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Ern's and Golosovker's Worlds of truth against the intellectual symbol of Immanuel Kant

Introduction

Kant-Lykurgos, All-Destroying Kant¹, Kant-skeleton, Kant is peaking from behind the back of the militant Krupp, Kant-policeman of philosophy, Kant-evil... In Russian philosophical thought, there is no shortage of symbolic designations, comparisons to Kant or associations with Kant, such as the one brought up by A. A. Ermichev in the dispute between the editorial boards of the journals *Logos* and *Path*: "Everything that was associated with the name Kant was suspicious"². Each

¹ Rus. *Vsesokrushayushchiy Kant* – (Petrushenko 2020, p. 64)

² Aleksandr A. Ermichev, „Zhizn i dela Vladimira Frantsevicha Erna [The Life and Works of Vladimir Frantsevich Ern]“. w: Aleksandr A. Ermichev, *Ern Pro et Contra [Ern Pros and Cons]*. (SPB: RXGA 2006), 38.

of these designations has its own story, its own reasons, the justification of which can be the subject of a separate discussion and is examined in various ways³.

"To add one stroke to the painting..., this stroke will consist in the interpretation..."⁴. We could also use V. F. Ern's word frequency to state our intention.

In the case of our study, it will be a move in the image-problem of symbolism and symbols in Russian philosophy with an emphasis on I. Kant. Kant as an intellectual symbol. We will interpret part of the work of Vladimir Frantsevich Ern and Yakov Emmanuilovich Golosovker.

This path is determined by the quintessence of the radically grasped position contra towards Immanuel Kant, his work, and especially towards Kant as an intellectual symbol. They are the quintessence of mentioned critical and symbolical positions. Why this choice? What unites this two 20th century Russian thinkers? They are not only united by the fact that they formulate their positions in the 20th century and that their thinking has strong religious foundations. They share a common approach to thinking about this world that needs to define good and bad, normal and abnormal, to determine what can save humanity and keep it on the path of authentic life values. They are united by the need to clearly name the roots of evil and also to determine ways to resist evil. What unites them is the spiritual metaphysics of the silver age. In the case of Golosovker, this connection will require further comment. A mere statement referring to Golosovker's unpublished letter to A. Bely, which is associated with 1921, the time when they were both members of the Moscow 'Vol'fila', would certainly not suffice here.

What unites them above all is the need to come to terms with Kant for good. Their interest is strictly tied to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, which is

³ See Dmitry Romanov, „I. Kant i russkij simvolism: kritika "ocharovanoj dali" [I. Kant and Russian Symbolism: Criticism of the "Enchanted Distance"]" *Vestnik Rossijskogo universiteta druzhby narodov* [RUDN Journal of Philosophy], 28 (2024); Ilya Kukulin, „The World War against the spirit of Immanuel Kant: philosophical Germanophobia in Russia in 1914–1915 and the birth of cultural racism“. *Studies in East European Thought*. 1-2 (2014); Viktor L. Petrushenko „Kontseptsiya imaginatsii Y. E. Golosovkera v kontekste ekzistentsialnoj dramy cheloveka [The concept of imagination by Ya. E. Golosovker in the context of the existential drama of man]“ w: *Stupeni zhitia Y. E. Golosovkera* [Yakov Golosovker's degrees of life], red. Marya Savelieva i in. (Kyiv: Dmitro Burago Publishing House 2020).

⁴ Vladimir F. Ern, „Sushchnost nemetskogo fenomenalizma [The Essence of German Phenomenalism]“. W: *Ern Pro et Contra [Ern Pros and Cons]*, red. Aleksandr A. Ermichev, (SPB: RXGA 2006b), 425. He formulates it in reference to the problem of phenomenism.

crucial in their contra position. What unites them is their grasp of Kant as the demonic figure worthy of opprobrium. Kant as a thinker who is the source of what is dangerous and fatally wrong for humanity. A thinker who must be fought and defeated.

These obvious and well-known references might seem insufficient. It could be argued that they may be applied to more contemporary thinkers such as L. M. Lopatin, P. A. Florensky, a close friend and colleague of Ern, or S. L. Frank.

What unites Ern and Golosovker is phenomenal erudition; their work has a high professional value, the influence of which goes beyond the boundaries of Russian philosophical discourse.

In the case of V. F. Ern, his brilliant work and academic progress in the university environment, in which he always maintained his professional integrity, are known. His conceptualization of the history of Russian philosophy⁵ has still not received the necessary signum laudis. One can mention the contribution in the main area of his academic interest – epistemology with significant overlap into metaphysics, which is presented in treatises such as: *The Nature of Philosophical Doubt* (1910), *The Nature of Thought* (1913), *The Nature of Scientific Thought* (1914) etc. Ern's epistemological considerations of a strictly professional nature are shaped to a large extent in the critical investigations of Kant with a clear and unwavering religious-metaphysical anchoring in faith. At the same time, Ern is well aware that Kant did not wake up from his dogmatic sleep alone.

In his fundamental work *Struggle for the Logos* Kant represents for Ern the culmination of a certain heritage of thought that was inherent in European philosophy. Ern mentions Martin Luther and philosophers such as David Hume and George Berkeley in *Struggle for the Logos*. This culmination for him consists above all in the greatest possible suppression of the real objective existence of the world, which Kant accomplished with his phenomenism.

