

# Overcoming the Secular



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*Russian Religious Philosophy  
and Post-Secularism*

Edited by Teresa Obolevitch  
and Paweł Rojek

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# Russian Thought and Post-Secularism

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## Russian Prefigurations of Post-Secular Thought: Nikolai Berdyaev and Ivan Il'in

Theoreticians of humanistic and social studies have suggested various terms with which to refer to the world at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, but in Europe it is commonly described as the post-secular,<sup>1</sup> or post-Enlightenment world. The terms post-secular thought and philosophy of post-secularism refer to the attempts at criticising or reflecting upon the aftermath of the Enlightenment and the twilight of Western secularism which commonly, albeit not exclusively, stem from the method of postmodernist deconstruction. One of the key premises of post-secularism, as formulated in particular by its most radical “right-wing” advocates, sometimes referred to as the Radical Orthodoxy (John Milbank, Philip Blond, Catherine Pickstock), is the abolition of the modern antagonism between religious and secular processes, between religion as such and the public sphere, between faith and reason. These post-secular deliberations pertaining to the complex relationship between science and religious faith are intrinsically tied to various European attempts of approaching this dilemma and readdressing it in a more creative manner. One of the more potent schools preoccupied with the same, although so far somewhat neglected in this context, was Russian religious philosophy which first emerged in mid nineteenth century and enjoyed its heyday in the 1910s and 1920s. It is in this context that varied and highly interesting analyses were

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<sup>1</sup> There are several definitions of the “post-secular world,” just as there are many trends in post-secular philosophy itself. According to one, the post-secular world is where atheism can no longer lay claim to having a scientific character. Post-secular thought stems from the *Imperative* context of several branches of social sciences: sociology, political science, etc. It has been most strongly influenced by the works and opinions of American religious sociologists: José Casanova (*Public religions*, “Public Religions Revisited,” “Rethinking Secularization”), as well as Peter Berger (*Heretical Imperative*, *The Desecularization of the World*).

provided pertaining to the relationship between science and religion. Later, it was forcibly replaced, for over seventy years, by incontestably secular, Marxist paradigm which dominated the discourse on this and other problematic relations.

In our search for further inspiration we could take a somewhat closer look at the parallel religious and philosophical standpoints of Nikolai Alexandrovich Berdyaev (1874–1948) and Ivan Alexandrovich Il'in (1883–1954), both of which can be interpreted as prefigurations of the contemporary philosophy of post-secularism. The turn to this tradition, as repeatedly evoked over the years in various capacities (particularly since the alternative Marxist narration has effectively run its course) is further justified by the fact that Russian religious philosophy originally emerged in a context largely similar to the post-modern (post-Enlightenment) one, i.e. characterised by a more or less unequivocal sense of a crisis in science and philosophy. The philosophical views of Berdyaev and Il'in are similar in that they perceive science as an alternative to religious spirituality (which might be said to be close to contemporary West-European thinking), while at the same time pioneering the belief in the necessity of reconciling said opposites (in which they might have been an inspiration to post-secular thinkers). They are, however, quite distinct from the propositions of other (by necessity left out of the present deliberations) philosophers of the Silver Age of Russian culture: (1) the antagonistic, Rousseauian perception of science understood as a useless and overly abstract attempt at explaining life as such, one that is entirely divorced from reality (Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Nikolai Bakhtin, Lev Shestov), (2) the attempts to abolish the incompatibility of science and religion by reinterpreting religion as a stern ally of science (Vasily Rozanov, Semen Frank), (3) the view of science as a phenomenon ultimately facilitating religion, one that provides the basis for co-creation of the world (Pavel Florensky, Nikolai Fedorov), or (4) a free synthesis of philosophy, theology and empirical science, commonly referred to as theosophy (Vladimir Soloviev).<sup>2</sup>

## The Place of Berdyaev and Il'in in Russian Culture

Nikolai Berdyaev was active at the turn of nineteenth and twentieth centuries, whose eminence in the history of Russian philosophy is undeniable (the proponent of one of the Russian forms of personalism, Russian version of

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<sup>2</sup> Borisova, "Otnosheniye k nauke russkikh filosofov."

existentialism, Russian “philosophy of life,” the philosophy of culture).<sup>3</sup> Indeed, it is not uncommon for him to be described as a philosopher of a standing equal to that of Aristotle or Nietzsche.<sup>4</sup> Ivan Il'in on the other hand was, and remains to this day, considerably less known and—for various reasons—less valued by historians of philosophy.<sup>5</sup> It would therefore seem prudent to first describe him in greater detail, for instance by recognising his anticipation of certain post-modern post-secular determinations.

Il'in was undeniably a respected scholar, a historian of law and a lecturer at Moscow University's Department of Law. His secondary preoccupation was with the philosophy of law and religious thought, wherein he subscribed, similarly to Berdyaev, to religious rather than scientific worldviews. However, the construction of later religious thought of Il'in differed significantly from that of Berdyaev's. The latter was an advocate of Christian modernism rooted in the tradition of Eastern Orthodoxy, which revolved around the idea of a new religious consciousness aiming to respond to the most pressing questions faced by societies at the turn of the century (formulated within the framework of a new language which allowed for a particular autonomy and departed from the strict tradition of the Greek Church Fathers). Conversely, Il'in, wary of Berdyaev's or Lev Karsavin's intellectual “theologising” and the danger of heresy they entailed, preferred to remain in line with the traditional teachings of the Russian Orthodox Church while attempting to only complement it by considering contemporary problems and formulating what he himself described in *Singing Heart* (1958) as quiet, philosophical praise of God.<sup>6</sup> His religious philosophy, standing in some regard in opposition to Soloviev's or indeed Berdyaev's deliberations, as expressed in *The Way of Spiritual Revival* (1935) and *The Foundation of Christian Culture* (1937), has only recently, since around the 1990s, been re-emerging in modern Russia. In previous years, the entirety of his work was subject to censorship due to the fact that Il'in had been an active theoretician and ideologist of the White Guard lecturing on

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<sup>3</sup> Polish reception of Berdyaev's work has been quite extensive, as evidenced in the article by Marek Styczyński, “Polskie badania filozofii Mikołaja Bierdiajewa.” Attempts at interpreting the problems of the relationship between science and religion as established by Berdyaev can be found in the works of Polish scholars: Andrzej Walicki, Jan Krasicki, Marek Styczyński, Grzegorz Przebinda, Sławomir Mazurek, Andrzej Ostrowski, Ewa Matuszczyk, Piotr Przesmycki, and Bartłomiej Brzeziński to name but a few. In order to avoid an endless string of references and polemics with regard to said abundance of interpretations, in the present article I focused only on the works of Berdyaev himself and on his anticipation of post-secularism.

<sup>4</sup> Gal'tseva, “Berdyaev.”

<sup>5</sup> Krasucka, *Iwan A. Il'in*.

<sup>6</sup> Lisitsa, “Ivan Il'in on the Foundations of Christian Culture,” 166.

its behalf in various European countries (after his forced emigration in 1922). What the Soviet authorities could not stand for was the “extreme ideological commitment” of his philosophy, his analysis of what he perceived as the revolutionary catastrophe, as well as his efforts to usher in the ideological rebirth of old Russia. At the same time, many of his beliefs proved unacceptable also for most Christian thinkers, both representatives of the traditional school and the proponents of a new, modernist vision of Christianity.<sup>7</sup> Their censure stemmed mainly from the negation of the author’s (largely misunderstood by his contemporaries) “non-Christian idea” of opposing evil by force in *Resistance to Evil by Force* (1925).<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, despite the many obstacles hampering his creative activity, Il’in’s legacy counts over forty books, brochures, several hundred articles, around a hundred lectures, as well as numerous letters, poems and memoirs.

### Berdyaev and Il’in’s attitude to Science

Berdyaev’s view of science was not set in stone and had indeed evolved over the years. His earliest independently voiced opinions, published in *The Philosophy of Freedom* (1911) and *The Meaning of the Creative Act* (1916), recognised the unquestionable autonomy of science from religion,<sup>9</sup> appreciated its pragmatism stemming from its focus on the description and recognition of natural determinisms (as well as from its compliance with said determinisms),<sup>10</sup> i.e. the “abbreviated, economical description of the world’s determinism for the purposes of self-preservative orientation and reaction.”<sup>11</sup> The only thing he rejected was equalling science with “scientism” which was, in his opinion, yet another ideology, a scientific imperialism that aimed to arbitrarily extend the

<sup>7</sup> The most outspoken critic of this concept of opposing evil was none other than Berdyaev himself (see his “Koshmar zlogo dobra”), which does not, however, hinder the juxtaposition of the full extent of the two thinkers’ works.

<sup>8</sup> His book was a direct polemic with Tolstoy’s concept of “not resisting evil by violence,” which ultimately evolved into the notion of not resisting evil at all. Tolstoy’s idea which is usually, and overly optimistically, described as a pacifist standpoint, was seen by Il’in as a purely nihilistic proposition. Therefore, he wished to restore the full strength of the old, Orthodox notion of “the sword.” It was his opinion that when the author of the *Sermon on the Mount* spoke of loving one’s enemies, he in fact referred to enemy-kin and never meant loving the enemies of God. Furthermore, the force which was to be used in the fight against evil was, in his opinion, of purely moral character, the force of a man at a high level of spiritual development.

