

GUSTAV SHPET AND THE FORMATION OF RUSSIAN PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS

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Abstract:

The authors proceed from the thesis that we can still identify neither the history of the Russian philosophy, nor its most prominent representatives, nor ourselves in philosophy as such and within the «world philosophy». We are enchained by old or new ideological patterns of interpretation and understanding of Russian philosophy and culture. For example, we try to deduce a «specific feature» of Russian philosophy, which is found in its «theocentricity», in «ethical centricity», in «literature centricity», or in some special «Russian problems» (the search for «Russian idea» or «a different way of Russia», as if the German philosophy at the time did not look for the same peculiarity of Germany). Yet every *true philosophy is substantially universal* and differs not so much in content (all philosophical themes and problems are «eternal» and universal), but *in form*. And the form has mainly linguistic and stylistic difference associated with self-understanding and understanding of other cultures and philosophies; it means that any established national philosophy is *initially hermeneutical as a being in the word*.

Keywords: hermeneutics, understanding, philosophical knowledge, Russian philosophy, G.G. Shpet.

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INTRODUCTION:

We do not want to produce another banal text about the "identity" of Russian philosophy, like a provocative book by V.V.Vanchugov [7]. For the purpose of problem statement we shall say a paradoxical thought: what if there is no special "Russian philosophy" they write about? Could it be an ideological construct or, at best, a quasi-scientific construct? There is Russia, Russian people (living, concrete-historical), including philosophers, there is their history and real life, during which they have created and developed culture and philosophy. While culture and philosophy either exist or not. Regardless of the "national form"...

It is obvious that our discourse contains both a) a negative interpretation of the specifics of Russian philosophy and culture (quite ideologically biased) [see: 3], and b) an *apologetic* one, no less ideological. The negative position goes back to the polemics of N.N. Strakhov and V.S. Solovyov, which clearly defined this axiological attitude. V.S. Solovyov then declared that "everything philosophical in these works is not at all Russian, and what is Russian in them is not at all similar to philosophy", and in them it is impossible to find "any real deposits of original Russian philosophy" [17, p. 345]. B.V. Yakovenko, Russian neocantian and pro-Western liberal reproduced a close, "ethnographic version of the denial of Russian philosophy" [30, p. 459]. Unfortunately, for the West we still remain mainly "the object of ethnographic interest" and play a role of "an informant in anthropological researches" [10, p. 14].

We will try to take the "middle position" and clarify the idea, which goes back to G.G. Shpet, that "Russian philosophy" can only be talked about to the extent that it has taken place as such, "pure philosophy" as a part - dialectically connected in its dependence/independence - of the world, *universal philosophical tradition*. Just as there is no "Russian science" or "German science", as it was thought in the totalitarian USSR and Germany. This is the case if we consider both philosophy as a "form of knowledge", different from both theology and literature, and a *scientific form of knowledge*.

The concept of Russian philosophy and the specifics of G.G. Shpet's philosophical knowledge in the historical-philosophical and historical-cultural range stands apart: in the literal sense "separately" - as a truly capital "structure" and "building" of Russian philosophy; and in the figurative sense - as a special philosophical project and "task" for future generations. T.G. Shchedrina has done much to rehabilitate and restore the objective meaning of his philosophical position [25; 26; 29]. We have previously published articles [15; 16], in which we tried to look at the ideas of G.G. Shpet quite objectively, since in our opinion, the "golden", middle way in evaluating the national culture and philosophy, the specifics of philosophical knowledge was characteristic of him. Though his ideas also require modern reevaluation.

For example, the opinion that G.G. Speth, having studied under E. Husserl, became the ancestor of "domestic phenomenology", and hermeneutics appeared only later, as a certain "addition", is a time-worn lament. However, this is far from being the case. Already in the book "The Phenomenon and Sense

(Phenomenology as the Basic Science and its Problems)" [27] hermeneutics is immediately included in the text - in the introduction, after criticism of A. Bergson's "philosophy of life" [28, pp. 12, 13] he contrasts Bergson's "irrational flow" with the "concrete integrity" of social being, under which he understands *the ontology of the ideal* - being filled not only with "life energy", but also with *sense*. Here we can already see a critical attitude to E. Husserl's phenomenology (this is a separate topic): instead of Husserl's "back to things", G. G. Speth has clearly stated his own philosophical principle - through things to the ideal meanings of being. In his understanding, hermeneutics is needed already when understanding the very problems of philosophy and the meaning of phenomenology: hermeneutics is not only a "method", i.e. a method of expression, but also a method of research through interpretation and understanding. And phenomenology should also be used not from the side of results, but through a method "*as it comes to its results*" [28, pp. 9-10]. Here, already on the first pages of his book, he supplements E. Husserl's sensual and intellectual (ideal) intuition with the third, philosophical and hermeneutic type - *the intelligible intuition* [28, p. 13]. And develops his own complete understanding of the role of philosophical hermeneutics in the VII, actually "hermeneutical" chapter "Sense and reasoning".