Ern's systematic interest is also clearly manifested in his work *Critique of Kant's concept of truth*. The very first sentence in which Ern sets the task of philosophers to seek truth is symptomatic. Criticizing Kant, he notes: "between the understanding of truth and the understanding of experience there are differences

⁵ See Oleg Marchenko, „Vladimir Ern i jego koncepcja russkoj filosofii [Vladimir Ern and his concept of Russian philosophy]“. w: *Ern Pro et Contra [Ern Pros and Cons]*, red. Aleksandr A. Ermichev, (SPB: RXGA 2006).

of enormous proportions”⁶. This judgment of Ern can be fully acceptable, even without any criticism or reference to Kant. This is Ern's position, which is clearly rooted in the positioning of philosophy as the search for the truth. At the same time, criticism would not necessarily have to enter the space of Kant's philosophical contribution in the field of epistemology and the assessment of Kant's contribution. That contribution, where Kant selects the frameworks in which true knowledge is possible, and where it cannot be reached. It is questionable whether the internal contradictions that Ern finds in Kant in this treatise are not exclusively related to the fact that he points out different frameworks in Kant's thinking about the possibilities of knowledge, which Ern subsequently freely connects with each other; that is, he measures the incommensurable. In Kant, we could say that truth is not an absolute category, at least because there are spheres of the transcendental and the transcendent, where the distinction between truth and falsehood cannot be applied with absolute validity, or at all. However, Ern clearly considers the criticism of these positions to be essential.

Golosovker, with his essays on *The Logic of Myth*, more precisely in the section on the Logic of Ancient Myth, ranks in the study of myth with authors such as W. Otto, M. Eliade, C. Lévi Strauss, L. Hejdanek, B. Malinowski. His triad *the Spirit – the imaginative absolute – culture*, his contribution to the understanding of the imaginative, which forms the logic of culture, where *anything can be thought and created from nothing*, are timeless. In these essays, both introductory and supportive of the imaginative absolute, Golosovker openly points to the ancient tradition, German romanticism, and the tradition of German philosophy with a significant emphasis on the work of I. Kant. Especially in an attempt to argue in favor of the necessity of philosophy as knowledge of truth. This is a fundamental position identical to that of V. F. Ern.

Golosovker argues in favor of the necessity of understanding being as a concept that is not ontological, but “Being is an imaginative and ethical concept at the same time”⁷. He argues in favor of the imaginative absolute, which is the instinct that creates culture and is thus “in opposition to science and

⁶ Vladimir F. Ern, „Kritika kantovskogo ponyatiya istiny [Critique of Kant's concept of truth]“. w: *Kant Pro et Contra* [“Kant Pros and Cons”] red. Aleksandr I. Abramov, (SPB: RXGA 2005), 731.

⁷ Yakov E. Golosovker, *Logika mifa. [The Logic of Myth]*. (SPB: Universiteskaya kniga 2010), 13.

rationalism"⁸. He also presents the following position: "that all of the so-called idealistic philosophy was actually an imaginative philosophy, and that its idealistic, reality-detached vision of the world is actually only an imaginative reality, as is the entire spiritual culture"⁹. Golosovker intensively tries to deal with the obstacles of a metaphysical nature that he finds in the rationalism of German thought and, to a fundamental extent, in Kant's antithetics from the *Critique of Pure Reason*. These are considerations that are conceived at a high professional level, for the interested and well-rounded reader. They often seem quite detached and as if they are reluctant to clearly name the source of what Golosovker is fundamentally at odds with. It is precisely in this position that one can find the path to engaged writing, to work that is intended to penetrate the more public scholarly space, to the work of *Dostoevsky and Kant, Reflections of a Reader on the Novel The Brothers Karamazov* and Kant's treatise *The Critique of Pure Reason*. In this work, we can also see that Golosovker chooses a freer genre, philosophical essayism with elements of literary criticism and his own dramatization, in order to clearly formulate programmatic positions and fundamental problems.

To my dear brothers ... who fight for their homeland with a pure soul ... I dedicate this little book Through this dedication to his texts on contemporary events, which were published under the title *Sword and Cross* in 1915, one can penetrate the "second sphere - social activity"¹⁰ of Ern's creative work. He presents it in parallel with his academic work, and in an extremely committed form. In the collected texts, we have the opportunity to see authentic stimuli to which Ern reacts and how he immediately perceives and feels them in his essence¹¹. In the section *Sword and Cross (instead of a preface)* we see committed words: "The clash of the spirit of Germany and the spirit of Russia is for me the inner axis of the European conflict" it is a fight, a rivalry, a clash of "two global historical forces"¹². He then adds that "power is not strong through force, but through truth and only through

⁸ Ibidem, 33.

⁹ Ibidem, 8.

¹⁰ Ermichev, „Zhizn i dela Vladimira Frantsevicha Erna [The Life and Works of Vladimir Frantsevich Ern]“, 35.

¹¹ It primarily concerns the texts such as *Ostrye Russko-Polskie otnosheniya, Golos sobitij, Velikoe v malom, I na zemli mir*, which had previously appeared in periodicals of the time such as *Novoje Zveno, Ruskaja Mysl, Utre Rosii, Birzhevye vedomosti*.

¹² Vladimir F. Ern, *Mech i krest [Sword and Cross]*. (Moscow: Tipografia I. D. Sitina 1915), 5.

truth"¹³ so that he can come to the mission that the Russian army is a *spiritual force*.

From this committed work, two other texts that Ern places in direct connection appear to be essential, in proportion to our (symbolic) interest. *The Essence of German Phenomenalism* represents an attempt to explain the criticism, which, according to Ern, consists of a misunderstanding of his intentions presented in the lecture *From Kant to Kupp*.

The engaged thinking of Ern and Golosovker struggles with what is inappropriate, evil, downright pathological, and dangerous in their time. The thinkers here move more significantly in the space of *obschchestvennoj mysli* than in the field of strict academic philosophy.

What unites them is an unwavering belief in the possibility of knowing the truth. It is the knowledge of the truth that determines philosophical research as such; that determines philosophy. If philosophy does not strive to attain the truth, it has no meaning and significance, it is nonsense¹⁴.

