

Stolovich holds that a scientific justification of this poetic image is neither possible nor necessary. The death mask as symbol of the “universal grotesque” offers the best possible illustration of the triumph of man over death. This view provokes, of course, numerous questions, concerning the difference between the concept of God and God himself, the scientific status of antinomies, and the fragility of the bearer of the image. Is it really possible or desirable to “preserve the beginning/principle of the discussion,” when faced with the fragility of Kant’s death mask, in a country that has little experience of Kantianism, intellectual democracy, and philosophical interpretation? Or should we rather learn from the “sarcoma of sarcasm” that human and divine dignity must always be derived anew from a thing without value, that lies there, ignored, in the cellar of an anatomy museum?

The book, in the end, shows that Kantianism, culminating in the idea of an axiosphere, is not so alien to Soviet and Russian philosophy as is sometimes assumed. Such Kantian themes as moral progress, the educative power of aesthetic judgment, and the privilege of antinomian thought can always appear, be it in the form of a mask or a trace, for instance in the work of Stolovich. By this, I do not mean to disqualify the book, only to question its metaphysical pretensions. Is it not proper to traces that they disappear as easily as they appeared? Is it not Stolovich himself who holds that beauty only saves the world on the condition that we save beauty? Antinomy here touches on tautology and circular thought, inviting the reader to think further, without reservation, without preservation.

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Patrick Sériot: *Structure et totalité. Les origines intellectuelles du structuralisme en Europe centrale et orientale* (Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1999), 353 pp.

Linguistics knows no *coupures épistémologiques*, no scientific revolutions in the meaning Thomas Kuhn gave the expression. Patrick Sériot, professor of linguistics in Lausanne, therefore

proposes an alternative model in order to write the history of linguistics. We are asked to imagine a pendulum swinging back and forth between two poles, returning to the point of departure, but each time at a point higher on its axis.

Sériot assumes that at any given time it is not some given linguistic paradigm that drives out contending alternatives, but rather a dominant paradigm ranging over all the human sciences, an *air du temps*. By this he means the totality of presuppositions and the resulting metaphors which the scientific community, despite all seeming differences, shares. The gradual displacement of a dominant paradigm by another, incipient paradigm occurs when scholars begin inconsistently to apply, to reinterpret, and to misunderstand central terms, when, in their confrontation with alternative contemporary theories, they fall back on some other, previous paradigm, most often unaware of so doing. According to Sériot, new terms and concepts of the new paradigm emerge in this way, slowly and by no means in a linear fashion. In this connection an important explanation for unconscious misunderstandings and inconsistencies is what Sériot terms the *air du lieu*, the spatiality of scientific insight, which in comparison with the evident historicity of the latter has hardly been taken notice of. In this spatial dimension there are no radical *coupures*, just as in the temporal dimension; instead of the standard binary opposition between identity and difference, shifts to new levels and increasing complexification take place.

The example that Sériot employs to develop his model and demonstrate its plausibility is interwar Prague structuralism. On the one hand, he analyses the scientific discourse of Roman Jakobson, Nikolai Sergeevich Trubetskoi, and of the geographer Pëtr Nikolaevich Savitskii within a wide context, which he sees as a confrontation between Enlightenment and Romanticism; as oscillating between rationalist-analytic and organic-synthetic conceptions of science. On the other hand, he places the genesis of the Prague school's concept of structure into the narrow context of the Eurasian movement, a political and ideological current of the Russian emigration with which the aforementioned representatives of the Prague Linguistic Circle were closely involved.

The so-called Eurasians, to whom Sériot has devoted numerous essays as well as a volume of translations (*N.S. Troubetzkoy*:

L'Europe et l'humanité, traduction et notes par Patrick Sériot, Liège, 1996), sought from their anti-Bolshevik exile to legitimate the continued existence of an imperial state on the territory of the former Russian empire by claiming that this entire area was an organic whole named 'Eurasia', which they imagined as an internally open system with hermetic boundaries separating it from Europe and Asia. As the Eurasians took the existence of 'Eurasia' in this sense for granted and on its basis asked, like their contemporaries, questions as to proper constituents, boundaries, as well as identity in the face of temporal change, they came up with several novel ideas – the theory of the linguistic union in which languages are united not by virtue of some common origin, but by historically acquired similarities; the theory of correspondences, according to which the symmetrical ordering of phenomena as well as the correspondence of climatic, linguistic, and cultural isolines at their boundaries were to reveal the existence of the 'Eurasian' whole; finally personology (*personologiia*), which is the program for a new synthetic science which was to enable a grasp of the harmonious order of the world in a single cognitive act.

By running through the same topic various times, Sériot shows how conceptual inconsistencies and internal contradictions in the Eurasians' thinking allowed them gradually to move from the romantic concept of an organic whole by way of the concept of system to the modern concept of structure. He shows how they accomplished the gradual passage from the metaphor of the organic whole to structuralism with recourse to *Naturphilosophie* and Neo-Platonism, which connects them with the *air du lieu* in Russia. However, according to Sériot, what was involved was an 'ontological structuralism' (p. 320), as the Eurasians, unlike Ferdinand de Saussure, do not distinguish between the real object and the scientifically constructed object. For them the elements of the system possess a substance, so for example the common phonological characteristics of the genetically unrelated 'Eurasian' languages. They exist independently of the researcher's point of view, whose task it is only to discover them and correctly to display their relationships in order to bring to light the hidden order of the world (the existence of 'Eurasia').

By virtue of its complexity Sériot's study is highly stimulating, but not always easy to understand. He develops his thesis concerning the spatiality of science on the basis of a comparison between the Prague School's concept of structure and that of de Saussure, by analysing the Eurasians' discourse who in their turn claim that Russian science is fundamentally different from Western European science. He brings the conceptual inconsistencies of the Eurasians clearly into view, without however using his terms consistently. In particular, he rejects the concept of paradigm to start with but uses it, be it in the sense of metaphor, presupposition, épistémé or theory.

In conclusion, it should be noted how Sériot constructs his own object. He narrowly conceives both Prague structuralism and Eurasianism as the work of the aforementioned three writers, thereby attributing a by far greater significance within the Eurasian movement to Jakobson than has so far been the case among scholars. Simple answers – this Sériot's work shows impressively – to questions concerning continuity or discontinuity in the history of the human sciences are not to be had.

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