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## S. BULGAKOV ABOUT CHEKHOV AND THE MODERN CRISIS OF SPIRITUALITY

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The article analyses the interpretation of Chekhov's works by S. Bulgakov. The author shows the connection of Bulgakov's literary criticism with his metaphysical suppositions about the nature of the art.

**Key words:** Russian philosophy, A.P. Chekhov, S. Bulgakov, metaphysics, literary criticism.

### 1. Bulgakov's metaphysical Chekhov-Interpretation and its contexts

Sergey Bulgakov's "Public talk" on "Chekhov as thinker" (1) offers a metaphysical interpretation of the writer the meaning of which becomes accessible in its contexts. On the one hand it deals with the field of discourse of the Chekhov images in literary criticism, in which Bulgakov positions himself and in which he had a determining constructing influence. On the other hand the talk shows a close connection to his philosophy, in which his journalistic works and the literary criticism play a crucial role. In the talk Chekhov, who for Bulgakov is in the shadow of the "eminent authorities" (CM 136) of Russian literature, Tolstoy and above all Dostoevsky, and who is otherwise rarely mentioned in the philosopher's work, serves Bulgakov's matter to evoke awareness for a renewal of Christian religiosity amongst Russian intellectuals. Bulgakov's essay is supplied with figures of thoughts and key motives of the two contexts mentioned above.

### 2. Bulgakov's position in the literary criticism of Chekhov

Bulgakov explicitly distances his interpretation from the Chekhov reception which has developed in literary criticism of the 19th century and which is mainly influenced by the essays of N. Michajlovsky (2). The view of Chekhov be defined by the issue of the rank of „direction“ («направление», CM 133), in a double sense of moral spiritual teaching function and social political commitment (3). Bulgakov however, does not understand art as a *mediator* of ideas but as a specific *method* of cognition.

From this standpoint Bulgakov is able to resolve *topoi* of the Chekhov criticism that have become clichés: The reproaches of „lack of ideas“ (4) and „the absence of a worldview“ (5) as well as the characterisation of Chekhov as a writer of the everyday (*бытописатель*) (6) he faces with his approach to appreciate him as “a thinker” (7). Bulgakov's definition of art allows him to consider Chekhov as a philosopher in an artistic way and his work as an expression both of a guiding idea and a specific worldview. However, Bulgakov does not look for idea and worldview in explicit and conceptual form, but rather in the artistic arrangement of the work, that brings it into appear-

ance implicitly and indirectly or even only *ex negative* (8). Bulgakov also disapproves of the critic's reproach that his work be „mosaic like“ (9), claiming they were not able to discover the unity at the basis of Chekhov's work.

Besides this methodological correction of his predecessors Bulgakov in addition develops a conversion of the main subject that has been focused on by Chekhov critics: Chekhov's demonstration of „triviality“ (*пошлость*), „bourgeois nature“ (*мещанство*) and „world weariness“ (*мировая скорбь*), which was negatively judged by Michajlovsky as painful awareness about the lost ideal i.e. the lost God (10) and then considered as anti-Christian by Zinaida Gippius, and escalated in a condemnation of Chekhov “in whose soul the devil made his home” («в его душе черт поселился прочно») (11).

Bulgakov, in contrast, understands this subject as a representation of the “spiritual state” («духовное состояние», СМ 160) in present time (12), and seeks the cause for its symptoms in an unconscious „search for faith“ («искание веры», СМ 137). Bulgakov characterises Chekhov as a „religious seeker“ (13).

With his contribution Bulgakov does not only try to approach Chekhov's work in a new way as far as the method and the contents are concerned but also to rehabilitate him from several reproaches from both positivistic (Michajlovsky) and symbolistic standpoints (Gippius).

A certain parallel can be found between Bulgakov's approach and Andrey Bely's essays (1904/1907), which honour Chekhov — likewise with subliminal polemic with older symbolists like Brjusov and Merezhkovsky — both as a link between realism and symbolism and as predecessor of the latter. For Bely Chekhov's characters and images represent „symbols“ by means of their „microscopic“ character, which allow to “look behind triviality“ (14). Everyday life becomes lucid for the „abyss of the spirit“ and make the „flight into eternity“ (15) possible. Bely, however, by putting emphasis on Chekhov's style and artistic approach, adapts a different point of view than Bulgakov. Yet, both revalue Chekhov with the aid of a platonically shaped approach to interpretation, which allows to view Chekhov's works as an artistic expression of transcendent ideas, reflexively and conceptually ungraspable as such and even for the author himself remaining largely unconscious, which gives his works a metaphysical depth.

In Lev Shestov's essay of 1904 (16) Bulgakov's — and Bely's — metaphysical image of Chekhov is contrasted by an aesthetic play with stereotypes of the Chekhov-criticism. Shestov who, by writing his book on Nietzsche and Dostoevsky (1902), introduced himself as an *enfin terrible* of literary criticism, picks up the classic reproaches and exaggerates them (17), by stylising Chekhov into a “poet of hopelessness” (18), a metaphysical ‘criminal’ and ‘assassin’ of all ideals (19). His essay deals with Chekhov's various „condemnations“ by humorously exposing their underlying authoritative claim of truth. Chekhov's „ignorance“ is revaluated in an ironic way as the only honest attitude appropriate to the present.

Apparently under Shestov's influence Merezhkovsky's essay of 1906 is written, in which he, however, retransforms Shestov's aesthetic interpretation of Chekhov's metaphysical ‘nihilism’ into ideological condemnation of the writer and deploys it for a negation of Bulgakov's view of Chekhov: Merezhkovsky reject the existence of explicit

as well as implicit religiosity in Chekhov and justifies the writers condemnation — set up by his wife, deconstructed by Bulgakov — as anti-Christian. Both Shestov and Merezhkovsky, although in contrary ways, turn against a metaphysical view of Chekhov (20), whom they believe has pronounced a “death sentence” on Christianity and religiosity (21).

From the beginnings of literary criticism in Russia, it has been characteristic of it that it is not so concerned with the comprehension of the works as such, but rather with opening a sphere, in which arguments and worries of ideological, philosophic, social, political etc. sorts, as well as artistic-programmatic positions, can be discussed. This also applies to the here suggested discourse of the Chekhov criticism and Bulgakov’s position in it.

Bulgakov’s attempt to found a metaphysical image of Chekhov (22) becomes clear in the context of his own philosophy in the first decade of the 20th century. Essentially the Chekhov-interpretation is based on his understanding of art as cognition (23), which makes a certain hermeneutic method necessary. Some reflections that can be found in the Chekhov-essay, as well as in articles close by it, allow a basic reconstruction of Bulgakov’s concept of art and his method of interpretation.

### 3. Art as cognition and Bulgakov’s ‚eidetic method’

The paradox of the attempt to represent Chekhov as a “thinker” whose works do not contain any or only reflections that can barely be attributed to the author as material for interpretation for the reader is solved by Bulgakov by his view of art as a special cognitive process («искусство есть мышление», CM 134). „Artistic thinking“ is distinguished from „scientific thinking“ (cf. CM 135f.: «художественное» versus «научное мышление») because its origin lies in *intuition*, which always contains more than is accessible to conscious reflection (24).

Bulgakov explicitly refers his concept of intuition to the model of the *poeta vates*, revived in Romanticism (25): Intuition is rooted in the (divine) world of ideas, which on the one hand the world of appearances is based on, but which holds “secrets of life” («тайны жизни», CM 136) that go beyond it on the other hand. By means of intuition art gains contents of trans-temporal, transpersonal and universal human meaning. By the artist taking part in a dimension transcendent to conscience through intuition, art becomes a form of „mysticism“ for Bulgakov (26).

For Bulgakov art shares the intuitive origin with philosophy (27). Not only do they owe it freedom and creativity but also the orientation towards „eternal“ and existential issues (cf. CM 136), that all end in the same “enigma” (CM 134, 145): self-knowledge as a human being. According to Bulgakov art is distinguished from philosophy by its synthetic form and its expression in „artistic images“ (CM 136: «художественные образы») (28), that replace conceptual analysis.

Bulgakov understands intuition as a union of the artist and ideas taking place beyond consciousness. The reception of the ideas becomes coloured by the individuality of the artist — preceding the empirical person — that can also be described as *idea* or *eidos* in terms of the idealistic tradition (29). Hence, Bulgakov defines the work as an expression of the „artistic individuality“ (CM 156) (30).

