

Russian philosophy about division of labor

by Vera Gouchtchina

I. Orthodoxy as a source of Russian philosophy.

Specific of Russian philosophy is conditioned by its origin from religion - Orthodoxy. Orthodox religion plays attention mainly to heavenly not earthly life, to the divine not human, to the sacred not secular. Its ideal is mystical and ascetic. Unity (Sobornost') is understood as only a spiritual unity within the Church, individual spiritual efforts are not recognized. "Individualism is foreign to Orthodoxy, to it belongs a particular collectivism" (N. Berdjajev). Thus, Orthodox religion recognizes only human existing in a collective, but the activity which unites this collective into the whole is spiritual one, sacred revelation, church, not earthly realities and/or activities.

II. Father S. Bulgakov and his "Philosophy of economy" (1910-1912) about division of labor.

This work is the first attempt in Russian philosophical thought to consider economic problems from the philosophic point of view. The author followed M. Weber but not so persistently and coherently. It recognizes division of labor, but its earthly, real empirical forms do not matter and do not influence economic development, because its main source and model is beyond this world. This is Divine Sofia, Holy Spirit.

III. N. Fedorov and his "Philosophy of the Common Task" (1878-1880) about essence of collective efforts and forms of division of labor.

The only collective, the philosopher recognizes, is one of relatives. Brotherhood he prefers to comradeship, kinship – to citizenship (The title of his main work - "The Question of Brotherhood or Kinship, of the Reasons for the Unbrotherly, Unkindred, or Unpeaceful State of the World, and of the Means for the Restoration of Kinship"). "But the citizens -- are prodigal sons, having forgotten their fathers. ... Brotherhood presupposes sonship, which is a fundamental category in the social thought of N. F. The true society is kinship and brotherhood, based on sonship. The primal archetype of true human society is the Holy Trinity. The whole world ought to be organized on the model of the Divine Trinity, a Heavenly kinship. The peculiar social utopianism of N. F. consists in this, that he believed in the possibility of a patriarchal and kindred sociality, based on a cult of ancestors" (Berdjajev).

The other name for his philosophy is "Philosophy of the Great Synthesis". This synthesis has a direct relation to his understanding of the division of labor.

On the one side he speaks against demolishing of different fields of human activities, e.g., science, art, agriculture and industry, what, for example, Lev Tolstoj called for. Tolstoj spoke in favor of only agricultural labor and called everyone to be engaged in agricultural works. Fedorov was against such idea and said that if all people were doing the same things, it would not have eliminated unjust and evil in the world, it would not have stopped quarrels and discord between peoples occupied with the same works. So he recognized the necessity of different type of work (industrial, rural, scientific, artistic), but was against its modern form, against professional division of labor, division between practical and theoretical (pure) reasons, between the learned and unlearned, etc.

His attitude towards secular collective activity, to citizenship is strongly negative.

In his utopian views the main laboring types is a peasant, which does industrial work in his leisure time, mainly in winter. City industry does not exist as well as science and art. He calls for the coming back to the archaic syncretism.

Sexual division of labor stops because procreation stops too. But some differences in the content of work on resuscitation take place: men are doing the most creating part of this job - they reproduced the participles and parts, which the dead bodies of ancestors consist of, because this is the most intellectual task; women join/sew these parts together and make resuscitated bodies to look alive and nice by means of cosmetic. They also have to inspire men to continue this work permanently in case of difficulties and failures.

The unifying force of all people in fulfilling this task is moral duty and sense of love to fathers, i.e., an ideal entity.

IV. The reasons for underestimation of division of labor:

economic (natural household), social (serfdom), political (tsarist authority), ideological (religion), cultural (art), historical, etc.

Natural household determined mechanical type of solidarity (Durkheim)

V. Consequences:

absence of habits and skills of civic communalism, practical communitarianism, organization and regulating of labor for economic purposes, citizenship, productive collectivism, social partnerships, ; the low degree of development of social capital, etc. In fact, despite the declared collectivity, the Russians are more anarchists and individualists than collectivists, or at least their collectivism has some specific – it appears mainly in hard times and exists often between marginals.