<sup>9</sup> Berdyaev, “Filosofiya svobody,” 38–44.

<sup>10</sup> Berdyaev, *Smysl tvorchestva*, 55.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

positivist criterion of science to other areas of human life, including spirituality.<sup>12</sup> As he observed in *The Philosophy of Freedom*: “scientism is founded on the belief [of scientists – H.R.] that science is the ultimate criterion of all life and spirit, that we must all submit ourselves to the principles it establishes, that its decrees and prohibitions must always take precedence.”<sup>13</sup>

The Russian philosopher of culture believed, similarly to his contemporary German philosophers of culture (including the anti-systematic author, Georg Simmel, and his *Der Begriff und die Tragödie der Kultur* published in 1919), that scientism is indeed necessary but solely in the context of science itself, whereas in other areas of culture it represents dangerous reductionism. However, he observed certain negative consequences of the prevalence of this modern ideology even in the scope of science itself. He believed it had been a mistake to enforce a single naturalistic and objectivist methodology on all scientific fields, while in fact a more viable approach would be to allow a pluralism of scientific methods in line with the pluralism of sciences themselves. Naturalistically understood scientism and its prevalent imposition had become, in the philosopher's opinion, an evident constraint to human spirit. While perceiving the excessive autonomy of science (and the fallacies stemming from the world of scientific methodology), he also observed that due to its deference to the determinisms of the natural world, science fails to serve the purpose of liberating us from their power, instead it must remain an expression of human subjugation by the particular state of existence. For the same reason, science “knows not the Truth, it knows only truths”<sup>14</sup> as it can unravel only that which is visible and remains blind to the ultimate mystery of existence. It promotes a particular “scientific reality” which, however, is hardly the only reality that we, as human beings, inhabit. Alongside it, there are visions of the world offered by religion and philosophy (the latter being capable of the same only if it remains free of said positivist demands of scientism). While summing up his philosophical journey in his autobiographical essay *Dream and Reality*, Berdyaev admitted to a growing appreciation for the role of science and critical (transcendental) philosophy.<sup>15</sup> He saw the value of empirical sciences, particularly the efforts of (European) philosophy in terms of formulating diagnoses of the twilight of Western civilisation. It is through that scientific and critical, philosophical diagnosis that Christianity may yet try to overcome said crisis (or weakness) of European culture. Nonetheless, Berdyaev remained

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>13</sup> Berdyaev, “Filosofiya svobody,” 264.

<sup>14</sup> Berdyaev, *Smysl tvorchestva*, 56.

<sup>15</sup> Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality*.

antagonistic towards the reductionist metaphysics of naturalism as it was incompatible with his idealistic and personalistic worldview. In an even later period, in his posthumously published *The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Caesar* (1951), the philosopher subscribed to the conviction, as dictated by the most authentic Christian standpoint, that rather than negate this or that particular scientific advance, one should strive to seize spiritual control over it by prudently incorporating the same into the Christian perspective.<sup>16</sup>

Il'in, on the other hand, generally refrained from addressing natural sciences as much as he was disinclined to write about the shortcomings of methodological scientism. As a philosopher of history, politics and religion, he would rather analyse the general crisis of Western culture and the widespread sense of being burdened by the demands on Europeans to adapt their traditional value systems to the new civilisational reality of the turn of centuries:

the discord between faith and reason has been present in Europe for a long time. But what is now gradually becoming prevalent is attempts of justifying (apologia) the demoralisation and corruption, an open rebellion against God and everything Divine, a systematic deprivation of any form of sanctity in life and a categorical rejection of Christianity. This rejection found its ultimate apex in Nietzsche's openly hateful and defiant intoxication, and has seen its practical realisation and conclusion in the events of recent decades (1917–1953).<sup>17</sup>

Unlike Nietzsche, the Western classic of the “devaluation of contemporary values,” Il'in saw a way in which to improve the condition of industrialising European civilisation. He was convinced that the burden of culture experienced and stigmatised by the progressive, secularised strata of Western societies and a faction of Russian intelligentsia, resulted from that very secularisation of culture and deprivation<sup>18</sup> (of its particular domains such as science, religion, art, ethics, politics, or education) of love. For it is love, understood not only as love for fellow human beings but also the adoration of God, that becomes a potent source of human revival and reinvigoration of the ossified culture. It was fairly evident to him that love is indeed the foundation of modern and creative spiritual life as it is the source of deep faith and the entirety of spiritual culture. Notably, the fact that European culture had been stripped of religious

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<sup>16</sup> Berdyayev, “Tsarstvo Bozhiye i tsarstvo kesarya.”

<sup>17</sup> Il'in, *Put' k ochevidnosti*, 313.

<sup>18</sup> Il'in spoke not so much of implicit secularisation but rather of the removal and elimination of religious content from culture, which he treated as one of the facets of secularisation.



content, and the consequences of the same, has been of particular interest to contemporary post-secular thinkers,<sup>19</sup> who often express hope that what survives is at least: “a trace reference to transcendence allowing us to maintain a certain balance and direction in our endeavours, which in the absence of said reference would be rendered entirely meaningless.”<sup>20</sup>

As a political philosopher, Il'in focused on the area of humanistic and social studies devoted to law (jurisprudence). To quote his biographers and encyclopaedists, in 1919 he wrote a notable work entitled *On the Essence of Conscience of Law*, published posthumously in Munich in 1956, with a general summary of the same appearing earlier, in 1935, under the title *The Way of Spiritual Revival*.<sup>21</sup> The work was strongly influenced by Il'in's independent, religious and personalistic perspective, in which the author related the civilisational domain of law to the sphere of spirituality, consequently identifying three axioms of legal awareness that lay at the basis of the legal life of any nation, and which constituted his personal ideals (regardless of the inherent difficulty of implementing the same in the day to day political practice): “the right to personal dignity,” “the right to civic autonomy” understood as a citizen's capacity to remain intrinsically free and responsible as a genuine legal entity, and “the right to mutual respect” (the reciprocal respect and trust between citizens themselves and in their relations with state authorities). The barely adumbrated, yet undeniably close correlation between the humanistic and social scope of his philosophy of law (or philosophy of politics) and Christianity is a testament to Il'in's abandonment of the either-or approach: either science or religious worldview, and his leaning towards Berdyaev's concept of reconciling these seemingly contrary cultural domains. In doing so, he can be said to have anticipated the contemporary, post-secular rediscovery of the role of religion (not just Christianity) in public life (as well as legal awareness), which either coincides with the search for new horizons within which modern religion (having abandoned its transcendental claims) can coexist with enlightened reason,<sup>22</sup> or leads to its turn towards metaphysics manifested in the dialogue of contemporary political thought with Plato, Aristotle, the Church Fathers and medieval philosophers (John Milbank, Phillip Blond); the latter being far less valued by most post-secularists of today.

<sup>19</sup> The same refers in particular to the representatives of the English group known as the Radical Orthodoxy as well as Charles Taylor, Gianni Vattimo and Jean-Luc Marion, rather than the more decidedly leftist thinkers, who wish for a revival of religion in the secular sphere but forego any metaphysical claims, such as Alain Badiou or Slavoj Žižek.

<sup>20</sup> Bielik-Robson, “Myśl postsekalarna,” 7.

<sup>21</sup> Il'in, *Put' k ochevidnosti*, Chapters 8–10.

<sup>22</sup> Halik, *Europejskie mówienie o Bogu*, 6–9.

## The Concept of Philosophy in the Works of Berdyaev and Il'in

Berdyaev was at least somewhat “touched” by Western European Enlightenment secularism, as evidenced by a period in his thinking influenced by the German rationalist school of philosophy (Marx, Kant). However, by the time he engaged in developing his own independent philosophical stance, he had already placed himself in direct opposition to the enlightened-rationalist<sup>23</sup> or naturalistic-scientific standpoint. The basis for his criticism of the modern philosophical tradition stemmed from an argument often evoked by various Russian philosophers, namely the objection to its lack of capacity for addressing the multi-faceted, multidimensional condition of human existence which is not easily reduced to the status of a cognitive subject so readily assumed in modern epistemology. Above all, rationalist philosophy is oblivious to the tragedy of human existence, the dramatic circumstance that contributes to life experience, because it lacks the methodological tools necessary to account for it. In its system-forming disposition, a weakness rather than strength of philosophy to date, it is oriented solely towards science and the explication of its studies. Meanwhile, reality continues to be perceived as something alien and hostile, consequently inviting various irrational (occult or magical) explanations. What is then needed is a new philosophy, one that would strive to grasp the actual meaning of the world and human existence, and would guide human spirit towards a state of freedom. Berdyaev rejects the attachment of nineteenth century Western philosophy to science (and the requirement of scientific approach) as something that makes it a mere passive reflection of the world, a passive philosophy of determinism that fails or neglects to understand what the human spirit actually craves.<sup>24</sup> In his early idealistic deliberations, he proposed to liberate philosophy from its close external ties to Christian theology so that it does not fall into the pattern of medieval scholastics. At the same time, however, he emphasized that any true thinker must be a deeply religious person. Eventually, he succeeded in finding a solution to this painful antinomy: free creativity of the human spirit striving to discover the meaning of the world and oppose the laws of deterministic reality is possible only if it stems out of Christianity, as historical Christianity (as well as the idea of new Christianity which he co-created) has always been a religion of freedom and creativeness, despite the various

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<sup>23</sup> However, Berdyaev's attitude to Kant's works evolved, as observed first by Shestov (who diagnosed Berdyaev's eventual inclination in favour of Kantianism). A Polish researcher, Grzegorz Przebinda, distinguished four stages of said evolution.

