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BRIEF REVIEWS

A History of Russian Philosophy, by V. V. Zenkovsky. Authorized translation from the Russian by George L. Kline. New York: Columbia University Press, 1953. Two volumes, pp. xiv, 947. \$15.

PROFESSOR ZENKOVSKY'S two-volume work of nearly one thousand pages is the most extensive and detailed history of Russian philosophy. The author, a professor at the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Paris, has brought to his inquiries the right combination of theological and cultural insight. The development of Russian philosophy is affected by the characteristic motives and problems of Russian Christianity and also by the social issues and struggles of Russian historical life. This history is more than a review of Russian philosophical speculation. It is also an examination of the inner currents of Russian thought and Russian civilization.

The two volumes, in continuous pagination, interpret Russian philosophy from its medieval beginnings to the present. As might be expected, the philosophers of the nineteenth century have received the most extensive treatment, with about two-thirds of the work devoted to them. Of the remaining third, a hundred pages are given to the earlier thinkers and two hundred to contemporary philosophy.

The author has indicated clearly the beginnings of Russian philosophical reflection and the principal features of its historical development: the subsidiary interest in epistemological problems, the dynamic concern with philosophy of life in its social and religious involvements. The Russian mind has not been indifferent to cosmological reflection, but it has been mainly anthropocentric. "It is above all occupied with the *theme of man*, his fate and career, the meaning and purpose of history" (p. 6). The reader should keep in mind this key-sentence as a guide to the author's historical interpretation.

The early modern centuries after the Renaissance, which were marked by such great scientific and philosophical advance in the West, showed little of comparable achievement in Russia. Up to the time of Peter the Great, Russian reflection was prevailingly theological, both orthodox and critical. The criticism was mainly self-probing, within the Church, mystical and historical-cultural, rather than a secular opposition to the Church from the outside.

The eighteenth century was marked by a definite "secularization within the ecclesiastical consciousness" (p. 45). Philosophical studies

were cultivated in the various theological seminaries even before the establishment of the Russian universities. Many of the church scholars pursued their studies in the West; both their expository and original work proceeded beyond Russian orthodox learning. Thus Skovoroda developed his theological convictions into a philosophy of the nature of man and of man's world. Radishchev turned from criticism of Russian social-political conditions to a thoroughly secular humanistic philosophy of life, in which we may note the invasion of orthodox Russia by Western radicalism. The influence of Voltaire and other French philosophers was directive during this period. The eighteenth century also recorded the beginnings of Russian science, in which Lomonosov was a pioneer of genius.

The nineteenth century in Russian philosophy was marked by the influence of German idealism and by sharp critical reactions to it. These critical reactions were social-practical as well as speculative. Odoyevski definitely resisted Western culture, forecast its eventual ruin and the ascendancy of the Russian spirit. Chaadayev criticized the Russian system but also advocated "*a Christocentric conception of history*" (p. 169) in which he saw the future mission of the Russian soul. The Russian self-affirmation found expression in the movement of Slavophilism which provided many leading social and religious philosophers of the period: Khomyakov, Kireyevski, Aksakov. Slavophilism was important in two ways: in its return to Russian orthodoxy, and then, on that foundation, in its plea for a creative reconstruction of the native spiritual tradition.

Against these Slavophiles were the champions of Western science and philosophy. This issue, as is well known, found literary expressions in the works of Dostoyevsky and Turgenev. Westernism characterized a whole generation of Russians influenced by Kant and Fichte and Schelling and Hegel. Some of these idealists eventually turned astray to atheism and negation, as Belinski towards materialistic insurgence, and Herzen towards alogism, the rejection of all rationality. Zenkovsky's examination of Dostoyevsky is not limited to his Pan-russianism. In a significant chapter the spiritual outlook of the great novelist is analyzed, his religious searchings, his insight into the dark recesses of human character. The study of the Russian literary masters as philosophers indicates the author's estimate of the active interplay of philosophy and literature in the development of Russian thought. Thus he gives us a very enlightening discussion of Tolstoy's religious and social panmoralism. Related to Tolstoy's gospel of the simple life, of fruitful work and fellowship with the peasant masses, was the

advocacy of the so-called "*pochvennichestvo*" or primitive immediacy, a return to "the soil," to the deep inner levels of the people's life.

