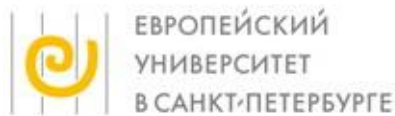


POLITICS OF THE ONE: THE LIMITS OF FRAGMENTATION AND THE CHANCES FOR CONSOLIDATION

April 8-10, 2010

Centre d'études franco-russes de Moscou, Smolny College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, The European University at Saint-Petersburg, The "Chto Delat" group



Smolny



The conference will be dedicated to the actual problems of the contemporary political philosophy. Their focus will be the problematic of unity and multiplicity, of synthesis and dissolution. These concepts, which may seem highly abstract, from the first sight, have been, in the last 30 years, central for the continental philosophy, particularly for the French tradition. Thus, the problems and paradoxes of the one and the many are thematically discussed in the fundamental works by Gilles Deleuze, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Alain Badiou. Some of them, for example “The clamour of being” by Alain Badiou and the “Being singular plural” by Jean-Luc Nancy, were recently translated into Russian. In the last two years, in Saint-Petersburg there has been working an informal philosophical seminar dedicated to the problems of unity (coordinators: Artemy Magun and Alexey Cherniakov). In this seminar, we study the texts by Hegel, Heidegger, Deleuze, Badiou, which are dedicated to the notion of the one. The subject of the conference is not limited, of course, to these authors. Thus, at a more concrete level of analysis, the theme of the constitution of collective was actively elaborated in philosophy by Jean-Paul Sartre. The issues of the constitution of social unity through the mechanism of identification have been deeply investigated by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. Some similar problems have been treated, in the recent years, by the philosophers of other European countries, such as Italy Slovenia, Austria, Finland, and others.

The today's interest in the concept of uniting the multiple is motivated by the current socio-political processes. The process of “globalization”, understood as the unification of the world via the world market and the mass media, does not introduce any working form of unity. This unification is rather negative (in the logical sense) than positive, since it stems from the destruction of the current local socio-political units. The things and the people are united, rather, by the absence, by the disappearance of forms and prin-

principles. Simultaneously, the process of society's atomization is underway, and a subject loses the intermediary levels of reference, finding itself one to one with the totality of the world. Unity appears today in its two modes at once - as a limitless totality and as an excluded, excepted one-as-singularity. Hence the highly popular theme of the universal "state of emergency," of exception becoming a rule.

Unity of the world is in the process of practical realization – and this is why it reappears as a problem. Some suggest a post-metaphysical abandonment of the one in favor of the multiple: the fulfillment of unity would lead to the overcoming of the one. Some, on the contrary, suggest that the true unity requires an irreducible singularity: the singular one (understood, this time, ontologically and not as exception) should rise against the one-as-a-form. Some, like Jean-Luc Nancy, propose a synthesis ("being singular plural").

At this juncture, the concept of the one demonstrates its polysemantic and contradictory: it simultaneously means unity as totality, singularity as exception, identity, and privative delimitation. It is this polyvocality which makes it almost indeterminate, but which also puts it into the center of philosophical questioning of the century.

The process of a negative unification brings with itself, not just the negative value of dissolution but equally, a chance for any democratic reunion of people, beyond all existing classifications and hierarchies. Currently, when, in politics, there comes a crisis of a party-type mass organization and of the parliamentary system of representation, philosophy should elaborate, along with the empirical social sciences and the arts, forms of the possible social synthesis.

The former binary structure of political forces is currently undergoing a deep transformation. The mutual opposition between the former historical blocks and parties disappeared or became diffuse; objective antagonisms do not disappear but they are, so to say, pulverized in the multitude of social conflicts. Social power acts not any more through the repressive forms of uniformization or exclusion of the antagonistic elements but through the "soft" forms of control and governance and through the emphasis on the plurality and diversity of various identities. In social philosophy this is reflected in the theories of "multiculturalism" and other affirmations of difference and plurality.

If, for the avant-garde philosophy of the last half of the 20th century, the principle of multiplicity was a call to micro-analysis and an instrument of criticizing the repressive forms of the One (the political and discursive ones), today, in the new situation, multiplicity often seems to be losing its innovative and critical potential and is hypostasized as a positive principle which is in accord with the reigning socio-political configuration. This is why the notion of the One, in its renewed form which expresses and affirms, rather than excludes, the disorder of the multiple, becomes an important stake in the contemporary philosophical work.

As Russian scholars, we are particularly interested in the history of the concepts of unity and multiplicity in the Russian and, later, the Soviet intellectual tradition. One

of the main themes of the Russian philosophy, from the moment of its emergence in the beginning of the 19th century, was the search for the collective models of subjectivity and of the subjectless and synthetic forms of consciousness. While in the early period (the Slavophiles Ivan Kireevsky, brothers Aksakov, A. Khomyakov), this search happened in the religious and religious-philosophical context, accompanied with the critique and revision of the Western Christianity (primarily, Protestantism), in the later years, by the end of the XIX century (Vladimir Solovyev and his circle, Nikolay Fedorov and others) the interest shifted towards the ethical and epistemological problems, and in the final stage (the 1920s, time of Gustav Shpet, Mikhail Bakhtin, LEF and Proletkult) it turned to the aesthetical and political discourse, while criticizing the “bourgeois” philosophy, the Western European culture and art. This tendency found its final expression in the ideological models of the Soviet collectivity.

