

## INTRODUCTION

**Andrzej Ostrowski**

---

“Values – culture – history” – this is an unusually extensive scholarly scope, an almost all-encompassing formula that initially appears too spacious and too embracing for proper humanities research. On closer inspection, however, the formula is fully justified as it points to intellectual cross-pollination at work, to the interfusion of all its components. Discussing values, one simply cannot dismiss culture. Correspondingly, elaboration on culture requires consistent expatiation on history. In other words, the proposed division into values, culture, and history ought to be read not as an exclusivist choice to be made but as a lens that magnifies the pre-selected complementary aspects of the whole. The most apposite type of reflection that aptly discusses this particular whole, as construed above, seems to be provided by philosophy. This is made all the more visible in the case of Russian philosophical reflection, which frequently tackles the issues pertaining to the question of omni-unity.

Entitled “Values-culture-history. In the circle of Russian philosophy”, the current issue of the quarterly is our joint contribution to the on-going research on and into Russian philosophy, which is becoming more and more popular in Poland these days. At present, there is a considerable number of active researchers, all of whom are whole-heartedly devoted to the topic. Consequently, their interest has yielded impressive scholarship – the number of both papers and standalone monographs is increasing year by year. The research itself has recently become a source of academic interest, giving rise to premium publications, including Polish research into Russian philosophy (Polskie badania filozofii rosyjskiej). This two-volume flagship monograph, published respectively in 2009 and 2012, was edited by Lilianna Kiejzik and Jacek Uglik.

Newly published research, whether singular articles, multi-volume proceedings or monographs, provides crucial information not only about the state of current scholarship but – more importantly in the case of the humanities – also about the topicality of the issues under scholarly consideration and thereby about their importance. This is particularly visible when one issue is tackled and analysed by different researchers. For instance, seemingly research on Fyodor Dostoyevsky

and Lev Tolstoy has exhausted all scholarly possibilities, draining all the input material of any substance. Nevertheless, their writings are constantly re-examined and re-imagined, inspiring present-day academics, who find these classics up-to-date, relevant, and timelessly engaging. A similar enthusiasm on the part of researchers is observed with relation to other representatives of Russian philosophical thought, as evident in all the papers published in the present issue of the quarterly. Although the majority of the articles collected here deal with matters related directly to history of philosophy, the approaches and methodologies employed by all the authors allow for other readings as well: it is not primarily the past that is the focal point of their scholarship but – if not primarily – all that is historically relevant to the present, to us, and to our contemporaries.

The current issue of “Culture and Values” opens with Janusz Dobieszewski’s article entitled *Philosophy of religion: contemporary horizons*, in which the author attempts to delineate and assess the relationships between religion and philosophy. By doing so, he opened the contextual floodgates for the flow of Russian thought and for the torrent of topics undertaken by all the writers published in the present volume. Philosophy of religion provides the context for Dobieszewski’s article but the value of his text lies among others in the universality of its intellectual claims – while the paper focuses on philosophy of religion, it simultaneously zooms in on its present-day repercussions and relevance. Make no mistake here – I have purposefully emphasised the universal character of Dobieszewski’s intellectual meditation on philosophy of religion as the author in particular highlights Russian philosophy, which in turn enables one to include it as an integral constituent of philosophy as such. This is not an obvious proposition – there is no tacit agreement regarding the status of Russian philosophy since scholarship offers numerous examples of its uniqueness, independence, and essentialism. However, Dobieszewski’s primary concern is different: he delineates the present-day horizons of philosophy, the frames for its endeavours. Yet, despite the multiplicity of the horizons in question, he points to one fundamental outlook, which – if I may add – is conducive to further research and offers metaphysical avenues as well. This is what is worth investigating, not only as a research field but also as a source of inspiration: Russian philosophy.

One of the elements contributing to the originality of Russian philosophy is the reception of Western philosophy on the part of Russian thinkers, as analysed by Vladimir Belov in *Einige Bemerkungen zum russischen Neukantianismus* (Notes on Russian Neo-Kantianism). Drawing on the philosophical output of select intellectuals, including A. I. Vvedenskij, B. V. Jakovenko, and V. E. Sesemann, his German language paper discusses the issue of neo-kantianism in Russia.

