

# ETHICS IN THE SOVIET UNION TODAY

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# ETHICS IN THE SOVIET UNION TODAY

The perspectives presented here are founded in part upon observations made during a visit to the Soviet Union in June, 1964. During that visit I engaged in many conversations with Soviet philosophers, chiefly those working in ethics, value theory, and related disciplines. Though my visit was brief, and though I therefore cannot claim that my observations are definitive or exhaustive, I have set them down for what they are worth, in the conviction that the more we of the U.S.A. (philosophers, scholars, citizens) can learn of the U.S.S.R., the better. In order to relieve the arbitrariness that seems to characterize any impressionistic report, I have relied upon recent Soviet works in philosophy, principally ethics. These have served, in my own thought, to clarify and elaborate the observations obtained firsthand while in the U.S.S.R. It is my belief that the current trends in ethical thought among the Soviets are important, both for them and for us.

## I

My over-all personal impression of Soviet philosophers is one of cordiality, confidence, and enthusiasm. They believe in man and man's progress—with all their hearts and minds. They are convinced that the present and future belong to them, and that collective reason and action are the means of achieving the good life for all people. This conviction, reinforced by social conditions, helps to produce an unbounded and sustained vigor which, at least in scale, is unmatched in Europe. The Soviet people are, of course, rapidly

making progress toward many goals, material and spiritual. Why shouldn't they believe in progress? The scientists, like other groups, look back one or two generations and can distinctly measure the distance between the achievements of their forefathers and those of their own. I met a young sociologist whose father, a factory worker, had been killed in the war, who was educated by his mother, and who because his examinations showed him to be able—not superlatively bright—was sent to school and university with the aid of a scholarship and pension. Now he occupies an important position in one of the institutes. What did he consider the significant values of his society? Free education, free medical care, job security, and the new mentality. By “the new mentality” he meant of course the socialist mentality.

The concept of “socialist mentality” has been defined in various ways. It refers to both fact and ideal. I got a current perspective on the ideal in a conversation with the Leningrad philosopher, V. P. Tugarinov, who is one of the leaders in the field of value studies. Professor Tugarinov laid stress on the following “vital values of a new man.” First, there is the progressive unification of the private and the social. This, in a word, is freedom. It is the overcoming of alienation, and the highest value. (The sphere of the private and inviolable remains, so long as the freedom of the individual man—in the traditional sense of voluntary, private activity—does not contradict the freedom of others.) Second, there is the correct attitude toward labor,

which is man's means of life, his main necessity, and his greatest interest, inner and voluntary. Third, there is the achievement of all-sided development. This is the unity of spiritual richness, moral purity, and physical perfection, all in harmonious coordination. Fourth, there is the overcoming of egoism and individualism. Fifth, there is the development of true individuality. Professor Tugarinov referred me to his new book, *On the Values of Life and Culture*,<sup>1</sup> which besides dealing with three theories of value—positivism, Catholicism, and subjectivism—develops his own theory. A number of other thinkers are working along the same lines, but I take Tugarinov's position to be typical.

## II

In 1958, John H. Randall, considering the papers of the Soviet philosophers delivered at the XIIth International Congress of Philosophy in Venice, commented on the meliorism of the Soviet philosophers: "The Soviet world really believes in progress, undeterred by Neo-Orthodox theologians or Existentialist philosophers."<sup>2</sup> The Soviets have not changed on this score. The ideal of progress means, among other things, the freedom of the individual person to express himself and to control and guide his own destiny in his relations to the external world, both society and nature. Such freedom means independence of social patterns which would crush individuality and independence of a nature, fate, or supernatural order which would void all decision. We are familiar with those reports which claim that freedom and individuality are absent or impaired in the U.S.S.R. It is, we are told, a "closed society." The disclosures of the XXth Congress of the C.P.S.U. indicated a trend in this direction in certain high places. Nonetheless, it is evident that the tremendous achievements of Soviet people in science, technology, and culture presuppose a widespread initiative and individual enterprise. A number of the Soviet citizens with whom I talked, while conscious of these past achievements, were voluntarily critical of failures and inade-

quacies in their system and their thought. I found, among them, considerable evidence of openness of mind. Let me cite two kinds of such evidence.

First, the scientists whom I met (all scholars are called "scientists") were by and large curious to learn about my work, to discover new developments in the main trends and thinkers in American thought (both progressive and non-progressive), and to exchange materials. They discussed, with manifest interest and understanding, the major schools of thought in Europe and America in philosophy. An impressive number of them speak and read foreign languages, have traveled to other parts of Europe, and have lived there. A few have been to the U.S.A. and not a few expressed the hope of visiting it.

