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RUSSIAN NEO-KANTIANISM:  
HISTORY  
AND DEVELOPMENT

*The article is dedicated to the analysis of the development of neo-Kantianism in Russia. Russian neo-Kantianism is marked with originality, which was due to the cultural and historical peculiarities of the formation of the national philosophical thought. The stages and specific character of the development of Russian neo-Kantianism are considered by example of the creation of A.I. Vvedensky, B.V. Yakovenko and V.E. Sesemann.*

**Key words:** neo-Kantianism, Russian philosophical tradition, specific character of Russian neo-Kantianism, A.I.Vvedensky, B.V. Yakovenko, V.E. Sesemann.

**Introduction**

It is both very difficult and easy to write about the Russian Neo-Kantianism as a holistic philosophical direction in the development of Russian philosophical tradition. As I have repeatedly pointed out<sup>1</sup>, it is largely based on German neo-Kantianism, represented by its two main schools. However, learning the lessons of German teachers and colleagues, on the one hand, was done independently and distinctively, on the other hand, it was carried out in cultural, historical and, most importantly, philosophical environment very different from that of Germany. Absence of a long and well-grounded philosophical tradition, including that in the study of transcendental philosophy of Kant, was one of the reasons why none of the Russian neo-Kantians can be called a consistent follower of either Marburg or Baden school. We can say that the interest in Kant and neo-Kantianism

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<sup>1</sup> See *Belov V. Russian neo-Kantianism – forgotten philosophical space // The world of the philosopher of the Silver Age. Saratov, 2003 ; Same author. Philosophy of H.Cohen and Russian neo-Kantianism // Annual journal of history and philosophy, 2003. M., 2004 ; Same author [Review] N. Dmitrieva. Russian neo-Kantianism: Marburg in Russia. Historical and philosophical essays // Philosophical issues. 2008. № 4 ; Same author. The problem of rational and irrational in the Russian neo-Kantianism // Spiritual continent of Russian philosophy. Saratov, 2009 ; Same author. H. Cohen’s doctrine in Russia: attitudes and reception // Russian and German neo-Kantianism: between theory of cognition and cultural criticism. M., 2010 ; Same author. Russian neo-Kantianism and Russian religious philosophy: an attempt at comparative analysis // Russian philosophy: unity and diversity. Saratov, 2010.*

started in Russia simultaneously. Hence Liebman's slogan "Back to Kant" for Russian supporters of transcendental philosophy sounded like "Forward to Kant". And so there could not be any debate between, let's say, Russian orthodox Kantians and neo-Kantians, between the followers of different options of the development of Kant's philosophy of transcendentalism. For young Russian philosophers Kant immediately became not a historical stage of formation of philosophical knowledge, not an archival attraction and a self-sufficient historical figure, but rather a living source of a truly philosophical and scientific exploration of Pure Reason, the Kant of Marburg, Heidelberg and Freiburg together with the Kant of Königsberg.

Enthusiasm for Kant among Russian thinkers was, as they say, overwhelming. By the beginning of the twentieth century, i.e. at the time when German schools of neo-Kantianism were flourishing, Russian culture was going through a so-called religious and spiritual renaissance, and the general interest in religious issues was on the rise. From the dominance of positivist and materialist ideas cultural and academic elite of Russia turns to Christianity and Orthodoxy. But one may still wonder if all that is connected in any way with interest in Kant. The fact is that for many Russian thinkers the road from materialism to Orthodoxy was leading through Kant, primarily through his ethical teaching. One of the most famous Russian religious philosophers and theologians Sergei Bulgakov, later Fr. Sergiy, the dean of St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris, described his Marxist-Kantian period: "Considering the polemic against Stammler, and beyond it, I set to myself a wider task, that of giving Marxism a vaccination with Kant's criticism, to place it on the solid epistemological foundation, giving a critical formulation to its basic sociological and economic teachings... I hesitated between various shades of [neokantianism], at different times getting closer to Riehl, to Schuppe, or to Natorp and Windelband. I must confess that Kant was always more reliable to me than Marx, and I thought it necessary to verify Marx through Kant, not vice versa" [1, p. 373].

