

# ABOUT RUSSIAN VERSION OF HISTORICAL PROGRESS

Pavel Simashenkov<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Samara State Medical University

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**Pavel D. Simashenkov,**

*Candidate of Historical Sciences, Associate Professor,*

*Public Administration and Legal Support of the Civil Service Chair, "IMI" University, Samara, Russia*

*pavel.simashenkov@yandex.ru*

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**Abstract.** The article provides an analysis of the views of Russian thinkers on historical progress; the concepts of freedom-opportunity, freedom-necessity, time and space are explored. Comparing the western and domestic approaches to the formation of the so-called "national idea", the author formulates his own hypothesis of progress, based on the creativity of the Person as conciliar unity.

**Key words:** progress, history of Russia, Russian philosophy, national idea, freedom, creativity, religious philosophy, social ethics, philosophy of history, ideology.

## Introduction

To see the image with spiritual eyes, elevating to prototype

*Tsar John IV the Terrible*

The relevance of the stated subject is determined by the regrettable tendency of a decline in interest in Russian culture not only on a global scale, but also among Russians. Russia is now fashionable to perceive either in a negative-political or in the infernal-messianic context, and both are imbued with deliberate pathos, which gives the image of national culture not even cheap, but fair look — bright one, like any colonial product offered for sale. We prefer to avoid the overly profitable work of myth-making and myth-debunking: let us try to figure out what is the notorious specificity, "mysteriousness" of the Russian soul and national historiosophy.

In a certain sense, Russia is a country of political chastity, innocent of wretched rationalism. In truly Russian (in the spiritual sense) novel by I. Goncharov [1], Oblomovism is the stability "so that it does not get worse" as a prerequisite for its superation — the ongoing process of surpassing cyclic recurrence with redundant efforts. [2]. Oblomov was a living piece of art for Pshenitsyna — that is what inspired and deifying love, life-giving idealization is capable of! Apparently, the gentry was perceived not only as a system of oppression exclusively, but (less often and not by all, certainly) as inviolability of domestic concerns — a guarantee of moral integrity. Oblomov's personality enhances the phenomenon of Oblomovism, a kind of humility with

a certain comfort and a sofa scale of dreams. The very image of the main character (internal emigrant) is remarkable for moral purity: according to E. Trubetskoy [3], Oblomov's Christianity is closer to Russians.

According to A. Khomyakov [4], the correct algebraic formula was the ideal for which the whole life of European peoples unconsciously strove. The ideal of Slavophiles is the conversion of society and the state into the Church. The famous "Uvarov's triad" of the official national character is the best illustration of how superation (Orthodoxy) is able to surpass the potential antagonism of the natural (the people) and the artificial (the autocracy).

## Results

Ready to serve the cause of freedom, but not to be its serf

*V. Klyuchevsky*

Russia is indeed the abode of fatal and total non-freedom, but this must be understood more deeply and without "vodka-matreshka" populism. Russians understand freedom as a necessity (freedom "for"), and not as an opportunity (freedom "from something"). Freedom in our national understanding is unconditional; the absence of all "if ifs and ans were pots and pans" is something genuine, real. Western freedom in its export-replicated format is an abstract ethical vacuum irrespective of humanity.

The context of "Russian freedom" is deeply archaic in the noblest sense of the word: it is religious, as opposed to freedom-opportunity suggesting an alternative, and therefore limiting duality. That is why nobody managed to enslave the Russians, except for their own bureaucrats [5]. The history of the Fatherland is replete with social cataclysms, when attempts to attain liberal freedom — opportunity always ended in rudeness and bondage in the grip of consolidated and concentrated power, and freedom-necessity helped fight social injustice collectively. Therefore, freedom in the Russian version is not so much a conscious necessity (as Marxists formulate it), but an irrational necessity consciously perceived as a Fate. The western concept of freedom presupposes the loneliness of a hyper-individualist, drifting in the rarefied space of the so-called "personal sovereignty", which greatly simplifies "self-realization", determined by enclosing one's own space from society and by raising one's own rating (in one's own eyes) by belittling others. It is easy to seem great to yourself when others are far away. The result is "me-me-me generation", an ambitiously awkward generation of selfies and flash mobs.

It is extremely significant: life was perceived as a gift even in the "atheistic" USSR (according to N. Ostrovsky: "you must live in such a way that you would not be thoroughly ashamed of purposeless years" [6], and in the world of capital life is a resource (Carpe diem, take everything from life!). Freedom in Russian way of thinking is asceticism, taking responsibility not only for others (the western term "social responsibility"), but also for everything that happens around us (the Russian version is historical responsibility), and this is a mission of a religious nature, and then "eternity will extend a hand to us, the future will understand us" (as N. Dobronravov writes). Taking on the burden and the cross of responsibility voluntarily is the destiny of the few; it is even more surprising when such phenomenon becomes mass. It takes the courage of a higher order to sacrifice life, realizing oneself as an expendable material of History [7].

