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## AXIOLOGICAL BASES OF DISCOURSE COMMUNICATION IN THE RUSSIAN PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT

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### *Abstract*

The article discusses the value orientations of Russian philosophy, which, on the one hand, determine its integrity, unity and identity, on the other hand, serve as the foundations of philosophical communication carried out within the framework of the Russian tradition or in connection with it. The peculiarities of Russian religious philosophy, which have the meaning of an axiologically conscious ideological position, developed during what is commonly called the "silver age of Russian culture" and indicate a consistent and diverse strategy for the reunification of philosophical knowledge, where epistemological research was only a substructure to achieve holistic knowledge. Values are included in Russian religious philosophy as an object of analysis and as a correlate of philosophical positions. In this article, a deep moral position that distinguishes Russian philosophical thought, religiosity, as well as a characteristic appeal to literary forms of presentation are considered as the basis of discursive practices in the Russian philosophical tradition (on the example of the works of I. Ilyin and P. Florensky). It is concluded that philosophy descending the “golden age of Russian culture”, serves as a guide for overcoming the deep ideological crises of the twenty-first century.

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**Keywords:** Russian religious philosophy, discursive communication, spiritual culture, axiological grounds, values.



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## **1. Introduction**

Russian religious philosophy is developing during the period, which is commonly referred to as the “silver age” of Russian culture. At this time, Russian philosophy reaches the peak of its development, its peculiarity fully reveals itself and it is represented in various philosophical movements; at the same time, something general is revealed in it, embodied in diverse and original variations. We can list this specific features of this movement as follows: 1) it is religious in its nature; 2) its representatives can boast of possessing the high level of rational and analytical thinking; 3) anthropological and ethical orientation; 4) the influence of literature on the philosophy. These four qualities are the “primary elements” of practically all theoretical systems of the philosophy of the “silver age”.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Let us consider the features of discursive communication in Russian philosophical thought from the point of view of the value approach, because it is values of the real being of a person and society that meaningfully form various cultural and socio-psychological processes in society. It includes communication at all levels and in different forms of public life: within the framework of theory and everyday consciousness, as well as in science, philosophy, morality, politics, art, etc. The formation of certain spiritual and value orientations in society is determined both socially and historically. However, value priorities have always been associated with the basic issues of the existence of a particular nation or ethnic group: understanding and attitude towards the transcendent, the question of the meaning of life, good and evil, person`s place in the world, etc.

## **3. Research Questions**

As modern researchers Shipunova and Kuznetsov (2015) rightly believe,

The history of human culture in its objective meaning of the material world and in the meaning of specific features of the individual psyche is connected with the processes of preservation, production and transfer of generic experience. This allows us to talk about the social coding as the most important ontological condition for the existence of any human community, each individual and culture as such (p. 255).

The traditional values of the people are implicitly present in discursive practice, giving rise to its specific meanings while accumulating social experience. In the article “The Role of Relation to Values Principle in the Social Management Practices. The Existential-Communicative Aspect” Shipunova (2014) writes:

The process of sense transfer (describing the dynamics of the life-world cultural space), the process of understanding (describing the acceptance and assimilation of senses), the process of existential senses generation (describing the dynamics of the inner world of the individual) are the basis of

explicit and implicit intersubjective practice that naturally combines values and communication nearly in every rational action (p. 568).

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The aim of this article is to show that the Renaissance of religious dimension in the Russian philosophy (both in the philosophy of Russian cosmists, and in the theology of traditional Orthodoxy representatives) demonstrates the indigenous and non-random agreement on understanding the value framework of human activity between many generations of Russian intellectuals, even during the period of technological achievements. The transcendental axis allows the ontological and ethical problems of modern philosophy to fall into the “event horizon”.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The basic structures, general topics and essential foundations of national philosophical traditions can be analyzed using various methods. Modern methods of textual research are of particular importance, in particular, Ulyanova and Sinepol (2014) refer to the prosopographic method of building collective biographies, which so far is applied in the field of history, where the quantitative approach in database analytics is used, and this approach allows to achieve new interesting results.

The difficulties one can face analyzing references on the history of Russian philosophy are connected with scarcity of such databases, since the complicated process of publishing archival materials and digitizing them is ahead.

Therefore, the characteristic features of any national tradition are revealed through traditional analytical procedures, in particular, authoritative opinions of experts in the history of Russian philosophy are of great importance. Many scholars adherent to this tradition speculated on the establishment of religiosity as the main basis of the national philosophical tradition. Lossky (1991) in his famous "History of Russian Philosophy" writes about the combination of “sensual, intellectual and mystical intuitions” (p. 470) as the general principle of the philosophical knowledge entirety. Zenkovsky (2001) in the “History of Russian Philosophy” claims that “Russian thought always (and forever) remains connected with its religious element... but also of various complications in the development of Russian philosophical thought” (p. 12).

