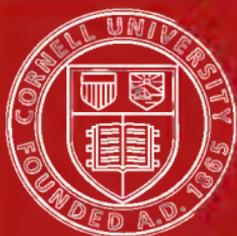


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ASPECTS, AORISTS AND THE CLASSICAL TRIPOS

BY

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ASPECTS, AORISTS AND THE CLASSICAL TRIPOS

TWICE in my life, only twice, it has happened to me to fall in love with a language. Once, long ago, with Greek, again, only yesterday as it seems to me, with Russian.

To fall in love with a language is an enchanting experience. You feel as though you were born again, you wonder how you could ever have lived without your new love; life seems growing richer every moment, you pity all the poor heathen who have never found the light. It is well to be off with the old love before you are on with the new. Not so. In the free spaces of the spirit there are no exclusions, no jealousies. People come to me and say 'I hear you have given up Greek and are devoting yourself to Russian.' As if I could give up Greek. It is part of my body and bones. No, thank heaven, the new love has only given new life to the old.

First, to clear the ground, to fall in love with a language is not to fall in love with a literature. It is well to note—a fact too often forgotten—that a rich language does not necessarily mean a rich literature. The stock and notable example is drawn from Semitic languages. Arabic is exceedingly rich in vocabulary, its literature well—of great specialist interest but singularly jejune. Hebrew is poor and sparse as a language, but its literature—incomparable. The reason of this distinction is clear enough and for my argument important. Language is the *unconscious* or at least *subconscious* product of the group, the herd, the race, the nation. Literature is the product more or less conscious of the individual genius, using of course the tools made by the blind herd, but, after the manner of live organisms, shaping these tools even as he uses them. When we love a language as contrasted with a literature, we fall under the spell not of a person, an individual genius, but of a people imaged in the speech they have made.

What was the spell cast by Greek? It was not the spell of Homer or Æschylus or Plato, I could not read them. No—if

I may be forgiven a reminiscence important for my point—I fell in love suddenly, hopelessly with the Greek particles, μέν and δέ and γούν and δ' ούν. I remember the hour and the place as though it were yesterday when my fate fell upon me, when the sudden sense came over me, the hot-cold shiver of delight, the sense of a language more sensitive than my own to shades of meaning, more delicate in its balance of clauses, in its setting out of the relations of things, more charged with the magic of well—Intellectual Beauty. I had no choice; science and philosophy were pulling hard at me but my fate was sealed. Youth is, I believe, contrary to all tradition, the time when Rational Thought dominates and allures. It is because they turned on the world the eager clear-eyed curiosity of a noble child that the Greeks are always young and their language essentially the language of youth.

In an interval of some thirty years I had to learn for various purposes, in a scrappy and discreditable way, various other languages. But the experience was never repeated. Italian and Spanish appealed to me as somewhat more agreeable forms of the Latin spirit than either Latin or French: Swedish and Norwegian gave me a pleasant shock of ultra-Teutonic crudity and a sense of the spirit of Ibsen, its ugly beauty. Sanskrit spite of its delicious tales of elephants and bathing-places inspired in me something like repulsion. I seemed to touch and shrink from the very soul of Formal Grammar. I had a narrow escape with Hebrew. As a sort of counter-blast to Greek it is so ingenuous, so frankly unconscious of logic; it rested a spirit worn with logical relations. It is the perfect speech of the story-teller and the mere utterer of disjointed lyrical emotion. But after all even in one's dotage one cannot wholly renounce one's logical heritage and become as a little child.

Then came Russian.

I began Russian simply to get at the literature. I wanted to read Tolstoy, Chehov, Dostoevsky and the rest in the original. I had the old-fashioned scholar's prejudice against translations as savouring of the guilt, the ignorance, the idle-

ness of 'cribs.' But I had no expectation of finding in the Russian language a new birth and a new life.

And here may I say in a parenthesis a word that may surprise and even shock some. If you learn Russian *for the sake of the literature* I am not sure that it is worth while. Russian is a hard language and unless you are of the bull-dog breed and like to get your teeth into something solid you may be wise to refrain. I say advisedly I am 'not sure' because I am but a beginner. The genius of the Russian people tends, it has often been noted, to the novel, the least literary of all literary forms. Now take Russian literature—the novel excepted—and set it beside say English literature and it seems to me Russian is simply nowhere. Set Ostrovsky, or even Gogol, by Shakespeare, set Pushkin and Lermontov by Keats, by Shelley, by Wordsworth, by Milton, they are not in the same street.

Now the novel, because least literary in form, is most translatable. The profound and shattering psychology of Dostoevsky loses but little in the accurate translations of Mrs Garnett.

Again with Russian it was language not literature that cast its spell. And again I remember with absolute precision the moment of my new birth. This time it was not the intellectual beauty of particles—though Russian is rich in charming and significant particles. It was rather an intimate emotional appeal—the appeal of the far famed, much dreaded Aspects of the Russian verb. The Russian verb is weak in tenses, strong in Aspects. You may learn the tenses of the Russian verb in half an hour—you may learn Russian for years and feel at the end that you are only beginning to feel the full beauty of its aspects. These aspects are in the very blood of the Slav. A Russian moujik may blunder in his cases and his spelling will be phonetic, but in his aspects—I know it from the illiterate post-cards of Russian war-prisoners—he will blunder never; they are part of him. These aspects I believe to be of profound psychological significance and this significance has not I think so far been fully understood.

WHAT IS AN ASPECT?

The word *aspect* is misleading. It is a translation of the Russian *видъ* appearance and *видъ* is itself a translation and a mistranslation of the Latin *species* 'class,' 'kind,' which had of course no sense of appearance or superficial aspect. Aspect then means simply the kind or quality, the sort of verb. Aspect or quality of verb had, I believe, nothing originally to do with time; aspect in fact cuts clean across time. Aspect in most languages is now at least indicated for the most part by adverbs. I run—quickly; I stand—still; in this sense many verbs have hundreds of aspects. Some languages however alter the actual root of the verb to denote specially important aspects. Thus Hebrew has e.g. *shavar* שָׁוַר to break but *shibbir* שִׁבְּר to break violently, to shiver, to break to pieces. This aspect of violent action is known as the intensive. English, to denote an aspect, often uses a quite different verb and hence is difficult to learn. Thus I 'eat' has for one aspect, its intensive, I 'gobble,' for another I 'munch,' I eat steadily and squarely. *ф. роворение - steady*

It is perhaps in watching the use of aspects in our own tongue that we best feel their meaning. The English language like the English people is good at particular emergencies, but hopelessly unsystematic. I have seldom been completely baffled in my attempts to translate Russian aspects but I pity any one who tries to construct a theory as to the morphology of English aspects. If you try to teach English, and I have experimented of late on many a hapless Belgian, Serb, Russian, you soon discover the maddening fact that your rule is usually a seething mass of exceptions.

I was proudly explaining to a Russian pupil that we could and did express the perfective aspect in English. 'We use other words' I said, for example 'to catch.' 'I catch sight of,' that is finely perfective in the inceptive sense—the act suddenly begun not finished. The Russian brightened sympathetically and screwed up his small shining eyes.

