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V.G. KUZNETSOV

The Role of Hermeneutic Phenomenology in Grounding the Affirmative Philosophy of Gustav Gustavovich Shpet

The conception on which the affirmative philosophy of G.G. Shpet rests can be called hermeneutic phenomenology. The choice of this term demands explanation. Shpet's basic hermeneutic work, *Hermeneutics and Its Problems* [Germenevtika i ee problemy], was completed in 1918. At the time hermeneutics was understood usually as the art of grasping the meaning of a text. It is worth noting that this art (skill or technique) was quite specific. It consisted mostly of a set of psychological techniques for "penetrating" into the internal world of the text's author. The techniques were empathy, sympathy, immersion in a historico-cultural world, and imaginative penetration into the author's creative "workshop." Understood in this way, hermeneutics was a psychologically loaded research method. And if it is treated only in that way, the recently coined term "hermeneutic phenomenology" is in respect to content internally contradictory. As I see it, Shpet fully realized what conclusions could follow from this. Nevertheless his fundamental aspirations are connected precisely with the idea of unifying hermeneutics and phenomenology. This is possible because words (expressions, texts) have a complex structure (which we shall examine somewhat later; for the time being we merely state the fact). The sense of a word (expression, text) is objective and can be known by nonpsychological methods. The art of comprehending the

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Translated by Benjamin Hale and Taras Zakydalsky.

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sense of a text (hermeneutics) must inevitably include semiotic methods (because of the symbolic nature of language) as well as logical and phenomenological techniques. They are aimed at comprehending (studying, researching, but not "grasping" or "sympathizing with" the objective, internal sense of the text. All the other elements of the sensible structure of the text are overlaid with the psychological peculiarities of the author and historical and social conditions. They are external factors that influence the sense of the text in a distinctive way and, without question, must be taken into account and included in the investigation of texts under the general heading "conditions of understanding," which are comprehended by the historical method. The psychological and historical methods in hermeneutics were historically conditioned research techniques, scientific means of comprehending sense under conditions when semiotic means were not yet developed, contemporary logico-semantic techniques were not available, and the phenomenological method was not yet invented. For this reason hermeneutics is reducible conceptually to a mere psychological art: it was only forced into being this by the lack of technical instrumentation. Moreover, the psychological hermeneutics of the nineteenth century may be called without any exaggeration the historical variant of hermeneutics in general.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, with the rise of semiotics, contemporary logic, semantics, and phenomenology, hermeneutics too was transformed. Psychological techniques began to play a distinctive, clearly defined role in the system of methodological tools that served the external aspects of understanding the sense of texts. Since texts differ completely in purpose, origin, and role in the life of society, the emphasis can be placed on different elements of the sense structure. There is no contradiction between psychology, logic, and phenomenology. A rigorous separation of the internal and the external leads to a distinction between the methods of investigation, systematizes research, and preserves the specific nature of the subject matter. The object defines the research method. The controversy about what is fundamental in defining the sense of a text, the external milieu or the internal structural factors, arises either from the wrong idea about or the existence of irreconcilable contradictions between internal and external determinants, or from a desire to satisfy an ideologema that had already formed at the beginning of the twentieth century and was claiming overwhelming dominance. It maintained that all of man's spiritual life is determined rigorously by the external conditions (the so-called social factors) of human existence. For me what is important here is that hermeneutics filled with new theoretical content does not contradict phenomenology methodologically or conceptually; hence the use of the term "hermeneutic phenomenology" is completely justified.

Shpet himself did not use the term, but the logical development of his ideas tended precisely in this direction. It was phenomenology that had to be enriched with new hermeneutical techniques for comprehending sense. On the other hand, it is worth mentioning that hermeneutics conceptualizes its own content on account of the phenomenological, semiotic, and logico-semantic explication of

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the concept of the sense of a text, on account of a methodological reflection on the entire field of human sciences and a breakthrough into the philosophical sphere. The synthesis of the two methods is mutually beneficial.

Shpet was quite perceptive to sense the movement of the hermeneutic problematic toward a transformation into a new philosophical tendency with its own special logic and distinctive research techniques. This philosophical tendency, according to Shpet, corresponds adequately to the nature of philosophy, and philosophical knowledge assumes the status of a rigorous science or, in a weaker sense, philosophy begins to function as a rigorous science. Just so! Philosophy does not become a rigorous science but functions according to its form analogously to a rigorous science. What secures this similarity? The use of theoretical reasoning in philosophy is the indicator by which one can judge the closeness of philosophy and science. Theory as a form for presenting knowledge and a method of reasoning is used in all the sciences and in philosophy. Moreover, Shpet suggests that one can speak of theoretical philosophy, using the term in an exact sense and attributing to it the definite meaning of the term "theory" and the specific features of the philosophical method of investigation.

What, then, is this sense? Shpet distinguishes three uses of the term "theory." The first meaning is connected with explanation and differs from factual knowledge, which has a descriptive function. Theory in this instance is a technical term, "which means knowledge that has been verified and arranged into a system with the aid of a hypothesis. In this sense, the theoretical is opposed to (a) the factual and the hypothetical, (b) common sense, and (c) in general to what is given through sensory perception."¹ This use reminds one of the sense of the term "theory" in recent methodological investigations, where the theoretical is opposed to the empirical and the functions of explanation and description are sharply distinguished.

The empirical level is phenomenologically certain and serves as a base in relation to the theoretical level. The theoretical level, which is systematically demonstrated and law-like, reveals the essence of empirical phenomena in the form of theories and hypothetico-deductive constructions. The connection between the two levels is secured by the rules of logic. Such a model of the relationship between the theoretical and the empirical is traced from the natural sciences. Consequently, this understanding of the theoretical cannot be used in philosophy without undermining the specific nature of philosophy.

The second sense of theoretical, according to Shpet, is opposed to the applied and the technical. This treatment of the theoretical has a place in philosophy. In Aristotle and Plato one can already find this use of the term. Kant also uses the term. In Kant the theoretical figures as the form of knowledge necessary to genuine science, and it actually exists in science and philosophy. "This kind of knowledge," wrote Kant, "has to be regarded in a certain sense as given, metaphysics exists if not as a science then in any case as a natural [human] inclination."² Such metaphysics, as is well known, did not correspond, according to Kant, to the ideal

of rigorous scientific knowledge in the first sense of the traits of the theoretical.

Kant thought that philosophy was conducive to it and realized. The other disciplines, like mathematical sciences, have a different nature of philosophical method.

Finally, the theoretical differs from the studies principle intuition. Thus, of knowledge is or sensuous intuition, ideal intuition,

The philosophical knowledge itself. Thus, philosophy should be necessarily philosophical knowledge.

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The true experience of knowledge through the senses exists, since that reveals itself as an

of rigorous science—apodictic science—as demonstrated, universal, and necessary knowledge. Apodictic science includes the features Shpet singled out under the first sense of the term “theory,” and its image consists of the most essential traits of the theories of mathematical natural science.

Kant thought that reformed metaphysics was possible if appropriate conditions conducive to its acquisition of the properties of apodictic sciences were revealed and realized. Today it is well known that to subsume philosophy (as well as all other disciplines unrelated to mathematics or natural science) under the ideal of mathematical scientific theories can lead only to the eradication of the special nature of philosophical knowledge. And this happened later in the most consistent methodological conceptions of the logical positivists.

Finally, the third sense of the term “theory” is revealed when it is contrasted with reality. Theoretical philosophy studies reality as a whole or in fragments. It differs from the concrete sciences by its subject and methods of knowledge. It studies principles, the first causes [*nachala*] of being. Its method is intellectual intuition. Thus, philosophy is opposed to the empirical sciences, since the source of knowledge in the empirical sciences is empirical intuition, sensory perception, or sensuous intuition, while the source of knowledge in the empirical sciences is ideal intuition, intellectual vision, or speculation. Shpet argues,

The construction of philosophical systems on the shoulders of philosophical first causes leads to metaphysical systems, and the first causes themselves qua principles can be singled out as objects of special attention. Thus, philosophy is divided into principles and metaphysics. (Principles should be understood here as authentic first causes, hence they need not necessarily be universal rational postulates from which the rest of philosophical knowledge or metaphysics can be derived, as it were.

Whereas metaphysics can be knowledge in the second of the above senses (knowledge about being in general), the first causes must be theoretical knowledge prior to the construction of theories in the second and first senses. We are speaking, consequently, about speculative principles.³

Since in the majority of methodological programs scientific theory is treated in the first sense, Shpet understands theoretical philosophy as pre-theoretical knowledge. This, at first glance, is a paradoxical formula. In fact, there is no contradiction in it, since the term “theory” is used in a different sense in the first and second cases. Philosophical knowledge is pure theoretical knowledge that does not depend on experience.

The truth is that neither sense experience, nor the understanding, nor experience in bondage to the understanding gives us living and full knowledge. But we break through the manifold of the sensuously given, through the order of intellectual intuition, to the living soul of all that exists, seizing it in a peculiar, if I may call it thus, intelligible intuition that reveals not only words and concepts but the very things themselves and enables us to comprehend the authentic in its authenticity,

the whole in its wholeness, and the complete in its completeness.