Intuition opens a sphere between the empirical person of the artist and his *eidos*, characterized by the difference between ideality and reality. The artist's empirical point of view can also be imagined as a dimension of perception for the eternal idea, which never appears to the artist in its pure form but is always broken by the medium of his empirical standpoint. This consideration explains why intuition for Bulgakov allows perception of the „spiritual state“ i.e. of the relation between the world of appearances and the world of ideas, which exists for a certain land, for a certain period of time, a social class as well as for an individual single person living in them. Times of ‚health‘ or ‚illness‘, about which Bulgakov likes to talk (31), are founded in some affinity to the ideal, or, in contrary, in the distance from it.

Thus art, for Bulgakov, is not only an expression of „artistic individuality“ i.e. of the artist's *eidos*, but also always an expression of the specific symptoms of time. The worldview Bulgakov uses here in the sense of world perception (СМ 134: «миросозерцание») emerges from this relation of *eidos* and time reference. According to him this kind of worldview — which is thus not to be confused with ‚ideological‘ content in Bulgakov — takes form in art.

Since art grasps the symptoms of time intuitively and not reflexively, according to Bulgakov it „cannot lie“ and it can be positioned „beyond good and evil“ (32): For him art has the ability to demonstrate „spiritual crises“ to the point of „demonism“ without being ill itself (33). As long as art owes itself an intuitive origin and is in that sense ‚pure‘ and thus for Bulgakov ‚true‘ art, it must not be ‚condemned‘ neither morally nor metaphysically (34).

Bulgakov's understanding of art requires a specific hermeneutic method, that can be characterised as ‚eidetic process‘: Ideas are always set both beyond their demonstration in the piece of work and the conscious reflection through the artist. They form the foundation for the artistic perception of the world and the creative act, yet without ever becoming entirely expressed in the piece of work (35).

This assumption enables him to discover in the works of an artist the hidden spiritual unity independently from their chronologic origin, which Bulgakov explicitly ignores in his Chekhov interpretation (36). The individual works are put together to form a „mosaic“ which is supposed to allow the *eidos* of the artist to have his individual figure shine through (37). As becomes clear from Bulgakov's Chekhov-analysis the ‚images‘ of the archetype each have a different quality: They either can be an expression of the reflection of the empirical world or the personality of the artist and then carry an increased symptomatic character; or they can give a more or less clear insight to the underlying *eidos*, the artist's individuality. These ‚insights‘ can be called „primary phenomenal“, in a transcendent sense in reference to Goethe.

Hence the piece of work always reveals more than the artist himself is aware of and thus, according to Bulgakov, has to be interpreted as detached from the conceptual declarations and personal intentions of the artist. Bulgakov also refuses placing the author on the same level as the characters, as was common practice in the criticism of Chekhov (38). However, Bulgakov can still quote single passages of a work to give immediate information about Chekhov himself. But since they are not referring to his

intention but his *eidōs*, Bulgakov here escapes the contradiction. In this case the characters are not taken as the author's mouthpiece, but as "primary phenomenal" expression of his *eidōs*.

According to Bulgakov, the 'eidetic reading' assumes an intuitive approach to the piece of work also on the side of the interpreter, since the *eidōs* can never appear immediately in the concrete work or become 'explicit' as such (39). The interpreter therefore has to have a 'double', a sensuous-spiritual view of the work: he has to perceive the work concretely and at the same time to grasp his underlying *eidōs* intuitively. Thus the interpretation of the work becomes necessarily coloured by the *eidōs* of the reader himself, and therefore is of 'subjective' nature: Besides, for Bulgakov the approach to the piece of art is individual (40). However, Bulgakov does not take the eidetic reading to be arbitrary, since he also tries to analytically present the synthetically grasped *eidōs* through perception of the concrete text, and to reflexively put its contents into concepts.

This procedure allows Bulgakov to understand literary criticism as necessary continuation of art. The interpreter is supposed to make art's „treasures of the spirit" conceptually accessible (41) for the conscience and to render them fruitful for cognition. For Bulgakov, the symptom grasped in art only turns into actual „diagnosis" (42) of the problems of time in comprehensive reading, which makes the search for a 'procedure of treatment' possible. In Bulgakov's view, however, the remedy indirectly comes with every piece of art: It dwells in its reference to *eidōs*, that, figuratively speaking, like 'sunlight' indirectly makes 'life' possible, even for water plants inhabiting the deepest darkness (cf. CM 150). According to Bulgakov, the cure of the „spiritual illness" can only begin through mobilisation of the metaphysical nature of man, of which 'true' art always gives report due to its intuitive origin, and to which it also accordingly appeals in the recipient.

Against the background of the sketched understanding of art, Bulgakov's Chekhov image becomes better understandable: He acknowledges Chekhov as a 'true' artist in the sense of the *poeta vates*, who, facing the task of human self-knowledge can thus be considered as 'philosophical'. In his talk, he wants to both show the individual artistic profile of Chekhov that like a seal gives its creation a uniform character, beyond stages of development, and the "diagnosis of the spiritual state" of the Russian *intelligencija* (43) to be found in Chekhov's work (CM 160). Independent from Chekhov's awareness towards these issues, the path to 'cure', which is supposed to lead out of the „spiritual crisis", in Bulgakov's view, is also based in Chekhov's work.

#### **4. Chekhov and the „spiritual crisis" of the Russian Intelligencija**

Bulgakov refers to Chekhov as a representer of the Russian *intelligencija*, a description common in literary criticism (44). However, he consults essential constant factors of the feature set that he himself developed for his interpretation of *intelligencija* — especially in his essay about Dostoevsky's Ivan Karamazov (1902) (45).

Bulgakov's *intelligencija* interpretation is based on his anthropology: Independently from the conscious attitude towards faith, man is a „religious being" (46), because his nature has a metaphysical origin.

But man's nature is a dualistic one, by contrasting the (good) metaphysical principle with an (evil) natural one (47). Because the first is of passive and the latter of active kind, the evil pushes the good principle into the back. The resulting weakness of the spiritual is considered as 'sin' in a Christian way and restricts man, as Bulgakov writes in reference to Paul:

«“[...] но в членах моих вижу иной закон, противоборствующий закону ума моего и делающий меня пленником закона греховного, находящегося в членах моих. Бедный я человек! Кто избавит меня от сего тела смертного?” (к Римл. 7, 15—24). В этих простых, но бесконечно мудрых и глубоких словах выражено то, что человек находит во внутреннем опыте своем, именно: мучительное сознание бессилия добра, косности духа, скованного грехом.»

‘But I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man am I! Who will rescue me from this body of death?’ (Romans 7, 15—24). These simple but endlessly intelligent and profound words express that what a person finds in his internal experience, namely: the tormenting consciousness of the impotence of the good, the stagnation of the soul which is fettered down with sin (48).

In the demonstration of the „weakness“ and the „dying of the spirit“ («угашение духа») (49), as well as the good and the ideals, Bulgakov finds the *eidos*(50) of Chekhov. Thus he transfers his anthropological Paulus-interpretation to the Russian writer. The central theme which, in variations is run through Chekhov's works is Chekhov's question: Why is the „force of triviality“ so strong in man? (51) Hence Bulgakov transposes the *topos*, central in the Chekhov criticism from *пошлость* and *мещанство*, to the metaphysical with the help of his conception of man taking up to Paul, and by this prepares his religious interpretation of Chekhov (52).

Bulgakov reads *мещанство* not so much as the lower middle class person's external way of life, but rather the mental and spiritual attitude, that only underlies life styles absorbed in everyday occurrences (53). It is marked exactly by the „dying of the spirit“, that means „impoverishment of the ideals“ (54) and the ceasing of striving for their realisation (cf. CM 146) (55). This, for Bulgakov, results in a life characterised by *пошлость* (56).

As a reason for such a life, Chekhov points to the „spiritual damage“ (,духовная поврежденность') and „inner weakness of human personality“ (,внутренняя слабость человеческой личности', cf. CM 144). Elsewhere Bulgakov himself shows a deeper reason for weakness of personality. He detects it in the corrupting influence of „satanic“ power that not always appears as a 'big' evil but that also parks itself on day to day life (57). According to Bulgakov, the tactics of the apparently not very dangerous devil (described by the symbolists as ‚grey' (58)) should not be underestimated, because precisely under the mask of the supposed innocence of the trivial he can pursue his aim even more effectively (59): the extinction of metaphysical roots in men, that consists of the destruction of being human by the separation of lower nature from the higher one (60). Bulgakov understands both *мещанство* and life in *пошлость* as a sign of the „spiritual captivity“ («духовный плен» (61)) of man and his spiritual ‚illness'.