But if for many future prominent religious thinkers Kant became a sort of bridge to transit to proper religious and theological subjects, the other part of young Russian philosophers treated their interest as purely philosophical, requiring long and hard work for its fulfillment. No wonder that Russian supporters of European philosophy accused their religious opponents of a smattering of those world philosophical traditions.

There are several reasons the young people of Russia were going to Marburg. I refer in this case to the opinion of the famous Russian poet and Nobel Prize winner, at one time a former student of Hermann Cohen, B. Pasternak, who in his "Safe Conduct" recalls: "Marburg school was fascinating in... two things. First, it was original, it started everything from scratch. It did not share the lazy routine of various "isms" ... Without any obedience to terminological inertia Marburg school referred to the very sources, i.e., to the authentic roots of thought which it had left in the academic history... Marburg school was interested in how science is thinking in its never-ending twenty-five-century authorship, at in the hot spots and final fates of world discoveries. In this condition, authorized, one may say, by the history, philosophy again became younger and smarter beyond recognition, turning from a problematic discipline into a discipline on problems, exactly the way it ought to be.

The second feature of the Marburg school follows directly from the first one, and it was scrupulous and exacting respect to the historical legacy... Uniformity

of academic structure for the school was the same rule as the anatomical identity of a historical man... History was looked at with both Hegelian eyes in Marburg, that is with genius generalization, but at the same time within in the exact boundaries of common truth...

These two traits of independence and historicism do not say anything about the content of Cohen's system... However, they both explain its appeal. They attest its originality, that is, the living place it occupied in the living tradition in one of the areas of modern consciousness» [4, p. 211 – 212].

Russian neo-Kantians understood their philosophical creativity as a necessary preliminary step towards the development of Russian philosophical tradition and true intermediary stage between European and Russian philosophical and, more broadly, social thinking.

Thus, we can say that the neo-Kantian movement in Russia was facing a triple challenge:

- to counter religious philosophy (Orthodoxy had the status of the official religion in the country), and materialism (as a philosophy of struggle for social justice) with authentic scientific philosophy;
- to lay foundations for Russian philosophical tradition that synthesizes a wealth of world philosophy with characteristics of Russian culture;
- to incorporate this tradition into international philosophy.

You can't but agree that these tasks are gigantic, so they were approached in different ways and with varying degrees of success.

The first among Russian neo-Kantian philosophers who understood the philosophical mission in addressing these three challenges, was Alexander Ivanovich Vvedensky.

### **A. Vvedensky – the founder of Russian neo-Kantianism**

In a spirit similar to that of his German neo-Kantian colleagues, Russian philosopher Alexander Vvedensky (1856–1925) determines his attitude towards Kant as offering to identify in the teachings of the great philosopher of Königsberg the historical moments that suggest the possibility of historically conditioned revisions and refinements of the doctrine. "In Kant, – notes Vvedensky, – i.e. in his teaching, it is necessary to distinguish between the historical Kant, not alien to the dogmatic views and errors, and the ideal Kant, who placed the questions regarding knowledge to a whole new ground and thus justified his "criticism". The historical Kant, influencing the minds of his readers within their historical environment, could and should lead them through Fichte and Schelling to Hegel; but even the historical Kant would not be able to do this now, because now the conditions of intellectual life are not the same. Actually, it is recommended not simply to return to Kant, but rather to take in the principles of criticism that he created in order to clear them from the impurities of dogmatism, to go even further than Kant in the development of pure critical philosophy" [2, p. 135].

