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IVAN ILYIN
ON RESISTANCE TO EVIL BY FORCE

Abstract. The article is a presentation of Russian philosopher Ivan Ilyin's views, which are an attempt to justify opposing evil by force. Ilyin analyzes the possibilities of the penetration of evil into the world and its forms of manifestation, against which he proposes appropriate forms of opposition. At the same time, Ilyin lists the conditions of this opposition, which must be met in order for opposition by force to be justified.

Keywords: poshlost', prinuzhdenie, nasilye.

Ivan Aleksandrovich Ilyin (1883–1954) is a Russian philosopher who tackled the issues of law, religion, culture, literature and political thought¹. He is one of the most interesting and controversial figures in Russian philosophy of the first half of the 20th century, whose philosophy is not yet as thoroughly researched as the views of Nikolai Berdyaev, Sergei Bulgakov or Semyon Frank². It should also be remembered that Ilyin was a very singular man and philosopher. He occupied a special place among the Russian post-revolutionary intellectual emigration, placing himself outside of its mainstream, because the radicality and the genuinely uncompromising nature of his views clearly cut him off from the liberal trend of Russian philosophy³. A researcher of Ilyin's philosophy, Vyacheslav Kuraev, thus writes about Ilyin's attitude: "Ilyin stood a bit on the sidelines, retaining his characteristic 'unconventional means of expression', clearly manifesting his individuality. This applies to his style of philosophizing, political sympathies, his attitude to the tradition of his native thought and to the political processes and events that took place in Russia and Europe in the 20s and 30s [of the 20th century – K. K.]. He tried to contrast the bold, sweeping, emotionally charged thought of N. Berdyaev, L. Shestov, D. Merezhkovsky and other representatives of Russian emigration with a strict and clear form of

philosophizing. Ilyin spoke directly and openly about himself as an ideologist of the white uprising, an opponent to any compromises with the new political regime established in Russia⁴. He said this when many activists in Russian emigration showed an inclination to reach an agreement”⁵.

In 1925, the book *On Resistance to Evil by Force* was published, which caused quite a stir among the Russian emigration⁶. The polemic around the thesis that Ilyin proposes here – namely, that evil should be resisted by force (because not every use of force and violence, both psychological and physical, is evil) – and which he tries to prove by arguing with Tolstoy’s pacifism, was not limited only to its substantive nature.

In this very work, Ilyin is interested in a particular and extremely specific thing, namely: whether an individual, being a witness to open and obvious evil, can and should resist this evil by force, while at the same time their act will be fully recognized as righteous, and their sinfulness will not deepen so much that they themselves will be considered an evil person; and whether this sinfulness will not be greater than if they had not raised the sword at all, remaining passive, or only calling on the criminal to repent and stop inflicting the suffering on their victim. Doesn’t recognizing the admissibility of responding to evil with force narrow the understanding of Christianity and God himself by depriving this understanding of the eschatological perspective? If so, then the description of the infinite good and love can be diminished by emphasizing the role of suffering, i.e. evil existing in the empirical world. However, if under no circumstances should one respond to evil with force (evil), then the consequence may be that life (being so full of suffering) will lose its meaning in favor of striving for the absolute implementation of the vision of good by not opposing evil with force, because resorting to force means multiplying evil in the world.

Ilyin undertakes an extremely difficult task, judging by the temperature of the discussion⁷ after the publication of his book, philosophically and theologically (as well as customarily and morally) almost risky, because he committed himself to something difficult to establish, ultimately providing a solution that approved of the possibility of resisting evil by force. Ilyin himself was convinced that his proposal was fully consistent with the Gospel teachings and did not betray them in any way, and what is more, he was most likely convinced that he was following a path that had already been taken by the critics of Tolstoy’s pacifism. This was one of the basic premises that could have led to his belief that the proposed solution was right. In Russian philosophy, the concept by the author of *War and Peace* on not resisting evil by force had already been subjected to critical reflection by Vladimir Solovyov and Nikolai Berdyaev. In *Resistance to Evil by Force*, the criti-

