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**STRUCTURALIZING CLASSICS: MODERN TRENDS IN RUSSIAN
CLASSICAL PHILOLOGY**

Classical philology is duly considered to be, probably, the most conservative discipline of the humanities. Russian classical philology, historically heavily dependent on German *Altertumswissenschaft*, must be the most radical specimen of this conservatism. Its fate in the time of economical and political changes, when humanities presumably should be not even in the second, or third, but on the "-teenth" place in public hierarchy of values, might have been somewhat drastic. Such remote and abstract topics as cultures of ancient Greece and Rome must be totally out of the newly formed "pragmatical" picture. These were natural fears of people in this or that respect connected with the discipline at the beginning of the nineties but as a matter of fact they didn't prove to be right. Moreover, in the last decade we've been witnesses to the phenomenon which can be duly called a "renaissance" of classics at least as educational discipline. The number of schools where classical languages and/or literature or culture are taught has increased dramatically, and that is true not only for Moscow and Saint-Petersburg, but also, say, to Samara, Smolensk, Voronezh etc. As the annual competition held in Moscow for high school students of Latin shows the geography of participants becoming wider every year and including last time such an exotic (even for Russian standards) place as Divnogorsk in Siberia. As for university education, a new department of classics was opened in Russian State University for the Humanities (which I represent), classics are taught in Petrozavodsk, Samara, Tomsk and other provincial cities. New centers for disseminating classical knowledge were opened in Moscow (so-called "Graeco-Latin cabinet") and Saint-Petersburg (Bibliotheca Classica Petropolitana) which are focused, among other things, on the revival of the complete secondary education in classics (hence, special classical "gymnasia" now exist in both cities) and publication of relevant books, texts and journals (Musaeum Graeco-Latinum in Moscow and Hyperboreus in St.-Petersburg). They are not the only publishing houses concerned with the edition of ancient authors and the secondary literature on them and, although not having the exact

statistics, I daresay, the number of such publications in the last 10 years outnumbers several previous decades for sure.

So far so good, but one cannot help wondering why. Why such a "highbrow" discipline begins now – at least on the surface – if not to flourish, but to grow and develop. One guess may seem too superficial, but still, to my mind, has some real basis. In times of radical change public consciousness tends to search for something stable, and classical education might represent such a permanent model. In Russian public opinion this general tendency is also grounded in a more concrete idea of returning to the "pre-revolutionary" standards of education and culture and a common view is that classical languages and subjects formed the basis for Russian gymnasium romantically thought to be a perfect example of education as such. It is neither my goal to criticize this very idea nor I would like to involve in an argument about the real status of classical education in Russian schools at the beginning of XX century (when actually its role was constantly being reduced). It is sufficient to say for now that this zeal for "return to the fountains" characteristic for different spheres of today's Russia might be one of the reasons for the successful survival of classics and, to some extent, of the humanities on the whole.

Be such nostalgia right or wrong, if it helps to support classical education and scholarship, we can only praise it. However, its consequences are much more complex. In various fields of humanities and public thought on the whole "good old times" are somehow associated with the idealization of traditional view of Russia with Orthodox Christianity being its cultural core. Hence, one cannot help wondering seeing that studies of ancient languages and Graeco-Roman antiquity (historically being a natural opponent to Christian tradition although the latter managed to absorb and adapt the former) are sometimes proclaimed now to be something like a real *praeparatio evangelica*. To quote from one conception of the revival of Russian classical education in the secondary school "classical teaching in Russian was always based on three interdependent subjects: maths, Greek and Latin, and Sacred Law". It is not true, in the first place, but the fact is that two of the now existing classical gymnasia in Moscow are Orthodox institutions patronized by the Church and Patriarchy. The same is true for two special Orthodox Universities in Moscow, where classical subjects are taught on a large scale; at least one of those

universities is famous for the most radical and shovinistic ideas the education there is based upon.

