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The critical individualism system of E.A. Bobrov

In the article there are analyzed features of a psychological concept of critical individualism developed by E.A. Bobrov in the spirit of the doctrine of Leibniz on a monad as "individual being". According to this theory, really there exist only individual spiritual substances which create the surrounding reality. It is considered the problem of how in the person's mind there appears a concept of the external world which is outside of soul.

Keywords: *personalism, critical individualism, monadism, being, coordination, external world, self-consciousness, soul, substance.*

Evgenii Bobrov (1867–1932) is one of outstanding, talented scientists of Russia of the end of the XIX – the beginnings of the XX centuries. In the history of native psychological thought the figure of Bobrov takes a special place: he is professor of Derpt, Kazan, Warsaw, then Don, North Caucasian university, writer, translator, philosopher, historian of psychology who has left more than three hundred of works; he is founder of the original theory of critical individualism, and also founder of Rostov psychological school.

Activity of E.A. Bobrov as the scientific researcher and university professor is distinguished by versatility and wide coverage: history of Russian literature and enlightenment, pedagogics, psychology and philosophy – these are those areas of knowledge to which the scientific creativity Evgenii Aleksandrovich has been devoted, in each of which he has made the solid contribution. As the moment in development of the native historical-psychological thought, the theory and personality of the professor Bobrov represents considerable interest and importance.

It should be noted that the works of E.A. Bobrov, written hundred years ago, were not republished, till now his psychological views were not considered in the history of psychology completely. Scientific activity of the professor was studied not enough, and it is presented basically by articles in dictionaries and encyclopedias; till now there is no description of his detailed biography. Archives of Bobrov are not investigated; the question on influence of his scientific heritage on modern psychology is poorly developed. The archive of the Bobrovs which is in Russian Academy of Sciences in St.-Petersburg in the Institute of Russian literature (the Pushkin House) can render great help in decision of this problem.

In textbooks and manuals on history and philosophy of psychology A.E. Godin, A.N. Zhdan, V.V. Zenkovsky, V.F. Pustarnakov, F.F. Serebryakov, etc. mention Bobrov.

The general body of publications, devoted to creative work of Bobrov, has appeared before the revolution of 1917 (A.I. Vvedensky, S.A. Vengerov, A.A. Kozlov, E.L. Radlov, T.I. Rainov, etc.). From the modern editions there are some isolated articles devoted to some aspects of scientific activity of the professor (A.N. Erofeeva, M.I. Ivleva, M.A. Prasolov, V.S. Sidorov, V.V. Smirnov, N.I. Sukhov, L.V. Firsova, etc.). For today, as



a rule, to the heritage of the professor there address scientists-literary critics, researchers of ancient philosophy, and also representatives of religious-philosophical direction of science. Generally the name of Bobrov is mentioned in works on philosophy and literature, more rare – in logic and psychology. It is connected with the fact that the majority of works of Bobrov are written within the limits of native philosophy, literatures and education, and psychology and pedagogics shares about a quarter. Among psychological works of Bobrov the most known are “On consciousness” (1898), “External world psychogenesis” (1904), “State of the psychological science in the XVII century” (1911), “Historical introduction to psychology” (1916).

The research aim is description and analysis of the philosophical-psychological system of critical individualism, introduction of the heritage of E.A. Bobrov into the fund of historical-psychological knowledge. In this connection it is necessary to decide a number of problems: 1) to define theoretical preconditions of critical individualism; 2) to outline the whole circle of ideas of E.A. Bobrov, to carry out the analysis of his works; 3) to study psychological views of E.A. Bobrov, to define their specificity in a context of national history of psychology; 4) to define a place of the theory of critical individualism among the other personalistic concepts developed in native science of the first half of the XX century.

Bases of scientific views of Bobrov were generated under the influence of the German professor of Derpt university, Gustav Teihmuller, founder of neo-Leibniz’s theory in Russia. Besides the theoretical bases of the concept of critical individualism of E. Bobrova originate from works of Aristotle, R. Descartes, G. Leibniz. The substantive provision is Leibniz’s synthesis of the idea about an indivisible substance, entelechy of Aristotle with the theory of individual consciousness of Descartes, and also the doctrine about monads as a substantive unity of the substance and the form, the force and the entelechy, the body and the soul.

