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The Dialogical Truth of European Culture

Main Theses

(1) One would be hopelessly mistaken from the very beginning, if one were to start by looking for a taxonomy of *-isms* or *-logies*. This mistake would affect not only our understanding of Vladimir Bibikhin's discourse and thought, but of philosophy itself, none of which belongs among *-isms*. The starting point is not located among foundational systems, categories, or discursive practices, but in the concentration, whence these systems have been growing since the times of Aristotle. The name of this concentration is *first philosophy*. For me, the significance of Bibikhin's thought is that it practically recalls the very being (*die Sache selbst*) of this practice, namely of first-philosophizing. The being of this practice, in turn, is rooted in the being of the human as a *perpetually self-recommencing* being.

(2) There is a unique culture, which cultivates (of course, *only* in a particular place, time, and circumstances when and where this happens) precisely this philosophically predisposed person, a human being who re-commences, the initiator. I insist that this culture, understood as a meth-

od of cultivation, rather than a set of implements, inventions, customs, and historical circumstances, is called *European*. All cultures are wise in their own way. However, European culture is not wise but wisdom-loving. The themes that are prevalent in Vladimir Bibikhin's philosophy are directly related to the philosophical character of European culture. First, the *strangeness*, the estrangement, the multidimensional and variegated character of truth (*sophia*) determines the *topos* of European culture as a culture-on-the-borders, one that is not autochthonous but mediterranean. Second, *a new beginning* is the renaissance-character of European culture in its historical being, its existence on the borders of time-epochs, its medi-temporality [*sredi-vremennost'*] that does not coil back to some lost past. "In the Renaissance," Bibikhin states, "we are dealing with the very heart, the essence of any history, including its medieval and modern European varieties" (Bibikhin 1998: 45). It is precisely the mediterranean and self-renewing character of European culture that renders it to be essentially *philosophizing*.

Martin Heidegger writes,

> the name 'philosophy', provided that we truly hear it and think through what is heard, calls us forth into the history of the Greek provenance of philosophy. It is as though the word φιλοσοφίαις inscribed on the birth certificate of our own history—one could even say, on the birth certificate of the contemporary epoch of world history, which is called the Atomic Age (Heidegger 1988: 8).

> If we truly hear the word and reflect upon what we had heard, the name "philosophy" summons us into the history of the Greek origin of philosophy. The word philosophia appears, as it were, on the birth certificate of our own history; we may even say on the birth certificate of the contemporary epoch of world history which is called the atomic age (Heidegger 1988: 35).

The state of affairs is not such that, among all other things, European culture also contains philosophy, which, in turn, contains first philosophy. Here, philosophy is first. That which is called "European culture" does not come about thanks to either ethnic, or national, or political, or confessional ties. The only thing that imparts inherent connectedness to Europe is *culture*, and this culture, in the essence of its being, is defined by philosophizing. Here, on the territory and in the history of Europe, are the migrations of populations, conquests and downfalls of empires, epochal breaks, confessional confrontations, political segregations, and wars. Yet there is still something, through which these ethnically, nationally, mentally, and confessionally heterogeneous worlds *correspond* to one another. What forms the Mediterranean Europe, what makes Athens correspond to Jerusalem and Alexandria, Rome to the Syrian Antioch, both Romes to

each other and to Jerusalem, the Roman Empire to the North-Germanic one, and Western to Eastern Europe, the Old World and the New? What makes all these parts correspond to one another is a philo-sophical mental disposition that creates European culture as a being corresponding to itself.

So, what exactly is this philo-sophical mental disposition?

Philosophical Process

When I speak about European culture, I am touching upon my own theme, rather than Bibikhin's. It is very difficult to speak about Bibikhin's philosophy, just as it is difficult to speak about any serious philosophy. The difficulty, or perhaps the mistake, has to do with extracting, from the strangeness of his own world, the themes, subjects, or aspects that are familiar to everyone, and that amount to the goods of our intellectual market. I intend to talk not *about* Bibikhin, but *with* him, if only in his absence.

Thanks to the invaluable efforts of Olga Evgenyevna Lebedeva, Bibikhin's *Nachlass* is largely at our disposal. Almost all of these works are lectures, or as Bibikhin preferred to call them, "speakings" (*govoreniya*). These texts are neither ideas, nor concepts, nor records of "the course of thought;" rather, they are the recordings and vociferations of the uninterrupted, always recommencing from the beginning "soundless conversation of the soul with itself," or what Plato called "thinking." These are not merely the results of a work, *erga*, but life itself, the *energy* of thought, traces of an uninterruptedly perfected philosophic practice. Without philosophizing—thought that happens here and now under the attentive care of speaker and the listeners—there can be doctrines, systems, worldviews, but there is no philosophy. Worse yet, the more fundamental (that is, certain) the established foundations of a teaching are, the faster thought wants to get rid of itself passing into act, and the thicker the cover occluding the source of philosophizing thought becomes.

The energy of the ever-living thought is the first, most evident peculiarity of Bibikhin's *Nachlass*.

The second peculiarity is that this philosophizing, in all its being, is about being itself as the most proper property; it is an authorial philosophizing, which is exceptionally personal, signed with a proper name and, at the same time, heedlessly sacrificial. It is Bibikhin himself and no one else, and simultaneously, it is an entry point into the essence of the very practice that has occupied all European philosophy since the times of Parmenides and Heraclitus up to Heidegger and Derrida. It only seems that the personal nature of thought contradicts its commonality (truthfulness). One should read Bibikhin's lecture course "Property" in order to understand that *philosophy in its own being, philosophy as such, can unfold*

only as the personal property of an author, who hands over his personal being as the complete property of thought (Bibikhin 2012). What other form can originary, radical thought assume, if not the original and the personal? But its originality is due to the originality of being, not to an authorial pose. It is authorial not because its author is someone with the name Vladimir Bibikhin, but because the author's thought has entered the authorial self-commencement of thought, capable of thinking the self-commencement of being.

As Schelling once said about Descartes:

> He began by breaking all ties to prior philosophy, as though having erased with a sponge everything accomplished in the sphere before him, and began to construct his system from the very beginning, as though no one had philosophized before him (Schelling 1989: 389),

began by breaking off all connection with earlier philosophy, by rubbing out, as if with a sponge, everything that had been achieved in this since before him, and by building it up again from the beginning, as if no one had ever philosophized before he did (Schelling 1989: 42).

One can say the same about any philosopher, if this philosopher is defined not by a title but by a calling [*ne po zvaniyu, a po prizvaniyu*], that is, guided by the commencing, wholly original, ownmost thought.

In understanding, accepting within his mind the world itself, the philosopher assumes a personal, economic (*khozyaystvennaya responsibility* (the capacity and readiness to respond or account for) the world, for the human being of this world, for his god, and for his own mind, understanding the world. If philosophy were to be understood in this sense, then its history would present itself not as a collection of philosophical inventions, but as the assembly of philosophizing minds. They can actually correspond to one another in an originary, that is, in the philosophically radical, the responsibility for truth.

As for the third peculiarity, the word, mainly one's own word, is uttered, but, once it is heard, it is as if it is taken back, and the conversation continues from the beginning. It continues to begin anew; for "the true beginning is always other" (Bibikhin[1]) "Thought [...] cannot be anything other than *first* philosophy. This means that it must be capable of starting from the beginning..." (Bibikhin 2012: 15). Philosophical speech is not the speech of a vocal enunciation, but rather, the speech of self-negation: it does not flow as an epic narration, but listens and flows back to the source, re-thinks its intention, retreats into a silent conversation with oneself,

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[1]   "Only *another* beginning measures up to the uniqueness of the unconditional beginning through this, its quality of otherness [...] In an important sense, one might say, honing this point, that a genuine beginning can be only other, taking 'genuine' and 'other' in all their senses" (Bibikhin 2003: 334).

into the initial puzzlement. Such speech is "epistrophic" (Proclus); in it "every step forward is a return back" (Hegel); it is a *Schritt zurück* (Heidegger). The philosopher begins from the beginning because the practice of philosophy is the restoration of the beginning from underneath what has already begun.

Thus, real philosophies are the ownmost, self-commencing minds, returning to the beginning. Not amidst systems, but in this plurivocal conversation at the source, one can hear Bibikhin's own voice.