<sup>24</sup> Berdyaev, *Smysł twórczości*, 57.

social and cultural determinisms which affected it throughout its history. All we need is to bring back to light the imperative of the creativity of human spirit, which is implicitly present in the Bible, and encourage creative attitudes within the realm of Christian philosophy. Such seemingly subjective and non-scientific philosophy may indeed prove far more authentic than autonomic modern philosophy with its claims of objectivity and scientific approach. It is because it has the benefit of the living truth inaccessible to the Enlightenment mind guided exclusively by the principles of logical reasoning; it captures the specific, dynamic and antinomic truth, as dynamic as life itself. Therefore, as has already been observed elsewhere, it cannot be reduced to "conformity of judgement with the actual state of affairs."<sup>25</sup> This new philosophy does not deal with an outside object (or an ordered system thereof) but a mystery within which such an object is embedded, where it lives, a mystery manifesting itself to the object, controlling and enveloping the same. Such philosophy is not a product of studying reality with the aim of gaining practical control over it, but rather the result of cognition understood as intuition, it is a contemplation of the truth and meaning of reality. It is a proper manifestation of the mystery, one to provide the light which evokes awe, ecstasy, light which illuminates all things and belongs neither to man himself nor to the disappearing mystery as such. In Berdyaev's opinion, the thus manifested Truth is the "meaning of the one who exists, and the meaning is his truth."<sup>26</sup> Naturally, cognising the Living Truth is not attainable by everyone, as is the case with intellectual cognition. Instead, it requires the background of a particular spiritual or religious experience, a tragedy and contradiction tormenting the cognisor, or possibly his unique vital or spiritual capacity."<sup>27</sup> Berdyaev's response to anticipated doubts as to whether such a *living truth* could possibly be widely adopted was the following:

The problem of whether something is generally accepted is not a logical one, it is a problem of spiritual community, of council, and strength of spirit. For the internally distressed, the world is governed by the laws of mathematics and physics, rather than freedom and meaning. Those alien to themselves require that every truth be proven. The generally accepted science is understood as adaptation to a given condition of the world, it is a manifestation of an inferior, incomplete form of cooperation grounded in determinism. The generally prevalent philosophy assumes a higher form of community because philosophical literature evokes the notion of heroically prevailing over

<sup>25</sup> Rarot, "Obiektywistyczny paradygmat," 230.

<sup>26</sup> Ostrowski, *Bierdiajew*, 80.

<sup>27</sup> Proleyev, "Kul'turno-istoricheskiye razlichiya razuma," 231.

the world's determinism, which can be achieved by only a limited group of people. Philosophical intuition is challenged by the spirit of the council.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, the institutionally conceived meaning of existence is not independent as it is a meaning born in God, "and that birth is then repeated by everyone in existence (as it is found in the very core of the cognitive subject, in his heart, which listens in and senses the obviousness of divine inspiration)."<sup>29</sup>

The secularist and somewhat rare reflection on Il'in's philosophical legacy has so far taken note only of his two-volume *The Philosophy of Hegel as a Doctrine of the Concreteness of God and Humanity* (1918) comprising a collection of his early lectures.<sup>30</sup> It has been said to be one of the better interpretations of Hegel's philosophy.<sup>31</sup> Il'in's approach to Hegel is different from that of modern post-secularists who see it as "abolishment of religion in philosophy" and ask: what does it mean if "transcendence is truly disappearing, and man awakens free and alone in the world of infinite immanence?"<sup>32</sup>

Conversely, in Il'in's portrayal, as demonstrated by researchers of his philosophy and his biographers, it is seen as a pantheistic religious experience and a crisis of rationalist theodicy incapable of systematising the explanation of the irrational element of the empirical world.<sup>33</sup> For that reason (as well as due to his earlier, unpublished texts devoted to Hegel), many considered him exclusively as a Hegelian and deliberately neglected the fact that his philosophy went far beyond analyses of Hegel's works. After all, it inspired a whole school in Russian religious philosophy, namely Orthodox philosophy evoking the tradition of Greek Church Fathers. The only thing that Il'in borrowed from others, more specifically from one of his contemporaries—the German philosopher Edmund Husserl, was the desire to provide a clearer description of the phenomenon of human religiousness. Said description was employed in *Axioms of Religious Experience* (1953). Generally speaking, Il'in, much like Berdyaev, was dissatisfied with German systematic thinking which conceived reality as a rational cognitive paradigm. In his critical article *What is Philosophy?*, he argued that no-one granted philosophers the right to assume that the claims of rational cognition are indeed the principles by which a given object exists, as well as that: "it is likely that the object of philosophy is intelligent, but he may

<sup>28</sup> Berdyaev, *Smysl tvorchestva*, 64.

<sup>29</sup> Rarot, "Obiektywistyczny paradygmat," 231.

<sup>30</sup> Il'in, *The Philosophy of Hegel*.

<sup>31</sup> Lisitsa, "Ivan Il'in on the Foundations of Christian Culture," 163.

<sup>32</sup> Bielik-Robson, "Myśl postsekularna," 7.

<sup>33</sup> Kurayev, "Filosof volevoy idei," 404–05.

be intelligent with Intelligence to dwarf our own common "intelligence" to the level of total unintelligence."<sup>34</sup>

A systematic philosopher is, in his opinion, much like a pitiful bookkeeper trying to tidy up his office. Il'in wished for a philosophy that would be more adequate to the complexity of life, one that would facilitate the merger of mind, heart and senses, which would in effect allow "contemplation with the heart." Only this could constitute a truly Russian philosophy capable of reforming from the ground up the national spiritual experience and freeing itself from foreign Western influences. Otherwise, philosophy is in danger of becoming a lifeless and redundant scrap heap in the history of Russian culture.<sup>35</sup> This redefined Russian philosophy would aim to honestly and responsibly study and describe objects, but not to construct them; it would perfect contemplation and steer clear of creating any abstract systems. Il'in devaluated deduction (establishing the system of an axiom) in favour of contemplative induction, empirical description of an object in its particular manifestations and in accordance with its actual nature. To the potential allegation that thus understood philosophy becomes indistinguishable from other sciences, he would reply that it is a science that requires a religious-spiritual person to pose experience and a particular artistry in the description of the studied objects. Indeed, it requires a philosophical experience which pertains to not only the sense of cognitive obviousness resulting in a contemplable truth, but also the experience of true love, of hearing the voice of one's conscience, taking in a work of art, or submitting oneself willingly to the rule of law. It eventually also requires a certain, deepened moral experience.

It is therefore clear that in his radicalism, Il'in expected philosophy to return to its ancient roots in becoming a source of wisdom and the teacher of life, while Russian thinkers were to practice their reflection in an involved manner, thus distinguishing themselves from indifferent and overly distanced western philosophers. And so, should a Russian philosopher wish to write about virtue and goodness, he must above all expand and deepen his own moral experience, as morality must not be conveyed or presented in terms of abstract constructs or speculation. Failing this is bound to only produce lifeless and ossified truths about moral phenomena. The argument also extends to epistemology which requires the philosopher to demonstrate a personal and deep experience of obviousness. Similarly, the theory of aesthetics demands of the philosopher a deep and not exclusively subjective experience of a work of art, etc. At the same time, this new Russian philosophy understood as *contemplation with*

<sup>34</sup> Il'in, *Put' k ochevidnosti*, 363.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 362.

*the heart* evolved into a “philosophy of belief,” philosophy of religion. What it means is that it ultimately placed man in a world created by God as only such a world, unlike Western nihilistic perceptions of the same, possesses meaning and can deliver us from the despair of the contemporary crisis of values. This philosophy was meant predominantly for those Russians who needed to be liberated from the yoke of secularist and materialistic worldviews and longed for a spiritual rebirth that would rely on an equilibrium of spirit and instinct, laws of nature and principles of spiritual life (the already mentioned *The Way of Spiritual Revival* and *Foundations of Struggle for the National Russia* (1938).

