
The intense effort underway in Russia since about 1989 to recover the country's rich prerevolutionary heritage of idealist and religious philosophy has, understandably, outpaced the appearance of scholarly works analyzing and interpreting this heritage. This collection of essays shows that Russian scholars can be as successful in practicing the history of philosophy as they have been in bringing out so many of the classic texts in scholarly reprint editions. The Russian reception of Kant is an important and complex topic that Soviet scholars found difficult to treat because of ideological constraints. These obstacles were practically insurmountable in the case of the late imperial period. Yet precisely this period, the Silver Age of Russian culture, makes clear that Russian philosophers were no exception to the general dictum that, "it is possible to philosophize with Kant or against Kant, but not without Kant." To fill this gap, the large part of Kant and Philosophy in Russia is devoted to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and, moreover, to idealist and religious philosophy. The volume demonstrates the value of a specifically historical and cultural approach to the history of philosophy that shows how the peculiarities more or less distinctive to a national philosophic culture decisively affect the reception of philosophy from abroad.

The essays comprising Kant and Philosophy in Russia are grouped according to either individual thinkers (Mikhail Bakunin, Aleksandr Herzen, Vladimir Solov'ev, Nikon Loeski, Evgenii Trubitskoi, Pavel Florenskii and Vladimir Vernadskii) or the institutions and journals that promoted Kant studies in Russia (the theological or ecclesiastical academies; the Moscow Psychological Society and its journal, Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii; and the journal Logos). Special mention ought to be made of the bibliography: a guide to 504 works, it will be indispensable to historians of Russian philosophy.

The longest essay in the volume is devoted to Vladimir S. Solov'ev, Russia's most important philosopher. The author, V.V. Lazarev, singles out ethics as one of the peculiar concerns of Russian philosophy. According to him, the philosophic culture of Russia, "received and developed by Solov'ev, is first of all an ethical culture." This is a promising point of departure for Lazarev's ambitious and often thoughtful comparison of Solov'ev and Kant, since ethics was also at the very center of the German philosopher's system. Lazarev first considers the merits of the absolute, uncompromising character of Kant's ethics of duty relative to Hegel's critique that Kant's "empty formalism" provides no positive indications for the fuller development of human nature in political society (the objective realization of positive liberty in the ethical community of Stattlichkeit). Against this background Solov'ev aspired toward, in Lazarev's successful formulation, a synthesis of the purity of the kantian good and the plenitude of the hegelian good. Even so, Lazarev maintains that Solov'ev's moral philosophy is more kantian than hegelian, especially in its rehabilitation of Kant's clear distinction between "what is" (das Sein) and "what ought to be" (das Sollen), a distinction that Hegel's monism collapsed in asserting that "what ought to be" already is.

At the same time, Lazarev dwells on what he sees as Solov'ev's main criticisms of Kant. First, Solov'ev did indeed argue, against Kant, that an act done by inclination and not by duty alone is not necessarily deprived of ethical value. The criterion is not motive but the internal moral quality of the act. There is no necessary incompatibility between inclination and duty; I can, in fact, desire to do what I know by duty I would be obligated to do, even were I not so inclined. This line of criticism has certain merits (in regard, for example, to holy beings who, presumably, never experience a contradiction between duty and inclination, and yet are no less the good for it), but it glosses over Kant's main point, that freedom consists in the human capacity to determine the will by duty, in opposition to natural inclination, in instances of such opposition. Freedom thus exempts human beings from natural causality and so would seem to

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constitute a miracle (a violation of the laws of nature) on which basis Kant postulates a supernatural, "noumenal" sphere of being.

