

On Necessity of Consideration of the Issue
“Did Russian Cosmism Exist?” in the Context of the Issue
“Did Russian Philosophy Exist as a Whole?”

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Abstract

The article under consideration reveals relation of criticism of a philosophical status of such a movement as Russian cosmism to critical attitude towards ideas of “Unity”, “collegiality”, “transformation and salvation of humanity”, etc. (as well as towards a metaphorical and often religious form of expressing thereof). Since these ideas precisely in such form are central to Russian philosophy as a whole, there is an alternative whether to recognize variability of philosophism standards so that what is traditionally called “Russian philosophy” including, inter alia, Russian cosmism can be recognized as a specific form of philosophical knowledge (the author proceeding from this viewpoint) or recognize Western philosophy as the only standard of the latter, thus logically arguing that Russian cosmism as an essentially philosophical movement did not exist as well as most movements of Russian philosophy as a whole which leads to absurdity.

Keywords: criticism of Russian cosmism, originality of Russian philosophy, “Unity”, “collegiality”, “god-seeking”.

In the previous publications in “IntellectualArchive” journal, heuristic (i. e. contributing to scientific research, from the Greek “eurēka!” meaning “I have found it!”) and humanistic potential of such philosophical movement as Russian cosmism (for its detailed description and a list of representatives see [1]) have been already discussed. In particular, the point that its *variant of interaction between scientific and non-scientific knowledge* (philosophical and religious as well as near-scientific) *in many respects helped to anticipate some ideas of modern science has been substantiated. Moreover, critical assessments of a scientific component of Russian cosmism* repeated in Russian and Western publications were considered as indirect arguments in favor of a heuristic nature of such variant of interaction defined by the principle of open rationality (see [1]). However, it should be recognized that not all negative characteristics of Russian cosmism, and in the first place denial of its existence as a philosophical

movement (!) may be “neutralized” in such way. It leads to paradoxes, e. g. in the author's thesis defended 9 years ago with one section devoted to Russian cosmism received the following contradictory comments by different reviewers. One of them criticized that almost half of the section was devoted to substantiating existence of the movement that was not required. On the contrary, another one considered that the very existence of Russian cosmism had not been proven by the author. Such contradiction is regularly reproduced in Russian publications, e. g. in a preface of a compilation titled “Philosophy of Russian cosmism” (1996) prepared by the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences (i. e. an academic publication) an editor described Russian cosmism as “a philosophical movement of Russian culture rich in tradition... (however – M. P.) some people abroad and in our country *dispute this idea and doubt the very existence of such a movement*” [2, p. 3]. Another compilation titled “Strategy for Survival: Cosmism and Ecology” (2013) discussed the issue “But was there a Russian Cosmic boy at all?” [3. p. 180] (which is a paraphrase of a quote “But was there a boy at all?” from “The Life of Klim Samgin” by Maxim Gorky). There are other examples but in order to detect causes of such tradition it's best to address the most consistent and at the same the first exponents thereof, M. Hagemeister and N. K. Gavryushin. The latter in his article distinctive titled “But was there ‘Russian Cosmism’ at all?” (1993) considered the movement in question as “a phenomenon of our scientific and religious consciousness, for many decades whacked in the tenets of external and internal censorship and finding the most sophisticated ways to coordinate the incompatible” [4, p. 104]. Hence, since “the Trojan horse of our religious and philosophical dissidence... needed a conceptual attire” [4, p. 104], *the so-called “Russian Cosmism” became such “disguise”* (it should be noted for English-speaking readers that dissidence was a political anti-Soviet movement in the USSR, and, in the author's opinion, N. K. Gavryushin did not provide a convincing answer why the concept of “*Cosmism*” was chosen as its “disguise”). As a result, as N. K. Gavryushin noted, “an army concealed in a horse (i. e. ‘the Trojan horse’ called ‘*Russian Cosmism*’ – M. P.) was of a rather mixed composition including Christians, theosophists, and