Thus, against the widespread hypothesis of the idiosyncratic character of the “Russian philosophy” - of its religious, fideist, intuitive, or “sobornyi” nature, which is supposedly engaged and justified by an idea of the chosenness and of the world’s salvation, we suggest to analyze, with the contemporary research methods, the social and anthropological experience of unity, the historically cultivated types of community in Russia, in relation to the phenomenon of the Russian power. In particular, it is important to answer the question of the possible specificity of the idea of collectivity (the “all-unity”, “sobornost”, “collective”) in the Russian tradition and its place in the world philosophical context.

Thus, the theme of the one and the many lies at the crossroads of the contemporary philosophical, sociological, and politological discussions. At the conference, we suggest discussing the philosophical logic of the one as well as the more concrete questions of unity in the context of globalization and atomization of the society, and of the chances they bring.

The conference program:

■ 8 April, Thursday

The European University at Saint-Petersburg (Gagarinskaya, 3)

19.00 The registration

Welcoming addresses: **Artemy Magun** Smolny College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; **Oleg Kharkhordin** The European University at Saint-Petersburg, **Xavier Le Torrivellec** Centre d'études franco-russes de Moscou.

Dmitry Vilensky (Saint-Petersburg, Group "Chto Delat", Laboratory of critical art at the European University at Saint-Petersburg). Opening of the exposition "When one must say "we". Art and practices of solidarity".

Gluklya Theatre of social problems SOS.

■ 9 April, Friday

The European University at Saint-Petersburg (Gagarinskaya, 3)

09.30 The registration

09.45 – 11.15 Unity and the perspectives of political solidarity

Nina Power (*Great Britain, Roehampton University*). Humanity. Unity and the One.

11.15-11.30 Coffee break

11.30-13.30 and the perspectives of political solidarity (protraction)

Alberto Toscano (*Great Britain, Goldsmiths University*). An Enthusiasm for the Abstract: Fanaticism and the Politics of the One.

Keti Chukhrov (*Moscow, Institute of Philosophy Russian Academy of Sciences*). The Universal, the General, the Multiple in the perspective of a Political Utopia.

13.30 - 14.15 Lunch

14.15 – 16.30 Unity and/or community?

Gerald Raunig (*Wien/Zürich, Zurich University of the Arts*). Condivision, or Towards a non-communitarian concatenation of singularities.

Artemy Magun (*SPb, Smolny College of Liberal Arts and Sciences*). Unity and solitude.

Boyan Manchev (*Bulgaria, International College of Philosophy, New Bulgarian University*).

The One: Construction or Event? For a Politics of the Becoming.

16.30-16.45 Coffee break

16.45 – 19.00 E Pluribus Unum: Res Publica and Community

Oleg Kharkhordin (*SPb, The European University at Saint-Petersburg*). How does one constitute the one? Theology of the icon, theory of non-representative art and of non-representative politics.

Viktor Kaploun (*SPb, Smolny College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Higher School of Economics*). The Problem of the Public Sphere.

Yves Sintomer (*France, Université Paris 8*). Drawing lots in politics: unity and totality.

19.00 -19.30 Coffee break

19.30 - 21.00 Keynote lecture

Jean-Luc Nancy (*France, Emeritus Professor, University of Strasbourg, France*). Plus d'un.

■ **10 April, Saturday**

Institute of Liberal Arts and Sciences (Galernaya, 58-60)

9.30-12.00 Politicians of the One

Dmitry Fedchuk (*SPb, The Saint Petersburg State University of Economics and Finance*). The first Philosophy and the problem of the One.

Boris Markov (*SPb, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences*). Being and totality. Problem of unity in the German philosophy of the early 20th century.

Janne Porttikivi (*Finland*) One or Several Worlds? Badiou on Globalization and Politics.

12.00-12.15 Coffee break

12.15 – 13.45 Unity and multitude in nature

Susanna Lindberg (*Finland, University of Helsinki, The Academy of Finland*). Elemental Nature as the Ultimate Common Ground of the World Community.

Michael Marder (*Canada, Thomas More College*). Vegetative democracy, or the post-metaphysics of plants.

13.45-14.30 Lunch

14.30-18.00 The metaphysics of the one

Alexey Chernyakov (*SPb, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences*). Truth and Infinity in Badiou and Heidegger.

Jussi Backman (*Finland, University of Helsinki*). Complicated Presence: The Unity of Being in Parmenides and Heidegger.

Marcia Cavalcante (*Sweden, The University of Sodertorn*). Fragility of the one.

17.45-18.00 Coffee break.

18.00-20.45 The praxis of unity and multiplicity: self-organization in contemporary Russia

Vladimir Soloveychik (*SPb, Civil initiative movement*). Movement of Civil Initiatives. Structure, participants, main activities.

Pavel Arsenyev (*SPb, Open air university*). Street University: production of collective time and public space.

Carine Clement (*Moscow, Institute of Sociology Russian Academy of Sciences*). Fighting together: the problem of solidarity.

20.45 Closing comments - Artemy Magun