Views on development goals also differ in the West and Russia in many respects. The goal is the idea of the desired result, the mission is the idea of the Path. Choosing it is more important than setting a goal, because the shortest path to the goal is amoral, cynical, and simplifying. "Chekhov's intellectual" — is a symbol of a beautifully inclined but incapable of active human activity. But what if purposeful activity, that very goal-setting is the brightest and obligatory manifestation of arrogance? To pursue the goal: there is something unpleasant, manic-egoistic even in the literal interpretation. In addition, the achieved dream is surely debased, is it not better to keep it clean?

The peculiarity of the Russian national character is a developed fantasy and a desire to live in a new, better, never before existed world. Perhaps this comes from the historical feeling of dissatisfaction with the Russian

reality (in the opinion of I. Aksakov [8]). Perhaps it is due to the tragedy of history: no one has ever lived well anywhere in Russia, and even more so — calmly. All this is due to the anticipation of the world to come — a lot of religious wanderers, and Russian martyr passivity (as the expectation of “the beautiful distant future”), and even government reforms that are divorced from reality: one more moment, and everything should fall into place, you just have to be patient! And all this is because the present reality for fun and the irrational reality in the Russian consciousness are not identical.

Sergey Dorenko once called the Russians “a child-people”, for whom everything was for the first time, and therefore it was so easy for politicians to deceive them. It seems to us that the words of the journalist are not at all reproaching. Yes, Russian thinking is akin to childish in many respects: it is picturesque, artistic, and synthetic. Hence, the urgent need for the Image of the Future — an absolutely beautiful idea, which basically has faith, that is super-natural. Russians do not accept anything abstract, unreal, “as though”. Hence, the neglect of formal constructions, simulacra, respectively, distrust of jurisprudence and politics, which is not much different from mere verbiage. The image must be inspired; therefore, naturalism is not in honor in Russian art. Sincerity — yes, but no shocking frankness.

Since we are talking about culture, let us emphasize a landmark feature that many people noted: the poet in Russia is more than a poet. He is considered to be a public figure, even if he does not consider himself to be such, because the society feels in him (in creative individual) the potential of new moral guidelines creator, which are, if not higher, then at least contradict the hateful, formal bureaucracy dictated by the government. That is why an intelligent person is always (at least) in opposition to the authorities, it is even more valuable when he is mentally and morally superior to them. Intellectuals have either their own ideals, or their own understanding of the way to achieve these ideals.

Mankind does not wander in a circle, but develops in a spiral. This hypothesis assumes the presence of a certain “center” and a concentric path of turns. It appears that the basis of social progress is a single principle — fixed, as the center of a circle or spiral. It means that universal human values (at the level of moral feeling) are immutable, but it is a matter of the free will of people to twist or unwind the turns. Thus, negation of the negation does not help to avoid a closed “circular” cycle, because it is a logical conclusion from the transition to the anti-quality and therefore unproductive. What gives rise to a new quality of development? In our opinion — this is only creativity.

We are sure that historical progress is provided by the principle of energy expenditure, and not at all by the law of its conservation. Even having to recognize the “jurisdiction” of the latter (and therefore the conditional impossibility of a perpetual motion machine existence, for example), people discover new sources of energy and, in this regard, distinguish between closed and open systems. Something inside a human being does not allow him to become reconciled to the limitations of his capabilities, much less to the isolation of the surrounding world. Thus, the very recognition of energy conservation expands the horizons of knowledge in search of the root cause. Ultimately, the fashionable “big bang theory” is the evidence of scientists’ belief in some initial energy expenditure, the first impulse, is not it? By the way, why should we not interpret the law of energy conservation in the sense that the creative energy given to people is stored in them? - only it is being used and transformed in different ways.

Any laws originate from certain limits, therefore it is impossible to formulate “laws of development”, because it is impossible to have development “within frameworks”, moreover established by people (it reminds a prison). That is why progress is clearer in the reverse temporal perspective: to evaluate it is the conciliar work of mankind (the common phrase “history will judge us”). The logic of laws is negative; they are suitable only for the demarcation of impossibility, while the notorious subjunctive mood is not even out of the ordinary, but beyond the regulations. Possibility — is mockery of appropriateness; the historical parallels are quite capable of intersecting in the non-Euclidean space of time — complicating, enriching both the very course of events and (most importantly) its comprehension.

Creating the future, we resurrect our past in its specific signs, idealized as we move away from them. Were it different, people would not feel affection for nostalgic memories, family traditions and good old films.

