V. BOOK REVIEW

Petko Ganchev. *Philosophy of Universal History as Fundamental Philosophy*. Veliko Turnovo: Faber, vol. I, 2010. 452 pp.; vol. II, 2012. 766 pp.; vol. III, 2016. 414 pp. (in Bulgarian, Петко Ганчев, „Философията на универсалната история като фундаментална философия“).

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In his monumental work, Petko Ganchev gives an original interpretation of the evolution of the Universe, organic nature, and human history. The author follows the principle of teleology on which evolution depends. This teleological principle carries out the divine design which produces the appearance and flourishing of human beings, human society, and history. Free human activity, guided by responsibility and duty, becomes the engine of history. Throughout the development of history, human activity and cognition create various levels of culture, which serve as a bridge between biological evolution and the fundamental essence of being. Human culture materializes the telos of living in the bosom of God and finally accomplishes the theosis of both human society and the rest of the Universe.

Ganchev has structured his book in three volumes. The first volume lays the ground for the entire study, introducing the interaction and interweaving of anthropological and cosmological principles in teleological evolution. Further on, it discusses briefly the historical process against the background of the greatest exemplars of the philosophy of history: Oswald Spengler's self-sufficient cultures and civilizations, Pitirim Sorokin's sociocultural systems, Arnold Toynbee's levels of civilization, and Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels' socio-economic formations. This overview is completed with an apt analysis of Francis

Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man,* Zbigniew Brzezinski's *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, and Samuel P. Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*.

The author proceeds to consider the advantages and drawbacks of a number of theories of socio-economic development beginning with Marxist political economy and historical materialism, dominant in Central and Eastern Europe in the second half of the twentieth century, continuing with various management theories, neoclassical economics, Keynesianism and Neo-Keynesianism, social market economy theory, indicative social planning theory, neoliberalism/monetarism, and a variety of Neo-Marxist ideas. These theories transform into ideologies when they serve as a means for taking/maintaining political power or just opposing the established political order. Ganchev subjects most of the currently prominent ideologies to critical and sharp assessment: liberalism and conservatism, socialism/social democracy and communism (defined as "a form of leftist extremism"), nationalism—divided into patriotism and jingoism, national socialism and fascism, anarchism; and finally, ecologism, globalism, and anti-globalism. According to the author, all ideologies to a greater or lesser degree bear an element of false consciousness; in spite of this, they are involved in the realization of the teleological evolution throughout the historical development of humanity.

The last chapter of the first volume pledges allegiance to the view that politics in its extreme form turns into war. The reader encounters the unambiguous statement that "the history of mankind in its substance is a history of wars."[1] In order to prove this position as well as to view the socio-political evolution through the prism of war, this chapter is dedicated to a study of nine types of wars: 1. Wars for the unification of clans and tribes into a larger union; 2. Wars between different factions of the same civilizational center; 3. Wars between powerful subjects of the same civilization in an attempt to dominate the entire world; 4. Wars for control over non-structured weak territory; 5. Wars of nomads against civilizational centers; 6. Religious wars; 7. Civil wars; 8. World Wars; 9. Cold War and local wars during the Cold War period. The first

[1] Petko Ganchev, *Philosophy of Universal History as Fundamental Philosophy* (Veliko Turnovo: Faber, vol. I, 2010), 374.

volume was finished in 2009, which might explain why so-called "hybrid wars" are not taken into consideration.

Laying the foundation for the second volume of his trilogy, Ganchev discusses the essence of culture, as the core of civilization, from a position that resolutely overcomes Spengler's and Nikolay Berdyaev's strategies. Unlike Spengler, Ganchev does not view culture in sheer biological terms; and, in contrast to Berdyaev, he does not derive "culture" etymologically from "cult," thus avoiding the detrimental form of worship of the divine common to any cult. The author bluntly states that culture is the universal means to go beyond human constraints toward the unity with one's origin and creator. In the enormous variety of its forms, culture expresses the profound sense of the magnanimity of God, while spreading this sense throughout time and space.[2]

From this worldview perspective, Ganchev depicts a multifaceted masterpiece of the major cultures within the entire human history. His attention focuses on the eternal issues of different cultural epochs. The exposition begins with the specific forms of culture of Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, passes to eternity-aiming Indian culture, touches the magnificent realism of Chinese culture, admires the harmony and rationality of the Ancient Greek spirit as well as classical Roman pragmatism. Thereafter, the evolution of culture goes back to the one God of the European Middle Ages (apparently inheriting Judaic monotheism), transforms into the titanic endeavor of the Renaissance, reaches the explosion of the Islamic spirit and the calamities of the sublime morality of the Protestant and Catholic Reformation (the latter also known as "Counterreformation"). The analysis of the period of Enlightenment is particularly eloquent and significant. During the Enlightenment, humanity finally adopts an immediate relation to the sacred reality based on individualism, humanism, freedom, and duty. People determine their faith on the evaluation and choice of reason and no longer through the mediation of the Church.[3]

The development of culture after the Enlightenment, according to Ganchev's comprehensive explication, enters a period of four cataclysms marked by the emergence, growth, and disappearance of Nation-

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[2] Ibid., vol. II, 2012, 32-33.
[3] Ibid., vol. II, 2012, 251.

alism, Colonialism, Communism, and Fascism during the twentieth century. These types of culture deviate from the values of the Enlightenment but, at the same time, are an element of the predestined evolution of humanity (the author firmly rejects the trial and error theory of evolution) towards unification with the divine perfection. As moments of light during these times of calamity, Ganchev identifies several varieties of productive national culture, the most prominent being American Pragmatism (developing certain ideas of German Idealism, in the author's opinion) and Eurasianism, as well as a number of European examples of national culture, including some in Bulgarian culture.

