

Eidos volume 6
no. 4 (2022)

A JOURNAL FOR
PHILOSOPHY
OF CULTURE

DOI: 10.14394/eidos.jpc.2022.0038

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State at War:
The Phenomenology of the Russian World
by Max Scheler and Kurt Stavenhagen

Abstract:

The aim of the paper is to reconstruct the theoretical background and practical meaning of the so called war writings which emerged within the phenomenological movement during the First World War. The author exemplifies it by researching the works of two German representatives of this movement, Max Scheler and Kurt Stavenhagen. He focuses on their application of the phenomenological method to the analysis of Russian national identity, and historical as well as cultural foundations of Russian state. The paper's main thesis is that the politicization and militarization of phenomenology consisted in both "personalization" and "sociologization" of the phenomenological approach to the problem of the state. While interpreting Scheler's personalism as an exemplification of the approach to the state as a problem of social ontology, the author reconstructs the theoretical conditions of analyzing the Russian imperial state in terms of the "world." The focus of the paper is particularly on the phenomenology of, as Scheler put it, Russian collective personality and Russian national consciousness or "soul" as well as on the question of legitimacy of Ukrainian resistance against Russian imperialism.

Keywords:

phenomenology, two sides theory of the state, legal positivism, pure theory of law, First World War, Russian imperialism, Ukrainian affair

Nobody is to blame for being born a slave; but a slave who not only eschews a striving for freedom but justifies and eulogises his slavery (e.g., calls the throttling of Poland and the Ukraine, etc., a 'defence of the fatherland' of the Great Russians) —such a slave is a lickspittle and a boor, who arouses a legitimate feeling of indignation, contempt, and loathing.

V. I. Lenin

“On the National Pride of the Great Russians”

Introduction¹

In the posthumous tribute to Max Scheler, written immediately after his death in 1928, Martin Heidegger characterized him as “the strongest philosophical force in today’s Germany, nay, in today’s Europe, and even in all contemporary philosophy.”² A few years earlier, during the First World War, Scheler had used all of this force to legitimize the German War as a just war and to analyze its essence from the point of view of his material ethics of values.³ In those articles and essays numbered among his “war writings” he considered the war to be not only a “unique occurrence in the moral world”⁴ and in this sense a “metaphysical war,”⁵ but also a thoroughly political issue. While arguing for the moral superiority of the German world of values in their material hierarchy, he analyzed insightfully also the moral-political worlds of Germany’s enemies. In order to make some sense from the physical facts of the mass killing on the Western and Eastern Front, he traced them back not only to their ultimate, metaphysical sources, but also to the immediate political controversies between the Central Powers and the states of the Entente.

Even if the theoretical relevance of Scheler’s insights into the moral meaning of the German war is still debatable,⁶ the political portraits of the “great nations” of Europe as sketched by him cannot be ignored as mere propaganda and pro-war rhetoric.⁷ Apart from the “national ideas” of England and France, reconstructed by Scheler from an openly subjective, but always compelling political perspective (GK 249–15),⁸ he equally delivered in his writings an intriguing analysis of how Russia, the third state of the Entente – “through the long-lasting, essential traits of its politics” – relates to Europe (GK 294). Today, in the Russian war in Ukraine, Scheler’s approach deserves special attention in regards to the relationship of the Russian world of values to the “spiritual-solidaristic Western European world” (GK 295) – an integral part of which is now Germany itself. What seems to be particularly relevant from the contemporary, and here both theoretical and political

1) This research was funded in whole by the National Science Centre, Poland. Grant number 2020/39/B/HS1/03477. For the purpose of Open Access, the author has applied a CC-BY public copyright licence to any Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM) version arising from this submission.

2) Heidegger, “In Memoriam Max Scheler,” 62.

3) Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, 326.

4) Scheler, *Genius des Krieges*, first page of the unpaginated “Vorrede.” Hereafter referenced in text as (GK)

5) Luft, “Germany’s Metaphysical War,” 8ff.

6) Apart from Luft, “Germany’s Metaphysical War,” see also Plessner, “Analyse des deutschen Selbstbewußtseins,” 253; Frings, “Nachwort des Herausgebers,” 692; Lübke, *Politische Philosophie in Deutschland*, 221–27; Schneider, “Intellektuelle und Krieg,” 177–96; Lembeck, “‘Deutscher Weltberuf?’,” 231; Flasch, *Die geistige Mobilmachung*, 124–28; Pergler, *Religionsphilosophische Elemente*; Sternad, “The Force of War,” 92–99.

7) Even though Scheler had, as a matter of fact, been appointed for war propaganda at the beginning of the conflict by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, see Sternad, “The Force of War,” 92; Flasch, *Die geistige Mobilmachung*, 106.

8) Scheler, *Krieg und Aufbau*, 49–166; Scheler, *Ursprünge Deutschenhasses*, 25f.

perspective, is his presentation of the religious, political, and economic conditions of the Russian attitude to the modern concept of the liberal-democratic state; that is to those factors that have historically shaped the alleged “Russian soul.”

