

PERSONALISM AND BULGARIAN IDENTITY DISCOURSE BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS (A PRELIMINARY EXPLORATION)

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Abstract. *In this paper I investigate the compatibility between personalist philosophy and the Bulgarian identity discourse between the two World Wars. Having outlined the variability and conceptual tensions (on “collective personality,” e.g.) within Russian and French personalism(s) of the 1910s–1940s, I delineate four prerequisites for emerging and adopting personalism in interwar Bulgaria: (1) the post-idealist crisis of identities and identifications; (2) the reception of foreign personalist (or close to such) philosophy; (3) the re-assessment of “home” (East-Christian) theological tradition and its philosophical implications; (4) the discovery of someone “other” needed worthy of being recognised as (collective) “Thee.” Postponing the exploration of the third prerequisite for a subsequent study, I conclude so far that within interwar Bulgarian secular thought only random juxtapositions between personalism and identity discourse can be expected, and I examine three such cases.*

Keywords: *personalism, collective identity, Byzantium after Byzantium, morphology of history, conservative avant-garde, Bulgarian intellectual culture 1919–1944.*

Introduction

In this paper I shall look for compatibility, juxtapositions and interactions between personalism and Bulgarian identity discourse.

In order to facilitate my search, I shall try first to consider the conditions which could have made personalism in interwar Bulgaria (and, in particular, within the Bulgarian collective identity debate) likely to emerge: (a) the post-war crisis of identities and identifications; (b) the reception of (foreign) personalist (or close to such) philosophy; (c) the re-assessment of “home” theological tradition and its philosophical implications (its own personalism); (d) the discovery of someone “other” needed worthy of being recognised as “Thee” and communicated with correspondingly.

Before exploring this, I shall explain what I mean by “personalism”.

1. 1. By personalism I mean the self-conscious and self-pronounced personalist philosophy of Emmanuel Mounier¹ (and of the journal, *Esprit*, founded in 1932 and edited by him), Nikolaj Berdjajev² and Lev Karsavin.³ And I also mean the Byzantine philosophy, wherein one basically thinks in terms of persons and energies, and not of essences and things,⁴ and which was revived in the twentieth century within the so called Neopalamism, or the Neo-Patristic synthesis of Georgij Florovskij, Vladimir Losskij and others⁵.

Thus, my investigation acquires a double focus: it attends to Bulgarian identity issues and it inquires the possible meeting between the two genetic lines of personalism-oriented understanding of a person (the Western anthropological and the Eastern theological⁶).

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- 1 I have had access to Russian editions of Mounier’s works, the most comprehensive being the following: Mun’ie, E. *Manifest personalizma* [Manifesto of Personalism]. Moskva: Respublika, 1999 [a selection of Mounier’s works, 1935–1949].
 - 2 Berdjajev, N. *O rabstve i svobode cheloveka (Opyt personalisticheskoi filosofii)* [On Man’s Slavery and Freedom (An Attempt of Personalist Philosophy), 4th ed.]. Biblioteka Jakova Krotova. Text after the 3rd ed.: Moskva: Respublika, 1995 [interactive]. [accessed on 05-05-2012]. <http://krotov.info/library/02_b/berdyaev/1939_036_01.html>. – First edition (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1939) under the subtitle: “*Attempt of a Personalist Metaphysics*” – Consider also: *Smysl tvorcestva (Opyt opravdanija cheloveka)* [The Meaning of the Creative Act (An Attempt of Vindication of Man)]. Biblioteka Jakova Krotova. The text mainly after the 2nd Russian edition: Paris: YMCA-Press, 1985. Contains the 1927 German edition Preface, the 1925 paper “Salvation and Creativity” and fragments from the 1930s [interactive]. [accessed on 05-05-2012]. <http://krotov.info/library/02_b/berdyaev/1914_sense.html>. – First ed.: Moskva: Leman i Sakharov, 1916.
 - 3 In this paper I rely on Nikolaj Losskij’s and Sergej Horužij’s accounts of Karsavin’s philosophy (see below).
 - 4 Kaprijević, G. *Vizantijska filozofija: Četiri tsenturana sinteza* [Byzantine Philosophy: Four Centres of Synthesis]. Sofija: Iztok-Zapad, 2011 (2nd complemented ed.). Consider also: *Philosophie in Byzanz*. Würzburg: Köninghausen & Neumann, 2005.
 - 5 Sergej Horužij argues that Vladimir Losski, the founding figure of the Neopalamism, is much in debt to his university teacher, Lev Karsavin, who is said (by Horužij) to have approached the personalism of the Greek patristic theology as close as possible, in his own version of theology-oriented, or “personology” (“understanding of person”). Cf.: Horužij, S. *Filosofija Karsavina v sud’bakh jevropejskoj mysli o lichnosti* [Philosophy of Karsavin in the Life of European Thought on Person] [s. pag., s.a; after 2007]. At *Librusce* site [interactive]. [accessed on 05-05-2012]. <<http://lib.rus.ec/b/294960/read#t1>>.
 - 6 I assume this differentiation as made by Horužij, S., *ibid.*

The conditions making possible such a trans-epochal synthesis as the Neo-Patristic one, could be inquired via focusing on the centre, on Paris of the 1920s–40s, where all the mentioned thinkers (with the exception of Karsavin and Florovskij for certain periods) lived and published.

A synthesis bridging the gap not between epochs but between traditions was also thinkable. Personalisms of Mounier, Berdjaev and Karsavin, pertaining completely or significantly to the Western tradition, faced the revival of Byzantine personalism. Mutual interest and interaction (as one between more or less anthropology-focused versions of Mounier and Berdjaev) were quite possible.

But we might access the issue from the periphery of its setting. We could explore, for example, the Lithuanian response to Karsavin's philosophical work; or the compatibility between the Bulgarian philosophical culture and personalists' insights.

1. 2. For personalists, “a person” is an existential and not a logical category. It is what persists in a drama of constant change. A person's being is one striving towards and authenticated through trans-personality. It is not a part of the Universe but holds the Universe within itself. It is a unity of spirit and matter that by definition transcends nature. Personalism is an outlook experiencing and recognising the primacy of personality, and of the interpersonal structure of the universe. This means a multiple (multi-centred), communicating and communicable structure, involved in an economy of gift and not of profit.