It is a creative performance which will be interpreted in the spirit of the core premise of this article, and based on this interpretation, we will create a stroke on the painting – Kant as a symbol; an intellectual symbol.

Kant and Ern's World of Truth

Mentioned Ern's critical remark from his work *Critique of Kant's concept of truth*: "between the understanding of truth and the understanding of experience there are differences of enormous proportions"¹⁵ does not originate only in the epistemological and logical dimensions of thought. It should be noted that in thinking about logic, Ern appropriately captures the nature of logic that Kant is dealing with (for example in his essay *Announcement of the Programme of Lectures for the Winter Semester 1765–1766* and links this to the instrumentarium of formal logic, which is close to Ern).

We would say that Ern's critique is more explicitly fundamental and metaphysical in character. The certainty of which Ern writes here, the justification

¹³ Ibidem.

¹⁴ Ern, „Kritika kantovskogo ponyatiya istiny [Critique of Kant's concept of truth]“, 729.

¹⁵ Ibidem, 731.

of which he seeks here, and which Kant fails to provide, goes well beyond the gnoseological horizon. The following words of Ern sound more than illustrative here:

"Kant's refusal to answer the question (of truth – certainty, author of manuscript) which he poses is not absolutely justified. Here is the source of all other transcendental conclusions; the logical dimensions of this necessity are colossal, even heaven-calling. This is not just the humble personal opinion of a resident of Koenigsberg, Kant, it is the profound foundation of the whole of critical philosophy."¹⁶.

What we also consider fundamental is Ern's point that Kant's foundational positions have implications beyond logical and epistemological investigations. They have a practical impact, affecting the spirit of the age, an age devastatingly stigmatized by war. In order to make the most effective use of the scope given by the study, we will deliberately not address other dimensions of possible impact and will concentrate on the contexts announced.

It is possible to say that in such a heritage, such a tradition of thought, which Ern brought to the form of genius in his philosophical work of Kant, in the intentions of the arguments of Ern one can find a justification for the emergence of those misfortunes which afflicted Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The misfortunes that culminated in the First World War, Ern and the whole world more or less directly experienced. We believe that it was the events of the first months of the First World War that had a strong influence on the harsh rhetoric that Ern uses in his speech *From Kant to Krupp*.

Until these moments, our text represented an attempt to approach the understanding of Kant by the Russian Neo-Slavophile Ern. To approach the implications of Kant's philosophy in its broader implications and also what foundations the philosophy of Ern were, but above all, on what his critique Kant was based. We then attempt to assess the relevance of Ern's approach. We would like to do so also in view of the need to specify a position on our conviction that Ern is worthy of the label of a *purposive interpreter* of the work of Kant himself. It will also contribute to the motivation and thinking about Kant as an intellectual symbol, to which it was popular in Russia to comment. We will allow ourselves to do so by presenting one idea from the introduction of Ern's speech *From Kant to Krupp*. Ern here defines himself against the contemporary evaluation of Kant and emphatically rejects it. Even the opinion of his time for Ern becomes one of

¹⁶ Ibidem, 729.

the key stimuli for writing this speech with its distinctive meaning. According to Ern, Kant denies man this world and access to its knowledge. This is an interpretation that too reductively concludes the message of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Ern can be considered as a purposeful interpreter of the work of Kant, as we see in Ern's attempt to define himself against the contemporary evaluation of Kant: "Kant and Fichte are as guilty of the militaristic intentions of the Prussian Junkers as Shakespeare or Tolstoy, and therefore: long live Kant and Hegel and long perish the Teutonic beasts"¹⁷. We suggest that such pre-sets towards contemporary discourse and Kant form the premises on which to make any other critical and pejorative comment on Kant cannot even be evaluated. If we have ventured to assert that Ern is classifiable in the camp of purposeful interpreters of Kant, we also base our claim on the fact that Ern is almost exclusively focused on a single work by Kant, namely the aforementioned *Critique of Pure Reason*. Only at one place in the *Struggle for the Logos*, does he mention the *Critique of Practical Reason*, but without any major implementation implications¹⁸, as a kind of confirmation of what he argued in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In this line of our argument, we cannot shake the conviction that there may have been a deliberate disregard within Ern's strategy of such writings of Kant's as *Perpetual Peace*, *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose*, *Conjectural Beginning of Human History*, and other works by Kant, which represent a negation of any militarism, especially in the horizon of the future.

As it has been mentioned, Ern's *The Essence of German Phenomenalism* is intended to explain positions that might seem unclear in the published speech *From Kant to Krupp*. There is no need to go into detail about the assessment of contemporary criticism, so the line this article has outlined will be followed. The opinion itself clearly points out what is to be explained in detail. This text can also be understood as a looser interpretation of phenomenalism, which he publishes in a more academic format in the work *Struggle for the Logos*.

Ern asks the question here: *What is Phenomenalism?* Its repetitive nature undoubtedly keeps the reader's attention. The problem, however, is that its own justification or even its obviousness and content is not clearly formulated.

¹⁷ Vladimir F. Ern, „Od Kanta k Kruppu [From Kant to Krupp]“. w: *Ern Pro et Contra [Ern Pros and Cons]*, red.

Aleksandr A. Ermichev, A. (SPB: RXGA 2006a), 415.

¹⁸ In the work *Critique of Kant's concept of truth* he writes "and in other works of Kant" Ern, „Kritika kantovskogo ponyatiya istiny [Critique of Kant's concept of truth]“, 731. But what works he is referring to is not made clear to the reader by Ern.

The problem with this essay is that German phenomenism as a whole is reduced to the performance of Kant. On the one hand, Ern thus suggests that this problem did not exist as a discourse. On the other hand, he clearly declares that the very formation of the problem of phenomenism is tied to the processes of capturing reality that shaped the philosophy of the 17th and 18th centuries. This only intensifies the problematic nature of his interpretation.