As a member of the phenomenological movement, Scheler developed in his war writings a kind of phenomenological psychology of the Russian national consciousness and, correlatively, a sort of constitutive phenomenology for the Russian world. Certainly, it would be an exaggeration to consider him a forerunner of the criticism against the contemporary concept of the “Russian World” or “Russian Order”; aiming to justify Putin’s interventionism within the domain of foreign policy and world affairs.⁹ In contrast to Scheler’s blatantly biased psychology of the English soul, which he summarized in two pages of the *Table of Categories of English Thinking* and attached as a “Supplement” to the *Genius of War* (GK 413–15), his analyses of the Russian consciousness can rather be described as an example of “interpretive” (*verstehende*) psychology. Especially in the interwar period, the inimical image of Russia as an inherently anti-western and anti-German (originally Tsarist and then Bolshevist), authoritarian power was substituted in Scheler’s political writings by the perspective of a kinship between both nations.¹⁰

Hence, while taking into account present-day Russian aggression against Ukraine, it is worthwhile to contrast it with more critical insight within the essence of the Russian world as delivered by another member of the phenomenological movement, Kurt Stavenhagen. As a Latvian German, who had returned to Riga after completing his study of philosophy at the University in Göttingen in 1909,¹¹ Stavenhagen did not consider Russia to be simply the unique constitutive achievement of the Russian soul, longing for nothing so much as an interpretive Western approach. Being aware of the history of his homeland as a part of Russian Empire, in his booklet *The War Aims of Great Russianness and Foreign Nations of Russia* (published in 1916), he rather tended to speak out about this political occurrence, here following on from Lenin, as a brutally oppressive “prison of nations.”¹² What makes Stavenhagen’s phenomenology of the Russian world particularly relevant today is his focus on the oppression suffered by not only the Baltic, but also the Ukrainian inhabitants of a tsarist state. There also is no question as to the constant relevance of his insight into the reasons as to why the struggle for independence of the so-called “Little Russians,” according to Great Russian nationalists, especially “strikes Russia directly in the heart.”¹³

The Phenomenology of State and Its Militarization

If phenomenology presented itself from the very beginning as an absolutely apolitical, “rigorous science,”¹⁴ then the First World War as a time of the “mobilization of absolutes”¹⁵ contributed to not only the politicization, but even the militarization of this philosophical approach to things. Edmund Husserl in his anonymous letter to the American public opinion¹⁶ on Adolf Reinach with his “death in action in 1917”¹⁷ and Max Scheler

9) Laruelle, *The “Russian World,”* 1.

10) Hoeres, *Scheler, Max Ferdinand,* 2.

11) Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement,* 219.

12) Lenin, *On the National Pride,* 104.

13) Stavenhagen, *Kriegsziele des Großrussentums,* 91. Hereafter cited in text as (DKG).

14) Husserl, “Philosophy as Rigorous Science,” 71–149.

15) Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* 21.

16) Husserl, “Letter to Hugo,” 222–24.

17) Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement,* 196.

with his *Genius of War* (dedicated to the “friends in the battlefield”) (GK unpaginated fifth page) considered both of their commitments to the German war to be not merely a moral, “world-view” issue, but also a theoretical one. The critique of empiricism and naturalism, positivism and pragmatism in the philosophy of science, constitutive for the idea of phenomenology itself, was also streaked before the war with an undertone of criticism against the Anglo-American, that is the liberal-democratic, relativistic, and utilitarian political world. What the war changed with this regard was simply that this tone, stemming directly from Fichte’s theory of knowledge, had become dominant and it had begun to resonate within not just the theoretical, but also in the political domain.

Scheler, in the analyses of the essence of war as a moral phenomenon as well as those of its historical and political meaning, referred to his phenomenological studies published before the outbreak of the war. Apart from the approach to the questions of social ethics taken by him in his study of the feeling of sympathy¹⁸ and that of resentment,¹⁹ the most relevant in this regard turned out to be the basic categories of social ontology developed by him in the book *The Formalism in Ethics and Material Ethics of Values*. What determined the theoretical meaning of Scheler’s prewar approach to the questions of politics, was on the one hand, the question of the foundations of political knowledge and, on the other, the criticism of both legal and political positivism. If the “state” for Scheler had become before the war a “phenomenon” and, as such, an object of phenomenological investigation, then it was only by examining the legitimacy of the claim to it being scientific and laid out by the legal positivist state theory of his time.

Even if Scheler did not refer directly to that theory in his prewar writings, the most relevant point of reference in reconstructing the theoretical meaning of his approach to the questions of politics was Georg Jellinek’s *General Theory of the State*. Published in the same year as Husserl’s *Logical Investigations*, Jellinek’s theory can be considered the epitome of German legal positivism, which before the war had shaped its theoretical meaning of both “scientific” approaches to the state and the main directions of the antipositivist criticism against them. The fundamental theoretical controversy over Jellinek’s theory of the state concerned the foundations of the normative meaning of that phenomenon. What this controversy consisted in was, in the first instance, the question as to the possibility of overcoming the positivist “is-ought” problem with regard to the state, mirrored in Jellinek’s theory in the form of the gap between its “two sides”, that is historical reality and ethical ideality or facticity and validity: in other words the legality and legitimacy of the state.²⁰ Jellinek himself attempted to overcome the discontinuity between the state as a brute empirical phenomenon, and the state as an ideally valid normative legal order by his doctrine of the normativity of the factual; that is, by the thesis that the normative “power” of the state is legitimized by nothing but the factual being of the state itself.²¹ The antipositivist and phenomenologist theorists, instead, criticized this doctrine by pointing out its skeptical-relativistic, if not nihilistic consequences.