However, it is exactly this 'illness' that Chekhov is supposed to show in form of his „gloomy people” («хмурые люди», СМ 139) (62). Yet, for Bulgakov, Chekhov's figures are distinguished by the fact that they react to the „emptiness” (63) that triviality evokes in their souls with the „tortures of their search” for faith (cf. «муки этого искания», СМ 137), with „world weariness” («мировая скорбь», СМ 145) and a sad longing («тоска»; СМ 137). Bulgakov, though, reads this reaction as a sign that the soul's metaphysical roots are yet undamaged. For him, they make the state of *пошлость* perceptible as inadequately for a human being and trigger a searching movement of the soul that is an expression of the spiritual i.e. divine principle's demand for realisation (64). Bulgakov interprets the world weariness and longing of Chekhov's characters as a sign of a „fight” (65) between the two principles in man, taking place in the hidden depths of the souls.

There are only two possible ways for this fight to end: final „spiritual death”, or man's spiritual 'rebirth' (66). 'Rebirth' for him emerges from the union of Christ and the individual human being: Christ has created the objective possibility for the 'victory of the Good' and saved men. Man however, has to actively realise his redemption by his own actions, since only then are freedom and individuality possible (67). According to Bulgakov, the realisation of redemption takes place through „self discipline” (cf. ‚самовоспитание’, СМ 160), which aims for the natural principle to be in control of the metaphysical principle in men. The starting point for this, however, is man's double cognition: on the one hand the realisation that he is in a state of sin; on the other hand, that only faith can release him from this state. For Bulgakov, hope for redemption only becomes a real prospect when man is convinced that the Good is of superhuman kind and has defeated Evil. Only through faith in Christ is man able to believe in the reality of the absolute Good i.e. divine in other human beings (СМ 148). For Bulgakov, however, this is a premise *sine qua non* for morality and sociality, because only the partaking in the divine is the cause of inviolability of the other human being (68).

The alternative to faith for Bulgakov consists in the transition from „spiritual captivity” to „obsession”, in which the divine is completely driven out by the daemonic principle (69). This, however, according to Bulgakov, equals the release of the „animal” in man, whose powers of destruction are directed against his own personality as well as the environment (70).

This „alternative” (СМ 148) between being human based on religion or the loss of it, for Bulgakov, follows as a consequence from the readings of Chekhov's works:

«Только веря в нее [сверхчеловеческую и всемогущую силу Добра, Н.С.], можем мы верить в себя и в своих братьев — человечество. Таков вывод, который, думается нам, неоспоримо вытекает из всего творчества Чехова. Загадка о человеке в чеховской постановке может получить или религиозное разрешение или... никакого.» (СМ 148)

Only by believing in it [the superhuman and omnipotent power of the Good] can we believe in ourselves and our brothers — humanity. This is the conclusion, we think, which indisputably emerges from Chekhov's works. The mystery of the person in Chekhov's interpretation can attain only a religious solution, or... nothing.

Bulgakov argues that Chekhov himself tends towards the view of the first alternative i.e. Christian faith (71). Bulgakov interprets the „world weariness” to be the sign

that constitutes the prevailing mood in Chekhov's works (72). Elsewhere Bulgakov develops the view that the intensity of *тоска* is the expression of the degree of presence of the metaphysical principle in man:

«Нет, в пессимизме залог того, что человек создан для вечности и для Бога, и, потеряв это, страдает и тоскует тем напряженнее, чем выше он сам.» (73)

No, in pessimism lies the guarantee that the person is created for eternity and for God, and, having lost that, suffers and longs more.

In Bulgakov's view the possibility for spiritual 'rebirth' is constituted in the experience of *тоска*, through which the soul defends itself against the approaching „spiritual death“. Thus Bulgakov represents Chekhov as of extremely religious nature, on which the pessimistic mode of representation — independent and even against his awareness — bears witness. Chekhov for Bulgakov is an eminently Christian writer, even if he pronounces himself explicitly against religion and Christianity.

Bulgakov goes a step further by trying to also determine a development to a deliberate turn towards faith in Chekhov. This attempt is based on Bulgakov's opinion that an artist, by demonstrating man's „spiritual illness“, already starts to break away from it (74). He understands the artistic registration of symptoms to be a harbinger of spiritual recovery.

Accordingly Bulgakov looks for signs that are supposed to point to the beginning of spiritual 'rebirth' in Chekhov. Those signs he finds in his "trust" in the individual human being, in advice to work (CM 150) as well as in „faith in the approaching victory of the Good“ (CM 150) and in „historical progress of humanity“ (CM 154). These elements would convert Chekhov's pessimism into a sort of "optimopessimism" (CM 150). Even though they do not derive from a conscious religiosity, for Bulgakov they are still an expression of Chekhov's religious nature that pushes its way into his consciousness. In literary as well as in biographical texts, Bulgakov tries to find indications for Chekhov's growing religious consciousness in the course of his life (75):

«Вообще из сопоставления рассеянных и всегда скупых замечаний автора по этим интимным вопросам выносятся вполне определенное впечатление, что в них стыдливо и, быть может, несколько нерешительно отражается крепнущая религиозная вера, христианского оттенка [...].» (CM 151)

In general, by juxtaposing dissipated and always grudging remarks by the author on these intimate questions, one gets the definite impression that they reflect an embarrassed and perhaps a somewhat unsure religious faith with a Christian taint.

In Bulgakov's talk, the thought that the path which the author Chekhov took in the beginning — through the sensation of *тоска* to the realisation of the necessity of faith as well as self-knowledge — also have a meaning for the reader of his works can only be found implicitly indicated: Bulgakov emphasises directly at the beginning that Chekhov's works evoke *тоска* in the reader himself (76). However, in the context of Bulgakov's full reflections that does not mean anything but that they also open up the possibility of self-knowledge and spiritual 'rebirth' for the reader. Hence, for Bulgakov, Chekhov would not only be a writer who symptomatically grasps the „spiritual crisis“ of the Russian Intelligencija under the aspects of *мещанство*, *пошлость* and



*мировая скорбь* or rather *тоска*, i.e. a writer of the *intelligencija*, but also a writer for the *intelligencija* (77), by leading it ‘therapeutically’ onto the path of spiritual health, both indirectly by the *тоска*-effect of his works and directly by few explicit notes. According to Bulgakov every individual still has to tread her path on her own.

### 5. Philosophical interpretation as an open space in history

Bulgakov, by giving the talk on Chekhov, pursues the same task that is characteristic for his journalistic work and his literary criticism in those years and that are closely connected to his understanding of history.

For Bulgakov, the individual human being is crucial for the result of the fight between the principals in world history, the divine and the diabolical (78). Man can miss his freedom, entirely lose it, or become aware of it and deploy it by stimulating his “spiritual world”. The spiritual in man, according to Bulgakov, is the „genuinely creating power in history“ (79):

«[...] духовный мир человека, эту подлинную творческую силу истории. [...] Рождение нового человека, о котором говорится в беседе с Никодимом, может произойти только в недрах человеческой души, в тайниках самоопределяющейся личности. Подвиг исторического творчества не может быть отделен от духовного подвига возрождения человеческой личности, которое не совершается помимо нашей воли.» (80)

The person’s spiritual world, this authentic creative force of history [...] The birth of a new person, discussed in conversation with Nikodim, can only take place through the depths of the human soul, within the secrets of the self-defining personality. The tasks of historical creativity cannot be separated from the spiritual task of giving birth to a human personality, which does not take place against our will.