Again, if Orthodox Church supports classical education – also financially, what partially explains the reasons for such a strange union – well, it's not that bad at all. But when studies of antiquity become a somewhat ideological issue – that's another problem. And, unfortunately, partisans of "orthodox classics" tend to include their approach to classical teaching and scholarship in a somewhat broader and more menacing ideological framework. The goal of classics, according to them – again, I quote from the same document – "to form the political elite of the country". Utopic from the political point of view, such a claim, to my mind, is ruining the very idea of classics as a scholarly and educational discipline. However, we must agree that such a pretense is to some extent quite characteristic for classical scholarship in different periods of its existence. One might remember, for instance, a questionable role played by some German classicists in the age of Nazism (even now we feel some sort of awkwardness when reading some of the passages from works of much respected scholars, like Werner Jaeger or Max Pohlenz). Again, one should ask why – the answer lies in the everlasting idea of classics being "top discipline of the humanities". This archaic pride often tempts classicists to become even more than just a "discipline of the humanities", and such claims come as a natural result. Hence, this "superiority complex" is a paradoxical external consequence of a specific seclusion of classics from the other disciplines of the humanities. About its internal consequences for classical scholarship, Russian in particular, I will say some words later on.

"Drang nach Orthodoxy" can be also better understood as a way of proving the necessity of classical learning in today's Russia. Orthodoxy is sometimes claimed to be the only basis for some unifying national idea filling in the so-called "gap of disbelief" or "ideological crisis", and if it is possible to link it with ancient Greek and Latin culture (the easiest way to do that is by referring to the writings of Church fathers), classics then become "modern" enough. The same concealed tendency – much less ideological, for that matter – to prove the "practical" need for studying classics can be perceived in the increased attention to Byzantine and neo-Hellenic studies resulting, for instance, in opening a special department in Moscow State University and growing scale of these

disciplines in other classical programs. Again, it's nothing bad in these studies as such, but somehow they are also becoming an attempt to find "Russian way" of doing classical scholarship, and as Constantinople is much closer to us than Athens of the fifth or Rome of the first centuries B.C. (not to mention a large number of later Byzantine manuscripts in Moscow and St-Petersburg collections), they are now not *added* to classics proper but sometimes tend to *replace* it.

Final minor movement in the same direction – a growing number of publications on so-called "Russian antiquity" meaning both the investigation of classical legacy in Russian culture from the early times on and the *memorabilia* on classical scholarship as such and its role in Russian social and public life. Once again, they also seem to represent the "proof" of the never-ceasing importance of classics for the cultural progress in Russia.

One might only wonder whether classics are in need of such a constant awareness of its actual necessity for today's culture and social life. On the one hand, the growth we are witnessing now may be partially due to that, on the other, some of the university departments and some of the new secondary educational institutions (like the gymnasium in St. Petersburg) remain true to the idea of teaching of classics "for its own sake" – but not as a "sacred knowledge", but just as a basic discipline of the humanities necessary for upbringing of an intellectual. In that understanding classical philology is just "equal among equals" in the field of the humanities and should be respected just for the role it plays in building up humanitarian knowledge – both historically and structurally.

Such a peculiar picture of classics "from the outside" can be to some extent explained, as said above, by those boundaries which classical philology historically built around itself. Interestingly enough, those boundaries inherited from the German philology of the nineteenth century, became even more solid in Soviet era. When humanities on the whole played the role of a somewhat "silent opposition" to the ruling ideology, classics being the most remote and "pure" kind of intellectual activity acquired one of the higher places of such "oppositional" hierarchy. On the one hand, it was the reason for its popularity within the *intelligentsia* (I recall a recent conversation with a colleague of mine who complained that classical conferences had been attended by almost hundreds of listeners before and now it was only 10-12 people in the room; my answer was: "Maybe that's even better as those are definitely interested in classics as

such"), on the other, classical scholarship distanced itself even more from all other disciplines that were "tainted" by ideology – philosophy, sociology etc. (perhaps, art history and to some extent, linguistics were a happy exception). And what we have now in the "internal" structure of classical studies – that is, in the problems discussed and methods used – is deeply rooted in the previous era, with both good and bad consequences.

