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Faith as the *Locus Philosophicus* of Russian Thought¹

In the first half of the 20th century, Nicolai Berdyaev (1874–1948) complained that “The Christian world doesn’t know Orthodoxy too well.”² One should add that at that time Orthodoxy was not well known in the West or in an Eastern Europe which was ruled by Communist parties. In recent years, however, the situation has changed immensely. Interest in Orthodoxy, as well as in philosophy which has been shaped on the basis of Orthodoxy (primarily Russian thought), continues to grow. In order to introduce the main topic of this book I will present some of the aspects of faith which we can distinguish in Russian religious philosophy. In turn, the authors of the articles collected in this volume will analyze the different themes concerning the relationship between the particular dimensions of faith in itself and reason.

¹ This paper is a modified English version of my article *Wiara jako locus philosophicus myśli rosyjskiej* first published in: *Rosyjska metafizyka religijna*, eds. T. Obolevitch, W. Kowalski, Biblos, Tarnów 2009, pp. 45–56.

² N. Berdyaev, *The Truth of Orthodoxy*, trans. A. Smirensky, <http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/Philosophy/Sui-Generis/Berdyaev/essays/orthodox.htm>.

1. Between *logos* and *ratio* – the specific nature of Russian thought

Berdyayev noticed that “Orthodoxy did not have its Scholastic age, it experienced only the age of Patristics.”³ For this reason, Russian religious thinkers, inspired by Orthodoxy, appealed to the legacy of the Greek Fathers of the Church and shared their interest in the Platonic tradition. One should also remember the other origins of Russian thought: German idealism (especially the systems of Schelling and Hegel), German mysticism (F. Baader, E. Swedenborg, J. Boehme), and finally, the Russian struggles with Kantianism and positivism.

Religious themes have been a common element of Russian thought: “it was religion which has created and is still creating ‘a high-voltage metaphysical field’ which serves as inspiration and stimulus for philosophical reflection.”⁴ That is why the border between theology and philosophy is indistinguishable. “In Russia – as Paul Evdokimov (1900–1970) wrote – both a theologian who overcomes the traditional teaching and a philosopher who thinks about the last events, are called by the term ‘the religious thinkers’.”⁵ The notion “religious” is not any additional characteristic of Russian philosophy, but its integral element.⁶

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ Е.Н. Некрасова, *Живая истина. Метафизика человеческого бытия в русской религиозной философии XX века*, Мартис, Москва 1997, p. 7.

⁵ P. Evdokimov, *La connaissance de Dieu selon la tradition orientale: l'enseignement patristique liturgique et iconographique*, Desclée De Brouwer, Paris 1988, p. 84.

⁶ Berdyayev claimed that even Marxism was adopted in Russia for its quasi-religious character. See N. Berdyayev, *The Religious Foundations of Bolshevism (From the Religious Psychology of the Russian People)*, http://www.berdyayev.com/berdiaev/berd_lib/1917_275.html. Cf. *idem*, *The Russian Idea*, trans. K. Lampert, The Macmillan Company, New York 1948, p. 252: “The Russian people belong to the religious type and are religious in their spiritual make-up. Religious unrest is characteristic even of the unbelievers among them. Russian atheism, nihilism, materialism have acquired a religious colouring; Russians who belong to the working masses of the people, even when they have abandoned Orthodoxy, have continued to search for God and for divine truth and to enquire into the meaning of life.” See also G. Nivat, *Aspects religieux de l'athée russe*, “Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique” 1988, 29, 3–4, pp. 415–425.

Russian philosophy – as its creators accentuate – oscillates between the Ancient Greek idea of *Logos* (therefore sapient, religious reflection) and the Modern European *ratio* (or speculative research).⁷ According to Vladimir Ern (1882–1917),

Ratio is a result of schematic abstraction. (...) Knowledge of *Logos* is attained in a completely different way. (...) The essence of *Logos* involves its *divinity*. It is not the subjective human assumption but the objective divine principle.⁸

Most Russian authors tended to recognize this divine principle as a fundamental source of philosophy as a whole. As a consequence, in the Russian philosophical understanding of *Logos* issues concerning man, being, cosmos, cognition, truth, morality etc. were focused on the problem of God. In particular, the question of faith constituted a *locus philosophicus*, the starting point of Orthodox philosophical reflection.