### Berdyayev and Il'in on Religion

Berdyayev negated the approach advocating the cognitive advantage of science over religion, as well as any concepts proclaiming absolute superiority of religion over science, and finally, any calls for a radical dualism between scientific knowledge and faith that denied the existence of any commonalities (Kantianism). It should be added that his interest in the relationship between science and religion was strictly limited to the context of Christianity. As already mentioned above, his ultimate position in this argument (the final product of the evolution in his thinking) was to accept a synthesis of antinomic parts constituting a single, consistent entity. On the one hand, he emphasized that religious faith and scientific knowledge, i.e. the two ways in which human spirit relates to the world, are indeed focused on two opposite spectra of reality: the former aiming to reveal its invisible aspects, the latter preoccupied with the visible; faith is the freedom of accepting that which has been revealed, while scientific knowledge is the compulsion to do so. On the other hand, however, he noticed that the two approaches are perfectly complementary, together giving way to the varied conditions and needs of the irreducible human spirit: “ultimately, knowledge and faith are the same thing... the world of knowledge and the world of faith are given as relatively incompatible systems, but they can be reduced to a singular entity.”<sup>36</sup>

Therefore, despite claims made by advocates of the critical Enlightenment to which he refers in his epistemology as gnoseological illusionism entirely divorced from actual being, religious faith is treated by Berdyayev as a form of knowledge. It should be critically mentioned at this point that although the author wished to declaratively steer clear of any comparison between the two

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<sup>36</sup> Berdyayev, “Filosofiya svobody,” 53.

cognitive systems and the inevitable prioritisation of one over the other, he himself often saw cognition through faith as superior to cognition through science, because:

through faith, one gains knowledge, but knowledge that is higher and fuller, an all-encompassing perspective, limitlessness. Scientific knowledge addresses reality but it is unable to perceive the imitations and pathology that said reality entails.<sup>37</sup>

Cognition through faith allows, at the cost of abandoning the small reason concerned with the wisdom of this world, access to the Great Reason, the universal reason, the reason of mystics and Christian saints (the sole protectors of the complete experience unaffected by practicalities). Berdyaev called it the cosmic reason, the Logos, which holds in its grasp the “community of man and Universe, microcosm and macrocosm.”<sup>38</sup> Such a reason is finally capable of perceiving the order and purpose of the world, feats far beyond the little reason. The thinker objectively observed that autonomous philosophers were at times able to transcend the wisdom of the world, to tap into the Logos-Reason, but in his opinion they still voiced visions of reality marked with particularity. Only religious philosophers, in his case Christian thinkers, by freeing themselves from sin and vice i.e. the sources of cognitive errors, are able to fully transcend the exclusively worldly wisdom, which is but “folly in the eyes of God.”<sup>39</sup> Thereby he referred to the Old Testament’s idea of Wisdom, according to which “Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins” (Wis 1:4).

An important argument testifying to the limitations (and thus secondary quality) of the cognitive potential of science was, in Berdyaev’s opinion, its inability to account for the incidence of miracles, the miraculous intervention of another Reality in the matters of this world. Following Dostoyevsky and the Orthodox doctrine, Berdyaev was convinced that, on the one hand, mature religiousness has no need for physical miracles as they effectively render it an empirical fact depriving the believer of his freedom. On the other hand, however, as a religious thinker aspiring to participation in the great Reason, he claimed that although the physical world is subject to the laws of nature (which God himself imposed on it), the “enclosed compartment of our world can be penetrated by forces originating from beyond, powers of a divine

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

nature, powers of grace.”<sup>40</sup> However, such instances in no way undermine natural principles but rather permeate them with other, unfamiliar influences. After all, the miracle of Christ’s Resurrection, far from annulling the law of death as such, constituted a certain exception and a victory of an otherwise unchallenged principle. Having brought up the above argument, however, the author hurried to clarify that despite its evident superiority, religious faith should remain respectful of scientific knowledge which, at the present stage of development of both the world and the human spirit, must be considered the necessary good (a view he would extend to the existence of the earthly state which he deemed necessary until mankind is mature enough to finally establish the Kingdom of God, first in the outside world and then—solely in their hearts).

Everything said so far about Berdyaev’s attitude to religion seems to lead to the critical conclusion that counting him among the group of philosophers anticipating modern post-secularism is somewhat unjustified. After all, any mention is yet to be made of the Russian author’s position on the central motif of post-secular discourse, namely interpretation of the “exemplarily modern *death of God*.”<sup>41</sup> However, several of Berdyaev’s works do indeed discuss this particular idea of Nietzsche’s,<sup>42</sup> wherein his chief criticism of the German philosopher pertained to:

his inability to account for the transcendental, mystical character of Christianity, very different from its historical and worldly dimensions. For that reason, the author of *Will to Power* also could not perceive the latent, restorative potential that Christianity represents, it was why it seemed to him a creation of the weak, capable of preaching exclusively of the sinfulness and powerlessness of the human condition. Nietzsche could not, or rather would not consider, as Christian modernists did, the new dimension of Christianity, one able to complement the old teachings of law and redemption with the new revelation of freedom and creativity. He was oblivious to the other aspect of the Suffering Christ: His Divine Power and Glory evident in the context of the historical Orthodox Church.<sup>43</sup>

When it comes to Il’in’s attitude towards religion and religiousness, the philosopher also perceived it in a deeper, more mystical way (as recounted in a letter to his friend entitled *What is Religiosity?*). Religiousness is the spiritual pinnacle, the inner unity of a human being, which harmoniously merges his

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>41</sup> Bielik-Robson, “Myśl postsekalarna,” 7.

<sup>42</sup> Berdyaev, “Salvation and Creativity,” and *The Divine and the Human*.

<sup>43</sup> Rarot, *Od nihilizmu do chrześcijaństwa*, 224–25.



instincts, desires, soul and spirit. A religious person is easy to identify as he or she is a monolith, a spiritual wholeness (not only in the face of danger). Religiousness is therefore neither merely an opinion and a point of view, nor a dogmatically obedient stance in life and thought.<sup>44</sup> Instead, it constitutes a new, creative life, a new human condition which will become possible once the world of men embraces the grace of God and divine energy. On the outside, such a person is immediately recognized as somehow transformed, while on the inside there is a sense of great care and desire to prove worthy of the grace and Strength received. Il'in goes on to discuss the full extent of a religious experience in the already mentioned two-volume work *Axioms of Religious Experience*, where the central focus is on a phenomenological description of a religious act understood as a spiritual state affecting man in his relationship with God.

## Conclusions

Discussing these two philosophers together may seem somewhat unjustified given the fact that Berdyaev long advocated the unpopular Christian modernism and Christian universalism, while Il'in fully subscribed to the rational doctrine of the Orthodox Church as well as nationalistic and monarchist ideologies. However, despite these glaring discrepancies, there was also an important similarity—the symbiotic definition of the relationship between religion and science (unlike the one proposed in the confrontational model, where religion, in whatever form, is always conservative while sciences are seen as revolutionary and facilitating changeability and the evolutionary progress). The symbiotic model is normally advocated by theologians and Christian thinkers who are typically deeply convinced that their duty is to maintain a positive attitude towards scientific advances and to skilfully incorporate scientific discoveries into the Christian worldview.<sup>45</sup> Notably, it required considerable effort and a relatively long time for Berdyaev to fully acknowledge the positive role of science. Meanwhile, Il'in did so virtually from the very beginning and the height of his symbiotic approach to science was the use of the phenomenological method in the description of a religious experience. The question of whether the model of a symbiotic relationship between science and religion formulated by the two philosophers has any chance of effectively

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<sup>44</sup> Il'in, *Put' k ochevidnosti*, 398.

<sup>45</sup> I write also about this in the article "Religia a nauka."

contributing to the discourse with the modern post-secular thought as its prefiguration, remains, as yet, unresolved.

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## Searching for Certainty: Russian and Post-Secular Thought

The question regarding certainty, referring to the notion of certainty as a constitutive element of human identity which shapes one's relation to their place and role in the world has constituted a significant problem over the course of the history of human reflection. Certainty regarding the existence of the world and the human being him—or herself, as well as certainty regarding knowledge about the reality surrounding the human, constituted the guarantee of the sense of security, a guarantee of the human being securely situated within the world, which translates into the continuity and cohesion of perceiving and constituting the human identity. In the abovementioned reflection, Russian thought occupies a prominent position, connecting the notion of certainty with a particular approach to ontologism. The reflection regarding human knowledge is here closely intertwined with references to being as the basis of cognition. This particular connection between cognition and being takes on the shape of ontognoseology (which is reflected in the works of such thinkers as Semen Frank, Nikolai Berdyaev or Pavel Florensky). The reality of the twenty-first century appears frequently as a reality, on the one hand, of post-certainty, a reality that negates certainty as the basis of human self-definition, and on the other hand, as reality that seeks certainty and asks for certainty. Russian thought, and, more particularly, the Russian philosophy of the turn of the ninetieth and twentieth century may constitute a valuable input in the attempts at answering the question regarding the importance of the sense of certainty, and, thus, basic sense of safety.

Longing, or, as Jean-Luc Nancy emphasises, a peculiar drive of the reason—directed towards the attempts at defining “the impossible” or putting into a framework of notions that which is “unfathomable” (“the unfathomable”) will designate, to a large extent, the vector of considerations of post-secular reflection. Seeking the foundations of knowledge, as well as of the world itself,

whether inside the world or outside its bounds, constitutes, in a sense, an attempt to return to the question regarding the certainty of human existence, the certainty of its being situated in the world (of being), as well as the existence of the world itself. In this way, philosophical thought comes a full circle, from seeking a “hard,” unambiguous foundation of reality, seeking the primal *arche*, as was the habit of reflection in antiquity, to making the category of certainty the necessary point of reference in seeking and getting a hold of truth, which found its culmination in Descartes’ philosophical reflection, to negating unambiguous foundations of knowledge, which became clear in the reflection of modernism and postmodernism. Beginning by negating positive tenets of knowledge, undermining these tenets and deconstructing them, post-secularism at the same time turns towards questions regarding the foundations of existence and cognition, which have their roots in ancient thought.

