

Preface

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One of the more important questions in contemporary philosophical and political discussions about the universal significance of human rights and dignity concerns comparison of images of the human person within distinct cultural historical contexts. In this regard the encounter, indeed sometimes the conflict, of the western European and Russian perspectives in interpreting the status and significance of this image within the history of Russian culture and philosophy are of particular interest.

On the one hand, a commonplace of the external European perspective on Russia, beginning with Hegel and de Tocqueville, is the observation that Russia knows few if any representations of the person and her individual liberty. On the other hand, how characteristic is the virtually symmetrically opposite response by Berdjaev that “...in Russia the person enjoyed a degree of expression that was absent in the faceless, demeaning western civilisation, in its bourgeois democracies.” (Berdjaev 1996, p. 236).

Such radically contrasting opinions are to be found in Russia as well. Starting with the polemic between Kavelin and Samarin in 1847 with regard to the role of the “Germanic principle of the person” in Russian history (Kavelin 1989; Samarin 1996) and ending with debates as to whether the Soviet period was the fulfilment of the person or her ultimate denigration, the concepts ‘person’, ‘Self’, ‘individuality’, the ‘subject’ assumed a key role in the dominant ideologies that at heart bore on the vexed question of Russia’s relation to the West.

And it is at this juncture that we cross the threshold of conceptual history. Dating from the end of the nineteenth century as a mode of analysis, classification, and critique of philosophical terminology *Begriffsgeschichte* (Ritter 1971) later emerged

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within the human sciences and philosophy in the context of the ‘linguistic turn’, not least of all thanks to influence of philosophical hermeneutics and ordinary language philosophy.

The basic premise of conceptual history is the Kantian principle that experience is mediated by concepts, or fundamental linguistic distinctions. The idea acquired substance in hermeneutic philosophy (Dilthey, later Gadamer): the basic concepts or categories, with the help of which human experience takes form, be it in science or in ordinary life, are not static but historically mutable. The deep structure of human consciousness and communication is not given once and for all but rather undergoes a historical evolution. Thus the study of the semantic transformations of the basic concepts in culture provides a key to exhibiting the character and direction of change in culture as a whole.

A more precise characterization of the tasks facing the investigation of the semantic field signified by the term ‘personality’ (*personal’nost*) will distinguish between its formal object comprising the categorical differences by means of which the meaning and status of the human personality came about in the history of Russian thought, and the material object denoted by such terms as personality (*Ličnost*), individuality, the Self (*ja*), the subject, among others, by means of which the relevant system of differences is brought to expression. The material under study will consist, correspondingly, of a body of texts in which the semantic field of the personality is the explicit subject of discussion. These comprise, first, dictionaries and encyclopaedias, with relevant entries, second, philosophic and publicist texts bearing on themes connected to personality, and third, texts from the human sciences (psychology, theology, pedagogy, jurisprudence), in which the philosophical concepts acquire a variety of shadings proper to these disciplines.

To set the broader stage of the encounter of the Russian and west European histories of the concept of the personality, I resort to three types of definition of the semantics of personality emergent in the modern period in the course of secularization and the renaissance of Roman law. I designate these types by the terms ‘autonomy’, ‘identity’, and ‘individuality’. These types delineate broad tendencies in the use of the concepts and occur in a variety of combinations in the works of individual writers. Nevertheless, their distinction is primarily of heuristic value as they provide distinct groupings of characteristics in the comprehension of personality.

The model of ‘autonomy’ associated with Kant takes personality to be an abstract property of a man as the subject of his acts. Not the separate individual as such is the focus, but any individual for whom the universal laws of practical reason are the basis of his actions (“die Menschheit, sowohl in deiner Person, als in der Person eines jeden anderen”; Kant 1786, p. 67), but also man as a rational being since in the very possibility of acting in accordance with the moral law a man shows himself to be ‘a subject for freedom’. The abstract property of subjectivity in relation to one’s actions means that the personality, and she alone, is the subject of proper regard and responsibility.

The model of ‘identity’, associated with Locke, focuses on another property of personality, viz., continuity across changing states of consciousness through the reflexive unity of memory (cf. Locke 1975). Consciousness alone secures the unity of personality since only by reflection can I turn to my earlier mental states and relate

them to myself. In other words, personality is the capacity to ascribe to oneself one's earlier experiences as belonging to one and the same consciousness and memory (thus, 'identity').

Finally, the third model—'individuality'—harkens back to Leibniz's monadology, although the best known version for contemporary tastes comes from German romanticism (cf. F. Schlegel 1958). The central motif here is the idea of the independence and uniqueness of the creative individual. In this context the personality is unlike anyone else, instead she creates herself in an act of self-determination and -differentiation, attaining an authentic individual existence. Personality, far from being a common property rooted in man's rational nature or a structural characteristic of any consciousness whatsoever, is the unique difference of any given man.

Now if, from the perspective of these ways of conceiving personality, the question is raised concerning thematic priorities within the Russian history of the concept, then it appears clear that in the vast majority of cases pride of place went to 'individuality' in the dialectical encounter of a convinced personalism and an equally radical antipersonalism. The remaining conceptions are marginal and without fundamental importance.

In the middle of the nineteenth century individuality, particularity, uniqueness take root as the fundamental meaning of personality due to the influence of Belinskij's writings in which he transferred into Russian ideas from German idealism. Already in Belinskij we meet virtually the entire range of semantic characteristics which have accompanied the history of the concept of 'personality' in Russian culture for a century and a half. Belinskij describes the personality as all that is ineffable in man, as an eternal search for identity on the basis of a creative difference by virtue of which a man acquires specificity or originality.