The connection of philosophy and the religious worldview is also emphasized by modern researchers (Artemyeva, 2018; Evlampiev, 2014; Horujy, 2005; Evlampiev & Kuprianov, 2016; Malinov, 2018; Maslin, 2017). This raises the important question of whether religious philosophy can be viewed as a kind of rationally constructed knowledge, or the transcendent foundation of any religious philosophy always somehow affects the nature of rationality as a structure of knowledge, restricts its application, imposing a specific way of implementing this kind of knowledge (kataphatic or apophatic, irrational or mystical in medieval philosophy, antinomic – in Transcendentalism, authoritarian – in Marxism).

In “Logical Investigations”, the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl wittily objects to Erdman, the skeptical philosopher, about his criticism towards the anthropological argument, the essence of which is that any human being, including a philosopher, is only accessible for the human truth. Husserl (2001)

believes that the existence of the forms of non-anthropological knowledge is possible. But, he adds ironically, if a “normal” person would need five years to understand the Abel’s theorems about the transcendent, it would take him a thousand years to comprehend the “truths of angels” (p. 97). What is peculiar of Russian religious philosophers of the XX century is that the “truths of angels” are included into the subject area of their research, the fact that “knowledge of the transcendent” is based on not just well, but perfectly organized rational culture. Thus, philosophical and religious experiences are combined in Russian philosophy.

Russian philosophers Sergius Bulgakov, Pavel Florensky, Ivan Ilyin, Lev Karsavin, Nikolai Lossky, Semyon Frank and others considered analytics of the sphere of transcendental as the needed and the most important part of philosophical knowledge. This list could be continued, but we will dwell upon two of many Russian philosophers, which oeuvres combined the analytics of transcendental subjects with the profound rationalistic culture.

## 6. Findings

The link between two names - Pavel Florensky and Ivan Ilyin - does not come about by chance. They were contemporaries, deeply original thinkers, but the main thing they obviously have in common is a special discipline of thought, which protects from an incautious, premature, immodest interest in the “truths of angels”. Both philosophers studied hard and received Gold Awards at the end of the studies – Ilyin studied in the First Moscow, Florensky – in the Third Tiflis classical high schools. Both entered the Moscow University: Florensky entered the Department of Physics and Mathematics in 1900, Ilyin – the Department of Law a year later. Ilyin and Florensky studied brilliantly, both by right and the advantages of diplomas received at the end of the university were invited to stay at the university to prepare and defend the thesis.

Ilyin (1996) continued his education at the university and was awarded the right to pass a traineeship in Germany to study the philosophy of Hegel. Immediately after graduation, Ilyin writes about the teleology of his scientific work:

My main desire is to apply the formal and methodological, disproving and scattering approach, which is familiar and peculiar to me / ... / I just know that I am drawn to write about other people's thoughts any more: however hard I try – it is phony and I feel like a conscientious liar (p. 13).

The defense of Ivan Ilyin's thesis “The Philosophy of Hegel as a Doctrine of the Concreteness of God and Humanity” took place within the tragic circumstances of revolutionary Russia, when one of his opponents, Pavel Ivanovich Novgorodtsev, was forced to spend the night outside the house on the eve of the defense, because his apartment was searched and an ambush was arranged. The “defeat of Russian academic science” (Lisitsa, 1996, p. 13) had already begun and soon terminated. On the basis of the defended thesis Ivan Ilyin was conferred both master's and PhD degrees.

Florensky (1994) after graduating from the university, despite the offer of his teachers – an outstanding Russian mathematicians Zhukovsky and L.K. Lakhtin – to remain at the Department, in 1904 entered the Moscow Theological Academy following the desire “to take in the positive teaching of the

Church and the scientific and philosophical worldview together with art without any compromises, honestly” (Florensky, 1994, p. 8). A mathematician, and, because of this, a man of high rationalistic culture, Pavel Florensky applies it to the analysis of the field of transcendent entities.