Such seems to me the path of the fundamental philosophical science that meets the fundamental demand laid down by us in accordance with the outlined idea of it. It must be not only pre-theoretical and pure in its task, but also concrete in executing it and rational in its course.⁴

It is not difficult to notice here Shpet's exchange with Kant. Shpet, like Kant, was not satisfied with the level of philosophy's development, which was quite distant from the ideal science. Kant's critical reform was aimed at transforming philosophy from a "natural inclination of man" with its incompleteness, imperfection, weak demonstrative power, and unscientific nature, all of which gave birth to skepticism and mistrust of philosophical constructions, into an ideal apodictic science.

Shpet held Kant's philosophy as a whole in high regard (in spite of his negative attitude to some of its aspects). Moreover, Plato and Kant were his standard models in evaluating and reconstructing past philosophical ideas and the course of development of philosophical thought.

Shpet distinguishes two types of philosophy—affirmative and negative. In the first, the principles of Platonism and the orientation to research on first principles are predominant. In the second, elements of Kantianism and a problematic geared to the invention of an ideal and universal research method independent from any realm of knowledge dominate. Shpet does not accept the traditional model of opposition between idealism and materialism. And this is no coincidence, but a consequence of his principles. It turns out that materialism is only a version of relativism (its most consistent form is positivism), with its tendency to ontologism and the absence of traditional, genuinely philosophical tasks. To ground his position and to introduce criteria for distinguishing affirmative and negative philosophy Shpet brings together the basic principles of Plato and Kant into the following schema.⁵

The basic principles of Plato are: (a) truth is objective [*predmetna*] and is perceived by our reason in ideas; (b) the highest principle of any assertion of truth is "the same" in it, i.e., the principle of identity; (c) the fullness of true being can be known as the concrete perception of the general; (d) an idea expresses its essence and any being is established through involvement with or participation in an idea; (e) the idea of a finite essence or good is rational and hence reason maintains its autonomy.

The basic principles of Kant are: (a) at the origin [*nachalo*] of knowledge lies the sophism expressed in the dilemma: either objects or predicables—the negation of the first part of the dilemma is an assertion of the second; (b) identity is the principle of analytic judgments that do not expand our knowledge—synthetic judgments have as their principle "I think" and do not express truth; (c) the general postulates of our knowledge have an abstract character and are not claims about truth, but universally binding judgments, the truth value of which is the greater the farther they are from reality; (d) as a source of knowledge an idea is

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antinomic and can play only the role of a regulative principle; (e) the way out of the antinomic nature of reason lies in the negation of its antinomy and the recognition of its goodness.

It is easily noted that the principles of Kant and Plato, taken in pairs and in succession, contradict each other, and this makes it possible for Shpet to use them as the basis for his analysis of the development of philosophy. Different combinations of assertions or negations of the mentioned principles lie at the foundations of all possible philosophical tendencies. The division of philosophy into affirmative and negative depends on the predominance of Platonic elements in the first case and Kantian ones in the second. Implicit in this approach is the contemporary conception of philosophy as a special kind of knowledge (in contrast to the ancient conception that identified philosophy with all knowledge). In this sense, philosophy is the "realm of principles, first causes, starting points, and foundations."⁶

Of what use was this whole construct to Shpet? What was his purpose? By means of this analysis, Shpet attempted to show that neither Kant nor all subsequent movements of philosophical thought that were connected in one way or another with the ideas of Kant's critical reforms did not lead to the construction of a truly scientific philosophy. Moreover, the consistent application of Kant's scientific ideal forces us to remove beyond the limits of science entire domains of knowledge, which have been considered scientific from time immemorial. This situation can be called a distinctive positivistic recidivism of Kantian methodology.

"Kant, in his theoretical philosophy," Shpet wrote, "recognized only one ideal of scientific knowledge—the mathematical knowledge of nature, and then the first encounter with a 'special doctrine of nature,' the doctrine of the soul, prompted him to banish psychology from the realm of science. History suffered the same fate."⁷ Shpet's incisive and even harsh critical comments about Kant are implacable. He accuses Kant of hindering the development of theoretical philosophy: "the critical philosophy of Kant, in contrast to Wolff's rationalistic system, not only left no room for solving the theoretical problem of history, but simply had to obstruct it from being included among the theoretical problems of philosophy. Therefore, critical philosophy, as it was expressed by Kant, had to arrest the already approaching articulation of theoretical questions in the philosophy and science of history."⁸ Shpet did not accept Kant's philosophical scientism, the essence of which lies in recognizing the mathematical knowledge of nature as the only model for all scientific knowledge and accepting all the consequences flowing from this.

Negative philosophy, according to Shpet, claims for itself the qualification of scientific philosophy, thus distinguishing itself from unscientific pseudo-philosophy. And in justifying its own scientific nature it instinctively appeals to the concrete domains of knowledge that have earned their deserved authority. What are these domains of knowledge—mathematics, physics, psychology, logic—is

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not that important. The main thing is if this way of proving the scientific nature of philosophy is used, the basic point that philosophy is a distinctive kind of knowledge disappears and philosophy is reduced to the special methods of the concrete sciences. Reductionism and relativism are the unavoidable elements of negative philosophy. And nothing can save the situation here. Measures such as introducing an abstract subject of knowledge, delineating two types of reality: subjective and objective, or appearances and things in themselves, prove to be downright artificial and in relation to a number of problems (for example, the objective truth and its relation to the sources of knowledge, the intelligibility of the world, the interrelatedness of the ego and the subject of knowledge, and the nature of philosophical skepticism) expose even further the poverty of negative philosophy.

But what can be proposed in opposition to the Kantian methodology? Is there a way out from the existing situation? Negative philosophy already exists as a fact and the philosophical tradition is in reality broken: pre-Kantian metaphysics is separated by a chasm from the present. Shpet holds that it is necessary to return to affirmative philosophy, to its tasks and its subject matter; it is necessary to restore the interrupted tradition and lost authority of philosophy and the human sciences. And this is to be done by introducing into the problematic of affirmative philosophy questions about the place, essence, and being of knowledge reason, as well as questions about the relation of this particular being to other species of being. In this way the return to the age-old subject matter of philosophy will be accomplished, but on a new level that has absorbed critically Kant's enormous achievement: "the peculiar, nonempirical and nonactual being of the subject of knowledge."⁹

Until 1914 (the year his work *Appearance and Sense* [Iavlenie i smysl] was published) Shpet believed that a genuine affirmative philosophy had already been constructed by E. Husserl. All we had to do was to "touch up" his phenomenology a bit to get a "fundamental science of philosophy" that would serve as the basis of philosophy as a whole as well as of all the concrete sciences. But in the very process of writing *Appearance and Sense* (and this is clearly visible in the published text) Shpet began to have doubts about the irreproachable methodological apparatus of phenomenology and the absolute clarity of all of the research techniques. These doubts were connected above all with the problems of grasping meaning, with the structure of the activity of understanding that would not depend on the psychological peculiarities of the knowledge subject, who is the object of particular interest in the theory of knowledge in negative philosophy. Therefore, he undertook a systematic investigation of the problems of hermeneutics for the purpose of raising its problematic to a philosophical level and filling the indicated gap in the apparatus of phenomenology. The results of his research were presented in the book *Hermeneutics and Its Problems*, the manuscript of which was finished in 1918 but was not published due to circumstances beyond the author's control. (It is interesting that Shpet expected the book to come out any day. In his publications he even referred to the book as being

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The subsequent plain the synthesis lies in the text. "The idea of appearance and, therefore, formal definition with our content basic idea of a shall deal with

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prepared for publication. For example, in the book *An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy* [Ocherk razvitiia russkoi filosofii] (Part 1, Petrograd, 1922) Shpet wrote: "For a general outline of the development of hermeneutics see my (forthcoming) book: *Hermeneutics and Its Problems*, p. 79). I shall use the copy that is preserved in Shpet's archive.

The subsequent exposition will follow a very simple plan. How is one to explain the synthesis of hermeneutics and phenomenology? The basis of the synthesis lies in the traditional formula: "understanding is the comprehension of sense." "The idea of an object lies like a sign in its content or, more precisely, in its essence and, therefore, can also be called the entelechy of the object. Its disclosure is the formal definition of understanding."¹⁰ This quotation will be correlated precisely with our context if we recall that for Shpet the entelechy is the internal sense, the basic idea of an object, a property of the basic objective content of the noema (I shall deal with this in some detail below).

Hermeneutics deals with the fundamental analysis of understanding. It answers the question: how is understanding possible?" Phenomenology attends to the fundamental analysis of sense and the methods of its comprehension. The new discipline, which results from their synthesis, has a very broad domain of objects at its disposal (a considerably broader domain than the domains of concrete hermeneutics and even of universal hermeneutics in the spirit of F. Schleiermacher) as well as a universal methodological apparatus, which is enriched with hermeneutic method.