cal analysis of Tolstoy's view becomes for Ilyin a tool leading to justifying the use of force against evil, because precisely through this it became clear that refraining from any use of force in the face of obvious evil is extremely absurd. In this regard, Ilyin seems to have been surprised by the ferocious wave of criticism that attacked his view with such force. Most likely (and this is hardly surprising) the philosopher expected that his book, which is in a sense a continuation of the line of thought of the above-mentioned figures of Russian philosophy, would easily fit into the trend of positive criticism of Tolstoism, which was blamed for the passivity of the Russian nation, and whose passivity, among other things, was supposed to lead to the fall of Russia. This conclusion comes to mind when we become acquainted with the arguments put forward by Berdyaev, who analyzes the philosophy of the author of *War and Peace*⁸.

In attempting to address the challenge of defining the nature of evil and its operation in the world, a certain category to which Ilyin attributes particular importance may be helpful. We must therefore refer to it, and to do it first, before images of evil spreading with all its strength in the world are evoked. One of its possible manifestations, which constitute a kind of ignition points, is the so-called triviality⁹. Triviality in itself is not dangerous, because it is rather devoid of a demonic character and is closer to some kind of an inclination rather than to evil as such. An interesting issue here is that Ilyin presents this category in a religious aspect, and in a perverse way, because he makes it a measure for the phenomena that are opposite to religion. He enriches this measure with a surprising aspect, namely he calls triviality a militant triviality to characterize a totalitarian culture that claims to dominate the world through aggressive expansion. Triviality of this kind is characterized by a hateful attitude towards holiness, the consequence of which is the belief in the emptiness and, precisely, triviality of the world¹⁰. Trivialization of things and phenomena cannot, according to Ilyin, have their source in things or in God. Things and phenomena are not in and of themselves the sources of triviality.

Poshlost' [пошлость] is born in a human as a primitivized view of the world, as a vision in which sacred objects of knowledge appear in phantasmagoric distortions. As a result of the distortion of the act of cognition, a view of the world that does not take into account the existence of the Absolute may, according to Ilyin, contain only common content, which results in the creation of a mirage of objects and not their authentic image. The falsehood consists in omitting the belief that what exists is in fact spiritualized and sanctified by God. Trivialization, or vulgarization, is also a stripping of the validity of the only truly worthy object of knowledge,

which is a religious one. Due to trivialization, existence “falls apart” into two incompatible spheres, one of which is only a subjective product, and its basis is only futile vanity. Ilyin writes: “Great objects cannot be common. But people’s ideas about them are often very common. And if man too often forgets this difference and the danger that arises from it, he shapes his soul, his act, his conduct, his life and culture *as if there were no great and sacred objects in the world*, but as if there were only those of one kind, filling his own horizon and *common objects* he ideated”¹¹.

Analyzing the category of *poshlost’* through the prism of the meaning of the subject and object, one may get the impression that it is what we usually call banality. For Ilyin, however, *poshlost’* and banality are fundamentally different things. This is because banality may have its source not only in the subject, but also in the object. In other words, it may be objective in nature. However, when talking about triviality, we cannot ignore the fact that its basic attribute is the replacement of what is “*objectively – main*”¹² with “*subjectively – not main*”¹³.

Based on the above description, *poshlost’* does not seem to be something particularly dangerous, just as certain kinds of evil that are thought of as a deficiency or defect, but do not yet cause concern with the thought on any of their consequences. A subjective view of reality leads to a distortion of its image, and losing sight of the spiritual object may lead, in the light of Ilyin’s thoughts, to turning away from it. And this is where we enter the sphere of evil, because this is where the agency of evil may begin. Even though the philosopher refrains from considering *poshlost’* a moral category¹⁴, if one develops his line of thinking with consequence, it is impossible to ignore the fact that triviality, although it does not have to, can become a gateway to evil. And this happens because it turns a person into an unconscious instrument of evil, although the devil himself does not have to be trivial, because as Ilyin writes: “The devil of Ivan Karamazov (Dostoyevsky) is furious and completely trivial; Goethe’s Mephistopheles is not only trivial, but also amoral in a good-natured way and very talented; Lermontov’s demon – furious, amoral and not trivial, but acquires significance as a carrier of religious protest and the pain of existence”¹⁵.