To be able to deploy this freedom man has to become aware of it first. Because of this Bulgakov sees the essential dimension for the succession of history in the individual intellectual worlds of human beings (81). Not only does the intellectual world symptomatically reveal the “spiritual state” but it also forms the sphere in which man, without restricting the freedom of others, can consciously contribute to the historical development, or rather influence its direction towards either Christ or also Anti-Christ. The task to grasp the symptoms of time and its diagnosis as well as the offer of therapy, Bulgakov essentially ascribes to art. However, in Bulgakov’s view, cognition, the resulting conscious turn to faith, and the collaboration to the world’s spiritual transformation i.e. deification in a sophiological sense — is a task of philosophy above all. Therefore the eidetic interpretation is synonymous with spiritual symptom diagnosis that takes place in some sort of open historical space. Bulgakov considers it to be the purpose of his journalistic writings to build the foundation for the origin of a „Christian *intelligencija*“ through cognition in this space (82).

### 6. Critical concluding remark

Bulgakov emphasises that his method of interpretation is necessarily subjectively coloured because of the intuitive character. The subjective point of view in Bulgakov, however, goes so far that in his Chekhov interpretation figures of thought — as the path of atheism through cognition to faith and “self discipline” from faith — and key

motives of his own philosophy — as the religious interpretation of the Russian intellectual — serve as a hermeneutic foil. Bulgakov, hence, does not meet the requirements of his own eidetic method because instead of the ‚double’ — intuitively grasping and perceiving — view, he applies coagulated patterns of his philosophy and by projections disguises the work itself. Bulgakov, in his Chekhov interpretation, succumbs to this exact power in man that Chekhov in his works repetitively shows in its socially deconstructing effect: to the captivity in illusion that can result both in an identity-establishing (z.B. «Студент» / “The Student”) as well as -destroying (z.B. «Черный монах» / “The Black Monk”) process, yet always blocks the access to the concrete perception of the other people.

#### ENDNOTES

- (1) For translation of this article I am grateful to Christiane Maria Bacher. Bulgakov gave his talk «Чехов как мыслитель» [in the following: CM] in Jalta and Petersburg in autumn 1904 (first published in: *Novyj put'* 1904, No. 10, p. 32—54; No. 11, p. 138—52; separate edition Moskau 1905). As he mentions in his preface, Bulgakov added a demonstration of Chekhov’s attitude to the Russian Intelligencija for the reprint Moskau 1910, cf. S.N. Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, Vol. II, p. 131—61 as well as I.B. Rodnjanskaja’s notes to the essay: *ibid*, p. 670—72.
- (2) Н.К. Михайловский: «Об отцах и детях и о г-не Чехове» (1892), «Кое-что о г-не Чехове» (1900). In: *A.P. Chekhov: Pro et contra*. — P. 80—93, 332—54.
- (3) Concerning «направление» cf. CM 132f. as well as the details on «тенденциозность» CM 135. Merezhkovsky in his debut essay «Старый вопрос по поводу нового таланта» (1888, in: *A.P. Chekhov: Pro et contra*. — P. 55—79, here: p. 56f.) already pointed to the importance of the issue of ‚tendency’ for the assessment of Chekhov by criticism. Bulgakov, however also looks at critics like V. Gol’cev, V. Golosov, R. Sementovsky et al. (on their criticism of Chekhov cf. in particular the commentary of Dolotova et al., in: Chekhov, *Полное собрание сочинений*, vol. 8 [Рассказы. Повести, 1892—1894. Москва 1977], p. 426f.). Bulgakov, because of his understanding of art refuses the demand for ‚tendency’ in general. Also cf. note 24.
- (4) Cf. Michajlovsky, «Об отцах и детях и о г-не Чехове» (1892), in: *A.P. Chekhov: Pro et contra*. — P. 86, 92.
- (5) Cf. Protopopov, «Жертва безвременья (Повести г-на Антона Чехова)» (1892). In: *A.P. Chekhov: Pro et contra*. P. 112—43, here: p. 132.
- (6) Concerning Bulgakov’s criticism of the Chekhov image cf. CM 144. A characterisation of Chekhov as a “writer of the everyday“ (бытописатель) can for instance be found in: Protopopov, «Жертва безвременья. (Повести г-на Антона Чехова)» (1892). In: *A.P. Chekhov: Pro et contra*. P. 112—43, here: p. 129. The theme is also found in Merezhkovskii: «И недаром вовлекает он природу в быт: именно здесь, в быте — главная сила его как художника. Он — великий, может быть, даже в русской литературе величайший бытописатель.» [Not without reason does he bring nature into everyday life[*byt*]; for here, in everyday life, lies his main strength as an artist. He is a great writer of the everyday — maybe the greatest in Russian literature.] («Чехов и Горький», 1906. In: *A.P. Chekhov: Pro et contra*. P. 692—721, here: p. 697.) As opposed to Merezhkovsky Bulgakov emphasises the „universal human meaning“ (CM 144) of Chekhov’s work (vgl. *ibid.*): „Поэтому считать Чехова бытописателем русской жизни и только всего — это значит не понимать в нем самого важного, не понимать мирового значения его идей, его художественного мышления.» [Therefore to see Chekhov as a writer of everyday Russian life and only this — this means to fail to understand in him the most important aspect, to fail to understand the universal significance of his ideas]. In opposition cf. Merezhkovsky: «Он [Чехов] знает современный русский быт, как никто; но, кроме этого быта, ничего не знает и не хочет знать. Он в высшей степени наци-

онален, но не всемирный; в высшей степени современен, но не историчен.» [He [Chekhov] knows everyday Russian life like no one else; but, other than this everyday life, he does not know anything else, nor does he want to. He is nationalist to the highest degree, but not universal; and to the highest degree contemporary, but not historical.] («Чехов и Горький», 1906, in: *A.P. Chekhov: Pro et contra*. P. 692—721, here: p. 697.)

- (7) Here Bulgakov apparently alludes to Merezhkovsky who declared Pushkin a thinker (cf. his essay «Пушкин» (1896)). Merezhkovsky refers to a corresponding tradition, that can be traced back to Pushkin's environment and is said to be renewed by Turgenev above all in his speech for the inaugural ceremony of the Pushkin memorial in Moskau, who quoted Baratynsky with the words: «Можешь ты себе представить, что меня больше всего изумляет во всех этих поэмах? Обилие мыслей! Пушкин — мыслитель! Можно ли было это ожидать?» [Can you imagine what amazes me most in all these poems? The abundance of thoughts! Pushkin is a thinker? Could we have expected this?] (cf. Turgenev, «Речь к поводу открытия памятника А.С. Пушкину в Москве», in: Turgenev, *Полное собрание сочинений*, vol. 12, p. 341—50, here: p. 346).
- (8) Cf. both the description CM 150 and the details on Chekhov's „artistic speciality“ to focus on the „negative aspects of life“ (CM 152f.).
- (9) Cf. for instance the references of Dolotova et al. to Poltavsky/Dubinsky, in: Chekhov, *Полное собрание сочинений*, vol. VIII [Рассказы. Повести, 1892—1894. Москва 1977], p. 425. Cf. also Michajlovsky (1892) concerning the lack of a „general idea“ in Chekhov: «И во всем этом действительно даже самый искусный аналитик не найдет общей идеи. Ни общей идеи, ни чутко настроенного в какую-нибудь определенную сторону интереса. При всей своей талантливости г-н Чехов не писатель, самостоятельно разбирающийся в своем материале и сортирующий его с точки зрения какой-нибудь общей идеи...» [And in all this even the most skilled critic will not find a general idea. Not a general idea, no interest which is carefully directed towards a specific subject. For all his talent, Mr Chekhov is not a writer who organizes his own material from the point of view of some general idea...] (Michajlovsky, «Об отцах и детях и о г-не Чехове» (1892), in: *A.P. Chekhov: Pro et contra*. — P. 91.)
- (10) Cf. «[...] то пусть он будет хоть поэтом тоски по общей идее и мучительного сознания ее необходимости.» [And let him be some kind of poet of misery according to a general idea and the tormenting consciousness of its necessity] (Michajlovsky, «Об отцах и детях и о г-не Чехове» (1892), in: *A.P. Chekhov: Pro et contra*. P. 92). Cf. also Michajlovsky, «Кое-что о г-не Чехове» (1900). In: *A.P. Chekhov: Pro et contra*. — P. 341. Bulgakov states (CM 145): «[...] Чехов является поэтом мировой скорби.» [Chekhov is a poet of world grief].
- (11) Cf. Krajny [Gippius], «О пошлости» (1904), in: Gippius, *Литературный дневник*, p. 221.
- (12) Bulgakov frequently speaks of a „spiritual crisis“ especially concerning the turn of the century and thus places himself in the subject of crisis widely spread at that time, among the symbolists in succession to Solovyev in particular. Cf. for instance his essay about Leont'ev («Победитель — побежденный. (Судьба К.Н. Леонтьева)», in: Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. II, p. 549), or his „Vekhi“-essay «Героизм и подвижничество (Из размышлений о религиозных идеалах русской интеллигенции)» (in: Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. II, p. 302—42, here: p. 302).
- (13) Bulgakov interprets several representatives of the atheistic Russian Intelligencija to be “religious seekers” («религиозный искатель», cf. «Душевная драма Герцена» (1902), in: Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. II, p. 97) and an “expression of the origins of the Christian religion” («выразитель начал христианской религии», *ibid.*, p. 204). In the talk it is referred to in a similar way (CM 137): «[...] оно [творчество Чехова] посвящено [...] исканию правды, Бога, души, смысла жизни. [...] В произведениях Чехова ярко отразилось это русское искание веры [...]» [It [Chekhov's work] is devoted to the search for truth, God, the soul, the purpose of life [...] Chekhov's works sharply reflect the Russian search for faith].