Therefore, the so-called reverse perspective with respect to time is the most accurate, for it reflects both historical (ancestors look at us) and futurological aspects (the farther away, the wider are the opportunities for future discoveries; thinking does not narrow, does not “reach the point”, it is not dogmatized).

The genius of the Russian proverb “morning is wiser than evening” is in a laconic designation of both the principle of reverse perspective and a special, religiously based mood: to look at the passed by day with not so much captious and sober but rather with blessing eyes. And also in the hint that the “present time” is an impenetrable night, which we have to sleep over. A man is made by the past, both in the sense of going there, and in the sense that personality is shaped by memories: everybody moves into the future, leaving for the past. It turns out that there is no real present; there is “only a moment between the past and the future” (in the words of L. Derbenev). It is striking how many times and how thoroughly this image is contemplated in Russian philosophy:

”The fall, the impoverishment of one epoch — let it be our epoch — is only a grimace, distorting a beautiful face for a moment, if the future connects with the past into a living chain” (G. Fedotov [9])

”We are set at the turn of two worlds: the past and the future” (V. Odoevsky [10]).

”It is enough for us to resurrect, to understand the past, and bring it into consciousness and life” (A. Khomyakov).

”The present is not subject to any changes, it always remains a point” (N. Strakhov [11]).

Therefore, perhaps, the appeal to stay in the present sounds so definite and so deadly: a point, a limit, an end. Zen Buddhists, by the way, advise to stay in the present, but this advice does not contradict the above-stated, because where the future is a dream, and the past is a result, the present is a process of creativity, superation of the past. Yes, we should live for this process; it gives meaning and value to earthly existence.

It is noteworthy: in the Russian language, the present tense describes the process to a greater degree than the result (what the British would call present continuous). The result, the accomplishment — is always in the past, and achievement — in the future. The linguistic “present tense” differs from the future only in a volitional component (I do — I will do, I make — I will make). Thus, realizing our plans, we rather do not bring the future closer, but we lock the materialized dream into the closet of the past by an effort of will. Evil is not so much in restriction (process), as in narrowness (result).

A person does not seek for self-assertion in creativity, but serves another, higher idea. To create is a kind of self-denial act, not self-realization. We almost agree with M. Mamardashvili [12] that self-determination is the most important guarantee of creativity. It is self-awakening, finding oneself not outside, but inside the transmission of life impressions, from which one learns the meaning of what is happening. Largely, it is rather self-overcoming, than self-determination. Therefore, in order to crystallize the coordinate system, a person must first be dissolved thoroughly in the surrounding world. The act of creation occurs always for the first time, harmony is being built from the primordial chaos. It turns out that the essence of creation lies in this dissolution and resurrection, i.e. in the work itself — it has no goal as such. Art is the only way to communicate with Eternity. To inspire and perpetuate — these are the aspirations and needs of the creator. It means that there can be no competition in art (and in creation in general). The environment can form a fairly high “general cultural level,” against which every creative person, however, will always try to surpass oneself, but not to gain an advantage in competition.

However, you can adapt to the “challenges” by becoming like mediocre creatives. Like any other person, they are also endowed with the ability to create, but they are deprived of their conscience and, therefore, value the gift as a means of survival in a market-trading environment. The vulgarization of art consists in its artificiality. Art can not be a mediator, because it is purport. Therefore, creatives are slaves to the temporal context (fashion and trend). The act of creation is expressed in the desire to exceed the commonness, based on the direct sensation of the irrational interrelations of the surrounding phenomena. The result (but not the product) of creation becomes a new value — hitherto unprecedented, not existing in nature. This is not

necessarily a work of art; for example, state institutions are also the result of the creative work of those people who do not deal with art. Social development in many ways vulgarizes the idea underlying it; hence, we have all the mistakes and perversions of what is considered to be the progress.

We idealize the past eventually, and people want to return the "golden years". History is the childhood of nations, and the melancholy of the "golden age" is already the prettifying of the past: it means that people survived, surpassed culturally its gross realities. Here the main thing is not to dwell on the admiration with the past, not to flatter yourself with the simplicity of retrograde nostalgia, but to try to develop the best moments of what is recalled with warmth. However, when the past comes back in ceremonial formalism, this is already a farce and a vulgarization of historical memory. Consequently, conservatism and retrogression are different concepts. True conservatism preaches inseparability from the primeval ideal, retrogrades prefer to get skeletons from cabinets and shake up rotten idols of the past. The root of evil here is not even in objective circumstances (ideas hardly depend on them), but in the efforts of specific subjects who implement ideas in their own discretion. As a rule, these subjects make up for their own creative inconsistency with an excess of possibilities for its realization (usually — by concentrating power in their hands). If artists, poets and thinkers are the bearers of ideas, then the official propagandists-ideologists are their peddlers.

