

The Crisis of European Culture in the Works of Russian Philosophers of the Twentieth Century

Around the Ideas of Spengler

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Abstract—The article presents a philosophical and cultural analysis of the situation of European culture crisis with Russian thinkers of the early twentieth century. The basis is a collection of native authors which was released almost immediately after the appearance of O. Spengler's book "Decline of the West". The release of this collection has been a definite response to the urgent issues raised in the fundamental work of the German philosopher.

Keywords—the crisis of European culture; Russian religious philosophy; Spengler; M.I. Kagan; cubism; futurism

I. INTRODUCTION

The subject of "cultural crisis" at the beginning of the 20th century became the center of philosophical reflection of many European philosophers.

Russian philosophers had even more external reasons referring to this subject than that of their Western counterparts, since the disaster of the First World War in Russia, distress of the October revolution of 1917, and the ensuing civil war and exile.

First of all, we should point out one implicit idea that largely determines the paths of the critics of European culture by many Russian thinkers of the 19th century - the contraposition of Russia and the West.

This idea has deep historical roots, and it was formed in the 16th century by the elder Philotheus into a political concept "Moscow, the Third Rome". It found religious, cultural, and philosophical embodiment among the Slavophiles¹, and then was in a certain way comprehended

¹ Thus, contrasting Russia and the West in the historical and concrete aspects of content, one of the founders of Slavophilism I.V. Kireyevsky finds that the deficiencies of Russia's development is a continuation of its virtues. As for the advantages of the current state of the West, they are temporary and transient. Historiosophy of Kireevskii is rooted in the main idea of the preservation of the Orthodox faith of completeness, integrity and purity of Christian doctrine: "Christianity penetrated into the minds of the Western nations through the teaching of one of the Roman Church - In Russia, it is lit on all the lamps of the Orthodox Church; Theology in the West assumed the character of rational abstraction - in the Orthodox world, it retains the integrity of spirit; there is a split power of the mind - There is striving for it through an internal elevation of consciousness to cardiac integrity and bustling center of the mind..."- I.V. Kireyevsky about the

by N.Y. Danilevsky in his fundamental work "Russia and Europe" (1869).

Through the efforts of the Slavophiles and N. Danilevsky, this position is rooted in the approaches to understanding the basic problems of the crisis of European culture, particularly the culture and civilization, the material (the machine) and spiritual, nature and history, and the elite and mass.

A collection of the four local authors, "Oswald Spengler and the decline of Europe"² has become a kind of response that determined the specificity of the treatment to the subject of the crisis of Russian philosophers of the 20th century, which became a cult book in the Spengler "The Decline of Europe". This book significantly raised interest among Russian intellectuals immediately after its appearance. Even as one of the authors of "Russian response," tries to understand the phenomenon of the unprecedented success for this kind of literature because as he convincingly argues, in the concept of O. Spengler the original idea is absent. George Vico, V. Windelband, Rickert, Bergson, J. Goethe and Nietzsche, according to F.A. Stepun, proposed a model of cultural-historical types of culture, interpreted the antithesis of nature and history (not as opposites between two worlds but as opposites of two points of view on unified world), and spent time understanding how to focus experiences and space as a dead time long before O. Spengler opened the mythical origins of Western culture.

However, along with traditional bases of Spengler's book success, the Russian philosopher finds that the external circumstances of the scourge of war and revolution represent the originality of the author's position "Decline of the West" which in his opinion makes the book interesting and relevant. "The originality of O. Spengler, as a cultural philosopher - wrote F.A. Stepun - lies in the fact that he does not belong to the positivist thinkers, who tend to see in civilization the most perfect face of culture, also does not belong to those religious-minded philosophers, which include almost all Russian thinkers that see in civilization the mask of dead

nature of Europe's Enlightenment and its attitude to the Russian enlightenment // I.V. Kireyevsky Selected articles. M., 1984, P. 234.

² It is necessary to point out the fact that in the Russian philosophy of culture is rooted an opinion about the kinship of the concept of local cultural-historical types of O. Spengler and N. Danilevsky.

culture. For O. Spengler, civilization is a face but not the face of life; it is a living person's death "[4, p.30-31]. Russian philosopher notes the depth of the new spiritual experience of the German author that allows trusting his estimates, in spite of the obvious subjectivity. He ends his thoughts with assumption: in the experience of death of O. Spengler a power of renovation of the religious life is enclosed.

II. RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHICAL SOLUTION TO CULTURAL CRISIS: N.A. BERDYAEV AND S.L. FRANC

If the F.A. Stegun only touched the "O. topics Spengler and religion", the other participant of this collection, famous Russian thinker N.A. Berdyaev, made this theme central to his article "Faust's dying thoughts." The main disadvantage of position Spengler N.A. Berdyaev believes it irreligious, misunderstanding of the German author of religious life and the values of Christianity in European civilization.

As well as F.A. Stegun, N.A. Berdyaev finds the originality of Spengler's book not in setting the theme of the crisis of European culture, but in the fact that the German culturologist aimed to a new world of civilization, cities engineering. But even here, according to Russian philosopher, Oswald Spengler is not fully consistent. More precisely, he is not who wanted to represent himself. His mind is twofold: the mind - on the side of civilization, the heart - on the side of culture. Therefore, in the civilization pathos of Spengler, N.A. Berdyaev heard notes of sadness on outdated Western culture.

N. Berdyaev affects the evaluation of O. Spengler concerning Russian prospects. First of all, the Russian philosopher, using Spengler dichotomy culture-civilization clarifies the negative attitude of Russian people exactly to European civilization, but not to the European culture. He suggests a related to Russia explanation of guarded expectations of Westerner. In his opinion, Russia, ranging geographically between East and West, can really encompass the historical idea of the future of mankind. It is in this N.A. Berdyaev sees the base of interest in the book of O. Spengler in Russia.

The article of N.A. Berdyaev "The Crisis of Art" is very symptomatic; it comes almost at the same time with the work of O. Spengler. Stating generally the recognized fact of the crisis of contemporary art, Russian philosopher observes two opposite trends, projecting symptoms of this crisis: a synthetic, characterized by a tendency to merge the different kinds of arts and analytical, i.e. the tendency to fragmentation within individual arts. And if the synthetic trend has positive features of the crisis, the preservation of certain aspects of the old art, old culture and in the overcoming of old one with new theurgic sense, analytical trend is an expression of all negative that brings with it a crisis. Analytical trend in art, according to N.A. Berdyaev, shows the degeneration of deep meaning of the old art into the surface, not related to the true being technology.

As the most outstanding examples of analytical trends in the art the Russian philosopher called Cubism and Futurism. Cubism, experimenting with the material forms, loses itself materiality; futurism is destroying traditional forms of life

which leads to blurring the boundaries of the image of the world. All solid faces of existence are destroyed, everything decrystallised and atomized. Man turns to objects; the objects are part of the human. One object changes over to another object, all the plans are moved, and all the plans being mixed. This is a new sense of life that a futuristic art tries to express.

Cubism was only one of the expressions of this cosmic vortex, displacing all of their seats. Futurism in all its varieties growing goes even further. This is a real disturbance of the feature of the permanent residency of existence; disappearance of all the images clearly delineated the world's subject" [2, p. 404-405].

According to NA Berdyaev, these "games" of Cubism and Futurism from materiality of the world, lead eventually, to the degeneration of art.

Another indication of the destructiveness of such attempt to overcome the crisis of art, which is offered in Cubism and Futurism, Russian philosopher considers the strengthening of the power of the machine, in violation of the connection between spirit and matter. In such destruction of old art, old culture cannot resist basic cultural values, and the man himself. N.A. Berdyaev even considers the First World War as a continuation of the futuristic art of destruction. "Futurism moved from art to life and gave more ambitious results, in life than in the art. Futuristic warfare was prescribed by Germany throughout the world. The current war is machine war. It is largely a result of increasing power of machines in human life. This is an industrial war where the machine replaces man "[2, p. 414].

So what is the way out of these trends of an art crisis? Above all, N.A. Berdyaev considers the need for birth of a new art and culture. Therefore, he is not going to mourn and to criticize the negativity of new trends in order to preserve the old art. And still solution to this crisis, in his opinion, can only be a new religious revival, including the synthesis of old and new, that does not destroy but transfigures it. N.A. Berdyaev believes that theurgy should become a new form of creativity transforming of a culture, of life itself: "Theurgic creativity in the strict sense of the word is already going beyond the boundaries of art as the sphere of culture as one of the cultural values, it will be a catastrophic transition to the creativity of the of being, of life itself.

The path to it lies not through the outposts of the old art and culture, through the return to the past, nor through the restoration of the sacred art of the ancient worlds and medieval worlds; the path to it lies through a sacrificial commitment to go through the splitting process, and atomization, which symptoms are shown in Cubism and Futurism, and through this cosmic whirlwind with faith in the indestructibility of creative human spirit, the core "I", designed for creative business in new world age "[2, p. 413].