- (14) Cf. Bely's essay «Чехов» (1904, in: Bely, *Критика, эстетика, теория символизма*. Vol. II, p. 357): «Чехов, наоборот, исходя из реального образа, утончая и изучая самый образ видности, рассматривает его как бы в микроскоп, указывает нам на то, что образ этот, в сущности, сквозной.» [Chekhov, emerging from the real image, perfecting and learning the very image of visibility, examines it as if through a microscope, points out to us that this image is in fact transparent.]
- (15) «Таков Чехов. Его герои [...] ходят, пьют, говорят пустяки, а мы видим бездны духа, сквозящие в них. [...] Разве это не называется смотреть сквозь пошлость? [...] Чехов, истончая реальность, неожиданно нападает на символы. Он едва ли подозревает о них, [...]»; «Чехов, оставаясь реалистом, раздвигает здесь складки жизни, и то, что издали казалось теньвыми складками, оказывается пролетом в Вечность.» [Such is Chekhov. His heroes [...] walk, drink, say banal things, and we see the abyss of spirit that shines through them [...] Does this really not mean to see through their banality? [...] Chekhov, exhausting reality, unexpectedly attacks symbols. [...] Chekhov, remaining a realist, smoothes out the wrinkles of life, and that which from a distance appeared to be wrinkles, in fact becomes the flight into the universal] (Bely, «Чехов», the chapter «Вишневы сад» (1904), in: Bely, *Критика, эстетика, теория символизма*. Vol. II, p. 364, 365). Direct references between Bulgakov's talk and Bely's essay on the „Cherrygarden“, printed in the February issue of the *Vesy* 1904, as well as Bely's obituary of Chekhov in the issue of August of 1904 («Чехов», in: Bely, *Критика, эстетика, теория символизма*. Vol. I, p. 318—24) are not with us. At about the same time as Bulgakov Bely denied that Chekhov was to be classified as belonging to pessimism (*ibid.*, vol. I, p. 323), and similarly to Bulgakov has Chekhov unconsciously take part in the metaphysical dimension of Being, by „feeling what his sad heroes do not know“: “eternity” which “his hopeless images breathe in” (*ibid.*, vol. I, p. 323).
- (16) Lev Shestov: «Творчество из ничего (А.П. Чехов).» In: *A.P. Chekhov: Pro et contra*. P. 566—598. Shestov is said to have written the essay in 1904 on the occasion of Chekhov's death. It was first published in „*Vestnik zhizni*“ in 1905 (cf. the commentary to the essay in: *A.P. Chekhov: Pro et contra*. P. 1032).
- (17) In Shestov's essay for instance the *topos* of the lack of idea and worldview in Chekhov becomes the “hate” of them: «Мировоззрения и идеи, к которым очень многие относятся довольно равнодушно — в сущности, другого отношения эти невинные вещи и не заслуживают, — становятся для Чехова предметом тяжелой, неумолимой и беспощадной ненависти.» [Worldviews and ideas, to which many remain fairly indifferent — in fact, these innocent things do not deserve a different attitude — become for Chekhov the subject of a difficult, relentless, and merciless hatred.] (Shestov: «Творчество из ничего (А.П. Чехов).» In: *A.P. Chekhov: Pro et contra*. P. 579). Shestov draws the same conclusion as Gippius had done earlier: «“Не знаю“, — отвечал Чехов всем рыдающим и замученным людям. Этими и только этими словами можно закончить статью о Чехове. *Résigne-toi, mon cœur, dors ton sommeil de brute*» [“I do not know,” Chekhov replied to all those who wept and were tortured. With these and only these words is it possible to conclude an article on Chekhov. *Résigne-toi, mon cœur, dors ton sommeil de brute*] (*Ibid.*, 598). The motif of the „ignorant Chekhov“ is continued by Merezhkovsky in 1906.
- (18) This demonstrates a negative reinterpretation of the motif „Poet of the Weltschmerz“ developed in Michajlovsky und Bulgakov.
- (19) Cf. Shestov: «Творчество из ничего (А.П. Чехов).» In: *A.P. Chekhov: Pro et contra*. P. 567f. Cf. also Merezhkovsky «Чехов и Горький», in: *A.P. Chekhov: Pro et contra*. P. 693.
- (20) A crucial role in the assessment of Chekhov as religious or areligious / anti-Christian must be attached to his narrative «Скучная история» [A Boring Story] in whose interpretation the stresses are accordingly shifted (strikingly, for instance, from Michajlovsky to Bulgakov, as well as then from Bulgakov to Shestov and Merezhkovsky).

- (21) Cf. Merezhkovsky («Чехов и Горький», in: *A.P. Chekhov: Pro et contra*. P. 706): «Чехов тем самым подписывает смертный приговор не только современному религиозному движению в России, но и всему христианству [...]». [With this, Chekhov signs the death warrant not only for the contemporary religious movement in Russia, but also all Christianity]. Merezhkovsky emphasises — as opposed to Bulgakov's distinction of Chekhov from Byron's and Nietzsche's 'godhood' («богочеловечество», cf. CM 148: «Человек, по Чехову, совсем не годится для роли божества [...]») —, that Chekhov indeed is a representative of the — anti-Christian — 'Godmanhood' (Ibid., chapter III).
- (22) Cf. CM 145: «Чеховым ставится [...] великая проблема метафизического и религиозного сознания — загадка о человеке.» [Chekhov takes up ... the great problem of metaphysical and religious consciousness.]
- (23) Bulgakov explicitly stresses this (CM 134): «В устранение этой кажущейся парадоксальности я позволяю себе сказать несколько слов и о задачах искусства вообще, насколько это необходимо в целях настоящего изложения.» [In eliminating this apparent paradox, I permit myself to say a few words about the duty of art in general, as far as this is necessary for the purposes of the present exposition.]
- (24) Cf.: «Для настоящего художника его творчество есть и раскрытие его души в самых глубоких и недостижимых ее тайниках, — оно интимнее, чем дневник, и искреннее, чем исповедь. Оно есть одновременно мышление и искание художника, хотя и не разумом, а художественной интуицией, которая, однако, сильнее и острее рассудочного мышления.» [For the present artist, his creation is the opening of his soul to reveal the deepest and most inaccessible secrets — it is more intimate than a diary, and more sincere than a confession. It is at the same time the artist's thought and his searching, although not through reason but through artistic intuition, which, however, is stronger and more incisive than rational thought.] («Человекобог и человекозверь. По поводу последних произведений Л.Н. Толстого: „Дьявол“ и „Отец Сергей“», in: Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. II, p. 458—98, here: p. 458). — This explains Bulgakov's rejection of 'tendency' and his vote for the 'pure' (purposeless) art in the Chekhov-essay: Origin in intuition frees art from 'tendency' because the latter distinguishes itself through reflexively grasped, conscious imminent concepts (aims and purposes), intuition, however, neither develops from a conceptual content, nor can be fully grasped by the artist's consciousness. — Cf. note 28 concerning Potebnja's (and the symbolist's) influence on Bulgakov's theory of art.
- (25) «Вдохновенному взору художника открываются такие тайны жизни, которые не под силу уловить точному, но неуклюжему и неповоротливому аппарату науки, озаренному свыше мыслителю-художнику иногда яснее открыты вечные вопросы [...]» [Inspiration opens up to the artist's gaze such secrets of life which cannot be discerned through the exact though uncouth and clumsy apparatus of science, sometimes the eternal questions are clearer to the thinker-artist who is enlightened from on high] (CM 136). Cf. also: «Великий художник есть вещун, ясновидец иного мира. Он говорит от себя, но не свое.» [The great artist is a rython a clairvoyant of another world. He speaks from himself, but not his own words.] («Л.Н. Толстой». In: Bulgakov, *Тихие думы*, p. 281—305, here: p. 297).
- (26) Cf. «Всякое настоящее искусство есть мистика, как проникновение в глубину бытия» [All real art is a form of mystery, a penetration into the depths of being] («Тоска. На выставке А.С. Голубкиной». In: Bulgakov, *Тихие думы*, p. 52—61, here: p. 59). With this Bulgakov develops further Vladimir Solovyev's understanding of art and mysticism.
- (27) Bulgakov transfers Vladimir Solovyev's concept of free philosophy (cf. Solovyev's *Теоретическая философия*) to the sort of art, which shares the openness and freedom with philosophic thinking because of the joint intuitive (mystic) origin. Here Bulgakov himself also indirectly points to Solovyev by quoting the same line from Pushkin to indicate the freedom of art that Solovyev used in the "theoretical philosophy" as an indication to the freedom of thought («свободный ум», cf. Solovyev, *Сочинения в двух томах*. Vol. I, p. 762).