It is the very sense of historical determination and thus significance of Kant's doctrine which became pivotal in the works of A. Vvedensky. On the one hand, he understands the merits of Kant and considers his criticism of philosophical thought as the most prudent method. On the other hand, he sees the contradictions and weaknesses of Kant's system and tries to offer some ways of overcoming them.

All efforts of Vvedensky, no doubt, were defined by the practical applicability of critical philosophy. He was a teacher and educator, so he saw the main goal of his philosophical activity in teaching the younger generation the skills of critical thinking and shaping their scientific worldview. It is true that we do not find here a detailed analysis of Kant's system, which we can see in Cohen's or Windelband's works, and in total historical and philosophical works are very few. Vvedensky in his presentation is more of a promoter rather than an apologist of the tradition.

Three interrelated points became determinative for the philosopher in the construction of his own philosophical system:

1. Understanding that philosophy's existence is justified by its function in the formation of people's worldviews. The philosophical questions addressed in the external and internal existence of a person form the basis of his beliefs and orientations.

2. The assertion that the formation of a worldview is initiated by human cognitive interest. Therefore, epistemology or theory of knowledge should lie at the center of philosophy.

3. The belief is that the core of the theory of knowledge allows only for the critical method, as one departing from the fact of the development of scientific knowledge and taking this development as a never-ending process.

According to Vvedensky, all our experience, all its content is reduced to perceptions of various degrees and strength. Any ordering of external affections happens due to the efforts of human mind. Experience and mind share the same content. Hence the famous logicism of Vvedensky, which is akin to that of "Logic of Pure Knowledge" by the founder of the Marburg school of neo-Kantianism.

Meanwhile, there is a pronounced difference between the logicism of Vvedensky and the logicism of Cohen. Without going into detailed analysis of the nuances of logical constructions of the two neo-Kantians, German one and Russian one, we can emphasize that if Cohen's logic is the logic of first principles, of generation from nothing, that is, the absolute creative force, then the logic of Vvedensky, while being of paramount importance for epistemology, is the one for handling experiences and verifying inferences – it primarily retains secondary role, if we try to sort out the conflicting judgments of the Russian neo-Kantianist.

In our opinion, we should talk about strict schematization and simplification of Kant's theory, which were caused by a desire to state all the basic ideas of the critical philosophy for the younger generation of philosophers in the shortest and clearest way. In addition, such a promotion came from an attempt to improve of the system of critical philosophy rather than to provide Kant's authentic doctrine.

It is absolutely Kantian fact in practical philosophy of professor Vvedensky when he recognises the primacy of practical reason and unconditional obligation of moral duty. Moreover, the representative of Russian neo-Kantianism deepens and radicalizes the dualism of theoretical and practical reason of Kant through logic. According to Vvedensky, applying pure logic, we won't be able to either tell anything about the causes of our moral conduct or prove the existence of the spiritual element in other living beings. It turns out that, on the one hand, we can't accept the unconditional obligation of moral duty, but on the other hand, we can't prove its existence by scientific means. It was the "nagging" of morality and impotence of science to justify it, according to Vvedensky, which justify the necessity to search for some other argument.

Neither God nor the immortality of the soul, nor free will, nor faith are the reasons for the Russian neo-Kantian that determine the existence of human morality, but, on the contrary, the latter gives rise to a reasonable opportunity to explain the irrational, and in the framework of the latter we may speak of faith, admitted by critical reason<sup>2</sup>.

In comparison with knowledge, faith, according to Vvedensky, is so differentiated, that, considered psychologically rather than logically, it can become the object of conscious reasoning about it. "Along with the naive and blind faith — he says, there is such faith which is quite strong, because it is recognized by the critical reason, and at the same time is valuable, in any case the one that can't be called abnormal or undesirable; it is a conscious faith" [3, p. 187]. The presence of such faith, according to the Russian philosopher, does not contradict the critical approach, but, on the contrary, is required by it, because the logically proven and sound knowledge is not enough to build a holistic worldview, which inevitably raises questions about the meaning of life, the immortality of the soul, and being of God. In ordinary life not everyone is a critically-minded philosopher. Presence of conscious faith, although not entirely clearly, is perceived by intuitively thinking people. Therefore, it is quite possible to say that in the philosophical system of A. Vvedensky we find an attempt to extend the ability of the critical ways beyond the frames of knowledge, but not those of mind, on the one hand, and beyond the position of a philosopher or scientist, but not of a cognizing subject.

