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The Ontological and Aesthetic Overcoming of the Philosophy of Wilhelm Windelband in the Silver Age

In Russia, the Neo-Kantianism of the Baden school was extensively studied and exceedingly influential, in terms of both its strengths (e.g., its justification for a unity of worldview) and its weaknesses (e.g., its relativistic model of truth and its rejection of ontology). The present article outlines the two ways of overcoming W. Windelband's philosophy. The first is an ontological overcoming via the idea of all-unity and sophiology, which replaces Windelband's concept of a folk soul. The second is an aesthetic overcoming via the recreation of reality in creativity, the work of free theurgy. The two approaches are shown to produce an unresolved conflict between the sophianity of the being and the recreation of the latter.

Keywords: *overcoming, Neo-Kantianism, Preludes, evaluation, sophianity of the being, ontology, free theurgy, aesthetics, W. Windelband, V. Solovyov, E.N. Trubetskoy, F.A. Stepun*

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Alexei Losev's remark that "Neo-Kantianism was everything," and that "Windelband in Heidelberg was considered its foremost authority"¹ could serve as an epigram for the present article. This observation made by the last representative of the Silver Age is little known in Russia today and yet is surprisingly easy to confirm. In fact, Windelband's ideas coincide so closely with how and what is thought in Russia that they at times seem as if they were written by a Russian. Why then the relative ignorance of Neo-Kantianism in the context of Russian philosophy? The explanation may be the common destiny of all Neo-Kantianism, which in the words of J. Stolzenberg remains to this day "a widely unresearched area of the history of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century philosophy."² Moreover, the special attitude toward Windelband, and through him to the whole Neo-Kantianism, has been essentially determined by his book, *Preludes* (1884), a programmatic work aimed at the entire philosophical community:

All of us who philosophize in the nineteenth century are disciples of Kant. But our current "return" to him should be more than a mere renewal of the historical condition in which he introduced the idea of critical philosophy. The deeper we recognize the antagonism that exists between the different facets of his thinking, the more useful he becomes for addressing the problems he created with his solutions. To understand Kant, means to surpass him.³

The challenge of the last phrase was met in Russia, with respondents seeking to *overcome* not only Kant, but Windelband himself.

What made Windelband's philosophy so attractive? Let us denote the key points outlined by Windelband in the *Preludes*, points that would become the foci of intense reflection and would stimulate ideational development throughout Russia. In Russia, many of the positions developed by the Baden school spurred movements as diverse as idealism, symbolism, and pragmatism, which comprised the spiritual ingredients of the unique cultural phenomenon of the Silver Age. Windelband introduced and developed a number of concepts and distinctions (such as philosophy and metaphysics, philosophy and culture, value and worldview, the natural sciences and the human sciences) that permitted a rejection of determinism and causality in history, and a strengthening of not only the position of the subject of cognition, but also the subject's role in history and in building and creating the whole of reality. Of major influence on the constitution of the intellectual field and the spirit of the Silver Age was the pathway *From Marxism to Idealism* (the eponymous title chosen for an anthology of essays written by Sergey Bulgakov and published in 1903⁴), which came to a preliminary end by the publication of *Vekhi* in 1909.⁵ By April 1910,

the anthology published March 16, 1909 was in its fourth edition with a record 16,000 copies in print. Almost all the contributors, among them N.A. Berdyaev, S.L. Frank, M.O. Gershenzon, P.B. Struve, and S.N. Bulgakov, had either visited Heidelberg or some other German university. Windelband's assessment of the cultural situation in Germany could have been penned by one of the authors of the collection to describe the shift to idealism in Russia:

What we expect from philosophy today is the reflection of immutable values, which are grounded in a higher spiritual reality above the variable interests of the times. To counter the dominance of the masses, which marks our external present-day life, rose a strong and elevated personal life, which once again desires to reclaim and save its inner spiritual self. In Germany, this need has brought us back to the large systems of idealism, having asserted this faith in the basic spiritual nature of all reality.⁶

Windelband attributes such large systems to the philosophies of G.W.F. Hegel and J.G. Fichte; the latter in particular may have done even more than Kant for the return to idealism.