Translated into the categories of the theory of science that takes its starting point from Husserl’s *Logical Investigations*, controversy over Jellinek’s doctrine of the two sides of the state lay in the question as to the proper object-domain of political science. Admittedly, neither the legal positivists, nor the early phenomenologists challenged the scientific legitimacy of the interdisciplinary, not merely legal, but also sociological, economic, historical, and so forth, approach to the questions of politics. For both Scheler with his material ethics of values and Reinach with his theory of the a priori foundations of law – as was the case for most of the German political

18) Scheler, *Zur Phänomenologie*, 118–49.

19) Scheler, *Über Ressentiment*, 49–70.

20) Jellinek, *Allgemeine Staatslehre*. See also Lepsius, *Two Sides of the State*, 5–28.

21) Jellinek, *Allgemeine Staatslehre*. See also Kersten, *The Normative Power of the Factual*, 248–72.

theorists of that time – there was also no question that the state was the object (from Hobbes to Hegel), that all modern political theories can serve (speaking in Husserl’s terms), as a leading-clue in determining the appropriate object-domain of the science of politics.²² What was debatable, especially in light of Husserl’s critique of sciences for not being “crystal-clear theories,”²³ was the question of the “ontological region” of political science as an a priori or eidetic science of the state,²⁴ or in short, the question of what the state is in its essence.

In contrast to those antipositivist legal theorists who, like Hans Kelsen, searched for a crystal-clear overcoming of the skeptical consequences of Jellinek’s theory in a neo-Kantian “pure theory of law,”²⁵ Scheler approached the phenomenon of the state from the perspective of ethical personalism. As a critic of Kant’s ethical formalism and his “Prussian” concept of the categorial imperative,²⁶ he founded phenomenological ethics, understood after Husserl as a form of “material eidetic science”²⁷ or “material ontology,”²⁸ on the concept of objective values and their personal, emotional experience. In a way different to Kant who addressed, in Scheler’s interpretation, his ethics of duty to a purely logical subject following universal moral law, Scheler himself put at the center of his material ethics the category of “person.” As distinguished from the Kantian moral subject, he defined the person as a concrete unity of acts in the sense of an individual, unique style of acting²⁹ and considered it always to be participating in distinct types of social units. Hence personal subjectivity also stood at the center of his eidetic social ontology and their ontic hierarchy from the herd, through life-community and society to “collective persons” as their higher forms.³⁰ While defining the state, in times of peace, as one of the above collective persons mentioned, and here separated from the culture circle (*Kulturkreis*) of nation or church,³¹ Scheler founded equally all the possible phenomenology of the state on this category.

As a matter of fact, Scheler’s approach to the state differed significantly from that of other founders of phenomenology not only in his war writings, but also in those studies written before the war. Unlike Reinach, but also Husserl in his lecture on Hobbes’ ethics where he argued for the “a priori content” of social contract theory,³² Scheler from the very beginning contested the idea of contractualism with regard to the origins of the state. In *The Genius of War* he pointed out that the “false ultimate root of all kind of ‘contract theories’ of state as well as that of analogous conventionalist theories of language, expressions of feelings, morality etc.,” was by him “insightfully demonstrated” in the *Annex* to his book about the feelings of sympathy (GK 419). In his war writing Scheler argued that “if the state, which in fact contributed to the peaceful order of its members labelled ‘citizens,’ were either historically or essentially founded on the idea of contract, it would be difficult to understand, why the analogue, lasting peaceful order of states could not be established on the basis of the contract between states” (GK 29).

Accordingly, in *Formalism in Ethics* Scheler did not define the state as a kind of intersubjective constitutive achievement, that is as an ideally valid intentional object having its a priori normative foundations in

22) Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, 519f; Reinach, “Foundations of Civil Law,” 136.

23) Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 16.

24) Husserl, *Pure Phenomenology*, 355f.

25) Kelsen, *Hauptprobleme der Staatsrechtslehre*.

26) Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, xviii.

27) Husserl, *Pure Phenomenology*, 17.

28) *Ibid.*, 19.

29) Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, 382.

30) *Ibid.*, 519.

31) *Ibid.*, 519.

32) Husserl, “Hobbes’ Ethik und Staatsphilosophie,” 58f.

the essence of the performed “social acts.”³³ In contrast to both Kelsen’s neo-Kantian pure theory of law and Reinach’s phenomenology of law, he did not consider the state to be in its essence a legal, but rather a social phenomenon. From the perspective of the material social ontology developed by him, the state, as a collective person, was nothing but “the highest center of the spiritual collective *will*,” that is, the will of *control* over a natural life-community (people) or a plurality of such communities.³⁴ In *The Genius of War* Scheler defined unambiguously this “originary life- and will-community” as a “being (*Wesen*) the will of which exists and is valid before the individual,” a being that “represents the unity of power, law and value, independent from the interests having to be adjusted by the possible contracts” (GK 29).

