



DOI: 10.22363/2313-2302-2020-24-4-631-636

Research Article / Научная статья

Groundlessness of L. Shestov as the Way of Going Beyond the Mind

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Abstract. The article is devoted to identifying the specifics of Russian philosophy through the analysis of F. M. Dostoevsky and L.N. Shestov's texts. The stylistic features of the two philosophers have been considered, their ways of philosophizing and denying of the cult of reason have been examined. The analysis is carried out using additional literature of French existentialism (were used such philosophers who wrote in similar styles as philosophical essays). To date, there are many researches in which study features of Russian philosophy. It is noted, that one of them are imagery, inseparable connection between philosophy and faith and criticism of rationalism. The excessive cult of reason leads to such problems in the history as the creation of the hydrogen bomb, the environmental crisis and so on. The revolt against reason and the state of groundlessness are a response to the processes of modern rationalization and technocratization, an attempt to go beyond the limits of the usual paradigm, to get out of the closed subjectivity. Thus, it's necessary to define the limits of the reason and develop a new way of philosophizing, for this reason it is proposed to consider the concept of groundlessness in the philosophy of L.N. Shestov, which makes the attempt to construct a philosophy, avoiding strict logic and excessive rationality.

Keywords: groundlessness, reason cult, presence, existence, transcendence, transcending, L.N. Shestov, F.M. Dostoevsky

Article history:

The article was submitted on 15.05.2019

The article was accepted on 25.02.2020

For citation: Goldberg D.V. Groundlessness of L. Shestov as the Way of Going Beyond the Mind. *RUDN Journal of Philosophy*. 2020; 24 (4): 631—636. DOI: 10.22363/2313-2302-2020-24-4-631-636

Introduction

There is a point of view according to which it is difficult to speak about the existence of the Russian philosophy [1]. However, it is important to analyze the key

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specifics of this unique philosophical tradition. Russian philosophy rests on visual, creative thinking rather than strict analytics. For instance, prominent Russian writer Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky expressed his religious, ontological and ethical reflections not in the form of classical philosophical texts, but in novels that reveal various philosophical problems (amongst others by means of the polyphony principle) [2]. Although one should not deny the influence of the European philosophical tradition on the development and history of Russian philosophy, and we can trace similar stages in the formation of the Russian thought and various philosophical schools, this article offers to consider employment of visual and creative thinking by Russian philosophers as a tool to break out of the rigid boundaries of strict analytics and comprehension of the surrounding reality, major philosophical questions and philosophical problems in general. As it is impossible to capture all material on this subject in one article, we will focus on the philosophy of F. Dostoevsky and L. Shestov. This choice is justified by the following reasons: F. Dostoevsky, as it has been already mentioned, is a prominent representative of Russian culture, who puts the ontological ideas in the form of a novel (i.e. prefers expressing his thoughts in an artistic way). L. Shestov, in turn, is also known for his specific narrative style (in the form of short notes that are not always consecutive and connected between each other).

Features of Russian philosophy in the context of F.M. Dostoevsky and L.N. Shestov

What is the essence of Dostoevsky's genius? He managed to convey peculiarities of Russian temper, to make the characters of his novels embody various philosophical paradigms, and, last but not least, let these characters live in line with the philosophical ideas they are meant to represent. Although some plots of Dostoevsky's novels were called autobiographical, his genius lies in the fact that his novels' characters cogitative activity stretch further away from their everyday routine. Geniuses are capable of going beyond their own individual being, to abstract from subjective experience and experiment mentally, transposing the idea into the sphere of real life. Its common knowledge that fiction (or in this case, philosophical ideas in a novel frame) is a special genre with other ways of reasoning and immersing the reader in the life of other people. For example, by means of living out their philosophical views — through the analogies, metaphors, hyperboles and other literary and stylistic devices. Imminent German philosopher Martin Heidegger had similar views; he considered it was important to study language and care of its purity. He believed that poetic philosophizing is the most suitable way of appealing to the truth and being [3]. Though analogy, for example, does not serve as the proof in strict logic. But it is impossible to describe some themes in a strict logical language. Otherwise we will get inexpressive scheme, deprived of randomness and such abstract ideal concepts as soul (there is no consensus view regarding the definition, but intuitively everyone understands what it is all about): “The philosophy and logic should have nothing in common; the

philosophy is the art, that try to break through a logical chain of conclusions and which is taking out the person to the shoreless sea of imagination, fantasy, where everything is equally possible and impossible” [4. P. 42].

