

Ochevidnost', *очевидность* (Russian). Literally: “obviousness”, “something observed with one’s own eyes”, “insight”. One of the central epistemological categories in the religious philosophy of Ivan Ilyin (1883-1954), a major 20th century Russian thinker.

Ochevidnost' is initially defined by Ilyin as simply “being in the truth.” The notion connotes the attitude of the ultimate assurance in the truth of something, as if that something has been directly observed with one’s own eyes. *Ochevidnost'* is first and foremost a particular state of being, arrived at with significant intellectual effort, as when a person grasps the truth about God and the world not as a set of formally true propositions, but as a genuine existential insight, which defines and shapes one’s whole life.

The philosophical act, resulting in such deep assurance and strong beliefs, is contrasted in many of Ilyin’s writings with the contemporary dominating tendencies towards epistemological skepticism and value relativism. A modern person is characterized by Ilyin as a person with fragmented personality, poisoned by perpetual doubt, and incapable of having any strong convictions. *Ochevidnost'* then, being the outcome of a mature life experience and sincere efforts on the part of the seeker, is presented as a way of restoring the original spiritual wholeness to human nature. It is important to note that Ilyin is not limiting the attitude of *ochevidnost'* to the sphere of religious convictions (even though this might be his primary interest in the long run); but seeks to apply it to all areas of human research, including natural sciences and moral philosophy.

The philosophical effort aimed at achieving *ochevidnost'*, as described by Ilyin, bears certain outer resemblances to the method of phenomenological reduction, as presented by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) (and Ilyin, indeed, refers to Husserl on several occasions). The gradual ‘bracketing’ (*epoche*) of sensual experience is seen by Husserl as a way of crystallizing the underlying essence of the subject matter, examining the phenomena as they are originally presented to consciousness. For both philosophers, the process of discovering the deeper layers of reality, i.e., the process of philosophizing itself, is not exhausted by the purely intellectual exertion, but requires a supra-sensual apprehension. Among other sources of inspiration of Ilyin’s philosophy in general one might mention J. Fichte, G. Hegel and the *Lebensphilosophie* of the early 20th century (e.g., Dilthey, Bergson).

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