In antiquity, understanding a being entailed certainty regarding its existence, Greek τὸ ὄν (*to on*)—being, identified with the notion of essence οὐσία (*ousía*), recognised as the basis of the world, was identified with that which is eternal, immovable, unchangeable. Heinzmann, pointing towards the distinctive feature of Greek reflection, writes:

Since the very beginning, Greek thought had posed a question regarding being as something constant, juxtaposed with becoming. This question leads beyond the experienced world to *kosmos noetos*, *modus intelligibilis*, to the reality proper, a purely spiritual world. This is what noetic perception, pure thinking is oriented towards. And it leads to *episteme*, to pure knowledge, and its object is that which is general and that which is unchangeable.<sup>1</sup>

The essence of knowledge (or, rather, wisdom) lay herein not in constructing reality, but in reaching its foundation, its ontological sources. Truth as *aletheia* is nothing else but revealing that which is covered, hidden from the human, situated beyond the realm of possibility of being described through simple—to use Heidegger’s terminology—dealing with the world, or being in the world. *Nous*—reason was supposed to make it possible to look into deeper layers of being, discover its foundation. Platonic *nous* is connected with the notion of *noesis*—a higher knowledge that makes it possible to look into the reality of the world of ideas.<sup>2</sup> There is no place here for questioning the existence of being as the fabric of reality; it is, rather, longing after certainty that the dialectic movement of reason results from—the search for certainty,

<sup>1</sup> Heinzmann, *Philosophie des Mittelalters*, 18.

<sup>2</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, V 476e—V 477b, VI, 510b–e, VII 533c–d.

or, rather, the attempt at uncovering that which is ostensibly certain, which is (given). Certainty regarding the existence of the hard foundations of reality was intertwined with describing the entirety of the world in the categories of order juxtaposed with chaos. Human fate was marked off by discovering ordered structures of the world where change appeared only as a surface movement, a cyclically understood course of events, which does not disturb the stability and immutability of the ontic basis of the world. Truth was connected with a particular revelation of the world in its foundations; human being, through cognition (rational insight into the intelligible tissue of reality), extracted into the light of day ontic foundations of the world that were presumed to be certain. Parmenides, after all, argued that “that is and that it is not possible that be not ... that is not and that it is right that be not,”<sup>3</sup> the truth regarding that is self-evident. Truth and being were also connected by Aristotle, who wrote in *Metaphysics* that, “[t]o say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true.”<sup>4</sup> And thus, longing for certain knowledge, and, as follows, for truth, transforms into embodying the truth itself by the means of knowledge (thought), which finds its expression in the classical definition of truth, *Veritas est adequatio rei et intellectus*, as formulated by Isaac Israeli ben Solomon, the Jewish philosopher who analysed the thought of the Stagirite philosopher. Aristotle himself wrote that the truthfulness of statements consists in their being consistent with facts<sup>5</sup> or that “falsity and truth are not in things... but in thought.”<sup>6</sup>

This search for or striving towards that which is certain—Truth—will have designated the paths of human reflection since the times of antiquity. What is significant is that seeking firm foundations of reality is superimposed by a crack within being itself, or, rather, a tear within it. Dual perception of the world, as introduced by Plato, situates truth in its higher, ideal dimension (which consists of ideal forms); the lower dimension thus becomes inscribed with a particular striving towards the actual reality, or, in other words, towards an ideal basis of the material world.<sup>7</sup> In *The Republic* Plato writes: “so too the instrument of knowledge can only by the movement of the whole soul be turned from the world of becoming into that of being, and learn by degrees to endure the sight of being, and of the brightest and best of being, or in other words, of the good.”<sup>8</sup> The movement of the soul is its rising, which reinforces the separation.

<sup>3</sup> Mourelatos, *Route of Parmenides*, 55.

<sup>4</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1011b.

<sup>5</sup> Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, 19a.

<sup>6</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1027b.

<sup>7</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, 517b–c, 518, c–d.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 518, c–d.

Moving towards immortality—eternal forms—results from noticing their imperfect representations, which imposes the necessity of movement—letting go of the world of becoming.

Reality, marked by the Platonic tear, the separation of the world into the world of material being and the world of ideal forms (ideas), turns out to be the reality of two intersecting orders inscribed into a particular horizon of time and space, the order of “here and now” and that of “there and then,” with the caveat that truth, and, as follows, certainty, become inscribed into the “upper” reality, the vertical dimension of the thought world. In thusly sketched representation of the world, human fate reflects the Faustian quest for the “intangible,” an eternal striving towards transcending the horizontal edge of the world. In this striving, the horizontal line crosses the vertical one. This very crossing is the awareness of the looming horizon, visible (be it in conscious insight or reflexive consideration), but intangible, always situated “before.” Here, truth constitutes the basis for the vector gravitating towards infinity. “When we wake up, at once something extends itself between a “here” and a “there.” We live the “here” as something proper, we experience the “there” as something alien. There is a dualizing of soul and world as poles of actuality.”<sup>9</sup> The aforementioned tear in the world causes, at the same time, the striving or gravitating towards transcending it. Thus begins to take shape, in Spengler’s belief, the “Faustian, restless spirit,” particular to the Western European culture, this specific, restless striving towards ceaseless transcending of reality that is immanent to a human being. This peculiar

Faustian passion has altered the Face of the Earth. This is the outward- and upward-straining life-feeling ... as expressed in Goethe’s Faust monologue. ... The intoxicated soul wills to fly above space and Time. An ineffable longing tempts him to indefinable horizons.<sup>10</sup>

Reality thusly sketched is intertwined in the European mindset with the Judeo-Christian tradition and the representation of reality it entails. On the vertical and horizontal planes in the representation of the world there are superimposed the divine plane—the reality of *sacrum*, and the Earthly plane—the reality of *profanum*. Here, truth takes on the shape of divine Sense, Anchor, Certainty. The Hebrew *emet* (truth) is, after all—drawing from the etymological sources of the notion—certainty.<sup>11</sup> The aim of the human fate, heretofore lying in the world of ideas, transforms into the reality of *sacrum*—the Divine

<sup>9</sup> Spengler, *Decline*, 164.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 503.

<sup>11</sup> See Świderkówna, *Bramy do Biblii*, 26; Florensky, *Pillar and Ground of the Truth*, 18.

Truth. Gravitating towards and transcending the limitations of matter as well as temporal and spatial entanglements makes the dual skeleton of reality stronger. This dual complexity of reality is marked by a particular “a relation to the outside of time (to the pure instant, to the ceasing of duration, to truth as an interruption of sense).”<sup>12</sup> However, as Nancy emphasises, this gravitating towards truth and sense, as particular to the Western European tradition, this problematic characteristic of the world (referring to Wittgenstein after Nancy) based on its sense is, at the same time, the awareness of sense reaching beyond the limits of the world, sense “beyond” that which is here and now.<sup>13</sup>

However, that which in Western thought and tradition is time and again situated beyond the horizon of the material world, in the Eastern (here: Russian) thought is found and situated inside, within the reality of Earth. Instead of striving towards the *sacrum* that is always situated beyond the limits of the world, the Russian soul, juxtaposed with the Faustian soul, discovers, or uncovers the *sacrum* within the world itself. This Faustian “upward movement” “the genuine Russian regards as contemptible vain-glory. The Russian soul, will-less, having the limitless plane as its prime-symbol, seeks to grow up—serving, anonymous, self-oblivious—in the brother-world of the plane.”<sup>14</sup> Nikolai Berdyaev emphasises that isolating the world, separating the reality of ideal forms and splitting the matter from them is a domain of the West. In his seminal text *East and West*, he writes that

the civilisation of the West, having actualised too far the potentialities and in everything providing a predominance to the formal principle, has led to the closing off and hardening of the consciousness, everywhere establishing divisions, boundaries and limits. Being thus closed off did not allow for more so a breadth of life. The perfection of form became a danger for the sustaining of life. ... The Russians understand differently the correspondence between form and matter, between act and potentiality. ... Russian thinking is inclined to see activity in the very potentiality of life.<sup>15</sup>

The tradition formed on the idea of reason isolates and separates specific elements of reality, ascribing a particular value to them, providing them with senses and meanings.

In a thusly ordered world, the sense of the world itself becomes transposed beyond the tangible reality that one can describe within a notional framework.

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<sup>12</sup> Nancy, *Adoration*, 24.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Spengler, *Decline*, 309.

<sup>15</sup> Berdyaev, “East.”



The certainty regarding the world itself, the foundation that gives it sense, as well as the knowledge about it, becomes separated from reality itself. Seeking sense transforms into a quest, striving reaching beyond the limits of the world, towards intangible reality that is always beyond human cognitive abilities. Seeking, or striving for that which does not fit within the notional framework—to reference Semen Frank—“inconceivable,” “impossible,” escaping notional articulation, and put together as given (given the human being as a higher order or sense that defines the world). With time, certainty starts to be displaced by its negation, doubt that leads, as a result, to rejecting certainty (and with it, truth or sense) as a direction of research. Negating any kind of certainty entails negating that which is situated beyond reality experienced by the means of the senses.

As Nancy emphasises, “the West ... which no longer has any distinct circumscription, is a mode of ebbing in the world in such a way that the sense of the world opens up as a spacing (*écartement*) within the world itself and in relation to it.” The Western will appear here as a reality that entails the “danger of an entire dissipation of sense when the world opens onto nothing but its own chasm.”<sup>16</sup> In this way, tradition based on the domination of reason cuts its own roots. After all, reason, as Nancy points out, grows out of the same source as religion does—from references to a reality-transcending situatedness of reason—the inside of the world—the sense, the sense, to return to Wittgenstein again, from beyond the world. The never-ending deconstruction of religion which Nancy talks about paves the way for reason from negation to affirmation.