Moreover, the dualism of theoretical and practical philosophy in of Vvedensky, emphasized by some reputable scholars, is not absolute. Because, first of all, faith, as an opposition to knowledge, is introduced into cognition through intuitive knowledge and psychological confidence in a certain way, i.e. causal relations of faith and knowledge gets postulated in the process of learning, and, secondly, the unity of knowledge and faith serves as the basis of a person's worldview and the conditionality of this communication and knowledge is prefaced.

On the whole, summing up, we consider the fact that the philosophical criticism of the system proposed by the Russian thinker and scholar A. Vvedensky was influenced by many of the great representatives of idealist philosophy, in particular by Descartes, Hume, Kant, Fichte, and Fisher. But the system it shares common features the most with is the one of Cohen, the founder of the Marburg school of neo-Kantianism. We can point at the logic and methodology in the development of Kant's theoretical philosophy, at expanding the boundaries of practical knowledge beyond the scientific knowledge, and at including national philosophical features into it (it's Jewish for Cohen and Russian for Vvedensky), not to mention similar interpretation of Kant's thing-in-itself as frame for scientific knowledge and understanding knowledge as a holistic phenomenon and at the same time, as an infinite process.

Wide and diverse field of tradition of transcendental philosophy, which Vvedensky was going to introduce to the national intelligentsia, impatient for

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<sup>2</sup> Here we are again faced with the logic of the argument, in many ways similar to the one of Cohen in his philosophy of religion. Researchers who prove the continuity of the theoretical and practical philosophy of the scholar with the philosophy of religion, also point at philosophical approach, a defining one in these arguments, when the philosopher philosophizes, but does not preach beyond reason, staying at its bounds and expanding, thus, the possibility of knowledge beyond science. See such an analysis of Cohen's philosophy in: *Poma A. La Filosofia Critica di Hermann Cohen. Milano, 1988.*

philosophical enlightenment, the need to find an adequate response to the challenge of the time inside the contemporary national philosophy, which was becoming increasingly prone to confirm primacy of religious consciousness over scientific one, forced the Russian philosopher to simplifications and schematization. They did not contribute to solving old Kantian problems, but gave rise to new ones. No wonder Vvedensky's works were always met with hot discussions and are still being accepted with a mixed reaction.

If Vvedensky can be classified to some extent as popularizer of Kant's philosophy, his young colleague Yakovenko set off popularizing the whole history of the transcendental philosophical tradition, with neo-Kantianism and phenomenology being the points of culmination. Moreover, efforts of the Russian thinker in "embedding" tradition of transcendental philosophy into the world philosophical space, including Russia, with all the controversial moments of such "integration" are really remarkable.

### **B. Yakovenko and Russian philosophical tradition**

One of the editors and the most active participants of the Russian "Logos", the main Russian magazine of neo-Kantianism, was Boris V. Yakovenko (1884 – 1948). He did not leave his own developed theory, though analyzing his historical and philosophical works; we could single out three main interconnected storylines.

Firstly, Yakovenko's efforts are aimed at creating a Russian philosophical tradition. With all the cosmopolitanism and Westernism, he understands through magnificent historical and philosophical intuition that religious philosophy in Russia is not an accidental phenomenon and it is not a marginalized road to nowhere, but an integral part of Russian culture, including philosophy. And this philosophy, even when perceived critically, provides a good ground for reflecting on the philosophy's independence of religion, and positively perceived, serves excellent stimulus for the opposite way, preventing it from stagnating in positivist, scientific dogmatism and offering really relevant and profound topics for discussion.