The second criticism of Kant that Lazarev attributes to Solov’ev is that Kant’s insistence on the autonomy of practical from theoretical reason does not obviate the need for theoretical substantiation or foundation of ethics. It is admittedly difficult to reconcile Solov’ev’s various pronouncements on the problem throughout the several fairly distinct periods of his creativity, although his major tract on moral philosophy, *Justification of the Good* (1897), is closer to Kant than Lazarev allows. Solov’ev’s relation to Kant’s delimitation of ethics and theoretical philosophy was a major issue among Solov’ev’s disciples after his death in 1900. Evgenii Trubetskoi and Lev Lopatin, for example, advanced interpretations that Lazarev would find congenial, while Sergei Trubetskoi, Pavel Novgorodtsev and later Sergius Hessen argued the opposing point of view, that Solov’ev supported the kantian autonomy of ethics from theoretical "justification" (in Lazarev’s sense of the term as foundation).

Lazarev devotes a large part of his essay to contrasting Solov’ev’s philosophy of history, particularly as it is expressed in *Three Conversations* (1899–1900), to Kant’s, which in one subheading Lazarev characterizes as an “apotheosis of evil.” This opposition is the most controversial and polemical part of the essay, which here resorts to easy stereotypes about the virtues of Russian Orthodox sobornost’ and the vices of Protestant individualism. *Justification of the Good* contains an argued (rather than allegorical) exposition of Solov’ev’s philosophy of history; for this reason it is perhaps the more obvious text for the historian of philosophy. In it Solov’ev shows that the absolute, perfect good receives its justification precisely in the face of imperfect historical reality: the good spurs the progressive improvement of relative historical and social forms toward the ideal of perfection, a challenge which, after all, speaks to that which has not achieved its highest potential. The justification of the good is, in short, progress (rather than the justification of ethics by theoretical philosophy, as Lazarev contends).

Solov’ev gathered around him a circle of philosophers (Nikolai Grot, Lev Lopatin and Sergei Trubetskoi, most notably) that took over direction of an important learned society of Moscow University professors, the Moscow Psychological Society, soon after its founding in 1885. Under new management, the Society became the center of the growth of Russian philosophy in the Silver Age. In 1889 the Moscow Society began publication of the first regular professional journal devoted to philosophy in Russia, *Questions of Philosophy and Psychology*. In his contribution to *Kant and Philosophy in Russia*, S.A. Chernov provides a useful survey of kantianism on the pages of the Society’s journal (published regularly until 1918).

In writing that Kant achieved the influence he did among Society philosophers because of the internal qualities of Kant’s philosophy and not primarily because of the dominance in Germany of neo-kantianism, Chernov introduces a vital distinction. *Questions of Philosophy and Psychology* was not an organ for the dissemination in Russia of contemporary German neo-kantianism but for the development of Russian philosophy, a process in which Russians had to work Kant out mostly on their own. An important step in this direction was taken by Sergei N. Trubetskoi, whose importance in the growth of Russian neo-idealism during the period was second only to that of Solov’ev (Trubetskoi deserves to have been the subject of a separate essay in the volume at hand, rather than a 2-page sketch). Trubetskoi’s assimilation and interpretation of transcendental idealism embraced Kant’s critique of experience but criticized Kant for a radical subjectivism that, Trubetskoi asserted, left human consciousness on its own, without a higher ontological ground. Trubetskoi is not very consistent in this criticism, however, and follows Kant directly in maintaining that this ontological ground, transcendental to consciousness (unlike phenomena in space and time), could never be an object of theoretical or scientific knowledge. As a result, it must be taken on faith. As Chernov quite rightly observes, “Trubetskoi as it were returns anew to the kantian thing in itself which, however, is given to us through a special capacity—faith.” Trubetskoi failed to notice (nor does Chernov) that Kant himself appreciated full well not only that transcendental ("noumenal") being must be taken on faith—"I
have found it necessary to deny knowledge, in order to make room for faith," in his famous words—but that transcendental idealism substantiates such faith by reconceptualizing space and time as a priori forms of empirical experience, leaving room for being beyond these phenomenal or natural limits. By contrast, the extension of space and time "everywhere," as in the newtonian conception, phenomenalizes or naturalizes being as such and thus by definition rules out the possibility of transcendence.