technocrats with no confessional beliefs united only by the pursuit of defending their understanding of freedom under the oppression by a totalitarian ideological violence” [4, p. 104]. An ideological nature of such argument provides ground to agree with the following assessment thereof by A. P. Ogurtsov: “One can assume that a style and an image of ‘the Trojan horse’ and ‘analysis’ of phenomena of social consciousness of dissidence with the help of ideological clichés... are inspired by the propaganda machine of the Communist Party” [2, p. 3]. It should be added that it was the one N. K. Gavryushin aimed to criticize. But above all in order to understand his logic it is necessary to consider how he was influenced by Marburg University's Professor M. Hagemeister recognized N. K. Gavryushin by stating: “The issue (of existence of Russian cosmism - M. P) I dealt with before, reappeared in front of me in a conversation with M. Hagemeister held in Moscow in March of 1993...” [4, p. 104]. The latter argued that the movement in question “never existed since there had not been a living tradition and continuity in development of ideas” [4, p. 104]. M. Hagemeister himself in an interview given in 1995 said: “I have been very engaged in Russian Cosmism. And I dare say that this phenomenon is quite parallel to the ‘New Age’ thought” [5, p. 61] (To understand M. Hagemeister's sarcasm it should be explained that the New Age movement was engaged in “vague religious and mystic searches inherent to an amorphous god-seeking environment and religious searches within youth counterculture and some alternative movements” [6, p. 29-30]). Moreover, according to M. Hagemeister, Russian Cosmism was “a pure invention of the late Soviet period” [5, p. 61], since as a united movement it “never existed: V. I. Vernadsky had absolutely no idea about N. F. Fyodorov, and K. E. Tsiolkovsky never knew V. I. Vernadsky, but they all appeared to be artificially united in ‘some typically Russian philosophy of the 21st century’ with great pretensions to become a new global philosophy of integrity that was capable of solving problems of survival of humanity” [5, p. 61]. For this article it is important to note that M. Hagemeister did not only dispassionately state it as a normal fact from the history of philosophy, but showed a clearly negative emotional attitude to “vague prophecy-like formations” trying to “impose recipes of ‘the righteous life’ on

the society” [5, p. 62]. Or, as he pointed out even more categorically in his another report, “it is yet another Russian doctrine that *threatens to save the world*” [7, p. 45]. The title of the report is very distinctive: “*Is Russian Cosmism an Anachronism or ‘Philosophy of the Future’?*” (1993). In order to prove that Russian Cosmism was indeed *an anachronism with no future*, M. Hagemeister named an idea of “god-building, self-deification of humanity and attributing divine functions and qualities such as omnipotence, omnipresence, and immortality thereof” [7, p. 44] as one of its main ideas. Moreover, in Russian cosmism “God is substituted for people” [7, p. 44], and such “a pseudoscientific religion of *Übermensch* replaces discredited Western materialistic communism” [7, p. 45]. Hence it is logical that such arguments in the West “resonate... not with professional philosophers, but... with people looking for a ‘new world outlook’... Anthroposophists or Christian sectarians” [5, p. 62]. It should be also noted that of crucial importance is the fact that such critical assessment of Russian cosmism was made by a German thinker *within his line of critical attitude to Russian philosophy as a whole*, in particular to central concepts of Russian philosophy (that for him are “typically Russian” ideologemes with pretensions “of solving problems of survival of humanity” and “*threaten to save the world*”). Furthermore, according to M. Hagemeister the very ideas of authors traditionally referred to as Russian cosmists *maximally expressed what made the so-called “Russian philosophy” impossible to be considered as philosophy as such*, and in the West practically the whole “Russian philosophy has been associated with an emblem of some esoteric or fantastic speculation close to folk tales” [5, p. 62]. He elaborated that “it’s... not about an ideal of ‘collegiality’ which is once again used to conjure though hardly anyone is able to explain what collegiality really means” [5, p. 61]. Since the majority of Russian philosophers interpreted collegiality as manifestation of the principle of Unity in a social sphere, we should mention M. Hagemeister’s irony against those who “consider the concept of cosmism to be an original creation of the Russian mind, the most important element of the ‘Russian idea’, which is so often recalled today” [7, p. 41], given that “this concept, in their view, had taken roots in a purely Russian archetype of

‘Unity’” [7, p. 41]. It is important to bear in mind that many other authors agreed with M. Hagemeister, but those “at the crossroads of two cultures” are of specific interest. In particular, E. V. Barabanov (a historian of Russian philosophy and literature and the honorary doctor of Theology at University of Tübingen, who due to his long-term stay outside of Russia and another citizenship represented the Western philosophical tradition), wrote: “‘The Russian idea’, again! ‘A special way’, again; ‘originality’, again; teaching instead of schooling, again” [8, p. 116]. Similarly, N. S. Plotnikov (a researcher at the Institute of Philosophy of the Ruhr University Bochum in Germany) in an interview titled “Philosophy in Russia simply does not exist...” (2008) thought that “the whole discourse of the so-called Russian philosophy is built on the statement ‘It’s different over here!’” [9]. However, “a philosophy that begins with stating its national privileges in the discourse from the very beginning ignores the rules of the language game called ‘philosophy’” [6]. *Similar to the aforementioned authors*, he rigidly connected the latter only with its Western variant with an assertion of Russian philosophy of its originality making it pseudophilosophy. Under this approach, Russian Cosmism looks like “a quintessence of pseudophilosophy”, which, however, can be regarded as a “reverse side” of the fact that it represents basic orientations and characteristics of Russian philosophy as a whole.

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