Secondly, this Russian philosophical tradition, according to Yakovenko, and some other philosophers, lacks detailed understanding of Western philosophical tradition, which continues developing in different directions but still preserves some common roots and goals. Yakovenko is the author of a series of review articles on contemporary Western philosophy, and nationally-focused research on German, Italian, Czechoslovakian and American philosophy.

Thirdly, Boris V. Yakovenko does not simply try to compensate for the lack of tradition of thorough study of Western philosophy in Russian philosophical realm with simple presentation of different philosophical trends, identifying the historical stages of their formation and development of national characteristics, but singles out the most promising philosophical direction, which, in his opinion, may become a starting point for creating the original schools of national philosophy. This is neo-Kantianism modeled on Cohen's one.

One of the main determining factors of self-identification for the Russian thinker is a strong belief in the autonomy of philosophical knowledge and cognition. Due to the fact that the object of philosophy is beyond ordinary physical, chemical, biological, social, and similar world, is not the observed objects and phenomena, but abstract things, it is very difficult to keep such an attitude and it

takes a certain level of the development of mind to be capable of persistent effort there. However, the opposition of philosophy, on the one hand, and all other spheres of human creativity on the other hand, can't be absolute. Philosophy, according to Yakovenko, has always been a part of the cultural space of a nation, and therefore it can't be separated with an impenetrable wall from science, religion and art.

Being a philosopher, and a philosopher-westernizer, B. Yakovenko did not imagine himself outside of Russian culture, national mentality and values. Particular tasks on shaping national philosophical tradition, without which in some degree of maturity the history of Russian culture can't be represented, dictated the form of philosophical priorities for the Russian thinker. It was necessary to protect the position of independent philosophy, and "Yakovenko first largely took on the burden of philosophical debate" [7, p. 852] with those who didn't believe in philosophy's self-sufficiency. The Russian tradition became a suitable background primarily for religious and philosophical view which the Russian thinker accuses, following Kant, of being dogmatic and ignorant of modern and contemporary philosophy.

It was necessary also to work diligently for the benefit of the future. "In other words – not without pathos, and at the same time with the full awareness of the complexity and a certain conventionalism says Yakovenko, – it was time to prepare and get ready: to prepare an original (as far as possible) detection of philosophical thinking in Russian mentality and to get ready for being its ancestors and perhaps even founders» [8, p. 739].

At the preparatory historical and philosophical stage of his philosophy Yakovenko identifies some iconic figures that allow him to present the history of philosophy as a developing system of philosophy, coherent with the core of philosophical knowledge: Maimon, Fichte, Schuppe, Rickert, Windelband, Husserl. Despite the fact that the ideal of historical and philosophical works for him was "History of Modern Philosophy", a two-volume work of Windelband, which covers the development of philosophical thought from Descartes to Herbart, Yakovenko does not follow the Baden neo-Kantian and does not undertake a large-scale historical and philosophical project. With all the "vastness", apparent dispersion and inconsistency in the selection of historical and philosophical themes, the Russian philosopher always remains committed to one idea, one philosophical school, one philosopher: transcendental criticism, Marburg neo-Kantianism, Hermann Cohen.

The most common scheme of development of philosophical thought in general is seen by the Russian thinker as follows: from Greek cosmism to German epistemology, and the main purpose of the historical and philosophical development, in his view, had always been to achieve self-sufficiency in philosophical constructs. The main obstacle on the way to this goal, which is often not clearly understood by the philosophers, is defined by Yakovenko as psychologism of philosophy, a mixture of philosophical and psychological research. In the twentieth century Husserl responsibly claimed the inadmissibility of such a mix and offered his program to get rid of this. Such a move gained the appreciation of the Russian neo-Kantian. He is convinced that all stages of philosophical knowledge should be exempt from the influence of psychology, then philosophical perception and human mind must be taken completely separately. Otherwise, we can be trapped by recurrences of anthropomorphism and relativism, which violate the purity and consistency of the transcendental method that became the greatest achievement of philosophy.

