

## Sergij Bulgakov, The Tragedy of Philosophy

### Chapter II: On the Characteristics of the History of the New Philosophy

Subject	Hypostasis	→ idealistic systems
Object	(predicate, nature)	→ panlogistic systems
Copula	(being, reality)	→ Realistic Systems (mystical, empirical, materialistic)

All philosophical systems start from one of these moments and try to deduce all others from it. This gives rise to variants of a monism, a philosophy of identity. These are three possible types of a "philosophical heresiology, a monistic modalism".

Alternative: Thinking in antinomies under renunciation of unambiguous comprehension.

#### A. THE IDEALISTIC SYSTEMS

"Here, philosophical thinking is above all astonished by that indisputable statement of our self-consciousness, seized by philosophical astonishment, that everything that exists is in the I, in front of the I, and for the I: the world as a spectaculum for an observer or as a conception of a subject. The world is subjective, is a subjective contemplation, without the subject there is nothing" (39).

Example: **Arthur Schopenhauer**, The World as Will and Representation.

Consequence: the world as "something illusory, schematic, deceptive" (40).

Examples from history: **Indian philosophy; Sophists** in Greece.

"Christianity defeated this subjectivism, not in theory, but in life, for the new life in God it brought, the deepened sense of reality, all by itself invalidated and extinguished decay subjectivism" (41).

Christianity was also susceptible to a rationalism that promoted a subjective idealism. "A spiritual earthquake occurred in Christianity itself - in Protestantism the individualistic principle, which soon began to assert itself in philosophical thought as well, reared its head" (42).

Thinkers in England: **Artur Collier** (1680-1732), **George Berkeley** (1684-1753):

"consciousness-immanent empiricism", scepticism towards the external world

And "immediately it proves that the ego, as soon as it is detached from reality or nature, from its predicate, is cut off from all sources of life, languishes on an uninhabited island, that it simply is not. And uncertainty and despondency take the place of titanic pretensions" (42).

**René Descartes** is "also a representative of subjective idealism" (44): "The ego, the hypostasis, becomes the only point of orientation, a torch of consciousness that illuminates the dark night of doubt" (45).

"The real father of philosophical idealism ... is **Kant**" (45). Kant distances himself from Berkeley and turns to the representational world. "With Kant, everything is directed towards the object, but not towards the subject, including the subject itself" (47). But Kant concentrates on the "forms of cognition, first of all space and time, furthermore the various categories ... Who will put them together, give them life? Obviously, although these forms determine the object, only the subject, the I, the hypostasis, can do this" (47f). "Without this I there is no synthesis, no object, no cognition" (48).

"Kant has not succeeded in proving or showing that the I can be conceived merely as a 'unity of transcendental apperception', as a logical function, without relation to an ontological centre, for example to the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum = sum cogitans = sum*. It entangles itself in ambiguities and contradictions" (49). "And yet it is in this doctrine of the 'unity of transcendental apperception' that Kant's central enlightenment, if one can put it that way, lies. Kant repeatedly emphasises the purely logical significance of this I and in this respect places it in contrast to the psychological I, which can only be known on the basis of 'appearances' and belongs to the realm of inner experience. 'That: I think, must be able to accompany all my conceptions', this conception 'cannot be regarded as belonging to sensuousness' and must be one and the same in all consciousness" (49f).

For Kant [similar to what Bulgakov himself suggests]: "The whole of life culminates in the I, is a predicate to the I, and the whole world is thus a living proposition, is an unfolding I, its predicate. But at the same time, as Kant rightly noted, this I is not our emotionally-changing, flowing I, accessible to our cognition from experience ... The absolute I is only the subject of the proposition, never the predicate; it is a subject that can never become an object" (52).

Critical questioning of Kant: in him we find "a peculiar agnosticism, according to which there can be no act of cognition of the ego. Is it meant "seriously or ironically" when Kant refers to "the constant logical subject of thought" as "a substance in the idea, but not in reality"? (54). With him, there is "apparently no possibility of overcoming gnoseological solipsism and of finding the way out of its splendid isolation. As a consequence, "he simultaneously ... also destroys the gnoseological possibility of a recognition or cognition of other gnoseological subjects and thus here denies the possibility of the criterion of objective cognition that he himself has established" (55).

"But if this I sees everything, thinks everything and knows everything, should it really not be able to look at itself as well? But what else than grasping the consciousness of the I by the I do Kant's own reflections represent, who - just like the old sage who began to walk back and forth in response to the assertion that there was no movement - proves its knowability by deed, by his doctrine of the relative unknowability of the I? In other words, in spite of everything, he poses the problem of the I and solves it" (56).