F.A. Stepan gives a vivid description of what spurred the rise of transcendentalism and the interest to Kant, as well as the main direction of his development or the need to overcome him:

What, in fact, did Kant do? In short, he turned the transcendent into the transcendental; he shifted the horizon of philosophy, so that the absolute was beyond the horizon. (With this step he resolutely departed from rationalism, since he had ultimately *removed the absolute from the line of objects of rational cognition.*) [my emphasis—J.M.] ...Neo-Kantianism ... *reinforced the irrational moment of the classical system.* ... it short-circuited the completed range of categories and drew it into an endless spiral, with the attracting factor being the irrational principle of a self-perpetuating cultural universe.⁷

At the heart of overcoming Kant is the Neo-Kantian *irrational* expansion of his philosophy through an appeal to the elemental in the theory of values and worldview. Windelband carried out a search for a holistic worldview based on the irrational—a worldview capable of unifying the disparate spheres of spiritual activity: science, philosophy, morality, art, and religion. The system of absolute values proposed by Windelband provides the equivalence of truth, beauty, and the good on the basis of the primacy of practical reason, that is, the necessary. But all these transformations are carried out within the bounds of transcendentalism, the search for new, pure forms of thought and categories, while remaining outside the bounds of

metaphysics and being. Therefore, to surpass Neo-Kantianism, and especially Windelband, means to rationally reinforce metaphysics and return the transcendent into the sphere of philosophy, tethering it to ontology. We can designate two important *arguments for overcoming* Windelband in Russia. The first is an *ontological* overcoming via the idea of *all-unity* and *Sophiology*, which replaces Windelband's concept of a folk soul. The second is an *aesthetic* overcoming via the *recreation* of reality in creativity, in the work of free theurgy.

“The transformation of problems of being into problems of values”

Precisely in the *Preludes* Windelband lays out his basic position regarding his *enhanced* version of Kant's *critical philosophy* and *transcendentalism* of the theory of values and unified worldview. If for Kant logical determinism acts only in the theoretical sphere, then Windelband, by way of universalizing valuation, equalizes three areas: the theoretical, the practical, and the aesthetic. According to Windelband, the task of philosophy consists of “separating and describing from the whole mass of representations and combinations of representations not only those that are called scientific, but also to show why these specific representations are entitled to the value of truth.”⁸ Thus, *all* knowable *propositions* contain a *combination* of propositions of *judgment* and propositions of *value*. Critical philosophy determines not only the evaluation of *truth* or falsity of *ideas*, which have universal relevance and necessity, but it also asks whether there is *activity* and will that are valid (*gelten*) and possess the characteristics of universal relevance and necessity, and which at the same time are also evaluated as *good*. Critical philosophy likewise evaluates *intuition* and feeling, acting with necessity and universality, like *beauty*, which is characteristic of art.

Unity of judgment and *evaluation* produce the desired equality of relevance in the three areas via the recognition of their absolute value: “we *firmly believe* [my emphasis—J.M.] that there are certain evaluations that function absolutely, even if they in fact never, or not in general, express themselves.”⁹ Evaluation is introduced into the definition of truth, beauty, and the good, as the necessary result of unity, “on the one hand, of the state of the need, and on the other, the content of representation.” Although absolute, evaluation acts according to unwavering *belief*, that is, it is still dependent on the subject. Needs are again “necessary products of the whole movement of life,” which has no rational basis. By making truth, beauty, and the good dependent on evaluation, Windelband relativizes both truth and reality. Psychology explains representation, while culture forms the

needs, the task of philosophy, however, is to identify the absolute relevance of values. Every evaluative subject who possesses representational truth has claims to its universality—since it is true for me, it *must* be true for all. Such a belief, according to Windelband, implies the existence of an “absolute scale” and “absolute evaluation.” He introduces the term “to be valid” (*gelten*), which he uses to establish the concept of validity (*Geltung*) of representation, but this only points to what “*ought* to be recognized as true”¹⁰ (my emphasis—J.M.). At the same time, Windelband makes a most significant reservation: the universal *validity* of these evaluations is not a factual one, and their necessity is not causal, that is, they are *ideal* and indicate what ought to be. For Windelband, validity and the universality of the orientation towards values are fixed by the existence of “normal consciousness” and the “folk soul.” There is “a law above that of the natural-necessary origin of our evaluations.... Wherever empirical consciousness discovers this ideal necessity for what should be universally valid, it encounters n o r m a l c o n s c i o u s n e s s , the essence of which for us consists in that we are *convinced* that it actually *ought to be*, without considering whether it *actually* exists in the natural-necessary development of empirical consciousness”¹¹ (my emphasis—J.M.). Although normal consciousness comprises the absolute totality of evaluations, it reveals itself initially as “subordinate” to “general consciousness,” born from the necessary process of the folk soul, and then, only after the “awakening” of the folk soul, awareness of the ideal measure arises in relation to which everyone is oriented by evaluating the real via the ideal ought. The essential appeal of Windelband’s philosophy for Russian thinkers is that he extols the role of the philosopher in the process of identifying cultural values and uniting them in a worldview. Ideas are realized only when they are *recognized*, as a result of the mental activity of the philosopher, who in contrast to other intelligent beings, reflecting about all existing literature, is capable by his “spiritual gift and energy of character to find a *unifying relationship of his representations* [my emphasis here and below—J.M.] through his *own* mental efforts.”¹² Paralleling Kant, Windelband defends the active role of the subject of cognition, which, when striving to rethink, transform, and even recreate reality, becomes ever more attractive and effective. Windelband wrote: “For our cognition, normal consciousness remains an ideal.... In our experience, the ideal *shines through* in this or that place, and if we must be convinced in the *reality* of absolute normal consciousness, it is a matter of our own *personal faith*, not scientific knowledge.”¹³ Later, the Neo-Kantian Stepun and the Neo-Christian mystic Berdyaev would go on to develop this line of Windelband’s philosophy, emphasizing the role of the philosopher in the cosmos as the creator of values and cultural forms,

the one who “announces to humanity” from the perspective of eternity, the new instances of the Absolute, which are created by “the free creative power of the human spirit.”