Yakovenko identifies two trends in contemporary philosophy, successfully continuing philosophical tradition of separation philosophy and psychology: the Marburg school and a trend which, together with the German philosophers, Yakovenko calls "teleological criticism" (Windelband, Rickert). "Both schools, says Yakovenko, consider themselves the successors of Kant, find their origin in his criticism and still call themselves the teachings of transcendental idealism. They are most responsible for the positive solution of the problem of psychologism... It is in them where the basic philosophical tradition is manifested and grants this state of philosophic thought the value of a stage in the overall process" [9, p. 256].

Given all the merits of the Baden school and reverence to its founders<sup>3</sup>, Yakovenko is quite critical of the most important achievements of this school: emphasizing value as a basic principle in the main philosophical constructs and teleological method. He formulates the final conclusion: "Independent, self-contained value is a mirage, an illusion. *Any value results from assessment, finishing the evaluation process is fixing the value.* And as such, even being absolute, it depends on the subject.

This is comprehensive about the *inner psychologism* of the teleological method... You can hide this basic psychology in an alien terminology, but you can't avoid psychological background when dealing with the teleological method" [10, p. 519].

B. Yakovenko believes H. Cohen to be the main spokesman of modern philosophical tradition. Despite some rather severe criticism of the Marburg neo-Kantian and the rejection of psychological motives in his constructs, the last conclusion made by the Russian philosopher sounds rather optimistic, and in brief form presents the program for his own philosophical program, which, unfortunately, was not fulfilled: "And just like the latest progress of transcendentalism was bought at the cost of a number of resignation, at the cost of the slogan "Back to Kant", now we can safely say to ourselves, having already returned to Kant and taken him through Hegel, "Go forward with Cohen!" [11, p. 472].

### V. Sesemann and systemic approach to Russian neo-Kantianism

The most systematic approach in Russian neo-Kantianism is shown in the work of V. Seseman (1884 – 1963), one of the most interesting and profound Russian thinkers, a student of Saint Petersburg and the Marburg schools, of N. Lossky, H. Cohen and P. Natorp, a friend of N. Hartmann, L. Karsavin, S. Frank. Even his published works (and the chance to study the archives of the philosopher in the Vilnius University Library suggests that a lot more still remains unpublished) show constant aspiration of the Russian philosopher to create his own philosophical system.

At least two periods which are reflected in the attitude to basic problems (pure knowledge and rational and irrational) can be clearly traced in the formation of the Russian thinker's philosophy: following the canons of Marburg neo-Kantianism and closely tracing the ideas of Husserl's phenomenology. It is worth mentioning that Sesemann became a consistent apologist for neither

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<sup>3</sup> Russian scientist appreciates the contribution of W. Windelband in the development of the history of philosophy, believing it was his methodology to present the history of philosophy, rather than the history of philosophers, as a model one; Rickert, according to B. Yakovenko, must be appreciated primarily as a supporter of the systematic approach.

Cohen nor Husserl, and his appeal to neo-Kantianism and phenomenology was purely creative, critical. He saw great advantages and disadvantages of both teachings and sought to overcome the one-sidedness of their epistemological analysis in the original synthesis.

Like his teacher Cohen, Sesemann was committed to building a system of philosophy. He believes theory of knowledge to be the basis of his system, since it naturally absorbs all other philosophical spheres. Following Cohen, he looks for a starting point from where to unfold the whole system. However, unlike his German teacher, who made emphasis on the mathematical natural science and the principle of infinitely small, which, in fact, through the category of relevance captures the methodological, functional and operational character of knowledge, the Russian philosopher, noting the obvious limitations of scientific learning and thus rebutting pure logic of knowledge, aims to offer the logic of pure knowledge. It is, by definition, can be neither natural science nor humanities alone. It is through the phenomenon of pure knowledge as a starting point; Sesemann tries to establish a proper understanding of the object, the subject of knowledge and relationships between them.