Scheler’s social ontology, also followed by other phenomenologists like Edith Stein,³⁵ Dietrich von Hildebrand,³⁶ or Kurt Stavenhagen,³⁷ challenged not only social contract theory, but also the positivist “two sides” theory of the state. However, even though Scheler made every attempt not to fall again into the positivist confusion of fact and essence, what the “spiritual mobilization”³⁸ and militarization of his phenomenology consisted in, was in the first instance referred to by him in his war writings to a kind of doctrine of the normative power of the factual. Like most of the other representatives of the German “Ideas of 1914,”³⁹ Walther Eucken, Ernst Troeltsch, Georg Simmel, Werner Sombart, or Paul Natorp, Scheler not only rejected Kant’s idea of eternal peace, but claimed it was artificially established in spite of the inter-state contract. He also argued for understanding the war as a “properly human” (*eigentlich Menschliches*) (GK 14), spiritual phenomenon and, as such, a “living root of history” which fosters the spiritual development of humankind (GK 19).⁴⁰ While defining the war as “a return to the creative origin from which the state as such arose,”⁴¹ he considered the state at war, respectively, to be “the state in the highest actuality of its existence” (GK 43).

The Phenomenology of Russian Collective Personality

As a result of the atmosphere of political Fichteanism reigning in wartime Germany,⁴² both Scheler and Stavenhagen considered analyzing the essence of the Russian state and its war aims to be doing their military duty. Especially Stavenhagen, who following his return to Riga initially gave up his academic career to commit himself to autonomy for the German national community in Latvia and for the defense of its cultural heritage,⁴³ warned in his 1916 booklet against the “tremendous significance of the danger posed to Germany and its allies” by the Russian Empire (DKG 5). This is in contrast to Scheler, who in the entirety of his war writings identified England to be Germany’s main, not only military but also metaphysical enemy, he pointed out that “the wish to mug Germany has been in Russia longer than it has in England” (DKG 5). Stavenhagen, indeed agreed with Scheler, if he presented Germany’s war against the British Empire as a conflict between the solidaristic approach

33) Reinach, “Foundations of the Civil Law,” 136.

34) Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, 545.

35) Stein, *An Investigation Concerning the State*, 126f.

36) Hildebrand, *Die Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft*.

37) Stavenhagen, *Kritische Gänge*, 21.

38) See Flasch, *Die geistige Mobilmachung*.

39) Lübke, *Politische Philosophie in Deutschland*, 171f.

40) See also Sternad, “The Force of War,” 95f.

41) See also Luft, “Germany’s Metaphysical War,” 10.

42) Lübke, *Politische Philosophie in Deutschland*, 204.

43) Trillhaas, “Nachruf auf Kurt Stavenhagen.”

to the state based on an organically growing, spiritual community of values; and the liberal-capitalist idea of the state, organized artificially on the basis of a purely conventional, egoistic “society (GK 25f; 177; 305; 333–413).”⁴⁴ In his report on the war aims of the Great Russianness he nevertheless stressed that among Russians, and yet not only among a couple of diplomats but also the Russian “people’s masses,” it is Germany which should be recognized as the first obstacle on their way to “world domination” (DKG 6).

Scheler approached the cultural and political Russian identity for the first time with reference to the main categories of his social ontology in the article “The Spiritual Unity of Europe and its Political Requirements.” In the same article, while contrasting after William James, the “abstract” idea of political universalism with that of a “pluralistic universe”⁴⁵ or, in short “multiverse” (GK 275), he interpreted the Russian cultural community in terms of a “world.” What Scheler aimed at by challenging there the humanistic idea of one universal world common for all peoples and cultures, was drawing attention to the internal unity, by all fundamental, confessional, cultural, and political differences, of the European world. According to him, the approach to the world as a multiverse by no means was in contradiction to the idea of an objectivity of values, fundamental to their material, non-formal ethics. In his critique of ethical formalism Scheler had already argued that “it belongs to the essence of extant values to be *fully* realized only by a variety of individuals and collective individuals” and that “the existence of historical *differences* in morals is not an objection to the *objectivity of moral values*, but is on the contrary required by it.”⁴⁶ What he meant by considering the world a multiverse was nothing less than the shaping of the consciousness of the emotional and intellectual intransgressibility of the European world among European nations. He considered the idea of Europe as a spiritual community immersed in the “distant coldness of other worlds” (GK 275) to be inevitable in shaping the foundations of “European patriotism.” (GK 250).

In contrast to the “great” and “small” nations of the European continent, but to some extent also to England, numbered in *The Genius of War* among the most evident constituents of the spiritual unity of Europe (GK 294), Scheler interpreted Russianness as a structurally different cultural world. While approaching its spiritual structure in terms of social ontology, he stated that the Russian collective personality could not be recognized unambiguously as a nation, but rather “at least” as a cultural circle such as Central or Western Europe is (GK 294). Insofar as Scheler defined the nation (in contrast to the state and the country folk (*Volkstum*), as a “purely spiritual” collective person specific to the modern Western European culture circle),⁴⁷ to identify Russia as a nation would mean, according to him, at the same time to underestimate and to overestimate it (GK 294). “Russia is neither composed of nations, like Austria,” he wrote, “nor is it itself a nation” (GK 294). In Scheler’s interpretation the concept of Russianness, referred, on the one hand, to an “extremely varied blending of peoples, stretching throughout all the main climatic, plant and animal zones of the earth” (GK 296). On the other hand, in spite of all the variety of its European and Asiatic national elements; from Great Russians, Little Russians, Belarussians, and Tatars, to the “annexes of empire”; consisting of Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians, Jews, Finns, Estonians, Swedes or Rumanians; Russia meant for him a “country of the sharply distinctive rhythm of the soul” (GK 296).