'I th'ank you' he said, 'I shall understand.'

'I k'atch sight of.'

'I k'atch hearing of.'

'I k'atch seeing of.'

No, No, No, I said, of course you can't say 'I catch hearing of,' you must say 'All at once I heard.'

My Russian leant back pained and patient, all the light gone from his eyes. 'Yit yis hard,' he said, 'Ye English. Yit yis impossible,' and in my heart I agreed and I 'thanked the goodness and the grace,' etc.

This general adverbial character of aspect it is important to note in order to clear the ground, but the meaning of the word aspect in Slavonic languages is more highly specialized. We take Russian as typical.

In Russian there are two aspects, denoting two special qualities of each and every verb, qualities that are complementary, the imperfective **несовершенный видъ**, the perfective **совершенный видъ**. Again the terms are unfortunate because to us perfective and imperfective imply time, and though perfective and imperfective aspects do imply a kind of time it is not the time order to which we are accustomed.

Take the simplest possible example.

писать, imperfective 'to write'—the process of writing—to go on writing.

написать, to write a particular thing and finish it off.

Now English has not these two infinitives and being a very sensitive language it feels the need and often substitutes for the imperfective infinitive a participle or a substantive.

я не люблю писать, 'I do not like to write'—that is foreigner's English. An Englishman would substitute for the Russian imperfective infinitive a gerund—I don't like writing.

Or again **я хочу эту книгу прочитать**, perfective infinitive, 'I want to read that book.' A sensitive idiomatic speaker would probably say, I want to get that book read, i.e. what I want is the accomplishment of the act of reading that book.

We said that aspects had primarily nothing to do with

time *order*, with the sequence of things. What an aspect denotes is a kind of internal time. It is often and truly said that the imperfective is like a line, it has duration, continuity, extension so to speak in space, the perfective is like a dot, a moment, as soon as it is begun it is finished. And here it is instructive to note that in Russian a certain form of perfective expresses equally well the beginning and end of an action, the two terminal points, the two ends; the Russian words for beginning and end, *начала*^o and *конецъ*, with a fine instinctive logic derive from the same root. Other illustrations point the same way, the imperfective is the open hand, the perfective the clenched fist, the imperfective is a snow-field, the perfective a snow-ball. Always we find the same notion not of time order but of internal time, the imperfective has internal time but no time order, it may be past, present or future; the perfective has no internal time, no duration, and equally its time order past, present or future is indifferent.

Now this distinction between imperfective and perfective is in skilled hands a wondrous weapon of expression—take an example.

Perfective *надо проститься*, it's time you said goodbye, got it over and started—it's time you were off. The whole focus of attention is on the result of the goodbyes, i.e. the start; no sentiment intrudes. Next in Ostrovsky's *Storm*, *Будетъ Вамъ прощатся*, imperfective, 'enough of saying goodbye.' The mere use of the imperfective conjures up all the *durée* of parting, all the process, the drag, the misery, the looking and the longing. English can get the effect by some such turn of phrase as 'saying goodbye,' which gives duration. Durand Greville in his admirable translation gives us 'pas tant d'adieux,' but neither the English nor the French have the direct simplicity nor the poignancy of the Russian. Or again *мнѣ умереть не страшно, а страшно умирать*, it isn't death that frightens me, it's dying¹.

Broadly speaking then the two aspects in Russian express what their name denotes—the perfective is of the accom-

¹ Both these instances I owe to M. Mazon's *Emploi des aspects du verbe Russe*.

plished act **совершенно́й** standing on its apex or vertex, the imperfective is of *non*-accomplishment, of process. But there is much more behind and I have come to doubt whether the ideas of completion and non-completion lie at the root of the matter. Why should a language focus so intently on such rather formal notions as completion and non-completion? A witty critic suggests that my friends the Russians when they *did* get anything really finished were so astonished that they were obliged to invent an aspect to express it, but possibly the psychological roots lie deeper. Some rather profound spiritual need must surely have prompted this distinction of aspect which is at once the dominant characteristic and the crowning glory of the Russian language.

Light came to me suddenly and quite unexpectedly. I chanced for quite another purpose to look up the motto that Tolstoy has chosen for his *Анна Каренина*.

Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.

Мнѣ отмѣщеніе и азъ воздамъ.

It was important for me to make out exactly the sense of the text so I turned up the Greek of Rom. xii. 19. It stands

Ἐμοὶ ἐκδίκησις, ἐγὼ ἀνταποδώσω, λέγει κύριος.

ВОЗДАМЪ in Russian, 'I will repay,' is of course the perfective future, i.e. the perfective of the present used, as invariably in Russian, for the perfective-future. It is translated in Greek by the future *ἀνταποδώσω*. I may note in passing that the future is sigmatic and that the stem of the sigmatic future is the same as the stem of the aorist. As to the meaning of the text I was no further.

Tolstoy's text is a quotation from a quotation. S. Paul, or whoever wrote the Romans, is quoting from Deut. xxxii. 35, from the magnificent song of Moses to the congregation of Israel. Here at last I got what I wanted. The English is 'to me *belongeth* vengeance and *belongeth* recompense,' but 'belongeth' was in italics so presumably not in the text. In the

Russian of the Deuteronomy version there was no verb of any kind, past, present or future:

Меня отмѣщеніе и воздаяніе
Of me is vengeance and requital.

To make quite sure about the absence of tense I turned up the original:

לִי נִקָּם וְיִשְׁלַם.

Here we have one of those condensed, antiphonal sentences that had need have no tenses for they are utterly out of time. It is not meant that Yahveh *had* revenged in any particular case (past) or *is* revenging at this particular moment (present) or *will* revenge hereafter (future) but that between the idea of Yahveh and vengeance there is an eternal immutable non-temporal relation.

English being a picturesque and vivid language takes an unfair advantage. 'I will repay' is far more ominous, imminent and terrifying than any abstract statement of Yahveh's permanent attributes.

But the interesting thing for us is the Russian perfective future. This perfective stands, it is clear, not for a future, not for a statement that something will happen but for a statement in Hebrew that something permanently *is* without any reference to time. It was a statement, abstract, proverbial and yes, the word came instinctively to mind, it was gnomic; I was face to face with my old and valued friend the gnomic aorist.

Long before I had ever heard of Russian aspects the gnomic aorist of Greek grammar had always allured and intrigued me. Partly I admit because it was so easy; it was a tight clear little instance of the manifold uses of the aorist; one could make no mistake about it, use it safely on occasion in one's prose, and that, in the welter of tenses and moods that awaits one in the early stages of composition, was in itself comforting. But also, though it was in a sense so tight and fast, so easy to use, it was hard to understand, and to my frequent questions as to its meaning and origin I could get no clear answer. I have had a suspicion all my life that in

the current dictionaries and grammars often the real explanation and origin of a word or grammatical form is to be found in something that comes in just at the end as a 'derived' form or 'exceptional' use. This I believe to be the case with the aorist; the true primitive essential aorist I believe to be the gnomic, the temporal aorist a later derivative, in fact the aorist I believe to be primarily not a tense at all but an aspect¹.