We already know from *From Kant to Krupp* that it is Kant's phenomenism that is responsible for everything bad¹⁹. However, in *The Essence of German Phenomenism*, the answer to the repetitive question is covered up with inconsistent and detached imagery of the masculine and feminine principles or starting points in epistemology. The attempt to answer is covered up with considerations about the active (masculine) form of the subject and the passive (feminine) formed materia of the object. The only relevant attitude towards Kant's phenomenism can be encountered here:

"He expresses the knowable reality as that which is created and built entirely and without remainder by the knowing reason, the reality that is inaccessible to knowledge is understood by him as purely questionable, as a transcendental *Grenzbegriff*."²⁰

This approach of Ern definitely supports the ferocity of his writing, he is able to accentuate the fundamentality of the motif of phenomenism, but he is unable to grasp it. Ern is not working with Kant as a philosopher here; Kant is an argumentative instrument whose separate conceptual elements he assesses as the final results of his research in the area under consideration, i.e. in epistemology and metaphysics. Assessing him in the context of his time, it would be obvious that he is unable to be as historically and philosophically honest in his research as other of his contemporaries, such as L. M. Lopatin, P. I. Novgorodtsev, V. V. Vernadskyj, or A. Belyj. An explanation could also be that this is not his intention.

When confronting Ern with Kant, we have emphasized several times the differences between the confrontation with the work of Kant almost exclusively represented by the *Critique of Pure Reason* and Kant as a certain symbol of thought, against which Ern delineates. To reflect on this bifurcation of perception Kant, we were also greatly stimulated by a specific phenomenon of the early 20th century in the history of Russian philosophy: the dual understanding of the notion of *Neo-Kantianism*. On the one hand, it is a return to Kant in the 20th century, on the other hand, it is a return to the teachings of one of the schools of

¹⁹ Ern, „Od Kanta k Kruppu“, 416.

²⁰ Ern, „Sushchnost nemetskogo fenomenalizma, 429.

Neo-Kantianism²¹. The above remark is deliberately included in this part of the thesis. For it leads us to questions which we do not wish to answer properly at this point, and which remain open to further investigation, which would merit more detailed elaboration later. We will consolidate them into a single question: does Ern's effort to properly resolve the ambiguities in the creation of Kant's own efforts to overcome his contemporary ideological rivals, stemming from the traditions of the Marburg and Baden schools of Neo-Kantianism?

Although it is relevant to subject this approach to criticism, we feel it necessary to point out that Ern's approach also embodies for us a very specifically grasped expression of respect and admiration for the work of Kant.

Ern, and his sharp critique of Kant's legacy carries an ostentatiously negative charge, but behind the radical-sounding and expressively religiously determined rhetoric, our reading reveals a dose of admiration. We see it as a specific kind of reverence for Kant, as an intellectual rival and initiator of negative civilizing activities. Kant appears to us as a righteous enemy; it is he who outlined one of the worlds in Ern's view. It was a world waiting and attacking from the trenches of one side of the battlefield, thus coming into open conflict with the world in which Ern wanted to live. Kant in Ern's conception gave birth to a world that wanted to assert itself at the expense of decimating the world of the values of authentic living Christianity, Eastern Christianity. Ern's fundamental, metaphysically grounded critique of Kant takes on the character of an extraordinary form of something like hatred. Maybe the hatred is not the best

²¹ It points out Aleksandr I. Abramov, „O russkom kantianstve i neokantianstve v zhurnale Logos [On Russian Kantianism and Neo-Kantianism in the Logos magazine]”, w: *Kant i filosofia v Rosii* [Kant and the Philosophy in Russia], red. Zakhar A. Kamenskij i in. (Moscow: Nauka, 1994). Four years later Aleksandr I. Abramov, „Kantianstvo v russkoj universitetskoj filosofii [Kantianism in Russian University Philosophy]” *Voprosy filosofii* [Problems of Philosophy] 1 (1998), his study appears to suggest yet a third approach – rather broadly conceived – to which it is inherent that the work of I. Kant becomes the source of the Russian thinkers' own conception of their philosophical positions. It should be added, however, that the aforementioned addition does not seem to be consistently followed and functional in the author's interpretation. In the aforementioned study, the author describes the reflection of the legacy of various schools of European Neo-Kantianism as a manifestation of this third approach. The initiative of Ern and Golosovker, when framed in this way, would appear to be an effort to personify the first and third initiatives with a distinct element with a strong element or need for a fundamental settlement.

word. It is worth to point out different word: "My feud²² is not against the substance of the German nation, but against its evil, monstrous form, to which its 70 million members have joined."²³ He formulates these words in relation to the line formed by Eckhart, Kant and Krupp, with whom Ern is forced to contend. Not to sound lyrical, but the feud which Ern also harbors towards Kant is an expression of the fact that Kant is a serious figure. A figure to be dealt with as the leader of one tradition of thought. It is not about common antipathy or intolerance, an unsympathetic feeling. It carries with it the demonstration that someone is at least our equal. Often, however, it says even more: it ascribes importance to the partner.

Kant, or what is derived from his teaching, must be done away with, overcome, eliminated. But at the same time, Kant's work creates a clearly demarcated evil for the Russian philosopher. By its systematic character it enables the Russian philosophical spirit to understand what it is defining itself.

Kant and Y. E. Golosovker's World of Truth

"Here the Antithesis battles with Thesis, the battlefield is Dostoevsky's novel (*The Brothers Karamazov*, note by author of the paper)". Surely no reader of the Russian writer, translator, and philosopher Yakov Emanuelovich Golosovker's work *Dostoevsky and Kant, Reflections of a Reader on the Novel The Brothers Karamazov and Kant's treatise The Critique of Pure Reason* would stay indifferent to this statement.