Like Trubetskoj, most leading neo-idealists philosophers in the Moscow Psychological Society, Chernov notes, accepted the ideality of space and time, which they advanced most of all in support of philosophic theism. In fact, the Moscow philosophers typically revised Kant's theory of space and time to relate it even more directly to theistic conclusions. N.Ia. Grot, for example, disputed Kant's claim that time is a necessary form of internal experience that, if so, would prevent knowledge of the soul in itself (Trubetskoj, however, concurs with Kant here as well). On this basis, both Grot and his successor as chair of the Society, L.M. Lopatin, rejected Kant's critique of rational psychology (in "The Paralogisms of Pure Reason"), maintaining instead that, in Lopatin's words (quoted by Chernov), "the substantial in us is an object of our immediate examination." They thus returned, in Chernov's characterization, "to the good old spiritualistic ontology of the soul."

Chernov also considers the reception of kantian moral philosophy on the pages of Questions of Philosophy and Psychology. From kantian ethics in the academic philosophy of Solovev, Lopatin and Novgorodtsev, Chernov turns to the kantian inspiration behind ethical socialism but only mentions it as a stage in the evolution of the "legal marxists." The Moscow Psychological Society was host, in part, to this important chapter in the intellectual history of the period. Elsewhere in the essay Chernov deals with the religious philosophy of two of the former legal marxists, Nikolai Berdiaev and Sergei Bulgakov, in later periods of their development. He neglects both Petr Struve, whose Russian liberalism drew on Kant, and (more egregiously) the important collection of essays, Problems of Idealism (1902), that Struve organized with Novgorodtsev, who formally edited the volume. The programmatic symposium, published by the Moscow Psychological Society, made a significant contribution to the intellectual defense of liberalism, on neo-idealism and often specifically kantian foundations, in the crucial early stages of the Russian liberation movement. Chernov concentrates instead on an article by a certain A.K. Dzhivelevov, "Marxism and Critical Philosophy." In discussing it Chernov states what is apparently his own conviction, that the communist, "not accepting the messianic idea of the proletariat and violent political revolution, striving toward a broad, 'all-human' understanding of socialism, finds in Kant the theoretical basis for his ideals."

Unlike Questions of Philosophy and Psychology, another philosophical journal published in Russia, Logus, was conceived and established as a theoretical journal of neo-kantianism. (Logus was an international journal, the Russian section of which was published between 1910 and 1914.) The very title of A.I. Abramov's fine article, "On Russian Kantianism and Neo-Kantianism in the Journal 'Logos,'" points to the need to distinguish between "kantianism" and "neo-kantianism." Abramov writes that "neo-kantianism" can have a dual meaning: either philosophic theories that identify with Kant himself (or take him as their point of departure or reference), or those that identify specifically with German neo-kantianism, best known for its Marburg and Baden schools. Since, however, "neo-kantianism" has now long been associated with German Schulpiphilosophie in the last third of the nineteenth century and first quarter of the twentieth, it seems best to let the term stand specifically for that. "Neo-idealism," although not enlisting by Abramov, is useful because it encompasses a wider range of philosophic contributions to the broad-based revolt against positivism characteristic of Silver Age culture. The Moscow Psychological Society and its journal reveal that many Russian neo-idealists were kantian in one way or another and that some (such as Aleksandr I. Vvedenski, Novgorodtsev and S.N. Trubetskoj) were deeply influenced by Kant's philosophy. Fewer Russian philosophers were specifically neo-kantian. Logus was their journal.
The only major Russian neo-kantians to emerge from Abramov's account are Sergius I. Hessen and Fedor A. Stepun (representing the Baden school) and Boris V. Jakovenko (representing the Marburg school). These three men were the life-blood of Logos. Abramov might also have identified Bogdan A. Kislakovskii as a Russian neo-kantian (of the Baden school type). Among the several other Russian philosophers sometimes listed by historians of Russian philosophy as neo-kantians (G.I. Chepanov, G.D. Gurvich, I.I. Lapshin and P.I. Novgorodtsev), neo-kantianism was in fact only one influence among many, as Abramov notes.