Russia, like Germany, had her "Hegelians of the left." Michael Bakunin moved from Fichte and Hegel all the way to anarchistic negation. Kant and Leibniz also had their followers and critics in Russia. Russian Neo-Kantianism spreads over the nineteenth century into contemporary philosophy, and has been especially concerned with the problem of the relation of scientific knowledge to metaphysical insight, as manifested in moral and aesthetic intelligence. Neo-Leibnizianism likewise revealed in its Russian development an ethical and religious emphasis. Its most noteworthy contemporary representative, Lossky, has proceeded to bold cosmological speculation: the monads are created by God, and they are not "windowless"; they have the creative power and initiative of persons, or rather they have a personal destiny. In the cosmic evolution the lower agencies ascend in the scale of being and eventually attain selfhood.

The growth of radicalism was far-reaching and crossed the limits of philosophy into overt and organized revolutionary action. The mid-century marked the definite beginnings of the socialistic struggle with Tsar and Church. Its first intellectual leader was Chernyshevski, but in dealing with him Zenkovsky is careful to point out a theoretical disharmony which is significant. Chernyshevski's systematic framework, like that of Feuerbach who influenced him, was positivistic and materialistic. Yet he never ceased upholding the truth and justice of moral-Christian valuations. Zenkovsky traces a similar disharmony in the varieties of Russian "semi-positivism," as expressed by Kavelin, Lavrov, Michailovski. Here were the attempted fusions of a "scientific" philosophy with moral idealism, a championship of personalism with a revision of Comtism.

As might be expected, especial attention is given to the philosophy of Vladimir Solovyov (1853-1900). Zenkovsky cites with approval Bulgakov's judgment that Solovyov's system is "the most *full-sounding chord* which has ever been struck in the history of philosophy" (p. 481). But he adds that it is "just that, a *chord*, i.e., it consists of a series of separate notes." Here it would seem that either the cited text or the gloss on it requires revision. Solovyov's philosophy is penetrated by a quest for social justice, in which he blended socialistic with Christian motives. He had an unusually keen sense of history and sought in it the realization of ideals, the "justification of the good." He pursued the idea of "total-unity" as a synthesis for religion, philosophy, and

science. His philosophy was dominated by the Sophiological doctrine, which Zenkovsky regards as capital in contemporary Russian philosophy. These are some of the strands in Solovyov's rich philosophical texture; they cannot be traced here in any detail, but an added word about the idea of Sophia may help to clarify Solovyov's cosmic outlook. Sophia is not only the "substance of God" but also the "rationale and end of creation." In this sense we may call it the real nature of things. It is the basic principle of existence, and it is the final destiny of all, "the Kingdom of God" (p. 507). Man should see his inmost being and true career as one with the integral being of all, and ultimately feel his life as a life in God. The ideals of a moral society, a spiritual cosmos manifesting the principle of "Godmanhood," reveal Solovyov's vast contemplative span.

Contemporary Russian philosophy, in the strict sense, signifies philosophy since the Communist revolution. There is, of course, Soviet philosophy, the only philosophy that may be taught or advocated in Communist Russia. And there is the philosophic work of a whole generation of thinkers expelled by the lords of the Kremlin, who have in their exile continued their productive activity. Zenkovsky devotes less than twenty-five pages to the varieties of dialectical materialism of the Marxists before and after the establishment of the Communist regime, noting the doctrines of Plekhanov, Bogdanov, and especially those of Lenin. But this philosophy is mostly radical propaganda. Even in Lenin it is "philosophically meagre; indeed, if it were not so tragic it would be ridiculous" (p. 749). As to Stalin's philosophy, Zenkovsky has nothing to report.

The vitality of contemporary non-communist Russian thought is indicated by the impressively long list of philosophers whom Zenkovsky considers. We can mention here only two. Berdyaev has gained world-wide attention for his religious neo-romanticism. He reflects a great variety of influences, both Russian and Western; the contact of his ideas with those of Solovyov is noteworthy. He is marked by "a sensitive conscience, a profound humanity, a thirst for an immediate and uncompromising ideal" (p. 763). His philosophy reveals mystical and irrationalist, paradoxical traits, and an accent on personal creativity, not concerned with salvation but with the ascent to a higher plane of being (p. 769).