The *philia* and *sophia* of Philosophy

So, how do these minds correspond? How are they jointly occupied with the task of philosophy? How to they co-respond to one another in philosophical responsibility? According to a legend, Pythagoras was the first to call philosophy *philosophy* and to define himself as a philosopher. Again, according to a legend, Pythagoras, the wisest of the wise, was initiated into all the secrets of the *ecumene*, visited Hades, and assumed more than one reincarnation; in a word, he is supposed to be the all-seeing and all-knowing. And it was Pythagoras, apparently summing up his wanderings, who said, "Only the gods are wise, while we — with our wisdoms, be they occult or evident, ancient or new—are nothing but philosophers," that is, *the friends of wisdom*. Human being is a friend of wisdom, a philosopher, not a *sophos*, or a wise one. *Philia* is not understood pedagogically, as the preparation and initiation into wisdom, but philosophically; on the contrary, as wisdom's separation from everything that puts it on a throne: the *height* of human wisdom is that the wise (the true) is always *other*. The word *friendship* [*druzhba*] is as much a gift from the Russian language to philosophy as the word *Dasein* is a gift from the German language. It hints that *friendship* does not have to do with an affinity, conjugal supplementarity or erotic possession, but with the mutual disposition of others to one another [*drugikh drug drugu*]. A friend is dear as another [*Drug dorog kak drugoy*]; friendly proximity is the proximity of others to themselves, as "I" and "You," another being in the capacity of a co-responding condition to my own being. Aristotle defines friendship, in the innermost sense of the word, as the disposition of equally good people to each other; a disposition conditioned not by profit- or pleasure-seeking from the other, but by attention to what makes the other good. "Those who wish good to one's friends for their own sake, are friends by preeminence" (Nichomachean Ethics, 1156b10). A truly friendly disposition is possible only when everyone is predisposed to truth and goodwill toward each other is fed by the common predisposition to the good. This "predisposition" (εὐνοία, in Greek) is also a good mental disposition: it is understanding. For the *philia* of philosophy this means a good disposition to one another in a common disposition to the truth-good, to *sophia*, the personal understanding

of each of other in a common understanding of what cultivates the human in a human. "Feeding friendship towards a friend, one feeds it for one's own good, seeing that, if a virtuous person[2] becomes a friend, he becomes a good for the one with whom he is a friend" (Nichomachean Ethics, 1157b35).

The Greek word φιλία is rendered very well in the Russian word *druzhba*, friendship. As the component part of the word philo-sophy, it means both the relation to *sophia* and the relation of philosophers with one another. But the Russian word also indicates a paradox, important for our theme: a friend [*drug*] in our co-friendship [*so-druzhestve*: also "union," trans.] with *sophia* not only remains but, perhaps, for the first time becomes *absolutely other* [*drugim*]. The Greek word philo-sophy means some kind of loving friendship [*druzhelyubie*] towards "wisdom" and, correspondingly, a loving friendship towards another friend [*drugomu drugu*] of "wisdom". As the Russian word hints, this co-friendship is also of others to one another [*sodruzhestvo drugikh drug drugu*].

It follows that the possibility of philo-sophy presupposes apparently mutually contradictory conditions or demands:

(1) According to the originarity of thought, it is always authorial and personal. It is not only always mine but first sheds light upon "me" as the *owner* of my world.

(2) It is turned toward the horizon of the world, since common, truthful, sophic, philosophy desires to be the only one, without any "others."

(3) Therefore it can only exist in some minimal *community*, in the interaction of the *friends* of "sophia" who are other to one another. The simplest philosophical community can be, then, represented as: *the others to one another are the friends of the other* [*drugie drug drugu druz'ya drugogo*].

But is it true that communication is necessary for philosophical thought? If it is doomed to an authorial plurivocality, then is it not a symptom of the failure of the whole endeavor and of our fall into the plurivocality of empty skepticism? Indeed, in the real, as they say, history of philosophy we are faced instead with an argument among the mutual incomprehension of the authors; a quarrel and a scandal, instead of friendship. It is all well and good to discuss the friendship of the friends of truth and the good, but Aristotle begins his *Ethics* with a decisive statement: even if something philosophically significant (say, the Idea or *eidos*)

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[2]   The moral senses of αγαθή–the good and αρετή –virtue are quite late; originally and at their foundations these words meant the perfection of nature, its *fitness*. One might say that that they referred to a certain threshold of perfection (τελείοσίςτις) or cultivatedness. A human being is cultivated as human in his striving toward "the good" as such. That is why a true friend can be only a co-friend in one's friendship with *sophia*: a *philo-sopher*.

has been introduced by people who are close to us [φίλοιἄνδρες—friends], the philosopher's *duty* [...] for the sake of saving the truth is to give up even on the dear and the near[3] [...]. Because, although both the one and the other is dear [φίλοιν], it is the duty of piety [ὅσιον—*veneration of divine law*] to honor truth above all (Nichomachean Ethics, 1096a15).

In this way, can the others be with each other in their co-friendship with the one and only truth? And why, and in what sense, do truth or the good… that is to say, what forms the philosophical co-friendship or union, and are they themselves supposed to be other? Would it not be more correct to accept a more traditional image of such a community: thinking as one in the joint thinking of the one [*edinomyslie v so-myslii edinogo*]? Although the tradition is near to us, it is the duty of philosophy to honor the truth above it.

The Strangeness of '*sophia*'

It is worth paying attention to the decisiveness of the Aristotelian *rejection*. The truth is not at all in the addenda (for instance, to the "theory of ideas"), but in *the other*. And that is considering that what we are dealing with here is the first beginning, defining being, becoming, and knowledge, with the architectonics of a mindful space, where all receive their definite place, purpose, sense, and hence, the correct understanding. Here addenda won't do, since every philosophically significant movement changes the *mind*, by which, and in which, the *world* is opened from the very beginning. It changes everything *from the very beginning*; hence, everything is *from the beginning*. Even if the history of science may not be described as a simple increase in knowledge or so-called progress, then it may be described as a development in the spirit of one scientific method. This development presupposes a critical self-correction, the revision of axiomatics, and a revolutionary change of "paradigms," but there is one medium in which such a tale can be told. The entire past of this history must enter a genuine theory according to the principle of correspondence. This means that science is a derivative of one *determined* mind and that theoretical physics is rooted in one *determined* metaphysics with its own ontology, gnoseology, and methodology. But if something is happening in the metaphysical *roots*, in the ontological *beginnings*, then what changes is not knowledge about the world, but rather, the world opens up *otherwise*

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[3]   καὶτὰοἰκεῖααναιρεῖν—to reject also the relatives (those sharing a house). The word αναιρεῖν signifies a decisive deed—*to lift and to carry out* (a corpse from a battlefield), *to take away*, *to refute*. For friendly "ideas," Aristotle has a number of strong words in store, all the way to τερετίσματα—"meaningless chirping" ("And we can bid farewell to *eidoi*—they are, after all, merely empty sounds (τερετίσματα)" [*An. post.* I, 22, 83a33]).

from the beginning. From the beginning the world is other, and therefore, there are other methods and senses of being in its meanings of the far and the close, the high and the low, the past and the future, or the prospects of achievements and discoveries. The Greek ἐπιστήμη and the modern European *scientia* are two different *meanings* of knowledge, not steps of one and the same thing. The statics of Archimedes may be included as a chapter in the Newtonian dynamics, but, for Archimedes, it is not a part but the whole, thought by a different mind, in a different idea of truth. Only accepting such a difference of philosophical minds (a difference reaching all the way to the foundations, the roots, the heart of the matter, principally, in the first beginnings, in the ideas of truth and the good that are other to one another) does the formula of philosophy as a community of others to one another make sense. Or, conversely, it can be refuted and should be removed, carried out like a corpse from a battlefield.

Just in case, I would like to specify that I am not talking merely about the different ideas of *the truthfulness of truth*, explicable through "traditions" or "mentalities." The *logic* of founding these first foundations and, moreover, the logic according to which minds that are other to one another are *born* is philosophically significant.

What does this radical difference among virtuous (faithful to truth, not to a school, to a tradition, to one's own, to one's tribe) philosophical beginnings signify? Not the difference, with which one enters a circle of disciples who are one's own, but the difference, into which one exits from this circle, on the way to a community of minds that are other to one another. Does about it signify futility and ephemeralness or hopeless relativism? Perhaps the principled difference among philosophical minds does not testify to the inability to attune one's thought to truth but, on the contrary, clarifies something in the makeup of truth itself.

Following is one of the fragments of Heraclitus (DK108 M83):

No matter whose speeches I have heard, no one has reached the understanding that *sophon* is set apart from all these [philo-sophies]	ὁκόσωνλόγουςἤκουσαοὐδεὶςἀφικνεῖτα ιἐςτοῦτοὥστεγινώσκεινὅτισοφόνἐστι, πάντωνκεχωρισμένον

The attentive thought of Heraclitus opens *another sophon* (a *strange* one, distanced from sophio-logists and from the a-logical, and the extra-thinkable [*vnemyslennoe*]) *be*hind every appropriation of *sophon* in different *logoi*, and in the diverse methods of grasping and reaching toward which the *philia* of philosophy strives. His thought does not open something that is still unrecognized in the space of some mind, but something completely unthinkable for *this* mind, something that remains that which is simply not for a mindful approach to being; some *no*. By appropriating *sophon* (the method, the art to be all that is), striving to complete, to

found the foundationality and the truthfulness of the appropriation of being by thought, *logos* seemingly gets estranged from itself in philosophy and, with its entire mind, falls into a state of incomprehension. In the beginning of philosophy, there are not "beginnings" (principles), but wonders. Wonder, commencing philosophy, is the mindful wonder, experienced with one's whole mind. One is surprised out of one's wits [*iz-umlenie*], in some sense, losing one's mind. It is from this surprise that everything in philosophy begins and it is to the same surprise (befalling the entire mind of the wise), which it leads. Precisely stated, this philosophically surprised estrangement opens the inexhaustible strangeness of being and creates space for the difference of philosophies. Bibikhin writes,

> The word '*strangeness*' [strannost'] should now be heard in the same way as '*sidedness*' [storonnost']. *Sidedness* presupposes a necessary and automatic development of the sides or dimensions: whatever side of strangeness one observes: another side will be seen. Seeing is, thereby (necessarily and in the same way) a non-seeing. Exactly because one sees and in the same measure as one sees, one necessarily *does not* see (Bibikhin 2001: 367).