Ilyin and Florensky had very different relationship with representatives of the “aesthetic Renaissance”. Andrey Bely left a kind of “evidence of the offended”: “... Young, obsessed, deathly pale Ivan Ilyin / ... / hated me from the first moment for no reason at all; there are such quite instinctive antipathies: Ilyin (1996) cringed to see me; sardonic smile appeared on his thin and dead lips; with intentional, delirious dryness, with shifty eyes he bowed to me; our acquaintance was determined not by words, but by how silent we were, glaring glances at each other» (p. 16). The reasons for such alienation are quite obvious – the Christian ideals of family, marriage, spiritual chastity, the adherent of which Ilyin was, were not accompanied by the free mores of the Russian Bohemia of the early XX century. Ilyin (2002) is a philosopher of the rationalistic reflexive will that was brought up on the basis of Hegelian dialectics (he conducted an enormous study on Hegel's dialectics that is still very up-to-date, called “The Philosophy of Hegel as a Doctrine of the Concreteness of God and Humanity”).

But what is rational knowledge? And what is a rational culture? Do the transcendent and rational truths correspond to each other? Do the principles of rationality determine the theological dogma? Is irrational and mystical knowledge an essential element of religious philosophy, as long as it correlates with the principles of faith? Is out-rational non-rational knowledge possible? What is the relation between hypothetical, problematic and irrational knowledge? These questions, particularly acute in medieval philosophy, have not lost their relevance hereinafter.

This problematic has always had a sharp polemical content. Since the Age of Enlightenment, Moses Mendelssohn discussed the relationship between religious knowledge and rationality with Gotthold Lessing, Friedrich Jacobi criticized the philosophy of Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schleiermacher, John Gottlob Fichte argued about this subject with Friedrich Schlegel, Jean-Paul Richter - with Friedrich Schiller In German classical philosophy, the topic of what the nature of rational knowledge is was determined as one of the most significant, then, in the XX century, it was studied within the frameworks of the philosophy of life, existential philosophy, phenomenology, and analytic philosophy. But the rationalization of the supernatural (i.e. including it in the structure of thought) does not in any way mean that we are moving from the point of rationalism to the ground of “pure” irrationality.

In this respect, the Russian religious philosophy of the XX century has drastically advanced in terms of understanding the necessity, and, what is most important, the possibility of combining philosophy and religious experience. Always, when it comes to religious faith, there is a special concern about the presence of transcendent power. But the subject of analytics in this case is not the unutterable concern, not the sacrament of communion, but the possibility of rational evidence of this. Both Florensky and Ilyin, full of both religious concerns and research will, show how do they correspond within rational knowledge. As Florensky (1994) writes, the “objective knowledge of another” is opened, and this very knowledge is a necessary complement to the “integral knowledge”. He testifies that he saw “such a reality, which all resolvers of reality will not take away from me in imagination” (p. 317). It should be noted that the rationally organized mathematical talant of Florensky (1994) did not conflict with his

knowledge of God; in his article called “About the types of ascending”, he writes about the possibility of “conjugating mathematics and moral theology” (p. 284). But he also writes about the need to combat the “bad scientific taste”, referring to the “empty analogy between mathematics and moral life.” The subject of grand methodological efforts is the method of research, the analysis of the principles of rational thinking. However, the question whether it is possible to apply them to the sphere which is called the “truths of angels” remains.

So, if the intuition of the transcendent is declared the basis of knowledge, the problem of the possibility of its rational description arises. Irrationalists rely on a special “feeling” when revealing the presence of the transcendent origin in the experience and treat intuition as the source that certifies its presence. In such a way the constituted “fact of the supernatural” is affirmed in any mythological or theological construction, however, the intelligible abilities of a man are always the source of knowledge, even a vague, indistinct, intuitive (in this sense – direct). Most often, the “ability of supernatural” in man can be explained by the religious needs of man. There is no gap between theology and philosophy in this respect: if the knowledge or reliability of the presence of God is established in a direct way – by the feeling, and this knowledge demands to be designed, disclosed or developed, even just told a story about, that will be a rationalistic form to expose this kind of intuition in any case. Mystically oriented philosophizing also describes concerns about this. Philosophy is designed to resolve and overcome the difficulties that arise. But how in philosophy can we avoid burdening this intuitive “purity of knowledge”, when rationally presented knowledge of transcendence can be provided by means of notions, concepts, logic, structure and ways of presentation? Everyone who wonders about it always find their own answers.

Pavel Florensky especially warns about the danger of a vain immersion into the transcendent: an idle sudomity engenders a passion for demonology, mysticism, spiritualism. In this sense, the point of support and the guiding line is the rational theology of the church fathers, it is a reliable and useful guide already in the sphere of the “truths of angels”. But those who are familiar with this rationalistic tradition know that here is no such knowledge that is “ready for use”. It is here that the real spiritual warfare unfolds, which allows us only to come closer and barely hold on to these entities, it is enough to confirm this by referring to the writings of St. Augustine the Blessed, John Chrysostom, or to open, for example, the Optina flower garden.