Through Soviet times classical scholarship was trying to preserve true philological methods of text analysis, commenting and criticism. As the edition of the original texts has always been (and still is) a real problem, this textual criticism usually resulted in publishing commented translations (one must note, most of all the titanic work done by Mikhail Gasparov who had translated alone an enormous amount of ancient Greek and Latin authors) what had always been the utmost goal of classical philology. Fortunately, this tradition is now continued, both by an easier way of re-printing the earlier books and by more difficult one of preparing fresh scholarly editions. Only in the last two years there appeared totally new editions of Cicero's treatise "On Ends of Good and Evil" (prepared by N. Fedorov and B. Nikolsky), "Trojan War" by Dares, "Mythography" of Gyginus (D. Torshilov) and several others. It's worth noting that we have now some publishing houses specializing on the editions connected with classics: "Ad Marginem" and "Museum Graeco-Latinum" in Moscow and "Aletheia" in Saint-Petersburg. This very fact together with the popularity of these books even with general public proves that the respect for classics didn't fade away.

Continuation of tradition is vividly seen also in the tendency to ensure the scholarly heritage of past decades. As practically all intellectual spheres, classical studies also passed (or perhaps is still passing) through the period of reviving the legacy of authors and texts abandoned or prohibited in Soviet times. Among such figures becoming somehow symbolical for classicists now one can name, e.g., philosopher Alexej Losev, and literary scholars Olga Frejdenberg and Jakov Golosovker. The first of them attracts quite a number of partisans gathered in the scholarly society named after him and in his memorial museum. They are regularly publishing both the new papers of their teacher and their own works aimed at continuing his tradition of, so to speak, spiritual reconstruction of classical culture. Sometimes they have some problems in doing so, as

his legacy combines both his past "official" writings bearing some vivid touches of the époque (including attempts to follow Marxist approach in studying classical philosophy and, say, vigorous attacks against formal structural methods) with recently published early works heavily dependent on German phenomenology. Losev's figure becomes even more contradictory as he is often claimed to be the only link connecting today's culture with Russian Christian philosophy, and in this context he sometimes looks like a scholarly representation of "Orthodox classics" I was talking about earlier. So this line in classical philology is often criticized from different angles for lack of philological precision (as Losev's works have a definite essayistic nature).

The same reproaches are addressed towards actively discussed works of Freydenberg and Golosovker which are now being published and commented mainly due to the enormous efforts of Prof. Nina V. Braginskaya. Their influence is certainly not confined to the field of classics as their ideas prove to be relevant also to the general theory of literature and myth. As for the latter, the closer view at Golosovker's theory of the "logic of myth" or Freydenberg's investigation of ritual proves that famous doctrines of Levi-Strauss were paralleled and even predicted by these Russian scholars (together with V. Propp whom Levi-Strauss, as widely known, openly named as his close ally and partial predecessor). On the other hand, Freydenberg's ideas on the connections between ritual and early literary texts and her doctrine of literary plot are now often associated with the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin (whose popularity with ancient scholars, although increasing, is still nothing compared with the wide usage – both proper and improper – of his ideas in the theory of literature and literary criticism) and are applied together to the studies of ancient drama and novel. Although such a more general approach is becoming quite widespread, it is still looked upon by a hardcore positivistic mainstream as something coming "from the outside" and thus spoiling the principles of accuracy and historical precision characteristic for classical scholarship proper.