However, the romantic individualization of the semantics of personality was characteristic not only of Belinskij, but of the entire generation of the emerging Russian intelligentsia. Belinskij's opponents—the slavophiles Kireevskij, Konstantin Aksakov, and Khomjakov—were ready to accept this semantics, though among them 'personality' is individuality in a contrasting sense, that is, no longer separate, isolated, closed in itself, but rather that which is surpassed in the religious oneness of the national spirit (*Gemeinschaft*; cf. below the article by A. Aljoshin).

The successive stage in the history of the concept of personality is connected to the exchanges between the populists and Marxists in the last decades of the nineteenth century concerning the "role of the personality in history." Here too the model of individuality is the dominant line of interpretation of the semantics of personality. And it was a characteristic feature of these discussions that the other models of personality were regularly excluded, as is especially evident in the work of the populists' foremost theoretician, Pëtr Lavrov. Whereas in his early writings, under the influence of Kantianism and Hegelianism, he characterizes personality in terms of autonomy in relation to morality and rights, in his later sociological theory of 'subjective method' the subject of social processes is the 'critically thinking individual' (cf. the article below by K. Faradzhev). This conception is developed further by Nikolaj Mikhajlovskij whose articles, devoted to the "struggle for individuality," time and again present the person as the critically thinking individual who, in the company of a select minority, creates history.

The Marxist answer to the ‘cult of personality’ came in the thesis formulated by Peter Struve—from the sociological perspective the personality is a “quantité négligeable.” From the initial Marxist writings of Plekhanov, Lenin, and Struve to those of the ‘young Marxists’ of the early twentieth century—Lunacharskij, Jushkevich, Bogdanov—the conviction takes form that ‘personality’ is but the product of capitalist division of labor. The hypertrophied account of the value and dignity of personality is nothing else than a secondary effect and, at the same time, sickly compensation for the dehumanizing consequences of the capitalist division of labor. (Cf. the article by A. Dmitiev).

The counter-positioning of personalism and antipersonalism was no less radical in the philosophical and artistic currents at the beginning of the twentieth century. But here too polemics raged round the semantics of the ‘creative individuality’. In characterizing the poetry and philosophy of Russian symbolism at the start of the century a term came into constant use, viz., the ‘cult of personality’, occurring in both criticism and positive appreciation of new literary currents. Moreover, it would be inexact to describe the philosophical conceptions of the symbolists as a variety of individualism. Among them the semantics of personality is rather ambivalent in as much as it includes not only an apologia of ‘creative individuality’ but likewise the requirement to overcome personality in the unity of the conciliar whole (*sobornost’*; cf. the articles by H. Stahl and R. Bird). In this way the symbolists come close to the religious philosophical ideas of Pavel Florenskij, Semën Frank, and Lev Karsavin, whose views on the subject equally join claims about overcoming man’s empirical individuality to the idea of personality as the ‘image of God’ and the highest manifestation of the human essence (cf. the articles by R. Goldt, A. Rörig, and S. Khoruzhy).

The discourse of personality during the Soviet period represents a separate stage in the history of the concept, in part continuing the traditional semantics, in part introducing new accents (cf. A. Bibkov, V. Dubin, E. Swiderski in Haardt and Plotnikov 2008). However, an important factor in the development of the Soviet discourse was the fact that the two most influential non-official philosophers, Aleksej Losev and Mikhail Bakhtin, continued the traditional line with its semantical center in the ‘unique individuality’. Bakhtin conceives ‘personality’ in parallel to Kierkegaard as the subject of individual responsibility tied to the unique ‘event of my being’ (cf. the article by A. Haardt). For Losev personality is the point of intersection of concept and life, that is, a form of concrete existence, though no longer that of the human individual but of the Absolute (the article by G. Gusejnov).

Significant work in the philosophical semantics of personality is to be found in Russian theology and legal theory. Notable here is that, in distinction to traditions in the West where the philosophical discourse of personality emerged in the course of the ‘secularization’ of the theological concept of persona, on the one hand, and the re-emergence of Roman law, on the other, in Russian intellectual history the theological and legal conceptions follow in the wake of the philosophical. Theological concepts of personality took form and developed in Russia in answer to philosophical discussions (cf. article by H. Gavryushin). In turn, legal conceptions introduced a fresh interpretation of the concept based on the Kantian moral-legal ‘autonomous subject’ (cf. the articles by E. Pribytkova and F. Nethercott). In this

connection the semantics of personality undergoes some modification, as is evident in the philosophy of law of Boris Chicherin (cf. the article by Igor Evlampiev).

Finally, important components of the semantic field of personality are the concepts of ‘Self’ (*ja*) and the ‘subject’ (cf. the articles by B. Molchanov and N. Plotnikov). The history of these concepts contributes to a better understanding of the emergence and transformation of the concept of personality in Russian intellectual history.

The history of the fundamental concepts of personality is an indicator of as well as a factor in Russia’s social and cultural modernization throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. An analysis of these developments and their significance for the Russian intellectual tradition can only be achieved as a result of an interdisciplinary effort on the part of philosophers, linguists, historians, and sociologists. The articles included in this double issue of *Studies in East European Thought* were assembled in the context of the research project “Person und Subjekt im deutsch-russischen Kulturtransfer. Untersuchungen zum Begriffsfeld der Personalität in interkultureller Perspektive” carried out by the Research Centre „Russische Philosophie und intellektuelle Geschichte“ in the Institut für Philosophie of Ruhr-Universität Bochum (director: Prof. Dr. Alexander Haardt) with financial assistance of the Volkswagenstiftung. My warm gratitude to the participants in the project as well as to the Volkswagenstiftung.

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