According to N.A. Berdyaev, in his experience of the contemporary culture of the crisis indicates two possible ways of its further movement: the way down to the pre-cultural status and the way up to super cultural state, which will lead not only to a new culture but also to a new life. The Russian philosopher assimilates this creativity with the

power of God's creation. N.A. Berdyaev declares the possibility to escape from the crisis of culture. This will produce a kind of creativity that's able to be a continuation of God's creation of the world. He sees the makings of this kind of creativity in the Gnostic work.

Even more specifically, N.A. Berdyaev writes in his book "The New Middle Ages" about the problems of the new shape of the emerging cultural world. The Russian philosopher calls the new Middle Ages the contemporary period of development of human history. According to him, the modern human society is going through a transition period where the old world is withering away and there is a birth of a new world. N.A. Berdyaev claims via "The New Middle Ages - I call the rhythmic change of times, the transition from the modern history of rationalism to irrationalism or medieval type of supernaturalism" [1, p. 410].

It is worth noting that this perception of the historical process as a periodic change of the ancient and medieval type of culture is characterized in one or another extent by many Russian thinkers. In particular, one of the leading Russian philosophers, Pavel Florensky, writes about himself in the encyclopedic dictionary of the early twentieth century as follows: "The leading theme of the cultural and historical views of Florensky - denial of culture as a single process in time and space, with a consequent denial of evolution and progress of culture. As for the life of the individual cultures, Florensky develops the idea of their subordination rhythmically in rising - culture types of medieval and renaissance culture" [5, p. 38-39].

For the position of N.A. Berdyaev, the radicalization of ratings is characterized for all components of the transition from dying humanistic culture to the nascent Christian Gnostic kingdom. On one side, he speaks of a certain parallelism in the occurrence of the old and the new middle Ages: then and now, it is preceded by a time of decline and barbarism. However, as the Renaissance, namely the new antiquity, did not become a repetition of the old antiquity as well the new Middle Ages, will not be a simple copy of the old Middle Ages. N.A. Berdyaev is sure that the new middle Ages will not be able to ignore such achievements of the previous historical period, as the "experience of freedom", "the positive gains of conscience" and "refinement of the soul". Thus, the Russian philosopher observes some continuity and correlation of periods in the historical development of mankind.

However, in contrast, N.A. Berdyaev predicts an offensive and radically new period which should receive its final decision within two mysteries not yet found their solution in the old Middle Ages, namely Christianity, and especially at Renaissance followed him: the mystery of man and the cosmos mystery.

What are the main changes that, according to N.A. Berdyaev, must occur in human society, as in individual world level as well on the level of the dispensation of social life?

First, rationalism will be replaced by irrationalism.

Secondly, neutral, middle, as describes Russian philosopher humanism of the Renaissance and modern times must be replaced by religiosity.

Thirdly, to replace the process of atomization of social life must come to the idea of universality, the spiritual unity of the cosmos. And this idea can and should realize Christianity so far still very fragmented.

Fourthly, the person will no longer be a single atom of social communities, and become a person of a hierarchically organized space. The main thing of this person will creativity of life itself, a man of the creature becomes the Creator, like God.

Fifth, the Church will be the center of all the transformations in human life, society and the universe. All life will be built around this universal church; it will have an impact on all spheres of human existence: knowledge, morality, art, politics and economics. Moreover, the Russian philosopher believes that intellectuals within the Church will play an increasingly important role, which is slowly returning to faith, while the nation falls away from her, tempted by the atheistic propaganda.

N. Berdyaev believes that communism and fascism are obvious indicators of the crisis of humanistic culture and civilization, defining most of the twentieth century, that is the life of Eurasian peoples. As for the prospects for Eurasian development, Russian thinker sees two possibilities of implementing a secular paradigm shift process on religious: positive - of building the kingdom of God, and negative - the domination of the devil's kingdom. He predicts a major role of femininity in the new era. Women, according to N. Berdyaev, unlike the masculine culture of rationality, are more related to the elements of nature, the soul of the world.

N. Berdyaev underlines the mission of Russia in the development of the new era of the middle Ages for two main reasons. Firstly, Russia had never detached from the sacred roots of medieval culture; it was not peculiar to fully humanistic, democratic European traditions. Secondly, the Russian people in their spirit are more universal. However, these advantages and serious temptations of the Russian people are accompanied sacred medieval beginning to turn into a satanic and distort the universal spirit of internationalism that has class. The private character or nationalistic superiority Russia opposes Europe.