Ilyin points out that although *poshlost’* is not a typically aesthetic, political or philosophical category, its implementation, disastrous in its consequences, takes place in all possible spheres of human activity. Starting from an individual and rather colloquial worldview, and ending with philosophical concepts, art and politics. In each of these areas, *poshlost’* is an expression of a great simplification, and the subject of interest in these areas turns out to be extremely flat and trivial. This conclusion is born in Ilyin due to his

obvious recognition that the only object worthy of knowledge is the Absolute, which, being the principle of everything, is also the goal of everything. Rejecting the existence of God must lead to simplified descriptions of reality that ultimately remain only a schematic product of human common sense, and this, according to Ilyin, is one of the reasons for the tragedies that are taking place in the modern world; so in order to change, the world must undergo a spiritual rebirth. "And therefore we can be sure that where abstract, schematic, simplifying and secondary thinking begins to prevail, one which has once and for all found a seeming »answer« to all its »questions« and arbitrarily imposes its »standard« or »template«, there the power of judgment has shriveled and died, and a dead lie and triviality take over (for example, »mechanicism« in natural science, »formalism« in jurisprudence, »constructivism« in philosophy, »cubism« in painting, »modernism« in music, »dialectical materialism« in history, politics and economics, etc.)"¹⁶.

The evil that may spill over into the world due to the trivialization of reality, however, is ultimately not something banal. According to Ilyin, it always turns out to be an unexpected and brutal blow to the Good through betrayal of this Good, although *poshlost'* may be a term for such "banal" human afflictions and emotional states as laziness or hatred.

So how does Ilyin lead his thought so that the demands of the philosopher's reason are satisfied? First of all, we should refer to his firm statement that force cannot change a person's spiritual life, their spiritual attitude. Contrary to superficial opinion, Ilyin actually refuses to acknowledge that force can make a villain undergo a spiritual transformation, because coercion as a physical force cannot directly become a source of good. "If »man« and »evil« in him are not one and the same, is it not necessary to influence 'man' in such a way that this beneficial action is transferred to the »evil« living in him? Evil cannot be conquered by a singular compulsion; but are we to derive from this a complete contempt for coercion?"¹⁷.

This statement clearly indicates Ilyin's consistency in formulating the problem of resisting evil by force in the religious and metaphysical domain. At the same time, the need to generate forceful resistance becomes problematic. Ilyin was certainly aware of this. This is supported by the extremely meticulous classification of coercion he developed. Therein Ilyin distinguishes the following forms of coercion: psychological coercion, physical coercion, self-coercion, preventing and cutting off the action of the villain, where coercion is something different from violence, which should, of course, be protested against. According to Ilyin, equating coercion with violence makes a positive resolution to the problem of opposing evil by force impossible due to an apparent loop.

On Resistance to Evil by Force is a special book due to its content and style. Its publication in 1925 was preceded by a series of lectures given by its author – Ivan Ilyin – probably not expecting that it would trigger long-term and heated debates about the spiritual condition of Russia, Russians, man, Christians or culture in general.

In the first half of 1925, the diverse audiences gathered at Ilyin's lectures in various European cities heard the possibilities and the necessity of resisting evil by force. The rhetorical eloquence with which these lectures were delivered was transferred to the pages of *On Resistance to Evil by Force*. None of his other works are characterized by such an emotional style, although all of them showcase the same meticulousness and consistency in striving for precision. In his work, Ilyin fondly uses repetition and emphasizes words that would be repeated and emphasized by someone giving a lecture, while keeping precision in mind. Thus, we will find words in the text highlighted by the author in italics to which he pays special attention. Sometimes, for the sake of clarity, Ilyin's repetitions must be omitted, but many of them have been retained in the translation.