The Logos group defined its program in epistemological, methodological and cultural terms, in explicit opposition to the neo-Slavophile religious-ontological focus of the remarkable Moscow publishing house Put' (established like Logos in 1910), which attracted such thinkers as N.A. Berdiaev, S.N. Bulgakov, V.F. Ern, P.A. Florenskii and E.N. Trubetskoii, and which cooperated with the Moscow Psychological Society. Logos proved unable, however, to preserve the purity of its neo-kantian direction. Abramov emphasizes this evolution: "initial interest in philosophical problems of 'pure' neo-kantianism, in methodology and epistemology, gradually gave way to interest in ontological problems of existence, in a weltanschaulich [wissenschachts] understanding of 'life,' in mystical revelations of human and divine consciousness." Logos accordingly softened its earlier sharp criticism of Put', seeking instead common points of view. This change in editorial policy is compelling testimony to the strength of the ontological direction in Russian philosophy, another one of its principal historical-cultural peculiarities.

Kant and Philosophy in Russia includes essays on two outstanding Moscow philosophers, Evgenii Trubetskoii and Pavel Florenskii, both of whom attest to the "revival of the tradition of ontologism," as D.E. Baram puts it in introducing Trubetskoii. Baram's essay and T.B. Dlugach's on Florenskii are very well done, delivering more than their titles suggest. According to Baram, Trubetskoii sought to differentiate between Kant himself and neo-kantian "anti-metaphysical epistemologism," and to advance a metaphysical interpretation of Kant's theory of knowledge. This is true but Trubetskoii did not like to admit just how much he was indebted to Kant. He read Kant through the neo-kantians as often or more than he distinguished them, and he could be as shrill in polemics toward Kant as Florenskii was. Dlugach, to his great credit, has a sophisticated and nuanced understanding of Kant and does not hesitate to correct some of Florenskii's characterization, drawing certain similarities between the two thinkers. From Kant's delimitation of the autonomy of theoretical reason to its own sphere of the natural scientific world, both Trubetskoii and Florenskii drew the conclusion that Kant had reduced reason as a whole to its theoretical applications and had abandoned any reality except the phenomenal realm accessible to science. They then proceed to lump Kant under a concocted rubric of Protestant ways of philosophizing. To this Dlugach responds on behalf of the real Kant: "Kant's philosophy is characterized in equal measure by working out the epistemological problematic, as by the search for integral reason, irreducible to the theoretical. But did not Florenskii himself seek this?" In a significant commentary Dlugach adds that for all their differences, "nonetheless the philosophical reflections of both aspire beyond the limits of scientific reality—to being in itself, and in this sense they move from logic to ontology, to metaphysics. Kant takes being in its negative, apophatic significance, while for Florenskii it becomes a symbol of true, Divine existence."

Dlugach's use of the term "apophatic" describes in theological language Kant's idea of the "noumenal" as that which transcends space and time, and therefore (according to Kant) the necessary forms of theoretical (scientific) knowledge. This connects Kant to Russian Orthodox thought, strongly influenced as it was by negative (or apophatic) theology. It is generally appreciated that the Russian theological academies laid the foundations for the growth of university philosophy later in the nineteenth century. "This is also the reason for the close connection between twentieth century Russian philosophy and religious thought as shown by its ontological orientation," as Marc Raëff observes in an essay (in Modern Greek Studies Yearbook, vol. 6, 1990) on another great Russian Orthodox thinker, Georges Florovskii. All these circumstances
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point to the importance of the reception of Kant in the theological academies. A.I. Abramov handles this topic with the same expertise shown in his essay on Logos.

By showing how the ethical, ontological and apophatic peculiarities of Russian philosophic culture helped situate Kant in Russia, the collection reviewed here brings home the merits of an explicitly cultural approach to the history of philosophy. Such an approach has special relevance to Russia, where the vastly influential cultural theme of Russia and the west received its most self-conscious expression in the search for a national distinctiveness in philosophy.