I can clarify this strangeness, this foreignness or other-sidedness [*inostoronnost'*] of *sophia* by recalling how Martin Heidegger interprets the Greek word αλήθεια, normally translated as truth. The inner form of this word—the *un-hidden*—speaks to the openness of truth (that is, the general possibility of truly understanding and being) as the "privation" of the hidden. Here the initial α is called α-*privatum* and it designates the result of a private *deprivation*: for instance, a flat, two-dimensional side of a three-dimensional body is called αβαθής, *deprived of depth*. In Greek, truth is called by a word that contains two negations: first, it is that which is hidden and, second, that which is *in a definite* (private, privative) *way* deprived of being hidden. Everything teased out by thought and brought to the light of understanding, together with the definition of the *idea of truthfulness* of this understanding (that is, as *sophia*, as the divine or natural light of reason), happens as a definite, *peculiar privation* of truth's hiddenness: the "yes" of a thought truth contains in itself and the "no" of a truth that is extra-thinkable. This is a privation, hence, in some *peculiar* way, a definite (privative) opening, but the opening of *truth*, that is, of the all-important, the *common*, of the world, of the human of this world, of the god of this world.

Obviously, the structure of the Greek word is not at stake here. In another epoch and in another way, without bringing the Greek into the fray, Immanuel Kant seems to have, for the first time, opened up the privative character of a theoretically unfolded *sophia*. The unconditional, he says, is found in things, because we do not know them. But here we still do not know, whereas in our *sophia*, (opened up, made apparent) we do not

know and cannot know. For Kant, the theoretically visible side of *sophia,* which has been made apparent by experience, has the sense of the *objective truthfulness* of modern European and Cartesian-Newtonian scientific reason. This reason, which has become simply the natural light, determined the entire world of European modernity as the world of technoscience. It is as though Kant's critique pushes aside what has blanketed this "light," in order to turn philosophical attention to *sophia*, which is estranged, set apart from this light (*logos*),and therefore *strange*. In contrast to metaphysics, (science itself becomes metaphysics when it deems its light to be "the natural light of reason") philosophy does not delete the *strangeness* of things from the field of vision: rather, it takes into account their "no." At the basis of critique, there is the crisis-judgment of reason, which stands with itself in the face of the thing hidden in it. "Everything, *Ding,*" says Bibikhin in his explication of Kant,

> is an affair, *Sache*, a case, a search [related to *suchen*], and, therefore, it contains the 'interest' [*inter-esse*], the difference that makes it different from itself, unequal to itself. The whole *Critique of Pure Reason* unfolds this intuition by a guiding hand (Bibikhin 2012: 108).

This way, the history of philosophy (of philosophical minds, not of doctrines) presents itself as a kind of *trial*. The paradox of the philosophical *case* is that its *litigation* is about the lawfulness of law, about what makes the evident character of testimonies evident, and what is considered here is not "guilty or not guilty," but what it means to be guilty. In a word, it is a philosophical trial *about* truth without a fixed instance of truth.

I call such a primary construction of first-philosophical thought (a trial with oneself) *the dialogical construction of truth*.

In other words, first-philosophical thought does not erect the edifices of *sophia*. It does not define apposite practices. On the contrary, first-philosophical thought reproduces the strangeness of *sophia*, its mind-boggling essence.

Philosophy becomes first, when it returns thought from its subservient condition to itself, into thought as the first (in relation to different kinds of *sophia*, be it theology or scientific methodology, sociology of the analytics of language, psychoanalysis or ideology critique). The firstness of first philosophy is not so much in the justification of first beginnings as in a return to the act of first-beginning: every *extra-thinkable* foundation is accepted by thought *in logic, in form, in the measure* of its understanding. Philosophy is concerned, above all, with these things: the logical architectonics of understanding, and the form and measure of an understanding receptivity. At times, it seems that, with the help of thought, first philosophy reveals, reasonably opens, and confirms, the foundation of the world, which already rules as myth, sacral tradition, natural light, and epochal

metaphysics. But the thought founding the foundation can open only itself, thought, at the basis of things that are let into being, and in-vented. Thought is discovered by philosophy as the first element. The elements of things (the Ocean, air, fire, the indeterminable) are the names of the element of all elements, the element of thought, thought as the first element. In the divine basis of the human and of its world there is a process of decision, a decisive detachment [*reshanie, reshayuschaya otreshennost'*]. I consider the method of human existence in the world, for which the floating of the world in the first element of thought becomes the forming beginning, (wherever and whenever the human embarked on such a maritime or terrestrial journey) to be European. That is why, in European culture, there is not a *tradition* but *history*, that is, essential, incipient changes in self-consciousness and self-fulfillment of the human with their world. There is not *good legislation* but *politics* and *jurisprudence*, that is, *thought* about the constitution (about law and right) included in the constitution of public life. There is not a canon of *the beautiful*, but *art*, that is, essential changes in the entire aesthetic human flesh. There is not the "natural" (or "divine") light of pure understanding reason, but a critical self-estrangement, philosophical surprise, and transcendence with regard to these "natural-divine" plans. In conclusion, it is not a world in the horizon of a *cult* (as in Pawel Florensky) but a *culture*: being in the horizon of strangeness, in self-estrangement, in being thrown back to the act of first-beginning, to the possibility of another side of "the all," each time concealed by the blinding clarity of some natural-divine light.

Culture

The metaphor *cultura* was invented by Cicero. "Just as a fertile field does not yield a crop without cultivation," he says in *Tusculan Disputations* (2, 1, 13),

> so it is with the soul, and the cultivation of the soul is philosophy [*cultura autem animi philosophia est*]: it makes furrows in the soul, prepares the soul to receive seeds and entr3usts it only with those seeds that, once they ripen, bring the biggest harvest (Cicero 1975: 252).

The question is: what kind of philosophy? For Cicero, it refers to a Platonized Stoicism, but that is only one of possible philosophies.

Behind the Latin word *cultura* stands the Greek παιδεία, the education of a free human being, not of a master in this or that art (τέχνη), but of the human insofar as he is *himself* human, in his human being; in other words, the education (nourishment) of his *soul*. Precisely in the struggle for the human *soul,* Socrates-the-philosopher argues against Protagoras-the-sophist in the eponymous Platonic dialogue. The Platonic school was the

one that came up with the definition that Cicero had in mind: Παιδεία—δύναμιςθεραπευτικὴψυχῆς ("Paideia is the capacity of the soul to care for itself"),[4] while the concentration of *paideia* is philosophy. While, speaking of *paideia*, we are situated in the common field of philosophy and sophistry, neither Platonism nor Stoicism nor any other teaching may exceptionally occupy the place of philosophy. *Paideia* is the *therapy* or *cultivation* of the soul, its *logos* and *dianoetics*, the capacities to persuade, to reason, to argue, to think.

For Plato, one side of philosophical education is embodied in Socrates, in the Socratic art of questioning, objecting, doubting, and estranging oneself from all pieces of wisdom into not-knowing, the element of questioning thought. The other side of the Platonic philosophy (*Platonistic*) is the construction of a sophic *polis*, or a *polis-paideia*. This dual understanding of *paideia*, of the formation of the soul, the production of a human as human, saturates all Platonic philosophizing, as well as all European philosophy. On the one hand (or side), there is the improvement of the world and of the human, rooted in a thought through wisdom, and on the other, there is the untamable and Socratic testing of the foundations, the columns, the first beginnings of wisdom, leading to the *undermining of foundations,* and estrangement from the improved (sophic) world.