The theory of critical individualism concerns to personalistic neo-Leibniz’s direction in science. In the centre of this concept there is a problem of knowledge of the person, and also the doctrine of the world as a hierarchy of spiritual substances capable to interaction. In frameworks of the neo-Leibniz’s approach Russian authors develop a number of theories: “panpsychism” of A. Kozlov and S. Askoldov, “critical individualism” of E. Bobrov, “evolutionary monadism” of N. Bugaev, “monistic spiritualism” of L. Lopatin, “intuitionism” of N. Lossky, etc. Native personalists adhered to the Leibniz’s position that the contrast between mental (spiritual) and material being is false and both these sources are reduced to the common being. At the heart of reality there are individual spiritual sources – monads, substances, thus to each monad’s knowledge it is directly accessible only its own internal life [10].

According to the representatives of the neo-Leibniz’s approach, the basic method of psychology is self-observation, introspection. The knowledge aspires to the truth, but it is impossible to cognize the truth in external world. It is necessary to find ideas in own mind introspectively, i.e. by internal view of selves. In the absence of the subjective observation objective methods provide only likelihood results, therefore person-



alists are sure that in psychology it is impossible the strict experiment and objectivity of knowledge [8].

Bobrov warns the psychologists who are fond of possibility to learn the soul in experiment. We cannot define a threshold, where and how physical energy passes in the mental. It is impossible to explain the mental activity mechanically. The soul is not learnt by external feelings; it can be learnt only by introspection [2].

Leibniz believed that the soul has neither the source in the past, nor the end in the future; neither spatial, nor time definitions can be applicable to it. Time and space is only the order of things established by people, a way of our view on an external world [2].

According to the concept of critical individualism of E.Bobrov, really there are only individual spiritual substances, the individuals who are finding out their active nature and thus creating surrounding validity. The separate substance not only imagines the whole world, but simultaneously represents it by self. Each person represents something separate, the absolute world which it is necessary to concern with attention and respect [2]. This thesis has something in common with Leibniz's position that each monad bears in itself perfection, its own positive content and in such a manner that this content is the whole universum.

Bobrov named his theory critical as he understood an external world and categories of being used for its description (matter, space, time, movement) as ideas of the cognizing subject, result of activity of his consciousness. According to this concept, "the external world is a phantom, the phenomenon strongly proved by our own nature", behind it, as behind a symbol, there hide real beings from which we receive the information in the form of sensations experienced by us [1, p. 50]. But this phantom is something inevitable for the person at the given stage of his existential life. The philosophy which has overcome the belief in materiality of external world and considering it as an idea or a phenomenon is critical, since Descartes it recognized the unique life in the person's consciousness of "I", individual self-consciousness.

The theory of Bobrov is also individualistic as it recognizes as the original being only individual substances. "As in own consciousness we find ourselves as separate beings or individuals, and the critical direction does not undermine the value of this fact at all, our world outlook can fairly be called as individualism, but only critical because it is a result of the whole previous criticism of knowledge, i.e. the whole history of philosophy", concludes Bobrov [5, p. 37].

According to the critical individualism, the human personality represents not a unity of material and spiritual components, but a multitude of "I" where "I" is consciousness, unity of individual consciousness [1]. At the heart of this idea there is Leibniz's position on a "garden of monads" which says that "it is possible to present any part of the matter like a garden full of plants"; but each branch of plants represents one more garden, similar to them [7, p. 425]. Thus the corporal substance represents not simply a cluster of monads, but association with the higher monad as the dominating entelechy, forming the spiritual source.



After E. Bobrov, the whole being of material subjects is reduced to our sensations and representations, i.e. everything that exists out of us is admitted by activity of our mind. But here there is a natural question, on what basis we attribute to combinations of our sensations some substantive basis that allows us to find in them ability to co-operate with other material subjects and to influence ourselves. In the works of the professor Bobrov it is proved how the person's mind comes to a recognition of "something" that lies out of his "I" (soul), and he also tried to define mental elements from which the concept of the external world is created.

G. Leibniz specified the fact of mental experience as a starting point of the external world cognition. In terms of the modern psychology language, this fact is the presence of two elements in consciousness at present: cognizing "I" and any content of consciousness. There is something that the person comprehends in himself, i. e. "I" possessing certain content, and also various phenomena or the phenomena existing in his spirit [9]. As well as Leibniz, Bobrov considers that any phenomenon has its reason. It is necessary to search for the true reason of all phenomena in the nature of human spirit; i.e. the spirit is a true basis of the phenomenal world.

After Leibnitz, E. Bobrov deduces the concept of being from the person's internal experience. By means of own imagination, fantasy we create other beings by analogy to our "I"; we take out these images for limits of the substance and we attribute them the same existence, as well as ours. "Analogue making, projecting are those soul activities with which help the external world representation is unconsciously created", confirms Bobrov [5, p. 37].

Our "I" directly realizes only one substantive being – own being. Carrying the content of own activities to supposed external subjects, "I" thereby transfer the concept of a substance from self on these subjects. Realizing self as a source of various actions, the soul attributes ability to action to other subjects of the external world.