Due to this specific Russian spiritual rhythm, for Scheler the opposition between Europeanness and Russianness was at its core the opposition between two uniform ways of experiencing the world (GK 308). He agreed with Fyodor Dostoevsky who explained in the article “What is Asia for Us?” the cause of “European hatred” against his country by the fact that Russia contributed a specific idea to humanity, one entirely different

44) Scheler, *Ursprunge des Deutschenhasses*, 25f, 40f.

45) James, *Das pluralistische Universum*.

46) Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, 492.

47) Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*.

to the European one (GK 308).⁴⁸ Insofar as Scheler also repeated after him that “Russian people (*Volk*) rests entirely on the Orthodox faith”;⁴⁹ in his reconstruction of the historical foundations of this ideal rhythm of the Russian soul he pointed at the fundamental theological and political differences between Eastern and Western Christianity. In *The Genius of War* and in the special article dedicated to those differences, published later in the volume *War and Reconstruction*, Scheler identified the tradition of caesaropapism as a main constituent of Russian political distinctiveness, completed by the unification of the autocratic Russian state with the Orthodox Church in the time of Peter the Great (GK 265f).⁵⁰ In contrast to the Western separation of these institutions, which Scheler presented as a guarantee for all individual freedom, their Eastern unification he considered to be “the crèche of all the oppression of the individual soul” (GK 266).

According to Scheler, the deeper one penetrated into Russian-Orthodox religiosity, the better one recognized “the only specific religious life-unity” of Western Christianity, despite all the variety of its confessional forms (GK 265). While analyzing the dogmas of the Orthodox faith he stressed that it consisted not only of Byzantine passive devotion and the cult of authority as an end in itself, but also in the specific Russian idea of sacrifice with its demand of suffering and pain (GK 266). Among the social and political expressions of that faith, Scheler numbered in the first instance “an impersonal, melting feeling of community combined with a lack of willpower to the artificial organisation of the people’s masses” (GK 297). He pointed out that the reverse of Russian-Orthodox religiosity was not only the extended, economically unjustified civil service body which formed an authentically Byzantine hierarchy (felt in Russia as metaphysically anchored), but also the violence, corruption, and venality of all officials. Scheler explained the fact that despite the outrageous corruption, Russia was by no means thrown into chaos, but even thrived by drawing attention to the typically Russian “love of patriarchalism” as a counterbalance to the “principle of the disordered lawless violence” ruling there (GK 299). In his attempt at an interpretive psychological analysis of that social phenomenon he stated that a European who saw in Russia mostly only reaction and a lack of freedom, “by his grumbling about the Russian knout fails to recognize the need for that knout, the demand of that knout among the masses” (GK 299).

In the controversy between the so-called Slavophiles and Occidentalists (Westerners) Scheler adopted a position in favor of the former. While taking seriously the concept of the “Russian idea” and though admitting an awareness of not understanding it fully, he expressed his radical skepticism against the possibility of the “Europeanization of Russia.” Scheler considered the efforts undertaken to this end, since Peter the Great, to be either manifestations of internal developmental tendencies within Russian society or the results of a general international capitalization of the economy (GK 304). He sharply distinguished between the “capitalist spirit” and the “European idea.” Scheler identified this capitalism with “lukewarm English comfort and conventional civilization,” which he opposed to an “original personal culture” based on the antic idea of the state understood as an “over-individual reality of will” (GK 305). Accordingly, he felt obliged to denounce as being not essentially European not only “formal technologization, the introduction into the work of the exact sciences and international institute infrastructure” in Russia, but also “the emancipation of the peasants, the abolition of serfdom, the establishment of the Duma and . . . the dissolution of the Old-Russian agricultural constitution” (GK 305). These last “occurrences in the moral world” were for Scheler rather manifestations of the indigenous cultural dynamics; whereas the processes of the “industrialization” and “proletarianization” of Russia, together with those undertaken in Japan, China or the Ottoman Empire, were the result, in his interpretation, of nothing but the internationalization of capitalism and by no means indicated its possible Europeanization.

48) Dostoyevsky, *Politische Schriften*, 493–501

49) Scheler, *Krieg und Aufbau*, 21.

50) *Ibid.*, 21f.

Yet despite a noticeable kinship between the Russian and German idea with regard to their relation to the Anglo-American spirit of capitalism, Scheler argued in his war writings for future European solidarity or at least partnership with England rather than with Russia. Even if he considered England to be this solidarity's "constitutive enemy" (GK 308) and foretold the decline of Europe in the case of the victory of "Old England & Co,"⁵¹ he presented the "felt and suspected difference" between European and Russian collective personalities as "much greater than this conceptualized one, able to be expressed in words" (GK 307). Scheler called: "let the masks of uniformity, of peace, of business as usual, of salon and hotel 'culture,' of imitation and mimicry over the deep dissimilarities in the organization of European and Russian essences definitely fall off!" (GK 307). What he demanded was "that the autonomic cultural solidarity of Europe in all its positive individuality lying behind international capitalism will also find expression in the economic autarky suitable to it as well as in an appropriate political form" (GK 307).