2. Faith and Cognition

2.1. Faith as an integrative factor: the epistemological aspect-I

What is faith according to the Eastern Christian tradition? Greek and Byzantine writers and then Russian philosophers stressed that faith is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1), or “the direct confirmation of that what could not

⁷ А. Лосев, *Русская философия*, [in:] *idem*, *Философия. Мифология. Культура*, Издательство политической литературы, Москва 1991, p. 215.

⁸ В. Эрн, *Нечто о Логосе, русской философии и научности по поводу нового философского журнала “Логос”*, [in:] *idem*, *Сочинения*, Правда, Москва 1991, pp. 78–79. See also V.V. Maliavin, *Vladimir Ern and the Quest for a Universal Philosophy in Russia*, “Tamkang Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences” 2001, 9, pp. 85–115.

be verified in usual way, i.e. *through sensory experience or rational thinking*.⁹ Faith is pre-discursive, intuitive cognition of the divine reality. At the centre of this cognition lies not *reason*, but *mind* (νοῦς) which is identified with “heart,” that is an organ of the inner, spiritual integration of the person. The Byzantine theologian, St Gregory Palamas (1296–1359) wrote:

We ourselves know exactly that our rational part is not confined within us as in a container, for it is incorporeal, nor is it outside of us, for it is conjoined to us; but it is in the heart, as in an instrument. (...) And the great Macarius says also, “The heart directs the entire organism, and when grace gains possession of the heart, it reigns over all the thoughts and all the members; for it is there, in the heart, that the mind and all the thoughts of the soul have their seat.” Thus our heart is the place of the rational faculty, the first rational organ of the body.¹⁰

The cognition of God – *theognosis* (*resp. cardiognosis*) is not a metaphysical speculation about the nature of God, but a living experience of His presence. Cognition through faith – *cardiognosis* – does not stop at the admission of the cognized Subject; it should lead to the radical conversion (μετάνοια) of thinking and life style.¹¹ Hence, while in the Christian West the discussions on the concept of truth were conducted from a theoretico-epistemological perspective, in the East the issue of truth concerned a true (i.e. moral) attitude. In the 19th century Russia, this concept of cognition and truth was advocated by the exponents of so-called academic philosophy, that is philosophy which was developed within the Theological Aca-

⁹ С. Франк, *Онтологическое доказательство бытия Бога*, http://lib.ru/HRISTIAN/FRANK_S_L/bytie.txt_with-big-pictures.html.

¹⁰ Gregory Palamas, *The Triads for the Defense of Those Who Practice Sacred Quietude*, I, 2, 3, trans. N. Gendle, Paulist Press, New Jersey 1983, p. 37.

¹¹ See T. Obolevitch, *Problematyczny konkordyzm. Wiara i wiedza w myśli Włodzimierza S. Solowjowa i Siemiona L. Franka*, Biblos, Tarnów 2006, pp. 25–28.

demies.¹² For instance, a professor of the Academy in Kiev, Pamfil Yurkevich (1827–1874) proposed the concept of “heart metaphysics” in his work *The Heart and Its Significance in the Spiritual Life of Man*. Yurkevich treated heart as the fundamental ontologico-anthropological category which determines spiritual life and decides about the cognition of God and moral values. First and foremost, heart is a source of faith. Such a form of “the metaphysics of the heart” can be found in the works of many others Russian thinkers: Semyon Frank, Boris Vysheslavtsev, Ivan Ilyin, Pavel Florensky, Vasily Rozanov. The maxim of Pascal (related to the teaching of the Fathers of the Eastern Church) “The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing” should be acknowledged as the seminal statement of Russian religious thought.

According to Greek and Russian “metaphysicians of the heart”, cognition through faith supposes an integration of the whole person. This position of faith towards reason was shared by the Slavophiles Ivan Kireevsky (1806–1856) and Aleksey Khomyakov (1804–1860). In Kireevsky’s opinion, one should strive for the unity of all of the powers of cognition. It can be achieved due to the elevation of mind to the higher, spiritual level, so that a process of thinking could run in accordance with the principle of faith. As a result of this, a “faithful reason” would be impervious to the radical rationalism which Western philosophy was subordinated to. Thinking cannot be carried out without the faith which integrates other factors: will, reason, intuition, feelings and aesthetic sense. Only under this condition could the New Testament postulate “the renewal of mind” (Rom 12:2) be fulfilled. Kireevsky claimed:

The development of natural reason serves faith only as a series of steps, and, by transcending the usual state of the mind, faith informs