In hermeneutics the concept of sense is usually not defined. Sense is given (appears, exists) as something external. It is ideal being, the eidetic world, to which hermeneutic interest is directed. The basic concept of hermeneutics was considered either intuitively clear or was borrowed from other domains (and in that case it was taken for granted that it was revealed with absolute precision there). In phenomenology an analogous picture applied to the concept of understanding. Therefore the synthesis of hermeneutics and phenomenology was theoretically predetermined: the two disciplines had to complement each other. Besides, Shpet's idea was subsequently strongly confirmed: it was realized, albeit somewhat later, by Heidegger in his hermeneutic phenomenology (M. Heidegger's book *Sein und Zeit* was published in 1927, while Shpet's hermeneutic work was not published at all at the time it was written. This work of extraordinary importance for its time was published only recently in the annual collection *Kontekst*. Russia lost its priority in creating a unique philosophical tendency. In content (in ideas) Heidegger's and Shpet's views coincided on many points. For example, Shpet's and Heidegger's conceptions were founded on Husserl's phenomenology. In both understanding is ontologized, being and existence are not identified, the question of the relation of the being of knowledge reason to other species of being is raised. Affirmative philosophy (Shpet) and metaphysics (Heidegger) require "attentive listening." Shpet speaks of intellectual intuition, comprehension, and understanding the essence of consciousness itself as pure (true) being. I must point

out one more surprising similarity. Heidegger thought that true being lives in language, that language is the guiding thread of culture. Shpet asserted that speech is the principle and archetype of culture. And finally, both thinkers thought that authentic philosophy can be reborn by returning to its sources and real philosophical tasks. For Shpet this source was Plato and for Heidegger the Presocratics. I must point out one more curious fact. Before World War I Shpet was in Germany and worked there for a considerable time. He became acquainted with Husserl, who called Shpet one of his best students (Shpet dedicated his book *History as a Problem of Logic* [Istoriia kak problema logiki] to Husserl. Such acts are possible only between close associates). Heidegger also was closely acquainted with Husserl: he served as Husserl's assistant in 1919 (Shpet was eleven years older than Heidegger) and in 1929 accepted the position of professor in ordinary at the University of Freiburg, the position that had been occupied by Husserl. All these facts make it possible to assert that Shpet and Heidegger belonged to the same school and were influenced considerably by Husserl. Both found the narrow framework of the phenomenological method constricting and discovered a way out in the synthesis of hermeneutics and phenomenology. Of course, each of them followed his own path but the purpose was the same).¹¹

Understanding as a cognitive act consists structurally of cognitive reason and the object of the understanding activity, which can be called the text. In this case "text" is interpreted very broadly. It is not only a written source. Texts are symbolic, informational systems of any nature. They are the result of the cognitive-productive activity of living beings (not necessarily human; the "dance" of a bee can also be viewed as a text carrying definite information, as signaling behavior or semiosis).¹² In hermeneutics a text is studied as a product of activity. "A fact of language," "congealed speech"—this is how F. Schleiermacher, one of its founders, described the subject of hermeneutics. The text can also be regarded as a sort of mirror in which the subjective-psychological peculiarities of the author's internal world are expressed—"facts of thinking," as Schleiermacher said. The special features of the author's period and times are reflected in the text. The text itself is a product of language (as a set of objectively independent of man, universal, and necessary norms and laws of speech activity to which all members of a given linguistic community conform) and a definite style of thought. Language and the style of thinking are objective, natural attributes refracted in the creative activity of the text's author. They are certain presuppositions of understanding, the internal, hidden elements of pre-understanding. In fact, they outline the "horizon" of man's understanding activity. To go beyond the "horizon" is to overcome objectivity, sublimate necessity, and attain freedom. But this is the fate of the few, only of the creators of language. This is how language develops. After the linguistic community has assimilated the new linguistic material, the "horizon" closes again. Under this interpretation language is a conservative principle that cements the system while speech, by contrast, is an active, dynamic principle, but one that is under the permanent "power" of language. Heidegger's aphorism—"Language

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Furthermore conditions: (1) reveal the essence proper evaluation In pre-Shpetian to the central concept of understanding psychological and understanding activity. "Under the specific circumstances writer, that is, the state structure word. Everything outside the understood (only hermeneutics). But the sense, attention structure. The sympathetic understanding without understanding to be co-felt [

speaks through us"—becomes thus absolutely rationally clear: language (to be quite precise one should add "style of thinking") governs speech and serves as its basic foundation.

What is important for the problem of understanding in hermeneutics is that language has an independent, external being and exerts pressure on man. It is born out of the "external necessity to communicate" and the pure internal needs of humanity residing in the very nature of the human spirit."¹³ Language serves the development of man's spiritual world and carries a worldview within itself. Thus the problematic of language touches on the problematic of consciousness and the concept of linguistic consciousness, which is fundamental for Shpet's hermeneutics and his philosophy of culture, arises. Inasmuch as texts are products of human activity on which the influence of linguistic consciousness is "impressed," the understanding of texts must rest on a fundamental analysis of linguistic consciousness. "Therefore, in the final analysis," wrote Shpet, "the fundamental examination of linguistic consciousness is oriented always and necessarily to its final unity, which as the universal unity of consciousness is, as both task and achievement, nothing but the unity of cultural consciousness. Manifestations of cultural consciousness such as art, science, law, and so on are not new principles, but modifications and forms of one cultural consciousness, which have their archetype and first cause in language. In this sense the philosophy of language is the basic foundation of the philosophy of culture."¹⁴

Furthermore, the solution to the problem of understanding must fulfill two conditions: (1) it must uncover the historical nature of the text and (2) it must reveal the essence of the process of understanding and interpretation. To give a proper evaluation of Shpet's conception I should make an essential observation. In pre-Shpetian hermeneutics uncovering the historical nature of a text belonged to the central core of the hermeneutic method and was the main substantive aspect of understanding. Shpet removes the entire problematic connected with the psychological and historico-cultural contexts beyond the framework of the process of understanding itself and places it among the *circumstances* of the understanding activity. "Understanding and interpretation, therefore, demand a determination of the specific circumstances in which the word under consideration was used by the writer, that is, his period, religion, political party, doctrine, social conditions, and the state structure."¹⁵ This was justified by the phenomenological structure of the word. Everything that has no relation to the sense of the word, to its idea, was put outside the brackets. The eidetic aspects of the structure of the word are understood (only here is there understanding proper) intellectually, co-thought [*so-mysliatsia*]. But in the structure of the word there are also aspects that accompany the sense, attend it, and surround like a background the central core of the word's structure. They are apprehended sympathetically. Their apprehension is based on sympathetic understanding, which Shpet calls "understanding that is basically without understanding," since the peripheral aspects of the word's structure have to be co-felt [*so-chuvstvovat*], experienced sympathetically, not co-thought [*so-*

myslit]. If we use the term understanding in relation to psychological acts, then this is a tribute to the old tradition. "A cultural phenomenon as an expression is objective, but this expression contains either a conscious or an unconscious relation to that sense, and this relation is the object of psychology. It is not the sense or the meaning, but the co-meaning [*so-znachenie*], the subjective reactions, the experiencings, accompanying the realization of the historical, the relation to the historical that is the subject of psychology."¹⁶

For Shpet, the consistent rationalist, the meaning of words and objects is objective, independent of our representations. The distinction between rational and historico-psychological methods arises from this fact. A strict distinction between the methods is all to the good. Rationalism and phenomenology do not diminish the significance of history, psychology, or literary scholarship. Hence, the criticism of Shpet's conception by supporters of the so-called historical approach who detect in Shpet a threat to the historical method in literary scholarship was based on a misunderstanding or an insufficient grasp of the sense of his innovations. Shpet's position outlined here was criticized by academician D.S. Likhachev (see his *About Philology* [*O filologii*, Moscow, 1989]). He argues that the historical and the psychological are not some kind of atmosphere surrounding a word, but the very essence of a literary monument and that the latter in turn is itself a historical fact.

Likhachev's criticism agrees with that of M.M. Bakhtin, who rejected the subjective-psychological approach to the analysis of language and wanted to justify the sociohistorical method (as "originally Marxist") of investigating language. He wrote, "And so, the theory of expression at the foundation of individualistic objectivism must be rejected by us. The organizing center of any utterance, any expression is not inside, but outside: in the social milieu that surrounds individuals" (V.N. Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* [*Marksizm i filosofiiazyka*], Leningrad, 1929, p. 111). Any utterance is social and has a theme, meaning, and valuation. The last concept is meant to connect the utterance with society (through context, communication, and dialogue). According to Bakhtin, every utterance and any of its elements not only means, but also evaluates.

Bakhtin and Shpet diverge not in their attitudes to psychologism in human studies, but on the question of which research method is basic. Shpet held that insofar as the objects of analysis are texts, the fundamental methods of studying them must be linguistic, semiotic, logical, and phenomenological techniques. The historical, sociological, and psychological methods of investigating a given specific object must be important (for certain special tasks), but only aspects of analysis. The Shpetian division between the methods of pure phenomenology (in philosophy), poetics, linguistics, and art studies, on the one side, and the methods of psychology, on the other, which was based on the distinction between the object domains of these two spheres, was interpreted by Bakhtin as a split between the objective [*predmetnoe*] meaning and the valuation. "In the Russian literature," wrote Bakhtin, "G. Shpet speaks of valuation as of the co-meaning of a

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word. A sharp distinction between objective meaning and the valuative co-meaning, which he assigns to different spheres of actuality, is characteristic of him. This divorce is completely intolerable and is based on the fact that the deeper functions of valuation in speech are overlooked. The objective meaning is formed by the valuation for, after all, it is the valuation that determines whether a given objective meaning has entered the horizon of the speakers—the narrower as well as the broader social horizon of the given social group. Moreover, it is valuation that plays the creative role in changes of meaning. A change in meaning is always, essentially, a revaluation: the transfer of a given word from one valuative context to another” (ibid., p. 126).