Against the Russification of the World

If Russian "expansionist tendencies" were mentioned in Scheler's war writings only occasionally (GK 286), in Stavenhagen's *War Aims of Great Russianness* they became the focus for thorough research. He considers the "oppression inside and expansion outside" to be the essential "life-form in which the Great Russian people's soul appears" (DKG 23). Like Scheler, he also insightfully analyzed the deep-rooted, religious-confessional, Orthodox determinants of Russian political psychology. With reference to Scheler's book about the resentment and moral judgement, stating that "no other literature is so overfilled with resentment as the Russian one,"⁵² Stavenhagen interpreted the Russian contempt for European culture as a resentimental expression of religiously motivated self-hatred (DKG 15).⁵³ In contrast to Scheler, however, he also devoted much more attention to historical, sociological, and economic factors which shaped the imperialist politics of the Tsarist Empire during the First World War. What Stavenhagen took into special consideration, were the concrete social agencies of Russian imperialism. He numbered among them not only Tsar Nicholas II of Russia and his war ministers, but also both conservative and liberal representatives of the Russian Duma and the ordinary Russian masses themselves.

In his report on the war aims of both Great Russians and the non-Russian peoples of Russia itself Stavenhagen argued for two theses. The first one was that Russian military expansionism endangering Germany was nothing but "a pure expression of the impulses coming from the core being of the Great Russian soul" (DKG 6). He considered Russian imperialism together with Tsarist despotism to be a resentimental reverse of the experience of Russia's enslavement for two centuries by the Mongol Golden Horde. Even after gaining independence, as he wrote, this Asiatic despotism "left inside of those liberated an imprint of the seal of slavery" (DKG 6). Evidence of this imprint was for Stavenhagen a certain "weakness" or "corelessness" of the Russian self, a certain "inability to experience the values" (DKG 15–16). He named this lack of self-evident self-reliance (*das selbstverständliche Ruhen im eigenen Ich*), following on from the title of Ivan Goncharov's novel *Oblomov*,⁵⁴ "oblomovshchina" and considered it to be the "psychological root of the thirst for acquisition" and the compulsion of searching for values externally (DKG 15–16).

Today, according to Stavenhagen, those dark instincts became a conscious will to dominate the world on the part of a state which forced almost one hundred million foreign descendants to be at its service. The second

51) Scheler, *Ursachen Deutschenhasses*, 33.

52) Scheler, *Über Ressentiment*, 6; 61.

53) See also Caprio, "A Nation of Resentment."

54) Goncharov, *Oblomov*.

thesis he was arguing for in reporting about the war aims of the nations enslaved by that state, therefore, was that it is in Germany's best interest to turn its attention on them. The good reason for becoming aware of the war aims of Poles, Balts, Latvians, Estonians, Lithuanians, Finns, Ukrainians, Caucasian peoples and Turco-Tatars, was in Stavenhagen's opinion that insofar as these non-Russian peoples used to revolt against Great Russianness with varied intensity, they also were to some extent Germany's natural allies. As Stavenhagen assured, "if only their backbone were to be strengthened, they would become them the more" (DKG 6).

Even if Stavenhagen did not contest Scheler's thesis as to Pan-Slavist ideology and specifically Great Russian nationalism as a "provable Western import" (GK 297), he was the farthest from disregarding its impact for contemporary Russian society. In his interpretation, the distinctiveness of this nationalism was its origins in the doctrines of Russian Slavophiles of the first half of the nineteenth century. Stavenhagen, in contrast to Scheler, as a Latvian subject of the Russian Empire was not confined to German translations of the pertinent literature, and in his research into the Russian national consciousness referred not only to the works of the main representatives of the Slavophil movement. Apart from Aleksey Khomyakov, Ivan Kireyevsky, Konstantin Aksakov, Nikolay Danilevsky, or Konstantin Leontiev along with the Russian writers and poets influenced by them, he also based his diagnosis on the journal articles and papers of numerous minor national propagandists and Russian state officials, such as Konstantin Pobedonostsev or Prince Pyotr Sviatopolk-Mirsky. His aim was to make the German public opinion aware that the ministerial "triple doctrine of Orthodoxy, Autocracy and the Russian Nation" of 1833, which was supposed to legitimize the transformation of all European nations into the annexes of the empire, gained irresistible force among the Great Russian people, so that "it appears today as an unstoppable avalanche" (DKG 11).