Whereas Enlightenment reason, and following it the reason of the world of integral process, judged it necessary to close itself off to all dimensions of the “outside,” what is called for now is to break the enclosure in order to understand that it is from reason and through reason that the pressure, the drive (this *Trieb* of reason that Kant wants to uphold) of the relation with the infinite outside comes about, and does so *in this very place*.<sup>17</sup>

At the same time, the philosopher emphasises that

we speak with some familiarity of ‘this world’ in the sense of this world here, this “down-here,” this “mundane” world—but it is a way of speaking that is proper to the West. ... In a certain sense, with “this world” there is no longer any totality of beings ... or rather,

<sup>16</sup> Nancy, *Adoration*, 24–25.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 25.

there is such [a totality] but it is in itself open, it is at the same time entirely consistent in itself, without outside, and open. The beyond is within (*en-deça*).<sup>18</sup>

Constantly putting the unity of being into doubt, itself stemming from the process of the internal deconstruction of the foundations of reality and knowledge which is built over it, leads to a particular mixing of orders. The order of the external world, negated as the existing one, becomes, due to the power of reason—the negating instance (since the times of Enlightenment)—introduced into the inside of the world. As Nancy highlights, being closed to that which is “beyond” at the same time opens the world, appropriating or absorbing its outside. The world-beyond becomes situated inside of the world. This particular drive of reason leads reason itself over a peculiar circle: construction—negation—(de)construction. Seeking hard foundations of knowledge (certainty) leads from truth to putting it in doubt, to negating it, from certainty to doubt, to rejecting truth, and, finally, from rejection to asking about the object of this rejection again. This way, philosophical reflection becomes a reflection of opening the possibility of returning anew, returning not to truth or certainty as much as to the very question regarding them, question regarding the possibility of referring to the very foundation of the world and to the knowledge about the world. In this way we arrive at a particular opening up of reason, and, as follows, opening up of philosophical reflection. Opening up, as Nancy emphasises, to a new dimension of sense, the sense of the inside of the world.

In overcoming the Faustian drive towards transcending the limits of immanence, this particular philosophy leads us into a new kind of logic, “logic of opening.” “The outside of the world in the world is not “outside” according to the logic of a divorce, a rift, but according to that of an opening.”<sup>19</sup> At the same time, thusly understood logic and a particular opening of the world is connected with deconstruction that is inscribed within it. Deconstructing the external reality entails deconstructing *sacrum*, and, together with it, religion. According to Nancy, the deconstruction of religion (which is inscribed into the Western European tradition) stems from two sources. The first of these is “the affirmation of the presence ‘down here,’” the other consists in revealing the truth *hic et nunc*.<sup>20</sup> This truth is revealed here and now, and not there and then, inside the world and not in what is “outside,” leading to the “opening”

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 28.

of the world itself, of its inside, and, together with it, to “opening of reason.”<sup>21</sup> This particular opening of reason is concurrent with the “effacement,” as the philosopher notes, of the divine element heretofore inscribed into reality. Divinity becomes “effaced” (“blurred”), and thus human will not strive towards it or seek it (letting go of the Faustian vector of sense, sense given to one’s own existence and deriving from reality external to the world). We arrive here at the notion of God negating himself.

God who effaces himself is not only God who takes his leave, as he did of Job, or God who constantly refuses any analogy in this world, as for Mohammed. It is God who becomes man, abandoning his divinity ... the man into whom God “descends” and “empties himself” (Paul’s kenosis) is not rendered divine by this. On the contrary. God effaces himself in that man: he is this effacement, he is therefore a trace, he is an impalpable, imperceptible vestige of the emptied and abandoned divine. Mankind is the abandonment of God. ... A sign of this: *that the effacement of God is the sense of the world.*<sup>22</sup>

Thus understood, God merges with truth; negating his own affirmation, he becomes an element of the inside of the world, or, rather, the opening of the world, “an opening of sense that produces the spacing of the world and its relation to itself.”<sup>23</sup>

Opening of the world is pointing towards the world itself as a source of meaning and sense: meaning and sense that derive not so much from cognition (knowledge) as from the reality itself. To efface the element of divinity is to transfer sense from the reality that is external to the world to the inside of the world, and more precisely, to its centre—which the human appears to be. The Faustian vector of transcending the earthly reality becomes inverted. The aim of the search turns out to be the space of the world, its inside. The quest of reason to transcend immanence stands in front of the open possibility of becoming transformed into contemplating that which can be revealed not “there and then,” but “here and now.” In thus sketched representation of the world it is not the movement of thought toward overcoming the limitations of immanence that defines the reference to sense, but their coupling to reality. Not the separation of thought from being (the ontic situatedness of the human within the world), but pointing towards the world itself as a source of sense.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 31.

Making this particular connection between seeking truth and sense, and, thus, support with how human fate entangles in the world, is specific to Russian thought. Here, truth is not truth discovered through inquiries of reason as much as truth revealed together with the world appearing as the foundation of truth—revealing of the world. Through criticising the Western European tradition, the Russian philosophy of the Silver Age leads us into the space of ontognoseology. Here, it is not cognition but being that is perceived as the primal (with regard to the meaning, importance ascribed to it). Truth is seen as an extension of reality. In Semen Frank's reflection we will find the rejection of the subject-object relation (the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum*) which affirms the subject as the guarantee of certain knowledge for *sum ergo cogito*—the primacy of being over cognition.<sup>24</sup> In a similar vein, Pavel Florensky emphasises the direct connection of knowledge and being, showcasing that separating reason from being itself is an artificial procedure which divorces cognition from truth, building in a vacuum (as the abstract constructs of the mind do not find a foundation that would justify them). As the philosopher emphasises,

the act of knowing is not only a gnoseological but also an ontological act, not only an ideal but also real. Knowing is a real *going* of the knower *out* of himself, or (what is the same thing) a real *going* of what is known *into* the knower, a real unification of the knower and what is known.<sup>25</sup>

In his work significantly entitled *Tragedy of Philosophy*, Sergey Bulgakov highlights that the essence of the tragedy of philosophical reflection is tearing reason away from being, an excessive focus on oneself, which can lead towards an illusory sense of independence of the mind itself. According to the philosopher, the world has not been derived from *cogito*, conversely,

in the understanding (*postizhenii*) of the world reason depends on the being revealing (*pokazaniy*) itself. ... And this discovery is not an act of thought in the least, as it is achieved not by mental effort, not by chain of reasoning, but it constitutes a revelation of the world itself in human consciousness, thus constituting a kind of cognition.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, knowledge becomes transformed into living knowledge,<sup>27</sup> born out of the consolidation of cognitive powers and their simultaneous union with

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<sup>24</sup> Frank, "Russkoye," 169.

<sup>25</sup> Florensky, *Pillar and Ground of the Truth*, 55.

<sup>26</sup> Bulgakov, "Tragediya," 315.

<sup>27</sup> Spidlik, *L'idée russe*, 71.

their ontic foundation. Achieving truth then penetrates the totality of being. In the philosophical reflection of Semen Frank, this totality or depth of being is identified with its unity. Being entails here not only the reality of the objective world (what appears in its factuality and can be grasped as an opinion), but also that which escapes rational cognition, irrational reality—the ocean of reality that is intangible to notions.<sup>28</sup> The ontic fabric of the world thus understood is found in the prime-principle or rather prime-foundation, which, according to Frank, constitutes the source of sense and unity of the world.<sup>29</sup>

It is there that immanence meets transcendence, the vertical dimension of the world meets the horizontal one, being in its surface manifestations (reality) meets the “depth of being,” that which eludes comprehension (reality—“the unity of *being* and *truth*”<sup>30</sup>). In its totality, being is the revelation of the truth inside the world—as a unity. Here:

Everything that is immanent is also transcendent. And the transcendent in the immanent is, in turn, immanent. The hidden and unknown is revealed as such (i.e., in its reality) with total self-evident truth. Behind every thing and phenomenon lie infinite, inaccessible depths and distances, which, as such, are given to us with total immediacy. “*Alles ist weit—und nirgends schliesst sich der Kreis*” (Rilke).<sup>31</sup>

Frank’s *The Unknowable* brings us closer to putting the foundation of being as truth (unity) that reveals itself. Here, the truth of knowledge turns out to be only a “derivative” of truth understood as the primordial ground or foundation of being. As the philosopher emphasises, the truth which is the unity of being is, at the same time, its sense, “the sense-giving principle.” Separating the truth about reason—the notional understanding of the world of objects (“the objective world”) from its roots—the *primordial foundation*—is, as Frank will claim, “not the genuine,” incomplete truth. Sense (truth) is thus revealed in the world, its revelation is a composite part of being in its unity. Cognition turns out to consist in penetrating deeper layers of being; the truth—is an integral truth.

Berdyaev will write in a similar vein, emphasising that truth is a unity, the uniting element, the “sense of realness.” “Total, not partial, Truth, constitutes a revelation of the higher world, that is a non-objectified world. It cannot be revealed to an abstract mind, it is not exclusively intellectual.”<sup>32</sup> Cognition is

<sup>28</sup> See Frank, *Unknowable*, 55.