¹² See T. Obolovitch, *The Issue of Knowledge and Faith in the Russian Academic Milieu from the 19th to the 21st Century*, [in:] *Between Philosophy and Science*, eds. M. Heller, B. Brożek, Ł. Kurek, Copernicus Center Press, Krakow 2013, pp. 242–244.

reason that it has departed from its original natural wholeness, and by this communication instructs it to return to the level of higher activity. For Orthodox believers know that the wholeness of truth requires wholeness of reason, and they are constantly preoccupied with the quest for such wholeness.¹³

The Slavophiles maintained that the West had lost the legacy of the Fathers and that is why

In the West, theology became a matter of rationalistic abstraction, whereas in the Orthodox world it retained its inner wholeness of spirit. In the West, the forces of reason were split asunder, whilst here there was a striving to maintain a living totality. There the mind sought to find the truth by establishing a logical sequence of concepts, whilst here people aspired to it by elevating their self-consciousness to the wholeness of heart and the concentration of spirit. There we see a search for a superficial, dead unity, whilst here we find a striving towards inner, living unity. There the Church mingled with the state, uniting spiritual with temporal power and merging the ecclesiastical and the secular in a system of a mixed character, whilst in Russia the Church remained distinct from worldly goals and structures. There we see Scholasticism and juridical universities, whilst in ancient Russia we find prayerful monasteries as centres of higher knowledge. There we observe a rationalistic and scholastic study of supreme truths, whilst here we note an aspiration to a living and integral cognition of them. (...) In other words, in the West we find a dichotomy of the spirit, a dichotomy of thought, a dichotomy of learning, a dichotomy of the state, a dichotomy of estates, a dichotomy of society, a dichotomy of familial rights and duties, a dichotomy of morals and emotions, a dichotomy of the sum total and of all separate aspects of human being, both social and

¹³ I. Kireevsky, *On Necessity and Possibility of New Principles in Philosophy*, [in:] *On Spiritual Unity. A Slavophiles Reader*, ed. and trans. B. Jakim, R. Bird, Lindisfarne Books, New York 1998, pp. 260–261.

individual. We find in Russia, in contrast, a predominant striving for wholeness of being, both external and inner, social and individual, intellectual and workaday, artificial and moral. Thus, if what we have presented is correct, *dichotomy* and *wholeness*, *rationalistic understanding* and *reason*, are the ultimate expressions of Western European and ancient Russian culture, respectively.¹⁴

This narrow rationalism leads to the disintegration of the social life, the isolation of people from each other and, ultimately, autocracy. The unification of the powers of the soul (under the authority of faith) should be accompanied by a consolidation of social and cultural forces: religion, science, law etc.

In turn, Khomyakov – according to description of Berdyaev – maintained that

Both rationalism and empiricism abstractly dissect the living consciousness and conceal from us that *experience*, in which is immediately given real being, the existent. I am not taking into account philosophically the felicitous terms “mystical perception” or “faith.” This experience, wherein our existence converges with the existent whole, rather than merely with the analytically rationalistic, is binding upon all, and it towers over the conditional contradiction of the rational and the empirical, it manifests itself as the source of *metaphysical* knowledge and fashions metaphysical reason.¹⁵

In the opinion of the Slavophiles, faith allows the discovery of the meaning of not only the divine sphere, but also of reality as a whole.

It is worth highlighting that the above-mentioned Slavophiles were under the influence of both the Eastern Christian Church Fathers and

¹⁴ I. Kireyevski, *On the Nature of European Culture and on Its Relationship to Russian Culture. Letter to Count E.E. Komarovsky*, http://www.oocities.org/trvalentine/orthodox/kireyevsky_culture.html.

¹⁵ N. Berdyaev, *Khomyakov as Philosopher: For the Centennial of His Birth*, trans. S. Janos, http://www.berdyaev.com/berdiaev/berd_lib/1904_110_3.html.

the Protestant philosophers of the 19th century, figures such as F. H. Jacobi and F. W. J. Schelling. In their reflection about “integrity of soul,” “super-logical reason” and “integral knowledge” which combines abstract *ratio* with the intuitional or mystical elements, the Slavophiles referred to the “philosophy of Revelation” which is contained in the late works of Schelling. In the teachings of the Slavophiles, as well as other Russian philosophers, the Eastern Christian conception of faith meets with the Protestant tradition.