In passing, I have noted three sides or intentions of a certain (apparently one) state of affairs. Three interrelated Greek words mark this important circumstance, three senses of *paideia*, of education, growing, and cultivation of the human as human: *sophia—sophistics—philosophy*. A more succinct formulation of this assertion is as follows: either the philosophical *paideia* inclines toward *sophia*, in order to perfect the human *polis* (keeping in mind the world of *sophia*), or it approximates *sophistics*, for which *paideia* is an apprenticeship in methodologies and political technologies (the tricks and means of reasoning, speaking, and convincing). The nobility of the human is now not tied to the ancient roots of the family but in the capacity to speak well. Here is a remarkable testimony of Plato's contemporary, the composer of speeches, Isocrates. In his famous *Panegyrics* for Athens, he speaks of the pan-Hellenic meaning of Athens:

> Our city has discovered philosophy, which has invented and established all those institutions that have educated [ἐπαίδευσεν] us with the view to common affairs and have taught us to be friendlier toward one another. And the art of speaking [λόγους] is so honored in Athens that everyone strives to learn it and envies those who are skilled in it, while realizing that we are born with this sole peculiarity [ἴδιονἔφυμενἔχοντηες]—the possession of speech—which distinguishes us from animals, as well as

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4   Compare to the Russian translation in (Plato 1986: 436).

the wise [σοφούς] from the unlearned [αμαθεῖς]. And those who, from the very beginning, are nourished (educated) freely [as a free person, as a human being in his human essence and dignity], are distinguished not by their courage nor by wealth nor by other achievements of this sort; most clearly, they are recognized by that which we have been discussing [the art of speaking well] […]. In reason and oratory, our city (Athens) has overtaken other people, so much so that its (the city's) disciples have become their (other people's) teachers, and thanks to our city **the word Hellene now means not so much the commonality of genus** [τοῦγένους] **as a way of thinking** [τῇςδιανοίας] **and indicates, rather, our educatedness** [παιδεύσεως] **than our shared provenance** [τῆςκοινῆςφύσεωςμετέχοντας)][5] (*Isoc. Paneg.* 47–50, author's emphasis).

This text is rhetorically complex but I doubt that one could, in a simpler and more accurate way, indicate the very thing that distinguishes not only the "Hellenes" from the "barbarians" but also European culture, or better put, the European trait of culture, from cultures that are constructed and that cultivate the human otherwise. It is only worth replacing the "Hellenes" with the "Europeans" and to replace the insulting word "barbarians" with what it actually means: those, for whom the world is certainly not devoid of *logos* and thinking, but at the same time, is not based on these factors. Neither the word "Hellenes" nor "Europe" implies the commonality of *genus*, the natural commonality of provenance (places of habitation, habits), or a confessional tradition.[6]Ancient, Christian, New, Central, Eastern, and trans-Atlantic Europe is united, tied together as Europe, only by a common *culture*, that is, by a definite method of *cultivating* (nurturing) human beings and a human world.[7] Such cultivation founds, and institutes the being of humanity upon the puzzlement about oneself, upon thought about this very being, the thought that becomes evident in speech directed toward oneself and the others. Only in this instance is Cicero's metaphor, *cultura animi philosophia est* is appropriate: the human

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[5]   I would not translate the last phrase the way the English translator George Norlin does: "…the title Hellenes is applied rather to those who share our **culture** than to those who share a common **blood**" (Norlin 1980). Pericles of Thucydides similarly speaks of Athenes: "Our city is the school of the entire Hellas" (*History*, II, 41).

[6]   The poem "Waltharius" by the ninth-century medieval author Gerald (although sometimes authorship is attributed to the tenth-century monk, Ekkehard) starts with the words "One third of the world is called, my brothers, Europe. / Many tribes inhabit it: their names, habits, life, / Speech and faith in God are separate one from the other (Pamyatniki srednevekovoy latinskoy literatury 2006: 443).

[7]   "Europe is culture. And culture implies working on oneself, the cultivation of oneself, an effort to assimilate that which supersedes the individual. Therefore, Europe cannot be inherited; on the contrary, everyone should conquer it oneself. You cannot be born European, but you can work to become one […]. It is European culture that defines Europeans" (Brague 2003).

is cultivated in the European mode when puzzled by philosophy, not by a traditional *sophia*.

Europe: Being in Culture

The different ethnic groups, languages, mentalities, cults, and confessional denominations, along with their different symbioses, splits, and transformations, various historical epochs, forming the historical world of Europe: *what* exactly do they all form? What is it that bears the name "Europe"? Under this rubric, we usually find pieces of research or historical descriptions, but neither objective-*logies* (ethno-, culturo-, socio-, politico-) nor historical narrations, nor even the practical demands of self-determination in the Constitution of the European Union ("Drawing inspiration from the cultural, religious, and humanist inheritance of Europe…") give a satisfactory response to the question of this "heritage" and whether there is such a being as "Europe" at all. Some "universal values" may serve as the civilized foundation of society, but, as everyday logic suggests, their contents are all the emptier, the wider the multitude they encompass. Europe's own being is not in a formal commonality; it is rooted in the inner correspondence of Europe's worlds and epochs to one another. The inner co-responding of different worlds and epochs forms the world of European culture, forming Europe's *own* being as a being in culture. European culture is a culture that cultivates a community of cultures, i.e., of the ontologically significant senses of being, of the world and of the human. The modern European techno-scientific epoch does not epitomize the essence of European culture any more than Judeo-Christianity or Hellenism. Besides the being of the inner community, of transitions, gaps, encounters at the borders of cultural worlds (the senses of being), in other words, besides being as an ontological puzzlement, there is no common *being* in European culture, let alone a common *natural* or *divine light of reason*. There is no European "humanism" in general either, but only a human puzzled by his humanity. There is no European "rationalism" in general, but only philosophy, asking what it means to think, to know, how "pure reason" is possible, what the beginnings of a thinking thought are, what is prior to, or more originary than, its apriori architectonics.

The being of Europe *itself* is located on the borders, on the limits, on the edges of independent, ontologically diverse worlds-cultures,[8] where these world-senses bordering on one another can see themselves as though from the outside, noting the limits of their world and, with all

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[8] Here I am only trying to reimagine, in my own way, the main theme from the late philosophy of Vladimir Bibler. See, for instance, his collection of essays *Na granyakh logiki kul'tury* [At the Edges of the Logic of Culture] (Bibler 1997).

their aesthetic, noetic, existential being, turning toward their foundations or beginnings, thus approximating the sources of their first discoveries, their first revelations [*svoih pervoraskrytii, pervootkrovenii*].

Such an understanding of Europe as a single "spiritual" being, incorporating into itself its cultural individuations, has been philosophically viable since the times of Hegel. His historiology is usually accused of imposing a logical scheme onto a historical world that is living, factual, full of unpredictable contingencies, possibilities, and singularly significant events. But what I am saying has nothing to do with factual history and everything to do with the logic of its *understanding*, with the possible meaningful ties of historical life: it is not history that logically deduces itself, but our self-consciousness in the historical world that includes into itself this historiological unfolding of understanding.

Hegel does not invent his logic but thinks the modern European logic of "progressive development" all the way to its foundations and limits. The history of European culture is understood as an internally coherent process of *cultivation* or *education* (one could say: of a historical *paideia*) of one subject, about whom, presumably, all *fabula narratur* and who finds himself in the understanding of the world, thereby acquiring the self-consciousness truth of this world. But this "subject" is also a "substance": not only is he the truth of the world, but the world is also his truth.

The main point here is that, included in the logical figure (understanding) of educated *modern* thought, included in the mind of an educated person, is the historical unfolding, where "every moment is necessary" and "one should linger with every one of such moments" (Hegel 1959: 15). History is "sublated" in the educated "spirit," but this "spirit" is *concrete*, i.e., it somehow con-tains in itself the "sublated,"[9] which is why, in order to be educated (cultivated) in it, it is necessary to stand at its level and penetrate its concrete con-tents. This means that, besides merely glancing at what has been already covered and moving "forward," one must return, move back, penetrate what has been already passed through as something pertaining to the heart of the matter, find out what and how, exactly, is sublated there, in spirit, all without any borders against unfolding backwards and wandering across different moments and times. On the contrary, every stage of the path is a special phenomenon, a special formation of "spirit" as a whole, its "individual whole form," and the whole "in the diversity of special determinations." It is worth going into the requisite details, into the proper concreteness of this individual form, and it will unfold before us as an independent world. Then, the progressive procession of world spirit toward the present will be interrupted and the "sublated moments" will break through to the freedom of their own being.

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9   It is worth recalling the inner form of the Latin word *con-cresco*. The prefix *con / co* and the verb *cresco* ("to grow," "to emerge") give the sense of *growing-with, conjoining* and so *co-emerging*.

On the horizon of contemporary (European) culture, these "spirits" are remembered and come to their senses: they are revivified, reemerge, though not as they were in their (past) world and not in the capacity of the sublated moment of European modernity, but in the world of their true community and co-participation; in the world of culture.