Berdyaev responded to Windelband’s *Preludes* with his own book, *Sub specie aeternitatis* (1907), which undoubtedly takes its name from the last chapter of the *Preludes*. This is the book in which Berdyaev makes the move “from Marxist pseudo-*sobornost*’ [Slavophile concept of community-based way of life and thought against individualism—J.M.], from decadent and romantic individualism ... to the *sobornost*’ of mystical Neo-Christianity,” of which he writes about in his foreword.¹⁴ In his article “Na rasput’e” [At the Crossroads], D.V. Filosofov wrote that having read Berdyaev’s book “one could come to the conclusion that he has found solid ground in ‘mystical realism.’ This would, however, be a hasty conclusion. Rather, he finds himself in the period of a bitter struggle for a holistic worldview....”¹⁵ Berdyaev analyzes Windelband’s teleological criticism desiring to surpass both Kant and Windelband. He begins by noting Windelband’s achievements, referring to him as the man who advanced the work of Kant and cleared it of “the problematic and troublesome ‘things-in-themselves,’ of the mystery of transcendent being,” leaving only “the norms and values,” only “reason itself.”¹⁶ According to Berdyaev, Windelband believed that the essence of the revolution produced by Kant consisted of the idea that “any knowledge, including philosophical knowledge, is not a doctrine of being, of existence, of objective reality, of the real, but only a doctrine of reason itself, of normal consciousness,” that is, in the “break with a realistic understanding of cognition, with the admission of a transcendent being as an object of cognition, with any ontology.”¹⁷

Thus, Berdyaev claims, “reason was opposed by the great nothing.” Windelband solves this original epistemological problem of the relationship of being and cognition by abolishing being “and seeks an antidote against subjectivism and solipsism in normative thinking, in reason.”¹⁸ Such a move “nullifies being, leads to illusionism and nihilism, and carries with it the spirit of nonbeing.”¹⁹ To surpass Windelband means to return being to the sphere of cognition, which implies returning metaphysics its philosophical status. Essentially, Berdyaev negatively evaluated the parts of Windelband’s philosophy that Windelband’s disciple Richard Kroner had evaluated positively. Kroner noted that “theoretical philosophy does not strive to know the content of reality; its specific objective is rather in correctly defining and connecting notions.”²⁰

The Neo-Kantians opened a line of thought associated with the *introduction of the irrational moment* into philosophy, which in turn led to the

division between the “philosophical, that is, science of value (*wertwissenschaftlichen*) viewpoint” and the viewpoint of the “science of being (*seinswissenschaftlichen*),” that is, empirical sciences (*Erfahrungswissenschaften*). Kant, according to Kroner, “formulated notions, the higher understanding of which is meant to solve ... contradictions, to reconcile reason with itself, and remove the problem of the antinomies.”²¹ This method of transcendental philosophy, which allows for “the transformation of problems of being into problems of values,” was the one employed by the Neo-Kantians. Kroner notes the disappearance of reality in philosophy, as well as the de-ontologization of being:

If we are no longer looking for transcendent realities, but for absolute values, then the understanding of logical difference and the originality of theoretical form-values (*Formwerte*) will shift to the center of analysis, and the precarious requirement that the world be consistent should lose its meaning. Then reality in and of itself is not the epitome of logical valuable, but *the kingdom of absolute logical values also covers the forms of reality*²² (my emphasis—J.M.).

The problem of reality now appears to be beyond the pure knowledge of science-oriented philosophy. Consequent criticism separates philosophy from metaphysics, which should not pretend to logical necessity of its position. Critical philosophy, according to Kroner, should lead us exclusively into an *infinite expansion of mental abilities, expressed in the search for new categories, types, and forms of thinking*.

The above argument renders it impossible for the consequent criticism to make any statements about reality. However, connecting new categories, types, and forms of thinking with being is made possible via a return to the idea of logical necessity in reality, that is, Sophiology.