The ideas of the philosopher-systematist, as Golosovker describes himself, are realized in the space of cultural studies with a strong connection to literature and psychological themes. His ideas are born out of a particular desire for a synthesis that could lead to what is and will forever be universally valid.: a synthesis that establishes a proper grasp of the normal in human life and thus sets a normative framework for man and his life in society. This aspiration is closely linked to the spirit of the age in which Golosovker was value-embedded – the silver age. Although he lived in a historically differently defined epoch (In

²² Rus. *vrazhda*

²³ Ern, „Sushchnost nemetskogo fenomenalizma [The Essence of German Phenomenalism]“, 433.

1936, he was arrested and until 1939 was in the camp in Vorkuta), in terms of values and ideas he was the last of the silver age Mohicans²⁴.

Golosovker as a philosopher-systematist does not appear to us to be a systematist in the sense of creating some great conceptions of thought. It is systematicity as insightfulness and incisiveness in both reviewing and working out various details from different perspectives. But this sometimes leads directly to speculativeness and unnecessary complexity in his thinking or, more precisely, in the formulation of his attitudes, his own work. He had a special interest to the Classical epoch (because of the wholesome unity of philosophy and literature) and to German philosophy. He actively translated German and classical literary and philosophical texts. In the text under study, such complications are tied precisely to motifs from Kant's first *Critique*.

In order to make the dramatic plot outlined by Golosovker clear, it is necessary to clarify Kant's place in these considerations and his position towards Dostoevsky's novel. Naturally as Golosovker sees it. More precisely, as Golosovker wants to see it: "Wherever a thinker would go on the philosophical road, he would have to cross the bridge that bears the name Kant."²⁵ For him, Kant's work is "one of the seven wonders of rational constructivism"²⁶. As we will show, it is Golosovker's own creative approach, writing according to himself, that will be pre-eminent and dominant in determining the relationship between Dostoevsky and Kant.

In the specific *Afterword*, which is in terms of its merits a *Preface* or *Introduction*, we encounter an interpretation which in its consequences shows an internal contradiction. On the one hand, Golosovker suggests Dostoevsky's pervasive interest in Kant. Dostoevsky's vehement interest in reading the *Critique of Pure Reason* is here supported by a reference from a letter by Dostoevsky to his brother dated 22 February 1854 when he states that the *Critique of Pure Reason* came in handy. However, he adds in the margins of the same correspondence:

"Kant - this is not just the German philosopher Kant. Kant represents in the novel European philosophy in general, critical philosophy in particular, and

²⁴ Such a description is attributed to Golosovker by W. Bielousova in her work *The Creativity of Jakov Golosovker in the Context of Russian and Western European Culture* (2012).

²⁵ Yakov E. Golosovker, Dostoyevskiy i Kant. Razmyshleniye chitateliya nad romanom Brat'ya Karamazovy i traktatom Kanta Kritika chistogo razuma [Dostoevsky and Kant, Reflections of a Reader on the Novel *The Brothers Karamazov* and Kant's treatise *The Critique of Pure Reason*]. (Moskva: Izdatelstvo akademii nauk SSSR 1963), 35.

²⁶ Ibidem.

with it Dostoevsky consciously enters into a duel in the pages of the novel, and at the same time unconsciously into a duel with himself"²⁷.

Perhaps it would be correct to say that he is only the symbol, but not Kant as such. Golosovker's afterword of the struggle with oneself, which ties in naturally with Dostoevsky, sounds extremely vague. As does the following justification for the "presence" of Kant in Dostoevsky's unfinished novel: "The reference to the *Critique of Pure Reason* is found in the novel: that inimical and poisonous word, so embellishing the novel – critique"²⁸. In addition, this seems to contradict the fact that Kant is like a symbol from another part of this conclusion, which is actually an introduction. It seems to us that Dostoevsky is "pushed" into this reading of the *Critique of Pure Reason* by Golosovker.

It is noticeable that there may be other inspirations. In fact, in the aforementioned letter, Dostoevsky also writes about the need for the works of other philosophers such as Vico or Hegel. We do not wish to be snide, but if he had introduced these claims in his introduction, where they properly belong, he would probably have revealed his cards enough to put off some of his readers. He would have done what probably happens to a large proportion of readers of some crime stories, where a nonsensical climax negates the value of the whole story and plot. If the reader had glimpsed the denouement, he might not have even started reading. However, it would not be due to finding out who the wanted perpetrator is. In the case of Golosovker, the revelation would be that this is not a confrontation between Dostoevsky and Kant. That it is a confrontation of Golosovker's metaphysical attitudes with the symbol, or more faithfully, the dramatizing *illusion of Kant* and the scene created by Dostoevsky's novel. This is precisely how one might describe the platform for the emergence of Golosovker's own reflections.

How Golosovker thinks Dostoevsky's first criticism suited him can be read from the explanation of the title, i.e., that it is not *Kant and Dostoevsky* but *Dostoevsky and Kant* that is being titled: "It is not about the influence of the comprehensive doctrine of Kant on Dostoevsky, but only about the *Critique of Pure Reason* and about the writer-thinker Dostoevsky as a reader of this work of Kant, just about how Dostoevsky read Kant"²⁹. The key position is taken by the following statement: "Dostoevsky not only became acquainted with the

²⁷ Ibidem. 96.

²⁸ Ibidem. 97.

²⁹ Ibidem. 39.

antithetics of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, but also thought it through”³⁰. It is this “rethinking” that appears to be Golosovker’s preeminent product and determines his entire work. Indeed, it is Golosovker who seems to realize this particular “rethinking.” He does so in a doggedly dramatic way. The product of this superstructure of Golosovker’s is, in all likelihood, a declaration referring directly to Dostoevsky’s work with Kant:

“Dostoevsky made Kant, or more precisely the antithesis of his antinomies, the symbol of all that he struggled against (both in himself and with his adversaries) as a writer, publicist, and thinker. Moreover, he himself engaged in a duel with Kant-antithesis”³¹.