<sup>29</sup> See *ibid.*, 205.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>32</sup> Berdyaev, “Istina.”

possible through a reference to Truth as a unity, a foundation of the world. That which is given directly and which is possible to grasp in a rational reflection is only a part of a more complex reality. Under the surface of being, be it objective (Frank) or the objectified reality (Berdyayev) hides that which is “unknowable,” not fitting within the notional framework, and which we could also call “the impossible.” Truth is thus not that which can be conceived of only in the course of rational reflection, but that which appears, is a revelation of the world itself (in its totality).

Tearing apart the framework of thought in the categories of causality leads us into the space of phenomenology, or, rather, that which is revealed (being) points, at the same time, to the process of revealing itself—to the revelation of being. Seeking that which is hidden leads through ontology or ontognoseology to phenomenology. The philosophical reflection of Jean-Luc Marion is inscribed into this plane. Reaching for the “impossible,” that which is hidden, unavailable to human understanding, Marion points towards a particular presence of the absent—which appears or is revealed in giving (gifting or being a gift). “We can describe a gift in a situation where nothing, no-thing, is given.”<sup>33</sup> Thus understood phenomenology, at the same time, constitutes a tearing apart of consciousness itself. According to Marion, it is not consciousness that is the source of sense, but it is sense that transcends its boundaries. “Givenness ... deconstructs the category of strong subject.”<sup>34</sup> Constructing a particular phenomenology of the gift, Marion points towards that which is hidden behind the gift itself (that which becomes revealed in being gifted), to the givenness always remaining, in a sense, beyond the perspective of being revealed in a specific being, it is, rather, an analogy to Heidegger differentiating between being and Being, where being “appears, but Being ... never shows up.”<sup>35</sup> Analogically, according to Marion, givenness is hidden under the guise of a gift, and it can only be revealed by the disappearance of that which is given. This particular dialectics of giving and that which is given, as Markowski will say in analysing Marion’s thought, “breaks a window to infinity in the visible world.”<sup>36</sup> In this way, we are led into the space of faith. “And faith differs from knowledge in that it does not stop on that which is possible, but considers the impossible.”<sup>37</sup> Here, gift (or rather the entirety of entanglement of that which is given) melds with the notion of the “impossible.”

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<sup>33</sup> Marion, “Sketch,” 63.

<sup>34</sup> Markowski, “Pomyśleć,” 39.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 40.

The gift itself ... will never become identified with the presence of its phenomenon. Perhaps naming, language, thoughts, desires or intention are only where there is still a movement of thought, desire, naming, which itself cannot be cognized, experienced, or lived. ... In this sense, one can think, desire and say only that which is impossible.<sup>38</sup>

The impossible thus becomes an indicator of the possibility of opening to the question regarding it. After all, seeking the foundation of reality, its certain, defined footing, has shaped human reflection, occupying a particular space in philosophical reflection. The human being, seeking one's own definition in the world, has constantly asked about the world, asked about its boundaries, frames, about its foundations. At the same time, knowledge, constructed on the basis of questions, has constituted the basic for the self-definition of the human being, one's place and role in the world. Certainty regarding the existence of the world in its complexity and multidimensionality, and, as follows, certainty regarding the existence of the human as an important component of reality, has constituted the core of safe situatedness within the world. Seeking the "hidden" foundations of the world, that, which eludes notional description, has frequently been an element of how the human related to the surrounding reality and the human condition within it. Human reflection has led through the reference to the notion of certainty connected with the notion of truth and sense (giving sense to reality) to its negation to asking for it again. In this place, Russian philosophy may coincide with post-secular thought. The attempts at grasping the *inconceivable* or the *impossible* become inscribed in the plane of opening to the question and, at the same time, opening the question itself.

*Translated by Nelly Strehlau*

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## Vladimir Soloviev's Idea of the Universal Church and Post-Secular Thinking

For the last two decades, modern society has been witness to a distinct religious “turn:” on the one hand, there is growing criticism and discrediting of secular thinking, on the other, religious thinking is becoming rehabilitated as a tool for disclosing additional key factors which influence intercultural conflicts and intra-cultural contradictions. Since the turn of the century we have heard increasingly frequently that science has behaved in a manner which was unreasonably presumptuous. Almost pretending to a role of a “new religion,” it aims at solving problems which are initially beyond the scope of both scientific and ordinary rationality. However, all the attempts of science to become all-embracing have been in vain. At the same time, more than two hundred years of secularization has not succeeded in deleting it from either the social-term memory or the contemporary social and practical context. That is why the rehabilitation of religious thinking can neither turn back time nor revive traditional classical religious experience, nor indeed is there any such goal. The new religious consciousness, regardless of its degree of consistency and depth, has to position itself not as “*extra-*” or “*anti-*” but just as “*post-*secular.” Thus it suggests, firstly, its historical lateness in relation to the traditional religious consciousness, secondly, its logical connection with the non-religious experience, and thirdly, a relativity of its own, being ready to change to a more successful idea with time.

Yet this worldview transformation is perceived ambiguously in philosophical circles. In particular, Jürgen Habermas, who was among the first to notice it, treats it with a great deal of irony. He presumes it was somewhat inevitable that both secularization and post-secularity were to become ideologemes (“-isms”), as they were no more than *play* moments in the history of relations between

the Church and state,<sup>1</sup> meanwhile he does not touch upon the features of the mutual influence of reason and faith. This opinion can obviously be argued with, but we cannot help accepting the validity of it. Assuming that secularism goes beyond the scope of legal and political relations and that it can seriously affect the foundations of religious consciousness, experience, and the very essence of religion, we should regard secularism as a *mental* characteristic which historically leads religion to self-destruction. In this case it becomes very difficult to take the emergence of post-secularity seriously as time cannot be turned back. In the opinion of Habermas, the main feature of the post-secular state of society is not a counter-reformation of social consciousness, but a growing conformism of relations between secular and religious one which is manifested as a concern on adapting “to the fact that religious communities continue to exist in a context of ongoing secularization.”<sup>2</sup>

That means providing religion with more rights and opportunities to manifest itself in society, so that, on a par with secular spheres, it could participate in public life and claim collective achievements. For example, it substantiates the exclusive right of religion to charitable and peacekeeping activities outside of politics. Of course, this cannot help but give rise to certain distortions and deviations in the structures of secular and religious consciousness and, consequently, in the relationship of the believers and non-believers towards the world. This is especially evident in the original problem:

Religious consciousness must, first, come to terms with the cognitive dissonance of encountering other denominations and religions. It must secondly adapt to the authority of the sciences which hold the societal monopoly of secular knowledge. It must, last, agree to the premises of a constitutional state grounded in a profane morality. Without this thrust of reflections, monotheisms in relentlessly modernized societies unleash a destructive potential.<sup>3</sup>

The main reason for the appearance of post-secular thinking is recognition of the fact that rationality cannot be a universal philosophical principle, since with its help it is impossible to conquer anything which is positioned as a “prejudice” *towards the principle itself*. It is not only religious beliefs, but also all sorts of ideas *taken to heart, uncritically, with sensual immediacy* that, one way or another, can seize people’s minds and, independent of people’s will, can direct the flow of thoughts. Everything that can be interpreted,

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<sup>1</sup> See Habermas, “Faith and Knowledge,” 329.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

and easily be transformed into idols, and try to “stop the time” should be ranked as superstitions. Thus the French Enlightenment thinkers defined the essence of prejudice. Later it was confirmed by Kant: “The tendency to such passivity, and therefore to heteronomy of the Reason, is called *prejudice*; and the greatest prejudice of all is to represent nature as not subject to the rules that the Understanding places at its basis by means of its own essential law, *i.e.* is *superstition*.”<sup>4</sup> However, Kant also pointed out that such an interpretation of superstitions and prejudices conceals the danger to lose a moral measure of relations not only between thinking and being, but also in practical behavior: judgment ability “in its reflection takes account (*a priori*) of the mode of representation of all other men in thought; in order as it were to compare its judgment with the collective Reason of humanity”<sup>5</sup> and loses the grounds of reflection, being replaced with these items. In other words, rationality can really conquer only itself. Therefore, there is sense in recognizing the power and autonomy of “prejudices” and in understanding their historical role and necessity.

*The main features* of post-secular thinking include a rejection of a consistent rational discourse on the religious and theological problems as well as different ways of substantiating the synthesis of rationalism and irrationalism. In other words, *post-secular thinking is not a consistent religious thought in the usual sense*. Being a part of mass culture, it includes scientific, mundane-profane and mythological aspects besides the religious. We can agree with Habermas on that “Post-secular society continuous the work, for religion itself, that religion did for myth.”<sup>6</sup> On the one hand, it aims at preserving respect for religion and extracting from it everything that seems most valuable. On the other hand, for this purpose it has to interpret the content of religion if not in terms of consistent rationality then, in any case, in terms of objectivity (perhaps metaphorically). In practice it leads to the fact that “religion within only *reason*” (Kant) turns out a “religion within only *judgment*.” In turn, absolutization of judgment and contrasting it to the reason is nothing but a *myth* because this judgment is imbued with unusual features. However, today it is the only way to compensate for the infringement of believers’ rights in a liberal society. Thus, in post-secular society religion does not regain its lost status of a *goal* and continues to remain just a *means*.

