealism [5], philosophy of culture of H. Cohen [6], various aspects of the interaction of Cohen and Russian philosophy [7], analysis of contemporary research works of the German philosopher [8], of his theory of knowledge [9], ethics [10] and its reception in Russia [11], philosophy of religion [12] and its difficult fate [13].

In all these interpretative studies, the refrain is the thought of the systematic thinking of a Marburg neo-Kantian and his thinking system. The head of the Marburg school of neo-Kantianism explains his desire for systematics by adherence to the spirit of Kantian philosophy. Kant’s critical idealism, according to Cohen, is, above all, a system of critical idealism. Therefore, the systemic understanding of Kant’s philosophy is the task of all his followers. Kant thought systematically, but controversially, therefore (all neo-Kantians concluded without exception) it is necessary to overcome this lack of Kant’s teaching and find stronger arguments for the unity of the system. But such a passion for consistency that we find in Cohen was not possessed by anyone else from the great neo-Kantian cohort. One can only

admire the adherence to the sequence with which the Marburg philosopher performs the task of the systematics of Kant’s philosophy. First, the fundamental interpretation works were created “Kants Theorie der Erfahrung” (“Kant’s Theory of Experience”, first published in 1871), “Kants Begründung der Ethik” (“The justification of ethics by Kant”, 1877), “Kants Begründung der Ästhetik” “Justification of aesthetics by Kant”, 1889), in which Cohen analyzed in detail the main ideas of the three Critiques of Kant. At the next stage of his creative work, he created three equally deep works: “Logik der reinen Erkenntnis” (“The logic of pure knowledge”, 1902), “Ethik des reinen Willens” (“Ethics of pure will”, 1904) and “Ästhetik des reinen Gefühls” (“Aesthetics of pure feelings”, 1907), outlining his own approach to the problems of the theory of knowledge, ethics and aesthetics.

A separate aspect of the analysis of the work of Hermann Cohen at the present stage was the study of the work of Russian students of the German philosopher [14], such as B.A. Focht [15], V.E. Sesemann [16], [17], S.I. Hessen [18], M. Kagan [19]. The influence of the ideas of Russian neo-Kantians in various countries [20] and in various areas of human culture is investigated [21]. These studies are designed to demonstrate how independently and productively Russian Cohen’s followers developed the concept of their teacher.

III. COHEN’S PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPT AS THE BEGINNING OF THE MODERN PHILOSOPHY OF DIALOGUE

Finally, I would like to emphasize that moment in the modern Russian studies of H. Cohen, which is associated with an attempt to present the concept of the German thinker as a concept that begins the tradition of the modern philosophy of dialogue. This is how the work of the Marburg neo-Kantian is understood and interpreted by Sokuler Z. [22] and Dvorkin I. [23].

The task set is to reveal the origins of the philosophy of dialogue in the philosophical position of H. Cohen – the author of the monograph “Hermann Cohen and the Philosophy of dialogue”, Sokuler Z. A. decides through the presentation and justification of two interrelated themes: Judaism as a religion of reason and a new concept of subject, characteristic of the ethics and philosophy of the religion of the German thinker. Sokuler Z.A. is trying to present Judaism as a religion of reason on the way to proof of Kant’s unfair attitude to Judaism and the legitimacy of interpretational proposals on Judaic religion from Cohen, interpreting all the provisions of the Jewish faith exclusively with the means and capabilities of the mind. The arguments put forward by the author of the work against Kant, based on the positions of both Cohen himself and his famous predecessor in upholding Judaism as the religion of the mind of Moses Mendelssohn, can be combined into the following: elementary-superficial knowledge of Judaism, subjective-unconscious rejection of Judaism by Kant — the protestant and the proposal of a utopian, in fact, model of the religion of reason, which must resist all existing religions. The Kantian model of the religion of reason proposes to single out the moral component in each religion and remove all the

rest — ceremonial, ritualistic, mythical, and others — as contradicting reasonable grounds. Neither Mendelssohn nor Cohen objected to such an interpretation of the religion of reason but tried to prove that such is Judaism. Already in Mendelssohn's works Soculer Z.A. finds the "Archimedes lever", which, having corrected Kant, fully justifies Judaism before reason: a new understanding of a subject socializing only thanks to the community that keeps and passes on to the next generations its traditions, the role of which the Jewish community is called to fulfil. This intention, overcoming the metaphysical concept of Kant's subject, according to which the subject is a self-sufficient rational individual, a self-legislator of the norms of his social behavior, is successfully developed and worked on in more detail by Hermann Cohen.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the hope should be expressed that researches on the creativity of the founder of the Marburg school of neo-Kantianism, one of the most famous German philosophers at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries Hermann Cohen, which have recently achieved well-defined successes and results, as the analysis presented in the article showed, will be continued, and new acquisitions and discoveries await us on this path.

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