Sophiology and V. Solovyov’s free theurgy: An ontological and aesthetic attempt to overcome Windelband’s theory of values

Windelband overcomes Kant by enhancing critical philosophy and separating philosophy and metaphysics, making ontology and the transcendent the product of belief, and thereby making reality relative. When V. Solovyov set himself the task of overcoming Kant, he sought to strengthen the role of the individual, to preserve the freedom of thought and action, and to preserve the transcendent, ontology, and metaphysics in philosophy. Solovyov’s sophiology is meant to be a kind of mediator, connecting thought and the soul with the cosmos and the Absolute. He develops the metaphysics of spiritualized

sophianic space and uses it to reinstate the transcendent in philosophy. Solovyov's idea of Sophia is close to Windelband's folk soul with the marked difference that Solovyov considers it from the position of its ontological status; it bridges the divide between consciousness and being, solving the Western philosophical conundrum and linking it to Russian thought. It is precisely through Solovyov's idea of all-unity and sophiology that the Neo-Kantians and their opponents would attempt their own ontological and aesthetic overcoming of Windelband's philosophy.

The philosophical elaboration of the idea of Sophia is meant not only to unite reality from the point of view of eternity and to return the transcendent and reality in a spiritualized shape into the horizon of philosophy, but also to link these with the individual subject. Solovyov conceived of Sophia as "a second created unity, opposing the original unity of divine Logos, [which] is, as we know, the soul of the world, or ideal humanity (Sophia), which contains within itself and binds by itself all special living beings or souls."²³ The essence of Sophia consists of attaining the completeness of being:

Presenting the realization of the divine principle, being its image and likeness, the original humanity or the soul of the world is jointly one and all; it takes a mediating position between the plurality of living beings ... and the unconditional unity of the Divine.... As a living center, or the soul of all creatures and at the same time the actual form of the Divine—the existing subject of created being and the existing object of divine action; ... all-united humanity, or the soul of the world is a being of a dual nature: —enclosing within itself the divine principle and the created being, it is solely determined by neither the one nor the other, and therefore remains free....²⁴

As a free being, Sophia is free to choose what direction to take: to preserve its unity with the supreme, divine principle, or to abandon it and establish itself outside of God and instead of God. Having made the choice, the soul of the world "descends from the all-united center of the Divine being into the manifold environment of creation, losing its freedom and power over that creation... [T]he universal organism turns into a mechanical aggregate of atoms,"²⁵ into the world of evil, separation, and suffering. Solovyov's doctrine of Sophia solves the problem of reality, since reality is possible and constituted only through Sophia. It also binds the individual to the world, and explains the imperfection of the world. According to Solovyov, the world does not reside in truth, and the only way of escaping the world is through its recreation, which he considers an aesthetic activity. The cognition of the world as an all-unity is complicated by its distortion and falsity. Solovyov writes:

... only the basic fact that the world in which we live, instead of being the realization of our deepest divine being, is for us external and strange obviously means that there is no truth in our reality, that we do not live in truth, and therefore do not know the truth. Of course, the truth is eternally there in God, but since there is no God within us, we do not live in truth either: not only is our knowledge false, our very being and reality are false. For there to be true *organization of knowledge*, there must be *organization of reality*. And this is no longer the task of cognition as the thought of perception, but as the thought of creation, or of creativity.²⁶

The final element of the scheme is a formulation of the role of art, which “in its totality as free theurgy consists ... in *recreating* (my emphasis—J.M.) existing reality, replacing the given external relations between the divine, the human, and the natural elements, in general and in particular, in each and all, with internal, organic relations between these three principles.”²⁷

However, Solovyov’s system contains a contradiction: on the one hand, the sophianity of the world relates it with divine being and reality (ontology), and with the individual, on the other hand, the imperfection of reality can only be resolved by recreating it, that is, by rejecting the being and with it the sophianity. The contradiction inherent in Solovyov’s system offers the possibility to overcome it in different ways: by developing further the metaphysics and ontology of all-unity through reinforcing the importance of the individual and belief, and by justifying the recreation of reality, by seeing reality as a product of free cultural creativity.

A personal relationship with God: The ontological overcoming of Windelband

The first path to overcome Solovyov, with the help of and, at the same time, overcoming Windelband, has been taken by Trubetskoy who turns to Windelband’s *Preludes* when analyzing the philosophy of V. Solovyov. In the preface to his book, *Mirosozertsanie Vl. S. Solovyova* (1913) [The Worldview of Vl. S. Solovyov], he wrote: “To understand Solovyov means concurrently to *take a step beyond Solovyov*. The famous dictum—*Kant verstehen heisst über ihn hinausgehen*—is applicable to him, too...”²⁸ What does it mean to “surpass” Solovyov’s philosophy with the help of Windelband? In the section, “Uchenie o sv. Troitse (kriticheskie zamechaniia)” [Doctrine of the Holy Trinity (Critical Remarks)], Trubetskoy wrote that Solovyov’s

mistake is not in the essence of his claims, but in the false assumption that they are the result of self-determined “pure” thought.... On the one hand, the truth of the trinity is given to us via Divine revelation and the infallible teachings of the church; but on the other, it is “imposed over reason and can be logically derived, once we accept that God *is* in the positive and perfect sense of the word.”²⁹