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This volume consists of twelve essays by German as well as Russian scholars, most of which were first published in the journal, Questions of Philosophy (Voprosy filosofii), between 1988 and 1993. The collection, like Kant i filosofia v Rossii, focuses mostly (but not exclusively) on idealist and religious thought. It considers the Russian reception of not only Kant but also other German philosophers (especially Schelling, Hegel and Nietzsche). Russia and Germany’s most direct point of intersection with Kant and Philosophy in Russia is an intriguing essay by A.V. Akhutin, "Sophia and the Devil (Kant before the Face of Russian Religious Metaphysics)." The author reconstructs the images of Kant held by Nikolai Fedorov, Fedor Dostoevsky, Andrei Belyi and Pavel Florenskii. The conclusion he draws from his portraits is worth quoting: "The mythologist of the ‘common task’; the spiritually penetrating writer; the poet-symbolist; the subtle and existentially experienced theologian—in one voice and, apparently, without collusion, all affirm: Kant is the devil!" Against this Russian Kant, Akhutin advances a powerful ontological interpretation of Kant that brings the German philosopher closer to Russian religious metaphysics than many Russian philosophers were willing to admit. Kant saw his task, Akhutin writes, not in the destruction of metaphysics, like the positivists, but rather in the substantiation of the "meta" beyond the physical, natural and phenomenal. Metaphysics cannot know its "object" (the "meta" or noumenal) as physics knows its (the immanent or phenomenal). The dogmatic claim to the contrary naturalizes metaphysics, as Akhutin puts it.

Akhutin, like Dlugach in Kant i filosofia v Rossii, draws attention to the apophatic or negative quality of Kant’s philosophy, comparing it to the “critical antinomism” of S.N. Bulgakov and P.A. Florenskii and the “apophatic ontology” of S.L. Frank. Indeed, Bulgakov himself, in a long essay entitled, "Negative Theology,” later incorporated into his Svet nevechnyi, makes the specific connection to Kant (as neither Dlugach nor Akhutin seem to have noticed). According to Bulgakov, “translated into religious language, that is, into the language of negative theology, the kantian doctrine of the thing in itself, establishing the rights of faith (practical reason) and opening the door to mysticism, receives very special significance.”

The negative critique of theoretical reason is propaedeutic to Kant’s positive philosophy, ethics (practical reason). Akhutin grasps this connection in all its intricacy. He stresses that Kant’s moral philosophy is ontological in its postulates of free will, immortality and God. These are possible if space and time are a priori forms (transcendental idealism), coextensive with empirical experience but not with being itself. Yet, the pretense to theoretical knowledge of the ontological, metaphysical implications of moral experience undoes Kant’s work, re-naturalizing everything. Thus the importance of the autonomy of ethics from theoretical philosophy (an issue in Solov’ev interpretation), even though the negative critique shows how genuine ethics is possible. Akhutin sees in Ivan Kireevskii’s 1856 tract, “On the Necessity and Possibility of New Principles in Philosophy,” the first confrontation of the Russian Sophia and the
Konigsberg devil. Kireevski’s essay, which Akhutin considers a seminal formulation of the whole future development of Russian religious philosophy, contrasts the western hypostatization of abstract, disintegrating rationalism to an integral harmony of faith and reason ("believing reason") in the whole person. As Akhutin notes, Kireevski drew on Schelling’s later system, which advances negative philosophy, the self-negation of abstract rationalism (culminating in Hegel), as the prerequisite to positive philosophy. In his contribution to *Russia and Germany*, Eberhard Müller argues that Schelling’s conception is in fact the key to understanding Kireevski. Müller’s essay, “I.V. Kireevski and German Philosophy,” a detailed and thoughtful analysis of Kireevski and Schelling, stops to consider their interpretations of Kant. According to Müller, Kireevski followed Schelling’s view that Kant’s negative critique opened the perspective of positive philosophy (however defined). This is apparently the connection Akhutin wants to make as well. Müller also ascribes great influence to Kireevski, concluding that his “philosophy of integral reason will still long occupy Russian philosophers.” It is a pity that Müller mars his essay in the end by misrepresenting scholars who are less interested than he in anachronistic evaluations (valid or otherwise) of Kireevski’s perennial philosophic worth. Müller’s reference to the “obvious vulgar marxist” plan of Andrzej Walicki’s *The Slavophile Controversy* is itself a vulgar simplification of Walicki’s sophisticated methodological considerations, which draw in part on the sociology of knowledge (hardly “vulgar marxist”). Moreover, in his *European and Muscovite Ivan Kireevski and the Origins of Slavophilism*, Abbott Gleason does not “dissociate himself” from Walicki but mines the insights of both Walicki and Müller. Kireevski sympathized with Blaise Pascal’s exhortation to believe with the heart. So did Vladimir Solov’ev, as Helmut Dahm shows (among much else) in his valuable essay, “The Light of Natural Reason in V.I. Solov’ev’s Thought.”