Second, the Soviet scientists were comparatively well informed about philosophical developments in the West. I obtained, for example, books like D. V. Yermolinko's *Kritika sovremennoi burzhuznoi filosofii* (*Criticism of Contemporary Bourgeois Philosophy*), 1959, and *Kritika sovremennoi burzhuznoi ideologii* (*Criticism of Contemporary Bourgeois Ideology*), 1963. The latter contains essays dealing specifically with existentialism, neo-positivism, neo-Thomism, and empirical sociology. All of these essays have abundant references to, and quotations from, American and European works in these fields. Besides, the Soviets are pursuing specialized studies in these and related fields, such as the work of I. S. Narskii on positivism; that of E. D. Modrzhinskaia on Western capitalism; Gaidenko's *Existentialism and Cultural Problems*; E. F. Pomagayeva's studies in Anglo-American philosophy; Kuzmina's work on existentialism and neo-orthodoxy; the studies of Drobnitskii on analysis and N. V. Motroshilova on phenomenology; and many others who might be mentioned. The philosophers in the Sector on the Study of Foreign Philosophy in the Institute of Philosophy at Moscow included, besides some already mentioned, V. V. Mshvenieradze, and D. V. Yermolinko, who have written on Western philosophy

for some years, and a group of lively younger philosophers. Others to be noted are Zhiritskii (industrial sociology), Mitrokhin (philosophical anthropology), Krasulina (American mass culture), and Vdovina (French philosophy).

Some commentators on the Soviet intellectual world today stress the differences if not the antagonism between the older and the younger generations. There is an obvious gap between the two: the men and women in their forties are few in number, the war having wiped out many of that generation. One sees mainly young people in their twenties and thirties and older scholars over fifty years of age. There are also differences between youth and middle age, which may be found in any culture. Perhaps the chief difference is a subtle one of attitude toward the non-Soviet world. The older generation grew up and matured in a period of intense labor, construction, and nationalism. During that time the nation was forced to conquer both internal and external threats. Aside from the repressions of Stalinism, the energies of men were concentrated on the building and maintaining of a new, raw, vigorous, and often uncoordinated society. In the domain of ideas and ideology, it was sufficient to hold the line firm and keep it close to the demands of the developing society. To consider and weigh seriously the ideas of other societies was not indispensable to this development and would have seemed a luxurious pastime during the decades of a life-and-death struggle.

After 1945 the actual situation changed radically, in the Soviet Union and the world. In the Soviet Union, the overriding task became the rebuilding of a shattered nation. In the world, as a consequence of the production of the atomic and hydrogen bombs, peaceful coexistence became the only alternative for those nations who wanted to survive. Those who are now (in 1965) between 25 and 35 years old were at that time between 5 and 15 years old. Their major attitudes have been formed during these two post-war decades. Stalin died in 1953, when they were between 13 and 23.

Many of them, moreover, have had opportunity to study one or more foreign languages, and some have travelled to or lived in other cities in Europe. They consequently read foreign literature, and while ordinarily this literature is harshly criticized it nonetheless has a certain lasting effect. These scholars are, as a group, unaffected, frank, friendly, and open to the perspectives of others. Their minds are inquisitive, aggressive, and incisive. It is not true to say, I think, that they are less committed to Marxism-Leninism than are their elders. But by reason of their new background they are acquainted with the content and style of Western thought in ways that their elders are not. In saying this I want to emphasize that a number of the older generation also keep themselves informed about philosophical developments in the West and are fully as alive and perceptive as their younger contemporaries. But I am here talking about the differences in the material and cultural conditions of life of two different generations, and how these differences have reflected themselves in the temper of mind of the generations.

The Soviet attitude toward the West in the field of philosophy is a specific implementation of the general policy of peaceful coexistence. This policy has been illustrated in various ways. First, American philosophers who have visited the Soviet Union in recent years are accorded the courtesies of visiting scholars, even if, like some, they are anti-Soviet in the extreme and do not hesitate to say so there. Second, the Soviets have cooperated with some U.S. philosophers in arranging philosophical dialogues. In Mexico City in September, 1963, on the occasion of the XIIth International Congress of Philosophy, about fifty Soviet and U.S. philosophers exchanged views on various philosophical questions. This was, on the whole, a friendly and frank exchange. Similarly, the Soviets sent two top-ranking philosophers, Academicians M. B. Mitin and M. E. Omel'ianovskii to Washington, D. C., in December, 1963, to participate in a symposium arranged by the Society for the Philosophical Study of Dialectical Materialism. This meeting has been

reported favorably by the Soviets.<sup>3</sup> A year later, in December, 1964, two other Soviet philosophers, Professor P. V. Kopnin and Professor V. V. Mshvenieradze, were speakers at a similar symposium in Boston.