Broadly speaking and as far as I can judge, personalism was endangered by two philosophical fallacies: of ascribing personality to collective selves and of restoring idealism or metaphysics in the garment of personalism. The first one could be exemplified with Lev Karsavin's theory of the symphonic personality (roughly speaking, he invested a number of super-individual entities like local community, state and church with personality and subdued the individual person to them). The second one could *probably* be exemplified with Nikolaj Berdjaev's *too* decreeing, as if announced from out-of-space and out-of-time, personalism. One more fallacy could be suggested: that of, in fact, ego-personalism or monistic personalism. In this case (in both of its variants) the “self” and the “other self” are in fact complementary to each other, there is no (logical or some other) room for real “otherness.” Berdjaev is too obsessed with the personality of “I”; the personality of a human “Thee” remains on the periphery and, more important, it bears the features of the other gender; and the personality of the divine “Thee” remains unaddressed. Karsavin prohibits the existence of “other” “self” in a more global and subtle way: God and man take part in a neo-platonic drama of mutual complementarity, in which man has no personality of his own, neither is he made of something radically differing from God's substance: thus man is downgraded to an inferior alter-ego of God. (I rely on Nikolaj Losskij's interpretation of Karsavin's cosmology.⁷) To summarise, personalism could fall into monism, into morphologism, and also retreat to idealism.

7 Cf. Losskij, N. *Istorija ruskoj filosofii* [History of Russian Philosophy. 2nd ed.; 1st ed. in English, 1951, New York, and 1952, London]. Moksva: Sovetskij pisatel, 1991, p. 351 [interactive]. [accessed on 12-05-2012]. <http://krotov.info/lib_sec/12_1/los/lossk_n_00.htm>. All of chapter 18 is devoted to Karsavin. Losskij called Karsavin's cosmology “Neo-Platonist” and “pantheistic.”

My primary intention in this paper—to meet personalism and conceptualisations of a collective self—is thus vulnerable to criticism even from personalist viewpoints. Ascribing “personality” to super-individual agents was considered by Mounier and Berdjaev as erroneous. Yet Mounier wrote on the possibility of establishing and maintaining inter-human structures based on personalist ethics, that is, on the recognition of others’ otherness. And the late Karsavin introduced the concept of “ephemeral personality.”⁸

1. 3. It must be stated that the Bulgarian philosophical culture was articulated in a syncretic milieu: chiefly within elitist (but not academic) magazines converging literature, art and humanities (like *Zlatorog* (Goldenhorn), 1920-1943; *Strelec* (Sagittarius), 1926-1927; *Bulgarian thought*, 1926-1943, etc) or theology and humanities (like *Dukhovna kultura* (Spiritual Culture), issued by the Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church since 1920). It was only in the 30s, when philosophy, altogether with sociology and psychology, had their own herald—*Filosofski pregled* (Philosophical review), 1929-1943 (if we don’t count the institutionally bound philosophical series of the Sofia University Annuary). Prior investigations, as well as I myself while checking some of their observations, take this fact into account.

2. Bulgarian culture of the 1910s and 1920s underwent an experience which seriously shook the established frames of reference. The existence of the self among other selves was no more intelligible and acceptable on rational ground. Let me focus on the level of the national self. First, the idea of a commonwealth of neighbouring nations pursuing the common goal of enlightenment and prosperity via moving away the remnants of the Ottoman legacy was seriously compromised during and after the Second Balkan War in 1913. Second, the idea of an enlightened and just European commonwealth was even more seriously damaged by the outcomes of the First World War, or the “European War,” especially with the Treaty of Neuilly in 1919.⁹ Third, the notion of a nation’s social, intellectual and political integrity was probably irretrievably lost.

The notion of crisis was a common one¹⁰ and this notion was intimately tied with what might be called the anthropological turn in the philosophy of the epoch.¹¹ In Russia

8 Horuzhij, S., *supra* note 5.

9 Elenkov, I. *Rodno i djasno (Prinos k”m istorijata na nesb”dnatija “desen projekt” v Blgarija ot vremeto mezhdu dvete svetovni vojni)* [Native and Rightist (A Contribution to the Historiography of the Unfulfilled “Rightist Project” in Bulgaria of the Interwar Period)]. Sofija: LIK, 1998, p. 41, 43 (note 17).

10 *Ibid.*, p. 45–113, etc.; Dimitrova, N. *Obrazi na choveka (Antropologichni idei v blgarskata filosofska misl mezhdu dvete svetovni vojni)* [Images of Man (Anthropological Ideas within the Bulgarian Philosophical Thought between the Two World Wars)]. Veliko Trnovo: Faber, 2003, p. 5–6, etc. (a 2005 on-line edition is available at: <http://liternet.bg/publish16/n_dimitrova/obrazi/content.html>); Dimitrova, N. *Religija i nacionalizm (Idei za religijata v mezhduvoennija period v Blgarija)* [Religion and Nationalism (Ideas of Religion during the Interwar Period in Bulgaria)]. Sofija: Faber, 2006, p. 8, 60, etc.

11 Dimitrova, N. *Images of Man, ibid.*, p. 7.

the period 1914–1923 was called “the century-long decade.”¹² A contemporary scholar emphasises the epistemological profile of this revolution, out of which post-idealist philosophy (existentialism, dialogism, personalism, philosophical anthropology and renewed hermeneutics) emerged.¹³ Two moments immanent to this historical situation are important for my inquiry: the sharp awareness of the *conditioned condition* of cognition, of the “object” of cognition and of the cognising self; and the *possibility* to develop this awareness into a personalist philosophy.