S. L. Frank is very significant for his development of the metaphysics of "total-unity" which was noted in Solovyov's philosophy. He is a preeminently systematic thinker, extensively and reliably versed in

the entire range of philosophy and literature alike. In the background of his contemplation we may recognize aspects of Plotinus, Erigena, Nicholas of Cusa, Spinoza. A profound reflection on the problem of evil expresses also his metaphysics of "total-unity." "The return of creation to God through suffering takes place in God Himself" (p. 867).

This review should not omit an appreciative word about the high quality of the translator's work. Professor Kline deserves the gratitude of all English readers for his very clear version of Zenkovsky's text. The following few errata are cited here for correction in a future edition. They appear on pp. 40, 193, 202, 299, 301, 414, 440, 475, 550, 575, 667, 669, 671, 673, 675, 680, 869.

RADOSLAV A. TSANOFF

Feeling and Form, by Susanne K. Langer. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953. 431 pp. \$7.

CENTRAL to the argument of this important volume is the elaboration of Mrs. Langer's symbolic philosophy. This is now applied to all of the major arts. "Art is the creation of forms symbolic of human feeling (p. 40)". Art expresses "not actual feeling, but ideas of feeling . . . art is expressive through and through—every line, every sound, every gesture; and therefore it is a hundred per cent symbolic. It is not sensuously pleasing and *also* symbolic; the sensuous quality is in the service of its vital import (p. 59)".

The value of this theory of art is essentially twofold. It forcefully and wholesomely combats those theories which, by dwelling upon the "arrangements" of objects, colors, sounds or words, over-emphasizes the significance of formalism. Secondly, it reminds us, in a telling and searching way, that the aim of artistic creation is not primarily to represent actuality, reality, life; but rather to present—symbolically, abstractly, imaginatively—an "illusion of experience." The artist transforms life by his imagination, and the "imagination always creates; it never records" (p. 296). Thus "it is *imagined feeling* that governs the dance, not real emotional conditions" (p. 177).

Enthusiasm for a single all-embracing theory of art is perilous. Like most philosophers, Mrs. Langer insists that "art is essentially one" (p. 103), and argues that "if 'art' means anything, its application must rest on one essential criterion" (p. 60). This belief, erroneous and

pernicious in the reviewer's opinion, explains Mrs. Langer's insistence upon the universal validity of her symbolic theory of art. It leads to conclusions, moreover, which seem arbitrary and wrong-headed. For example, Mrs. Langer refuses to accept as valid, to any degree whatever, the testimony of distinguished artists who state their own, quite different convictions concerning the nature of their artistic creations: for example, the "very nearly unanimous" claim in the literature of the dance to direct self-expression.

Mrs. Langer's search for unity also accounts for her determination to discover *one* fundamental "primary illusion" or "basic abstraction" in each art: for example, in music, virtual time; in the dance, gesture; in literature, virtual life. In the plastic arts virtual space is "the first creation . . . the primary illusion in which all harmonious forms exist as secondary illusions" (p. 75). With this opinion—especially with its insistence upon the preeminent importance of virtual space in sculpture—no competent student of the fine arts will agree. Mrs. Langer is plainly twisting the experience of art to fit her theory. As often happens, sweeping philosophical generalizations become suspect when tested by specific evidence.

Mrs. Langer sensibly states the need of giving "definite and satisfactory meanings" to key terms. But does she always do this? No clear distinctions are drawn between "art theory," "art-philosophy," "aesthetics," and "art criticism." What is one to understand when she asserts that virtual space "whether it be two-dimensional or three" is "infinitely plastic" (p. 75)?