The complete expression of his philosophical hermeneutics and the concept of philosophical knowledge is obtained in the article "Wisdom or reason?". [24], which was probably also the result of his work on the history of hermeneutics [22]. But the question arises: why does G.G. Speth, distinguishing philosophy as "pure knowledge" from "wisdom" (metaphysics) and "scientific philosophy" (pseudophilosophy), understand philosophy itself as "science", "pure science"? Philosophy as pure knowledge", he wrote, "does not oppose itself in its exceptional position *to other sciences*, because *it is itself a science...* (italics ours - authors)" [24, pp. 224, 227, etc.]. He brings the birth of "pure philosophical knowledge" to the "positive philosophy" of antiquity - "Philosophy as pure knowledge is the birth of ancient pagan Europe" [24, p. 229] - to Parmenid, reinterpreted by Plato, giving amazing interpretations, ahead of Heidegger [24, p. 233-234], at least for a decade. But why does he identify "ancient knowledge" with "science", with philosophy as "pure science" if he himself contrasts the *discursive precision* of science (mathematics) with the *dialectical, interpretive precision* of philosophical knowledge? And because, in his opinion, philosophy, as well as its "rational precision", is always rational and reasonable: "So, in its perfectly final moment, as in its whole, hermeneutic philosophy essentially remains a rational philosophy, a philosophy of reason. *Rationalism* is the first word, constant, and will remain the last word of European philosophy. *Everything that is, being, in its essence, is reasonable; reason is the last foundation and the first omen of the essence.* This is the formula of rationalism" [24, pp. 316-317]. Here one can hear echoes of polemics with Hegel, but more with his Russian interpreters and popularizers of the middle of the XIX century.

Strange as it may seem, G.G. Speth falls into the general *temptation of modernization*, when "rationalism" is identified with "precise knowledge", and then, by its belonging (a purely mythological method) - with "science". But in history we know at least *two types of rationalism* [1; 2]. Rationalism is still accepted as a given of science and philosophy, which initially claimed to be "scientific", "precise", "strict", and built its discourse on the manner of scientific texts. However, ancient philosophy - here we critically develop ideas of M.K. Petrov and A.V. Potemkin [11; 18] - was not a "pure science", as well as modern, and any philosophical "knowledge" is not a "science", no matter how it wants to be "pure". This is where the epistemological objection arises: why does G.G. Speth, so sensitive to historical and philosophical intuitions, drive "theory" out of philosophy as "pure knowledge"? He demanded "that not this or that theory, but any theory and any hypothesis" [24, p. 253] be expelled from philosophy as pure knowledge, but he himself put

forward hypotheses [24, p. 289] and deprived the ancient philosophical "knowledge" of its "theories".

At the same time, one cannot disagree with another Shpet's thesis: "Understanding the problems of philosophy as pure knowledge in the above mentioned sense, we take, as I pointed out, the path predetermined by creature of philosophy itself. What is revealed to us on this way as a final point of aspiration is the reality itself in its true being - *what exists, the being.* Reality - what exists- is always around us, we are in it and live by it: we suffer, rarely rejoice, fear, anger, struggle, love, die. Among such numerous and diverse experiences there is one experience or, more precisely, one group of experiences which occupy the most modest place in human life in general, but sometimes grow to monstrous proportions - the group of experiences which we call *philosophical*" [24, p. 261]. G.G. Shpet lived with this attitude and philosophized, including his own interpretation of the "identity" of Russian philosophy. And you are amazed, reading not quite "simple" Shpet's texts, how different is the pure Russian philosophical language and its transparent meanings from the artificial multiplicity and design of German, whether it is a discourse of Hegel or Heidegger.

