

The round table 'S. I. Hessen (1887–1950) Abroad'

On September 27, 2012, the round table 'S. Hessen (1887–1950) abroad', timed to coincide with the 125th anniversary of the philosopher's birth, was held at Alexander Solzhenitsyn House of Russian Émigrés in collaboration with the V. V. Zenkovsky Society of Historians of Russian Philosophy. The round table participants discussed the following issues: S. I. Hessen and Neo-Kantianism in Russia, S. I. Hessen's theory of pedagogy, S. I. Hessen's philosophy of law and ideal of the state, and S. I. Hessen's ethics and articles on Dostoyevsky.

In his opening address, the *leading research fellow of the House of Russian Émigrés*, Oleg T. Yermishin, stressed that the idea to celebrate the anniversary of the Russian thinker, who, unfortunately, had so far drawn little attention from Russian researchers, was also supported in Prague, where a round table 'The life and work of S. I. Hessen' was held in the Slavic Library on May 23, 2012. The round table was organised by a Prague historian of philosophy, A. M. Šitov, in collaboration with the Slavic Library in Prague. The round table brought together Russian and Czech researchers investigating the life and research legacy of S. I. Hessen (first of all, his philosophical and philosophical-pedagogical views), specialists from the Slavic Library and the Slavic Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, historians, journalists, and students.

Yulia B. Melikh (Moscow State University) focused on the topic 'S. I. Hessen in the history of Russian Neo-Kantianism'. In her presentation, she considered general approaches of Neo-Kantians to Kant's legacy, which were accumulated in two major programmes manifested in Liebmann's slogan 'Back to Kant' and Windelband's 'To understand Kant is to go beyond him'. Another topic of the presentation was the array of Neo-Kantian ideas developed by S. I. Hessen starting with the thesis *On Individual Causality* (Über individuelle Kausalität. Inaugural-Dissertation zu Erlangung der philosophischen Doktorwürde der philosophischen Fakultät der Albert-Ludwigs-Universität in Freiburg i. B. Freiburg i. B., 1909), which has not yet been translated from German. According to the speaker, Hessen's choice of the path of "irrational expansion" of Neo-Kantianism was based on the notion of personality and the idea of individual causality.

Vladimir N. Belov (Saratov State University), when developing the first topic, emphasised that the adoption of the ideas of German Neo-Kantianism by young Russian philosophers had been an independent, creative, and critical process. For instance, S. I. Hessen bases his works synthetically on the positions of both the Baden (mainly Rickert) and Marburg (first of all, Natorp) schools. Moreover, one should take into account the historical background of the activities of Russian Neo-Kantians relating to a certain cultural and political situation in Russia in the early 20th century and their evident creative evolution. In this context, there arises a need for an attentive and comprehensive study of the complicated attitude of Russian Neo-Kantians – and especially Hessen – to Russian religious philosophy and the issue of religion in general.

Sergey A. Nizhnikov (Peoples' Friendship University of Russia), who earlier expressed his opinion on the search for the "authentic Kant" conducted within Kantianism and Neo-Kantianism, addressed questions to the first two speakers.

S.I. Hessen's philosophy of law and socio-political teaching was analysed in the presentation made by *Mikhail G. Galakhtin* (House of Russian Émigrés). In his opinion, S.I. Hessen, having summarised earlier formulated social concepts, developed an original teaching – a coherent synthesis of liberalism and socialism. Hessen justified the ideal of “legal socialism”, which was interpreted by the speaker as a new type of the liberal idea based on the ideas of “social democracy” and personal freedom.

S.I. Hessen's ethics was the focus of the presentation made by a PhD student of St Tikhon Orthodox State University, *Deacon Dmitry Samoïlov*. He emphasised that the Russian scholar had considered philosophy not only as a solely theoretical field of human knowledge, but also as an activity with a strong practical component. The speaker stressed that S.I. Hessen had emphasised the importance of the development of personal centripetal force, i.e. the volitional tension as a response to the centrifugal forces – a produce of the pressures exerted on a person by “external culture”. The centripetal force can be developed through moral education and formulation of super-personal objectives. As the speaker believes, the ethics of the Russian philosopher was influenced by Kant's moral teaching. However, in the course of his creative evolution, Hessen's reception of moral philosophy overcomes the formalism of Kant's moral legislation, which becomes just one of the stages of ethical life in the former's concept. The stages of ascending from the lower to the higher forms of morality are described by the Russian philosopher through the literary images of F.M. Dostoyevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov*. It follows from the philosopher's reasoning that, in order to protect a person from “breaking” caused by excessive informational load of the modern world (which is especially relevant in the case of education), spiritual labour is a must. There is a need for a moral and creative effort, which should be rooted in the holy level of being and be aimed at attaining perfect love.

In conclusion, V.N. Belov, Yu.M. Melikh, S.A. Nizhnikov, and A.V. Sobolev (Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences) made certain comments and proposed several ideas.

V. Belov