The self fluctuated between (re)hardening and dissolving¹⁴ on all three main levels of identification (individual, national and supra-national), which resulted in a kind of pluralism. For Bulgaria, the conclusion can be supported by a recent investigation on Bulgarian literary modernism, which exploited Jean-Pierre Vernant’s differentiation between an individual, a subject and a self, and rethought the history of its subject as one of an emerging and evolving concept of the “self.”¹⁵

The unstable and pluralistic situation, which coincided with the post-symbolist phase of modernism and in which both individualism and collectivism were revised, seems to have been short-lived in Bulgaria.¹⁶ Two main cultural projects, both of which represented collectivist and monist visions of the self, “the leftist” and “the rightist,”¹⁷ became increasingly influential and left less and less space for disengaged work and different visions (both in literature and philosophy).¹⁸ The self of the individual personality swiftly dissolved in the collective self (of the nation, the people or the social class). The collective self was usually understood as a community (*Gemeinschaft*), not as a society (*Gesellschaft*), at least within the rightist project—that is, it approximated the parameters of a collective personality. But the rightist thinkers did not grasp “personality” on the level of ontology. Instead, they thought of “individuality,” “spirit” and of “life” (or duration). A kind of romantic enchantment with the non-transcendental condition of mind emerged. The leftist philosophers were also too enchanted by the strong, heroic, self-affirmative individual in anthropology, as well as by determinism in cosmology, to develop a personalist understanding. A recent investigation¹⁹ is inclined

12 The phrase, “столетнее десятилетие”, was coined by the Russian writer Evgenij Zamjatin (Mahlin, V. *Vtoroje soznanije: Podstupy k gumanitarnojj epistemologii* [The Second Conscience: Towards an Epistemology of Humanities]. Moskva: Znak, 2009, p. 21).

13 *Ibid.*, p. 21–22, 47–62, etc. Mahlin makes the “epistemological turn” of the 1910s–1920s and the possibility of understanding it from a post-Soviet stance his main subject.

14 For acknowledging the heuristic of this alternative (hardening–dissolution of the self) I am in debt to the following work: Burger, P. *Dissolution of the Subject and the Hardened Self: Modernity and the Avant-garde* in Wyndham Lewis’s Novel *Tarr* [1991]. In: Burger, P. *The Decline of Modernism*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1992, p. 127–136.

15 Penchev, B. *Blgarskijat modernizm: Modeliraneto na “Aza”* [The Bulgarian Modernism: The Modeling of the “Self”]. Sofija: YUI “Sv. Kliment Okhridski”, 2003.

16 I rely on Bojko Penchev’s (*op. cit.*) and Nina Dimitrova’s (*Religion and Nationalism*) accounts.

17 Elenkov, I., *supra* note 9. – Aleksandür Kjosev, 1998, pointed another dichotomy as constitutive for the period—between “westernists” and “autochthonists” (Dimitrova, N. *Religion and Nationalism*, *supra* note 10, p. 8).

18 Penchev, B., *supra* note 15, p. 256–258.

19 Dimitrova, N. *Images of Man*, *supra* note 10, p. 32–45, esp. 34.

to see the main controversy in Bulgarian interwar philosophy proper as one between “philosophy as a meta-science” and “philosophy as an overcoming of the reason from inside.”²⁰ The philosophical mainstream, in both its vitalistic and scientific currents, overlooked personality.²¹ Leftists and rightists, promoters of meta-scientific philosophy (as a rule leftist) and vitalists—all of them were monists, the pervading opposition in their thinking being “culture” against “nature,” in a world dominated by an impersonal absolute. Almost none of them became aware of the reality of someone “Other,” of a culturised “otherness.”²² I suggest that correspondence between this monistic cosmology and the imagined or real social condition of the Bulgarian intellectual elite existed: those elite conceived themselves as mediators between the modern state and the pre-modern “people” and thus took part in a vertical circulation between “the civilisation” and “nature”, a circulation which did not leave time or place for “Other.”²³

3. 1. Kierkegaard and Nietzsche have been frequently mentioned as the 19th century predecessors of personalism; I guess we might add Vladimir Solovjov (mainly for his “Critique of Abstract Principles”). Bulgarian literary modernism in its first, pre-symbolist, phase produced a genuine response to, possibly, both Nietzsche’s philosophy of Dionysian experience and Solovjov’s philosophy of “pan-integrity.” I mean Penčo Slavejkov’s anthology of imagined poets from an imagined country, titled *On the Isle of the Blessed* and issued in 1907. Though this work constitutes a part of the Bulgarian literary canon, the parameters of its culture-generative force are still under-recognised.²⁴

20 The controversy is exemplified with Dimitür Mihalčev and Spiridon Kazandzhiev.

21 Within the scientific current, the “Remkeanism” (cf. Johannes Remke) of Mihalčev was dominating, but Marxism and adaptations of Psychoanalysis were also influential. A work by the *Remkeanist* Nikola Iliev, published posthumously in *Philosophical Review*, “What is Person(ality)?” (Iliev, N. Shto e lichnost? *Filosofski pregled*, 1939, 11(1): 5–30) demonstrated a post-individualist understanding of person which seems compatible with the personalist. Yet Iliev professed different ontological presuppositions, and he could hardly think of “person” outside the realm of psychology. And, besides, the definition of personality as self-consciousness, regarded as quite insufficient by Mounier (Mounier, E., *supra* note 1, p. 306), made up the core of Iliev’s understanding.

22 Rather telling is the following selection of works and fragments: Stamatov, A.; Stojnev, A. (süstaviteli). *Filosofija na istorijata v Blgarija (1878-1948): Antologija* [Philosophy of History in Bulgaria (1878-1948). An Anthology]. Sofija: AI “Prof. Marin Drinov”, 2002. Probably the only exceptions to evade monism and impersonalism were Janaki Arnaudov (with a work on *the problem of understanding in history*, 1938) and Hristo Todorov (see below). Aleksander Nikolov’s “A System of Philosophy of History” (1941) adopted Spengler’s morphology abandoning Spengler’s pessimism but leaving the germs of pluralism (cf. below) undeveloped. Ivan Ormandžiev’s contestation of Hegel’s dialectic of freedom (and, hence, of Hegel’s monism) remained purely apophatic in his 1936 paper “Freedom in the Light of History”.