One might wonder why Dostoevsky and Shestov were chosen for this inquiry? Both of them tried to break out of the strict framework of logic, to outdo that critical barrier in readers’ mind and plunge them into “the presence (here being)” or “Dasein” (in Heidegger terms), as well as to urge them to quit caring about superficial daily routine and question their being instead. It is difficult to express such meanings strictly (though Heidegger tried to use strict concepts in his works), but when one describes a state of mind or puts thought in the form of a story, everyone intuitively catches what is called “love of wisdom” [5]. Also, we face a problem of universals, where the definitions are too wide, general and do not reach the completeness, disregarding even subjectivity and other human factors. But when the reader plunges into reading, where they enter a condition of a character, do not they refuse their own experience, their own limits? Is not it an attempt to question? Thus, for example, Lev Shestov refused to put his philosophical work into the strict consecutive system of expansion of his views — “The apotheosis of groundlessness” was written in the form of short statements which were not connected directly between each other, but were penetrated by one general idea — an attempt to deprive the reason of the ground, to push out the person from the habitual environment, to destroy limits of subjective thinking which seeks to choose the convenient world view describing and explaining various phenomena. This way the philosopher tries to find ways of going beyond his own limits.

Criticism of the cult of reason

The influence of the Western tradition on Russian philosophy has been mentioned earlier. That, in particular, happened also to the Enlightenment and an excessive cult of reason. It would be appropriate to mention modern Russian philosopher, the expert in the philosophy of science and ontology, A.N. Pavlenko. He has quite a different view on the ideas of the Enlightenment and humanism. The essence of humanism used to be the human himself. That would be ridiculous for those living during the antique period to perceive such a humanistic view. In the antique world, it was cosmism that dominated. Cosmism considers space as the supreme value. That is where we see a huge gap between eras — in Antiquity people bow before the greatness of Space, Universe, and God. However, after the development of humanistic ideas, there happened a revolution and the human placed himself in the center of the universe.

It is during the Renaissance when the new type of humanism appears. Humanism tries to make the person humane. The main ethical categories — morals, freedom, the good and the evil, they all rely on the reason of a human. The reason has to fight against. The main idea of such humanism is the perception of a human as the highest natural being. Each individual by nature is endowed with reason and represents a certain unique personality that possesses freedom, an ability to define

their own destiny, to make independent decisions, to direct his life, pick his own destiny, and to build himself up. Destiny, in this case, is not an abstract or mystical term with indistinct sense, but a certain living plan which the person realizes or not — he chooses and designs it himself. God has some abstract nature here, as the unique and creative human being is now placed in the center of the universe. He has the reason, knowledge of laws of nature, and therefore leans on them instead of relying on the will of God. Initially, the harmony of soul and body is present in him; he is almost perfect. So, similar ideas became a basis of the humanism of the Enlightenment. The person becomes a natural element (still central) endowed with reason, and the content of the reason is scientific knowledge (natural science).

Shestov's act of faith, and the act of love, in the context of Dostoevsky, is capable of pulling out the person from his routine existence in passions. It allows making the spiritual jump, to go beyond limits of oneself, to make spiritual regeneration. The western trends came to Russia quickly and Russians perceived all achievements of science as a miracle and identified them with happiness and development and upcoming prosperity. But in fact, the rationality suffers a defeat in some spheres of life, as it is not capable of describing everything. The reason which makes sparks scientific revolutions is also capable of generating awful things (e.g. ecological crisis caused by excessive development of science). The invention of hydrogen bomb, technocratization of society and many other things generated by reason — lead to the degradation of morality. The original revolt (as Camus understood it) can be made against reason, against the desire to systematize everything. Shestov briefly mentions a famous phrase from a fairy tale: "The emperor has no clothes" — just like the scream of a person who passed borders of some paradigm, looked at the world with a fresh view. Only due to act of faith and love mankind can leave such overcome absurdity of the existence.