The gnomic aorist is thrice familiar to all but I give a couple of instances, taken straight from that enchanting book, Monro's *Homeric Grammar*.

Death cometh alike to the man who toileth not and to him that hath toiled long. *Il.* 9. 320.

κάθθαν' ὁμῶς ὁ τ' ἀεργὸς ἀνὴρ, ὅ τε πολλὰ ἐοργῶς.

That is purely gnomic.

And next the gnomic aorist of similes.

Even as a lion is glad when he lighteth upon a great carcase, a hornèd stag or a wild goat that he hath found. *Il.* 3. 23.

ὥστε λέων ἐχάρη,

I need go no further.

The aorist here is not historical. Homer does not mean to say that in the past a certain particular lion found a certain particular hornèd stag and that that particular lion was glad. What he means is that at any time, irrespective of tense, a lion, given that he is hungry and that he finds a hornèd stag, will be glad in his lion heart. It is the permanent attribute of lionness—purely gnomic; the lion, the hunger, the hornèd stag, the gladness, are all *in* relation but *out* of time. Dr Monro with his usual acuteness and profundity notes this. 'When an assertion is made *irrespective of time* either the aorist, or in particular cases the present is used.' These particular cases as not affecting my argument I pass by.

¹ The best discussion of the Greek aorist known to me is in an old and elementary book, Ernst Curtius' *Elucidations of the Student's Greek Grammar*, 1875, chapter xx. Curtius still regards the aorist as a tense but his discussion of the 'triple kind of time' and of the 'ingressive and effective aorist' marks a great advance in understanding.

Dr Monro knows quite well that the aorist is out of time but with deplorable conventionality he leaves it stranded among the tenses, a source of perennial confusion.

What do the other languages do when they want to be gnomic?

English usually uses the present—‘even as a lion *is* glad’—but when we say ‘even as a lion *is* glad’ we are assuredly not thinking of any particular lion rejoicing in the Zoo at the moment.

Greek then uses the aorist, a supposed past, English the present and Russian a future which is no future at all but a perfective present.

And Hebrew?

He that findeth a wife, findeth a good thing.

Gnomic present in English.

*And in Hebrew:

מָצָא אִשָּׁה מָצָא טוֹב.

Is מָצָא past, present or future?

It is neither, it is no tense at all. For the best of reasons. Hebrew is a language which has *no tenses at all*, it has only aspects. I should not venture to base this statement on my own knowledge of Hebrew, which is slender. I base it rather on the sound scholarship of Professor Kennett. No one knows better than this accomplished scholar and no one could say more plainly that all the supposed futures in ‘prophecies’ have nothing to do with the future at all. Oh what burning controversies might have been saved had only theologians known a little more grammar! Hear what Professor Kennett says:

The name ‘tenses’ is misleading. The so-called Hebrew tenses do not express the time but merely the *state* of the action. The ancient Hebrews never thought of an action as past, present or future but simply as *perfect*, i.e. complete, or *imperfective*, i.e. as in course of development. . . the *time* of an action the Hebrews did not attempt to express by any verbal form.

My debt to Professor Kennett is deep; I owe to him all my too scanty knowledge of Hebrew; and yet I owe him a personal

grudge. Knowing and clearly stating that Hebrew has no tenses, only aspects, he yet, like Dr Monro, is incorrigibly conventional. From sheer traditionalism he calls his admirable book on the Hebrew aspects by the misleading title *The Hebrew Tenses*; so is the clock of scholarship set or rather kept back. My grudge is personal because had his book had a fitting title I must long ago have seen the affinity between Russian and Hebrew aspects. Further, knowing how primitive in many respects, how little abstract, how uncontaminated by logic and logical structure Hebrew is, it would surely have occurred to me to ask, is not aspect wherever and whenever it occurs a thing more primitive, more psychologically fundamental than time order, than tense? Was there not a time in the development of language when primitive man focussed his attention not on time order but on something else expressed by aspect, and what was this something?

-To answer this question we must go back for a moment to the beginnings of language. All language is in a sense an abstraction; it is a feeling after class, it is the putting of a shiftable adjustable label for a live uninterchangeable thing. The more primitive a language is the less it abstracts. As is well known some primitive languages have e.g. no general class name for 'bird.' They have cockatoo, flamingo and so on. It is a terrific mental effort to see the common qualities of birdness. So with verbs. They have no common verb 'to fly,' a pheasant flies, a swallow flies, but the act is not the same, so it has a different verb. As the language with its people advances in civilization it classifies, i.e. abstracts and simplifies more and more; it sees common qualities and drops out those distinctions that do not subserve life. A similar process may be observed in the formation of what we call Parts of Speech.

It used to be thought that language began with names, the names of things to which later were added qualifying adjectives. Still later, it was held these separate nouns were joined by verbs expressing relations between subject and object and these again were qualified by adverbs.

Modern linguistic based on savage facts tells us a very different and for psychology a very instructive tale. Language, after the purely emotional interjection, began with whole sentences, holophrases, utterances of a relation in which subject and object have not yet got their heads above water, but are still submerged in a situation. A holophrase utters a *holopsychosis*. Out of these holophrases emerge our familiar 'Parts of Speech' rightly so called for speech was before its partition. A simple instance will make this clear¹.

The Fuegians have a word or rather holophrase *mamik-lapinatapai* which means 'looking-at-each-other,-hoping-that-either-will-offer-to-do-something-which-both-parties-desire-but-are-unwilling-to-do.' This holophrase is quite unanalysable, it contains no nouns and no verbs, it simply expresses an intense relation not unknown to some of us. Uneducated and impulsive people even to-day tend to show a certain holophrastic savagery. They not infrequently plunge into a statement of relations before they tell you who they are talking about. As civilization advances, the holophrase, overcharged, disintegrates and bit by bit subject, object, verb and the other Parts of Speech are abstracted from the stream of warm, full, human consciousness—in which they were at first submerged. The holophrase shows us man entangled as it were in his own activities, he and his human environment utterly involved. Traces of this involution survive in Russian speech. If a Russian wants to say You and I, he does not say 'You and I' Я и Вы, that is too cold and hard and analytic for him; he says МЫ СЪ ВАМИ 'We with you,' a thing much more *intime* and sympathetic, but apt to drive a logical Frenchman crazy. It is right emotionally though wrong grammatically. A Russian would appreciate the fact that, as observed to me by Mr J. A. K. Thomson, *Pictus acutunicam* is a psychological unit, it is *not* = *tunicam gerens acutictam*.