Justifying the thesis about resisting evil by force, Ilyin introduces a categorization of various types of coercion and acts aimed at stopping evil. Unfortunately, neither in Polish nor in English do we find, for example, two different equivalents for such categories as *принуждение* [*prinuzhdenie*] and *пону́ждение* [*ponuzhdenie*] and that is why these are translated as “forcing” or “coercion” either interchangeably or with a blended unified sense. However, the term *пре́сечение* [translates primarily as “prevention”, due to the purpose of this action, although its basic meaning is, of course, “cutting”. We also use it when the context in which it is used requires that. The same applies to the concept of *душе́вный* [*dushevnyi*] proposed by Ilyin, referring to what is specific to the soul, and not to the spirit or psyche. Here it should be translated as “spiritual”.

The meticulousness that characterizes the discourse of the work *On Resistance to Evil by Force* attracts attention not only due to the extensive terminology proposed by its author, but is a consequence of the subtle philosophical matter that the philosopher undertook to discuss and resolve. This meticulousness, although sometimes burdensome, expresses the pathos with which the issue of resisting evil by force in the name of good is treated.

In order to properly resolve the problem of resisting evil by force, Ilyin proposes the following arguments: “And therefore it would be a serious spiritual mistake to reduce every coercion [*заставление* – *zastavlenye*] to violence [*насилие* – *nasylye*] and to give the second term a central meaning. The word “violence” itself contains a negative assessment: “violence”

is an arbitrary, unjustified and scandalous act; the “aggressor” is a person who crosses the lines of what is permitted, he is an attacker, a persecutor, an oppressor and a criminal. “Violence” must be protested against, it must be fought; in each case, a person who is a victim of violence is wronged, oppressed, and deserves compassion and help. Just one use of this evaluative and emotionally contaminated term causes negative tension in the soul and assumes a negative meaning of the research problem. To prove the “permissibility” or “rightness” of violence is to prove the “permissibility of the unacceptable” or the “rightness of the unjust”; and what is proven realistically, spiritually and logically immediately turns out to be emotionally rejected and controversial in real life: an inadequate term splits the soul and obscures its obviousness.”

In order to justify his position, as mentioned above, Ivan Ilyin carries out a detailed systematics of various actions that are aimed at stopping evil actions and provoking appropriate ones, which should not be understood as violence. This obviously involves sophisticated terminology that allows for a precise description of types of coercion to distinguish them from violence. The criteria of the order proposed by the philosopher are as follows: on the one hand, people can use coercion on themselves, and on the other hand, against others and on the basis of form, where we distinguish between mental and physical coercion. This is also related to the types of evil that manifest themselves in the world, including mental, spiritual and physical phenomena.

Ilyin’s conceptualized order leads to distinguishing the following forms of resistance: coercion [*заставление* – *zastavlenye*], coercion [*понууждение* – *ponuzhdenye*] or coercion [*принуждение* – *prinuzhdenye*], self-coercion [*самозаставление* – *samozastavlenye*], coercion applied to others [*заставление других* – *zastavlenye drugykh*], psychological coercion [*психическое заставление* – *psikhicheskoye zastavlenye*], physical coercion [*физическое заставление* – *fizicheskoye zastavlenye*], self-coercing (coercing oneself) [*самопонууждение* – *samoponuzhdenye*], self-coercion (coercing oneself) [*самопринуждение* – *samoprinuzhdenye*], mental coercion [*психическое понууждение* – *psikhicheskoye ponuzhdenye*], prevention (cutting) [*пресечение* – *presechenye*].

The categories mentioned above serve to avoid confusing coercion with violence, on which Ilyin writes as follows: “Therefore, it will be expedient to retain the term ‘violence’ [*насилие*] to designate all cases of reprehensible violence coming from an angry soul or aimed at evil, and to establish other terms to designate permissible violence that comes from a benevolent or coercive-to-good a soul. Then, for example, the concept of self-coercion

will be subordinated on the one hand to the concepts of self-coercing and self-coercion, and on the other hand to appropriate types of mental and physical self-coercion. Going further, the concept of external coercion will be subordinated on the one hand to the concepts of psychological coercion, physical coercion and prevention, and on the other hand to appropriate types of psychological pressure on others. And only then, thanks to clear terminology, will the problem of permissible coercion and its diversity be revealed first”¹⁸.