Stavenhagen recognized the gnostic doctrine of the god-damned world as a core of expansionist Great Russian nationalism. "Man and the world are evil in their essence. Hence fear is the foundation of religion," he summarized the Orthodox dogmas of the Russian idea with reference to Leontiev (DKG 12). According to Scheler, who also analyzed these gnostic foundations of the Russian world in his article "On Eastern and Western Christianity," they were "older than Tsarism and nothing speaks out for them disappearing together with autocracy after the successful revolution."⁵⁵ Equally the Slavophile approach to the relation of the Russian self to the world, in Stavenhagen's interpretation, was thus not motivated by positive forces. Unlike in Saint Francis of Assisi or in Luther, it was triggered by the "negation, the genuinely oriental conviction about the nothingness of the world" (DKG 13). Together with the role of suffering in Orthodox theology as analyzed by Scheler, but equally with the other distinctive features of Orthodox piety thoroughly reconstructed by him, those gnostic principles were also supposed to determine the Slavophil approach to the relation between the Russian and the European world. Their nationalist expression became, in Stavenhagen's interpretation, the opposition between "believing Russia" and "faithless Europe," between the Russian state as a political "body of the Orthodox Church" and a European state as a "forced state"; founded on the "force of law" and existing only on the – purely artificial – strength of a constitution (DKG 12).

The gnostic Manichaeism of Orthodox Christianity laid the foundation, on the one hand, for the instrumental anthropomorphization of the Russian people, which Scheler criticized in Dostoevsky,⁵⁶ and on the other hand, for the Slavophile idea of Russia as the "Messiah of Europe" (DKG 12). According to Stavenhagen, the gnostic features of the Russian idea also determined in this way the fundamental difference between English and Russian imperialism. In contrast to the former which he considered to be nothing more than economic expansionism, the Russian will to dominate the world did not limit itself, in his interpretation, to its mere economic and political

55) Scheler, *Krieg und Aufbau*, 21.

56) *Ibid.*, 25f.

subordination. Stavenhagen pointed out, that the aim of the agencies of Great Russian “people’s imperialism,” which he presented as “more tsarist than the Tsar himself” (DKG 14), was not only to rob conquered territories of their political independence, but also to assimilate them both religiously and nationally. What he recognized as an imprint of slavery’s seal in the “coreless” Russian soul was the will of the Russian masses to transform the subjugated nations into “Orthodox Great Russians under the command of an autocratic Tsar” (DKG 11).

Correspondingly, Stavenhagen distinguished between the internal and external war aims of Great Russian imperialism. Among the evident internal objects or rather victims of the imperial agency he numbered in the first instance the non-Russian peoples of the Russian Empire. The program of Russian imperialism with regard to them was supposed to consist, according to the Slavophiles, in nothing but their russification. “Russia needs a uniform state and strong Russian nationality” (DKG 18): wrote Mikhail Katkov in the second half of the nineteenth century, quoted by Stavenhagen. “We will create such a nationality on the foundation of all the inhabitants of the common language, of the common faith and the Slavic world. We will overturn everything that will stand in our way” (DKG 18). Stavenhagen pointed out that Tsar Alexander II, in following this program, signed in 1876 under pressure from the nationalist movement the “famous decree,” on the strength of which it was prohibited to print works in Ukrainian as well as to stage Ukrainian theatre performances, lectures, and folk songs. “About thirty million Ukrainians, he wrote, were to become the first victims of the political oppression exercised by their Russian ‘brothers’” (DKG 18).

In his report of the manifestations of Russian imperialism with regard to other non-Russian inhabitants of the Russian world, Stavenhagen did not only focus on the forms of the russification of Slavs. While describing the ways of political and economic as well as religious and national subjugation of Poles and “White” or “Red Russians” like Hutsuls, he stressed Great Russian internal expansionism aimed at “the annihilation of all foreign descendants” (DKG 26). As a Latvian German, Stavenhagen reported in detail the progress of the russification of Germans and other nationalities in the Baltic states from the 1880s onwards, where the Great Russian population of 5 percent had played no role before the outbreak of the First World War (DKG 66). He also informed about the Russian politics of assimilation in Finland, the Caucasus and other Asian territories, inhabited by “Ural-Altaiic” and Finno-Ugric language speaking peoples (DKG 95). While describing the oppression of the non-Great Russian nations of the Tsarist Empire during the First World War, Stavenhagen presented as the worst off the situation of the foreign descendants of Russian national status. Among them he did not leave unmentioned the expropriation and expulsion, either in sealed wagons or barefoot, of “the entire Jewish population of Kurland and Lithuania and a great part of it from Poland, about one million people” (DKG 29). The extermination of Jews consisting in “pogroms, plundering, murder, the violation of women and girls” which Stavenhagen considered to be “the most terrible chapter from the Great Russian history of the oppression of non-Russian descendants” (DKG 29).

Stavenhagen completed his report of the war aims of Great Russianness with the elaboration of the external objects of its territorial expansionism, the origins of which he traced back to the politics of “the gathering together of the Russian lands” in the late Middle Ages. The contemporary threat posed by Russia to Germany resulted, in his interpretation, from the subsequent conquest of Ingria, Livonia, and Estonia by Peter the Great in order to gain control over territories along Baltic coast including Holstein (DKG 7). Apart from the struggle for transforming the Baltic Sea into *mare nostrum*, Stavenhagen also discussed the theological-political and economic motives for the Russian push south-westward towards Constantinople and the Dardanelles, which brought Russia into conflict with not only the Ottoman, but also the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He pointed out that dominating Asia Minor opens up for Russia a route to the Persian Gulf and the Suez Canal through Palestine and Syria. “Pushing eastward,” Stavenhagen concluded, “came to a standstill, but for certain only temporarily. We have seen already that Russia cannot be satisfied with Vladivostok, the harbor frozen for the great part of the year. Therefore, it also will push southward again” (DKG 35).



