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INTERVIEW FOR PUBLICATION – SYNERGIC ANTHROPOLOGY

This interview was held in March 2015, during the visit of Sergey Sergeevich Horujy to the Institute of Human Sciences in Vienna. The questions were asked by Kristina Stoeckl.

KSt: You have recently published a book in English on *Practices of the Self and Spiritual Practices*, in which you engage in a dialogue with Michel Foucault. In his endorsement, the American scholar Paul Valliere calls this book "a demonstration of the continuing vitality of the Russian Orthodox intellectual tradition in our time". How do you react to this statement?

SH: I am very grateful to Professor Valliere for his kind words, but I am afraid that the vitality he talks about is not very strong – to put it mildly. Yes, the tradition he mentions is a real thing and my work is surely connected with it. But now this tradition is in decline, deep and long. This decline is a part of the larger process of the long degradation of the country and culture. And as for myself, I used to associate with my work the line of Mandelstam: "A drying-out makeweight of loaves taken out from the oven long ago (*усыхающий довесок прежде вынутых хлебов*)".

What is more, the formula "Russian Orthodox intellectual tradition" can cover my work only because this formula is so large and imprecise. In concrete terms, this work does not belong to any school or any trend in Russian philosophy, be it past or present. At present there are no philosophical schools worth mentioning. As for the past, my work was connected genetically with the big school of Russian religious philosophy and sometimes it is considered as a continuation of the latter. However, I criticized this school, its foundations are now obsolete, to my mind, and my philosophy is not religious though it gives great importance to religious experience. And what Russian philosophy needs is rather the "other beginning" than the direct continuation of this or other tradition which existed before.

KSt: How important is "Russian" as an element of description of your philosophy, to what extent do you see yourself in the tradition of Russian religious philosophy?

SH: There is the popular term "glocal" in the modern globalization discourse and I think it fits my work too. It means being both global and local at the same time and I

believe it is what creative thought should be with necessity. As any philosopher I try to think in the horizon of universal philosophical problems, but the only way to be global and universal in a constructive way – by which I mean not just on the level of declarations – is to bring in your local, your personal experience: your cultural milieu, your history, your surroundings, and your most personal things. So there is the unity of these two aspects, but I am not special in this, it is a necessity. Of course I feel myself as part of Russian culture, Russian was the first native language of my thought, and I started philosophizing on the ground of Russian thought, but the tasks and problems as well as the means and methods to solve these problems, are always universal. And there is no Russian philosopher who would be as important for my philosophical development as, say, Husserl or Heidegger or Palamas.

KSt: Can you tell us a bit more about your own philosophical project of synergic anthropology?

HS: Continuing the theme of glocality I can tell that the development of this project (and I develop it for about 20 years) lead out to more and more global tasks. I started on a quite local level, namely, with phenomenological study of Eastern-Orthodox ascetical practice, hesychasm. However, the detailed reconstruction of hesychast anthropology provided a rich fund of much more general ideas, concepts, epistemological and methodological principles, which opened the way to a full-fledged anthropology of a new nonclassical type. I discovered that having some clever enough description of hesychast experience I can advance to a sound analytical description of all the field of anthropological experience. And my synergic anthropology is nothing but the result of this step by step advancement.

In the course of it the project took a definite place in the context of modern anthropological schools and trends. First of all, it is a radical nonclassical approach which rejects all the foundations of classical anthropology by Aristotle-Descartes-Kant and all its basic concepts such as the subject, essence of man and substance. At the same time, it is close methodologically to the big and influential line of modern anthropologies, which build-up a full-fledged anthropological conception by means of the gradual expansion of the working field from some narrow domain of anthropological experience to all the ensemble of this experience. I call this methodology of expansion the strategy of the "rescued bit" adopting the expression used by Husserl for the famous Descartes cognitive act, the expansion of which produced successfully all Cartesian epistemology. This line includes leading theories of structural and cultural anthropology developed by such authors as Levy-Strauss, Malinowski, Turner e.a., which all share the main principle: the starting base of the large anthropological conception is the study of some narrow sample of primitive consciousness (Amazonian Indians in Levy-Strauss, Ndembu tribe in Turner, Polynesians in Malinowski and Margaret Mead, etc.). One chooses such samples as "rescued bits" because structures of primitive consciousness

and society are relatively simple and it is easier to discover and unearth universal anthropological principles and structures in such material.

But here comes my deep divergence with this line! I think that primitive prehistoric consciousness is not an adequate choice for the starting database of full-scale anthropology since certain levels, functions and structures of fully developed consciousness of historic man are not yet formed-up here. Thus I follow the strategy of the "rescued bit" too, but I make a different choice of the latter. Analyzing hesychasm and other spiritual practices created in world religions (Yoga, Zen, Sufism, etc.), I find that they are devoted specially to producing certain anthropological experience, which follows strict rules and has completely transparent organization; it is even reflected upon and interpreted within these practices. So I draw the conclusion that they can be considered as genuine schools of pure anthropological experience, and hence they can be accepted as a "rescued bit" in the elaboration of a self-consistent experiential anthropology. To my mind, spiritual practices represent an important database for the present-day search of new anthropology, and this database is almost unexploited so far.

Finally, I must mention one more project, which is undisputably the closest to synergic anthropology: it is theory of practices of the Self by Michel Foucault. In our context, it also can be considered as following the rescued bit strategy, and such a bit is here the set of practices developed in philosophical schools of the Late Antiquity, chiefly, in Roman stoicism. They are very close to spiritual practices. Moreover, both synergic anthropology and Foucault's theory try to confront most topical problems of present-day anthropological situation. Thus my recent book which you mentioned launches an active and many-dimensional dialogue between these two approaches.