But what is the attitude of the Soviets in such exchanges? Professor George L. Kline, writing of the Mexico City meetings, holds that they continue to be "dogmatic" and "abusive," that they exclude "alien ideas," and that they refuse "to discuss central moral issues arising out of current Soviet developments."<sup>4</sup> He declares that the Soviets do not really believe in the "coexistence of ideas or ideologies."<sup>5</sup> What is the truth in this matter? With regard to the performance of the Soviet philosophers at the Mexico City meeting, one may get reports which at some points support Professor Kline's interpretation.<sup>6</sup> As against these, let me cite the account of the American Professor Herbert Schneider, who is by no means pro-Soviet in his views. Professor Schneider, who participated in the Mexico City meeting, has written of that meeting that "it was the Americans rather than the Soviet delegates who took the offensive in shifting the discussion to political innuendo." But, he observed, the Soviets in general "showed a genuine desire to discuss rival interpretations of humanism" and he commented on the "good will on both sides."<sup>7</sup>

### III

Soviet philosophers are concerned with a wide variety of fields and problems. The preponderant interest is philosophy of science, which derives from the very basic study of dialectics. The philosophical implications of quantum mechanics, the theory of evolution, thermodynamics, the theory of relativity, and cybernetics, for example, are under examination. Increasing attention is paid to the methodological problems of the social sciences and the dialectics of social development. And there is accelerating interest in the human or ethical implications of all the sciences, particularly of technological developments like automation and cybernation. One young sociologist

I met was carrying a copy of Roethlisberger and Dickson, *Management and the Worker*. He and others have a keen interest in the American studies on the effects of industry on human beings and in the consequences of automation and cybernation on the American economy. They are no less interested in making use of such studies in understanding similar changes in their own economy. At this point sociology and ethics are joining hands. On the one side, a Soviet philosopher has suggested that a study of empirical data, namely, the moral life and social relations of societies, would make it possible to formulate general laws of moral change and development. On the other side, "a particularly rounded and profound study of the morality of society in all its forms and manifestations is needed today, in order more clearly to see the paths and methods by which communist morality can take root."<sup>8</sup>

It is important to note that, in contrast to a simpleminded view that once enjoyed some prestige, the domain of morals is seen as something more than a mere reflection, a superstructural facet, of the economic base of society. Moral behavior, relations, and ideas are to some degree independent in reality and value.<sup>9</sup> This recognition is significant, for it means that a society with a relatively advanced economy can fall backward (temporarily) in its morals, while any economy, in process of evolving into a more progressive one, can display intimations of a new morality. Thus, for example, socialism and communism may anticipate new moral problems and principles.<sup>10</sup> In addition, one Soviet ethicist asserts that there is an objective, concrete criterion of moral progress, namely, (1) the contribution of the individual personality to the interests of the society, and (2) the combination of social progress with the free development of the individual personality.<sup>11</sup>

Economic superiority in a society is not to be equated with moral superiority, although it lays the base for it. The practical effect of this view of morals is to give the green light to theorizing, observing, and experimenting in all those areas

where the development of personality, interpersonal relations, individual-group relations, incentive, education and the like are in issue and in need of improvement. "The moral" pertains to areas of antagonism between the individual and society (as in "stealing") and between society and society (as collectivism vs. private property and its psychology).<sup>12</sup> Thus "morals" is not, as some passages in Marx and Engels might suggest, a transient phase of "ideology." It is a permanent feature of the human situation. The moral appears at those points where the ideal relation of harmony between the individual and society is in tension with objective relations. Indeed, this tension defines an aspect of the unchanging dialectic. As one young ethicist put it to me, the "ought" arises out of the "is" and is transformed into the "is," and so they exist in dialectical relation. To this extent the dialectical process is inherently moral (though not independent of concrete, acting, judging individuals) and defines moral progress. This new emphasis on the role of moral factors<sup>13</sup> is in fact a reflection of a new situation in the Soviet Union, in which economic factors have liberated the individual's energies and attention from an overriding pursuit of economic necessities, providing more opportunity for the influence of "spiritual" factors. This, of course, is entirely in accord with the views of Marx and Engels on man's progress, under socialism, from the kingdom of necessity to that of freedom.<sup>14</sup>

Historically, studies in ethics and the whole domain of value studies in the Soviet Union have not enjoyed a strong and distinct development. One reason for this has been that the theory of Marxism-Leninism, as a general theory of man, society, and history, is, from beginning to end, an axiological theory. Elaboration of that seemed a tautology and oftentimes a diversion from the compelling tasks at hand.