Unfortunately, the scientific polemics of the twenties and thirties were abused by dilettantes who stuck labels on Shpet, labels that assumed an ideological coloring in connection with the “intensification of the class struggle.” S. Kanatchikov in his article in the 30 January 1930 issue of *Literaturnaia gazeta* called Shpet a “well-known idealist-mystic” and a “subjective idealist.” Ignoring the authentic content of Shpet’s texts, he attributed to Shpet a conception of the divine origin of the creative image of the artist and upbraided him for a departing from the study of “the history of class struggle, the daily life of his contemporaries, and the struggle among political parties.”

It should be mentioned that the recognized forms of artistic production may justifiably abstract from social and psychological reality. To understand some texts one does not need to know the history of class struggle. But there are special types of literature, the analysis of which necessarily requires the use of psychological and historical methods, in particular, the literary monuments and ancient literature. Shpet was not right to approach literary analysis from the viewpoint of an abstract “literary entity” instead of the viewpoint of the concrete literary process.

Likhachev’s, Bakhtin’s, and even Kanatchikov’s criticisms (if we can forget the offensive, unjust, and even dangerous formulations of the last critic) contain a rational element that is justified by the aim to establish the historical method in literary scholarship. But these authors hardly understood Shpet’s philosophical conceptions, and Shpet was hardly a grave threat to this method! Here is what Shpet wrote on this issue: “Finally, I have spoken, in fact, against extreme enthusiasm for collecting biographical trivia when this becomes an activity for its own sake and detrimental to the analysis of the artistic production itself. But I do not deny the proper, although subordinate significance of biographical search in historical research. Moreover, I am not denying the dependence of the artist and his biography on the milieu, the social and material conditions of his life.”¹⁷

Thus, knowledge of the historical nature of the text, the distinctive features of a writer’s handwriting, psychology, and internal world is a condition for understanding the text. How is the historical nature of a text uncovered? What are the foundations of historical knowledge? The historical development of any domain according to Shpet, who follows S.J. Beck, is treated philologically. Philology,

according to Beck's formula, is a knowledge of the known, that is, a second-order knowledge. In this formula, the first occurrence of the term "knowledge" approaches the sense of the term "understanding." "The proper task of philology is to be the knowledge (*das Erkennen*) of what has been produced by the human spirit, that is, of what is known (*des Erkannten*)." ¹⁸In this connection, I would like to refer to the opinion of Academician Likhachev, who in his time criticized Shpet for his "antihistorical approach" to literary scholarship.

To understand a text is to understand the entire life of one's own period that stands behind the text. Therefore, philology is the connection of all connections. It is needed by textologists, students of sources, literary historians, and historians of sciences. It is needed by art historians, for at the foundation of every art, at its "deepest depth" lies the word and the connection of words. It is needed by everyone who uses language or words; words are connected with every form of being, with any knowledge of being: words and, more exactly, combinations of words. Hence, it is clear that philology lies at the foundation not only of science, but also of all human culture. ¹⁹

Likhachev's views are surprisingly in harmony with Shpet's ideas on the basic foundations of culture, and I am convinced that there are no irreconcilable contradictions between them in this respect. Actually, in *Esthetic Fragments* [Esteticheskie fragmenty], Shpet writes: "The word is not only a phenomenon of nature but also a principle of culture." ²⁰ And another excerpt from Shpet: "Syntactically a connection of words is also a word; consequently, speech, a book, literature, the language of all the world and of all culture is a word. From the metaphysical aspect nothing prevents us from viewing the cosmic universe as a word. Everywhere the existing relationships and the typical forms in the structure of the word are the same." ²¹

And so, the basic foundation of understanding as an act of the cognitive activity are the philological, historical, and psychological methods. They are usually brought together under the name of the historical approach that is isolated by Shpet into a special field of knowledge that describes the conditions of the understanding activity. The conditions of understanding form the context in which the analyzed text "lives." The context is recreated by means of philological, historical, and psychological interpretations. Understanding becomes the criterion for distinguishing the formal part in the mentioned methods, the part that since long ago has included hermeneutics and criticism. Hermeneutics, from Shpet's point of view, should not be a simple collection of practical rules and advice on how to interpret texts, but the scientific discovery of the laws of understanding. The philosophical task of hermeneutics should be the analysis of the very act of understanding.

The goal of the hermeneutic method is to understand the sense of the text in its sociocultural context. The theoretical task of hermeneutics is to discover the laws of understanding. It is by fulfilling this task that hermeneutics attains the level of philosophical generalizations.

From Shpet's understanding that is not derived from sense, "ratio," that it is co-terminous attributes the essence of the text. It is less clear which it can be an objective existence certain attribution. "The connection. It is a connection is sense—the sense being. Only a of an acoustic thing. The word is oneous, and of sense of each Shpet's understanding of a word is sense itself, the methods of an within the structure and the eidetic methods of interpretive methodology accompanying conditions.

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From Shpet's point of view, "at the basis of the corresponding acts [acts of understanding—V.K.] lies something that is original and primordial, something that is not derivative from, or reducible to, anything else."²² So essence appears as sense, "ratio," as sense lies in the *essentia* of things."²³ What is sense? Simple hints that it is co-thought, the common achievement of the many, hints about the obvious attributes of sense that lie on the surface, are obviously insufficient to disclose the essence of the concept. It is also clear that by its nature sense is an ideal entity. It is less clear and yet definite enough that sense must possess indications by which it can be assigned to some sort of self-sufficient world with the status of objective existence. But all of these are only hints, an intuitive apprehension of certain attributes of sense that do not fit together into a coherent theoretical conception. "The connection of word with sense," wrote Shept, "is a unique connection. It is a 'genus' but does not come under a genus.... The specificity of the connection is determined not by the sensibly given complex as such, but by the sense—the second term of the relation—which is also a *sui generis* object and being. Only a strict phenomenological analysis could establish how the reception of an acoustic complex as a meaningful sign differs from the reception of a natural thing. The word-concepts 'thing' and 'sign' are basically and originally heterogeneous, and only a precise interpretive method could establish the limits and the sense of each of them."²⁴ From this fragment it follows that sense, according to Shpet's understanding, is a set of various semantic characteristics (as far as the sense of a word is concerned) and there are also some sort of adjacent characteristics. The sense itself, by its own nature, is an object and belongs to a definite world. The methods of analyzing meaningful signs should be semiotic (the sign should be placed within the structure of semiosis), phenomenological (the ideal essence of the sign, and the eidetic nature of sense are detected by special methods that differ from methods of studying things in the empirical world), and hermeneutical (the interpretive methods of understanding sense and sympathetically grasping the accompanying conditions, the sensible relations of the second level and the subtext).

Thus, the realm of sense is a realm of special being that is accessible through the phenomenological apparatus. Phenomenology is the science of specific essences that lie at the foundation of all the sciences and can be called the first causes. Such essences are apprehended intuitively. But the intuition here is of a particular kind—it is rational, in contrast to the empirical intuition that deals with the world of experience. It is not enough to assert the fact that there is a special world of objects for phenomenology. One must go further and uncover the specific properties of the objects of that world. "Husserl," writes Shpet, "does not stop with a general determination of what phenomenology studies as 'essences,' but proceeds further to the determination of the being of phenomenology's subject matter and characterizes it in general as 'intentionality.' Thus a broad field is opened up for the investigation of this being itself as well as all its other forms and species, both in their mutual correlation and in their correlation with intentional being."²⁵ The world of essences is isolated by means of a special phenomenological stance

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that changes only our relationship to reality (the world of appearance) without rejecting it, without renouncing reality. Let us note that besides the real world there are other worlds, ideal worlds such as the world of numbers. It is also clear that we can easily move by means of cognitive and understanding activity from one world to the other. Then the question arises as to what the real and the ideal worlds have in common. It is sufficiently obvious that all of them are given in my consciousness (in the consciousness of the ego), but it is not at all obvious, although it is true, that all the acts of my consciousness are directed to the beyond-the-given [*vne-dannoe*]. Thus on the one side there is something given—the real world and the ideal world; let us call them the world of objects of thought—while on the other, there is something opposed to this given that Shpet designates as the Cartesian *cogito*.²⁶

The phenomenological attitude penetrates “through” present being (the spatio-temporal world including the ego and other people), and “encloses” the natural world “in brackets,” as if to exclude it. “Without rejecting it and without doubting its existence, we leave it outside our use.”²⁷ The phenomenological *epoche* rules out any judgment about the real world. Statements about pure essences do not contain any assertions about facts.²⁸ The phenomenological *epoche* excludes present being, leaving the *cogito*, a special being, which, as the object of our stance, becomes the focus of our intellectual glance. The *cogito* is the realm of pure consciousness or consciousness in general. It is this distinctive realm of being that is the realm of phenomenological knowledge.

An essential property of consciousness is the property of “being conscious of something or other,” that is, consciousness is always directed and has an object [*predmetno*]. That to which consciousness is directed is called the “intentional object.” It itself is not the act of consciousness, but rather the implicit “focus” of the phenomenological stance.

