

The Philosophical Ideas of Count S.S. Uvarov in Connection with the National Education

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ABSTRACT

The paper is dedicated to the philosophical ideas of Count S.S. Uvarov in their close connection with his pedagogical views that he estimates necessary for educating and up-bringing a good citizen. The author tells about two Uvarov's publications to illustrate clearly his views on the connection between philosophy and teaching of history that later he as the Minister of National Education will put into practice in the Russian educational system. Also the author gives an analysis of the historiosophical conception of the Russian thinker showing that the notion "Providence" is one of the most important parts of this conception.

Keywords: S.S. Uvarov, Philosophy of history, Education, Nationality, Romanticism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Count S.S. Uvarov (1786 - 1855) was the curator of educational district of Saint Petersburg (1811 – 1822), the President of the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences (1818 – 1855), the Minister of National Education (1833 – 1849). Also he was an autodidact, excellent expert in the antiquity [1] and author of many works dedicated to the philosophy of mythology and of history [2].

It is important to say that Uvarov always estimated the history as a discipline, in particular because of its pedagogical and up-bringing feature and potentiality. In addition, he estimated it as a method and tool to show to the young men the great experience of previous generations that could serve them as a great example.

In 1810 Uvarov wrote his first work entitled "The Project of Asian Academy" [3] where he expressed his philosophical view of the historical process, but he didn't pay attention to the teaching of history then. This paper gives an analysis of two Uvarov's publications dedicated the interrelationship between the history and the philosophy in educational system that he considered essential.

2. UVAROV'S PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS AND ITS APPLICATION TO THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The first publication to analyze is Uvarov's essay "On the Teaching of History and its Application to the National Education" (1813). He wrote it as the curator of educational district of Saint Petersburg and it was addressed to Count A.K. Razumovsky (1748 – 1822) being at that time the Minister of National Education. The essay represents methodical and ideological recommendations directed to the teachers and professors of history. Also it represents Uvarov's meditation of the way how to unit the history with the philosophy for constructing the courses of history and for showing to the students the reason and sense of the whole historical process. He pays attention to the age of the students saying that it's very important to realize if student's mind and soul are truly ready to perceive and to right interpret the facts of history and their real meaning.

Reading the essay we should remember that it was written at the unquiet and turbulent time, just after the wars with Napoleon when Europe was full of smoldering and fuming ruins. That's why the intentions of thinkers in Europe as well as in Russia were evident: they were trying to explain the meaning of these historical events. Now they weren't satisfied with previous answer to this

question because it had been inspired by the Enlightenment, and they saw with evidence that in reality the course of events had been going absolutely different way. Europe and Russia of this period needed a reasonable, distinct and valid explanation of that catastrophe, and some thinkers intended to explain it from the point of view of the divine reason. So no wonder that one of the points of Uvarov's essay was to attract attention to the history as a science and as a discipline of educational institutions, to notice how it was important to unit the history with the philosophy and to learn it and its lessons, thoroughly and even scrupulously, because all this could help to foresee, prevent and avoid new historical tragedies in the future.

Uvarov was convinced that the Providence lead the historical process and it was enough to look more intently at the succession of the historical events to see it clearly. The notion "Providence" is one of the central notions in his historiosophical conception. In its frameworks he gives an answer to such a grievous question about the meaning of the terrible events that the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars brought with them. Thus, according to Uvarov, Providence warns humanity against even greater evils, showing which path is wrong and leads to errors, motivating to look for other ways. At the same time, Providence is a force that is in a continuous process of creation and choice. We can read in the essay: "The mysterious direction of the incidents is hidden from our eyes. We wish to see the goal of providence when it is still choosing ways to achieve them". [4]

The human reason, by definition imperfect, in the process of creation a historical canvas, according to Uvarov, is assigned the role of a kind of tool, through and with the aid of which Providence manifests itself at all stages of world history. "<...> the teacher should always make sure that the truth and the connection of historical events are not hidden from the students. From the very beginning, the teacher must always show the stubborn resistance of the human reason, its rapid flight, its numerous errors, and, finally, the secret influence of providence on all its actions and attempts" [5]. Therefore, the Providence has a higher intelligence, perfect in comparison with human intelligence, and it is also endowed with a will, which it implements in the world through the actions of particular, concrete people and the movements of peoples and nations and it implements this will in the world. Its ultimate goal is to lead humanity to the highest spiritual state and

the best political system. Through the actions of people, even through their errors, blunders and fatal mistakes, it fulfils its plan in accordance with the higher plan and project. In this regard, it is interesting to note that Uvarov here preceded the ideas that Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel will later express in his "Lectures on the Philosophy of History".

Hence, the essay we are considering bears the stamp of new, post-war realities, and it is an experience of finding and justifying the meaning of destructive events on a pan-European scale. For this Uvarov uses interesting forms, images and intellectual shifts. First of all, it is about the representation of the historical process in the form of the life of a single person and the passage of similar stages of development – infancy and childhood, youth, maturity, and, finally, old age and decrepitude. Here are two quotations from the essay that can help to illustrate his views: "The teacher should, in my opinion, not otherwise portray them (the Middle Ages) as the times of the childhood and youth of Europe". "<...> spreading the rays of science and enlightenment among the citizens, we should excite and retain, as much as possible, the popular spirit and the elegant character that Europe now looks at, as well as an exhausted old man looks at the vigor and strength of a blooming youth" [6]. The second of the quoted fragments is simultaneously associated with Uvarov's views on the national spirit, and he speaks about it in connection with the "ages" of civilizations. He finds that, unfortunately, because of the economical and political realities in Europe of these times, the individualities of the European countries and their popular spirit were inexorably disappearing, it was replaced by the general spirit of time – today, on a global scale of the whole world we would say "globalization". In this process Uvarov sees the indisputable influence of the "old age" of Europe, that mostly looked with contempt, from his point of view, at the national spirit and the identities of particular cultures.