Since the end of the eighteenth century, the European philosophy of history has been describing history, in different tonalities, as the bulwark of the independent becoming (cultivation) of the human in his universal humanity.[10] Now, the emphasis shifts. Here and now, in the "spirit of the present," the human loses the idea of universal humanity. He comprehends himself as a special co-participant in an indeterminate event, rather than an end result or someone privileged or chosen.[11] One of the conditions for the task of human existence today is the cultivation of the human being in the world of worlds, the world of cultural individuations of this existence. Such is the concrete, content-filled form of our task. I am not invoking merely objective investigations, conducted by some divinely estranged theoretician or historian (that is how Leopold Ranke saw the role of the historian), but about co-participating understandingly. Being, which we inhabit with puzzlement and co-participation, is history, turned toward our creations, through which a human announces how he has created himself together with his world, how he raised himself to a human being.

In this way, the very idea of understanding the historical world changes: understanding is *vivacious*, rather than merely *objective*. Such understanding is not objective, though not because it is *subjective*, but because it is *co-participatory*. In this lies the main difficulty of the "sciences of spirit," with which Wilhelm Dilthey struggled all his life, since the question raised here is not one of *methodology* but of *ontology*, and it is not resolved by supplanting "objectivity" with some sort of descriptive psychology. *The Critique of Historical Reason* has remained, however, fragmentary, while other attempts at analyzing the foundations for the "sciences of spirit" or "philosophy of culture" without following Hegel's spirit have either drowned in rhetoric of "life" and the mysticism of "creativity," or have unwittingly returned to the logic of the same spirit.

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[10]   Compare this to the title of Herder's classical work *Ideen zur Philosophie der. Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784–1791). Here, the word die Menschheit means both "humanness" and "humanity," and the entire world history can be represented as a process of cultivating a human on the path, whereby a multiplicity of different cultures grow together to form a pan-human civilization, so that humankind would be cultivated in its humanity/humanness.

[11]   These are the current conditions of the human task, of the question overshadowing the human. Only because the human is actually questioned in this way, can the question about them be formulated with philosophical radicalness. Indeed, all of philosophical anthropology may be expressed in one formula: the human is a being that, in its very being, is under question.

In Husserl's 1935 talk, "Philosophy in the Conditions of the Crisis of European Humanity," there is a new phenomenon emerging in his reflections: *European humanity*. "What breaks through in the Greek humanity, for the first time, is what as *entelechy* is essentially included in humanity as such" (Husserl 2004). To the extent that thought can clarify this philosophical entelechy, it will make apparent either the illusory character or the living spirit of that

> *telos*, inherent in European humanity since the times of Greek philosophy, according to which it wants to become a humanity based on philosophical reason and can persist only as such, in an infinite striving to normalize itself only through the truth and authenticity of its humanity (Husserl 2004: 28–32).

Hegel's "spirit" is not only caught up in "striving," but it also has much to say to Husserlian "humanity."

One way or another, the phenomenal basis for the question of being—in other words, the first-philosophical ontology, is being in the cultural space-time (the "chronotope") of Europe. Indeed, Europe, as we have already observed, is the name of a cultural co-responding being, since nothing else, aside from the *European culture* that forms this historical being, ties together ethnic cultures, languages, confessions, political formations, or epochs. Here, these cultures and epochs—be they past, present, or still possible—are con-tained. Whatever the special subject of contemporary thought, it inevitably enters the con-tents of European culture. "Time," said O. Mandelstam, ascribing his thought to Dante, "is the content of history, received as a single synchronous act; and, vice versa, content is the joined holding of time—by its comrades, co-seekers, co-discoverers" (Mandelstam 1967: 22).[12] Only in pertaining to such contents of culture, is Europe not an empty name featured in historical investigations, but the designation of a special—multifaceted individuated—being of the human ("European humanity").

European culture as the Event of Cultural Co-existence

But is "humanity," after all, limited to its "European" instantiation? Husserl spoke of the crisis of "European humanity." Today, the horizon of the "crisis" has widened to encompass the entire world; it has widened not only theoretically—as a described spectacle or material for comparative studies and global histories—but also practically—in the mobiliza-

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[12] Mandelstam wrote this manuscript at the same time as Heidegger worked on *Being and Time*. Cf. an interesting study by V.K. Sukhantseva (Sukhantseva 2002).

tion of the products, institutions and resources, natural and human, in meetings, scandals, wars, catastrophic clashes, in the "conflicts of civilizations." Where, in this world, is there anything "in general," "as such," "in and of itself": "rationality," "self-evidence," "everydayness"..? What is the "lifeworld" of the common world? What is its "strict science"? None of these questions now has any sense, unless posed in this world-wide horizon, and every question demands that one lowers oneself into the thickets of firstness and originarity, which classical European philosophy has, probably, not even dreamt about.

And so, if one glances from the contemporary world at the very method of the world's existence known as "Europe," it comes as no surprise that exactly this kind of a situation (the meeting of different "worlds" and the periodically widening *globalization* of the *ecumene*) that creates, from the very beginning, this historical "existence," namely European culture.[13]

It seems to me that it is not difficult to notice that the historical existence known as "Europe" emerges and does not live in "peoples," "cultures," and "times" unified by under this title, but lives somewhere in the interstices, crossings, borders, crossroads, and chronotopes of encounters. Even myths recall this. Europe is a Semitic girl (Phoenician, Palestinian), stolen by Zeus and transported by him to Hellas, to the island of Crete. Her brother, Kadm, composed the Greek alphabet on the basis of the Phoenician (a variation of Hebrew). Herodotus describes the relations between Europe and Asia in terms of an erotic fusion (*History*, I, 4).[14]

Hellas herself is a result of the miscegenation of peoples and layering of cultures. Ethnic groups pertaining to various tribes became, felt themselves as, Hellenes quite late; at the foundations of this self-consciousness lie not "blood and soil" but, as we have already seen, the education in communication and in reflection.[15] As Thucydides narrates:

> The country, now called Hellas, has been permanently populated not so long ago; in antiquity, however, it was the site for tribal migrations and every tribe abandoned its territory each time it found itself under pressure from more numerous aliens [...] (12). Even after the Trojan

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[13] Le Goff writes in the same spirit about an episode in the history of Europe. "In the sixteenth century, thanks to the emergence of permanent ties between Northern Europe, Flanders, the Asian world, and large Italian harbor cities (Genoa, Venice), we witness the rise of world-economy, which, in the fifteenth century, was centered around Antwerp. This process became the first serious instance of globalization since the Roman globalization of the Ancient world, which united only the countries of the Mediterranean basin" (Le Goff 270).

[14] Cf., for more details (Zembatova 1971).

[15] This is reminiscent of the assertion made by Isocrates, discussed in this essay.

Wars, Hellas still experienced tribe migrations, and new settlements were established, such that the country could not develop peacefully [...]. Only gradually, in the span of a long time, calm has begun to reign, since the violent transplantations of populations ceased and the Hellenes **started colonizing lands overseas.** So, the Athenians populated Ionia and many islands, while Italy and Sicily were populated, in large part, by the Peloponnesians (*History*, I, 2 — author's emphasis (Thucydides 1981: 2)).[16]

In contrast to Egypt and Babylonia, Greece is an archipelago: islands, shores... Instead of river valleys, determining a way of life on one's own piece of land, its geography meant seafaring (commerce and pirate activities)—a life on the sea, situated between different lands. We, the Hellenes, Plato notes, "crowd around our sea, like ants or frogs around a swamp" (*Phaedo*, 109b).[17] Not just Pythagoras but all first philosophers were wanderers, adventurers, and cartographers of the *ecumene*.

In the world that surrounded them, the Hellenes thought of themselves as children or latecomers, whose task was not so much to invent as to improve what they have borrowed. They even learned about the gods quite recently from the poets, according to the affirmations of the wanderer, ethnographer, culturologist, and historian (gatherer of testimonies), Herodotus (*History,* II, 53).

Every Hellene must reflect on the fact that the territory we, Hellenes, occupy [...] occupies a middling place between countries with harsh winter climates and those with hot weather. [...Although] later we have received accounts about the gods of the world, we must acknowledge that Hellenes perfect everything they have received from the Barbarians. [...] We harbor a strong and beautiful hope that Hellenes will more beautifully and justly take essential care of all these gods, whose cult, according to legends, was transmitted to us by the Barbarians. Here, Hellenes

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[16]   Juxtaposing Athens and Sparta, the Corinthian says: "They are mobile; you are slow. They are travelers; you sit at home" (I, 69; 32).

[17]   "The nature of their [the Hellenes'] country, in this way, accustomed them to a terrestrial-maritime existence; it prompted them to cut through the waves with the same freedom as the one with which they spread over land, without leading the nomadic lifestyle of wandering peoples and without becoming stupefied, like the peoples living in river delta regions" (Hegel 1935: 215). The resettlement and miscegenation of peoples, of diverse religions ("the chthonic titans" and the "Olympians," the "Olympic religion" and "Orphism"), colonization, and wandering are characteristic traits not only of Hellenic, but of European history. Indeed, for culture (and for philosophy) it is precisely the *combination* of settlement and nomadism that is significant, rather than the infinite desert of the nomad, where G. Deleuze and F. Guattari wished to escape (cf. Deleuze and Guattari 1987). .

can put to good use their education, Delphic oracular sayings and their entire cult, based on the laws (*Epinomis* 981c, ff).