Same attitude is often shown towards, maybe, the most influential trend in Russian humanities to which classics are also paying tribute – I mean, Russian structuralism. The amount of work done by, say, Vyacheslav Vs. Ivanov and Vladimir Toporov in studying classical languages, myths and texts is quite impressive, and the influence they have on younger scholars is also significant. Not to mention a lot of

particular problems addressed by them, one may draw attention to the fact that mainly due to their ideas, ancient Greek studies were included also in the general framework of Balkan studies: the regular conference "Balkan Readings" including, among other topics, also classical material became one of the practical results of such broadening of classical horizon. Theoretically, it allowed to perceive in Greek texts and culture some peculiar features characterizing the so-called *Homo balcanicus* on the whole. Nevertheless, here we also sometimes deal with a vigorous positivistic reaction towards what is supposed to be a too "generalistic" approach from the "outside" of classical philology – and there are still people literally counting all the minor mistakes made by structuralists when dealing with classical matters – like a wrong accent, inaccurate quotation etc. It's a pity as some fields in classical studies are yielding for a structural systematization: for instance, in spite of different achievements in the interpretation of given myths, we lack a coherent work on the entire Greek and Roman mythological system, and the existing works and textbooks on that matter follow the archaic historical "progressive" view on the development of classical mythology which seem now rather outdated. It's even more regrettable as Russian tradition of comparative folkloristics and mythology might have contribute significantly to such studies. But again this tradition is somehow taken to be an "outside" one, and methods proved to be successful for the studies of, say, Slavic or Germanic mythology are not fully extended yet to the investigation of their Graeco-Roman counterpart. Of course, some of the epigones of structuralism may be blamed as giving ground for such a prejudice: when we come across works where the vocal structure of Greek epic verse is analyzed according to the tripartite scheme of the mythological structure of the universe or every stick of wood mentioned in ancient sources is interpreted as a representation of "world tree", it may make us only smile, at least. But structural approach to the classical material deserves both more serious exploration and, then, more comprehensive critique – and the examples of such polemics are rather rare (one could mention Braginskaya's arguments against Toporov's interpretation of the origins of Greek tragedy).

Reluctance to adopt comparative prospective when dealing with "eternal problems" of classical philology is obvious in various spheres of classical scholarship. Homeric studies may be taken as the most vivid example. Loyalty to German positivistic

approach leads to the situation when the "neo-analytical" interpretation of Homeric texts is still predominant, and oral theory being the leading approach in the Anglo-American school of epic studies is still looked upon as some sort of imposed "innovation". The translation of Albert Lord's *Singer of Tales* in the nineties was a major event for all scholars working in the field of comparative folklore, but some of the classicists are still believing in the necessity of arguing against it in order to ensure Homer's creative genius. One of the best instances of such a defensive critique is an extensive article in the recent edition of the *Iliad*. Consequently, in their polemical vigor they fail to see the new range of problems arose by the oral approach properly understood: the necessity to re-evaluate the genesis of Homeric text, new understanding of the idea of authorship etc. Same is true for the attitude towards comparative poetics on the whole: for instance, in the interpretation of archaic Greek poetry we are still dealing with the idea of the progressive gradual emergence of the individuality (in the sense of H. Fraenkel-B. Snell's school) ignoring the entire range of discussion and objections raised against it in Western scholarship in the recent decades. Of course, comparative evidence cannot be totally neglected, but usually it is dealt within the same "realistic" framework – so, for instance, all Homeric material paralleled by Near Eastern, Hittite or other non-Greek sources is interpreted in very refined investigations of S. Gindin, V. Tsimbursky and others as evidence for early historical contacts, not as a possible realization of some typological schemes.

In Russia linguistics was the field where comparative approach had been established already since long ago, and therefore, linguistic analysis of Greek and Roman material is much broader in its methodological and interpretational outlook. It's no wonder that one of the major achievements are made in spheres where linguistic reconstruction is an objective tool: that's why Mycenaean studies as represented by works of Nikolay Kazansky and others might be claimed to be one of the most successful directions in contemporary classical scholarship. It is mainly in the field of linguistics that new technologies are widely used: one may note the project of a computerized Indo-European etymological vocabulary undertaken by the group of N. Kazansky in St. Petersburg or a program for computer analysis of the rhythmical structure of classical verse elaborated by Dmitry Litvinov in Moscow. It's a vital necessity that the results of

comparative linguistic reconstruction should be enlarged and included into broader framework of cultural and poetical investigations, and I dare to hope that a book written by my father and myself on comparative analysis of ancient Indic and Greek views on poetry is one of the first steps in this direction.