23 Elenkov, I., *supra* note 9, p. 74.

24 In the 1980s, it inspired a literary critic to launch the concept of a/the “Bulgarian literary personalism” and to find the origin of the corresponding phenomenon in the above mentioned work of Penčo Slavejkov (cf.: Nedelchev, M. “Na Ostrova na blazhenite” kato slozhen izraz na blgrskija literaturen personalizm. In: *Socialni stilove, kriticheski sjuzheti* [“On the Isle of the Blessed” as a Complex Expression of the Bulgarian Literary Personalism. In: Social Styles, Criticism’s Plots]. Sofija: Blgarski pisatel, 1987, p. 27–47). As far as I can see, the concept referred to the predisposition of the Bulgarian literary culture to canonise writers rather than works (or to admit works having canonised their authors).

3. 2. As far as I know, Mounier's personalist works of the 1930s remained unknown in coeval Bulgaria, as well as Karsavin's works of the late 20s and 30s, *with one exception*.²⁵ I guess that the dominating intellectual orientation towards Germany²⁶ diminished the chances to notice Mounier, and Karsavin's relocation to Lithuania might have had the same effect (his earlier works—issued prior to the “Great War” as well as in the early years of exile, like his *Philosophy of History*—are present in Bulgarian libraries and were, probably, read). Unlike them, Berdjaev seems to have been indeed influential, but, first, his influence was probably far stronger among the intellectuals who were close to the Church, and, second, his ego-personalism could have hardly been stimulating outside anthropology. He was too hostile toward what he called social and historical “objectivations.”

The general disposition within the field of secular philosophy and its close neighbourhood in Bulgaria did not facilitate an adoption of the views of those post-idealist philosophers who were probably closest to personalism (such as Martin Buber, Max Scheler, Lev Šestov, Gabriel Marcel, Karl Jaspers). Among those mentioned, Scheler was an exception.²⁷ A detailed survey should differentiate not only among the thinkers of the “turn” (whether their works invited a development toward personalism or not), but also among modes of reception (e.g., between “acquaintance with” and use within an existentialist or neo-metaphysical perspective).

A comparison between two journals, *Philosophical Review* (issued by D. Mihalčev) and *Spiritual Culture* (issued by the Orthodox Church), and between works of their more or less regular contributors, would show that the Church-bound fringe of the philosophical field, represented by authors like Dimitŭr Penov, Boris Popstoimenov, Manjo Stojanov, Gančo Pašev, was far closer to adopting personalism (in both theological and anthropological perspectives).²⁸

25 Popstoimenov, B. *Problemt za choveka: Khristijanskoto uchenije za choveka s ogled na nauchnite i filozofski antropologii* [The Problem of Man: The Christian Teaching on Man with Regard to the Scientific and Philosophical Anthropologies]. Sofija: [pech. T. T. Dragiev], 1941, p. 119–121.

26 Since the late 19th century, Bulgarian literature, art and humanities were increasingly Germany-orientated (after half a century of dominating orientation being Russia). Cf. Lauer, R. Zur Frage der Fremdorientierung in der Bulgarischen Literatur. Lauer, R.; Schreiner, P. (hrsg.). *Kulturelle Traditionen in Bulgarien*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989, S. 263–280 (esp. 268, 273 ff.). For example, the majority of Bulgarian academics in philosophy then studied and received their doctorates in Germany, cf.: Stamatov, A.; Todorov, D.; Dimitrova, N.; Velčeva, D.; Denkov, D.; Dimitrov, D. *Blgarskata filozofska kultura prez XIX–XX vek* [The Bulgarian Philosophical Culture during the 19th–20th Centuries]. Sofija: LIK, 2000, p. 286 (etc).

27 The names of these and some more philosophers (M. Heidegger, Fr. Rosenzweig, *et al.*), but with the exception of Šestov, are mentioned by Mahlin recurrently. Mounier, in a 1949 account, mentions Buber and Scheler among the immediate predecessors of personalism, and speaks of existentialism and Marxism as of immediate neighbours of already established personalism (Mun'ie, E., *supra* note 1, p. 467).

28 Berdjaev was published in translation in *Spiritual Culture* and elsewhere. Nina Dimitrova (*Images of Man*, *supra* note 10) finds his influence in the works of Pašev, Popstoimenov, Atanas Gaštev... *Spiritual Culture* regularly reviewed the issues of *Path* (“Путь”) journal (the Parisian herald of the Russian theological and religious philosophy in emigration) and thematically related collections of papers issued by YMCA-Press. In the early 1940s, works of Berdjaev (and, by an exception, of Jacques Maritain, but not of Mounier!), and of Jaspers and Šestov, were able to produce near-instant response among the Church-bound thinkers, as witnessed by texts of Popstoimenov and Penov.

3. 3. If there had been a move toward some kind of personalism or dialogism in Bulgarian secular thought between the two World Wars, the main impulses should have come from Spengler's *Decline of the West*²⁹ and from the pre-founding book of the Russian eurasianist movement, Count Trubeckoj's more radical and sketchier *Europe and Mankind*.³⁰

The publication and dissemination of two important revisions of the pre-war culture-philosophical and geopolitical common sense coincided with the end of the war.³¹ I shall disregard for a while the common accusations of Spengler in biologism in order to discern something different. As far as I can judge, both works had the potential to impulse a reconsidering of world history and its meaning in (proto) personalist terms, this interpretation being invested on the level of super-national selves usually known as cultural-historical types, circles, commonwealths or simply as "civilisations." Both works contested the monistic vision of history and human culture, one grounded, in fact, on the self-affirmative secularised discourse of the West, that is: they contested a vision fundamentally individualistic. On the base of a tacit assumption, a self, individual or collective, had pertained to the culturised and culturisable universe only to the extent it had shared "our" (Christian or post-Christian, moderately humanist and bourgeois) views and opinions. And Spengler's and Trubeckoj's works witnessed the end of Western "self" as one conceiving itself as unconditioned, that is, in Cartesian, individualist or metaphysical terms. From now on it had to conceive itself in different terms—be they collectivist (like in Nazism and communism), existentialist or personalist. The boundaries of the culturised universe coincided no more with those of a Western commonwealth destined to expand.

Inter-communicability of selves is a key feature of a personalist universe and a universe inhabited by more than one single self is a necessary step towards it. It seems to me that contesting monism had been a more difficult and resolute task to undergo than the task Spengler's system in its turn posed: as we can see, the non-communicability between the selves was a shortage promptly corrected by Toynbee.