An additional factor of interest of Russian philosophers in transcendent matters were historical events that determined the context of their philosophizing. The First World War, the crisis of 1905, the wave of terrorism, the February Revolution, regime change, the October Revolution, civil war, state terror, expulsion, unsettled life and forced emigration of a large part of the Russian philosophical community and absolute lack of freedom to the rest. In this sense, the fate of the Russian philosophers remained in Soviet Russia is of particular importance - all without an exception, tragic. Tragical destinies of Shpet, Florensky, Losev, Rozanov are the evidence of this (Vaneev, 1990). The time when the main theme (sometimes implicit) is theodicy – the justification of the imperfections of the world, the search for the absolute foundations of morality, which is strengthened not by an agreement or a social contract, as in English philosophy, and is not based on fear of punishment and retribution (“an eye for an eye”), but on love towards a neighbor. Since the beginning of the XX century, it is especially difficult to believe that the world is perfect, and a creature is filled with good intentions and deeds.

One of the main themes is the interpretation of the existence of evil in the world. Here a vast variety of approaches to solve this problem are possible. Not many things can be compared in terms of strength and impressive depth with the beginning of the work “On Resistance to Evil by Force” by Ivan Ilyin, revealing and systematically describing evil. Ilyin (1925) analyzes different forms of violence, holiness, resistance to evil, forms of escapism, nihilism, variants of false solutions of the problem of distinguishing good and evil, compromises between their adherents, the functions of pity, pleasure, the boundaries of love, etc.

Florensky (1994) has another opinion. Evil for him is also a “real power”, but one must be completely alienated from it. His tactic is to never allow “it into consciousness as something immanent, / ... / always treat evil as something totally alien and external, / ... / do not experience it as the reality, / ... / see in it "a limiting concept," which should not be denied, but is impossible to investigate, remaining immanent in the realm of good” (p. 314).

Pavel Florensky strives to keep the evil rolled to its point of power with the help of a cautious and knowledgeable mind, which is also difficult and not at all easier than to study the various ways of manifesting it in the world systematically, as Ivan Ilyin does.

The futility of rational knowledge in relation to such objects is manifested in the fact that philosophy is only Prolegomena, it is a sophisticated propaedeutics, i.e. introduction, the method is a masterly developed reflexive way to turn philosophy into a "strict science", capable of solving the main fundamental contemporary problems, it is only a very complex analytical technique for solving the problems of the "vital world" (both Florensky and Ilyin claim that dialectic is such a rational tool). What purposes does it serve for? The whole methodology should be subordinated to practical moral philosophy, this is a fundamentally common thing that unites the overwhelming majority of Russian philosophers of that time. The whole dialectical and epistemological knowledge must be affirmed in a moral (and it may happen, in an immoral) act. It is the knowledge that gives away all dialectical doubts. Moral standing is the knowledge acquired in the course of life, and it somehow manifests our entire philosophy. Epistemologists and dialectics in theory, P. Florensky and I. Ilyin “drink unconditional like water” in moral philosophy, as Fr. Schlegel would say (Schlegel, 2015, p. 315).

Thus, value cannot be an abstract part of philosophical knowledge, because it controls the “practical philosophy” – ethics. Socrates studied this coordination; he forced his interlocutors to clarify what they knew and what their knowledge was worth: “You, apparently, do not know, – says Nikiy in the dialogue “Laches”, – that once someone talked to Socrates – it was like twinned – and got involved in the conversation, no matter how it began, Socrates will certainly grill his interlocutor until he gives him a report on how he lives now, how he lived before; and only then Socrates will calm down – not before having considered all this in detail” (Cooper & Hutchinson, 1997, p. 673). It turns out that this knowledge is completely based upon values. Values were the subject basis in the philosophy of such an outstanding representatives as P. Florensky, I. Ilyin, F. Dostoevskii, V. Rozanov, S. Frank, K. Leontiev, S. Bulgakov, A. Losev.

Axiological issues are associated with problems of culture. The confrontation between culture and anti-culture, where spiritual emptiness is gaping, is the main point of analysis of Russian religious philosophers.

The essence of this interest will be fully expressed by Ilyin (2011) in his remarkable work called “The Basics of Christian Culture”: “... contemporary art,” secularly “freed from religious feelings and senses, meets the needs of the modern godless mass: fashion breeds a “modernism”, boredom and satiety – a nervous twinge; cinematography replaces the temple; the crackling and roaring of the radio replaces the personal culture of music and words. In arts, the “third dimension” disappears – dimension of the artistry, sacredness, and objectivity; the two-dimensional soul creates a vulgar, ungodly art, and becomes a victim itself” (p. 289).