In fact, every creator is a fringe frustrated by the fact that it is impossible to materialize an idea by its very definition. However, the impossibility is the prerequisite for its further (and permanent) improvement. The mass, with its criticism and inertness, balances the egocentrism of the creative individual; this is how social harmony is born in the development of someone else's moral ideals. The people define the criteria of historical responsibility not only for the creative individual, but also for each member of society. If it were different, the fringe groups would destroy the world.

The hierarchy (coordinate system) is built into the human consciousness as a vector of expanding creative possibilities. Naturally, there is always an indignant minority in society that is opposed to the hierarchy in general, especially when representatives of the upper elite begin to treat their subordinates with disdain, because they consider themselves to be within walking distance from God. Time smooths over the conflict: as a rule, the masses declare posthumously both martyrs for the faith and fighters against the regime to be heroes, tools of Destiny — as mediators between God's providence and people. Thus, the institution of saints forms the spiritual hierarchy, and that, in its turn, is layered on the social one — with the fathers of the nation and freedom fighters. Social stability largely depends on the coincidence of these coordinate systems: a society, in which the authorities have purely "exclusive" saints and, conversely, there are hero men who are worshiped by the common people, will hardly be harmonious.

Historical continuity is total, as an inheritance: either to accept it entirely, or to give up everything. According to M. Prishvin [13], if you do not take the whole of Christ, then the rest of Christ would stand against taken by you as Antichrist. A western, alternative approach leads not to the development, but to the negation of negation. Therefore, we have "antichrists" of world history (Nero, Hitler). Any attempt to achieve progress through the search for alternatives leads to the loss of the integrity of the worldview and, as a result, to the emergence of "antichrists", confusion.

Social is always more conditional, formal and massive than individual, hence there is inevitable blurring and vulgarization of high thoughts and aspirations. Is Christ responsible for the moral character of "catholic" Cesare Borgia, and communist Lenin for the deceit and betrayal of the Motherland by "member of the Communist Party" Gorbachev? Consequently, the redundancy of creativity provides mankind with at least some chance for development. It compensates with this for the vulgarization of the idea due to its replication. The potential of social development is the creative potential of the idea underlying it.

## Conclusion

There are six days of creation for the moral world, for History:  
what day are we in the world?

Spatial perspective may be any (direct-inverse, linear-nonlinear), but temporal one — most likely, is only inverse. This does not imply a retrospective nostalgia, but a historical responsibility to those who had lived before us, and whom we will certainly meet at the end of the earthly journey (Fedorov's "sons' duty is the return of the lives of fathers" [14]). Let us not to disgrace the ancestors — it means that we will remain in the grateful memory of our descendants.

They are mistaken, who think that those possessing information own the world, it is ruled by those who takes possession of time. Time is eternally desirable wealth, infinitely limited due to unlimited perspective (Russian saying: "God has many days") and finiteness at the moment ("you do not breathe before dying"). There is neither history nor progress without a time concept.

Time is the path from plurality to unity, a kind of defragmentation of being by consciousness. Historical time is transformed into a space of memories, which people are free to decorate, as they like. Closing his life within the framework of earthly existence, a person can break the eternal moral law by arranging for himself his beloved cozy closet with the benefits of civilization. The process is more valuable than the result, therefore the root of evil is always present in the creature, but it is absent in creation. Evil appeared as soon as creation was embodied in the created.

Evil is non-existence, a frozen form, intended to become a dogma, it is a cashing of reality into actuality, into everyday life. Moreover, what could be explained by the historical context is outdated. But the development is provided not so much with confidence in the infinity of human potentials, as with infinite faith in inexhaustibility of creativity. According to N.Ustryalov [15], progress is not in a continuous linear rise, but in an increase of being, in a growing wealth of motives number. It turns out that the time is not so continuous cyclically-measured, and if you wish, you may not hang about the main entrance, but enter the new life by opening the doors with the keys of knowledge and experience. Cyclic recurrence is not infinity, but hopelessness. Nevertheless, "the arrows go in a circle, time goes forward" (by N.Dobronravov).

Each stage of progress is a kind of synthesis, surpassing the established limits of the law or genre. Figuratively speaking, one trying to climb a descending escalator without considerable acceleration will inevitably move down. Anyone who tries to go towards progress "in tune with the century" will not facilitate progress and will not make it. Moreover, the Russian way is to *surpass* the world around us — and this is the essence of creativity and superation. Not to adapt, but to soar above the objective reality given to us in sensations, with the help of subjective sensations — is not it a challenge and an answer to all-powerful Fate? Russian destiny is the tragedy of the ascent of the human spirit over inhuman circumstances.

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