According to Trubetsky, the primary drawback of Solovyov’s system is his attempt to overcome logical thinking, while remaining within the framework of rationality. The main result of this shortcoming is that “revelation once *proved* ceases to be revelation,” “faith is deprived of its independent value ... it can be easily replaced by knowledge. And most importantly, it ceases to define the *personal* relation between man and God: since the logical relation by its very nature is impersonal....”³⁰ This insuperability “of the strong rationalist beam” in Solovyov’s system, the foreseen but conceptually underdeveloped *personal* relationship between man and God leads Trubetsky to reproach his system of all-unity for its impersonality. Here, Trubetsky resembles Windelband’s reference to personal belief. Following Windelband, Trubetsky overcomes Kant’s rationalism by its irrational expansion, by increasing the significance of individual consciousness. Trubetsky criticizes Solovyov’s for his dialectic of being, which admittedly is “dependent on experience and revelation,” but it is still “impossible to derive that trinitarian character of relations that Solovyov believes to be a feature of any living creature from the pure notion of ‘being.’ We know *from experience, by observing* living creatures being conscious about themselves, that a living creature not only exists, but exists *for its own sake and enjoys* its being.”³¹ Apparently, Trubetsky attempts to overcome Solovyov’s strong rationalist impulse with an appeal not to a dialectic of being, but to *individual* consciousness, experience, and observation, to *self-consciousness*. Unlike Solovyov, for whom the principle of “the all-united being” was central, Trubetsky believes that “truth is the *all-united consciousness, not the all-united being*.”³² How does individual consciousness attain the truth? “The search for truth is an attempt to find unconditional consciousness in my own consciousness....”³³ For Windelband, as we remember, this has been the absolute located in normal consciousness. For Trubetsky, this means that our thoughts “are couched in the form of the unconditional ... all our cognitive judgment necessarily presupposes and contends something Unconditional that truly exists: to contend that something is true....”³⁴ Like the Neo-Kantians, Trubetsky claims “that *logical unity is a form of Truth*,” but he *amends* this position,

indicating the significance “of the positive value of the logical form of thought ... for penetrating into the meaning of revelation.”³⁵ V.V. Zenkovsky interprets this statement as the increased importance of the Logos, of the logical for revelation, noting that for Trubetskoy “revelation itself is inseparable from the Logos, being subject to the judgement of the Logos.”³⁶

This raises the question of the reality of unconditional consciousness and the ability of my consciousness “to attain the truth.” Trubetskoy needs to find a connection between subjective consciousness (all-unity) and the unconditional, to present cognition like “*an inseparable and undivided unity of human as well as absolute thought.*”³⁷ According to Zenkovsky, Trubetskoy uses the Platonic logic of ideal absolute reality and its relationship with relative reality through intuition, which Trubetskoy understands as the intuition “*of a supratemporal connection of thoughts in eternal truth*” and which is necessary for the eternal process of thinking: “It is what makes reasoning *logical.*”³⁸ Again, we can see Trubetskoy’s closeness to the position of Windelband who speaks of the absolute shining through the individual and general consciousness, when Trubetskoy writes: “The whole process of our cognition is accomplished *through* nothing other than *the revelation of absolute consciousness in our human consciousness.... Absolute consciousness is active in the human one.*”³⁹ Trubetskoy deliberately makes his position religious and seeks to preserve the transcendent realm, unlike Windelband, who places the transcendent beyond the horizon of consciousness and philosophy, leaving to the latter only the transcendental realm. Strengthening the importance of personal experience and the relationship to being and absolute consciousness, Trubetskoy, as noted by Zenkovsky, strengthens “the laws of logic” and defends “the rational principles of knowledge,” which “sharply distinguishes” Trubetskoy from the “mystical alogism,” a direction of thought that he ascribes to Florensky, Bulgakov, and Berdyaev.⁴⁰ What unites all of them is the return of the transcendent to philosophy and the creation of an ontology based on Solovyov’s sophiology and idea of all-unity.

Overcoming Windelband on aesthetic grounds

The difference in the interpretation of the irrational expansion of Kant deriving from the positions of Neo-Kantianism and Solovyov was described in an editorial in the journal *Logos*. The authors of the editorial, F.A. Stepun and S.I. Hessen, would later go on to overcome Windelband from the position of Solovyov. Stepun would use an aesthetic approach,

while Hessen would use the ontological—introducing a fourth “plane of being”: “The kingdom of spiritual beings ... which corresponds to the Kingdom of God in the concept of philosophers like August Cieszkowski and Vladimir Solovyov,”⁴¹ as indicated by Hessen’s student, Andrzej Walicki, but that is a separate issue. Stepun’s approach will be discussed in detail below.