Besides the individually-personal problems Bobrov was interested in the doctrine of being; he paid much attention to the analysis of ontologic problems. The professor deduces his concept from the being concept.

It is important the Bobrov's working out of the concept of "coordinal" being within the limits of the theory of critical individualism. According to the professor, it is possible to distinguish four kinds of being: ideological being (the content of the cognitive activity of soul), substantive being (direct consciousness of "I"), real being (consciousness function), and coordinal being which correlates all elements of consciousness together. Bobrov considered coordination as the higher form of being, the law: logic, psychological and space; it dominates in the world, in the soul and in the thought. All mental acts would be co-ordinated with the others. So each thought (act of cognition) incorporates with any feeling and movement [3].

In own works E. Bobrov analyzes a soul category (or "I" in more comprehensive sense) in details. He defines "I" as a point of parity, coordination, the general for the presenting in consciousness real and ideological being; without coordination with "I" nothing can be comprehensible and thinkable. "I" remains identical to itself by the



quality. Distinction is stretched only on soul function, or on the content of these functions (ideological being). "One "I" or the person differs from another "I" or another personality only in relation to their activities" [3, p. 54].

The value of "I" as a singular element of the consciousness opposite to the complex of ideological and real being is great, but it is necessary to note the value of coordination – the basic sign of live, complete consciousness. Individual life means the unity of "I", its ideological and real being. Hence, the concept of individual being and coordination cannot arise one without another [6].

Though in the scientifically-psychological analysis we distinguish direct consciousness from all other phenomena of consciousness, but this elementary "I" is inseparably linked with the phenomena of consciousness and in coordination with them form unity which forms the "soul" category. The soul represents coordinational being in relation to all individual beings, i. e. separate acts of consciousness - sensations, movements, concepts, images of imagination etc. [4].

The soul is known to us at a single copy, we directly understand own "I" and the phenomena, indissolubly connected with it. In thinking this coordinational being receives the value of the separateness, the feature, the individual. Thus, in the mind the concept of soul becomes the individual being. However the united cannot exist without the much. The soul as the united by its individuality forces thinking to recognize the existence of the much, to recognize coordinational existence. Along with the concept of our own soul in the thought there is a concept of many other souls, same, as our own soul which has served as a prototype for their creation [4].

Correlating the categories of "soul" and "much" from the point of view of the "united", the mind comes to formation of a concept of plurality of individual souls. If "soul" covers all manifestations of our consciousness, everything that belongs to our "I", all other souls, being out of ours, represent for our soul something external; this is an external world for our "I". This external world is not material, but consists of souls. Thus, the complex of all souls as the thought products is embodied in the world concept; the complex of elements of consciousness is symbolized in the mind by the soul concept. Comparing this understanding with that understanding of the external world what we use in our everyday life, we should ascertain a sharp difference. The external world in usual, pre-philosophical, understanding is the world material, the world of bodies, instead of the world of souls.

E. Bobrov is sure that the purpose of the further psychological research should be the solution of a problem of the way this initial, soul understanding of the external world turns into its further understanding as the material. Unfortunately, the professor has not left the works in which in details there would be traced the process of gradual materialization of the external world experience.

Analyzing the creative development and works of the professor, it is possible to notice that Evgenii Bobrov was the outstanding scientist with encyclopaedic interests, by the make-up he is comparable with other important figures of the end of the XIX – the beginning of the XX centuries. First, E.A. Bobrov wrote a lot – as the phi-



losopher, as the publicist, as the literary critic, and as the historian of psychology and pedagogics. The professor corresponded with N.Y. Grot, P.P. Blonsky, S.A. Rozanov and other known scientists of that time. Secondly, Bobrov taught in large university cities: Derpt (nowadays – Tartu), Kazan, Warsaw, Rostov-on-Don. Thirdly, he was known as the brilliant pedagogue and active organizer of student's groups, associations, scientific seminars.

The original concept of the critical individualism of E. Bobrov is a considerable component of Russian personalism and native tradition of psychological studying of personality. This theory concerns to the neo-Leibniz's approach and has its distinctive features. In many respects the theory of Bobrov is similar to ideas of the modern existential psychology (recognition of uniqueness and self-value of the human personality).

Motives of critical individualism penetrate all works of E. Bobrov on philosophy, psychology, pedagogics, especially till 1917. During the Soviet power when the basic attention started to be devoted to materialism history, and idealistic views were persecuted, many representatives of personalism have appeared forgotten. The analysis of the scientific heritage of the professor E.A. Bobrov gives the chance to estimate pages of the history of psychology, closed for ideological reasons, in a new fashion.

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