For Sesemann there is no doubt that it is only the self-reflection (as a kind of reflective, objective knowledge) – though not to full extent due to the empirical limits of the very subject of knowledge) – where the ideal of pure knowledge can be found. Only a man in self-reflection as a finite being can come close to pure knowledge that is not conditioned by any real assumption, so is really universal. Only self-knowing that combines reflection and self-reflection, in object-oriented, logically defined self-knowing, which relies upon immediate non-object-oriented self-knowing, can include such characteristics as independency of object oriented knowledge and self-sufficiency of non-objective knowledge. Therefore, the main intention of pure knowledge can be realized in the direct knowledge only if the latter is based on indirect self-reflection. He believes that "the main intention of pure knowledge can be preserved and realized in subject knowledge only because it has behind it the absolute indirect identity as a foundation and reference point. Only in this way it acquires the ability to overcome the inherent phenomenal character and maintain contact with the absolute being" [5, p. 160].

We should also take a look at Sesemann's special attitude to the problem of the irrational. In-depth and versatile approach of the Russian thinker allows him to articulate the philosophical concept of the irrational, which is different from what we usually take for it in the positive sciences. "Irrational – he said – is a purely philosophical concept which is not limited by narrow boundaries, in which positive sciences can conclude it, it is generally not bound by any empirical or temporary borders, and resides in a temporary ideal as an inexhaustible complexity of providing perpetual and continuous progress of objective knowledge" [6, p. 117].

Sesemann points to the methodological role of the irrational in other parts of the system of philosophy. Thus, in the ethics he sees that the irrational is a real unity in the moral sphere of two conflicting principles: the individual and the communal. Aesthetic consciousness, according to the Russian thinker, "revolves entirely in irrational" and the symbolic nature of art is explained by "reduction to the harmonious unity of two different forms or stages of infinite irrationality: a superior, represented by an idea and the other, inferior, implemented through a concrete way" [6, p. 120]. In the religious philosophy the value of the irrational lies in apophatic theology, which is inextricably linked with the positive assertion of the highest levels of reality and perfection.

The scope of the irrational should include immediate intuition (referring to the mind), and the subject matter of the thing, which is not diffused in the complexes of connections and relationships (referring to the being). But another conclusion can be even more important: this juxtaposition of rational and irrational itself has a preliminary basis, "significance is only in the context of objective knowledge, i.e. perceiving formally, in the context of logic. This limited significance, as emphasizes the Russian philosopher, is not in any way contradicted by the fact that, these mentioned definitions are caused by other more deeply lying illogical moments. Just logical is, we hope, we can say — nothing primary, original. It is based on the assumption, which itself arises from certain metalogical (metaphysical) motives" [12, p. 50].

To demonstrate the latter thought, Sesemann examines the notion of contradictions in its logic, ontological, ethical and aesthetic senses. If the logical opposed senses of being and non-being are symmetrical and equal, then in the ontological non-being can never be symmetrical to being. Such a situation, even with a great emphasis on the logical difference, is seen in the ethical concepts of the good and the evil, the aesthetic ones of the beautiful and the ugly.