G.G. Shpet, not having found "purity" in the Russian philosophical knowledge, wrote skeptically: "The first of these remarks concerns my author's features and consists in a question: How can I write *the history of Russian philosophy, which, if it exists, is not in the form of science, whereas I recognize philosophy only as knowledge* (here italics is mine; again, the identification of 'science' and 'knowledge' - authors)... *Philosophy acquires a national character* not in the answers - the scientific answer, indeed, for all peoples and languages is one - *but in the very formulation of the questions* (here italics is mine -V.R.), in their selection, in private modifications. The interest and attitude to this or that problem, to this or that side in it, are local, folk, temporary, and not ideal form and content of problems" [25, p. 40]. However, during the defense of his dissertation G.G. Shpet was more optimistic, referring to the Russian "pure" and "positive" philosophy not only by V.S. Solovyov, but also P.D. Yurkevich, S.N. Trubetsky and L.M. Lopatin [24, p. 293]. But do we use a certain word "generally"? Isn't the philosophical problem in national philosophy put *in the forms of the native language?* And we write our texts in our native language...

So maybe the specificity of Russian philosophy, like any other *national established philosophy*, lies in its language and hermeneutics? Not only in those questions and answers, which national philosophy most often does not differ from other "philosophies", as they essentially constitute the "ideal objectivity" of all world philosophy, namely in *the form of setting and solving these eternal philosophical problems?*

Next comes the question: isn't all European modernist philosophies, like Russian philosophy, somehow or other connected with national literature? And here it is quite appropriate to refer to G.G. Speth himself, who is unreasonably attracted to nihilistic discourse in the interpretation of the "identity" of Russian philosophy. After all, he himself wrote about the "Russian word": "Whatever the qualities of my work, it is at least partially justified by the amount of material I have captured. In this respect, however, my work remains first. Only after it will it be possible for me, or for anyone else, to enter the more hidden depths of both the "context" and the philosophical Russian word itself" [26, p. 44]. Earlier we wrote that in the "Essay on the development of Russian philosophy" G.G. Shpet in the same methodological paradigm of institutionalism considered the transfer of ideas and concepts of Western European philosophy to the Russian "soil", to the Russian institutional "environment" (science, education, literature, magazines), and before us actually unfolds *a kind of dialogue of cultures, raises the problem of acculturation of Western philosophical ideas in Russian philosophy* [16]. Slavophiles were the first to voice this problem, but G.G. Speth only approached them in his historical and philosophical work on Russian philosophy. But it was A.S. Khomyakov who was one of the first to set the task of Russian hermeneutics. Most

likely, he was familiar with the hermeneutical works of Schleiermacher and Humboldt [19] and in some sections of the Semiramis left us quite actual hermeneutical intuitions [20, p. 40, 41, 44, 69-70, 137-138, 427, 428, etc.]. I.V. Kireevsky and A.S. Khomyakov introduced original concepts of "wholeness of believer's mind", "life science" and "whole reasoning", which have real philosophical and hermeneutic novelty even in comparison with German "classical" idealism.

And here, if we objectively go through the historical and philosophical presentation of the problem of "understanding - phenomenology - hermeneutics," we will see that Russian philosophers, learning the world's philosophical traditions, at the turn of the XIX-XX centuries in many ways critically reflect on Hegel, Cantianism, "philosophy of life" and phenomenology, and in some ways ahead of them.

Hermeneutics is often reduced to thought-provoking interpretation procedures. However, this technological approach to hermeneutics leads us into narrow philological, textological or semiotic procedures of thought. If we talk about philosophical hermeneutics, the main subject is understanding, because "understanding" and "hermeneutics" are not the same. Often such breeding is done, but it is neither original nor conceptual. This is where the problem dichotomy of "understanding is hermeneutics" actually occurs, which requires us to come to an *understanding* of the problem of "understanding in philosophical hermeneutics" as a result and at the same time a task through historical-philosophical and historical-cultural interpretations.

Understanding of understanding is not only phenomenological or hermeneutic phenomenon, if under hermeneutic one understands the procedure of professional humanitarian thinking (including philosophical thinking), but also epistemological, ontological, anthropological, and cultural. Understanding is not just an interpretation of philosophical texts, but always such a grasp of "the fullness of what a thinker can think" (Heidegger), when the interpretation of eternal philosophical problems, *universal ideal subjects* comes from the fullness of phenomenological penetration into these subjects, their meanings and meanings, and not only the conceptual existence of texts expressing philosophical thinking, in the depths of contexts, philological and existential*. We still do not adequately interpret and evaluate what is included in the understanding of "understanding": hermeneutics, evaluation, research, analytics, explanation, etc., are in no way removed from "adequate understanding", "holistic understanding". Understanding is always holistic, it is "holistic understanding", which goes back to antiquity and to Christianity.

An unbiased study shows that G.G. Shpet, like other Russian philosophers in the 19th century and the first third of the 20th century, *made possible the Russian philosophical and hermeneutic tradition* and called us to be more attentive to our own philosophical and cultural tradition.

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