A thing as something given is always apprehended through the nuances in phenomena, always inadequately, “approximately.” In the contemporary specialized language of the methodology of science, the given situation could be described in the following way: the precision of the description of a thing (the object of research) is determined by abstractions, idealizations, and the epistemological presuppositions of a given theory, that is, it is a relative quantity. You could say this is trivial. On this approach a mass of questions remains absolutely unclear. How is the system of abstraction selected? On what (or on whom) do the epistemological presuppositions depend? Do the natural, objective attributes of the human way of knowledge the world influence the process of abstraction? A methodology from which the subject and all the problems of consciousness are excluded in order to achieve objective truth does not answer any of these questions. And if it tries to answer them, the answers give rise to even more complicated problems. Shpet poses the question in a fundamentally different way. In his opinion, there is something like a central kernel of what is apprehended, surrounded by accompanying elements. Therefore, there are two types of experiencing: immanent and

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transcendent. A perfectly special being—objective sense—agrees with immanent experiencing. Here Shpet puts in place the phenomenological foundations of the future doctrine of the internal form of the word: the objective sense is the central nucleus of the word's structure and the subjective strata are the surroundings, the "atmosphere," around the nucleus. The objective sense is understood, while its surroundings are sympathetically experienced. (As I have said above, Shpet called sympathetic understanding an "understanding that is basically without understanding," since understanding in the proper sense of the word is "the comprehension of sense," it has to do with the sphere of co-thinking [*so-myshlenie*] and arises in a situation of community [*soobshchenie*]. Sense in the latter case is a logical characteristic of the object of thought. Shpet's viewpoint is close to the contemporary treatment of sense in logic and semiotics.) Different methods of knowledge are suited for different domains of objects. The distinction is based on the methodological principle that the object determines the method of research. The nature of the word encompasses sociocultural-psychological elements and immanent-eidetic elements. The connection between them does not have the character of "determination." In his time L.P. Karsavin said that the economy can be studied also according to the state of ideology. In general, the choice of method in scientific research too often depends on insubstantial pragmatic factors and does not determine anything: "In many instances the approach to the historical process from its material side proves, perhaps, more convenient and for elementary minds, undoubtedly, easier. But I reserve the right to make judgments about the economy, the interrelations of labor and capital and so on from an ideological viewpoint, too. At the same time I categorically reject the right of any side of national life that we happen to isolate conditionally (including ideology) to primacy or primitiveness. Let us leave to 'metaphysicians' the argument about which came first, the chicken or the egg. One can approach a process only from one side; but the side that is chosen conditionally and in view of its convenience is by no means the cause of the other sides. What is preferred methodologically is certainly not first ontologically."²⁹ Shpet agreed with this position and even enhanced it: a strict distinction between methods enables us to achieve a "purer" result (for example, to isolate the objective content of the sense of a word that is not loaded with psychological elements). The synthesis of the results of different methods is a special problem.

Experiencing, according to Shpet, already exists in the world of consciousness before things are apprehended and their essence is uncovered. But this existence is of a special type: it is being outside of time. Therefore, in the strict sense of the word this existence is not analogous to empirical existence. It is not "that which exists" [*sushchee*].

Every thing to which consciousness is directed is given to us with some "coefficient of consciousness." The empirical sciences investigate appearances without taking note of the coefficient of consciousness, and they are right in a way, but such investigations are not phenomenological in essence. If we take into consid-

eration the coefficient of consciousness, then the investigation will be phenomenological. We can carry out the phenomenological reduction until there is some coefficient, which is the common factor of everything included in brackets, left. To investigate it as the coefficient of everything belongs to the pure domain of phenomenology in all its universal and fundamental meaning.³⁰ Naturally, phenomenology is not limited to the study of consciousness only: everything can be an object of its investigation. This is, by the way, what Shpet himself showed by extending the phenomenological method to ethnic psychology (seemingly completely incompatible domains), esthetics, linguistics (the doctrine of the internal form of the word), literary scholarship, and history.

But the main difficulty is connected precisely with "pure consciousness." The basic problem of phenomenology is "what does the being of pure consciousness consist of, how is it studied as such and what is its content."³¹ It seems perfectly unclear why exactly we should strive to attain pure consciousness. After all, pure consciousness does not exist in any science (including psychology and the human sciences in general). On the contrary, the objects of study in scientific knowledge are given in a sociocultural context and depend on external conditions, otherwise they cannot exist. But the important point is that phenomenology strives to be the foundational science for all scientific knowledge. It strives to give a "pure method" of the knowledge of the essence of things, avoiding the transcendent. It is only after this that any science can be achieved (its true face recreated) as a result of the *interpretation* of the pure phenomenological method in terms of the corresponding domain of cognitive activity.

Pure consciousness is achieved as a result of the phenomenological reduction by bracketing out all things transcendent—it is the ideal world of pure experiencings. "Therefore, after a careful elucidation of everything that actually is transcendent and its phenomenological reduction, that is, its exclusion from the sphere of our regard, we come to the fact that there remains before us as our sphere of investigation into pure consciousness alone, that is, the sphere of pure experiencings, which are examined ideally and eidetically in their own peculiar essence."³²

The question of the Ego has a special place in phenomenology. The essences that are thought can change in correlation with the directionality of the phenomenological attitude. The Ego is necessary and immutable: it does not constitute a real element of experiencing and, therefore, is not reduced. Nor does it appear as an object of the phenomenological attitude. Interpreting Husserl, Shpet calls the Ego a "turn of speech" that is indispensable to avoid. It is a kind of transcendent droplet in immanent experiencing and has no influence on the essence of experiencing. "In itself it cannot even be described: 'pure Ego and nothing else.'"³³ This is the point of correlation to which everything is related. It is necessarily present in consciousness. (It is interesting to point out that in contemporary computational linguistics, in constructing programs capable of understanding natural language, a special reference point [a kind of phenomenological ego] proved to be useful: without it the programs worked

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I would like to say a few words about the phenomenological method. The only source of knowledge in the domain of phenomenology is immediate insight (in fact, it plays a role in any kind of knowledge, although not as exclusive a role) in direct intuition. The uniqueness of the intuition in phenomenology consists of the fact that it is rational (eidetic, ideal). Therefore, the method of phenomenology "must be seen in the essence of ideal intuition itself."³⁴ Objections to this intuition are usually those to intuitive *knowledge* in general. The argument for this point of view is that intuition and discourse are completely contradictory. Knowledge is realized only in concepts, that is, discursively. Moreover, there can be no pure description, free from theory. Any description is theory-laden and dependent on the conceptual apparatus of the theoretical level. Therefore, if in knowledge we use description, the latter by definition is discursive. This means that there can be no intuition at any level of knowledge. At best, intuition can be related to the context of discovery, where it characterizes the psychological stratum of the subject's cognitive activity. Another argument against the possibility of intuitive knowledge is connected with the fact that intuition is always vague, "human," and does not lead to a reliable grasp of the truth.

Shpet was not worried by the fact that the traditional theory of knowledge is oriented at dichotomous paired categories. But no one has shown that this is how things must be and cannot be otherwise. The "promenade" of philosophical categories in "dialectically contradictory" pairs is only a tribute to tradition. But not every tradition promotes progress, especially not in philosophy. Shpet answers the objections to rational intuition in the following way. There is no doubt that in principle there is intuition. If this is so, there must be means for realizing and expressing it, even logical ones—a special logic of intuition—since the expression of anything in any kind of structure is linked with logic. As for precision, how to arrange things so that intuition becomes a reliable means of knowledge is another question. And he believes that the reliability of intuition, as a means of knowledge, is based on immediate insight into essences. Shpet depends on a principle introduced by Husserl that is basic to phenomenological methodology (citation from Husserl): "In phenomenology, which desires to be nothing, but a doctrine of essences within the limits of pure intuition, we perform acts of seeing essences [*Wesenserschauungen*] immediately in the exemplary givens of transcendental pure consciousness and fix them in concepts, resp. terminologically."³⁵ The objections connected with the "vagueness" of intuitive knowledge are refuted by the very essence of the phenomenological method: the reduction must continue until absolute clarity is achieved. If this is lacking then something is not bracketed and, hence, the process of the reduction must be continued.