How? The I can reflect on itself, can make itself the object of thought: "This is the meaning of tautology, which is basically no tautology at all and meaninglessness: I is I. The second I is predicate, the I becomes its own predicate" (57).

Since the I as a propositional object remains transcendental to thought and the concrete I is already "predicate", the following applies: "This does not point to its emptiness and abstractness, which is proper to the logical function, but to its universality and its metaphysical, ontological content, i.e. it necessarily leads through the door of gnoseology into metaphysics, into the realm of the general doctrine of being" (57).

Thesis: Kant did not clarify the relationship between the gnoseological I and the psychological I, nor the relationship between the noumenon and the phainomenon. Therefore, he has no anthropology, no doctrine of the person, no bridge from the *ego* to the other person. This question becomes central in practical philosophy.

Problem with Kant: "In the foreground are gnoseological obstacles and disassembled parts of the gnoseological apparatus, which completely obscure the flyer itself". (61).

Consequence: "The problem that Kant tried to solve, how cognition at all, that is to say: objective cognition, is possible, has become even more mysterious after him than it has always been" (62).

The *proton pseudos* of Kant's philosophy, and at the same time its basic characteristic, is its subjectivism or egocentrism. It forcibly tears apart (only in abstraction, of course) the living unity of substance, the inseparability of subject and object as propositional object and predicate, noumenon and phainomenon ... How is this torn connection to be restored?" (62).

"The metaphysical diagnosis of this whole characteristic disease of gnoseologism can only be: detachment of hypostasis from nature, of subject from object (63).

**Hermann Cohen** (1842-1918): Attempt to overcome the "givenness" of things and to dissolve the object of cognition into a logical category, to leave in cognition to the a priori and to cast all afferent things into the gloomy darkness of psychologism, in order, in fact, to feed on them incessantly of course" (64).

**Wilhelm Windelband** (1848-1915): The subject becomes objectless.

"Kantian idealism is continued by Schopenhauer in a form that is sharpened to the extreme and consistent" (65). "In the doctrine of the subject as the reference point of all predicates, which therefore itself stands outside the realm of experience, is transcendent to it and yet immanently beholds experience, Schopenhauer has come very close to the truth" (66).

"The real king in the field of idealistic subjectivism, however, is indisputably **J.G. Fichte**, and that in the first period of his philosophical thinking (roughly up to the year 1800)" (67).

Fichte undertakes a formidable thought experiment. "The meaning of this experiment is that in order to recognise the true nature of the I, thought must probe and examine its limits; but to do this it must violate and transgress them in real terms ... Fichte has grasped the substantial nature of the I, the impossibility of dissolving and eliminating it. The I is the

closest, the most infallible, the first. Everything must be understood in the I and through the I, expressed in the language of I-ness - that is the task" (68). In this respect, he consistently develops Kant's teaching.

Fichte develops the doctrine of the I not gnoseologically but metaphysically: "everything is I, I is everything, and there is nothing apart from the I, beyond the I, nothing that is not I, that is transcendent of the I" (70). Therefore, he must deduce nature from the I. At the same time, for Fichte there is no tension and no correlativity of I and non-I. Therefore, there can actually be no deduction (of the non-ego from the ego). "But Fichte deduces with all his might, and with the help of a series of middle links he forms a chain that would allow the centre to be fixed with the periphery. But it turns out that there is nothing by which this chain can be measured" (71).

"And the Fichtean ego, the absolute as well as the empirical, cannot, in spite of everything, bring forth from itself even a real fly or a living cockroach, not even a blade of grass or even a scrawny thistle. It is barren and dead in the desert of Luciferic rapture. The loss of nature, i.e. yawning emptiness - that is the result of Fichte's enterprise" (72). "The ego, the abstract hypostasis, in its Luciferic ecstasy is only able to give birth to its own shadow, the non-ego, and to reign in this realm of shadows, in this metaphysical Sheol" (74). Fichte does not shrink from transforming "the whole world of God into a pocket edition under the title 'non-ego'" (78).

One understands the consequence: philosophy from Schelling to Hegel conversely labours to derive the I from the non-I.

Side glance at the doctrine of creation: the creation of the world is not a "deduction" of the world. Otherwise the I of the Creator would necessarily remain in the singular.

Trinitarian evaluation: from page 74 (English: from 48 below).

*(Note: The English translations are not taken from the English edition, but translated directly from the German.)*