So, if we are to sketch the general picture of classical scholarship in Russia, it could be seen as following. We have a historical, positivistic "mainstream" closely connected with German school of classical philology and opposed both to the external pressures of "modernizing" ideas from neighboring fields of the humanities and to the internal "deviations" of those who are more inclined towards the Anglo-American, or French, trend of classical scholarship. (One should certainly take into account that those two directions are not mutually exclusive: for instance, the recent work of Nikolay Kazansky on the reconstruction of Stesichorus' papyri is a brilliant example of them combined). Such distribution is vividly seen also in dealing with Western scholarship, for instance, in the ways it is translated into Russian. On the one hand, we have a major number of traditional scholarship now translated: I mean, works of Jaeger, Snell a.o.; the latest example is the three-volume "History of Roman literature" by K. Albrechts which definitely lies in the same tradition. On the other, in recent years, we have also examples of an opposite trend: that is, the translation of Dodds' "Greeks and the Irrational" or, to take a contemporary scholar, of G. Nagy's work on "Ancient Mythology and Poetics". But the latter examples are included in "non-classical" programs: that is, in the series on cultural studies or linguistics, what reflects the opposition shown above. The same is even more obvious in case of the latest general innovations in the field of humanities. For instance, French post-structuralism has deeply influenced the contemporary historical, literary and cultural studies; but we practically have no attempts to use its methods in the field of classics (recent discussion of the translations of P. Quignard and B. Cassin is one exception from the general rule), and if we have, it's again an intrusion from the "outside" (that is, made not by classicists proper) – usually erroneous and easily criticized and ignored.

"Dealing with the West" is another bottom-line of the development of classical studies in Russia. They are sharing this problem with all Russian humanities: we are quite aware of what's happening in contemporary English, German or French scholarship, but

Russian scholars are, mostly because of the language barrier, practically unknown in the West. It's most regrettable as almost all works mentioned above (both "positivistic" and "innovative") are, to my mind at least, on the top scholarly level compared to the analogous works published elsewhere. Such a situation causes a sort of "inferiority complex": it's by no chance that in today's Russia a lot of scholars working in the other fields of humanities (general linguistics, literary theory etc.) try to disguise themselves as Slavists and thus to make their contacts with Western scholarship much easier. Classics lack such a chance, but the same tendency can be perceived in the idea of serving as a sort of "source base" of material otherwise unknown to the colleagues abroad. It's quite obvious in today's historical studies (along with a large number of works on Byzantine-Russian connections) mainly concentrating on the publication of archaeological and documentary sources of Hellenistic and Roman settlements in the regions of Black Sea etc. Of course, these materials are unique and we must be happy to have them explored and edited, but it's also one of the reasons for maintaining the only one, positivistic way of dealing with ancient culture. Fortunately, such a real-based approach is sometimes contrasted by a wider comparative and theoretical comparative analysis: one should mention a thorough and knowledgeable work on the principles of ancient geography by A. Podossinov.

Apart from the idea of "Russializing" classics, I would say that the problems classical scholarship is dealing with in today's Russia are akin to those it's facing in general everywhere. That is to say, they are rooted both in the peculiarities of the concrete environment, but also in the nature of the discipline as such. Being, perhaps, the most conservative branch of the humanities, it should overcome its seclusiveness, but in doing so, should avoid too broad and unnatural claims. It should adopt (with due critical reserve) methods and approaches elaborated by related schools and disciplines without shaking its principal foundations. This process is developing in the West, it's also on its way in Russia. The only difference, I would say, is that here it's included in a broader ideological framework, on the one hand, and, paradoxically enough, is starting, probably, in better external conditions (I mean, the status of classics in the society). Also, what in the West resulted in the opposition of schools and national trends (say, Anglo-American against continental, that is, German) of classical scholarship, in Russia is underway

within one and the same tradition. That could produce even better consequences, but in order to do so, classical philology should go through the period of "structuring itself" both in the methodical and institutional way.