"Improvement" is preceded and conditioned by some sort of puzzlement. When a multiplicity of different gods appears in the environing world, naturally the question crops up: What is *divinity itself* (αυτὸςόθεός), and in what is the divinity of god? And further: What is the human *himself*, the number *itself*..?

Epic poetry and philosophical cosmogony were born in the Greek colonies on the shores of Asia Minor and Southern Italy. Athens in the fifth and sixth centuries BCE was the center, the place of their encounter and hence, the acme-ripeness (the blossoming) of everything born on the peripheries. This encounter gives birth to tragedy, disclosing to everyone in the concentration of human being the tireless puzzlement of humans with themselves, as well as classical philosophy, both of which are the sources of Hellenic culture that, in turn, will forever become one of the sources of European culture.

In Plato's *Parmenides* we find gathered in one, aporetic, *logos* Greek philosophy of all times, from Heraclitus to Parmenides and to the logically anticipated Neo-Platonists. This aporetic onto-logics, revealing step-by-step the fundamental puzzlement with itself of the constituting and understanding mind, touches upon the very essence of the philosophical occupation and can serve as a logical *topos*, the place of a mutually comprehensible (for one another) encounter of all subsequent philosophies. More than that, precisely in this thinking encounter, philosophy first becomes itself, since their metaphysical, theological, and ideological presumptions here amount to nothing more than onto-logical hypotheses that need to be further investigated.

Beginning with Greece, the history of Europe represents a chain of the "globalizations" of the *ecumene*: the Empire of Alexander the Great, the two-headed Roman Empire, the Romano-Germanic world, the Syrian-Arab-Spanish world, the conquests of the New World... Indeed, the contemporary globalization, on the one hand, *politically* puts Europe in its own, quite peripheral place in the world, and, on the other hand, it may be understood as the unfolding of European *culture* to a world-wide condition: the opening of the world, of the possibility of its being-for-self at the borders of its "independent" (essential in themselves) cultures. Globalization, understood as the *Europeanization* of the world, does not imply conquest, or the spread of the canons of some "European" culture to the rest of the world, but, precisely this: the discovery of a multifaceted, multi-worlded world by and for itself.

Yes, the history of Europe is one of expanding geopolitical borders of the *ecumene*. Colonization, conquests, domestication of the world by means of its appropriation continues. Bartlett, a contemporary historian, does not neglect to note that

european Christians, who arrived on the shores of America, Asia, and Africa in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, departed from a society which was already one of colonizers. As the initiator of one of the largest processes of conquest, colonization, and cultural transformation in the world, Europe was itself a product of such a process (Bartlett 1993: 313).

Yet, these colonial, imperial expansions led to a paradoxical cultural outcome: foreign, "barbaric" cultures are internally admitted into "classical" culture, inhabiting and radically changing it. The conquests of Alexander, who strove to connect East and West through a single idea of Hellenism (Droysen 2011: 380),[18] brought about a radical orientalization of the spirit of Hellenism, such that classical Greece retreated into cultural memory.

It would have been difficult to unearth the traces of events, namely the encounters of cultures, sought by us, if the general overview of a new epoch in the history of Greece, which Johann Droysen called Hellenism, could not be focused against the background of "Alexandrian culture." The center of the Hellenistic world, the city of Alexandria, was founded in 332BCE. That place truly became an intersection of the *ecumene*, where customs, cults, and idiolects were crossbred. Egyptians, Assyrians, Greeks, Jews, Arabs, Persians lived there. There was even a Buddhist community (Savrey 2005: 93).

> Like a proverbial melting pot of World Spirit, ancient Alexandria accepted the Hellenic worldview and the Judaic monotheism, the science of walking in the face of a Living God and the Egyptian religion of the dead, the Iranian Mithraism and Zoroastrianism, the surviving remnants of the harsh Assyro-Babylonian archaics... And, mysteriously, they fermented there into new spiritual worlds: Gnosis—Neo-Platonism—Christianity, which then over many centuries have been determining the life of European culture and constituting its mental style and appearance... (Horuzhy 2000: 143).[19]

Here, at the palace of the king of Ptolemies, the Museion and the Library were founded. The Alexandrian Museion was also the "global" repository of learning—not a "museum," but something closer to the Royal Court's Science Academy, or even a monastery. "The Museum," narrates Strabo (the end of the first century BCE),

> much like the Library, is a part of the quarters of the royal palace; it has a place for taking a walk, an exedra and a large house where there is an

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[18] "With full right, we may call Hellenism the first unifier of the world" (Droysen 2011:414).

[19] See also (Horuzhy 2000).

eatery for the learned people (φιλολόγωνανδρῶν), hired by the Museum. This college of the learned not only possesses common property, but also has one priest—the ruler of the Museum, who was previously appointed by the kings, and now by the Cesar (Strabo 1994: 733).

"Fermentation," "melting down," and "synthesis" are metaphors used to describe the usually unseen processes, happening at such intersections of the *ecumene* and their strange products. In the meantime, it would have been crucial to comprehend the chemistry of this "fermentation," if not the atomic physics of cultural transmutations, entering the entrails of culture, "where no human foot has stepped before," in the words of Ossip Mandelstam (Mandelshtam 1967). For instance, in the Alexandrian "fermentation," an event happens, whereby the sought after "encounter of cultures" assumes determinate outlines and allows for a substantive, evidentiary investigation. In the third century BCE, Hellenized Jews translated the Torah, and later the other books of the *Tanakh* (*The Old Testament*) into Greek (the Septuagint). Two strikingly distinct (in terms of their inner structure or their "spirit") cultures entered into direct communication. Captured in the flesh of language (but also sealed and encrypted in it) is a trace of this communication: a translation of the text, dubbed by culturologists "the book of culture." This text is very broad, but it can be focused on still more precisely, by selecting a small part of it, in which, perhaps, the very semantic essence of the thing is concentrated.

There is, for example, an extremely important text about the self-naming of God (*Exod.* 3:14). On Mount Horeb, God entrusts Moses with the task of leading Israel out of Egypt. "What should I say," asks Moses, "when they ask what is the name of the one who sent me?" The Greek translation of the answer is Ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ὤν (Vulg., *ego sum qui sum*; I am who I am); however, in Hebrew, something else is said. It is not only said, but also thought, cognized, experienced, while both in the original and in the culture, in the experience of being-in-the-world, into which translation translates. What is at stake is something undoubtedly central for this experience: the self-discovery or the self-consciousness of the human in a divine horizon, in its liminal *telos* or originary disclosure, in a word, in that which "cultivates" the human within the divine measure of their humanity.

In the Scriptures, God names Himself while *talking* to a human being. But, if in Greek and Latin, God speaks *about* His being, ("I am who I am") in Hebrew the Name itself speaks about the *relation of God and a human*. The words "I am who I am," according to Hilarius Pictaviensis, express

the inaccessible knowledge of divine nature in speech, suited, in the best way possible, to human thinking. For, it is impossible to think of anything else that would resemble God more than being, because to be be-

ing itself is a quality of what can never be destroyed and has never emerged. The one who is, is the name of being. God said to Moses the same thing as the one already grasped by Greek Philosophers. Étienne Gilson, who cites this and references parallel passages in St. Ephraim of Syria, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Cyril of Alexandria, and other theologians, concludes: "Herein lies the beginning of an inexhaustible metaphysical fecundity [...] There is only one God, and this God is Being: such is the cornerstone of all Christian philosophy, and it has been put in place neither by Plato nor even by Aristotle, but by Moses (Gilson 2011: 68–70).

Admittedly, the Neo-Platonic One, to the confines of which Greek languages transfers the event of divine self-naming, would never say "I" (ἐγώ); in fact, it would not say anything at all and "being" would be rendered in the neuter, rather than in the masculine (ὄν, rather than ὤν). Nevertheless, the formula is quite recognizable from the standpoint of Greek philosophy, and now one might consider that the Greeks borrowed it from Moses.[20]In the guise of Plato, Moses started speaking Greek, but he had always thought in Greek in any case, as the Jew Philo of Alexandria, and then the Christians St. Clement and Origen explain.