- (28) СМ 135: «[...] самостоятельность художественного мышления, тот своеобразный интуитивный синтез, который мы имеем в искусстве.» [Independent artistic thought, this unique intuitive synthesis, which we have in art] — Bulgakov thus refers to Potebnja's theory (and its origins in W. v. Humboldt's and A.W. Schlegel's philosophy of language), that poetry represents some type of (self-) cognition in images (cf. Potebnja: «Мысль и язык», «Психология поэтического и прозаического мышления», in: Potebnja, *Слово и миф*, p. 17—200, 201—35. About the theory of Potebnja cf. Aumüller, *Innere Form und Poetizität*). Furthermore, Bulgakov's concept of art is close related to the context of the Russian symbolists, especially of Bely's philosophy, who develops Potebnja's studies.
- (29) Bulgakov in his talk speaks of Chekhov's „idealism” i.e. the „ideal“ (СМ 149), which as a model indirectly underlies the explicit demonstration of negative appearances. Concerning the distinction of the higher and the lower I cf. «Размышления о национальности» (1910) (in: Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. II, p. 435—57, here: p. 438): «Потому эмпирическое я не только не выражает нашу подлинную, субстанциальную личность, но и не может на это притязать, неадекватно ей; оно ее только *обнаруживает*, выявляет [...]» [Therefore the empirical self does not only fail to express our authentic substantial personal, but is also unable to lay claim to it, and is insufficient to do so; it only *uncovers* it, reveals it]. Bulgakov's distinction of personality and individuality or lower empirical and transcendental nature of man refers back to his reception of Vl. Solovyevs in particular. For Solovyev, the spiritual individuality that forms the basis of the empiric person in the apparent world is an „idea“.]
- (30) Cf. also: «[...] ибо ведь о чем бы ни писали художники, они дают в конечном итоге самих себя, они опознают жизнь в себе и чрез себя, освещают подземелье своим собственным светом.» [For whatever artists write about, in the end they give up themselves, they acknowledge life in themselves and through themselves, they illuminate the underground with their own light] («Человекобог и человекозверь. По поводу последних произведений Л.Н. Толстого: „Дьявол“ и „Отец Сергей“», in: Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. II, p. 458—98, here: p. 459.) — Bulgakov's understanding of art is closely connected to that of younger symbolists, above all Andrey Bely. This amongst other things becomes evident by the reference of both to the works of Vladimir Solovyev.
- (31) Besides „symptom“, „diagnosis“, „crisis“, and „condition“, expressions like „health“ and „illness“ (each taken in a spiritual sense) also belong to Bulgakov's vocabulary to characterise his time and the Russian Intelligencija in particular. So already in the essay about Ivan (cf.: «Иван Карамазов (в романе Достоевского „Братья Карамазовы“) как философский тип», in: Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. II, p. 15—45, here: p. 21).
- (32) Cf. Bulgakov, *Интеллигенция и Религия. О противоречивости современного безрелигиозного мировоззрения*, [http://ftp.kelia.ru/s\\_bulgakov/Main.htm](http://ftp.kelia.ru/s_bulgakov/Main.htm); download 31/05/2009: «Муки современной души, тоска современного сердца о Боге яснее всего, конечно, отражаются в искусстве, которое не может лгать, не может притворяться.» [The trials of the contemporary soul, the longing of the contemporary heart for God are most clearly expressed, of course, in art, which cannot lie, cannot be contradicted] Cf. also: «[...] сделаться органом чисто эстетического восприятия и отображения мира» «по ту сторону добра и зла» [make himself an organ of a purely aesthetic understanding and reflection of the world beyond good and evil] («Л.Н. Толстой». In: Bulgakov, *Тихие думы*, p. 281—305, here: p. 298).
- (33) Cf. his essay on Picasso: «Труп красоты. По поводу картин Пикассо» (1914, in: Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. II, p. 527—45).
- (34) Thus Bulgakov cannot share Gippius' and Merezhkovskys' condemnations of Chekhov — i.e. of artists in general. Cf. his essay on Picasso, that symptomatically grasps ‚soul's hell' of contemporary mankind and that demonstrates the „demonism in art“ with its „black icons“, but that Bulgakov still values as ‚great art' due to their intuitive and accordingly pure aesthetic form («Труп красоты. По поводу картин Пикассо», in: Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. II, p. 527—45, here: p. 530 f., 544).

- (35) Cf. his details analogous to his concept of art about the relationship between *eidos* to person and life of a human being: «Последнее слово, тайна живой индивидуальности, ее духовная сущность оказывалась все-таки невысказанной, творческий замысел, вызвавший к бытию эту живую душу, нераскрытым, и о том, что же действительно было самым важным, подлинным, существенным в человеке, приходится только гадать и спорить.» [The last word, the secret of living individuality, its spiritual essence is inexpressible, a creative conception, calling into being this living soul, unrevealed, and one can only guess and argue about what was in fact the most important, authentic, and essential aspect in the person.] («Венец терновый. Памяти Ф.М. Достоевского», 1906, in: Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. II, p. 222—39, here: p. 222).
- (36) Cf. CM 133.
- (37) Cf. CM 133: «[...] остается один путь — попробовать получить, так сказать, мозаическую картину, суммируя мысли и впечатления от большого количества произведений сравнительно мелких и внешне разрозненных.» [... one path remains — to attempt to attain, so to speak, a mosaic, summing up the thoughts and impressions from a large number of works which are comparatively insignificant and seemingly disparate.]
- (38) Bulgakov, who held Goethe in high esteem, refers here to his natural scientific method, as is shown in the essay „The attempt as mediator of object and subject“, and transfers it to humanities. However, there is no evidence for an explicit indication to such a relation of reception.
- (39) Cf. CM 139.
- (40) Cf. Bulgakov’s demonstration of the cognition of the other’s nature that he himself prefers to gain from their works, Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. II, p. 222—39, here: p. 223).
- (41) As the piece of art is the expression of the artist’s individuality, the eidetic interpretation also has to carry the special character of the interpreter’s individuality (cf. «Венец терновый. Памяти Ф.М. Достоевского», in: Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. II, p. 222—39, here: p. 224).
- (42) Cf. «Иван Карамазов (в романе Достоевского „Братья Карамазовы“) как философский тип», in: Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. II, p. 15—45, here: p. 16.
- (43) Bulgakov repeatedly speaks of the „diagnosis“, that artists make for their periods of time, or also of „symptoms“ of the spiritual health state that they show in their works. Cf. e.g. «Иван Карамазов (в романе Достоевского „Братья Карамазовы“) как философский тип», *Ibid.*, p. 41 f. Also concerning („spiritual symptomatology“ cf. Bulgakov, *Интеллигенция и Религия. О противоречивости современного безрелигиозного мировоззрения*, [http://ftp.kelia.ru/s\\_bulgakov/Main.htm](http://ftp.kelia.ru/s_bulgakov/Main.htm); download 31/05/2009).
- (44) Cf. the parallel case in the *Vekhi*-essay «Героизм и подвижничество (Из размышлений о религиозных идеалах русской интеллигенции)» (in: Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. II, p. 302—42, here: p. 310).
- (45) Merezhkovsky’s essay of 1906 possibly inspired Bulgakov to add details about the relation between the writer and *intelligencija* in the reprint of Chekhov’s talk (1910), cf. Merezhkovsky’s «Чехов и Горький» (in: *A.P. Chekhov: Pro et contra*. P. 692—721, here: p. 692): «Чехов и Горький русской интеллигенции как раз по плечу. Они ее духовные вожди и учителя, „властители дум“ современного поколения русской интеллигенции». [Chekhov and Gor’kii are practically shoulder to shoulder within the Russian intelligentsia. They are its spiritual leaders and teachers, the “possessors of the thoughts” of the present generation of the Russian intelligentsia] — The new passages in Bulgakov’s essay are also immediately connected to the context of his essay for the „Vekhi“ (1909).
- (46) «Иван Карамазов (в романе Достоевского „Братья Карамазовы“) как философский тип» (talk 1901/ essay 1902), in: Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. II, p. 15—45. Bulgakov, however, does not transfer essential features like the “human divinity” that he deprives Chekhov of, because he draws an ideal image of an intellectual, who, led by his own inner nature, finds the path to the Christian faith.