According to the philosophers associated with the journal *Logos*, the interpretation of the irrational, of mysticism in pursuit of unity, takes as its foundation either “unity as the givenness of inner life,” or “unity as the task of theoretical thought. In the first case, it is a dark irrational root, unifying the whole fullness of our experiences. In the second case, it is the crystal-clear sphere of all the rationally bound motives of common cultural and particularly philosophical creativity.”⁴² This distinction shows the main intrigue of the division between the two mystical (irrational) trends in Russia. The fact that the themes of unity and the view from the perspective of eternity were made in reference to the *Preludes* is evidenced by the authors’ epigraph taken from Solovyov: “The unconditionally independent and self-confident activity of the human mind is the very element of philosophy. It is impossible to produce anything truly great in any area of human activity, if there is no confidence that this particular sphere is the most important and worthy one, that its activities have an independent and *infinite importance*” (my emphasis—J.M.).⁴³ Although Solovyov speaks of the elemental in philosophy as the independent activity of the human mind, he was criticized by Russian Neo-Kantians as a representative of the first order: “Solovyov’s work is steeped in the dark roots of his irrational experiences. His rationalist constructions carry by no means a creative, but a merely passive, narrative character. Sub specie value of theoretical truth, Vladimir Solovyov hardly created anything new or significant.”⁴⁴ Thus, the position of Solovyov himself is evaluated from the point of view of eternity—as not having the potential to be further developed and unworthy to be overcome. The authors who criticized Solovyov’s “dark roots” and the passivity of his philosophy failed to mention the insuperability of his “strong rationalist beam,” for which he was criticized by E.N. Trubetskoy, and the creative nature of his philosophy, which calls for free theurgy and the recreation of reality. But here we should emphasize the phrase, “sub specie value” of theoretical truth, which immediately refers us back to Windelband’s *Preludes*, clearly revealing the orientation of the authors. The critique of Solovyov unveils quite some slyness, at the time, the authors intended to defend science-oriented philosophy and, therefore, their position contradicted the one they had described the previous year in their book, *Vom Messias. Kulturphilosophische Essays* [On the Messiah:

Cultural Philosophical Essays],⁴⁵ but this too is a separate issue.⁴⁶ A significant moment in dividing the interpretation of the irrational and mystical concerns the relation to the transcendent. For Solovyov and his followers the transcendent is given a place in philosophy, while the Neo-Kantians hold that everything remains in the sphere of pure philosophy, in the sphere of “evolving categories” of culture by the creatively thinking philosopher. Despite the insistence on the connection between newly found forms and categories of thought with the “self-developing cosmos” or with “sophianic being,” Stepun failed to successfully argue, to philosophically realize his position, just as Solovyov failed to overcome the dichotomy between the recognition of the sophianic in the world and the overcoming of the world’s derogation and untruth by recreating it through free theurgy. Unlike in the case of Solovyov, when Stepun attempted to aesthetically overcome Windelband, the theme of the folk, *common soul* receded into the background. Instead, he developed the idea of the “*poetically affected*” individual consciousness of the philosopher-poet (see: Stefan George’s *dichterisch erschüttertes Bewusstsein*),⁴⁷ who is capable of making contact with eternity. Precisely this rupture between the *predisposition of normative consciousness and the created*, as well as existing, *common norms and ideals of culture* will become the stumbling block, and weakness of the Russian Neo-Kantians, who avoid all talk of the folk soul and common consciousness, and instead focus first of all on the values of culture generated by the creative individual consciousness of the poet-theurgist or philosopher. If Windelband’s introduction of normal consciousness was meant to overcome solipsism, as indicated by Berdyaev, then its rejection implies the return of solipsism and enhances the relativism of the created forms of the cultural cosmos. As noted by D.I. Chizhevsky (who used the pseudonym Prokofiev in his review of Stepun’s book *Zhizn’ i tvorchestvo* [Life and Creativity]), although Stepun understands that penetrating to the overarching wholeness is possible only in religiosity, “in his theoretical philosophy, under the guise of romantic form, Stepun returns to transcendental philosophy, to the ‘consciousness of borders,’”⁴⁸ that is characteristic of critical philosophy and for Stepun signifies the impossibility of penetrating into the *core of personality*, in which “the genuine *all-unity* is given, that is never ever attainable by any objective, ‘object oriented’ unity.”⁴⁹ That is why the striving of the actor’s soul after “multisoulness” (as Stepun argues in “Priroda akterskoi dushi (O meshchanstve, mistitsizme i artistizme)”) ⁵⁰ [The Nature of the Actor’s Soul. (On Philistinism, Mysticism, and Artistry)], that is, as in romanticism, after a maximally diverse formation within the unity of character and life, does not transform into the manifestation of the soul’s genuine all-unity, but into endless