It is questionable to what extent this dispute is a dispute fabricated by Golosovker. We venture to say that it is by him to a fundamental, or even exclusive, extent. As in the case of Ern’s inconsistency and expediency with Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, we venture to say that the object of Golosovker’s authentic interest is not only not Kant’s antithetics, he is not even authentically interested in all four antinomies of pure reason, he is only interested in one of them, and that too in the form he formulates, so to speak, in the image of his own doctrine.

“Is there a god and a creator of the world? Is there no god and creator of the world?”³². This is Dostoevsky’s alleged grasp of this: “Thesis. Something belongs to the world which is, either as a part of it or as its cause, a supremely necessary being”³³; “Antithesis. Nowhere, neither in the world nor outside it, does there exist an intrinsically necessary being as its cause”³⁴. In this approach by Golosovker, there is a fundamental problematic moment of a formal-logical nature or also attributable to the theory of speech acts. It is related to the formulation of thesis and antithesis in the form of a question. The problem lies in the extent to which a question can be accepted as a thesis and antithesis respectively. From the point of view of formal logic³⁵, this would be unacceptable.

³⁰ Ibidem. 38.

³¹ Ibidem. 38 – 39.

³² Ibidem. 39.

³³ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998), 490.

³⁴ Ibidem. 491.

³⁵ The fact that Golosovker is close to logic is not only evidenced by its placement in the title of his *opus magnum* (*The Logic of Myth*). In Golosovker’s work, we can see that he is familiar with Aristotelian formal logic, classical formal logic (he refers to the *principium identitatis* or *principium contradictionis*). It is possible to see that he also works with logic

It is related to the fact that from the point of view of formal logic, a question cannot be considered as a proposition. Indeed, it is, at the very least, quite problematic to ascribe to questions - even if only assumed - truth-values from which the truth or falsity of propositions, for example, could be judged subsequently in terms of relations of contradictoriness or contrariness. That is to say, in relations that seem appropriate for the assessment of Kant's antithetics. If Golosovker is starting from some alternative form of logic that would admit that questions or commands are represented using the same constructions as propositions (or admit questions as statements of a particular language, e.g., as in the case of dynamic epistemic logic), he is not reporting it. In our opinion, this alternative is not the case.

Leaving aside the problem of formulating the thesis as a question, which is admittedly a fundamental formal-logical problem, a strong impulse in the approach we have outlined is Golosovker's assessment of the nature of antinomies as an issue that stands in Kant's doctrine without clear justification. It is as if it were the sole object of Kant's concern, the culminating point of his work. His "fixation" exclusively on the *Critique of Pure Reason* appears to be a significant shortcoming. To approach the extent of Golosovker's reductionism, it would be possible to point to a broader context of antithetics, such as that offered by a pair of authors from the University of Heidelberg, Peter McLaughlin and Oliver Schlaudt³⁶, who seek to explore Kant's antithetics through the logical hexagon³⁷. A broader context could be presented to us by Sadiq Jalal Al-Azm³⁸ based on a substantially richer bibliographical base of Kant's original work. The latter reconstructs Kant's attitudes also from such works as the *Prolegomena to*

in other modalities: he discusses dialectical logic; logic as something that characterizes common sense, when *something cannot come from nothing*; he accepts the logic of the mysterious, when thanks to our desire, *anything can come from nothing*. These modalities allow him to think about the logic of myth. This can be seen in his reflections on *The Logic of Ancient Myth*, which are part of *The Logic of Myth*.

³⁶ Philip McLaughlin, Oliver Schlaudt, „Kant's Antinomies of Pure Reason and the Hexagon of Predicate Negation“. *Logica Universalis*, 1 (2020).

³⁷ We can also mention research of Kristoffer Willert, „Semantic Anti-Realism in Kant's Antinomy Chapter“, *Open Philosophy*, 5 (2022); or Damian Melamedoff-Vosters, „Representation and Reality in Kant's Antinomy of Pure Reason“, *Kantian Review*. 28 (2023).

³⁸ Sadiq Al-Azm, *The Origins of Kant's Arguments in the Antinomies*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1972)

Any Future Metaphysics that may be called Science or from correspondence with Marcus Herz and Christian Garve.

We could certainly list a number of other works, but that is not our intention, and so we will stick with just these two. We believe that these are sufficient excursus to reinforce on the merits the suspicion that Golosovker is being deliberately selective in his approach to the problem of antinomies. For Kant, antinomies are an initial issue, a guiding stimulus as captured by Al-Azm, not the end result of his reasoning, which should lead to some inevitable marasmus in the affliction of the world. The motif of antinomies thus becomes merely "fabulative," dramatizing Golosovker's interpretation. The question arises; does this criticism merely pave the way for Golosovker's peculiar conception of *the imaginative absolute*?

Conclusion

"The Name-symbols Christ, Judas, Herostratus, so often found in the works, are fundamental to the author's logic and in the philosophical work *The Imaginative Absolute*"³⁹. It is noticeable that the symbol is not alien to his thinking, on the contrary, it is intentionally connected with his work. Kant, not only with Golosovker, but also with Ern, should also be added to it.

As we mentioned in the introduction and as W. Bielousova points out, thinking about symbolism and symbols is nothing new in relation to the Russian philosophical thought. Dealing with expressive symbolism also has its own specific practical dimension in the Russian philosophical and broader environment. It depends on circumstance that this expression (symbolism) is not used primarily because of the author's creative interest, but, for example, in an attempt to present the author's ideas and avoid the censorship to which literary works (including philosophical texts) were subjected. Y. E. Mandeshtam's *tarakhan* designation is well known, with which he wanted to symbolically encompass Y. V. Stalin, unfortunately unsuccessfully.