Coercion should be called such *an imposition of will on the internal or external structure of a person, which does not refer directly to the spiritual vision and its acceptance by the soul in love, but tries to force it to a specific action or to anticipate it*. It is understandable that if the prior turning to spiritual vision (either in words of persuasion or in the form of turning the cheek) brings about and creates a state of self-evidence in the soul, then a *free belief* will arise and the action of the volitional force that then takes place will be organically free and not enslaved. Therefore, if the prior turning to acceptance by the virtue of love evokes a state of love in the soul, harmony and unity will appear, and the action of the volitional force that occurs will be organically free, not enslaved.

The use of physical force in the fight against evil is considered by Ilyin to be necessary and justified in the presence of all the strictly defined circumstances listed below. If one of the five conditions specified by Ilyin is not met, then the use of physical force is unjustified.

The first circumstance is the presence of authentic evil, i.e. an evil will revealed in an external evil act. Such a will is defined by Ilyin as anti-spiritual and contrary to love, which is the foundation and essence of human unity. And if so, this anti-spiritual will of man is fully directed against this really existing spiritual unity.

Another condition that must occur for the problem of resisting evil by force to be correctly formulated and resolved, is the proper recognition of evil. From the very beginning, this knowledge includes the awareness that it exists and manifests itself in evil deeds. And only such an attitude can give a start to the right proportion in seeing evil and fighting it. If a person lacks this awareness of the presence of evil and its prevalence in the world, then they seem not to notice any need to oppose it: “It is understandable that a man who turns away, does not see, does not understand, does not investigate, cannot solve the problem, because he extinguishes it within himself, frees himself from its burden, dulls its sharpness and torment, and diminishes the right to participate in its judgment and, as a result of all this, his judgments regarding a given issue turn out to be either incompetent,

like judgments about complementary colors expressed by a man born blind, or scholastic, like the resonanceist's judgments about unverified, made-up circumstances"¹⁹.

The next, third condition for the correct interpretation of the discussed problem is the necessity of the presence of "authentic love for the good"²⁰ in a person who is faced with an evil act. In other words, but in accordance with Ilyin's intentions, one should have the good of the soul before one's eyes as the basic, only and ultimate goal. When the awareness of the existence of evil appears, the person who has it loses their truly subjective independence (they must go beyond their subjectivity), because such circumstances place a person's life in the dimension, as Ilyin writes, of "his own to be or not to be"²¹. However, if it happens otherwise, it can only mean that the soul, or rather the spirit of this person, is immature and unprepared to hinder the evil deed.

Fourthly, the activity of the human soul and spirit should be joined by the will, which, not being separated from the world, cannot remain passive towards the processes taking place in it, refraining from the will arising from the above-described consciousness. A human cannot prevent their will from being implemented in the conglomerate of acts that are the actions of people. If an individual is not active and is not able to make a decision, they cannot pose a problem, much less evaluate it. Ilyin formulates this idea in the following words: "He cannot pose it because for him the problem does not exist, it is not proper for him to solve it because for him it is resolved in a negative sense. And all he can say rightly on this issue is to openly admit his own incompetence and decide in advance to refrain from participating in the discussion about it"²². However, it should be remembered that for Ilyin, a will that is not enlightened and sanctified by love is a dead or even a dangerous instrument. Because the will, which is dead and passive, already surrenders itself to the power of evil, deprived of its autonomy, becomes its instrument.

The fifth and last condition for correctly posing the problem is the recognition that physical coercion is the final solution when other forms of influencing the wrongdoer have proven ineffective.

The above-mentioned conditions for the necessary use of force in the face of happening evil are the answer to the right way to pose the problem, according to Ilyin. Namely, the philosopher proposes the following formulation of this problem: "if I see genuine wickedness and have no possibility of stopping it by means of psycho-spiritual influence, and I am genuinely bound by love and will with the source of God's good not only in me but also outside of me, then should I wash my hands off, leave and grant the

evildoer freedom to blaspheme and sow spiritual ruin, or should I interfere and cut off the evil-doing by physical opposition, consciously exposing myself to danger, suffering, death and perhaps even to the diminution and contamination of my own sanctimoniousness?"²³ And it is indeed so that the above words testify to Ilyin's rejection of the recognition that gentleness and pleasantness can be the attributes or the foundation of moral human action. Consequently, one cannot help but feel that Ilyin, in these very words, seems to place greater demands on man than Tolstoy, who postulated refraining from any action that may result in suffering.