There was indeed a tendency to define Marxism as a physical, biological, and economic science, and to dismiss values as non-scientific. Another reason has been that since 1917 the Soviet society has been bent toward the solution of immediate, con-

crete, practical problems. There were, at first, the civil war and the war of intervention; then the five-year plans; then the war against fascism; and at last, post-war reconstruction, the consolidation of new alliances, and the cold war and the Stalin personality cult. Third, Marxism-Leninism is not an armchair or parlor philosophy. It is an instrument for the development of individual man and society, and it compels its adherents to action. This view still prevails. As Academician P. N. Fedoseev puts it, "The problem of man in our days by no means should be reduced to a mere proclamation of the human principles of freedom of an individual, equality, fraternity: the crux of the matter is in the realization of these principles."<sup>15</sup> Finally, there was the reason of strict political regulation of cultural expressions, including philosophy. When a society faces intense problems and pressures, both internal and external, the decision its leaders make on matters of great importance are not likely to come from philosophers. Or if those leaders are inclined to be philosophical, as Stalin was, those decisions will very likely be aimed at securing solidarity and conformity.

Some European communists believe that philosophy in the Soviet Union is the most backward of the scholarly disciplines. I am in no position to judge this. But I do think that ethics is one of the less developed sub-disciplines within philosophy there. Some of the Soviet philosophers voluntarily acknowledged this to me but anticipated that important developments in the field of value-studies would come.

#### IV

Of course everything written in Soviet philosophy has ethical premises, implications, and overtones. It is important to grasp this fact in order to understand the situation there in philosophy and in ethics in particular. Paraphrasing Marx, Soviet philosophers would say today, "The philosophers of other persuasions have only described, analyzed, supernaturalized, or subjectivized the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to

change it." Positivism aims at a logical description of the world, but, according to the Soviets, succeeds only in idealizing it. With regard to analysis, they are inclined to agree with Ernest Gellner that an unexamined common life is not worth living and uncriticized common language is not worth following. They reject supernaturalism as an upward flight from existence, just as they reject existentialism as an inward escape: the latter insularizes man, absolutizes his Crusoesque decisions, and inverts real human values by taking illness and death as a revelatory of man.<sup>16</sup>

Marxism-Leninism is concretely humanistic in both its method and aim. It aims at the "free self-affirmation of man, the unfolding and development of all man's substantive abilities and creative potentialities."<sup>17</sup> Its method is to study, with the aid of dialectical principles, the conditions in current societies that obstruct this fulfillment of man, to describe the causes, and to prescribe the solutions. Thus, for example, it sees the contradictions between man's labor and deprivations on the one side and technical progress and wealth on the other. It sees the fact of alienation in its many forms.<sup>18</sup> It locates the causes of these in a class system, with its exploitation through private property relations. It proposes the solutions that point toward ultimate socialism and eventually communism.<sup>19</sup> Thus Marxism-Leninism leads directly to, and demands, social action. "A genuinely scientific investigation does not limit itself to a mere statement of fact," one Soviet philosopher writes.<sup>20</sup> Another adds that man's labor and the exploitation of labor are the obvious facts which provide the starting point of all investigation into man, and that Marx and Engels substituted these for the conception of the existing society and "connected their humanism with a demand to annihilate this exploitation."<sup>21</sup>

In the context of Soviet society today, this approach receives several emphases. First, abstract, illusory, and aristocratic humanisms are repudiated as failing to recognize the economic source of all forms of anti-humanism. Likewise, anti-collectivism, which leaves the members of society "an

impersonal, non-differentiated mass," as well as the notion of "absolute freedom," are rejected. Critics of communism identify it with "violence in general and with suppression of an individual, negation of freedom, etc." The answer to this criticism is:<sup>22</sup>

In real fact the transition from treating an individual as a free owner to comprehending him as a human being who is a comprehensively developed individual, is the highest stage of humanism. If violence is used as a means of transition to a new society, the essence of this transition is the abolition of violence to an individual.

The Soviets criticize existentialism for desocializing man and the Thomists and other transcendentalists for deindividualizing him and both for dehumanizing him.<sup>23</sup> Thus they separate themselves from both laissez-faire individualism of any kind and totalitarian collectivism—in a word, capitalism and fascism. They also reject theories featuring the sinfulness or inherent aggressiveness of man<sup>24</sup>—theories that are pessimistic, irrational, and nihilistic.<sup>25</sup> These theories, widespread in the West today, have evoked a vigorous defense of humanism in Soviet philosophy. Now such rejections are not new; but the reasons today for the rejections are significant. The reasons are not primarily historic, material, economic, or even dialectical; they are *humanistic*. It is stressed that the motto of communism is "Every thing for man, for the benefit of man."<sup>26</sup> And while the social is regarded as pre-eminent, it is acknowledged that the individual and the society influence one another and perfect one another.<sup>27</sup> "Humanism is a characteristic feature of the consciousness of Soviet man. A man is a friend, brother and comrade to man."<sup>28</sup> Socialist humanism is conceived as an aspect of the scientific world view and practice of the working class, aiming at the all-round development of all people.<sup>29</sup>