Is the savage then with his holophrases impersonal? Does

¹ See my *Themis*, p. 473; my illustrations are taken from Mr E. J. Payne's sections on language in his *History of the New World*, 1899, vol. II, p. 114 ff.

he tend to employ only generalized abstract terms denoting that indefinable though wholly palpable thing 'relation'? Far from it, he is intensely personal—only he is all personal experience, he cannot cut himself loose from his activities. Language again is the best evidence. A New Caledonian¹ expressing the fact that some fruit was not high enough for the native palate, said not 'it-not-yet-eatable' but 'we-not-yet-eatable.' Egotism could scarcely go further. Now—and this is my point—if we were asked what was the *aspect* of the savage holophrase, we should answer without a moment's hesitation, it is imperfective—it is the very incarnation of the imperfective, it expresses actual duration, or as I should prefer to call it actual, personal experience. The imperfective lies at the very beginning of things².

But what comes next? Primitive man, however closely entangled in actual experience, in the imperfective, *remembers* something. We are men, Bergson tells us, because we remember. He remembers something, or he hopes something, or he fancies something, he dreams something. Darkly he feels that all this remembering, hoping, imagining, is not quite the same as his actual experiences at the moment, and by some other and perhaps fainter holophrase, by some modification of his complex howl he utters this other something and steps out of actuality into *the aspect of non-experience*, the perfective. I admit that here I am speculating, I cannot produce a holophrastic perfective, but I am convinced such must have existed and are perhaps still only waiting to be looked for. The step out of the actual into the remembered and the hoped for is really a leap of tremendous genius, it is the beginning of all generalization, of all imagination, all

¹ Crawley, *Idea of the Soul*, p. 35.

² By the kindness of Mr Seth-Smith I learn that Maori, a language that knows little of inflections—gender, number, case, mood, tense, person being determined by context not change of form—yet takes cognizance of aspect which it expresses by particles. For example the form *e-ana* may indicate present, past or future. It is a form that contemplates the action as *going on* whether in past, present or future. It is in fact a formulary for the imperfective.

science, all art¹, all religion, all philosophy. It is the first impersonal move, man's first attempt to stand outside himself and view the world undebauched by immediate reaction.

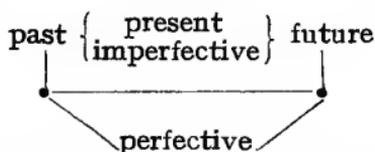
Abstraction then rather than *achievement* is—if I am right—from the outset the very pith and marrow of the perfective. But it is easy to see how achievement comes in. While you are involved in the action, actually experiencing it you cannot look at it from the outside. It is only when the action is accomplished, done with, that you look at it at all. That is why the perfective shuns the present. Its happy hunting grounds are necessarily the shadowy past and the still dimmer future. The perfective is the aorist, not indefinite, ill-defined in time but *out of time*, remote from *durée* as Bergson would say, free from the hot intimacy of personal experience.

To resume then. In their ultimate analysis our two aspects are

(1) The imperfective, the aspect of actual experience with affinity in time-order for the present.

(2) The perfective, the aspect of *non*-experience, of the concept, whose affinities are with the past and the future.

Both these aspects are primarily out of time but liable to be contaminated by it. If we like to figure them spatially as a line the imperfective is the duration of the line, the perfective its terminal dots at the beginning and end. Thus



We think of the future as in front of us. Homer thought of it as behind (*ὀπίσσω*); the future was the laggard in time that had not yet come up.

But though, as we see, aspects have certain natural affinities

¹ Elsewhere, *Themis*, pp. 42-47, on the psychology of the *δρώμενον*, and *Art and Ritual*, Home University Series, chapter v. I have tried to show how art develops from action by way of hope and remembrance, the future and the past.

in time-order they are yet clearly distinguishable from tenses. The imperfective has affinity for the present but it can transport itself into the past and future. We can live *into* the future and the past. Only for the perfective the present tense is *tabu*.

We have seen that Hebrew had no verbal tense-forms, only aspects. Indo-European had, it would seem, both aspects and tenses. In surveying present Indo-European languages two significant facts are noticeable. Aspect on the whole has tended to disappear, and within the domain of aspect, on the whole the perfective has tended to develop, the imperfective to decline. But with one significant exception. The Slavonic branch of Indo-European has maintained and even enhanced its aspectual system while its tense system has sensibly weakened in comparison with Old Slavonic. These are surely facts that must have psychological significance.

Before we pass to this significance let us very briefly survey the survivals of aspect. Greek we have seen has the perfective in its aorist, but the time tendency seems always pulling at it to drag it down to a mere tense. Nevertheless it survives as aspect not only in the gnomic aorist which we have examined but also in the significant fact that the Greek infinitive, which is necessarily out of time, has its imperfective (present) and its perfective (aorist) form. Moreover Greek has two aspects for its imperative—so I am told has Persian, e.g. *Bi-dihid* give generally, *Mi-dihid* give me *now*.

Indo-Iranian generally and Armenian have also an aorist—and use it with great strictness, but in these fields I am not sufficiently at home to pronounce whether this aorist is aspectual¹.

Latin, much concerned with time-order, has no definite aspectual apparatus, but it retains the sense of aspect. Sir Frederick Pollock points out to me the elegant perfective use of the perfect *vigui* in Horace, *Carm.* III. 9, *Persarum vigui rege beatior*, not 'in those days I was as happy as a king'

¹ See Delbrück, *Vergleichende Syntax*, II. 1-255, and Brugmann, *Kurze Vergl. Grammatik*, p. 480 fg.

which would be the imperfect, but 'such is my happy state now done for.' There is assuredly here no reason to suppose the perfect is *metri gratia*. Madvig notes the use and calls it the perfect 'absolute.' Quite recently M. Barbelenet¹ in his *Questions d'aspect* has noted that there exists in Latin as in Slav and Gothic a category of what he calls *verbes ponctuels ou perfectifs*, that is expressing an action without any notion of duration. These verbs, if such exist, should have in the nature of the case no imperfect (outside of paradigms). These perfective verbs are usually verbs compounded with a preposition of very weak prepositional force. An examination of such verbs in the one selected author, Terence, shows them to lack the imperfect.

Old Slavonic has of course a complete aspectival apparatus and as already noted a much richer supply of tenses than that possessed by any modern Slavonic tongue. It has only the *present* future, the periphrastic imperfective future is a comparatively modern development in East and West Slavonic. It is interesting to note that in the Old Slavonic gospels presents in the Greek appear uniformly as imperfectives, aorists as perfectives.

Gothic is in some respects nearest in the matter of aspects to Slavonic. It usually—like Slavonic—forms its perfective by a colourless preposition *ga*, and its perfective like the Slavonic is terminal, i.e. either ingressive or egressive. Thus Luke viii. 10 'that seeing they might not see, *ei saihwandans ni gasaihaina*, ἵνα βλέποντες μὴ βλέπωσιν.' Moreover it has like Slavonic a few simple perfects, i.e. perfects which have no preposition but which are so to speak incurably perfective².

Turning to modern languages the traces of the perfective aspect in German are familiar. German like Slav expresses its perfective by a machinery of prefix-particles which are probably worn-out prepositions. Thus 'he looked out of the window for ever such a time, at last he caught sight of me,'

¹ In *Mélanges Linguistiques offerts à M. Antoine Meillet*, 1902.