KSt:. I think, this placing of synergic anthropology into contemporary context still leaves one important aspect unclear. Among related conceptions that you mention, Levy-Strauss' theory is classical structuralism, Turner's or Malinowski's studies don't claim to be philosophical, while Foucault's positions are usually characterized as post-structuralism or something in a class of its own. As for the philosophical mainstream, it is now more geared towards pragmatism, philosophy of language and communication. Synergic anthropology is a philosophical project, but what is its philosophical position?

SH: To start with, I find it helpful to characterize the present philosophical situation in slightly different terms. All the components of its mainstream listed by you belong to one big trend of contemporary philosophy, which can be called by the Deleuzian term *de-territorialization*. It means essentially that the central or perennial philosophical questions are no longer asked on the "territory" of philosophy, but in neighbouring discourses. Philosophy as such and fundamental philosophy, ontology, survive on neighboring territories, and this takes place chiefly due to the breakdown of classical European metaphysics. This breakdown generated also a closely related trend

of *de-ontologization*, which means the rejection of ontology or, to be more precise, the rejection of the discourse of the transcendent in favor of the discourse of the purely immanent. The two trends represent the mainstream, but besides this mainstream philosophical situation includes an important component of the opposite kind, which I call the trend of *re-ontologization*, i.e. of efforts to bring back to philosophical discourse, notwithstanding the end of metaphysics, the ontologische Differenz, difference of being as such and present empirical being. For the sake of brevity we could call the mainstream the Deleuze-vector and the trend of re-ontologization the Heidegger-vector. And the fact is that the Heidegger-vector stays present and influential in the situation despite the new denunciations of Heidegger as political thinker caused by the publications of his *Black Notebooks*. For example, many studies in the search of new modes of subjectivity replacing the Cartesian subject as well as the conception of „being singular plural" by J.-L.Nancy correspond to this vector.

This is my view of philosophical situation *au vol d'oiseau*. Now, where is synergic anthropology located in this situation? The answer is that it follows both vectors, it implements both the strategy of de-territorialization/de-ontologization and the strategy of re-ontologization. Such combination or union of opposite trends becomes possible because the conception of human being in synergic anthropology is based on a particular paradigm, which is remarkably general: it possesses a set of extremely different realizations such that the description of some of them needs ontological discourse while the description of others needs de-ontologized discourse. It means that synergic anthropology is pluralistic anthropology, which conceives human being as a certain ensemble of anthropological formations, and it is also pluralistic in its philosophical and ontological standings. This radical pluralism is not eclecticism, however, because all the subject field is provided with a united conceptual base originating in this fundamental anthropological paradigm.

KSt: But what is this wonderful paradigm? Tell a bit more about it and how it works!

SH: This is the paradigm of the *anthropological unlocking*. The unlocking is indeed a very general category: it is any act of any kind of man´s encounter with the Other, be it some acting agent or just surrounding reality. Everything, which exists, performs such acts, and lots of our manifestations are events of our unlocking: for instance, in all our perceptions we unlock ourselves to sensual reality, etc. This concept was first introduced by Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit* (die Erschliessung), but in synergic anthropology it is conceived in a quite different way.

KSt: And how do you proceed to full-fledged anthropology basing on the unlocking?

SH: First of all, we single out the key class of the unlocking events: those, in which human person forms-up his/her constitution. Then we find that there are very different kinds of such constitutive unlocking, and each of them corresponds to a certain anthropological formation. Identifying these formations and analyzing them we build-up the framework of a new conception of human being. We find that there are just three basic formations, which we call Ontological, Ontic and Virtual Man. The Ontological Man is constituted when human person unlocks him/herself towards the Other endowed with a different mode of being, which is the case in spiritual practices (e.g. in hesychasm the Other is Christ) and practices related to them. Description of this formation involves the ontological discourse and follows the trend of the re-ontologization. On the contrary, the Ontic Man is constituted in the unlocking towards the „Ontic Other", which is immanent: for example, one of its principal representations is the unconscious, and the unlocking is in this case realized in patterns of the unconscious like neuroses, manias, etc. Description of this formation follows the trend of the de-ontologization. As for the Virtual Man, this formation is constituted in virtual anthropological practices like practices in the cyberspace. Conceptual framework of this formation is synthetic, it combines elements from both ontological and ontic formations.

And to my mind, this anthropological pluralism fits exactly the present anthropological situation in its dynamics demonstrating ever growing multiplicity and disunity.

KSt: Good. But when the framework of synergic anthropology is essentially built-up, what are its further goals and prospects?

SH: In fact, the main work is only starting here. I accept the idea that new anthropological discourse has the mission to become a meta-discourse embracing all humanistic discourses and providing them with a united conceptual and epistemological base. In other words, new anthropology should serve as a full-bodied episteme for all the ensemble of humanistic knowledge in order to overcome the present state of "epistemic vacuum", which brings forth the disintegration of this ensemble. At this stage the framework of synergic anthropology must be used for the capital transformation of the foundations of basic humanistic discourses. Of course, such work meaning the radical deterritorialization demands the participation of colleagues from various disciplines, and I am glad to see that more and more specialists from such disciplines as social and political philosophy, psychology and psychotherapy, theory of law, etc. find this work topical and join it.

2015