Current Soviet philosophy is accordingly critical of abstract and static ideas of man—"often used as a front for conservative and even reactionary ideas."<sup>30</sup> Man is in process from present to future,<sup>31</sup> and it is man's task to create himself as he thus moves—not out of the stuff that dreams are made on but out of and with existing materials and



forces. Perhaps more than in previous periods in the Soviet Union, freedom is emphasized as an important value. Academician Konstantinov views freedom as a function of individual and social activity. It is not an isolated attribute of inner consciousness, thought, or spirit. Freedom is<sup>32</sup>

the continuously developing unity of the subject and object. . . . Man is free if in his activity he is able to do what he strives to attain and if the goals he sets himself beforehand coincide with the objective results he achieves. . . . Freedom manifests itself in the practical utilization of a cognized and comprehended necessity. . . . Man and society become free after they have transformed these forces and relations in accordance with their objective regularities.

While this formulation follows Engels', it gives that classical view a new turn by emphasizing the creation and evolution of freedom through the interaction of man and nature and man and society. Whereas the older views focussed on the recognition of, and obedience to, necessary laws, the contemporary view accentuates the cooperative transformation of social and natural conditions in accordance with those laws. Flexibility and creation, not strict necessity and imitation, are the order of the day, as the Soviets think of both man and nature. Necessity is not abjured; it is interpreted as creative necessity.

## V

Likewise, there is a concomitant accent on the "spiritual" values of man's life. Marxism "flatly denies anti-scientific, vulgar-materialistic metaphysical identification of thinking processes, spiritual life of man, on the one hand, and matter on the other."<sup>33</sup> The domain of mind cannot be reduced to, or dissolved in, physical or physiological categories. Consciousness, ideas, purposes—all that comprise "mind" or "spirit"—are all aspects of matter, derivative from it, dependent on it, and interacting with it in its various forms.<sup>34</sup> The power of the ideas of Marxism-Leninism in rallying and organizing the Russian working class is taken as an example of the significance of new ideas

and theories.<sup>35</sup> The Soviet philosophers recognize the conscious individual as one pole in the dialectical process of man's creation. Professor Tugarinov said to be that the traditional concept of freedom is that man conquers a sphere in which society has no right to interfere. Thus man separates himself from society—as in a fairy story he draws a magic circle around himself, which none can transgress. In socialist society, he continued, such a concept remains: in the sphere of his private life man is free from interference on the part of society, so long as his freedom does not contradict the freedom of others. But, he concluded, the main point is that freedom is the approximating of private and social unification. Freedom is non-imposed, voluntary action that is useful for society. (Tugarinov is himself a painter, and expressed a special appreciation for the superb collection of French impressionists and the Picassos in the Hermitage Museum. It was his opinion that impressionism is underestimated in France. Here, in this painter-philosopher, I found a keen sensitivity to the life of art and its implications for value theory.)

It is a misunderstanding to assert, as some do,<sup>36</sup> that Soviet value theory holds that communism is "the ultimate objective demand" or value because it is "inevitable." The Soviet philosophers do believe that it is inevitable; but what is the meaning of this belief? Their position is something like this: given the fact that man's nature is defined by a certain complex of needs; that in order to fulfill these man must engage in productive labor in cooperation with other men and in interchange with nature; that historical systems, such as slavery, feudalism, and capitalism have thwarted and destroyed the fulfillment of human needs, and that socialism followed by communism is the only system yet to appear that promises adequately to fulfill these needs—then communism is in this sense an inevitable value. This assertion does not mean that, regardless of what man thinks or does, communism will come about. It does mean that if present trends continue, and that if out of the drive of their needs men collectively struggle to fulfill those needs, the probability is that com-

munism will be the path that they follow in process of meeting those needs and thus realizing ultimate human value. Ultimate value, in Soviet value theory, consists in the social harmony of all-round, creatively developing personalities. This, too, is inevitable only in the sense stated; and as communism is a necessary means to that end, according to Soviet thinking, it derives whatever inevitability it has from that end. Thus the primary question to be argued here is human nature and its possibilities for fulfillment in the present and future world; the secondary question is the character of communism and its relation to man and his fulfillment.