It would be certainly far-fetched to identify Stavenhagen's description of Russian imperialism as eidetic, in spite of his explicit and implicit references to Scheler. Stavenhagen joined the phenomenological movement only when Reinach had fallen in battle; with his front-line notes on the essence of religion being published by his students in his *Collected Works* in 1921.⁵⁷ It was only after Stavenhagen wrote (and here inspired by Reinach's religious fragments), his first phenomenological study on the meaning of "absolute attitudes,"⁵⁸ that the essence of the "people," the "nation," and the "state" become for him the object of an eidetic social ontology.⁵⁹ The impact of Scheler's political personalism on his approach to the state as well as his own, thoroughly "relative attitude" to that political objectivity is especially illustrated in Stavenhagen's investigation of 1939 into the phenomenon of "homeland." In describing the political and economic pressure placed on the local German community by the new Latvian national state authorities, Stavenhagen argued for the life significance of the homeland as a "foundation of human existence."⁶⁰ He published a second edition of this study in Göttingen in 1948 under the title *The Homeland as a Meaning of Life*,⁶¹ after he had been expelled from Riga together with all his German compatriots on the strength of the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement between the German National-Socialist and Russian Soviet State.⁶²

Therefore, it is in no way insignificant that Stavenhagen's remarks can be viewed in the present climate given the struggle of Ukrainians during the First World War against the oppression exerted on the part of their Russian brothers. Stavenhagen paid special attention to the Ukrainian "war aims" insofar as he was fully aware of the meaning of this land for Great Russianness and the Russian State's imperial identity. Without Ukraine, he wrote, Russia "cannot conduct politics on a global scale and despite its greatness it is nothing but a small state" (DKG 92). Stavenhagen depicted in his report the role of Ukraine as "Russia's economic treasure-house" that was responsible for one third of Russia's entire production of wheat, rye, barley and sugar beet as well as the same amount of Russia's headage of cattle (DKG 87). He pointed out that the coal mines of Donetsk were responsible for three quarters of Russia's total coal production and that the "Russianness" owed seventy percent of its steel production to the iron mines of Kerch, Kryvyi Rih, and those abreast the Sea of Azov. "The fields of naphtha and earth wax still await exploitation" (DKG 88).

Stavenhagen thus was not surprised that in Ukraine after two centuries of Russian subjugation there was "nothing more to destroy." He pointed out that the Uniate Church of Ukraine had already been abolished in the 1860s, that Ukrainians in 1907 were robbed by Stolypin's state of the possibility of voting for a national representatives to the Duma so that in the year war broke out there was nothing more to do but to suppress the rest of the press and to exile the Ukrainian leaders to Siberia (DKG 31). In Stavenhagen's interpretation, Ukraine best exemplified how "Muscoviteness" (DKG 31) which, as he put it, always "lived off others," learned to centralize economic life around Moscow and to drain the borderlands dry without doing anything for them whatsoever (DKG 88). He quoted a study into "the Ukrainian affair" that appeared in 1915 in Vienna:

57) Reinach, *Gesammelte Schriften*.

58) Stavenhagen, *Absolute Stellungnahmen*, vii.

59) Stavenhagen, *Kritische Gänge*; Stavenhagen, *Das Wesen der Nation*.

60) Stavenhagen, *Heimat als Grundlage*, 102f.

61) Stavenhagen, *Heimat als Lebenssinn*.

62) Hiden and Lane, *The Baltic States and the Outbreak*.

The Muscovite State in its Petrograd's distortion resembles a usurer who creates no new values and exploits all those who fall within its economic realm through foreign money. French and Belgian gold has made it possible for the masters in Petersburg to bind the borderlands to themselves (to which Ukraine belongs in this context to the same extent as does Poland and the Baltic states) like the threads in the web of a cross spider hold tight its victims.⁶³

Certainly, neither Scheler nor Stavenhagen approached the Russian world as a phenomenologically reduced "pure phenomenon" in the Husserlian sense. Their descriptions of this world were determined by explicit practical interests. Admittedly, both of them presented a sort of interpretive approach to the doctrine of the normative power of facticity with regard to the foundations of legitimacy of this world. Nevertheless, not only Stavenhagen, but also Scheler was far from showing understanding for the doctrine of the Russification of the world as a principle of its political constitution. Especially Stavenhagen, who was subjected in Riga to direct Russian oppression, instead felt complete empathy with Ukrainian opposition to the Russification of their collective identity. He was also more resilient to arguments directed against claims about the distinctiveness of the Ukrainian language and culture – and here with reference to the so-called Russian "culture circle." In his report, he quoted the scientific evidences presented by Russian linguists, who also argued for its certainly being more than a Russian dialect. With regard to the Ukrainian affair, however, "grammatical-linguistic" insights were ultimately not so much decisive for Stavenhagen. What mattered, he wrote, was "the will to be a nation" (DKG 86).

63) Kleinow, *Das Problem der Ukraina*, 17.

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