² For aspects in Gothic (Aktionsarten) see Dr Wilhelm Streitberg, *Gotisches Elementarbuch*, 1906, p. 184.

would be in German 'Er blickte (imperfective) lange zum Fenster hinaus, endlich erblickte (perfective) er mich.' Often the perfective is used in German rather delicately when the end is not actually accomplished, only envisaged, thus:

Es gingen drei Jäger wohl auf die Birsch,
Sie wollten erjagen den weissen Hirsch.

Here it is not stated that the stag was caught but the hunters were thinking of the catching. Whether the stag was caught or not in the end you could not say, 'sie erjagten den Hirsch den ganzen Tag,' nor could you say 'wir ersteigen den Berg Stunden lang,' even though you got to the top in the end.

From the Teutonic we pass to the Latin group. French, Italian, Spanish have lost their imperfective apparatus save for the imperfect. This is instructive; the sense of aspect has been obscured by the sense of time order. Only in the past does French observe the distinction between perfective and imperfective, between *passé défini* and *imparfait*. This distinction scrupulously observed by classical French writers, *les jeunes* I am told tend more and more to obscure. In his interesting and subtle paper *Traces d'aspect en Français*¹, Monsieur Barbelenet has further observed that French expresses in certain cases the ingressive perfective by a preposition, prefixed, and has selected for this function the preposition *re*. It will be remembered that in Gothic and Slavonic the perfective is often terminal, i.e. of the beginning or end of an action to the exclusion of the middle. In Latin and Greek it is often terminal, of the end or accomplishment of an action—*ire*, to go (imperfective), *transire*, to cross (perfective), *βαίειν*, to go (imperfective), *διαβαίειν*, to cross (perfective). In Lithuanian this perfective is very fitly called the resultative. In French as sometimes in Latin *re* marks the beginning of one act that succeeds to another—to quote M. Barbelenet, *rescisco* 'je fais succéder la connaissance à l'ignorance, j'apprends; *réveiller* quelqu'un (perfective), c'est

¹ *Mélanges Linguistiques, Meillet, 1902, p. 14.*

faire qu'il ne dorme plus, qu'il veille, éveiller (imperfective), c'est le tirer peu à peu du sommeil.'

Another survival of aspect machinery is the frequently perfective force of the pronominal verb. 'La langue populaire distingue "ce train arrête (imperfective) une heure à Douai" et "ce train s'arrête à Lille (perfective), il ne va plus loin."' Essentially perfective, and full of the bustle of a 'start' are such *argot* verbs as *se trotter*, *se défiler*, *se carapatter*. Sometimes again the aspect is exhibited merely by intonation, 'Vous avez laissé tomber un livre. En le rattrapant vous dites "Je l'tiens," "Got it." L'idée est assurément tout autre que celle qu'on exprimerait en répondant Je le tiens (Yes I have it) à la question As-tu ton livre?' The first is essentially perfective, the second imperfective.

But in summing up his results, M. Barbelenet admits that traces of aspect in French are but 'phénomènes isolés, en partie subjectifs.' He realizes that to the Latin mind intent on time-order aspect is antipathetic—the phenomena he notes are 'nuances de signification qui au premier abord peuvent sembler absolument étrangères à leur esprit.'

It is to a Frenchman¹ that we owe our best study and appreciation both of the morphology and the semantics of aspect. But though individual Frenchmen may and are interested in methodizing aspects the fact remains that the average French mind resents the intrusion of aspect, tends to feel it either slightly barbarous or at best superfluous. Some twenty years ago in France the question was seriously mooted whether it might not be well to teach Russian 'without aspects.' This remarkable project needless to say was not carried out. But a certain antipathy is still not dead. After listening in the early days of my Russian pupillage to an admirably lucid discussion, by Monsieur Paul Boyer, of the function of aspect, I rashly turned to the lady by my side, a lady of great intelligence, one who knew far more Russian than I did myself, and I broke into enthusiasm as to Russian in general and the beauty of aspects in particular. She

¹ André Mazon, *Morphologie des Aspects*, 1908; *Emploi des Aspects du verbe Russe*, 1914.

answered 'Mais oui, c'est sans doute une langue très intéressante, excessivement riche, mais *quant à ses aspects, je l'avoue franchement, je puis très bien m'en passer.*'

In striking contrast to French and indeed to all the Latin group—Teutonic languages seem to stand midway—comes Slavonic. The Frenchman may feel, or at all events think, aspect to be superfluous, the Slav soul—of which we have lately heard so much—needs it and will have it. Slavonic languages have not only preserved the complex apparatus of aspect, they have even developed it; the need is alive to-day. The Slav is not much interested in order whether of space or time; hence his winning habit if he comes to call on you of staying to talk till the small hours of the next morning, time is for slaves not for Slavs; he *is* interested in something immeasurably more important, in *quality* of action and in sympathy with action. He does not care to stand outside an action to register, to analyse, to judge, he wants to live into it, he craves 'knowledge by experience.' Hence though it would seem his temperament is inherently imperfective, he is also very sensitive to the perfective attitude. That the need for aspect and especially imperfective aspect is still living is shown by two facts (1) the evergrowing development of imperfectives with the comparatively new suffix *ива* and (2) the durative or periphrastic future with *буду*. This durative future is unknown to Old Slavonic. It has attained its greatest development in the Iugo-Slav group, i.e. Serbo-Croat and Bulgarian, where, in principal propositions it has supplanted the perfective future. In the W. Slav tongues, i.e. Polish and Chech and in Russian, the perfective future is rigorously preserved, but side by side the periphrastic future has developed freely.

It is no part of my present plan to discuss the morphology of the aspects nor even in detail their semantics. One general remark however must be made. The use of aspect depends on the psychology of the speaker and therefore for the most part delightfully defies rules. There is perhaps only one safe rule which can be supplied to the student, i.e. that the periphrastic future demands the imperfective infinitive; that

does not carry us far. The idle mind, which demands rules, i.e. recipes for making correct sentences, and shirks the subtler task of understanding the speaker's point of view and living into his emotion will never either use or understand aspects aright. If the speaker is *living into* the action, sympathizing with it, he will use the imperfective, if he stands outside and merely states a fact or a judgment he will instinctively use the perfective. This same subjectivity characterizes other Russian forms of speech. The Russian language is rich in diminutives. Diminutives in English and German are apt to be rather unpleasantly what a friend of mine calls 'heating,' they make us feel embarrassed. When a husband addresses his wife as 'wifkins' we all look the other way. But in Russian the diminutive is used not only to express smallness, though translators persist in rendering БАТЮШКА as 'little father'—but also to show a certain sympathy and warmth in the speaker's mind. Thus, as Mr Neville Forbes aptly observes, the train ticket-collector will ask for your билетѣки; he does not thereby imply that the tickets are of small size but simply that he is not averse to the friendly relation of receiving a tip. Ordinarily a peasant will speak of his priest as БАТЮШКА but if the priest has had a little too much he will be БАТЬКА¹—which is about equivalent to a friendly shrug.