It is likewise a source of misunderstanding to assert that for the Soviets "the ultimate basis for value seems to come not from individual man but from men taken collectively, from humanity or from the masses"—in contrast "to those in the West who hold that the individual is intrinsically valuable."<sup>37</sup> Such a misunderstanding leads to the erroneous conclusion that "if the annihilation or enslavement of millions of people leads to some given end, e.g., Communism, such an act is not only justifiable but a moral imperative and that this annihilation or enslavement takes on moral value."<sup>38</sup> I shall not deal here with the factual question that is raised, or with the putative inconsistency of an alleged humanist philosophy. The fundamental philosophical issue here is that of human nature. The Soviet position is that the truest, most concrete, and essential description of man is a social one, taking into account all members of the species, changing and developing in space-time on the planet. To say that "the *individual* has value only insofar as his aims or interests coincide with those of *humanity*"<sup>39</sup> does not mean he has *no* value. It means, rather, that as one member of society he, like all others, has the opportunity by individual activity to define and actualize the human essence. It means that so far as he, in so doing, contributes to the human definition and fulfillment of other men, his activity has value. This idea—and the Soviets acknowledge that it is an ideal—is quite the opposite of enslavement. One may find in the Soviet litera-

ture many statements relevant to this issue, e.g., this: "The supreme goal of communism is to ensure *full freedom of the human personality*, to create conditions for the boundless development of the individual, for the physical and spiritual perfection of man. It is in this that Marxism sees genuine freedom in the highest meaning of this word."<sup>40</sup>

What is to be done about the realization of man's spiritual life—about the "all-round development of his personality in its physical, spiritual, moral and aesthetic aspects."<sup>41</sup> The task of the philosopher, according to the Soviets, is to identify and analyze the primary needs and problems of man, to locate their causes and conditions, and to propose solutions that will both remove the obstructions and provide the favorable conditions for man's all-round and universal fulfillment. The philosophical task, in short, is existential, descriptive, pragmatic, moral, and humanistic in the deepest and most comprehensive senses of those terms. The emphasis on the experiential or empirical side of Soviet philosophy—some years ago it tended to be almost Hegelian and deductive—has been stimulated by the turn to empiricism in a closely allied discipline, sociology. For example, at the laboratory of Social Research of Leningrad University 2665 workers have been interviewed and studied with respect to their attitude toward labor, motivation for choosing a profession, attitude toward job and trade, and understanding of the social significance of work. (Also at Leningrad some interesting studies in extrasensory perception have gone forward.) At least some Soviet philosophers are aware of gaps in their knowledge about man—the dialectical relation between the biological and the social was one mentioned to me. The emphasis on the social sciences has already been officially declared.<sup>42</sup> I anticipate that as such studies proceed, they will have, as they are now having, repercussions in philosophical discussions.

## VI

Soviet philosophers spoke to me of the error

of assuming in the past that the problem of values is a pseudo-problem or that it is solved by the general theory of historical materialism and communism and by belief in the practical value of communism for society. What is needed, one said, is studies in *kinds of values* that communism can and ought to provide for the individual person. Another added that the value problem is the correlation of material and spiritual culture with the needs of the people, a correlation, he said, which is highly needed and on which a beginning is just being made. A young woman philosopher, technically brilliant, summed up a typical attitude when she said to me severely: "All the evils of ethics come from the fact that it does not want to become sociology."

The Soviet philosophers see socialism as facing many problems in its transition toward communism.<sup>43</sup>

A very difficult problem of this transition process is elimination of distinctions between people of mental labor, on the one hand, and people of manual labor on the other, the shaping of the new man of communist society, a man of all-round and harmonic development who will not have any ideological or moral survivals or birthmarks of the old society.

The philosophers see their task in the context of a total societal effort: the creation of the material base for communism in industry, agriculture, science, the planning and organizing of production, and labor (e.g., the application of automation and cybernation, the elimination of unskilled and arduous labor, the transformation of all labor into pleasure); the creation of the conditions of distribution that will satisfy human needs and raise the living standards, through payment according to work, adequate housing, a reduced working day, and an expansion of public consumption funds; the building of a classless society by eliminating distinctions between workers and peasants, town and country, mental and manual labor, and the status of men and women; the development of socialist democracy; the closer association of nations; and the education of the working people, and the lifting of the cultural level.<sup>44</sup> Besides these

basic internal tasks, the Soviets take as their task on the international front the advance of "Peace, Labor, Freedom, Equality, Fraternity and Happiness for all people of the earth."<sup>45</sup> An important corollary of this is "Peace and Friendship, Cooperation and Rapprochement of the Peoples."<sup>46</sup>

The heart of this colossal effort is the drive to create a new man, "to learn how to live and work in the communist way."<sup>47</sup> The moral principles of the code of the builders of communism have been stated as follows:<sup>48</sup>

Devotion to the Communist cause, love of the Socialist motherland and other Socialist countries;

Conscientious labor for the good of society—he who does not work, neither shall he eat;

Concern on the part of everyone for the preservation and growth of public wealth;

A high sense of public duty, intolerance of actions harmful to the public interest;

Collectivism and comradesly mutual assistance; one for all and all for one;

Humane relations and mutual respect between individuals—man is to man a friend, comrade and brother;

Honesty and truthfulness, moral purity, modesty and guilelessness in social and private life;

Mutual respect in the family, and concern for the upbringing of children;

An uncompromising attitude to injustice, parasitism, dishonesty and careerism;

Friendship and brotherhood among all peoples of the U.S.S.R., intolerance of national and racial hatred;

An uncompromising attitude to the enemies of communism, peace and the freedom of nations;

Fraternal solidarity with the working people of all countries, and with all peoples.