- (47) Cf.: «Человек есть существо религиозное, могут быть нерелигиозные или даже антирелигиозные люди, но внерелигиозных нет в силу метафизической природы человека, его духовности и его свободы, с одной стороны, и его тварной ограниченности — с другой.» [A person is a religious being, there may be irreligious or even anti-religious people, but no one stands outside religion in the strength of a person's metaphysical nature, his spirituality and his freedom on one side, and his bestial finiteness on the other.] (Bulgakov, «От автора» (1910), in: Bulgakov, *Dva grada*, p. 5—17, here: p. 8).
- (48) Cf. «Человекобог и человекозверь. По поводу последних произведений Л.Н. Толстого: „Дьявол“ и „Отец Сергей“» (in: Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. II, p. 458—98, here: p. 460): «Согласно первому, человеческая природа двойственна и дисгармонична, поскольку она представляет смешение двух враждующих начал, добра и зла [...]» [Human nature is split and inharmonious, in as far as it presents the merging of two opposing beginnings, good and evil...]
- (49) Ibid. 460 f.
- (50) Cf. Bulgakov, *Интеллигенция и Религия. О противоречивости современного безрелигиозного мировоззрения*, [http://ftp.kelia.ru/s\\_bulgakov/Main.htm](http://ftp.kelia.ru/s_bulgakov/Main.htm); download 31/05/2009.
- (51) Cf.: «Итак, общечеловеческий, а по тому самому и философский вопрос, дающий главное содержание творчеству Чехова, есть вопрос о нравственной слабости, бессилии добра в душе среднего человека [...]» (СМ 139), cf. also (СМ 142): «[...] как глохнет постепенно семя добра [...]» [And so, the philosophical question which affects all of mankind and which gives the main content to Chekhov's work is the question of the ethical weakness of the good in the human soul...]
- (52) Cf. (СМ 143): «Отчего так велика сила обыденщины, сила пошлости?» [Where does the strength of offensiveness, of vulgarity, come from?] Concerning *мещанство* cf. (СМ 141): «Чехов в полном объеме художественно поставил проблему посредственности, умственной и нравственной ограниченности, духовного мещанства, которое обезвкусивает жизнь и себе и другим, делает ее скучной и постылой.» [Chekhov, to the fullest extent through his art, posed the problem of indirectness, the finiteness of the mind and ethics, of spiritual *meshchanstvo*, which dullens the life of the artist and others, which makes life boring and odious.]
- (53) Bulgakov also explicitly points to Chekhov's Christian dimension and uses expressions from the New Testament for his characterisation, cf. the motif of «нищие духом» [those poor in spirit] (СМ 147, cf. also СМ 148).
- (54) Cf. Bulgakov, *Интеллигенция и Религия. О противоречивости современного безрелигиозного мировоззрения*, [http://ftp.kelia.ru/s\\_bulgakov/Main.htm](http://ftp.kelia.ru/s_bulgakov/Main.htm); download 31/05/2009: «Ибо это самоудовлетворение, самодовольство и равновесие в таком положении, в котором невозможно быть человеку в равновесии, есть уже извращение человеком своего естества, угашение духа, продажа прав первородства за чечевичную похлебку.» [For this self-satisfaction, this complacency and balance in such a situation where it is impossible to be a person in equilibrium there is already a perversion of the person's nature which the person himself caused, an unleashing of the spirit, a sale of the rights to primogeniture.] Bulgakov refers to the term *мещанство* in Herzen and deepens it (cf. Herzen's «Письмо первое» in his work «Концы и начала», in: Герцен, *Собрание сочинений в тридцати томах*, vol. 16, p. 129—198, here: p. 131—142).
- (55) Cf. «оскудении идеалов» [improvement of ideals] (Bulgakov, «Душевная драма Герцена», in: Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. II, p. 95—130, here: p. 124), Michajlovsky spoke of an „idealisation of the lack of ideals“ («идеализировать отсутствие идеалов») in Chekhov (cf. Michajlovsky, «Об отцах и детях и о г-не Чехове» (1892), in: *A.P. Chekhov: Pro et contra*. P. 92).
- (56) Мещанство «стремится парализовать эту деятельность [духа; H.S.]», «заглушить высшие потребности духа, сделать существование плотским, скудным и низменным» [aims to paralyze this activity [of the spirit], [to make existence vulgar, miserable and base] («Душевная



- драма Герцена», in: Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. II, p. 95—130, here: p. 126f.). Cf. also: «Духовное мещанство [...] иррелигиозность, и ее возможность носит в душе каждый человек независимо от своих верований. Она постоянно тянет его вниз, придавливает жизнь духа, которая дается поэтому только в борьбе, полной побед и поражений. В этом проявляется мощь стихии греха, немощность плоти, против которой бодрствует дух.» [Every person carries in his soul spiritual *meshchanstvo* [...] its irreligious nature and its possibility, regardless of his beliefs. It continually pulls him down, suppresses the life of the spirit, which is therefore given only in battle, full of victories and defeats. This is where the power of the elements of evil appear, the weakness of the flesh, against which the power of the spirit fights] (Bulgakov, «От автора» (1910), in: Bulgakov, *Dva grada*, p. 5—17, here: p. 7.)
- (57) СМ 142: «С ужасом и унынием Чехов постоянно вновь и вновь возвращается к этому скотскому равнодушию среднего обывателя, к его бессмысленной злобности, тупому эгоизму, к все обволакивающей пошлости.» [With horror and despondency, Chekhov returns again and again to this brutish indifference of the average philistine, to his needless wickedness, his stupid egoism, to his all-enveloping vulgarity.]
- (58) «Сатаническое начало мира, „князь мира сего“, есть именно олицетворенное мещанство, спекулирует на духовный упадок, дряблость, рутину, порабощение «плоти»;» [The satanic origins of the world, the “prince of this world”, is in fact a personified *meshchanstvo* which profits from the spiritual decline, sluggishness, routine, the enslavement of the “flesh”.] («Душевная драма Герцена», in: Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. II, p. 95—130, here: p. 127.)
- (59) Cf. Bely, «Священные цвета» (1903/1911), in: Bely, *Символизм как миропонимание*, p. 201—209, here: p. 201.
- (60) Coming from Solovyev’s representation of the Anti-Christ, whose evil is disguised behind the mask of humanity, and referring to the figure of the apparently ‘small’ evil in Gogol’s work, the image of the ‘trivial’ evil began to spread at the beginning of the 20th century, cf. in particular Sologub’s novel *Мелкий бес* and Merezhkovsky’s essay *Гоголь и черт*.
- (61) For Bulgakov the ontic consequence of atheism means the destruction of being human i.e. metaphysical suicide: «Да потому, что, хороня Бога в своем сознании, они вынуждаются хоронить и божественное в своей душе, а божественное есть действительная, реальная природа человеческой души.» [Because, burying God in his consciousness, they also need to bury the divine in their soul, and the divine is the real nature of the human soul.] (Bulgakov, *Интеллигенция и Религия. О противоречивости современного безрелигиозного мировоззрения*, [http://ftp.kelia.ru/s\\_bulgakov/Main.htm](http://ftp.kelia.ru/s_bulgakov/Main.htm); download 31/05/2009).
- (62) Cf. «Автобиографическое», chapter: «Мое безбожие» (in: Bulgakov, *Тихие думы*, p. 397—404, here: p. 404).
- (63) This title of an anthology of Chekhov’s narratives became the central thought in Chekhov criticism after Michajlovsky’s review of 1892 («Об отцах и детях и о г-не Чехове»).
- (64) Cf.: «В душе человечества, теряющего Бога, должна непременно образоваться страшная пустота, ибо оно может принять ту или иную доктрину, но не может заглушить в себе голоса вечности, жажду абсолютного содержания жизни.» [In the soul of a person who is losing God, there certainly forms a terrifying emptiness, for it can accept this doctrine or another, but cannot deafen in itself the voice of eternity, the thirst for the absolute content of life.] (Bulgakov, *Интеллигенция и Религия. О противоречивости современного безрелигиозного мировоззрения*, [http://ftp.kelia.ru/s\\_bulgakov/Main.htm](http://ftp.kelia.ru/s_bulgakov/Main.htm); download 31/05/2009).
- (65) Cf. his interpretation of the Russian *intelligencija*, that also supports his Chekhov-interpretation *ibid.*: «[...] страдальческая душа Гл. Успенского, который, подобно Гаршину и некоторым другим, несомненно страдал от несоответствия своего интеллигентского мировоззрения религиозным запросам души. [...] Это трогательные признания интеллигентской души, тоскующей о Боге и не сознающей действительной природы своей тоски.» [The suffering soul of Gl. Uspenskii, who like Garshin and others undoubtedly suffered from a conflict bet-