The method of clear and distinct insight [*usmotrenie*] is founded on the evidentness that, in turn, is immediate insight. The latter can be attained both at the level of the empirical and at the level of rational intuition, but in the latter

instance it is a direct, evident insight of reason. "The original givenness of the object in consciousness, thus, is also the condition by which we ascend to evident insight and, consequently, to the legitimacy and foundation of all of our acts of positing."³⁶ An evident phenomenological description turns out to be a necessary but insufficient theoretical criterion of any kind of truth. In that case to understand is to bring intuition to the final stage of clarity, to evidentness. Then phenomenology becomes not an explanatory discipline, but a descriptive eidetic science about ideal objects, which cannot be expressed in anything but concepts.³⁷

Earlier, I underscored that the world of pure experiencing is characterized by directionality and objectness [*predmetnost'*]. But then, concepts as a form of thinking possess not only a nominating function (and pure concepts possess a capacity for this), but also express thoughts. The expressing of thought is linked to an element of sense-bestowal [*osmyslenie*]. Following Husserl, Shpet introduces in addition to intentionality a new category of noesis or noetic aspect to describe the uniqueness of consciousness. This category characterizes the special nature of consciousness, which consists of directionality, objectness, and sense-bestowingness [*osmyslennost'*]. Sense-bestowingness forms the objectness of consciousness. It creates the sensible content of the concept as an expression of intuition. It has to do with the essence of consciousness. "Every intentional experiencing, thanks to its noetic aspect, is a noesis, that is, it belongs to its essence" to conceal in itself a "sense" and fulfill its functions of "bestowing sense."³⁸

But what is sense? How does it enter the structure of noesis? Shpet introduces another category to clarify this, that of noema. Noema is the objective [*predmetnaia*] essence of experiencing. Sense comprises its central core. The theory describing the relation between the noesis and the noema is the main link in the phenomenological method. "Here, actually, the mystery of the very being of our knowledge is examined and light is shed on its nature. . . . We know that in its being as logical being—in accord with the entire spirit of the phenomenological doctrine of the correlation between the noesis and the noema—the logical is evidently also one of the layers in the noesis and noema and one of the acts in the experiencing as a whole."³⁹ A concept expresses sense (the central core of the noema) and refers it to the "direct object" (to that which remains after the reduction). The logical in the noema is a special relation of eidetic being to the objective [*predmetnyi*] world, to which our consciousness is directed. The object of experiencing can be described in a determinate way (by a set of predicates) and existentially (by its relation to the object as a given). "Sense" would then denote the noematic object in its determination-content, including everything that the description characterized above could find evident in it and express in concepts.⁴⁰

But a determination-content does not express the complete sense. In the noematic content the sense is given *an sich* (this depends on the determination-content), *in sich* (this depends on the determination of the modes of givenness), and *für sich*. Shpet defines the sense *für sich* or the internal sense by the

Aristotelean co-motivational-tel-like a sign of the object. The internal noema: it constitutes (body) and indicates terminological meaning. Sense do with the content pertains to the internal noema. Then the sign is the sense

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Aristotelean concept of entelechy. Here the concept is used to distinguish the motivational-teleological function of the noema. Sense as content is something like a sign of the internal sense. It indicates the motivation of the givenness of the object. The internal sense, like the Aristotelean entelechy, is the "soul" of the noema: it constitutes the object as something concrete (as the soul constitutes the body) and indicates its purposive predetermination. To enhance the precision of the terminological apparatus, Shpet proposes to distinguish the concepts of sense and meaning. Sense is a characteristic of the determination-content of an object. It has to do with the content of the object. Meaning has to do with expression or utterance and pertains to the logical layer of the noema. It serves the expressive functions of the noema. Then the internal sense characterizes the purposive function of the object. Its sign is the sense, which is given through the determination-content.

Here the correlative connections of "the sense *an sich* of the object—the logical meaning of the utterance about it" and "the sense *an sich*—the sense *in sich*—the internal sense" are essential. The logical expression of sense, which is given through its determination-content, does not require a middle term. The sense *an sich* of the object is expressed directly in utterances. The internal sense is characteristic of the object, not an utterance about it, and has to do with the sense *an sich* through the sense that depends on the mode of the givenness of the object, which, in turn, has a purposive function. We should note that the separation of the categories of sense and meaning into different levels so that the category of sense describes the object-content level of noema, while the category of meaning pertains to its logical level is characteristic of Shpet's "early" phenomenology of the *Appearance and Sense* period. Later, both of these categories are extended to the description of language and reality.

The introduction of hermeneutic themes and, correspondingly, hermeneutic methods into phenomenology was conditioned, from Shpet's point of view, by the presence of the specific function of sense-bestowal in the noetic aspect. As a unique independent act, sense-bestowal required definite means for its implementation, for "paving the way" to the sensible characteristics of the noema. Sense, as the essence of consciousness, as a most complicated multileveled formation permeated with various shades, halftones, and hidden meanings, must not only be directly seen by rational intuition as something evident, but also understood and comprehended. Understanding as a synthetic function of reason is provided by commentary and interpretation. It is precisely through understanding and interpretation that the hermeneutic problematic (in its new rationalized form) is incorporated into phenomenology. Hermeneutics (with its function of bestowing sense and interpreting), logic (the function of expressing sense), pragmatic teleology (the function of rational motivation), phenomenology (the function of uncovering sense in its various positings) are interwoven in the activity of reason into a single method that is defined by the uniqueness of the eidetic world as the "mirror" of the objectivations of the activity of the human spirit realized at the level of appearances. Shpet wrote:

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The being of the understanding, which is limited in the thetic activity of establishing posita, appears as the sense-bestowing function and illuminates its "expressive" layer in a new way, thanks only to an even more penetrating comprehension. "Expression" (concept) splits as it were into two parts. . . . The being of reason consists in hermeneutic functions that ascertain the rational motivation emanating from the entelechy as the "bearer" of objective being, as the "spirit of the objects." The latter finds characterization in logos, in an "expression" that penetrates the object and constitutes the appearance, the "externalization" and "incarnation" of the spirit. Its "objectivation," being rational and motivated, is the directedness that organizes the various forms of the spirit according to their social essence: language, cult, art, technology, law.⁴¹

The obvious hermeneutical contribution to the phenomenological method, the significance of the hermeneutical problems in it, and the absence of theoretical research on the interpretational-understanding methods of knowledge prompted Shpet to turn, after his phenomenological investigation of *Appearance and Sense*, to the study of hermeneutics and its apparatus (*Hermeneutics and Its Problems*). Hermeneutical phenomenology was constituted by supplementing and interpreting Husserl's version of phenomenology and by demonstrating the significance and effectiveness of hermeneutical phenomenology in the different domains of knowledge (history, art studies, psychology, linguistics and literary scholarship). But this is a special problem that is beyond the scope of this article.

The formation of the new variant of phenomenology proceeded in parallel with the founding of affirmative philosophy. In *History as a Problem of Logic* Shpet wrote:

Under the name of affirmative philosophy I bring together the following basic features. Everything we express as our knowledge has its foundation. We can agree to call this foundation *ratio cognoscendi*. What is it, what does it consist of, or where is it to be sought? The answer to this question already belongs to the content of philosophy, because it is the question about first causes. The *rationes cognoscendi* are these causes, consequently, they comprise the direct object of philosophy, since they are the *foundations*. But the foundation of any expression lies in what is being expressed: what is expressed, that is, that which the expression is about determines what the foundation is. No matter how particular our expression, it includes implicitly incomparably more than what we directly refer to in our expression. By itself it is detached from a certain whole, in which it designates a part, a member, link, or aspect, and so on. Thus what is expressed unfolds into a kind of inexhaustible whole, which appears before us first of all as *reality*.⁴²

The Platonic conception of truth continues to have a decisive influence on the formulation of the basic task of philosophy and the method of solving it:

This reality spread out before us is designated also as that which we "find," as that which appears to us, *to fainomenon* and, finally, as that which we are conscious of, the *present to consciousness* [*soznavаемoe*]. But it is

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“given” to us, I repeat, as a question and riddle, and since everything is in it and nothing more is “given” to us, we must seek the conditions for solving the emerging task in the task itself. The first thing we encounter is the fact that here we are given *together* that which is and that which “seems,” an illusion. To uncover that which is and to distinguish it from that which seems is now the proximate task of philosophy. That which is is called the truth. On the whole, reality needs to distinguish truth from illusion, it needs to say what *ta onta ta onta* constitutes and what is *to on*.⁴³

Affirmative philosophy, according to Shpet, is pure knowledge, genuine philosophy. It cannot oppose itself to science for the very simple reason that it itself is a science. It does not replace other types of philosophy, but assumes a critical posture toward them and tries to show their shortcomings from the historical, theoretical, and logical viewpoints. Philosophy as pure knowledge begins only when thought becomes its field of object, its domain of reflection. Thought about truth, about authentic being. It aims not at experiencing truth, but at its rational investigation, and, in fact, this is the characteristic and distinctive principle of philosophy as pure knowledge. “Affirmative philosophy always singles out the path of reason in the broad sense by which we arrive at the affirmation of the real as the true and ideal, and as the necessary.”⁴⁴

The question of positive philosophy—the proof that it is pure knowledge and a specific science distinct from the concrete sciences and from ancient philosophy as a general syncretic knowledge, whose character was predetermined by its original undifferentiatedness—is the basic motif of many of Shpet’s works. Further, I would like to show how this theme is developed in Shpet’s basic theoretical writings (from 1911 to 1927 Shpet wrote a cycle of works that could be unified under a single general heading: *The nature of philosophical knowledge, or What is philosophy?* This is the series of his works: “Hume’s Skepticism and Dogmatism” [Skeptitsizm i dogmatizm Iuma], *The Philosophical Legacy of P.D. Iurkevich* [Filosofskoe nasledstvo P.D. Iurkevicha], *Appearance and Sense*, “Toward a History of the Rationalism of the Eighteenth Century” [K istorii ratsionalizma XVIII veka], “Philosophy and History” [Filosofia i istoriia], *History as a Problem of Logic*, “A First Attempt at a Logic of the Historical Sciences” [Pervyi opyt logiki istoricheskikh nauk], “Consciousness and Its Proprietor” [Soznanie i ego sobstvennik], “Wisdom or Reason?” [Mudrost’ ili razum], *Hermeneutics and Its Problems*, “The Skeptic and His Soul” [Skeptik i ego dusha], and *The Internal Form of the Word* [Vnutrennaia forma slova]. To this series belongs a very important theoretical contribution, *A Work on Philosophy* [Rabota po filosofii], which was discovered recently in Shpet’s archive and to which I have already referred.