Conclusion

Lev Shestov appealed to clean creativity. Studying the past (e.g. history of philosophy) is certainly important for a deeper understanding of specific thinkers, but it is not necessary for further development of philosophy. "Any creation is the creation from nothing" [6. P. 62] — here the philosopher speaks about the emergence of those ideas which are not thoroughly framed in a concrete thought or a statement when you are in the state of here — being. When it is framed and seems stable and strong, it will begin to get a form of proved — at this moment it is necessary to break and deny it. Otherwise, each thinker can get obsessed with it and fail to move further. Should we transfer a similar way of reasoning to the natural-science sphere, then, for example, A.N. Pavlenko speaks about a stage of empirical weightlessness of the theory. In the physical-cosmological sphere of science changes between the theory and experience begin to happen, the theory starts to advance experience, and subsequently and to stimulate empirical researches. As for Shestov, it is possible to draw a conclusion that the condition of "groundlessness", an exit from habitual explanations (the world, the person, etc.), refusal of the

previous outlooks contributes to the maximum development of thought. German philosopher Martin Heidegger called this state “presence”. The person, being engaged in daily affairs. But there are moments when a person questions life when he drops out of his daily routine and “is present”. At this moment his consciousness goes beyond his own framework and tries to touch life, to merge with it. However, it is impossible to be in this state constantly, after a while the person will return to his ordinary being, but at those rare moments of “presence”, the individual can be full of the new ideas (it is similar to of Plato’s world of Eidos).

Summing up, we tried to define Lev Shestov’s way of thinking. The philosopher suggests refusing scientific, cultural, historical and other frameworks; it is some kind of an attempt to deprive reason of its standing point, to destroy habitual track of thinking and to go beyond limits. All previous knowledge and desire to choose one paradigm and develop this paradigm only creates subjective “blinkers” that thwarts the development of philosophical thought. Every time when the individual wants to be guided by one theory, he should refuse and continue to search, be free and open, as well as constantly aspire to a state of “groundlessness”.

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Беспочвенность Л. Шестова как способ выйти за пределы разума

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Статья посвящена выявлению специфики русской философии на примере Ф.М. Достоевского и Л.Н. Шестова. Рассматриваются стилистические особенности двух философов, анализируются их способы философствования и отрицание культа разума. Анализ осуществляется с использованием дополнительной литературы по французскому экзистенциализму (использовались тексты таких философов, которые писали в схожих для художественной литературы стилях, как философские эссе). На сегодняшний день существует множество исследований, которые посвящены особенностям русской философии. Выделяются ее специфические черты — образность, неразрывная связь между философией и верой, а также критика рационализма. Чрезмерный культ разума приводит к таким проблемам в истории, как создание водородной бомбы, экологический кризис и так далее. Бунт против разума и состояние беспочвенности являются ответной реакцией на процессы современной рационализации и технократизации, попытка выйти за пределы привычной парадигмы, выйти из замкнутой субъективности. Таким образом, необходимо обозначить границы разума и выработать новый способ философствования, в связи с чем предлагается рассмотрение идеи «беспочвенности» в философии Л.Н. Шестова, который делает попытку построить свою философию, избегая строгой логики и чрезмерной рациональности.

Ключевые слова: беспочвенность, бунт против культа разума, экзистировать, присутствие, выход за пределы, трансцендировать, Л.Н. Шестов, Ф.М. Достоевский

История статьи:

Статья поступила 15.05.2019

Статья принята к публикации 25.02.2020

Для цитирования: *Goldberg D.V. Groundlessness of L. Shestov as the Way of Going Beyond the Mind // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Философия. 2020. Т. 24. № 4. С. 631—636. DOI: 10.22363/2313-2302-2020-24-4-631-636*

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