Next, the books of Spengler and Trubeckoj should have been heuristic just in introducing a level of identity superseding the one of nation but not coinciding with

29 Spengler, O. *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*. 3rd ed. München: C. H. Beck, 1923. A translation, by Dimitŭr Gavrijski, of at least its first volume had been made by mid-1926 which had to be published in the autumn of the same year (an announcement in: *Iztok* [East]. 1925-1926, 1(35), 13.06.1926, p. 4), but was not. In 1931 another translation, by Kr. Kŭrdŭziev, of the Introduction only, was issued: Shpengler, O. *Zalez na Zapada* (V"vedenie). Prev. Kr. Krdziev [The Decline of the West. Translated by Kr. Kŭrdŭziev]. Sofija: D-r Zh. Marinov, 1931.

30 Trubeckoj, N. *Evropa i chelovechestvo* [Europe and the Mankind]. Sofija: Russko-bolgarskoje knigoizdatelstvo, 1920. An edition in Bulgarian, translation by Sava Ćukalov, was launched in 1944 (Trubeckoj, N. *Evropa i chovestvoto* [Europe and the Mankind]. Sofija: evropejska misl, 1944), probably to be employed in the anti-British (anti-colonialist) propaganda of the Third Reich.

31 An overview of their Bulgarian reception was made by Nina Dimitrova (Dimitrova, N. "Zalez na Zapada" v blgarskoto kulturno prostranstvo [The Decline of the West within the Bulgarian Cultural Space]. *Filosofski alternativni*. 1996, 5(2): 82–89 (on Spengler only); Dimitrova, N. *Images of Man*, *supra* note 10, p. 20–31; Dimitrova, N. *Religion and Nationalism*, *supra* note 10, p. 120–122). My conclusions differ from hers; I shall discuss the probable reasons for this difference in another publication.

the/a universal. This could have shaken the convenient framework of self-identification, one facilitating both self-affirmation and conformism marked with inferiority complex. Imitation of Europe and self-identifying in (exclusively) ethno-national terms should have lost in authority.³² To recall Berdjajev's rhetoric: those works disturbed the individualism of the master as well as the individualism of the slave.

Whether a collective agent could be credited, the existence of a personality is a question of secondary importance. What, I guess, matters here, if we are ready to recognise the revolutionary potential of these books, is whether the Other is given the respective ethical *credit, as if* it were a personality, or not.

Yet the impact of Spengler's and Trubeckoj's works (unsupported by such works as Buber's *You and I*) was too insufficient to impulse a shift toward dialogism and personalism. Paradoxically, more often than not, they supported interpretational and inter-cultural stereotypes they were likely to suppress and which were counter-positive to dialogist and personalist understanding of history and culture.³³ They were downgraded to their neo-Romanticist component.

4. I cannot esteem whether theology in Bulgaria understood the philosophical heuristic of Christian personalism, esp. in its Eastern version, and esp. in the latter's Neopalamite filiation. An examination of the works of clerical authors like those mentioned above would suggest an answer.

5. The suitable "other" was, or should have been, I guess, the (post)Byzantine tradition.

Within the first third of the 20th century Byzantine art and, subsequently, Byzantine intellectual culture were reassessed.

The interest in East-Christian art can be considered within the frame of avantgardist reappraisal of the primitive, one common for West and East European cultures.³⁴ Yet, following this perspective, which I consider simplifying, could be misleading.

Both people from the early twentieth century and we could downgrade an alien self to an inferior alter-ego, or recognise it as some other self. I think that facing the Eastern Christianity in its artefacts can be regarded as a test-case for such a choice, a choice between a monological and dialogical attitude. I guess that recognising another self

32 A recent investigation, which argues that nationalism, being imported to the Balkans two centuries ago, is not grounded in the still actual identificational model of "Byzantinism," uses the concept "identity circles," instead of "identity hierarchies," in order to stress the "paratactic" links within the range of identities of a self (individual or collective): Kapriev, G. Krgovete na identichnostta i vizantinizmt [The Circles of Identity and Byzantinism]. *Ezik i literatura*. 1999, 54(2): 158–171 (160–161, 168–171).

33 The response to Spengler's and Trubeckoj's works was explored by Nina Dimitrova (*Filosofski alternativni, supra* note 31), as well as in my previous works (Ljuckanov, J. Za retseptsijata na "evrazijstvoto" i Shpengler v Blgarija: majmunstvo, evropeizm i choveshtina [On the Reception of "Eurasianism" and Spengler in Bulgaria: Aping, Europeism and Humanity]. *Slavia*. 2011, 80(2-3): 147–162; etc.), but there are aspects still unexplored.

34 As Hans Belting does: Belting, H. *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*. Chicago and London: Chicago UP, 1994, p. 20–21.

which is *not* vastly different from “me” and which is *not* in war with “me” is far more difficult than recognising that self in the opposite cases. Such might have been the test for the European West.

The case with Russian, Bulgarian, Greek, Romanian and so on selves could have been a more complex one. “I” had to recognise a self in which he once partook but from which “I” had become alienated. The previous self, since decades or centuries alienated into an inferior alter-ego, was to be restored within and beside the current one, as its probably superior counterpart. And the re-partaking in philosophy/theology could have been a difficult enterprise to involve in (compared to re-appreciation of visual images). Philosophy of personalism could have been the right conceptual form for being modern on a European scale and for reviving regional and not quite “European” continuity evading self-exoticisation.

Some of the symptoms of the reflective continuation of Byzantium’s afterlife on the Balkans were the launching of congresses on Byzantine studies; the publishing of books like *Byzantium after Byzantium* (1935) of the Romanian scholar and politician Nicolae Iorga. Medieval Bulgaria had been a part of the Byzantine commonwealth. In the 19th century the Bulgarian elite considered it dead and tried to introduce the Bulgarian ethnic community into two far more promising international clubs: of the European nations and of the Slavonic peoples.³⁵ Given the re-assessment of Byzantine heritage, the Eurocentric conformism as well as the sympathy for the Russian messianism had to be reconsidered.