As we have also shown, it is nothing new even in relation to Kant. A. Bely is a well-known example. On the one hand, his symbols skeleton and policeman of philosophy can be perceived as mocking expressions, but in the article

³⁹ Vera Bielousova. 2012. „Tvorchestvo Jakova Golosovkera v kontekste russkoj i zapadnoevropejskoj kultury [The Creativity of Yakov Golosovker in the Context of Russian and Western European Culture]“ *Studia Rossica Posnaniensia*, 37 (2012): 26.

Criticism and Symbolism, which was written for the magazine *Vesi* and appeared in the second issue in 1904, he combines his reasoning with an expression of creative respect and tribute to this unique thinker. What is interesting from A. Bely's approach is that, in addition to his work with the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he has a noticeable interest in and direct reference to the rarely discussed work of I. Kant, i.e. to the very first published work *Gedanken von der wahren Schätzung der lebendigen Kräfte*. According to Bely, the frameworks that Kant formulates for the possibilities of human knowledge also form entry positions to the religious and spiritual Christian perception of life. With its boundaries, it allows entry into other, qualitatively different and, in Bely's understanding, even higher dimensions of thinking. Although it is not possible to structure them precisely and strictly logically and to present them in an argumentative manner, they reveal depth in another way, namely symbolically.

Highly valuable contribution which is directly linked with the legacy of I. Kant is possible to find in paper of D. D. Romanov *I. Kant and Russian Symbolism: Criticism of the "Enchanted Distance"*. Attention of author is focused on the philosophical systems of V.S. Solovyov, A. Bely, V.I. Ivanov and P.A. Florensky. Mentioned Russian thinker are united by the similarity of critical positions regarding the teachings of I. Kant. D. D. Romanov also indicates the homogeneity of symbolist philosophy itself in its relation to legacy of I. Kant and transcendental idealism. What unites them is the resolution of antinomies that Kant's work generates as a kind of religious creativity. D. D. Romanov proceeds from the position that Russian thought with its theological and teleological imprint is formed as a critical reworking of foreign concepts. This is the methodological position that D.D. Romanov adheres to. The author also points out that Russian symbolism as an artistic and literary phenomenon is rooted in the Western European tradition and the romanticism of Baudler or Goethe. This can be considered the most general level of understanding Russian symbolism, or symbolism in the Russian environment. However, on the philosophical level, according to the author, it is a "completely independent" phenomenon⁴⁰. It represents a unique synthesis of deep asceticism, iconography, eschatology, and the search for God. It is here, according to D. D. Romanov, that the reception of Kant's teachings has its special position.

⁴⁰ Dmitry D. Romanov, „I. Kant i russkij simvolism: kritika "ocharovanoj dali" [I. Kant and Russian Symbolism: Criticism of the "Enchanted Distance"]" *Vestnik Rossijskogo universiteta druzhby narodov* [RUDN Journal of Philosophy], 28 (2024): 317.

It would be possible to include Ern and Golosovker in this line. And not only include them. It would be possible to follow up on this and deepen the perception of symbolism in relation to Kant. And this is done through what we have already called the term intellectual symbol. Kant is definitely in this position.

We are aware that this is an assessment with the character of a reflection on a stated problem. We feel that there is no better place to present our vision of the issue to the reader and we understand that such positions must be seen in the context of variables that are ever present. In considering the nature of Ern's (dis)respect, we cannot help but reflect on another historical-philosophical fact, namely, to refer to Kant was popular. This is particularly important because this often-machinated attitude can have both the consonant dimension and the popular object of criticism dimension, which is not negligible with the optics we have chosen. We mean to suggest that Ern (and Golosovker) are examples of this. Our aim is to point out that this is a phenomenon that cannot be ignored.

The intellectual symbol issue is a tendency inherent in the Russian intellectual milieu, which falls not only on Kant but also on thinkers like Hegel, in particular, not bypassing F. M. A. Voltaire, D. Diderot, A. Comte, J. S. Mill, or more currently on M. Foucault, M. Heidegger or S. Huntington or F. Fukuyama.

Their names often represent vast philosophical legacy of the time or the Western thought of the time or Western philosophy as such⁴¹. It happens that the sanctioning of their original work does not take place at all, or only in a limited or expediently reduced form.

These are reflections oriented either to separate works. In the case of Ern and Golosovker, it was the first criticism of Kant. Or these reflections are tied to separate motifs. In their grasp, the problem is that the selected motifs are

⁴¹ The functionality of Kant as an intellectual symbol in Russian thought reveals a problematic position. The apparently purposeful use of Kant brings with it the problem of how extensive historical and philosophical connections Kant as an intellectual symbol represents. Ern repeatedly points to German phenomenism, to the Germanic spirit, to the fact that his feud is not with the German nation but its perverted modality. The fact that he definitely does not represent the West as a whole is noted by O. V. Marchenko, referring to Ern's polemic with S. L. Frank Oleg Marchenko, „Vladimir Ern i jego koncepcja russkoj filosofii“. w: *Ern Pro et Contra*, red. Aleksandr A. Ermichev, (SPB: RXGA 2006), 828. However, the broader, Western civilizational dimension is emphasized by Ermichev: "Ern's goal lies in the justification of the faith of the fathers, its militant defense against the encroachments of Western civilization", Ermichev, „Zhizn i dela Vladimira Frantsevicha Erna“, 34.

interpreted in isolation, sometimes as the final results of Kant's reflections. As be seen in the criticism of the phenomenism in Ern or antithetics in Golosovker. Here, the selective approach and simplified interpretation were most clearly present. It is clear that neither the historical-philosophical assessment of Kant's legacy in Ern nor Golosovker, nor even a systematic grasp, at the level of epistemology and metaphysics is decisive for them. As it has already been stated, they are miles away from the analytical and interpretative performance of L. M. Lopatin, A. Bely or P. I. Novgorodtsev.