The third author of the mentioned book "Oswald Spengler and the decline of Europe" S.L. Frank recognizing certain validity in the diagnosis of the withering away of O. Spengler's culture, generally finds wrong his conception of the history of European culture. First of all, the Russian thinker believes that the historical relativism, which claims Spengler, in fact, is not determinative. The German philosopher, according to the Russian author, unwittingly, is building a new metaphysics, which relies on the "feeling of universal unity" permeates his book. The contradiction between the conscious setting of O. Spengler on the rejection of the metaphysical concept of history and the real embodiment where the timeless and space less determining

substrate stories cause variability in specific historical situations, allows to S.L. Frank to consider the position of Spengler as a holistic philosophy of culture, otherwise, to talk about its fallibility.

As well as N. Berdyaev, S. Frank believes that the development of European culture, is faced not with closed birth cycle, peak, decline and death but with different variants of its steady progress. It is not when the crisis testify not the coming of the inevitable end but the change of one embodiment of the development into another. However, in contrast to N. Berdyaev, whose onset of a new Middle Ages can carry both positive and negative scenario, may be embodied as the kingdom of God as well the kingdom of the devil. S. Frank writes about a new spiritual revival, the essential features of which he finds in the late Middle Ages and the early old revival, especially in the works of Dante and Nicholas of Cusa.

According to him, the new cultural paradigm was born at the tum of the middle Ages and Renaissance to oppose themselves "ascetic-dualistic" paradigm of the early middle Ages: the paradigm of religious justification of earthly human existence. In this paradigm, specific culture "terrestrial beginning" of life were blessed from its spiritual center. Thus, the early medieval asceticism, contrasted with heavenly and the earthly and spiritual and material could be replaced by more holistic way of development of European culture, where spiritual principle extends its beneficial effects on the whole of human creativity. However, according to the Russian philosopher, for some reasons this option has not been implemented. In the activities of the followers of A. Dante and Nicholas of Cusa, connection with spiritual origins has been weakened and continued to weaken until its complete break in modern European culture.

Therefore, S.L. Frank concludes, today we are not dealing with the death of European culture but with the crisis such variant revival, which led to a complete neglect of its culture, spiritual and religious origins. "Humanity, - says the Russian philosopher - far from the noise of historical events - accumulates strength and spiritual skills to the great work begun by Dante A. and Nicholas of Cusa, and failed, due to a fatal historical error or weakness of their successors. It is not the destruction of Western culture is what Europe is going through but its deep crisis in which some great forces die and others are born. And we end up with what we started, if not the most profound and fruitful, in any case, the most remarkable and striking symptom of this crisis is the book of O. Spengler "[6, p. 54].

III. TELEOLOGIC SOLUTION OF CULTURAL CRISIS: M. I. KAGAN

Another Russian philosopher, student of G. Cohen and P. Natorp, and friend of M. Bakhtin - M. Kagan treats O. Spengler's ideas with several critical positions. For him, Spengler and his book serves as a negative sample, shielding brighter thoughts of another German author, whose ideas of European culture and the crisis he considers more original, accurate and deep.

The main advantage of the solution to overcome the crisis of European culture, which offers P. Natorp, in the opinion of his Russian pupil is that he seeks and finds its solution, focusing on the future. Spengler, who is also in their search, is completely in the past.

Such teleological approach to the problem of the crisis of European culture allows P. Natorp, unlike of O. Spengler, to indicate the true causes of the crisis and propose effective ways out of it. The futility of the same decision, of O. Spengler is that he builds on the basis of its final value and begins to see the true infinity of the historical process. Therefore, according to M. Kagan, Spengler does not deal with the real living, and therefore, infinite reality but with separation and death.

M. Kagan, based on the position of his German teacher, believes that the foundation of the historical process of human creativity must be shown the same infinite value that is put by marburgs and natural science foundation, and it is infinitely small (infinitesimal) quantity. In the living creative process of historical existence must meet "the infinitely large and the infinitely common small force of individual spontaneity" [3, p. 94]. How can happen this meeting? If for each person was found his one job-tells the native thinker.

What kind of work can unite the community and the individual by providing everyone his work? After P. Natorp, M. Kagan believes that this job can only be a work of education in the broad sense of the word "human". Therefore, all efforts of the government and the public should be directed to the creation of such schools in which both economic, educational and spiritual functions would be united.

M. Kagan understands certain utopianism of such views, but believes that utopia can be useful for historical science. Russian philosophers explain the pessimism of M. Kagan by various failures of his concept.

IV. CONCLUSION

Thus, in relation to the crisis of European culture prospects, Russian thinkers have very obvious characteristic optimism. They do not agree with O. Spengler in his pessimistic predictions of the imminent destruction of European civilization and culture.

Highlighting the specificity of cultural and historical development of Russia, Russian philosophers defend the point of view of cultural development unity of Russian and European nations.

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