The second volume continues with an overview of the arguments for the existence of God and the specific embodiments of the deity in world religions. In this part, a concise examination of the major world religions is offered in order to prepare the ground for the elucidation of the leading role of religion in the emergence of all civilizations and the formation of their innermost spirit. In Ganchev's really well-founded explanation, it turns out that religion influences civilization and significantly contributes to its becoming along four lines. The first is the fact that religion as a syncretic form of culture has made it possible to link the inceptions of civilization "with the idea of eternity, omnipotence, justice, goodness, freedom of spirit, and sense of duty to the creator and the origin."[4] The second line is the transformation performed by religion of the gregarious instinct into a system of social relations with the help of moral norms, principles, and values.[5] Furthermore, religion is a form of ecclesiastic power interrelated with secular political power. The author rightly claims that there are several main kinds of such interrelation in the history of human civilization: Cesaro-papist, Papo-cesarist, theocratic, and theistic-individualistic.[6] Finally, every monotheistic religion claims universality, thus setting the context for the uniqueness of a civilization, which is determined and vitalized by this religion.[7] Ganchev concludes that, today, some new forms of dialog between the Church and politics are necessary and states that temples should not be made into gathering places but should become nodes in a global network of

[4] Ibid., vol. II, 2012, 669.
[5] Ibid., vol. II, 2012, 670.
[6] Ibid., vol. II, 2012, 672.
[7] Ibid., vol. II, 2012, 676-678.

communication for believers in a given religious system.

The third volume of this remarkable work studies the role of the subject and the subjective factor in history, as well as human freedom and bondage against the background of history. Essential to the intentions of this volume are the terms "social subject" or "subject of history" and "the subjective factor." Concerning the meaning of the social subject, Ganchev follows the general line of G. W. F. Hegel, but attempts to interpret Hegel's absolute idealism in a worldly manner. By "subjective factor," Ganchev means social, political, and economic elites supplied with a vibrant ideology. The author shows why ideology is crucial for the transformation of a social subject into a subjective factor, since precisely ideology highlights the direction in which a society has to develop; that is, the purposiveness of the subjective factor is substituted for the spontaneity of the social subject.[8] Presumably, the closer the purposiveness of the subjective factor comes to the teleological evolution of history, the more valuable and more efficient the subjective factor turns out to be.

The central part of this volume treats the most significant philosophical and physical concepts of time and space throughout the Western history of ideas. Ganchev pays due attention to classical Antiquity, then moves to Hellenism and the Middle Ages, outlines the achievements in this respect of Modern Times, concentrates on the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century theories of time and space, including dialectical materialism and the theory of evolution, and concludes his general overview with Einstein's theory of relativity. He proceeds further on to the manifestations of time and space in history in the form of social time and space. The author makes a decisive contribution to this field by introducing the terms "national psycho-cosmos" and "civilizational psycho-cosmos," coined by himself. These two terms are consistently interwoven into Ganchev's system of teleological evolution unfolding on sacred ground.

Sticking to Hegel's multilateral method of philosophy, Ganchev demonstrates that his own version of philosophy, which he describes as "philosophy of universal history," unifies in the same productive whole ontology, epistemology, and the dialectical logic of universal history. He goes a step beyond Hegel's position by adding axiology to unified phi-

[8] Ibid., vol. III, 2016, 21.

losophical cognition. Axiology becomes a core part of Ganchev's holistic approach to the philosophy of history. Moreover, he sublates Hegel's method by underlining the indispensable role of the theory of reflection in philosophical cognition with a special provision for the crucial place of the activity of the social (historical) subject.

Of tremendous importance for the entire trilogy is the last part of the third volume, which deals with socio-political prognostics. Taking Nikolay Sergeevich Rozov's works as a guide, Ganchev believes that the near future over the next 15-20 years can be viewed through three major tendencies of socio-political development: westernization/globalization, protest and isolationism, and multipolar partnership.[9] These three tendencies determine three scenarios for the development of humanity. The first scenario features a total crisis of the nation state on a global scale and a gradual decline of social life in all spheres. The second is characterized by a multitude of local wars, which might involve weapons of mass destruction. Ganchev assesses the probability of each of these scenarios at approximately 35-40%. The third and most favorable has a lower probability of 25-30%. According to this last, the financial groups ruling all over the world will become aware that it is in their interest to combine market principles with state regulations, which should lead to overcoming international conflicts and resolving global risks. This salvational scenario accords with the duty to the creator and the profound teleology of evolution. In order for this only optimistic scenario to prevail, Ganchev calls on intellectuals to work for a new metaphorical Sermon on the Mount. The present noteworthy study undoubtedly belongs to this metaphor.

[9] Ibid., vol. III, 2016, 387.