Last—and this again follows from the subjective character of aspect—the imperfective has often been compared to a line, the perfective to a point. But this comparison only brings out one quality of the imperfective, its duration, the analogy obscures another and equally important quality, its complexity. Thus 'пора же и одѣваться (imperfective) —сказалъ наконецъ Саша².' 'It is time I was getting dressed'—or 'it is time I was dressing.' Here the context shows that as the undressing has been described in great detail, similarly the dressing is envisaged not in its result but in all the complexity and picturesqueness of process. But 'пора Вамъ одѣться' (perfective) 'it's time you were dressed' looks only to the simple net result and takes no heed of com-

¹ Jarintzov, *The Russians and their language*, p. 207.

² Мелкій бѣсъ XII, cited by Mazon, *Emploi des Aspects*, p. 4.

plexity. So in the instance already cited it is not merely that *прощаться* expresses length of time; it brings up all the complex processes of parting: *проститься* would register merely the bald fact that two people parted. Surely aspects lend to a language a singular warmth and life. After long reading of and living into a language rich in aspects like Russian to turn to Latin languages which have no imperfective save for the past, is to feel them oddly thin and chilling.

Going back to the primitive holophrase we have so far tried to seize the significance of aspect in *language*. We have seen Slavonic peoples specialize in aspects and emphasize more and more the imperfective. We turn now to literature; can we trace here a like 'imperfectiveness'? If we can we may perhaps be justified in writing down 'imperfectiveness' as a characteristic of Russian psychology.

THE IMPERFECTIVE IN LITERATURE.

A brilliant French critic, a critic as sympathetic as brilliant, has characterized the Russian novel as the *Roman d'Aventure*¹—to us English a title most misleading. M. Jacques Rivière appears to know no Russian and says no word of 'aspects,' but what he explains as his meaning is simply this, that the Russian novel is written in the imperfective, written from within not without, lived not thought about. This modern Russian method is to M. Rivière the exact opposite of symbolist work, where everything is known beforehand, everything achieved and then thought or felt *about* from outside and above. In Dostoevsky the action is never complete, we have no statement of results, no moral judgment, all the people are still alive and may do anything any time, that is what is so exciting. Hence our sense of *aventure* not 'adventure,' but 'what is to come,' what is in-process-of-going-to-be. Hence the immense objectivity of Dostoevsky's novels. We

¹ Jacques Rivière, *Le Roman d'Aventure*, La Nouvelle Revue Française, Mai, Juin, Juillet, 1913, and see my former pamphlet, *Russia and the Russian verbs*, 1915, p. 10.

are almost too much in the action to feel about it till a sudden ache in our personal hearts reminds us that we are ourselves not the hero. It is this living into things that a new generation demands, and it is this, because she is young among the nations, that Russia has to offer.

It is a common criticism of Dostoevsky to say that he abstains from moral judgment; instead of judging the sinner he sympathizes with him. It is not that he approves crime but that he is not concerned either to approve or disprove, he has not got there yet, he is busy living into, understanding through feeling. Father Zossima is made to say 'no one can judge a criminal until he recognizes that he himself is just such a criminal.' This sense of sympathy and solidarity, of common responsibility and therefore common need for purification through suffering is fundamental in Dostoevsky's psychological outlook. He makes Mitya say 'we are all responsible for all.'

I had meant to take as my main instance of imperfectiveness in literature Dostoevsky himself, whose books I could assume had been read by every one. I changed my mind owing to the publication of Mr Middleton Murry's *Fyodor Dostoevsky*: Mr Murry lays before us a quite new and very striking theory as to the rise and development of Dostoevsky's thought. One point in this theory—the main one, I will mention. Mr Murry thinks that what makes the terror, the frighteningness of Dostoevsky's greatest characters is that, living though they are, terribly alive, they are not primarily individuals, they are incarnate ideas, abstractions made to live by sheer imaginative genius.

This might seem to militate against my view that the method of Dostoevsky is imperfective. If these characters are abstractions then *ipso facto* they are perfective. In reality the theory is my strongest support. The characters are abstractions, but by sheer force of the sympathy, the imperfectiveness of Dostoevsky's mind they become incarnate. It is the last word for the imperfective.

Dostoevsky is however a writer of genius so overwhelming that he transcends nationality. It seems fairer to select as

typical a lesser man, Goncharóv. The *Oblomov* of Goncharóv appeared in 1858 just before the liberation of the serfs. Though parts of it have been translated¹ it is a book but little known in England. Perhaps never in the history of literature did a book on its appearance create so great a sensation. Russians went crazy over it—and yet—it is a piece of very fine work, deservedly still a classic.

Oblomov is a man's name but this name has passed into the Russian language in the form *Oblómovchina*—the condition of being like *Oblómov*, *Oblómovdom*; the word is to be found now in any Russian dictionary and it means the imperfective state incarnate. Suddenly the Russian world woke up to find itself charged with and what is more convicted of *Oblomovdom*. Each and every Russian owned himself an *Oblomov*, a non-actomplisher, what we should call an incurable 'slacker.' *Oblomov* on the physical side is the incarnation of what the Russian calls *Халатность* the quality of dressing-gownness. *Oblomov's* dressing-gown is described with loving, appreciative detail. It is a big, soft, roomy Asiatic dressing-gown, easy to get into, almost impossible to get out of. It haunts the book like an Ibsen symbol. It stands for the impossibility of being 'well groomed' physically, mentally.

Oblomov's story—a moving one—is briefly this—and to shorten it just ruins it, for you lose the sense of its epic leisure, its dream-like *durée*.

When the story opens we are in a faded dusty flat in Petersburg. *Oblomov* is in bed. The hero of four thickish volumes is almost always in bed. He is waited on literally hand and foot by a delightful old body-servant, *Zakhar*, who never dusts and lets the place go to rack and ruin. *Zakhar* is impudent and incredibly dirty but he understands and adores his master. He is in peasant form another *Oblomov* whom harsh fate only has prevented from blossoming into the perfect inertia of his master.

¹ By C. J. Hogarth—Allen and Unwin. Neither translator nor publisher states that the English version is rather a résumé than a translation.

Oblomov's friends come in one after the other, talk to him, try to rouse him, bother him to come out and lunch at a restaurant, go a drive, pay some calls. A steward brings in a report from his property. It is all no use; Oblomov has seen through it all long ago, all the busy pretence of doing, all the boredom of the social mill and he won't begin it all over again. At last they go; he falls asleep and dreams, the famous dream of Oblomov.

It is a beautiful thing that dream, a wonderful bit of art. In his dream Oblomov goes back to his childhood's home which is a very palace of sleep. I have read the 'dream' many times to see if it was possible to condense it or to give extracts, but no, one must read the whole.

Oblomov's home is a land of peace and plenty far from the sea which moans and makes man think and ache in his soul, a land where even the desolate moon looks full and round and cheery, not pale and passion-haunted. There was no nightingale to lament poignantly, only flocks of prosperous fatted quails. It was a land where it was 'always afternoon' save for two strenuous hours when all the world was up and doing to cook the huge midday meal. The serfs to cook it, the masters to look on with keen interest and constant suggestion, each one, down to the aged aunt, eagerly pleading for her one special dainty.