In brief, modern Bulgarian collective identity, as shaped by the intellectual elite, had to undergo a process of initiation—that is, to achieve a cultural self in command of its free will and uncontrolled by self-imposed paternalism with regard to Europe and Russia. In acquiring or recollecting its multiple identity, the self had to abandon the dualistic (in fact monistic) patterns of conceptualisation, exemplified by conceptual pairs like “culture-barbarity,” “purity-corruptness” and so on, as well as naïve universalism. It had to revise the straightforward belief in progress but to evade falling into ethnocentric and modernising the past “ruritarian” sentimentalism. And it had to cope with a century-long, or probably a millennium-long, trauma of the cultural memory: the one generated by the uneasy ambivalence of the Greek-Bulgarian and “Byzantine”—Bulgarian interaction. In fact a discourse which I find constitutive for the articulation of (modern) Bulgarian identity had to be fundamentally reworked. I am speaking of the anti-Greek discourse, whose generative potential within the Bulgarian culture is comparable with the anti-European within the Russian.³⁶ Philosophy of dialogue and personalism could have been the right conceptual forms for such an achievement.

35 Compare: Aretov, N. *Blgarskoto Vzrazhdane i Evropa* [The Bulgarian National Revival and Europe]. Sofija: Kralica Mab, 1995.

36 I am examining the issue in my study “Bulgarien? Europa? Eurasien? Das Selbstverständnis des Bulgaren auf der Suche nach seiner kulturellen Identität in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jh.” (to be published). Investigations on the interwar anti-Byzantine discourse usually point at the highly influential historical works of Petür Mutačiev (1883-1943), regarding them as kind of a key-stone on the issue, cf. Dimitrova, N. *Religion and Nationalism*, *supra* note 10, p. 110 etc. I guess that Mutačiev’s works are convenient to be reiterated for one more reason (beside their lasting influence): they are relatively simple conceptually and could easily fit some postmodern frameworks of investigation, the one which could discern ‘nesting’

I guess that the country's international condition—one of isolation—and its choice of a political strategy—one of revisionism—formed an emotional and intellectual atmosphere which could hardly stimulate an innovative socio-, geo- and historiosophical vision, especially one transcending the ethnocentric framework.

In 1931 Petūr Mutafčiev, a professor in Balkan medieval history who had specialised in Byzantine history in Munich, issued a paper titled “On the Philosophy of Bulgarian History: Byzantinism in Medieval Bulgaria.”³⁷ The paper is emblematic of how the majority of the educated Bulgarians conceived Bulgaria's participation in what was later called “the Byzantine commonwealth.” Byzantinism was regarded as an embodiment of a corrupted culture, as a medieval analogue of modern Europeanisation (understood in neo-Romantic terms),³⁸ and what was opposed to it was a concept of “natural course of development” set in a monist and evolutionary vision of history. I am afraid that Mutafčiev's attempt at philosophical understanding of Byzantine-Bulgarian relations and the persisting interest in it are symptomatic.

6. The state in the fields under observation—insofar I am aware of it now—allows me to focus on an open series of random juxtapositions between personalism and national identity discourse; that is, on products not necessarily designed to develop one's view on the meaning of history, nation or medieval heritage and so on. Interesting things were too often told by marginals in the fields within which we could expect something interesting to be told; or not by marginals, but in peripheral texts of theirs. I guess they were closest to it on three occasions.

6. 1. The linguist Stefan Mladenov (1880-1963; doctor of the Charles University in Prague), in 1921, responded to the publishing of Eurasianists' manifesto book “Exodus to the East” writing two reviews. In the review I consider relevant to our theme³⁹ he focused on the key subject of one of Nikolaj Trubeckoj's contributions for the collective manifesto: the differentiation between nationalism and chauvinism. It had been a matter already touched upon in Trubeckoj's solo book, *Europe and the Mankind*, and Mladenov demonstrated awareness of that. The core difference between chauvinism and nationalism was viewed by them as one between imitative self-affirmation and creative self-cognition and, ultimately, we could infer, between collective individualism and some kind of collective personalism. The point is that Trubeckoj and his reviewer considered self-cognition through the prism of the Evangelic parable of the talents. This suggested a potentially personalist anthropology (everyone has a talent of his or her

Occidentalisms, for example. Instead, I have preferred works from peripheral authors like Theodor Schmidt and Konstantin Stojanov to delve in the history of Bulgarian (anti-)Byzantinism or, rather, anti-Graecism.

37 The paper was republished more than twice after 1989, for example, in the anthology mentioned above: Stamatov, A.; Stojnev, A., *supra* note 22, p. 378–384.

38 Compare Elenkov, I., *supra* note 9, p. 126.

39 Mladenov, St. Natsionalizm, kultura i choveshtina (S ogleđ na rabotite v Rusija i po povod na sbornika „Iskhod k Vostoku. Predchuvstvija i svershenija“) [Nationalism, Culture and Humanity (With regard to the Events in Russia and on the Occasion of the collection Exodus to the East: Forebodings and Events: an Affirmation of the Eurasians)]. *Svremennik*. 1921-1922, 1(4-5): 290–299.

own and actually *is* insofar he or she has developed it) and an implicit Theo-centric perspective. It is noteworthy, besides, that in translating the word “человечество” (“čelovečestvo,” “mankind”), Mladenov chose a Bulgarian equivalent that emphasised the ethical dimension of the human condition and added the concrete meaning of “unpremeditated philanthropy” (“човештина,” “čoveština”), instead of the neutral “човечество” (“čovečestvo”).

6. 2. The archaeologist and art historian Bogdan Filov (1883-1945; doctor in classical archaeology of the Freiburg University, 1906), in 1926, wrote of two more or less actually existing cultural circles within Europe (literally—of “two Europes”): the one relying on the legacy of Hellas and the other—on the legacy of Byzantium.⁴⁰ In the 1910s Filov had launched the idea of a bi-cultural pre-Roman antiquity on the Balkans: that is, he had refused to compare Old Greek and Old Thracian art in the terms of culture vs. barbarity. In the 1920s, investigating the origins of medieval Bulgarian art, he thought again in terms of multiple cultural circles (each having its own centre of cultural and, in particular, artistic reason) (and he pointed at the hybrid: pre-Christian Roman – Iranian - Byzantine—provenance of that art). A little bit later Filov was among those who lamented that 19th century Bulgarian art had left the post-Byzantine tradition to drop into fruitless academism.⁴¹ In brief, he thought in the terms of multiple super-national selves⁴² who could communicate and interpenetrate; and was able to abandon the nationalist trend regarding the Byzantine legacy (that is, to consider it an important part of the Bulgarian legacy and to consider the Bulgarian self as part of the Byzantine and post-Byzantine one). All this implied an abandonment of thinking in the terms of ethno-linguistic genetic trees (and an attempt to think in terms of commonwealths determined territorially and communicatively). Viewed together with works by his colleague Nikola Mavrodinov,⁴³ Filov’s works introduced the Byzantine tradition as the *other* side to the modern Bulgarian self and delicately pled for a dialogue.