Here, the influence of public opinion, persuasion, and education are crucial. Professor B. C. Mankovskii, a political scientist who has been

working on the question of the development of socialist democracy,<sup>49</sup> talked to me about the problem of involving the people in the activities of the state. The big problem, he said, is the transfer of state functions to the public, as, for example, through the all-Union society called "Knowledge," which introduced the new achievements in science to the public through public lectures. The principle of criticism and self-criticism, it appears, is taken with increasing seriousness, both by philosophers and by the Party. Recently *Pravda* criticized the attitude of rubber-stamp assent at party meetings, calling for "creative discussion" and urging members to "express their opinions directly and openly, without fear of whether someone may not like it." *Pravda* added that party leaders who suppress criticism must be severely punished.<sup>50</sup> In Moscow I sat in on a session of the Scientific Council where the manuscript of a sixth volume in a series written by Marxist philosophers on world philosophy, *Istoriia filosofii*, came under critical scrutiny. There, a number of sharp criticisms were voiced.

The Soviet philosophers recognize, as John Dewey did, that one of the constricting factors in the creation of a new man is the fetters of habit and tradition. The new Party Program, the first since 1919, scores "the survivals of capitalism in the minds and behavior of people." In particular, "individualism and selfishness" are mentioned. As the principal means of eliminating these "remnants of private-owner psychology," the Program recommends "comradely censure," "the power of example," and "ideological media" or scientific education<sup>51</sup> In his report on the Program, Chairman Khrushchev was even more pointed in specifying these "survivals":<sup>52</sup>

At the present stage of communist construction a still more vigorous struggle must be waged against such survivals of capitalism as indolence, parasitism, drunkenness and rowdyism, swindling and money-grabbing, against the resurgence of dominant-nation chauvinism and local nationalism, against bureaucratic methods, a wrong attitude towards women, etc. These are weeds that should have no place in our field.

The Soviet view of the interconnectedness of all things calls for a cooperative attack by scientists on the problems facing man. At the Institute of Philosophy in Moscow, the Sector on Ethics includes scientists working on problems as diverse as democracy and the political organization of society (Mankovskii), child psychology and education (Pichugina), the development of personality (Tselikova), the "ought" and the "is" (Konovalova), the ideals of youth (Yurov), women's problems and women's movements (Bil'shai), and the problem of moral evaluation (Mokrousov). Yet all these problems are interdependent, and it is plain to the Soviets that as they work upon them as a team, bringing theory and practice into interaction, they can solve them more effectively than apart. As indicated to me, they direct their efforts to five broad areas: the conditions of all moral institutions, theory, history, concrete studies and special problems. For them, philosophers are not confined to a corner of society, eating their existential hearts out, or sticking their thumbs into some solipsistic pie, or pulling apart words as a schoolboy might pull apart a fly. No: philosophers are at work with other scientists, struggling to understand the problems that people face and, through creative, collective labor, to help make life more abundant for all.

## VII

Finally, the Soviet philosophers see that, beyond the borders of their own country, the main problem in the world is, in the words of Academician M. B. Mitin, the "unprecedented danger of annihilation."<sup>53</sup> The problem of "how we can avert the disaster of thermonuclear war" is of concern to all men and women of the globe—over and beyond the differences between capitalism and socialism.<sup>54</sup> Everywhere I went in the U.S.S.R. I encountered this concern. The Soviet philosophers maintain that the attitude on this question, the problem of war and peace, is now "*the principal criterion of humanism.*"<sup>55</sup> The friendliness of the Soviet people and the Soviet philosophers arises as a natural expression of their way of life. But it is also directed to the realization of the implicit ideal

of a universal brotherhood,<sup>56</sup> and to specific efforts to develop the policy of peaceful coexistence. Contrary to some interpretations,<sup>57</sup> the Soviet philosophers do not repudiate the peaceful coexistence of ideas. Quite the opposite is the case: they believe in maintaining a lively contest of ideas from which improvement may result, and they reject equally the extremes of a cessation of conflict and a contest of force that may destroy the world.<sup>58</sup>