A.N. Medushevskii’s essay, “Hegel and the State School of Russian Historiography,” is devoted to social and legal philosophy. Medushevskii considers not only mainstream representatives of the state school (K.D. Kavelin, S.M. Solov’ev, B.N. Chicherin and V.I. Sergeevich) but also Russian thinkers only loosely associated with it, like P.I. Novgorodtsev. Indeed, some of the author’s most valuable insights occur when he turns to thinkers, like Novgorodtsev, who really were not gosudarstvenniki, and to the strengthening of Russian liberalism as certain hegelian foundations of the state school were revised along kantian lines. The attention that Medushevskii gives to Russian liberalism is welcome, since this vital topic is virtually absent in *Kant i filosofia v Rossii* (where one would expect it). The incipient liberalism of the state school looked (not surprisingly) to the Russian state to introduce reforms necessary for the growth of civil society, which (it was hoped) would eventually balance the peculiar weight of state over society in Russian history. (The Russian liberalism of Boris Chicherin is the subject of a major study by G.M. Hamburg, the first volume of which appeared in 1992.) Medushevskii shows (as Andrzej Walicki does in much greater detail in Legal *Philosophies of Russian Liberalism*) that the development of Russian liberalism from these roots preserved certain hegelian elements, such as the rule-of-law state and the autonomy of civil society, but revised others, especially the monism of the philosophy of identity (or reconciliation with reality). The revision was taken up by Novgorodtsev in particular, whose normative approach to jurisprudence rehabilitated natural law as an ethical ideal that evaluates “what is” according to “what ought to be.”

Kantian neo-idealism was for Novgorodtsev not only the best theoretical defense of a truly progressive liberalism but also the critical framework for the study of utopianism in Russian and European intellectual history, a topic to which he devoted one of his books, *Ob obshestvennom ideale* (1917). Novgorodtsev anticipated subsequent twentieth-century scholarship on utopianism in concluding that utopian ideologies have in common the transposition of eschatological ideas of salvation from a transcendent realm beyond history to the immanent sphere of man’s existence in history. G. Rorman draws on this insight in his essay, “On the Question of the Future of Russia,” which opens *Russia and Germany* by speculating on the intellectual origins and reasons for the collapse of marxist-leninist socialism.

Boris Groys’s essay, “In Search of Russian National Identity,” focuses the common
theme of both *Rossiia i Germania* and *Kant i filosofia v Rossii*: the Russian search for a national distinctiveness in philosophy. In reviewing these volumes, I have tried to show how certain (e.g. the ethical, ontological and apophatic) elements of this distinctiveness emerge from the Russian reception of Kant in particular. In turn, these peculiarities of Russian philosophic culture reveal Kant himself in new perspective, bringing out theoretical insights of his philosophy that post-Kantian German idealism and neo-Kantianism tend to obscure. Even the peculiar strength of utopianism in Russian social thought can be seen in this light. Utopian ideas bear a striking resemblance to moral ones: both are testimony to human intuition of "what ought to be" when the empirical world speaks to us only of "what is." As a result, the very intensity of Russian utopianism deepened the insight of Russian philosophers into the perennial human search for an absolute source and destiny beyond the natural and historical world, a search that, for many of them, already entailed its ground.

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