In the essay, we also can find the rhetoric dedicated to the cultural and intellectual advantage of young Russia over aged Europe. Uvarov inscribed this rhetoric in his historiosophical conception about the ages of countries and civilizations. Indeed, in a historical process, each nation, having been formed and spiritually gained strength, enters like the human in the "age" of its youth and blossom, when he admires everything, when everything in the world seems charming to him in the light of newness, and it seems that

everything is possible for him. In the same period, there is also a process of discipleship and imitation, whether it is an imitation of nature copying its creations, or it is an imitation of the spiritual and cultural creations of already mature peoples-predecessors. Later, as in the life of a person, a period of maturity comes in the life of a nation, when it can finally give to the global cultural process something new marked with the stamp of its own identity. Hence, according to Uvarov's idea, every nation and country is destined to go this way and to enrich the spiritual treasury of the humanity. From his point of view, in the first half of the 19th century Russia was in the period of youth and apprenticeship in the comparison to its older "sister", Europe, that by this time had already crossed the line of maturity, and was intellectually and spiritually tired steadily moving towards the old age. For Russia, in turn, its own unique cultural and spiritual discoveries and findings were in the future. [7]

One more Uvarov's publication where his historiosophical views were described in connection with the education was "Speech of the President of Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences and the curator of educational district of Saint Petersburg represented on the 22 of March 1818 at the solemn assembly of The Main Pedagogical Institute". On the 12 of January, 1818 Uvarov became the President of the Academy of Sciences, and on March he represented his "Speech..." The reason to write and represent it was the opening of Departments of Arabic Language, of Persian Language and of World History. It is interesting to note that Russian thinker and statesman addresses it not to his colleagues but directly to the students.

In "Speech..." we can see again the rhetoric dedicated to the imperfection of the human reason, its author says that sometimes the path of reason can come to a dead end (for sure, it is an allusion to the recent war events). At the same time, we also can see the Uvarov's strong faith in the human reason. Next quotation can be an illustrative example: "The human reason does not always follow a straight, well-defined path; it leans forward with a bold impulse, and then suddenly stops. Often carried away by misleading ghosts, it interrupts its pursuit and, like a brooding genius on the monuments of ancient plastic, he turns his torch to the ground. Nevertheless, be at peace! The torch cannot be extinguished; it is immortal like the human soul, like the eternal justice, as the truth and the virtue!" [8] Also Uvarov stays true to the idea

of the ages of nations and countries and he repeatedly pays great attention to it.

In spite of the fact that "Speech..." was written in a quiet and peaceful time, when the voices of war have already felled silent, we still can see in this text the thoughts of its author about the providentialism and his intentions to explain the divine meaning of history. It is important to notice that now in Uvarov's Russian text appears one more word that means "Providence" – "Promysel", along with the notion "Providenie". "Speech..." is the only one work of his legacy where Uvarov used the word "Promysel". He writes, for example: "Everyone was acting for himself, and none of them knew that he was just a tool in the hands of Providence and was acting solely to establish the balance of all political forces; and no one knew that from all these personal and narrow intentions a united impulse should be formed to lead Europe to the common improvement" [9]. It is also remarkable that in "Speech..." the both Russian variants of the word "Providence" are written with a capital letter, in contrast to the essay "On the Teaching of History and its Application to the National Education" where "Providence" is written with a lowercase "p" (in his very first work, "The Project of Asian Academy", the notion "Providence" is written with a capital letter).

3. INFLUENCE OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND THE ROMANTICISM

Uvarov's historiosophical conception and applied to the educational system is created in equal measure under the influence of ideas of the Enlightenment and the romanticism. Russian thinker being brought up in the traditions of the Enlightenment cannot, however, agree with the Enlightenment ideal that represents the historical process as a vector that has no limits. He also does not agree the idea about the human reason as the motive force of this process that nothing can conquer and limit. He believes in linear progress of the Enlightenment, but in the cyclical course of world history. The linear progress can eventually lead humanity to the catastrophes similar to the one that Europe recently experienced, but the world history, which repeats its phases cyclically and is guided by Providence, by definition, cannot come to this kind of impasse. At the same time, in accordance with the ideas of romanticism proclaiming the primacy of the national identity and values of each individual nation over the

cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment, Uvarov is convinced that the spiritual and cultural contribution of each nation is unique in comparison with the achievements and contributions of other nations.

4. CONCLUSION

Therefore, Uvarov makes Providence ("Providence" and "Promysel") one of the central notions of his historiosophical conception, where it leads the course of world history. Even at the beginning of his career, he united this conception with his ideas about the teaching of history as a discipline. The future Minister of National Education in his early works already emphasizes the importance of the connection of the history as a science with the philosophy and says that philosophy should always be an aid in the search of the meaning of the historical process. He appeals to the teachers of history and to the students. The teachers should always keep in mind the idea of Providence and try to show it as clearly as possible to the students, and the students should learn the lessons that the history can give: "Listen carefully to the history! It will answer to you; it will explain all your doubts and will resolve all your issues" [10]. Eventually, according to Uvarov, everyone should remember that the Providence takes care of the humanity and leads it to truth and goodness.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Diana Sivakova.

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- [9] Ibid., p. 313.
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