This theme can be found also in the book *Appearance and Sense*, which was published in 1914 as a unique report to the philosophical community about Shpet’s working trip to Germany. Many researchers of Shpet’s legacy assign that work to the period of his enthusiasm for Husserl’s phenomenology. Actually, one can discover there a detailed study of the phenomenological method, a minute analysis of consciousness as the true field of philosophical reflection, and other topics that

are usually of interest to phenomenologists. And yes, Shept himself never concealed his sympathies. Moreover, he considered himself a proponent of this movement and actively propagated the ideas of phenomenology in Russia. There was nothing dishonorable in such sympathies. But at the same time he had a clear idea of how to develop the phenomenological method and in this, his first work on phenomenology, he already strove to defend the place and significance of phenomenology in philosophy as well as its role in constructing affirmative philosophy. He tried to point out the weak sides of phenomenology and draft a research plan for overcoming the detected inadequacies, including three issues that substantially enrich the preceding material.

The first issue is connected with the problem of the ego in the phenomenological method. What is the ego? As we noted earlier, it is simply a point of reference from which the phenomenological stance arises, a kind of abstract principle. Shpet's answer in *Appearance and Sense* does not solve the problem, but only poses it as clearly as possible. And we well know that in philosophy a clear and distinct framing of the problem is very important. It was precisely to solve this problem that Shpet went on to rewrite "Consciousness and Its Proprietor." (I shall examine this problem in greater detail a little later.)

The second issue that I would like to raise pertains to the problem of understanding. We have already examined this problem, but here it is important to examine how it influences the solution to the question of the nature of philosophical knowledge. Let us recall that understanding has been usually defined as the comprehension of sense. Although the problem of sense (its nature, species, and methods of comprehension) has been studied sufficiently in phenomenology, the question of what is understanding and what is its role in affirmative philosophy, in fact, has not been answered. Therefore, it was necessary to enter a critical contest with the centuries-old tradition that considered the comprehension of sense (and, correspondingly, understanding) a psychologically loaded act, with a tradition that stood by the methodology of empathy (G. von Wrigt), which not only left no room for rational means of comprehending sense, but also reduced theory, the art of understanding, that is, hermeneutics, to psychological techniques and thus undermined the significance of hermeneutic methods for affirmative philosophy. This point is exceptionally important insofar as philosophical knowledge is basically interpretative. Inter-retation is an indispensable element of philosophical investigation and determines in many ways the internal essence of philosophy as knowledge. Thus, if understanding, interpretation, and the comprehension of sense are treated as psychological acts, then the distinctiveness of philosophy as pure knowledge is lost.

In light of these facts, Shpet's turn to hermeneutics as the theory of the interpretation of texts, which enables us to explain how their sense is comprehended and understood, is fully understandable. His book *Hermeneutics and Its Problems* has its legitimate place in the sequence of his planned works. Moreover, during this period an essential departure from pure phenomenology in the spirit of Husserl becomes noticeable in Shpet and a tendency toward the synthesis of phenomenol-

ogy and hermeneutics. The way: the concept of the world with the semiotic presuppositions of interpretation of the human spirit, which the universe rotates. Shpet's thesis that the world reduces the problem of philosophy in general to the problem of the ego.

The third issue, again, is as follows: philosophy as a hermeneutic reason, the subject can be established and solves this problem works and, especially "Consciousness and Its Proprietor."

Shpet shows versions of negative epistemological turn out to be subconscious functions of the sense organs and traditions of the world and at the end. But consistent surprising step: Thus arises the tension between a subject and itself (an external world).

The foundation of appearances is the result of sense thought—our knowledge is, in general, cannot be an appearance. The sensualist restricted itself to serious. Skepticism, for example, that cannot be a world are essential philosophical problems.

ogy and hermeneutics asserts itself. But this hermeneutics is interpreted in a new way: the concept of text is substantially sharpened and the discipline is enriched with the semiotic approach, which at this stage of the investigation includes the presuppositions of the future doctrine of the internal form of the word and the interpretation of all cultures as the objectified expression of the activity of the human spirit, which has a symbolic character. All the wealth of the philosophical universe rotates around reality and its intellectual expression in words. Therefore, Shpet's thesis that the word is the principle and archetype of culture can no longer reduce the problematic of the philosophy of culture in particular and all philosophy in general to the problematic of linguistics and psychology.

The third issue, which must be mentioned here and brought into sharper focus again, is as follows. It is inconceivable that the positions of affirmative philosophy as a hermeneutic philosophy, and at the same time as a rational philosophy of reason, the suppositions of which are expressible in a logical, conceptual form, can be established without a critical attitude to negative philosophy. Shpet poses and solves this problem with all the complexity of its double task in many of his works and, especially, in "The Skeptic and His Soul," "Wisdom or Reason?" and "Consciousness and Its Proprietor."

Shpet shows that skepticism as a philosophical position is characteristic of all versions of negative philosophy. The deep foundations of skepticism are rooted in epistemological psychologism and common sense. In the end, all such doctrines turn out to be opinion, not knowledge, and their presupposition is their own subconscious failure, the failure of empiricism and sensualism. The unreliability of the sense organs and their dependence on the surrounding conditions, customs, and traditions are the reasons for abstaining from judgment about the external world and at the same time the signs of relativism, subjectivism, and negativism. But consistent skepticism, especially in the empiricist variant, takes one more surprising step: it transfers the shortcomings of its own judgments to truth itself. Thus arises the doctrine of absolute and relative truth, the conception of a distinction between appearance (as an immediately given presentation) and thing in itself (an external thing, a reality inaccessible to the senses).

The foundation of skepticism is the belief that there are two realities: the world of appearances and the world of things in themselves. The world of appearances is the result of sense perception, and the world of things in themselves can only be thought—our knowledge of it is imperfect and, according to the extreme variant, it is, in general, unknowable. From this the conclusion is drawn that reason cannot be an adequate source of knowledge and that truth lies in experience. The sensualistic character of such theories is obvious. If only skepticism restricted itself to doubting the possibility of attaining truth! The is much more serious. Skepticism claims to be a philosophical doctrine that demonstrates, for example, that certain assertions about the existence or nonexistence of the external world are equally doubtful, and that this problem belongs among the basic philosophical problems.⁴⁵

Skepticism, according to Shpet, is not a specific philosophical doctrine, but rather a psychological superstructure based on empiricism: "this introduction of psychology into the domain of first philosophical problems is psychologism, which has now become notorious."⁴⁶ The mistake of negativism consists in replacing the object by representations of it and in confusing the act of pure consciousness with the "experiencings of an empirical subject." This leads to the appearance of "subjectively colored truth" or relative truth. Shpet's biting irony exposes the essence of negative philosophy, which makes the "digestion of the subject pass for his knowledge of the object" and refuses to recognize that the "latest" "fullness" of knowledge, "heart-felt sincerity," and "love" as sources of knowledge are only metaphors that timidly conceal the cognitive weakness of negative philosophy. "Skepticism is not a theory but a psychic state." Just as ancient skepticism arose from the Stoics' incapacity to know the world, so the contemporary theoretico-cognitive variants of negative philosophy in the spirit of Locke and Kant and their subsequent sprang from the "failure of metaphysics." Shpet's categorical conclusion sounds like a judgment of guilty against negative philosophy, a sentence that fixes concisely the essence of this whole tendency: "In this respect, all these theories of knowledge as independent philosophy are nothing but skepticism raised to a principle." Therefore, to lay bare the theoretico-cognitive weakness of skepticism is at the same time to destroy the foundations of negative philosophy.

All negative philosophy is the philosophy of failures. "All of this suggests the direction in which the skeptic's psychic structure can be specified. Just as the Platonic eros is the psychology of successful knowledge, so skepticism is the psychology of unsuccessful knowledge."⁴⁷

Now let us return to the problem of the ego, which brings out in stark relief the impotence of negative philosophy. Whatever methods of analyzing the ego are chosen in negative philosophy all are doomed to failure. Actually, the ego can be treated as a thing that is distinct from all other things, but then the distinctive nature of consciousness and the relation of my consciousness to other Egos become unclear. On this approach the ego degenerates into a mere point of correlation, from which consciousness merely departs (as this was even in Husserl, whom Shpet, naturally, did not assign to the representatives of negative philosophy). Moreover, the ego returns into a multitude of points that are indistinguishable from each other, each of which loses its uniqueness.

We can take another route, assuming as the foundation of the analysis of the ego the interaction of the internal forces of an organism with its environment. In that case a new understanding of the ego as the "vehicle of man's psychic powers and states," which were usually associated with the concept of "soul," arises.⁴⁸ Clearly, according to this approach the ego is defined by man's psychic activity and is of no value to philosophy. On this understanding of the ego, we can even distinguish subspecies of it (i.e., the ego becomes a general concept): self-consciousness, the spiritual ego, the genetic ego, and the transcendental Ego. The

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isolation of general psychic properties of personality and further generalization through abstraction in forming the general concept of ego lead to the loss of the ego's distinctiveness.