Why do they do it in such a way? There are several reasons for using Kant as an intellectual symbol.

It is rhetorically successful. It is in the case of the attitudes of Ern and the means of expression he used, especially in his speech of 6 October 1914, *From Kant to Krupp*, the fact that it was a paid lecture may be a special variable. It was a lecture, the proceeds of which were intended to help the victims of the First World War, and it was delivered at a time when this conflict was raging in Europe and the world, and the Russian environment was affected by it on several levels. It is to be expected that he was also trying to impress rhetorically. In our view, one of its intentions can be relevantly thought of as therapy in the marasmus of lived events. It seeks to identify, to diagnose the source of the "contagion", and to present a method of spiritual healing at least in the possible horizon of the ultimate victory of the authentic over the cold rational Germanic calculus. For Golosovker, the rhetorical reference to Kant, the inflection of his name, and the reference to his *Critique of Pure Reason* are reinforced by the connection to another intellectual and culture-forming figure of the Russian space - F. M. Dostoevsky.

Another reason that can be considered is that Kant as an intellectual symbol serves as a clear reference for the reader. At the same time, it serves as a bridge to the central issue, both in the committed intellectual performance of Ern and Golosovker. For Ern, it also serves to demarcate and grasp the aforementioned lineage of Eckhart, Kant, Krupp, with which Ern is forced to struggle. Kant serves as an instrument for clarifying his own path religiously anchored in truth, his determined perception of the world and the possibility of establishing the normality of the world. A world that is worthy and necessary to defend. Golosovker is interested in introducing, approaching and motivating the reader of his committed essayistic reflections with a dramatic plot for a different reading of his authorship. For a reading clarifying the determination of the world, the truth of the world in the fundamental triad *Spirit - the imaginative absolute - culture*.

To cross the borderline of the author's statement towards the reader. This could be another possible reason. Working with Kant's intellectual symbol allows authors to enter into closer contact with the reader. At the same time, it allows them to leave part of the burden of grasping the issue to the reader's own intellectual prowess. This makes it possible to communicate attitudes that are on the borderline of the author's (Ern's and Golosovker's) statement, appealing to a kind of sense of tact on the reader himself. They initiate the need for a *co-reader*⁴² - to use the famous expression of Anna Akhmatova.

Through this intellectual symbol, it is possible to avoid problematic points in grasping philosophy in the contemporary modality, in this case German, as a discursive platform. The use of the intellectual symbol of Kant reduces and selectively suppresses the fact of the time, namely that Kant's work is formed in confrontations. This reduction is untenable, and in the end the authors point out and declare the contemporary and historical connections and their influence on the formation of philosophical concepts. In the case of the authors examined, this is more striking in Ern, but Golosovker is also no exception here. The use of Kant as an intellectual symbol, his often clear identification with the German, Germanic or Prussian spirit, isolates philosophy from the professional platform that it creates. Inappropriately simplifying it can give the reader the impression that German thought of the 18th and 19th centuries represents a homogeneous and clearly defined movement or school in terms of content. The functionality of such a reduction can be understood. The use of an intellectual symbol makes the text clear, without burdensome explanations of context.

The reasons mentioned can also be perceived as elements of the optics through which Russian philosophy can be viewed, read and interpreted. Completing the interpretation of a stroke on the painting of the history of Russian philosophy itself. The intellectual symbol could perhaps be joined to other optics or keys that emerged in new readings of Russian philosophy in the 21st century. To join the optics of M.A. Maslin's intellectual double for the study of the history of Russian philosophy formulated in the 2010s. It can be linked with the philosophical generation phenomenon and hermeneutical approach represented by Y. V. Sineokaya⁴³. I think that the intellectual symbol as a key could be functionally attached to the reading of the history of Russian philosophy, which

⁴² Rus. *sochitatiel*

⁴³ Yulia Sineokaya, *Filosofskie pokolenia* [Philosophical Generations]. (Moscow: LRC Publishing House 2022)

is so significantly formed in confrontation with the thinking of foreign provenance.

At the same time, this key can open the door, hopefully not a Pandora's box, towards explaining are some works in Russian thought only flipped through and not read⁴⁴.

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⁴⁴ Flipped thought tendency is mentioned in remarks of Aleksey P. Kozyrev, „My - pokolenie optimistov [We are a Generation of Optimists]“. w: Yulia V. Sineokaya, *Filosofskie pokolenia [Philosophical Generations]*. (Moscow: LRC Publishing House 2022), 732 to the time when the Soviet system broke down and there was a dramatic change in the research and teaching paradigm in philosophy.

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Ern's and Golosovker's worlds of truth against the Intellectual Symbol of Immanuel Kant

Summary

The history of philosophy often shows that the legacy of the great philosophical thinkers is misunderstood, interpreted in a reductive way, and deliberately shifted in meaning. It also happens that their work is accepted as a threat worthy of elimination. The intellectual and geopolitical circumstances in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century created the background for the harsh criticism aimed at Kant. Its most radical manifestation was the work of the Neo-Slavophile Vladimir Frantsevich Ern, who compared Kant's philosophy to the Krupp Werke artillery causing casualties on the battlefields of World War I. The nature of this critique becomes the subject of systematic treatment in this paper. It demonstrates that Kant becomes for Ern an intellectual symbol that serves the Russian thinker to deal with the age in which and for which he lived. At the same time, Ern's approach is a particular expression of respect for the work of Kant. The explanatory framework of Kant as an intellectual symbol is a text-enhanced view of Y. E. Golosovker's approach.

Keywords: Russian religious philosophy, Critique of Pure Reason, V. F. Ern, Y. E. Golosovker, intellectual symbol