variation of its objectification, that is, into relativism, which is likewise commented on by Chizhevsky. Stepun's opposing of life and creation, his emphasis on their irreducibility, and the priority of life have profound implications for the personality, which turns out to be merely a form of human creativity. The destruction of the pole of creativity is the ideal of holy life, culminating in "the withdrawal of man from the main creative forms, that is, from the forms of personality and destiny."⁵¹ Stepun, rejecting *creativity*, and thereby both personality and culture, *specifies* that "the destruction of creativity supposes its full disclosure" as a *false path*, the true purpose of which is the rejection of personality. He admits that for the artistic soul manifesting itself in multisoulness (i.e., it lives different life roles and attitudes, which "constitute it as such"), multisoulness means "the sin of betrayal" in relation to the desire to "die faceless." However, Stepun still prefers "unconditional multisoulness," again referring only to a single subject, which Stepun fails to connect with true all-unity.

The philosophical searching of Solovyov and Stepun turn out to produce the same results: both approach the problem of overcoming the imperfection of the world aesthetically, and both see the solution in recreating reality. The idea of recreation causes them to abandon existing reality, which leads them both back to Windelband. The difference between Stepun's position and that of Windelband and Solovyov is that it represents a more radical rejection of reality. He emphasizes the derogation and erroneousness of all culture, which is not surprising in the context of the growing cultural crisis and nihilism at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that the attempts of the above Russian thinkers to overcome the philosophy of Kant and Windelband *sub specie aeternitatis* successfully identified several problems with Neo-Kantianism as well as possible solutions; however, their methods were not sufficiently far-reaching and therefore did not yield the desired results. They were unable to connect their ontological and aesthetic arguments to overcome Windelband. During this time, there existed more radical solutions to the question of unifying thought and reality, of fundamentally destructing the old world and building up the new one beyond Neo-Kantianism; one would fall to dialectical materialism. A more radical solution was also presented by the religious concept of all-unity, which was able to overcome critical philosophy and transcendentalism by grounding its argument in the original

all-unity of being. Following this debate, the Neo-Kantians themselves would fracture along these paths of radicalization.

Notes

1. V.V. Bibikhin, *Aleksei Fedorovich Losev. Sergei Sergeevich Averintsev* (Moscow: Institut filosofii, teologii i istorii sv. Fomy, 2006), p. 241.

2. J. Stolzenberg, "Fichte im Neukantianismus. Probleme der Fichte-Rezeption bei Wilhelm Windelband, Heinrich Rickert, Hermann Cohen und Paul Natorp," in *Neukantianismus und Rechtsphilosophie*, introduction by S.L. Paulson, eds. R. Alexy, L.H. Meyer, S.L. Paulson, and G. Sprenger (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2002), p. 421.

3. W. Windelband, *Präludien. Aufsätze und Reden zur Einleitung in die Philosophie* (Tübingen: Akademische Verlagsbuchhandlung von J. C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1884), p. vi.

4. S.N. Bulgakov, *Ot marksizma k idealizmu. Sbornik stat'ei (1896–1903)* (St. Petersburg: Tip. Tovarishchestva "Obshchestvennaia pol'za," 1903).

5. *Vekhi. Sbornik stat'ei o russkoi intelligentsii* (Moscow: Izd-vo V.M. Sablina, 1909)

6. W. Windelband, "Die neuen Wertprobleme und die Rückkehr zum Idealismus," in *Die Philosophie im deutschen Geistesleben des XIX. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1909), p. 119.

7. F.A. Stepun, "Otkrytoe pis'mo Andreiu Belomu po povodu stat'i 'Krugovoe dvizhenie,'" in *Kant: pro et contra* (St. Petersburg: RHGI, 2005), pp. 715–17.

8. W. Windelband, "Was ist Philosophie? (Über Begriff und Geschichte der Philosophie)" in his *Präludien*, pp. 22–23.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

14. N.A. Berdiaev, "O realizme (Vmesto predisloviia)," in *Berdiaev N.A. Sub specie aeternitatis. Opyty filosofskie, sotsial'nye i literaturnye (1900–1906)* (St. Petersburg: Izdanie M.V. Pirozhkova, 1907), p. 4.

15. D.V. Filosofov, "Na rasput'e," *Berdiaev N.A. Opyty filosofskie, sotsial'nye i literaturnye (1900–1906)* (Moscow: Kanon+; Reabilitatsiia, 2002), p. 562.

16. N.A. Berdiaev, "Krizis ratsionalizma v sovremennoi filosofii (Vindel'band. Prelidii)," in *Sub specie aeternitatis. Opyty filosofskie, sotsial'nye i literaturnye (1900–1906)* (St. Petersburg: Izdanie M.V. Pirozhkova, 1907), p. 292.