In conclusion, it must be said that Ilyin should not be seen only as the creator of a specific philosophical view, one who very efficiently used philosophical reason and philosophical intuition, and treated with great detail the philosophical problems he undertook to resolve. His life is an epitome of the drama and tragedy of the human fate occurring in the first half of the 20th century. And although Ilyin has continuously been read in a political context²⁴, if we remove this very context, we are presented with a philosophical problem in which a fundamental and undismissible question about good and evil is asked.

NOTES

¹ For more information about Ilyin's life and philosophy, please refer to my book *Iwan Ilyin i jego doktryna o sprzeciwianiu się złu siłą*.

² In the 1990s, there was an incredible revival in the publishing market in Russia, where works by emigrant philosophers of the Russian religious and philosophical renaissance at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries appeared. Interest in this philosophical trend resulted in the publication of Ilyin's works in Russia. What is the "silver age" in the book *The Meaning of Life*. Anthropological aspects of the Russian spiritual renaissance of the 20th century in the light of Orthodoxy are revealed by Jerzy Kapuścik (Jagiellonian University Publishing House, Kraków 2000). It is obvious that on the Polish philosophical market we can now find many works devoted to this cultural formation.

³ The so-called The liberal trend was created by, among others, Nikolai Berdyaev and Sergey Bulgakov, mentioned above.

⁴ We are talking here about communism, which will take over Russia after the October Revolution.

⁵ B. I. Kuraev, *Filosof volevoy idei*, afterword to: I. A. Il'in, *Put k ochevidnosti*, Izdatelstvo "Respublica", Moskva 1993, p. 405.

⁶ Amongst contemporary works about Ilyin, we find those in which Ilyin is presented as a fascist, which comes not from the analysis of the philosopher's works, but from the fact that he was hailed as Putin's ideologist. Unfortunately, such a discourse is clearly present, which, as can be assumed, results only from reading fragments of Ilyin's journalism, and thus bypassing his strictly philosophical works. Citing examples is unnecessary because they are easy to come across. Interesting, insightful and non-one-sided reflections are presented in their articles by such philosophers as: Janusz A. Majcherek (*Bezsilność jako przyzwolenie na zło*, PRINCIPIA LXIX (2022), Adam Sawicki (*KONFLIKT*

– ROZDARCIE – ŚMIERĆ. *Myśl rosyjska o bólu i cierpieniu*: Bierdiajew, Ilyin, Fiodorow, Ethos 30 (2017) no. 4(120)) and Sławomir Mazurek (*Iwan Aleksandrowicz Ilyin – religia, prawo, osoba*, Archive of the History of Philosophy and Social Thought, Vol 58/2013 Supplement. In Majcherek we find an analysis that points to an incorrect reading of Ilyin's philosophy by Vladimir Putin and his nationalist followers. Ilyin's philosophy has fallen victim to falsification through its simplification and ideologization. At the same time, it should be added that the philosopher was persecuted also in Soviet Russia, where he was arrested six times and sentenced to death. The death sentence was changed to expulsion from Russia, with no return possibility. The first stop was Berlin. When Hitler came to power, Ilyin became a victim of persecution carried out by fascists, which included, among other things, ban on public speaking, delivering lectures or the printing of the philosopher's works. Ultimately, the philosopher left for Switzerland, where he stayed until his death and continued his work on philosophy and journalism. It seems that Ilyin became a victim of politics, as we know from history and the history of philosophy as exemplified by Friedrich Nietzsche and Karl Marx.