The idea of two European cultural communities, a Hellas-based and a Byzantium-based one could be read as a compromise construction which allows explaining the Bulgarian experience in Westernisation without entirely negating Spengler’s idea of pseudomorphosis, as a step towards the understanding demonstrated by Toynbee. At the same time it allowed to counterbalance the Eurasianist idea in offering a moderate and modern alternative to the ideologies of Panslavism and of Slavonic mutualism.

6. 3. The philosopher and historian by learning and sexologist by devotion Najden Šejtanov (1890-1970; doctor of Leipzig University), in a series of publications between

40 Filov, B. Vizantija i Elada [Byzantium and Hellas]. *Blgarska misl.* 1926-1927, 2(1): 32–41 and 2(2): 125–135—Filov and Nicolae Iorga are worth comparing (though regarding important issues it would be contrastive comparison: Iorga disliked modernism and Filov welcomed it).

41 I am referring to all these works of Filov in “Bulgarien? Europa? Eurasien?...”.

42 I cannot esteem whether and to what extent he was influenced by or congenial to the Vienna Kulturkreis School of Fritz Gräbner and Wolfgang Schmidt.

43 Cf., e.g.: Mavrodinov, N. Ekspressionizmt na iztochnata srednovekovna zhivopis [The Expressionism of Eastern Medieval Painting]. *Zlatorog.* 1928, 9(2): 108–116.

the mid-20s and the early 40s,⁴⁴ launched a vision of Bulgarian psychic and cultural universe which resembles a personalist philosophy—both in the scope of its subject and in the level of abstraction. In fact his work evolved on the edge between philosophy and myth-making, theoretic and visionary discourse. Something more: his word was not slower than his thought and his action—not slower than his word. This resulted in a writing practise which performatively constituted parameters of the utopian universe described in the work itself. Thus, he anticipated the description of a universe permeated by intense and specific sexuality with the mere act of writing the corresponding books in co-authorship with his wife Maria.⁴⁵ In brief, he himself demonstrated an important aspect of the kind of existence prescribed in a visionary mode in his writings. It was an existence in a universe permeated by Eros, or a universe inherently communicative in terms of psychic and cultural time and space. In this universe, brought into visibility by the means of philological and ethnographic investigation and artistic imagination, human individuals and groups, both legendary and historical, merge with topographical objects and non-human creatures; all of them interact and interpenetrate in a way that suggests of the permanent pregnancy the universe's substance with varieties of personalities. The chronotope of Šejtanov's works resembles that of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* invested with a specific thematic accent and an additional level of signification. The thematic accent in Šejtanov's works was the archetypal myth about the He-Dragon and the She-Dragon. The additional level of significance was one of the geopolitical, geo-cultural and historical-cultural utopia. This utopia was both prospective and retrospective (that is, it merged the evocable future with revivable past). On this semantical level, it constituted a Bulgarian answer to the Eurasianist vision of Russia-Eurasia. It imaged Bulgaria as the core of the Balkans, and the Balkans—as a cultural universe mingling European, Asian and African psychic and cultural flows and constituting a kind of a universe in the universe, a kind of an emblem of the age-old cultural communication between and throughout the three continents. And his language suggested an ontology which was based on the notions of energy and of personality, rather than of essence and substance.⁴⁶ To conclude with, his works invite a comparison with the works of his elder contemporary—Lev Karsavin.⁴⁷ The focus on Eros of his early-1930s works recalls the early 1920s, Eros-focused and Vladimir Solovyov-dependent works of Karsavin (including *Noctes Petropolitanae*); and like Karsavin, he experienced a move toward geopolitics in his subsequent decade.

44 The most important are: Shejtanova, M.; Shejtanov, N. *Ljubov. Vselenogled. Nachalo* [Love. Universe-View. Beginning]. Sofija: [authors' ed.], 1931; Shejtanova, M.; Shejtanov, N. *Ljubov. Vselenogled. Chelovek* [Love. Universe-View. Man]. 1933; Shejtanov, N. *Velikoblgarski svetogled* [Grand Bulgarian Worldview]. Sofija: Blg. podem, [1940].

45 Shejtanova, M.; Shejtanov, N., *ibid.*

46 Shejtanov, N., *supra* note 44.

47 The only monograph on Šejtanov, a recent and monumental book, does not suggest such a parallel (and, I am afraid, almost entirely misses the context co-impulsed by Spengler, “Eurasianists,” and the “anthropological turn” in philosophy). Cf. Lazarova, E. *Uchenijat sreshthu politika: doktor Najden Shejtanov* [The Scholar against the Politician: Doctor Najden Šejtanov]. Sofija: Zakhari Stojanov; UI “Sv. Kliment Okhridski”, 2005.

Like Karsavin, Šejtanov was insensitive for the possibility of a radical otherness within the universe; God and man constituted in fact a single ego which undergoes a tragical split and re-union: a profoundly neo-Platonist drama. Moreover, Šejtanov's personology systematically and gaily disregarded the fundamental difference between the Christian concept of the God-man and the neo-pagan concept of the Man-god.