Nor can the correlation of the ego with the nature of consciousness by using the concept of subject of knowledge lead to success. In this case, the ego as subject becomes a homonym (the ego as subject is opposed to the object of knowledge, the object of behavior, knowledge in general, the addressee of the communicative act, the object of the thinking activity, and the object of thought) and, clearly, the isolation of such a meaning of the term ego is not theoretically justified. Moreover, the more abstract the ego becomes, the more deprived it is of sensation and desire and instead of living blood the diluted fluid of reason courses through its veins. One of the qualities of the ego (for example, being rational) is separated and turned into an independent concept, into an abstraction (for instance, the ego as the subject of knowledge). There can be no theory about this kind of ego; it is inexplicable. It can only be interpreted, but an interpretation is a translation "into the language of another ego or into some conventional, 'artistic' language of poetic creativity."⁴⁹

Is there some other way? Shpet sees it in examining the idea of the ego, of the ideal Ego, which is correlated with the empirical ego. Such an Ego does not come into being and does not pass away. It is viewed outside of real time. It is identical with itself. It defines the essence of the empirical ego, which is not identical with itself in time. In this regard, according to Shpet, Locke was not right when he defined the method of establishing the personal ego by constituting its identity ("Since man makes an identical consciousness one and the same for himself, personal identity depends only on this.")⁵⁰ If the ego is seen only as an object possessing unity of content, then it is like any other object. The specific features of the empirical ego, which distinguish it from all other objects, are the unity of experiencings, the unity of consciousness, the actual and potential activeness of consciousness, and the internal experience of "trying."

In attempting to define pure consciousness or consciousness as such, and to uncover the very essence of consciousness, Shpet notes that one can distinguish in it esthetic, phenomenological (the appearance of the ego), intentional, and functional (the essence of the ego) states. The meaning of the world of consciousness is revealed in the undifferentiated unity of two of its characteristics: "both as phenomenal structures and as functional productivity." If we take only one of these characteristics and attribute it to individual consciousness as a general concept (for example, its dependency on external circumstances, on the pure creative stream from itself, on the will to life, or the will to power), then it will be completely incomprehensible what distinguishes men from one another and the ego from every one of them. What makes the ego absolutely unique is "the coordination of predetermination and freedom," founded on a distinctive interpretation of the usefulness of their synthesis, on rational motivation. And if one recalls that for Shpet the hermeneutic penetration of the world of consciousness is a rational act

of laying bare the objectively given sense, the nucleus of the internal structure of objectified spiritual activity, then it becomes clear that interpretation and comprehension raises the problematic of the ego to the rational level, and the idea of the ego, the internal sense of the ego, becomes the essence of the empirical ego.

Then, following the rationalist tradition and, in particular, Leibniz, who asserted that the ego is integral, intuited, and more certain than the existence of sensuously perceived things,⁵¹ Shpet leads his readers to a critical rejection of the empirical conception of the ego based on inductive generalization. The uniqueness of the ego, according to Shpet, means that it is impossible to generalize the ego, that is, if we accept the Aristotelean theory of generalization, the applicability of which in this case (but not its general validity) is questioned by Shpet. Here again, as in the case of skepticism, Shpet tries to show the logical unsoundness of the empirical (and, in general, all negative) conceptions of the ego, to dissipate their appearance of theoreticity, and to relegate them to the status of opinion.

Consequently, the most sensible [*osmyslennyi*] meaning of the ego can only be an understanding of it as a *logical*, not an ontological, transcendental, or epistemological genus. At the same time, the ideal Ego is an essence, which is disclosed in the concrete and unique ego. Only the idea of the ego can be correlated with the empirical ego, the epistemological ego, or the transcendental Ego. The idea of general ego, of the ego in general, is a convention or nonsense. It is based on the traditional theory of generalization. But since the ego is not a species in relation to a genus, the generalization is logically invalid. This is the basis of Shpet's critiques of Kant, Fichte, Teichmüller, Losskii, and Natorp. A supplementary basis of his criticism is the proof that consciousness, self-consciousness, the subject and the ego are different concepts; hence, they cannot be substituted for one another (some philosophers have done so unintentionally), and they are not interchangeable in different contexts.

The pure Ego, according to Shpet, turns out to be a function. If it is formed on the analogy with the empirical ego, then it should be not only unique, but internally defined and free and, because of this, rationally motivated. This, in turn, leads to the conclusion that it must be different for any stream of inner experiencings. And to our surprise we discover that all that has been said about this ego, seemingly unique and singular in its own genus, will not be understandable to others.

The authentic ego is a social entity. It is knowable. We can talk about it. It has its own content, a sense. From a philosophical perspective, Shpet notes, it is a problem, an object of investigation, not a foundation or an axiomatic presupposition.⁵² But it is a universal subject. From a metaphysical viewpoint, the ego can be viewed as an object, but it is necessary to find its substantial nature.

While debunking various versions of empiricism on the question of the nature of the ego, Shpet lays bare and exposes the "source" and "substance" of consciousness in comprehension and its results in the interpretation of symbols to which, in particular, the individual ego belongs. But any comprehension is co-

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1. G.G. Shpet, manuscript archiv
2. I. Kant, *Sc*
3. G.G. Shpet
4. G.G. Shpet (Moscow: Germe
5. Shpet, *Ral*
6. Shpet, *Iav*
7. G.G. Shpet (Moscow, 1916),
8. Ibid. p. 40
9. Shpet, *Iav*
10. Shpet, *Ch*
11. For more *Istina i metod* (N
12. See Ch.U (Moscow, 1983),
13. Shpet, *Vn*

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Every typical consciousness has its own form of commonality, and it is because of this that it can be expressed in words, has a sense, is correlated with culture, and can be an object of investigation for affirmative philosophy.

In conclusion I would like to point out that Shpet's hermeneutic phenomenology and affirmative philosophy claimed to be the foundation of theoretical philosophy. It is very difficult to judge at this time how justified these claims were, because fundamental conceptions are usually established in debates or discussions, are clarified and modified by the author, and are accepted or rejected by the scientific community. Shpet's philosophy was destined for a different fate: almost total neglect and oblivion for reasons independent of Shpet or the scientific community. Shpet's deep and all-sided analysis of the nature of philosophical knowledge impresses even an experienced philosopher with its perspicacity, originality, and competence, and Shpet's personal erudition is impressive. We can agree or disagree with his proofs or conclusions, which are sometimes quite categorical, but, undoubtedly, we can be quite confident that Shpet's ideas will compel any sufficiently patient and attentive researcher to reflect on the deep foundations of philosophy and its cognitive capacities.

Notes

1. G.G. Shpet, *Rabota po filosofii, Bez nachala i okonchania* [until 1914-15 (?)]. Shpet's manuscript archive, OR GBL, f. 718.5.10, p. 1.
2. I. Kant, *Sochineniia*, vol. 3, p. 118.
3. G.G. Shpet, *Rabota po filosofii*, p. 3.
4. G.G. Shpet, *Iavlenie i smysl. Fenomenologiya kak osnovnaia nauka i ee problemy* (Moscow: Germes, 1914), p. 6.
5. Shpet, *Rabota po filosofii*, pp. 15-16.
6. Shpet, *Iavlenie i smysl*, p. 1.
7. G.G. Shpet, *Istoriia kak problema logiki. Kriticheskie i metodologicheskie issledovaniia* (Moscow, 1916), pt. 1, p. 400.
8. Ibid. p. 403.
9. Shpet, *Iavlenie i smysl*, p. 19.
10. Shpet, *Chto takoe metodologiya nauk?* Shpet's archive, OR GBL, f. 718.22.14.
11. For more details about Heidegger's relation to Husserl's ideas see H.-G. Gadamer, *Istina i metod* (Moscow, 1988), pp. 293-316; 672, n. 29.
12. See Ch.U. Morris, "Z knigi *Znachenie i oznachivanie, znaki i deistviia*," *Semiotika* (Moscow, 1983), p. 119.
13. Shpet, *Vnutrenniaia forma slova* (Moscow, 1927), p. 12.

14. Ibid. p. 37.
15. Shpet, *Germenevtika i ee problemy*. Shpet's archive. OR GBL, f. 718.1. 11, p. 58.
16. Shpet, "Vvedenie v etnicheskuiu psikhologiu," in *Sochineniia* (Moscow, 1989), p. 480.
17. Shpet, letter to *Literaturnaia gazeta* in connection with Kanatchikov's article "Otvét Bespalovu," 20 January 1930. OR GBL, f. 718.24.3, p. 4.
18. J. Beck is quoted according to Shpet's manuscript of *Germenevtika i ee problemy*, p. 113.
19. D. S. Likhachev, *O filologii* (Moscow, 1989), p. 206.
20. Shpet, *Sochineniia*, p. 380.
21. Ibid. p. 381.
22. Shpet, *Germenevtika i ee problemy*, p. 62.
23. Ibid. p. 61.
24. Shpet, *Sochineniia*, pp. 380–81.
25. Shpet, *Iavlenie i smysl*, pp. 21–22.
26. Ibid. pp. 38–39.
27. Ibid. pp. 40.
28. Ibid. p. 28.
29. L.P. Karsavin, *Vostok, Zapad i russkaia ideia* (Petrograd, 1922), pp. 9–10.
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