ween the worldview of an *intelligent* and the religious questioning of his soul. [...] This is the touching acknowledgement of the *intelligent's* soul, longing for God and understanding the real nature of his longing.]

- (66) «Для христианского понимания жизни и истории, кроме того, несомненно, то человеческой душой владеют и историей движут реальные мистические начала, и притом борющиеся между собою, полярные, непримиримые. В этом смысле религиозно нейтральных людей, собственно говоря, даже нет, фактически и в их душе происходит борьба Христа и „князя мира сего“». [For the Christian understanding of life and history, apart from that, undoubtedly, which is possessed by the human soul. In this sense people do not have a religious neutrality of people, in fact, and their souls is the location of the battle of Christ and “the prince of this world”] («Карл Маркс как религиозный тип (Его отношение к религии человекобожия Л. Фейербаха», in: Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. II, p. 240—72, here: 240).
- (67) «В этой духовной опустошенности нашей эпохи, в этой ее безысходности заключается наша величайшая надежда, духовная смерть может оказаться кануном духовного воскресения [...]» [Our greatest hope lies in this spiritual emptiness of our times, in its despair, spiritual death can also be the eve of a spiritual resurrection...] (Bulgakov, *Интеллигенция и Религия. О противоречивости современного безрелигиозного мировоззрения*, [http://ftp.kelia.ru/s\\_bulgakov/Main.htm](http://ftp.kelia.ru/s_bulgakov/Main.htm); download 31/05/2009).
- (68) Cf. «Воскресение Христа и современное сознание», in: Bulgakov, *Dva grada*, p. 421—29, here: p. 426.
- (69) This thought can be found outlined in the details (CM 147) on the human's soul's „absolute value“ — in connection to „Christian morality“ —, to which Chekhov, from Bulgakov's point of view, is close. Bulgakov also refers to Solovyev's philosophy, with the thought of us being the image of God as the reason for human dignity, cf. e.g. Solovyev's ethics «Оправдание добра» chapter VIII, 7 (Solovyev, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. I, p. 261).
- (70) Concerning the subject of „obsession“ — to which A. Bely expressed similar thoughts, cf. especially his novel *Серебряный голубь* and his *Воспоминания о Блоке* — in Bulgakov cf. «Труп красоты. По поводу картин Пикассо» (1914, in: Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. II, p. 527—45, here: 544) as well as Bulgakov's essay on Dostoevsky's «Бесы» in particular («Русская трагедия», 1914, in: Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. II, p. 499—526).
- (71) According to Bulgakov the „animal“ — as an instrument of the devil — can only be tamed by the stimulation of the spiritual principle in man (Bulgakov, *Интеллигенция и Религия. О противоречивости современного безрелигиозного мировоззрения*, [http://ftp.kelia.ru/s\\_bulgakov/Main.htm](http://ftp.kelia.ru/s_bulgakov/Main.htm); download 31/05/2009)
- (72) Cf. CM 148.
- (73) Cf. CM 143, 146.
- (74) Cf. Bulgakov, *Интеллигенция и Религия. О противоречивости современного безрелигиозного мировоззрения*, [http://ftp.kelia.ru/s\\_bulgakov/Main.htm](http://ftp.kelia.ru/s_bulgakov/Main.htm); download 31/05/2009.
- (75) Cf. the analogy for the curing of the „obsessed“ that begins with his awareness of the „obsession“ («Русская трагедия», 1914, in: Bulgakov, *Сочинения в двух томах*, vol. II, p. 499—526, here: p. 526.)
- (76) This is his interpretation of Chekhov's «Студент», and more, cf. CM 150f. As explained above, the references that Bulgakov establishes between character and author are not to be understood to function in the ordinary sense of a mouthpiece, because Bulgakov is looking at *individuality* in comparison with Chekhov's personality, not, however, at Chekhov's reflexive-intentional consciousness which his emphasis of the “restless” nature of Chekhov's faith points to (CM 150). For him Chekhov's faith as „a strong one“ [Ibid.] is embodied in individuality; the uncertainty of faith, on the other hand, belongs to the empirical person who Bulgakov only comprehends in an approaching process to its underlying *eidōs*.

- (77) «[...] песня, надрывающая душу тоской и заставляющая „трепетать от неизъяснимых предчувствий“ [...]» [The song which cuts through the soul with longing, and which makes us tremble from “inexplicable foreboding”...] (CM 132). Concerning art’s task in Bulgakov also cf. his allusion to Pushkin’s „prophet“, who is called to lay waste with fire the hearts of men («дано глаголом жечь сердца людей») (CM 136).
- (78) Cf. Bulgakov, concerning Chekhov’s “testament to the Russian intelligentsia” («завещание Чехова к русской интеллигенции», CM 160, 161).
- (79) Also Bulgakov thinks to find in Chekhov this concept of history which is determined by the activity of the individual, cf. CM 154 and 160.
- (80) «[...] ибо личность, определяющаяся в тайниках души и интимнейших переживаниях совести, есть все же единственное творческое начало в истории. Только здесь свобода, и только свободе принадлежит творчество.» [For the personality, defined in the secrets of the soul and the most intimate concerns of the conscience, is the only creative origin in history. Only here is freedom, and creativity belongs only to freedom] («От автора», in: Bulgakov, *Dva grada*, p. 5—17, here: p. 16.) In view of the concept of history a connection to Andrey Bely can also be detected.
- (81) Bulgakov, Интеллигенция и Религия. О противоречивости современного безрелигиозного мировоззрения, [http://ftp.kelia.ru/s\\_bulgakov/Main.htm](http://ftp.kelia.ru/s_bulgakov/Main.htm); download 31/05/2009.
- (82) Ibid.
- (83) Ibid.
- (84) This path from (atheistic) „marxism to idealism“ (shaped by Solovyev and therefore of sophiologic nature) Bulgakov claims to have autobiographically experienced himself. He understands his own life to be prototypical for the Russian intellectual (cf. Bulgakov’s volume: «От марксизма к идеализму. Сборник статей. (1896—1907)», in: Bulgakov, *От марксизма к идеализму*, p. 367—721).

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## С.Н.БУЛГАКОВ О ЧЕХОВЕ И СОВРЕМЕННЫЙ КРИЗИС ДУХОВНОСТИ

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В статье анализируется интерпретация С. Булгаковым произведений А.П. Чехова. Автор рассматривает связь между литературным критицизмом Булгакова и метафизическими допущениями, положенными в основу его понимания природы искусства.

**Ключевые слова:** русская философия, А.П. Чехов, С. Булгаков, метафизика, литературный критицизм.