Of crucial importance is Mrs. Langer's very special conception of "significant form" as "an articulate expression of feeling" (p. 39), the "significance" being "that of a symbol" (p. 32). The trouble with this unusual usage is its conflict with the meanings normally given by writers on art to the terms "significant form," "significance" and "form." The Clive Bell-Roger Fry connotation of "significant form"—so very different from Mrs. Langer's—is generally known. To equate "significance" with "significant form," as she does (p. 23), eliminates the useful criterion of "artistic greatness" or "artistic significance." To use "form" loosely and vaguely—it is nowhere defined in the book—is to ignore its well accepted meaning of "artistic organization." These valuable meanings for art criticism of "significance" and of "form" are admirably explained in the writings of T. M. Greene and Walter Abell, who find no place in Mrs. Langer's bibliography.

Even if the foregoing criticisms are justified, the positive contributions of this book are notable. It is rich in ideas which are argued

persuasively, discerningly, learnedly. The insights, particularly those in the chapters upon the symbolic essence of literary forms, are just and penetrating. Stimulating and sensitive observations on a variety of pertinent subjects abound: for example, the esthetics of Croce, Collingwood and others; the nature of decoration, rhythm, and catharsis. And it is worth recording that Mrs. Langer's fluent, effective prose style is a pleasure to read. There is little doubt that anyone interested in the philosophy of art will welcome this sequel to *Philosophy in a New Key*.

BERNARD C. HEYL

An American in Europe, by Egor Larsen. New York: Philosophical Library, 1953. 224 pp. \$4.75.

ON THE DUST JACKET and twice in *An American in Europe* itself is quoted, out of context, a categorical judgment by Franklin D. Roosevelt: "Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and Count Rumford are the three greatest minds that America has produced." Did Roosevelt really consider Count Rumford's mind superior to that of any Adams or Holmes, or Emerson or William James or Jonathan Edwards? In *An American in Europe* Egor Larsen produces little evidence in support of this astonishing statement.

Larsen's study is the first readable and objective biography of Benjamin Thompson, who was born in Massachusetts, knighted in London, and created an Imperial Count in Bavaria. The farm boy, a cold opportunist, ambitious, and as insatiably curious as Franklin, served as a secret agent for the British in the early days of the American Revolution, and, deserting wife and child, slipped away in 1776 to England. Here he immediately became an Undersecretary of State, and near the end of the war was a colonel in the British army. In 1783 he went to the Continent in search of further military honors. At once he ingratiated himself with the Elector of Bavaria, who appointed him Minister of War, Minister of Police, Chamberlain of the Court, and State Councillor! Back in London he established the Royal Institution, the world's first great center for scientific research. He returned to Munich in 1796 to become head of the regency and Commander-in-chief of the Bavarian army. In his last years he devoted his

versatile talents to science and gadgetry, finally settling in Paris, where he married the widow of Lavoisier. He died in 1814 at the age of fifty-nine.

In activities and accomplishments, if not in mental stature, he rivalled Franklin and Jefferson. His ballistic experiments led to improved performance of light artillery; he inaugurated social reforms which abolished beggary in entire cities; established industrial and veterinary colleges; changed for the better the nutrition habits of millions; invented the kitchen range and coffee dripolator; founded Europe's first citizen army; created Munich's famous English Garden; proved by experiment the exact nature of heat and demonstrated the convertibility of energy, a fundamental principle which was to become the basis of modern industrial power; contrived better methods of heating—by more efficient fireplaces in homes and central steam heating in auditoriums; laid the foundations of domestic science; designed ingenious, space-saving furniture; improved Lavoisier's calorimeter; established the Rumford Professorship of Physics and Mathematics at Harvard.

He was a strange, bloodless internationalist who shifted from America to England to Germany to France as opportunity beckoned. He had no love whatever for his fellow-men, no faith in their political intelligence. An essential coldness is revealed in his callous attitude toward child labor, as well as his attitude toward his wife and his mother. Yet paradoxically this cold utilitarian and egoist effected a vast improvement in the comfort and well-being of mankind.

Larsen's biography is concise and restrained. It is agreeably free of "he probably," "he undoubtedly," "he must have," etc. The author went to the original sources: Rumford's writings, those of his contemporaries, and official documents. The one frailty of the book is the unnecessary attention paid to the abortive romances of Rumford's dull daughter, Sally.

RICHARD A. CORDELL