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*, p. 293.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 294.

20. R. Kroner, "Kritizismus und erkenntnistheoretische Resignation," in *Bericht über den III. Internationalen Kongress für Philosophie zu Heidelberg, September 1-5, 1908*, ed. Th. Elsenhans (Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1909), p. 825.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 826.

22. Ibid., p. 827.
23. V.S. Solovyov, "Chteniia o Bogochelovechestve," in *Sobranie sochinenii Vladimira Sergeevicha Solovyova, pod red. i s primech. S.M. Solovyova i E.L. Radlova*, 2nd ed. (St. Petersburg: Knigoizdatel'skoe Tovarishhestvo "Prosveshchenie," 1912), vol. 3, p. 140.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., p. 142.
26. V.S. Solovyov, "Kritika otlechennikh nachal," in *Sobranie sochinenii Vladimira Sergeevicha Solov'ova, pod red. i s primech. S.M. Solov'ova i E.L. Radlova*, 2nd ed. (St. Petersburg: Knigoizdatel'skoe Tovarishhestvo "Prosveshchenie," n.d. [1911]), vol. 2, pp. 351–52.
27. Ibid., p. 352.
28. E.N. Trubetskoi, *Mirosozertsanie Vl. S. Solovyova* (Moscow: Izdanie avtora. Tovarishchestvo tip. A.I. Mamontova, 1913), vol. 1, p. viii.
29. Ibid., p. 317.
30. Ibid., pp. 321–22.
31. Ibid., p. 318.
32. E.N. Trubetskoi, *Metafizicheskie predpolozheniia poznaniia. Opyt preodoleniia Kanta i kantianstva* (Moscow: Put'. Izdanie avtora. Russkaia pechatnia), p. 321.
33. E.N. Trubetskoi, *Smysl zhizni* (Moscow: Respublika, 1994), p. 17.
34. Trubetskoi, *Metafizicheskie predpolozheniia poznaniia*, pp. 14–15.
35. Trubetskoi, *Smysl zhizni*, p. 188.
36. V.V. Zenkovskii, *Istoriia russkoi filosofii* (Leningrad: EGO, 1991), vol. 2, part 2, p. 111.
37. Trubetskoi, *Metafizicheskie predpolozheniia poznaniia*, p. 316.
38. Troubetskoy, *Smysl zhizni*, p. 170.
39. Ibid., p. 163.
40. See V.V. Zenkovskii, *Istoriia russkoi filosofii*, vol. 2, part 2, p. 111.
41. A. Walicki, "Sergei Hessen: filosof v izgnanii," in *Hessen S.I. Izbrannye sochineniia* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1998), pp. 13–14.
42. "Ot redaktsii," in *Logos* (Moscow: Musaget, 1910), vol. 1, p. 2.
43. Ibid., p. 1.
44. Ibid., p. 3.
45. R. Kroner, N. Bubnoff, G. Mehlis, S. Hessen, F. Steppuhn, *Vom Messias. Kulturphilosophische Essays* (Leipzig: Verlag von Wilhelm Engelmann, 1909).
46. See J.B. Mehlich, "Reguliruemyi neokantianstvom messianizm. Mezhdumitsizmom i nauchnoi filosofiei. K 100-letnemu iubileiu zhurnala Logos." Articles collected from the conference *Sotsial'no-gumanitarnye chteniia pamiati professora V.O. Goshevskogo* (Murmansk: FGOUVPO, "Murmanskii gosudarstvennyi tekhnicheskii universitet," 2010), pp. 54–65.
47. See R. Kolk, "Das schöne Leben. Stefan George und sein Kreis in Heidelberg," in *Heidelberg im Schnittpunkt intellektueller Kreise. Zur Topographie der "geistigen Geselligkeit" eines "Weltdorfes": 1850–1950*, ed. H. Treiber und K. Sauerland (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995), p. 319.
48. P. Prokof'ev (D.I. Chizhevskii), "Retenziia: F. Stepun i tvorchestvo" (Berlin, 1923), p. 252; F.A. Stepun. *Zhizn' i tvorchestvo. Izbrannye sochineniia* (Moscow: Astrel, 2009), p. 713.

49. Ibid., p. 711.

50. F.A. Stepun, "Priroda akterskoi dushi (O meshchanstve, mistitsizme i artistizme)," in *Zhizn' i tvorchestvo. Izbrannye sochineniia* (Moscow: Astrel, 2009), pp. 186–212.

51. F.A. Stepun, "Zhizn'i tvorchestvo," in *Logos* (Moscow: Musaget, 1913; Moscow: Territoriia budushchego, 2005), vol. 3-4, p. 126.