Professor K. N. Momjian is correct in characterizing Soviet philosophy as "this philosophy of hope, the philosophy of optimism, the philosophy of science, the philosophy of revolutionary, world-transforming activities for the sake of truth and humaneness."<sup>59</sup> It is a philosophy which, in principle, disowns "conservatism, dogmatism, stagnation . . . inertness and stale routine."<sup>60</sup> It is a philosophy of reason, enlightenment, and progress in the context of concrete, modern socialism. But this is a qualitatively new view of progress—at times breath-takingly visionary. Professor Y. K. Melvil, citing man's progress from the first stone axe and the mastery of fire, to aviation, radio, television, cybernetics, and nuclear energy, speaks of

the very feasible possibility of periodic exoduses to planets . . . the possibility of migration through space, the colonization of other planetary systems and the propagation of life in them . . . humanity is potentially immortal. . . . Hence, in principle, barring miracles which contradict the laws of nature, *there is nothing impossible for man.*<sup>61</sup>

Whether or not such optimism is justified, it is surely significant as an expression and idealization of a culture which has in just two generations created phenomenal progress and which then projects this arc of progress into the future. It is a measure of what *can* be done and *has been* done as much as it is of what *will be* done by all men.

I asked a Soviet philosopher what he would do were he living in the U.S.A. today. He replied: "Speak the truth, every minute, hour, day, day in and day out. There was a time when Lenin and his followers were small in numbers, and people said scornfully, 'What do they amount to?' But in

time the truth that they spoke was acknowledged, and it prevailed. During the days of Stalin it was difficult to speak the truth. But now that period is past. Time is on the side of truth, for in time social conditions will develop to the point where people become ready to accept truths to which previously they had closed their eyes." I thought of Gorki's statement that the pressure of events will in time *squeeze* people until their eyes pop open.

Ethics in the Soviet Union is the study of man's essentially human values and how to secure and enhance them. And it is founded on the conviction that human life is good and can be made better by intelligent, cooperative action in a world of peace and friendship. Although Soviet philosophers refer to "our meager literature on morality,"<sup>62</sup> they are engaged in debate on such questions as the categories of ethics.<sup>63</sup> This kind of debate is not merely academic; it penetrates to the core of philosophy and hence social policy. For example, one critic thinks that his opponent has unduly limited the categories of ethics. (Happiness, for instance, is not only a moral matter; it is economic, political, esthetic, and the like.) Second, he lifts up and emphasizes the category of duty as basic. Duty is more fundamental than "good." Here is an old philosophical conflict: formal principle vs. empirical consequence. Which is more important? In Soviet society today, the question might be: Which is more important, doing one's duty to society, or pursuing the good life for oneself? But our critic poses the problem differently: Are humaneness and justice significant enough moral motives to be called basic, or can they be derived from duty? Is there, we might say, a *humanistic* motive, essential to moral behavior, and quite independent of duty? Is there a concrete, personal basis for ethics apart from the abstract demand of society for loyalty to a group or a position?

Our critic's answer is, yes. In short, a man can have a sense of duty, or be dutiful, but not be humane. (Similarly, we suppose, one can be humane without being dutiful.) Yet in their truest and deepest sense, according to the critic, they

require one another. And here the critic seems to be rejecting two extremes—inhumane duty and dutiness, undisciplined humaneness. This first extreme is clearly indicated:

The concept of humaneness as one of the most important motives of behavior should be an ethical weapon in the struggle against bureaucracy, indifference and a contemptuous attitude toward people on the part of those who believe that one can perform one's official duties without serving the welfare of each human being as an individual.<sup>64</sup>

While love of people should suffuse and humanize duty, it at the same time cannot be derived from or commanded by duty.<sup>65</sup> This is a way of saying: formal socialism is not enough; we must build socialism by humanizing our concrete social relations.

At the other extreme, the critic seems to be implicitly repudiating that individualism and loss of social responsibility which can threaten a socialist society approaching a phase of consumer prosperity. No doubt the recent concern about "humanism" has brought this issue into focus. But it is important to note that our critic, in dialectical fashion, holds the motives of duty and humaneness

together, in tension. Indirectly, he criticizes both an over-controlled sense of public duty and an under-controlled allegiance to private interest. At this point the Soviet system as a whole finds itself in the middle: in their early stages revolutionary movements tend, of necessity, to stress strict adherence to duty for the sake of social solidarity, while more highly developed socialist societies, such as those in Eastern Europe, seem to produce conditions favorable to the cultivation of individuality if not individualism. To the latter has been added the external influence of Western European and American individualism.

While the Soviet ethicists speak of a "humanist" morality and "the societal roots" of ethical categories, it is not always clear precisely what these are. Nor is it clear what practical steps need to be taken, and what conditions need to be produced and changed, in order to materialize in an optimal way the ideal of "a new man."<sup>66</sup> Nonetheless, new questions are being raised, with increasing momentum; and as they are raised, we may look forward to new answers.

\* \* \*

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