Moses, however, does not speak here but asks and listens; it is God who speaks. God's answer to Moses in Hebrew sounds as follows: "*'ehyeh asher 'ehyeh*."[21] The verb *'ehyeh* is an imperfect, first person, singular form of the verb *lihyot*, to be or to become. This imperfect form has an active sense of *doing*, rather than *persisting*, and the saying means not "I am, who I am," but "I *will be*, who I *will be*." In the second century, in the new translations by Aquila and Theodotion, the phrase is translated exactly like that: ἔσομαιὥςἔσομαι—*I will be, who I will be* (Propp 1988: 225).[22]Thishas nothing to do whatsoever with *being* as the *existence* of God in Himself, but with the *event*, with what happens differently every time, and what comes to pass in *historical time*. The concepts of being and existence are secondary, derived from the meaning of the happening. "In this case, a

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suitable translation is not 'I am, who I am' and not 'I will be, who I will be' (Aquila and Theodotion) but precisely—and this is at the core of the Jewish conception of the Eternal—'I am the one who discovered, makes apparent, opens himself', hence, not some abstraction, but a being responding to a concrete need."[23] This has nothing to do with the "essence" or "unchangeability" of God but about His constant presence and participation, about the history of human-divine relations: the testament and the covenant. A little earlier in this history (*Exod.* 3: 10–2), Moses inquires: "Who am I to go to the pharaoh and demand to let Israel go?" "I will be (*'ehyeh*) with you," God responds.[24] It is this "I will be with you" that is the most important in the *name* of God. "I am the one who *was* with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the one who speaks to you now, the one who will be with you at the pharaoh, the one who will be with Israel"—that is the *name* of God.

At issue here are not representations, ideas, and concepts, but the Hebrew language that is constituted in such a way that the Greek onto-theo-logical course of thought cannot be spoken in it: "The translation of *'ehyeh asher 'ehyeh* by the seventy interpreters—Εγὼ εἰμι ὁ ὤν—is but a double (to be—εἰμι; existing—ὤν) linguistic confusion" (Chernyak 2012: 505). The seeming difficulty of translation alone conceals a much more serious problem: a cross-cultural *aporia*, an unsurpassable border. Not only do distinct understandings of the same thing clash, but also different senses of the very event of understanding, ways of *being* and *comprehending* oneself in being, different *existences* are at loggerheads. A characteristic of Greek thought is its "striving to unfold its 'object' in terms of *being as being*, which means in this case opening the 'object' in the **self-sufficiency** of its being-in-and-for-itself"(Chernyak 2012: 507). For Biblical consciousness, it is not at all typical to form a "conception" of an "object." "Here, the defining trait of divinity is […] His **involvement in a relation** with the human, which precludes His self-sufficiency" (Chernyak 2012: 507).[25] Everything transpires in communication, in speaking and listening, in the text and its reading of (=studying, interpreting, commenting upon) the Scripture. Instead of building *theories* or mentally contemplating the ideal cosmos, Biblical consciousness hinges on attempts to hear and understand what has been said.

The Biblical self-definition of the human in the face of God, turned towards him by the word and involved in a history of mutual relation, is so distinct from the Hellenic self-consciousness of a human in the horizon of a self-sufficient and completed being that they seem to be wholly incom-

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23 Cf. *Christian Classics Etherial Library*. Kittel R., "YAHWEH" In *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Vol. XII: Trench Zwingli (p. 471). http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/encyc/encyc12/htm/ii.xxviii.ii.htm#ii.xxviii.ii

24 Cf. parallel passages on the site http://biblezoom.ru/.

25 Italics and bold fonts inserted by the author.

patible (unless they are correlative to one another, according to N. Bohr's principle of complementarity). This very incompatibility is captured and sealed in the translation of the brief and untranslatable phrase. The phrase contains a question. It asks about that which is most decisive: How does a human comprehend himself in the face of God? That is how the question of philosophy stands. It was asked a long time ago, sealed in a word, and remains to be heard.

We ought to hear, for instance, how the very way of existing of the Hebrew word puts into question the classical Aristotelian definition of the word (name) in general.

> Thus, what in the sound amounts to the signs of what the soul experiences [παθημάτων], in writing corresponds to the signs of sounds. Similar to the ways of writing that are not one and the same for all [people], the sounds are not one and the same. However, that which the soul experiences, the immediate signs of which are in sounds, is for all [people] the same, just as the same objects [πράγματα] are imitated in the *pathemata* of the soul (*De Int.* I,1 16a3–8).

And yet, human beings have a soul that experiences everything otherwise; its condition, impressions, captured in sounds and letters are constituted otherwise. They do not merely correspond to other "objects," and relate not so much to "objects," but to *actions*.[26]

In *The Categories*, Aristotle conveys something else. Defining a homonym, he asserts: "Ὁμώνυμα λέγεται ὧν ὄνομα μόνον κοινόν, ὁ δὲ κατὰ τοὔνομα λόγος τῆς οὐσία ϛἕτερος—Homonyms are the names of such [things], the name of which is one and common, but the definitions of essence corresponding to this name are different" (*Cat.* 1, 1a). But what corresponds to this "definition of essence" in the method of thinking in Hebrew? Is "apophantic *logos*" (a form of demonstrative judgment, which is the form of saying the *truth*) possible in Hebrew?

Nevertheless, the unity of Christian Scripture already includes the Judaic listening to the word of God and the Hellenic word about God (theo-logy). Moreover, they are relocated to a *new* context, into the word of the Gospel. The Alexandrian teachers could, without much difficulty, interpret Judaic Law and Hellenic philosophy as two ways of divine guidance toward the revelation of Christ; later commentators and investigators will speak of a "crossing" of these ancient wisdoms, the re-coining, the synthesis of the "Eastern" and the "Western," even though, I repeat, it remains unclear how such synthesis is possible and what its "chemistry" is like. At the same time, this fundamental, *unsynthesizable* cultural differ-

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26   Hebrew letters are "the symbols of basic forces and phenomena (certainly, to a much greater degree than the letters composing chemical and mathematical formulae), of which our reality consists" (Palant 2001: 9).

ence between the senses of the *cultivation* of the human in their divine humanity and between co-participants who have met in the same place, equally sacral for all of them, reverberates in the history of European culture, and not only.

At this point, I would like to unravel my main thesis: European culture is built on the *encounter* of different cultures, and, hence, its constant philosophical fermentation, and philosophical puzzlement. Both in Alexandria and in later history these encounters, though they come to pass, cannot take place as encounters, as mutual puzzlement, as dialogues. An appropriate time is required for this. My second thesis is that this time is the time of our contemporaneity.

The history of Europe can be continued, as a chain of local globalizations of the world, as the history of the widening of the *ecumene*, and as the inclusion into the cultural field of new characters from other cultures. What comes next is the Roman Empire, culturally divided within itself between Rome and Byzantium and including new worlds, "Germanic" in the North, and "Syrian" in the East... But I will pause here.

The one thing that needs to be at least mentioned in the inclusion, rather than a mere fusion, of Arab culture into the history of Europe (Spengler was probably right to put Arab culture in the place of the incomprehensible "Middle" Ages). Here, too, it is possible to make a transition from a general overview of the Arab world to the focused image, where the event of the encounter is evident, namely the Caliphate of Córdoba in Spain.

It is up to future investigations to pursue this line of thought. Here, I will limit myself to a few quotations.

> In the middle of the seventh century, a new power, energy, will to conquer, and alternative culture emerged—that of Islam. In a remarkably short span of time—around fifty years—the classical world was captured. Only its bones, whitened by the sun, have remained under the Mediterranean sky (Clark 1969: 7).

The Islam of the time was tremendously receptive to foreign cultures. Conquests were accompanied by an intense appropriation of the cultures belonging to the conquered world. Islam sponsored monotheistic religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, or Zoroastrianism, and literally imbibed into itself their teachings and wisdom.[27]

In the beginning of this era, a Syrian cultural "reserve" emerged on the Eastern outskirts of the Roman Empire. Even after the Arab conquest in the seventh century, the Syrian language kept its status as the language

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[27]   Cf. the classic of a Swiss specialist in Arab culture Adam Metz (Metz 1973; Meri & Bacharach 2006); as well as a collection of essays, edited by John R. Hayes (Hayes 1992).

of the learned,[28] even if Aramaic, Hebrew, Coptic, Greek, and then Arabic were also in use. Islamic Arabs conquered these provinces and forced the cultural centers they contained to speak Arabic. "There is something strange," writes a British expert in Islam, W. Watt,

> and therefore captivating in how the ancient culture of the Near East was [...] transformed into a Muslim culture [...]. Humanity in that part of the world possessed millennia of experience of city culture, harking back to Sumer, Acadia, and Ancient Egypt: and all these cultural centers, carried through the millennia, now started to express themselves in Arabic (Watt 1976: 28).

By the ninth and tenth centuries, Arabs translated from Greek and from the Syrian translations virtually all the available texts by Greek philosophers and scientists. In Cairo, there was a library with two million books. The University of al-Qarawiyyin in Fez, Morocco, founded in 859, is considered to be the oldest in the world and is still operating this day.

European Culture as a Gathering of Times

"The history, which *is* history," as Bibikhin writes in *The New Renaissance*, "turns out to be one of the renaissance" (Bibikhin 1998: 49). Renaissance, in other words, is not only a special epoch in European history and culture, but the inner form of the *historicity* of European being, and, moreover, the form of the historicity of historical being as such. It does not pertain to geniuses and achievements, but to a multi-temporal constitution of imagination, consciousness, thought. In this regard, the epoch of the Renaissance resonates with other times and, above all, with the twentieth century.