2.2. Faith as a perception of the relation
between the subject and the object:
the epistemological aspect-II

Numerous Russian thinkers understood the term “faith” as a way of knowledge in general. It is worth saying that “faith-knowledge” (termed by Khomyakov and Frank “living knowledge”) in this broad sense supposes religious faith *sensu stricto*, that is referred to the experience of God. This understanding of faith is in tune with the ontological concept, according to which the whole of reality is rooted in the absolute. This kind of panentheistic vision was advocated by Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900), Semyon Frank (1877–1950) and Nicolai Lossky (1870–1965). The above-mentioned philosophers claimed that all beings create an organic unity (called all-unity or pan-unity), hence the subject and object of cognition are immanently linked with each other. Frank and Solovyov illustrated their position using the metaphor of a tree (borrowed from Plotinus’ *Enneads*):

The branches of the tree cross and combine in different ways. The branches and leaves touch one another by their external side. This symbolizes external knowledge [i.e., empirical knowledge – T.O.]. Yet the same branches and leaves are connected through their common

trunk and roots which deliver vital juices to them. This is mystical knowledge or faith.¹⁶

“Faith” means here an intuitional, pre-discursive perception of the primordial ontical relation between subject and object which Solovyov expressed by the formula: “we believe that the object *is*.”¹⁷ In this depiction, faith – the pre-discursive admission of the existence of the thing – is the base of each kind (both rational and empirical) of knowledge.

“Faith as a factor of knowledge”¹⁸ was the central concern of another Russian thinker, Sergey Trubetskoy (1862–1905). Trubetskoy stressed that each being is an object not only of empirical experience and rational thought, but also (and even first of all) of faith which supposes the inner relation between subject and object:

Faith as an inevitable element of our empirical and rational cognition (...) argues about reality of the external world, i.e. the reality as the objects of the senses and reason. (...) All we can perceive and think about, is something that is related to our thought and experience, that is object which essence is identified with the essence of subject.¹⁹

¹⁶ В.С. Соловьев, *Критика отвлеченных начал*, [in:] *idem*, *Полное собрание сочинений и писем в двадцати томах*, vol. 3, Наука, Москва 2001, p. 296. Cf. С. Франк, *Предмет знания. Об основах и пределах отвлеченного знания*, [in:] *idem*, *Предмет знания. Душа человека*, Наука, Санкт-Петербург 1995, p. 193; *idem*, *Свет во тьме. Опыт христианской этики и социальной философии*, Факториал, Москва 1998, p. 134; *idem*, *Reality and Man. An Essay on the Metaphysics of Human Nature*, trans. N. Duddington, Taplinger Publishing Company, New York 1950, p. 66. Cf. Plotinus, *The Enneads*, III, VIII, 10: “think of the Life coursing throughout some mighty tree while yet it is the stationary Principle of the whole, in no sense scattered over all that extent but, as it were, vested in the root: it is the giver of the entire and manifold life of the tree, but remains unmoved itself, not manifold but the Principle of that manifold life” (Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. S. MacKenna, Faber and Faber Limited, London 1956, p. 249).

¹⁷ В.С. Соловьев, *Критика отвлеченных начал*, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

¹⁸ “Faith as a factor of knowledge” is a name of the chapter of Sergey Trubetskoy’s work entitled *The Foundations of Idealism* (1896).

¹⁹ С. Трубецкой, *Основания идеализма*, [in:] *idem*, *Учение о Логосе в его истории*, АСТ, Москва, Фолио, Харьков 2000, pp. 575, 581.

Hence faith expresses the certainty of the existence of any object of cognition – both empirical things and God. “The whole of Russian thought is pervaded by the concept of living, intuitive experience.”²⁰

Moreover, in the Eastern Christian tradition, the cognition of God only justifies the cognition of the world which is rooted in Him. As Evdokimov wrote:

In the eyes of the West, the world is real and the existence of God is uncertain, hypothetical, hence it inclines to seek the confirmation arguments. For the East, it is the world which is illusive and doubtful, and the only argument for its truthfulness is the self-evidence existence of God. The philosophy of the obviousness corresponds to the philosophy of Revelation.²¹

What does it mean that the existence of God is more certain than the existence of the world? The answer to this question we can find in the works of the brilliant Orthodox philosopher and theologian, Vasily Zenkovsky (1881–1962). In his “Christian teaching on cognition”²² Zenkovsky distinguished (following A. Kozlov) between a so-called primordial consciousness, which does not differentiate between object and subject, and a secondary consciousness which contains this antithesis. The “primordial consciousness” is typical of the cognition of God: we can know Him because we belong to God, “for in Him we live, and move, and have our being” (Act 17:28). Whereas the “secondary consciousness” concerns to the cognition of the world which is clearly differentiated between object (the empirical world) and subject. In this case, God can also be opposed to the cognizing subject or, in other

²⁰ S.L. Frank, *The Essence and Leading Themes of Russian Philosophy*, “Soviet Studies in Philosophy” 1992, vol. 30, 4, p. 41.