6. 4. I would add here the 1930 opening lecture of the sociologist Hristo Todorov (1881-1954), *The Essence of the Sociality* (and probably more works from him). He drew upon Ferdinand Tönnies's and Alfred Vierkandt's differentiation of communitarian and rational societal forms and insisted on the epistemic significance of *the communitarian* for sociology.⁴⁸

6. 5. To summarise, Bulgarian inter-war secular approximations of personalism lacked theoretical pursuit, self-consciousness, momentum and selflessness. They could be regarded as random and ad hoc utilisations of personalistic understanding of the being. Mladenov abandoned the essentialist approach to nation (one correlating with collective individualism) to adopt an existentialist-personalist one, yet for a while and with an aim of self-affirmation (of affirming the Bulgarian collective self), that is, in ultimately individualistic perspective. Filov arrived at the idea of multiple super-national cultural selves communicating with each other, but in fact disengaged from these insights to enter politics in the mid-30s. Šejtanov was a myth-maker and ethnologist, but not a philosopher. All these cases witness a lack of tragic vigour. I remember the early philosophy of Lev Šestov and I suggest that ultimate personalism can be born only as an outcome of the philosophy of despair.⁴⁹ But even falling there, in the condition of the meanest man, does not guarantee a breakthrough. One might make a step sideways and fall into idolatry: to an idea or to a superhuman self (individual or collective). Of course, one might approach a personalist understanding having evaded despair. But I am afraid this would result in idyllic—and idealistic—similes of a personalist universe.

Conclusions

Let me reformulate the topic of this paper. Did, first, the echoes of the epistemological “revolution” in Western and in Russian thought,⁵⁰ which was exemplified by phenomena

48 See Shejtanova, M.; Shejtanov, N., *supra* note 44, p. 356–365.

49 Philosophy of despair had its eminent representative in Bulgaria—Janko Janev (Янко Янев)—who referred to Scheler and Heidegger (Димитрова, *Образу*, p. 41) but remained with Hegel and Nietzsche—with *Geist* and *Übermensch*.

50 I guess that the self-conscious reassessment of the Tradition by Hans-Georg Gadamer and by Vladimir Losskij should be considered parallel phenomena. I am relying on my personal reader's experience with Losskij's *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (1st ed. in French, 1944) and “Dogmatic Theology” (lectures from the mid- and late 1940s) (the two works were gathered into one book in 1991, in Russian), and on Vitalij Mahlin's considerations about Gadamer (Mahlin, V., *supra* note 12, p. 265 ff. (consider also p. 54–56)). Mahlin's neglecting of the philosophical implications of the Neo-Patristic theology (as well as of “Christian existentialism” of Šestov) deserves a separate inquiry.

such as the Neo-Patristic synthesis, impulse the Bulgarian thought for an existentialist and personalist experiencing and imaging of the Bulgarian collective self? I am afraid the answer is “no,” with regard to secular philosophy, but works of clerical authors remain to be inquired. And could, second, the Byzantine intellectual artefacts within the reach of Bulgarian thought benefit somehow from that? To put the second point otherwise: could Bulgarian identification benefit from the undeniable availability of Byzantine and post-Byzantine artefacts? Yes, they could and it could; but the mutual benefit was brought about, in secular thought, by different developments, incited, partially, by Spengler’s and Trubeckoj’s books.⁵¹

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51 A variant of this paper constitutes the concluding chapter of my book “The (Un)thinkability of (the) Other: Early Eurasianism and Its Bulgarian Neighbours” (draft title), to be published by “Marin Drinov” Academic Press before the end of 2012.

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PERSONALIZMO IR BULGARŲ TAPATYBĖS DISKURSAS TARP DVIEJŲ PASAULINIŲ KARŲ (PARENGIAMASIS TYRIMAS)

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Santrauka. Šiame straipsnyje aš tiriu personalistinės filosofijos (filosofijos, kilusios iš „epistemologinio“ ar „antropologinio“ filosofijos „posūkio“ 1910-aisiais – 1920-aisiais metais ir susidūrusios su savo geocentristine ir bizantine kopija, išsirutuliojusia 1930-aisiais iš neopalamizmo) ir bulgariškosios tapatybės diskursą, gyvavusį tarp dviejų pasaulinių karų.

Apžvelgęs prancūzų ir rusų personalizmą 1920-aisiais – 1940-aisiais metais (E. Mounier, N. Berdiaev, L. Karsavin), jų variantiškumą ir vidinius konceptualiuosius nesuderinamumus (tarp jų ir „kolektyvinio individo“ atvejį) aš aptariu šias personalizmo susiformavimo prielaidas tarpukario Bulgarijoje: 1) pokario / po-idealistine tapatumo ir identiteto krizė; 2) personalistinės (arba ankstesnės / gretimos egzistencinės ir dialoginės) filosofijos įvaldymas; 3) naujas „namų“ teologinės tradicijos ir jos filosofinės reikšmės (jos pačios personalizmo) vertinimas; 4) „kito“ atsiliepiančio (kolektyvinio) „Tu“ vardu atradimas ir toks komunikavimas su „kitu“.

Žvelgdamas į antros prielaidos formavimąsi aš nagrinėju ir papildomas priežastis: O. Špenglerio „Vakarų saulėlydis“ (1918–1922) ir N. Trubeckojaus „Europa ir žmonija“ (1920) paskatino bulgarų tapatybės diskurso iniciaciją proto personalizmo būdu

Aš darau išvadą, kad pasaulietinėje mintyje tyrėjas gali prognozuoti tik atsitiktinius personalizmo ir tapatybės diskurso supriešinimus, ir susitelkiu ties trimis tokiais atvejais (vienas iš jų papildo mano hipotezę žinia, kad pobizantinė tradicija tapo tinkamu „pašnekovu“ personalistiniame kolektyvinio tapatumo diskurse) ir iškeliau dar ir ketvirtą atvejį.

Ironiška, bet prognozuotina, kad mano protagonistai yra ne filosofai, bet lingvistas (Stefan Mladenov), archeologas (Bogdan Filov) ir kultūrososofas mitų kūrėjas (Najden Šejtanov).

Nauji (šio laikotarpio klerikalizmo minties) tyrimai ir jau atliktas tyrimas gali pateikti platesnį problemos vaizdą, aprėpiantį kultūros persikėlimą laike ir erdveje, iš „periferijos“ ir iš „centro“.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *personalizmas, kolektyvinė tapatybė, bizantiškumas, istorijos morfologija, euroaziškumas, konservatyvus avangardas, bulgarų intelektualioji kultūra 1919–1944.*

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