⁷ The polemic around the thesis that Ilyin proposes here – namely, that evil should be resisted by force (because not every use of force and violence, both mental and physical, is evil) – and which he tries to prove by arguing with Tolstoy's pacifism, was not limited only to its substantive nature. The indirect polemic with Berdyaev, who in the article *The Nightmare of an Evil Good*, compared Ilyin's thinking to the thinking of the Che-Ka officer, took on a particularly malicious expression. And here is one of many telling excerpts from Berdyaev's article, in which its author raises accusations against Ilyin's view and the philosopher himself for that matter: 'The most unpleasant thing in Ilyin's book is the abuse of Christianity, Orthodoxy and the Gospel. Justifying the death penalty with evangelical texts gives the impression of blasphemy. In Ilyin's worldview there is nothing not only from Orthodoxy, but from Christianity in general. Orthodoxy was put on display for non-religious purposes, as is often the case these days. Quotations from the Bible, from the Fathers of the Church, from apostolic and conciliar canons are taken mechanically and do not prove that Ilyin has an Orthodox worldview' (M. Bierdiajew, *Koszmar złego dobra*, [In:] *Głoszę wolność. Wybór pism*, trans. H. Paprocki, Fundacja "Aletheia", Warszawa 1999), p. 222 [quote translation: Michał Pelczar]. Ilyin, however, discursively retaliated at Berdyaev, claiming that the latter's entire philosophy was a superficial, demagogic and harmful "Augean stable." And so the acquaintance with Berdyaev, which seemed to be quite close, as can be suspected from Ilyin's words, and which began in Moscow in 1908, ended turbulently and violently. The liberal-democratic trend of Russian emigration, to which, apart from Berdyaev, Zenkovsky also belonged, categorically criticized and rejected Ilyin's concept, and the philosopher was even accused of sympathizing with Bolshevism.

⁸ The mentioned analysis was included by Berdyaev in his *Spirits of the Russian Revolution* (in Polish this article was published as part of the collection *De profundis. Z głębokości. Zbiór rozpraw o rosyjskiej rewolucji*, trans. "Aletheia" team, Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, Warszawa 1988).

⁹ This concept requires explanation, because Ilyin rejects its simple interpretation as commonness, vulgarity, banality or triviality. When trying to locate this category in Ilyin's views, one should characterize it as vulgarizing, trivializing or banalizing spiritual values. The above-mentioned interpretation allows for a more in-depth examination of the meanings of "triviality" and their significance for the philosopher's views.

¹⁰ Here, however, it is clearly visible that triviality is not a completely neutral category at all, as it initially seems.

¹¹ I. A. Ilyin, *Aksiomy religioznogo opyta. Issledovanie*, Izdatelstvo "Russkaya kniga", Moskwa, Vol. 1, p. 257.

¹² Ibidem, p. 270.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ *Poshlost'* is also not an aesthetic category and cannot be used to distinguish between art and non-art.

¹⁵ I. A. Ilyin, *Aksiomy religioznogo opyta. Issledovanie*, pub. cited. Vol. 1, p. 261.

¹⁶ I. A. Ilyin, *O soprotivlenii zlu siloyu*, Izdatelstwo "Respublica", Moskva 1993, p. 329.

¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 16.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 20.

¹⁹ I. A. Ilyin, *Aksiomy religioznogo opyta. Issledovanie*, pub. cited. Vol. 1, p. 38.

²⁰ I. A. Ilyin, *O soprotivlenii zlu siloyu*, publ. cited., p. 39.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ I. A. Ilyin, *O soprotivlenii zlu siloyu*, publ. cited., p. 41.

²⁴ An interesting example of Ilyin's adversary, who claimed that his work was a thoroughly political book, was the poet, writer, and literary critic Zenaida Gippius. She was one of the most vehement critics of Ilyin's concept and did not spare harsh words for *On Resistance to Evil by Force*, and even for the author himself: "The book *On Resistance to Evil by Force* is a political book. Psychological-religious-philosophical considerations serve only to conceal a specific political idea, even a tactics and practices, with specific, specifically oriented political goals. What was the purpose of these disguises? Perhaps it is a kind of a tactical trick. The Russian man loves to philosophize." (Z. Gippius, *Mech i krest*, See.: https://libking.ru/books/nonf_publicism/677145-zinaida-gippius-mech-i-krest.html. Access 11.03.2025.)

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