²¹ P. Evdokimov, *La connaissance de Dieu selon la tradition orientale: l’enseignement patristique liturgique et iconographique*, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

²² It is the subject of a chapter of the book by V. Zenkovsky entitled *Foundations of Christian Philosophy* (1961).

words, can be treated as an object. The “secondary consciousness” is based on the “primordial consciousness.” According to Zenkovsky,

Consciousness of the world lies *within* the primordial consciousness of God. Apart of the “knowledge of God” (a direct linkage between soul and God) there is also the primordial, non-distinguished “knowledge of the world,” i.e. living co-belonging to the whole world. The primordial consciousness of the world *awakens our reason which thereby is arising in the womb of faith*, in the womb of the primordial co-belonging to the Absolute (...). The distinguish between the world and God (...) *came out for the sake of the world*, in which we can encounter an unlimited number of “differentiations.” (...) Hereby the “primordial consciousness” which does not know an opposition between “subject” and object, passes into its second stage, i.e. the immanent “knowledge of God” develops into the “knowledge of the world.”²³

Therefore faith – an acknowledgment of the primordial bond between subject and object – determines the cognition of empirical things. As a result, in the concept maintained by a number of Russian philosophers “a sacral character of each kind of knowledge is intensified: *the whole cognition obtains here a religious tinge.*”²⁴ It is no coincidence that Berdyaev found that “The merit of the Russian religious philosophy of the 19th century was in its sharp setting forth of the problem of the relation of knowledge and faith, of apperception by the integral spirit, of the problem of churchly gnoseology.”²⁵

²³ В. Зеньковский, *Основы христианской философии*, vol. 1, Канон+, Москва 1997, p. 45.

²⁴ Cf. B. Jasinowski, *Wschodnie chrześcijaństwo a Rosja na tle rozbioru pierwiastków cywilizacyjnych Wschodu i Zachodu*, Nakładem Instytutu Naukowo-Badawczego Europy Wschodniej, Wilno 1933, p. 86.

²⁵ N. Berdyaev, *Concerning the Character of the Russian Religious Thought of the XIX Century*, trans. S. Janos, http://www.berdyaev.com/berdiaev/berd_lib/1930_345.html.

3. The life of faith

3.1. Faith as “I – Thou” relationship: a personalistic aspect

Faith expresses a personal relation to God and allows us to address Him as “Thou.” The Orthodox theologians accentuate that the appropriate formula of faith sounds: “I believe in *You!*”²⁶ Such a kind of faith was the subject of reflection by Semyon Frank. In his treatise entitled *The Unknowable* (1939) we can find the following statement:

God is unconditionally unknowable, absolute primordial Ground, experienced and revealed in experience as “Thou.” And His “Thouness” is experienced as somehow belonging to His essence and mode of being. To speak of God in the third person, to call Him “Him,” is blasphemy from the purely religious point of view, for this assumes that God is absent, does not hear me, is not directed at me, but is something objectively existent. (...) Between the “is” form in which God’s existence is abstractly expressed and the “art” form which is concretely revealed to me, there lies an abyss which separates that which is doubtful and uncertain from that which is absolutely self-evident, from that which fills and constitutes with its self-evidence my whole being. Let an atheist be right (...) in his expression that “there is no God,” this understood to mean that God does not “exist,” “is” not. But Thou, my God, *art!*²⁷

Genuine, living faith in God is always expressed in the first person (“*I believe*”), while its Object – in the second person: “*You are.*” In this context Frank deliberates over *faith-certainty* (*vera-dostovernost*) which is in opposition to *faith-confidence* (*vera-doveriye*). The last supposes obedience to authority – the recognized spiritual teachers, holy books, tradition, the *declarations of councils* etc. In Frank’s opi-

²⁶ А. Кураев, *О вере и знании – без антиномий*, “Вопросы философии” 1992, 7, p. 49.