In conclusion, I would like to quote V. Sesemann. These words from his short work, in our view, state a number of important points that have become crucial for all of his philosophical work: "1) It (philosophy. — V.B.), says the Russian philosopher, in any case, is not a simple conceptual speculation, which for the most part was seen in the pre-Kantian metaphysics and that transcends any experience and does not need it. This kind of conceptual speculation is ultimately pointless, and it was finally rejected by Kant. 2) But it is not just one reason, common foundation, rooted in the same experience, similar to other relevant sciences. 3) But philosophy is also the experience that gives to its subject the character of true being and its spiritual form. So, like any real science it the knowledge of the subject, an experimental science. However, the experience of which it grows, is a special kind of experience, an experience that is not opposed to man as something external (as the experience of the outside world, the natural sciences), and that itself is not conceived in the flow of everyday practical life experience, but an experience that is available to a person only in rare great moments of his life, moments when he can mobilize the all his spiritual powers as something whole and united, and bring them to a higher concentration and effort. But this confirms Plato's expression that philosophical knowledge is more than just the knowledge of what it is, at the same time it fills the soul with truly being. In this respect philosophy is more than a simple science, and this explains why you fail to subdue it to the system of positive sciences.

It appears there as if it were a stranger, an unwanted unexpected visitor. The essential peculiarity of philosophy is that it is, in a large sense, an experimental science, and involves a special maintenance of spirit that makes it possible to penetrate into the deeper layers of existence — that should be learned and confirmed — is timeless, immortal merit of Platonic idealism. This must be always kept in consideration by philosophical research of today" [13, p. 119–120].

### Concluding remarks

Making some preliminary conclusions, it is worth pointing at a number of reasons, which complicate systematic work on the analysis of Russian neo-Kantianism. Indeed, what final outcome can we discuss, when a large part of the heritage of Russian neo-Kantian thinkers is still in the archives and has not yet been published?

Another difficulty in systematizing Russian neo-Kantian studies is the language: the works of leading Russian neo-Kantians are written in a variety of European languages — English, German, French, Italian, Lithuanian, Czech, etc.

It should also be said that there are no major program works written by Russian neo-Kantians — they are mostly articles, some of them are quite voluminous reviews and surveys.

Certainly, we can't but mention one factor, which complicated the formation of a more holistic and complete approach to the Russian neo-Kantian philosophy. It is the briefness of the period of time, relatively favorable for the development of Russian philosophical tradition, which actively involved Russian neo-Kantians: late 19<sup>th</sup> — early 20<sup>st</sup> century.

Russian neo-Kantianism at first glance appears quite fragmentary. We can't point now at any social group (school, university, journal), which represented neo-Kantianism, being its major force over extended period of time and defining its character. An exception might be found in the journal "Logos", that existed from 1910 to 1914, though it could hardly be called purely neo-Kantian. It was rather dedicated to Western philosophical and cultural tradition in general. But such a synthetic character of "Logos" largely corresponded to the nature of Russian neo-Kantianism, which actively engaged in European philosophy of the day in order to further develop German neo-Kantianism and overcome what was seen as its one-sidedness and errors.

In general, Russian neo-Kantianism didn't outgrow the preparatory projects, manifests, preliminary sketches, and the work of a researcher of Russian neo-Kantianism is less a work of a "restorer" or even a renovator, but rather a "constructor" of the national philosophical tradition, formation of which was the main objective for Russian neo-Kantians.

Nevertheless, it is hard to overestimate the significance of neo-Kantianism for Russian philosophy and culture. The general philosophical significance of neo-Kantianism should be emphasized above all: the debates and discussions of common themes had an undeniable influence on the formation of such seminal philosophical schools of thought as the Russian religious philosophy, the philosophy of dialogue of M. Bakhtin and hermeneutic phenomenology of G. Shpet.

The impact on culture is also undoubted: many Russian cultural figures — B. Pasternak, A. Beliy, A. Scriabin were educated in neo-Kantian paradigm.

General scientific significance of neo-Kantianism had a visible outcome: many famous Russian scientists, such as a psychologist S. Rubinstein, educator S. Hessen and others were the trainees of Marburg school.

Russian neo-Kantianism played a significant international role: F. Stegun became a famous German culture expert, D. Gawroński, a friend of E. Cassirer, taught for a long time in Switzerland. We can't but mention N. Hartmann, who began his philosophical education in St. Petersburg, completed it in Marburg, and later became a prominent German philosopher of the XX century.

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