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[28]   "The use of Syrian language as an international means of communication was conditioned by the geographical situation of the Syrians between Byzantium and Iran [...] The Syrian language was the connecting link, which permitted Near and Middle East to adopt the achievements of Greek science, so that it would blossom anew on Arab and Persian soil. The high level of development in the spheres of philosophy and science in the East during the Middle Ages resulted from a long process, at the basis of which there was a sense of proximity to Ancient Greek culture [...]. Antioch turned out to be the place of crossings, of mutual influence. A high level of education in its population made it a competitor of Alexandria" (Pigulevskaya 1979: 31). It is important to stress, however, what exactly happens in the events of "adoption," "approximation," and "influence," in the places where languages and cultures *cross*, on the borders and at the limits, at the seams of passages, in the hidden "influences" of clashing meanings. What matters to us is the obverse of this multicolored tapestry, because there, behind historical embroideries, we find concealed the unfinished (and still more often, the not yet begun) contestations of "the ultimate questions of being," which is how European culture poses its question before us. I repeat: it still remains to be heard.

Every epochal culture, be it Ancient, Medieval, or Modern, builds the historical dimension of its world in its own way, gathering various times in the horizon of "eternity" (of the cosmos, of Creation—Fall—Salvation, of progress…). In the moments of "renaissance," these horizons intersect, and it is precisely the intersection of horizons that is produced in cultural productions and con-tained in the "things" of culture; precisely, the crossing of the different horizons of being becomes the theme of culture. It is as though humanists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are playing at this intersection, putting on various masks, stylizing. For them, this is the time of *leisure* (*otium*), and the place of their pursuits is a villa or a secluded house with a vast library and a circle of learned friends. Now the thing gets more serious.

"What is old has passed; now, everything is new" (or, "the spirit of positive sciences, finally, disenchants the world")… The old, as it turns out, does not pass and is not easily recalled; it is born anew in the world of *another* culture as a co-participant, an interlocutor, as the "second soul" of a person, another *cultura animi*. The historical Renaissance is not at all a mere rebirth of the Antiquity, and classical texts, collected and studied *ad cultum humanitatis* (for the cultivation of the humanity of the human).They are, by far, not the only things that cultivate a "humanist." Neither in the Latin West nor in the Greek East has Antiquity ever receded from cultural life. The "Humanism" of the fourteenth century is a discovery of how the *dividing threshold* of an epoch effects the concentration of *humanitatis*, the practice of "cultivating" the soul.

The humanists' occupation is *studia humanitatis*, a zealous study of everything that comprises the *wholeness* of the human spirit. But the "confession" of the new human, namely Petrarch, is titled *De secreto conflictu curarum suarum*, "On the Secret Conflict of Self-Care" (1343).[29] Petrarch's allegiance is torn between St. Augustine and the Roman classics. In all his studiousness, Augustine does not want to know anything but God and the soul, and so Petrarch finds solitude in Vaucluse, in order to immerse himself in the study of his classics. "Christ is my God; Cicero, on the other hand, is the prince of the language I use. I grant you that these ideas are widely separated, but I deny that they are at conflict with one another. Christ is the Word…" (Petrach 2005: The Book of Letters on Human Deeds. XXI, 10).[30] One is the Word, the other is the word: the contradiction between them is superficial, he tries to convince himself, and the provenance of both from the same truth is evident.

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[29]   See the Russian translation in the book (Petrarka 1915: 73–223). Petrarch's "confession," traditionally titled "Of the disdain toward the world," was a conversation with Augustine, who educates Francesco with citations from Cicero, Virgil, Horatio, Ovid, Juvenal…

[30]   Cf. Bibikhin's translation in (Petrarka 1982).

This polysemy, the dynamic pluri-existence of the human being, his being in the interstices, in the in-between, on the border, in the middle, the human as a *copula*-connection of all the forces and dimensions of the world: all this, perhaps, amounts to the historical discovery of the Renaissance. A human is *possible* according the essence of his human being. Such is the experience of this epoch. "If the human is equally imparted to distinct persons, places, and times," as Marsilio Ficino once wrote in *Platonic Theology*, "then it follows that it is not exhausted by any person, any place, or any time" (cit. in: Batkin 1990: 373).More definitive still, is the affirmation of the indefinite possibility of human being in the famous "Oration on the Dignity of Man" by Pico Della Mirandola (1486):

> God agreed that the human is created in an indeterminate image (*indiscretae opus imaginis*), and, having positioned him in the center of the world, said: 'We will not give you, Adam, neither your own place, nor a determinate image, nor any unique responsibility, so that you could choose, according to your own desire, your will, and your decision, your place, face, and responsibility. The image of other creatures is determined within the limits of the laws we have set. You, on the other hand, are not confined within any limits, and will define your image according to your decision, to the power of which I deliver you (Pico della Mirandola 2012).

Taking man, therefore, this creature of indeterminate image, He set him in the middle of the world and spoke to him: "We have given you, Oh Adam, no visage proper to yourself, no any endowment properly your own, in order that whatever place, whatever form, whatever gifts you may, with premeditation, select, these same you may have and possess through your own judgment and decision. The nature of all others creatures is defined and restricted within laws which We had lay down; you, by contrast, impeded by no such restrictions, may, by your own free will, to whose custody we have assigned you, trace for yourself the lineaments of your own nature"

Precisely, the renaissance-character of historicity (in other words, the capacity of cultural time-epochs to be reborn in other historical worlds as creative co-participants, and not only as recreated monuments) gives a real sense, as opposed to a merely nominal sense, to the notion of European culture. It seems that, in the contemporary world, everything is against this sense of culture: the fundamentalism of cultures-cults, the modern idea of synthesis, the notion of progressive development, "sublation," the theoretical meta-position of culturology, historical psychology, and semiotics. In the meantime, an inner debate, *polemos*, a dialogue of "spermatic *logoi*" of various possible cultural worlds, is transformed into the very content of certain works of contemporary culture (for example, Joyce's *Ulysses*). We learn how to pay a new kind of attention to everything

"that has fought with tooth and claw, struggled there" (Mandelshtam 1967); we learn how to understand the spermatic cultural *logoi*, constituting the very fabric of European culture. Epochs turn out to be neither separate "objects" for investigation, nor adventures, nor stages in a grand path, nor steps toward the ascent *per aspera ad astra,* but interlocutors and co-participants in contemporaneity.

"Contemporaneity," writes Bibikhin, "ought to become the encounter of times. The present is so important only because, through it, the mysterious depth of the past and the mysterious breadth of the future open one toward the other" (Bibikhin 1998: 18).The past, in its true sense, is realized as the event of the present; "the earlier has, in truth, not yet been."

> ...[antiquity] returns *for the first time*, because it *was* without ever having contained all the presents. The antiquity of the past as the present has not yet been but it will be. Renaissance introduces us into the knot, wherein history was tied, that is to say, the *present* tense, which is yet to arrive (Bibikhin 1988: 37–38, 45).

I will finish this essay with a reminder about the notion of "the great time span of culture," coined by M. Bakhtin. In this time-space we find not only the world of European culture as a whole, but also the European image of a worldwide culture. The image, which is utopian, like everything else in culture, is more of a regulative idea than a historical perspective. It is the horizon within which contemporary humans can, for the first time, enter the meaningful commencement of human being with the yet unheard-of radicalness.

Here is what I have in mind:

> From a vast world, nineteenth-century science and cultural consciousness drew out a tiny world, which has narrowed down even further. The East was barely represented in this tiny world. The world of literature and culture is, in its essence, as limitless as the universe. We are not referring to its geographical breadth (in this, it is limited), but to its *semantic depths* that are as bottomless as the depth of matter (Bakhtin 2002: 399).

The mutual understanding of centuries and millennia, of peoples, nations and cultures, has furnished the complex unity of all humanity, all human culture (the complex unity of human culture), as well as the complex unity of human literature. All this is only revealed at the level of the 'great time spans.' Every image needs to be understood and evaluated at the level of the 'great time span.' Analyses usually busy themselves with things in the narrow space of small time spans, that is, of contemporaneity, the recent past, and the imaginable future, be it desired or fearsome (Bakhtin 2002: 429).

'A great time span' is an infinite and unfinishable dialogue, wherein none of the meanings dies (Bakhtin 2002: 433).

There is nothing absolutely dead: every meaning will have its holiday of rebirth (Bakhtin 2002: 435).

Being confined within an epoch does not permit one to understand the future life of a work in subsequent centuries; this life appears as some kind of a paradox. Works break through the borders of their time and live in the centuries, i.e., in *great time spans*, not to mention that often (and, in the case of exceptional works—always) they lead a life that is more intense and fuller, than they did in their contemporaneity (Bakhtin 2002: 454).

Translated by Michael Marder

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