²⁷ S.L. Frank, *The Unknowable. An Ontological Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, Ohio University Press, Athens, Ohio – London 1983, pp. 226, 229–230.

nion, this is “blind” and forced faith; in its radical form, such a kind of faith becomes totalitarian and enslaved. Whereas faith-credibility (also known as faith-knowledge) is based on the personal, immediate, intuitive perception of God. Faith is not a product of reflection, but admission of the existence of the vital relation with God; it is not the theoretical “knowledge about God,” but the practical “knowledge of God.”

3.2. Dynamics of faith: the ascetical and soteriological aspects

Faith is not something which is done once and for all: static, unchangeable. The Fathers of the Church, as well as many Russian thinkers, emphasized that faith is dynamic reality which should be grown and developed. Faith is not born as a result of passive “waiting,” but of the engaged attitude of searching for God. Frank called for an intensity of an “inner vision,” an active answer (“reaction”) to the divine action.²⁸ As he put in, faith demands

A certain effort of will, determined by the moral decision to seek that which has the highest value. (...) This will to believe is nothing other than the will to attend, to see, to observe, to perceive that which, once perceived, is unquestionable truth.²⁹

A condition of the deepening of faith, i.e. the cognition of God is asceticism, the moral effort, and first of all – the attitude of love.

Cognition through faith contains also the soteriological dimension. Faith leads to the achievement of unity with God, or deification (θέωσις). Therefore, the ultimate goal of faith which crowns the process of the cognition of God is the “vision of God face to face.”

²⁸ Cf. S.L. Frank, *God with Us: Three Meditations*, trans. N. Duddington, Jonathan Cape, London 1946, p. 115.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 65.

3.3. Faith and freedom: an existential aspect

The issue of faith is strictly connected with the problem of the search for God, His acceptance or rejection. This aspect of faith was taken up by Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–1881), “the greatest Russian metaphysician,”³⁰ if we use the words of Berdyaev. For Dostoevsky, faith is totally free, unforced, independent from any authority, personal clinging to Christ which transforms the human condition. In the 20th century, the phenomenon of faith and unfaith was also reflected upon by Nicolai Berdyaev together with the related question of freedom. Berdyaev stressed the significance of the religious experience for human life. Yet this experience needs an effort of will and consent to “throwing himself into the mysterious abyss,” without any warranties or securities. God cannot oblige us to recognize His existence, as the empirical world does: “I cannot deny the reality of the desk on which I am writing, but I can deny the reality of God.”³¹ According to Berdyaev, faith is free, nonobjectionable cognition, whereas science – the cognition of the empirical world – has an objectified, “slavish” character.

“An objectified God has been the object of man’s servile reverence.” This is idolatry, it is not worship. (...) God as conceived of by reason, which is but a faculty of man as human-individual, is the only image-maker; but man in the creative act of experiencing God inwardly, centrally and subjectively, is reflecting in himself the very image of God.³²

As a consequence, Russian philosophers rejected the possibility of the rational proofs for the existence of God, because God give

³⁰ N. Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

³¹ Н. Бердяев, *Философия свободного духа. Проблематика и апология христианства*, [in:] *идет, Диалектика Божественного и человеческого*, АСТ, Москва, Фолио, Харьков 2005, p. 115.

³² G. Seaver, *Nicolas Berdyaev. An Introduction to His Thought*, Harper & Brothers, New York 1950, pp. 33, 37.

us the freedom to choose: to believe or not to believe. God should only be known through the living experience, contemplation of spirit which is a result of “the risk of faith.”

* * *

As we can see, faith in Russian philosophy is not only a religious/theological category, but also epistemological (faith as a certainty about the existence of things) and ontological (faith as a primordial relationship between subject and object). We also distinguished the other “faces” of faith: faith as a factor which enables the integration of the various powers of soul, a personalistic aspect (faith as “I – Thou” connection), the ascetical and soteriological dimensions (concerning the dynamics of growth of faith) and an existential aspect concerning the human freedom. Obviously, all of the aspects listed here are not separated from each other; we have only tried to emphasize the different features of faith. To sum up, one should claim that the issue of faith, like a lens, concentrates all of the main problems of Orthodox thought: the theological, metaphysical, epistemological, anthropological and ethical. It is no surprise that the topic of the relationship between faith and reason is one of the most representative themes for Russian culture as a whole.

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