And then, when the huge deliberate dinner was done, came sleep; sleep for every one each in his favourite corner. You feel yourself dozing off. And then, as the cool comes the waking up, the coming of the samovar, the drowsy, drawling, endless talk, the peace of it all, the content, the safety, the utter endless lethargy. For the masters no work to be done, no decision to be made; for the countless serfs as little as may be.

From the dream Oblomov is suddenly waked by the entry of Stoltz, his German friend who had always done Oblomov's lessons for him in the elder Stoltz's excellent German school.

Stoltz is the typical German, the **НѢМЕЦЪ АККУРАТНЫЙ** at whom Pushkin and every true Russian pokes gentle genial fun. **АККУРАТНЫЙ** means not so much 'accurate' in our

sense as punctual, 'on the spot,' up to time, regular, efficient. Stoltz is the embodiment of energy, of successful vivid life and this sort of vivid effectiveness always appears to the Russian as slightly ridiculous and irrelevant to the real inner life. Stoltz is the perfective incarnate, he is for getting a thing put through.

Stoltz has come to take Oblomov abroad. It must be done now or never, 'we will start to-morrow.'

'Now or never.' Somehow the words sounded like a sort of threat. Oblomov came up to his dusty writing table. He took up a pen. There was no ink, not a scrap of writing-paper. Mechanically, as if by chance, he wrote some letters in the thick dust with his finger—*Oblomovchina*. He rubbed it out with a quick movement of his sleeve and sat down.

Now or never. To be or not to be. Oblomov got up from his chair but—failing at once to put his foot into his slipper, he sat down again. A fortnight later Stoltz started alone for England.

You think Oblomov is lost. But no! suddenly a change comes. He brightens up, the dressing-gown is put away, there is a look of adventure, almost of assurance in his eye. Oblomov has fallen in love. Stoltz has told a girl friend, Olga, all about Oblomov. She is to save him. Women are always ready for rescue work.

You think you are well in for a tract with an obvious moral and a comfortable ending. The fresh young girl brings new life to the jaded man. They marry and are happy ever after. That isn't the Russian's way; he seems constitutionally incapable of pointing a moral, he is too busy living inside things.

Oblomov after his kind loves Olga, but bit by bit he begins to be afraid of her. The Russian woman is apt to be more perfective, more accomplishing, than the Russian man. And, still more, is Oblomov afraid of marriage. The Russians have a true sad proverb, *ЖЕНИТЬСЯ ПЕРЕМЕНИТЬСЯ*, 'Once y're married all is changed.' Once y're married—but the process of marriage, marriage in the imperfective is so tedious and trying! There are all the dreadful arrangements to be made,

the congratulations, the people to be seen, the things to be done. No he can't face it. Then there is Olga herself, she is so terrifyingly intelligent and alive, she *will* discuss things and try to get at the bottom of them, she *will* drag him out to picture-shows and parties, force him back into life. Her very intensity, the demands she makes of him frighten him, and, bit by bit, he fades away from her, in positive fear. And she, poor thing, feels it in her sensitive Russian fashion and it all but breaks her heart. But she sees it won't do, she breaks with Oblomov and in a recoil marries the punctual Stoltz.

Well to cut a long story short, and thereby again to spoil it, Oblomov sinks lower and lower into lethargy, gets stouter and stouter, over-eats himself worse and worse. Russian realism is pitiless. At last he marries his landlady, just that she may keep him in bodily ease, has a fit of apoplexy, dies.

It is all as it should be, a terrible warning against the fate of the upper class sluggard, a moral tale to upraise the sleeping landlordism of Russia. But is it?

The astonishing thing in the book is that Goncharov undoubtedly meant to write a tract and failed. We know that he, like Tourgenév looked to Western influence to raise Russia from her lethargy. His book was intended as a tract against Oblomovdom. But so incurably Russian, so hopelessly imperfective is he that he cannot stand outside to judge and condemn. From start to finish, spite of his obvious shortcomings, we are in the subtlest way attracted to Oblomov, we 'take to' him, we like to hear him talk, he has pleasant ways, we feel the perfect gentleness, the gentility of his inner soul. We feel too that, though he is doomed to die of his dreaming, his dreaming is better worth while, in the name of spiritual values, than all Stoltz's wide-awake excellence. And—supreme touch of all—Olga, 'happily married' to Stoltz, is in external ways wholly prosperous yet not quite happy. There is a little dull ache for Oblomov and his dreams. Man does not live by bread alone, not even by the most wholesome bread punctually served. There is

dream-stuff as well as bread-stuff. Sometimes man's strength is to sit still.

The book might all have been so easily banal, even nasty and yet moral. It is so delicate yet so real. Even Stoltz is never caricatured. He is a good man, a fine man after his kind and he has a sort of redeeming hero-worship for Oblomov as made of finer clay. Stoltz understands his wife and helps her all he can and very nobly. It is not his fault that he is no dreamer. Shutting the book we feel ourselves the richer not by a ready-made moral applied, but by a bit of real life felt, lived into, made known to us *imperfectively*.

The Russian does not judge, does not moralize, nor does he sentimentalize. In his imperfective way he lives into his subject till he almost ceases to be artist—so intense is his realization. He feels the thing so closely, so fully, that he has no need to pump up emotion and relive it in imagination just for the 'sake of sensation.' To instance this I will take another bit of imperfective work, a short poem by Nekrasov (1821–1876), not perhaps a man of genius, but an essential Russian. Nekrasov said of himself, perhaps too severely, 'I do not flatter myself my verse will endure, there is no flash of poetry in my fierce clumsy lines, no touch of creative genius.'

The little folk-poem is called 'Зелённый Шумъ,' a title quite untranslatable. The 'new-green rustle' or buzz. The word 'Shum' needs no translation, it explains itself. Зелённый means the new green that comes in spring. Зелённый Шумъ. 'So nennt das Volk das Erwachen der Natur im Frühling.' Well and good, but it does not help one to a translation.

The two first words of the poem, equally untranslatable, are идѣть гудѣть, 'there goes,' 'there hums.' The words are in the imperfective and hyphenated. идѣть, there goes, has a sense of going well, advancing, vorwärts, 'es geht schön.' гудѣть is said of a samovar—a kettle singing, insects humming.

'There goes, there hums.'

My German commentator says of 'there goes—there hums,' 'an asyndeton,' a thing not bound together—that abhorred monster a loose construction. The German grammarian and

equally the French wants a construction 'the green noise goes well, AND it hums.' Then his grammatical soul is at peace.

The grammarian may want it, the Russian doesn't. It is just what he doesn't want. The two things which the grammarian says are *asyndeta*, 'not bound together,' are to him so closely bound that no grammarian with his conjunctions may loose them.

It is part of the great spiritual riches of the Russian that, because he sees or rather feels things living from the inside (imperfective) he sees or rather feels things *whole* (*asyndeta*). It is a corollary from his living into things, for life is *durée* unanalysed, undistributed. These *asyndeta*, these bits of life so closely bound together that they refuse conjunctions, are countless in Russian, specially in epic and peasant Russian.