The philosophers have only interpreted the world – the point is to transfigure it. The philosophical project of Nikolai Fedorov and Nikolai Berdyaev, the paper by Cezar Jędrysko discusses the concept of value and creation (the act of creation). Using the thought of Fedorov and Berdyaev but also employing the titu-

lar Marxist concept – which on its own is theoretically apposite but remains antithetical to the said philosophers' output, Jędrysko formulates his categorical imperative – an absolute obligation to create. It does not boil down to strictly artistic activity, which is understandably not excluded and duly permitted, but to creative acts, to the process of creation, which is discussed in terms of commitment and duty. As a result, justification and evaluation of artistic endeavours becomes one of the fundamental intellectual problems facing homo sapiens.

The question of creative acts and their effects may be construed not only as an everyday binding postulate of creation but as a means of expressing viewpoints as well. Ewa Cichocka in *Remarks on the Specificity of Art in the Writings of Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy* intertwines her own philosophical sensibilities with the creative output of the two Russian writers, aiming to find an answer to the question of their understanding of art. Her article is not a quest for the quest's sake but a vehicle for shining light on some of the less translucent ideas encountered in the writings of these two artists.

If Cichocka's paper on Dostoyevsky's and Tolstoy's understanding of art may be subsumed under the vast category of literary and philosophical analysis, then the articles by Edyta Domagała, Halina Rarot, and Justyna Krocak undoubtedly focus on more typically philosophical output, on the writings of, respectively, Vladimir Solovyov, Nicholas Berdyaev, and Pavel Florensky.

Entitled *The rationale behind erotic love in Vladimir Solovyov's thought*, Domagała's article treats of the title philosopher's intellectual system. Frequently dubbed "the philosopher of omni-unity", Solovyov attaches upmost importance to the issue of love, which he constructs in an idealised fashion. Understandably, the philosopher devoted one of his major works, namely "The Meaning of Love", to this very idea, which in turn forms the core of Domagała's analysis. Her research is aptly supplemented by the wider context of Solovyov's philosophical system.

Rarot's *Nicholas Berdyaev's Russian personalism* examines not only the philosophical stance of Nicholas Berdyaev, one of the most influential Russian thinkers who impacted the development of Western personalism, but also juxtaposes it with Russian and French emanations of personalism. Thanks to this comparison and resultant analytical confrontation, the specificity of Berdyaev's personalism is thoroughly discussed.

The aim of Krocak's *Pavel Florensky's philosophical sympathies and antipathies – select issues* is to pinpoint the sources of inspiration underlying Florensky's own philosophy and to discuss his critique of Kant. According to Krocak, taking intellectual heed of these two elements is conducive to the endeavour to interpret Florensky's philosophy.

The article that concludes the current issue, namely Natalia Daniłkina's *Ideas of freedom and harmony in philosophical pedagogics in the era of Russian revolutions*, is devoted to the idea of harmony and to the paramount value epitomised by the idea of freedom. The article provides symbolic closure since the no-

tion of freedom – alongside of the concept of god, human, creation, and many others – may be construed as the cornerstone constituent that binds together all the analyses collected in the present volume of “Culture and Values” – explorations focusing on the topics of value, culture, and history in Russian philosophy.

Predictably, one cannot identify all the features inherent in Russian philosophy on the basis of the papers published in the present volume of the quarterly, especially since many important themes and topics have not been discussed. Being genuinely complex, the task of unanimous elaboration on the specificity of the philosophy in question poses a number of serious problems, leading to a number of scholarly debates, and requiring further detailed research. Nonetheless, the topics selected by the authors are adequately representative of the scope of Russian philosophy, enabling readers if not to get inside the very circle of Russian philosophy then to get significantly closer to it. It is truly laudable that this academic attempt has been undertaken if only because of its end-result epistemic value – enabling readers to familiarise themselves with a different culture. Yet, the very unquestionably fundamental value of the collected research lies in the fact that it may be used as a source of inspiration for individual perusal, possibly resulting in further more in-depth scholarship.

*Translated by Tomasz Kitliński*

**ANDRZEJ OSTROWSKI**, habilitated doctor, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland. E-mail: [aostrowski@bacon.umcs.lublin.pl](mailto:aostrowski@bacon.umcs.lublin.pl)