Analysis of the “benefits” of spiritual production is one of the leading topics of Russian religious philosophy.

The experience of describing such concerns involves mastering a completely new language.

As Florensky (1994) said, there is “my own internal, and therefore my external word,” which has nothing to do with the “lifeless products of literary factories” (“as if the prince of the world” unfolds his boring “affairs”). In superficial words, “... their splendor is the splendor of paper and rag flowers, dusty, faded and befouled by flies: such words are just a falsification” (p. 690).

The works of the “silver age” philosophers continue the tradition of the “golden age” of Russian culture. The link between Russian literature and philosophy in Russia is by no means accidental. Literature was a model of artistry and stylistic benefits of a philosophical text, a model of the “open philosophizing” free from rules of the scientific treatise, and a structure of “existence” of philosophical problems. However, this phenomenon is not exclusively national, it already existed in Plato’s dialogues, and in different times the close link between philosophy and literature provided brilliant results in European philosophy. In this regard, suffice to recall Novalis, Wackenroder, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Sartre or Camus – all those philosophers who especially cultivated their literary style. Here the parallel with the late Heidegger’s philosophy and his immersion into literary work in the most trivial sense of the word arises. Literary structures are such mental structures that are part of an infinite, requiring new and new additions collection of growing definitions. This is related not to the ideological, but to the formal content of philosophical work. Although, in Russian spiritual culture the more extensive blend of philosophy (disciplined rationality), theology as dogmatism consecrated by the tradition, and literature, in which unique expressiveness and individuality of discourse are most valuable, was realized.

In accordance with the value orientations of Russian philosophical thought (religious, ethical and anthropological orientation, literary center, etc.), information is selected from discursive communications that ensure the relationship between various ideas and concepts that have their own peculiar synthesis. It happens because value is the attitude to an event, a process, a phenomenon, a person or the World as a whole. Being deeply meaningful and theoretically expressed, this attitude gives harmony and orientation



to various discursive practices, determines its goals and objectives. In mastering and expressing values, a philosopher relies on traditions, norms, and customs established in culture, which ensures the integrity of the culture, its uniqueness and a certain degree of its order and predictability.

In this regard, there is a more general, but still important question: Can philosophy in principle be non-axiological at its core? Can the requirement of “neutrality” coexist with the sense of philosophy? And can we demand the religious neutrality from the theory?

Examples of discursive communication in Russian philosophical thought allow us to discard this assumption. Due to the special historical circumstances, which influenced native philosophers, a grandiose synthesis was realized in Russian religious philosophy of the XX century – the unification of ethics and axiology within the philosophical knowledge, on the one hand, and epistemology and ontology, on the other. It was impossible for an “axiologically neutral” ethics to exist as an abstract knowledge during the persecution, exile, terror and isolation from the homeland. In the XX century, new subject areas – axiology, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, political science, conflictology, etc. – descended from philosophy, these parts of philosophical knowledge and the entire philosophy, took the risk of becoming an instrumental logic and methodological activities, as it happened in case of the analytical philosophy, where L. Wittgenstein and K. Popper passionately discuss the “meaningfulness of moral judgments” (Edmonds, & Eidinow, 2004, p. 274). Losing its ideological content, philosophy would increasingly turn into “pure logic”, a narrowly focused analytics, but for the great need for the essential completeness of knowledge in the XX, and now the XXI centuries. In our opinion, this was the mission of Russian religious philosophy, which was completed.

## 7. Conclusion

Value judgments form the conceptual core of the philosophy of its representatives, determine the essence of philosophising of Russian thinkers. Without a value background, there is no knowledge-worldview, that is, the completeness of philosophy in all the diversity of its discourses (Serkova, 2013).

This is clearly seen in the works of P. Florensky and I. Ilyin. Both of them with all the significant differences in their tragic life paths (one died in a Soviet prison, the other died in the suburbs of Zurich, having completed his thirty-year work on the “Axioms of Religious Experience”) and with all discrepancies in their philosophical theories, expressed the depth of the religious-philosophical worldview, which was existed within the Russian spiritual movement in the first half of the XX century. The theory of unity and correlation of ontology, epistemology, axiology and moral philosophy was implemented in their philosophical systems, theoretically preventing that crisis of “European humanity”, into which we plunge, becoming or agreeing to become parts and details of the unworldly world.

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