Take the common Russian exclamation **ТЫ ГОРЕ-БОГАТЫРЬ, ГОРЕ** = disaster, **БОГАТЫРЬ** = splendid, prosperous hero, richly endowed. Thou art disaster—splendid hero. The epithet thrown at a man carries with it a world of sympathy and loving amusement for the doer of some reckless, feckless, beautiful action. We have no word. A Spaniard might say 'O you Don Quixote.'

The poem of Nekrasov is as untranslatable, as a whole, as the title—though I have tried a rough rendering of the last two verses. The story is this.

It is winter in the peasant's *isba*. The husband is away in Petersburg, the wife falls in love with another man. She tells her husband how it has been. He almost curses her for telling him. The bitter shaggy winter makes him fierce and relentless. It howled in his ear 'Kill them, kill them! You'll have no peace. The neighbours will point at you.' His heart is hard as the winter. He sharpens his knife.

Then comes springtime, springtime that is in Russia so sudden, so magical. 'Like milk outpoured was the whiteness of the cherry orchards and softly the leaves rustled, warm with the sunshine, the pinewoods rustled. The rush by the river rustled.'

The whole world went a-murmuring,
The world is new, the world is spring.

And then, suddenly, the black ice in his heart melted; the spring has conquered. There is another spirit abroad in the world not vengeance, not judgment.

My savage soul went soft and weak,
 The knife fell from my hand,
 One only song I heard men sing,
 'To the wood—to the new spring-land;
 Love while you may—Bear while you can;
 Forgive and bear no grudge;
 Love while you may—Bear what you can,
 And God—Be He your judge.
 The whole world went a-murmuring,
 The world is new, the world is spring.'
 Идѣть гудѣть зелёный Шумъ
 Зелёный Шумъ, весенний Шумъ.

This is something deeper, warmer, than the Frenchman's *tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*. The one is perfective, the other imperfective.

The imperfective then dominates Russian language and Russian literature; shall we be far wrong if we conclude that the imperfective is the leading note in general Russian psychology, and that it is this imperfectiveness that the modern world both needs and desires?

Let a Russian critic speak.

'The world,' says Shestov¹—and it is a typically modern utterance—'has long been weary of universal truth—we want not so much a science as an art of life.'

Ideas are only a *pis-aller*, the last word is not in philosophy. Shestov gives more practical counsel.

'Men do not need a truth ready made.'

'When you talk do not trouble to be consistent.'

'When you speak with a man do not listen too much to what he says. His words must needs be *clichés*—freedom is already enslaved by grammatical forms and words. Look at his face and see what the whole of him means.'

This aversion to the abstract and generalized, this love of living into the live individual fact is I think at the bottom

Anton Shestov and other Essays, translated by S. Koteliansky and J. M. Murry, 1916.

of all the well-known, just now too well-known, Russian characteristics. The Russian has a horror of abstractions, while no Teuton, we are told, can resist a generalization. The real Slav is out of place in modern war, not because he is a pacifist—he is always ready for an individual scrap—but because he will not be standardized and straightened out and ticketed. ‘The powers that are occupied in cutting men to a pattern, as in modern war cut they must be, will find,’ says Shestov, ‘tough material in Russia.’ The Slav has little love of the state, i.e. for man’s collective order imposed on the individual, hence his incapacity for discipline, efficiency, collective progress. For him the wonder of the world is the individual not the class, the complexity of life not its simplification, least of all its abstraction. This, his imperfectiveness, appeals straight to a generation nurtured like the present on the generalizations of science, full fed with abstractions. Life to the Slav and especially the Russian is felt not as a forward march but as a ballet, not as an inevitable evolution but as a kaleidoscope phantasmagoria. Time is not a corridor leading to a judgment hall but like space an inextricable labyrinth¹. Instead of the hope of a future life we have the faith in an eternal actualized present.

Immediately what we get from Russia, is the impulse to live in the living fact, rather than outside it, to look to process, *durée*, rather than to achievement. Specially I think we need this in morals. We plume ourselves as moralists and have by more dispassionate critics been dubbed hypocrites. Morality is I think the vice of the *perfective*; it is the judging of an act by its results. A governing people will always emphasize results. Results can be tabulated, they are the basis of statistics, the stuff of which codes and ‘strong government’ are made. Such perfective morality has its uses, great uses, but it is not an end in itself and its value is easily overestimated. It has its subtle dangers. As soon as you judge, if even you plead in the criminal’s favour, you begin to move away.

¹ I think this was said by Mr Stephen Graham, but I cannot verify the quotation.

As the French critic says :

On ne pensait aux autres que pour revendiquer en leur faveur : ce qui était un excellent moyen de ne pas les aimer pour eux-mêmes. On réclamait pour eux la justice, la liberté, un tas d'autres choses ; ainsi se trouvait-on dispensé de s'attacher à chacun selon lui-même et de le prendre tout entier avec ses vertus et ses vices et de charger sa mémoire de cet être à jamais différent de tous les autres¹.

If I may sum up in a sentence—the Greek felt most keenly the values of distinction, of analysis, of clear-eyed reason and 'intellectual beauty'—whether in art or science.

The Russian stands for the complexity and concreteness of life felt whole, unanalysed, unjudged, lived into ; in literature as in language he is more holophrastic. Scarcely does he stand enough outside his work to make of it an art.

Fully to enjoy our humanity we need both spirits. We have Greek—let us keep it—though not in the Little-go. Shall we add Russian?

And finally shall we not break down the ancient barrier between new and old? Our classical tripos is a garden enclosed and thereby in constant peril of becoming a *hortus siccus*. May we not some of us live to see old and new join hands, to see the student of language allowed to choose his two tongues be they ancient or modern? He will be well advised if he choose one ancient and one modern : he will not repent if his choice fall on Greek and Russian.

And this for reasons that can only be most briefly indicated. Russian civilization is based in large measure on Greek because the Russian Church like the Russian alphabet is derived from Greece. State and Church are in Russia more closely unified throughout history than in any western nation. To study Russian civilization without studying the history of the Russian Church is time wasted. But, as this paper has tried to show, it is in its contrasts with Greek rather than its analogies that Russian has its prime educational value. The same is true of Russian civilization generally as contrasted with Greek. In studying Russia as a sequel to Greece we are transplanted to a land where every geographical condition is utterly alien to Greece. Russia is a land of vast plains and

¹ Rivière, *op. cit.* p. 764.

a land of river civilizations, the very antipodes to mountainous riverless Greece. The geographical contrast is necessarily reflected in history, in the successive rise and dominance of the three great river-civilizations, of Kiev on the Dnieper, Moscow on the Volga system, Petrograd on the Neva. Nor is the contrast less striking in literature. To take a single and salient instance, to study the folk-epos of Russia, alive in the mouths of the people up to and beyond the time of Peter the Great, is to look at Homer with new and wider opened eyes.

An accurate knowledge of the Greek and Russian languages together with an intimate understanding of the two civilizations should furnish a humanistic education at once broad and thorough.

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