The main purpose and meaning of post-secularity is obviously to overcome the Church autonomy from the state—the principle proclaimed in the era of

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<sup>4</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 171.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>6</sup> Habermas, “Faith and Knowledge,” 335.

early Christianity. Since the state once intervened in the affairs of the Church policy of secularization, the Church can no longer exist in isolation, the Church leaders cannot pretend that they do not take into consideration the attitude of secular circles. Therefore, the state must act not as a persecutor, but as a mediator between religious and secular institutions, although it must act in this way only in those cases where the relations between the Church and secular circles are transformed from a simple contradiction into antagonism. In other words, when the conflict cannot be resolved by religious or mass consciousness alone but upon necessity, it is to attract legal and political means.

Thus, we should not consider post-secular thinking only as a forced response of mass consciousness to the inability of society to deal with the vital problems which are brought about by science and routine almost every day: for example, the necessity to solve such topical issues as “how we should deal with prepersonal human life under descriptions of molecular biology that make generic interventions possible.”<sup>7</sup> In this case, post-secularity will be seen as a fortuity in that it always has a necessary alternative denying its own basis. We would apparently agree with it, but for the steady ideological and theoretical assumptions of forming post-secular thinking in a variety of conceptual motifs in the works of Western European and American thinkers of the first half of the twentieth century, as well as the Russian religious philosophers of the turn of the ninetieth and twentieth centuries. These works are worth paying attention to. The experience of the aforementioned Russian thinkers is of particular interest in this context because the secularity on show in Tsarist Russia and later in the Soviet Union was significantly different from the European one.<sup>8</sup>

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One of the most expressive and controversial ideas which in its spirit and content is very close to post-secularity is *the Universal Church creating concept* by Vladimir Soloviev. The fragments of this idea are scattered throughout the

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 331–32.

<sup>8</sup> In short, in the Tsarist Russia the secular policy was aimed not at discrediting religion, but at consolidation of the supreme secular authority of the Church. The result was just the same: the Church ceased to perform its typical functions, becoming a component of state policy. This caused some tough criticism of the Decembrists: “In the Russian Empire, as in old Byzantium, religion, deviating from its divine origin, is one of those ... institutions by which the people are governed. ... Priests are at the same time ministering to the sovereign” (Lunin, “Iz ‘Zapisnoy knizhki,’” 183).

works of the philosopher. However, it is most completely and consistently stated in his book *Russia and the Universal Church* (1889).

If we ignore the details of the content, the formal principle of Soloviev's ideas is quite in line with the essence of post-secularity. Being thoroughly aware of the history of Christianity as a whole and its separate confessions, the thinker came to the conclusion that after the split in 1054 *restoring the Church internal unity is impossible* and spoke about the *necessity of its external restoration* under the aegis of the Catholic Archbishop. Realizing the absolute ontological foundation of the objectivity of such a unity (based on the text of Holy Writ), Soloviev recognized that there were many social and cultural factors, taking preference over and not letting to restore this unity. Thus, the thinker involuntarily revealed the essence of the problem that was not brought up by him deliberately: considering positive and negative sides of religious experience heterogeneity, he showed the possibility and necessity of the *formal* existence of religion in society. We should remember that, on the one hand, Soloviev was influenced by positivism in one way or another all his life, constantly criticizing it and bringing up his own idea of the Universal Church in spite of it. His notion of possible synthesis of Christian confessions is one of the main consequences of his ideological dependence. Positivism is one of the first truly formal philosophical schools that brought the problems connected with *the study of structure of relationship* of the subject to the object of knowledge to the forefront, leaving both the subject and the object themselves in the background. On the other hand, regardless of what occurs in the cognitive process as a whole, in the Catholic doctrine the philosopher perceived potential counter-tendency to secularity. In Soloviev's opinion, it is rooted in the idea of the dialectical co-relationship between faith and reason. Correspondingly the thinker used it as a basis for the logic of overcoming the confessional split in religious consciousness. He thought that the split occurred due to the fact that contradiction between orthodox content (dogma) and progressive form (knowledge) had become more and more imminent for centuries. Segregated Catholicism was initially built in the public life:

The Western Church, faithful to the apostolic mission, has not been afraid to plunge into the mire of history. After having been the only element of moral order and intellectual culture among the barbarous peoples of Europe for centuries, it undertook the task not only of the spiritual education of these peoples of independent spirit and uncivilized instincts, but also of their material government. In devoting itself to this arduous task, the Papacy, like St. Nicolas in the legend, thought not so much of the cleanliness of its own appearance as of the urgent needs of mankind. The Eastern Church, on the other hand, with its solitary asceticism and its contemplative mysticism, its withdrawal

from political life and from all the social problems which concern mankind as a whole, thought chiefly, like St. Cassian, of reaching Paradise without a single stain on its clothing. The Western Church aimed at employing all its powers, divine and human, for the attainment of a universal goal; the Eastern Church was only concerned with the preservation of its purity. There is the chief point of difference and the fundamental cause of the schism between the two Churches.<sup>9</sup>

That is why it is not surprising that Catholic people are active in their relation to God, they strive after Him not only with faith, but also with mind, trying to comprehend the essence of God existence logically. The doctrine of grace in Catholicism is not a destination as it is in the doctrine of Orthodoxy, where a person waits passively for higher indulgence and considers this waiting as the sense of personal godliness.

Such an interpretation comprises, of course, a moment of idealization, as Soloviev compared confessions only on the basis of *one*—target—feature, i.e. the peculiarities of reflection of the objective world as God's creation in the thinking of a believer. However, this interpretation is not devoid of objectivity: in fact, the Orthodox perception of the world is much more mystical than the pragmatic Catholicism.

This concept immediately evoked anger, condemnation, criticism from Orthodox Church structures and some secular thinkers. One of those who considered Soloviev's ideas in the most tolerant and deliberated way was Nikolai Berdyaev. Not denying the idea of ecumenism as such, he treated it as one of the mankind unity manifestations. However, he saw a lot of difficulties in the selection of ways and means of its implementations. Therefore he agreed with Soloviev on that it was unacceptable just to abandon the principle of confessionalism:

Many think of the Ecumenical Movement as a movement towards Inter-Confessionalism. I am inclined to think that Inter-Confessionalism is a mistake and a danger for the Ecumenical Movement. Protestant organizations frequently put forth the principle of Inter-Confessionalism and in it they think to encompass all the confessions and churches. But Inter-Confessionalism is least of all to be acknowledged universal. Inter-Confessionalism is not an enrichment, but an impoverishment, not a concrete fullness, but rather an abstraction. Inter-Confessionalism is not richer and fuller, but rather poorer and more impaired than a confession. It is a reduction to the minimum. Inter-Confessional Christianity is an abstract Christianity, and in it there is not the concrete

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<sup>9</sup> Solovyev, *Russia and the Universal Church*, 38.

fullness of life. The proponents of Inter-Confessionalism propose a Christianity to be united on an abstract minimum of Christianity, e.g. on faith in the Divinity of Jesus Christ, throwing away everything else that makes for division. But by such a path it is impossible to come upon the religious life. Religious life has altogether no resemblance to political life, wherein impossible coalitions are structured in such a manner that I yield up something to you, and you yield up something to me. Faith, however, is able to be integral, whole, in which there is nothing possible to yield up. Wherefore it only is living, wherefore it only is able to inspire to action.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, contrary to Soloviev, Berdyaev did not see the advantages of one confession over any other: "The Ecumenical Movement is able to be considered only in the sense, that in it representatives of various confessions jointly meet together and work, that it is a co-operation of confessions."<sup>11</sup>

Berdyaev's point of view is clear and justified: confessions are important and necessary because they appeared due to the increasingly deep penetration of Christianity into the socio-cultural and national context and now reflect its proximity to the sphere of traditions. Hence there is possibility and necessity of inter-confessional dialogue, exchange of experience, joint efforts to address the general social problems. This is a basement for the principle that the Church is inseparable from the society. However, Soloviev did not aim at subordinating Orthodoxy to Catholicism or eliminating confessions groundlessly while making religion an abstract notion. He sought to justify such a reform of Christianity in which religion would actively cooperate with other spiritual realms. Not without reason, he saw Catholicism as the most active confession in terms of the public—primarily because Catholics were the only believers to put theocratic experience into practice. Consequently, they proved to be doers, not only observers. If so, Catholicism is more capable of participating in secular policy and life than other confessions. Another matter is that, as a believer, Soloviev tried to confirm his words with Holy Writ texts. Here he faced an age-old problem: he was not able to translate the essence of the dogmas of faith clearly into the terminology of the reason, as here the interpretation turns out to be infinite. At the same time, he did not want to use the works of the Church Fathers, first of all of Saint Augustine, as, contrary to the original source, there had been a different purpose.

In other words, if we choose theological arguments to justify the right or wrong of the philosopher, it is hardly possible to come to any definite result. Indeed, possessing a thorough knowledge of the Holy Writ and confessional

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<sup>10</sup> Berdyaev, "Universality and Confessionalism."

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

peculiarities of the religion, Soloviev himself regarded it only as the surest *means* of justifying a more common *goal*, i.e., of proving the generality, universality, and indestructibility of the religious experience.

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## Love as an Evolutionary Force: From Soloviev to Teilhard de Chardin, Towards a Contemporary World<sup>1</sup>

Love is a phenomenon which can be defined in a variety of ways. The aim of this paper is to examine love as an evolutionary basic power, which plays a very significant role in the life of each individual (and in his personal growth), also on the level of social wholes. I shall try to examine these problems against the background of Soloviev's and Teilhard's thoughts about love, which are in direct agreement with the ideas of unity. My attention will be paid to observations of some parallels between the views of Soloviev and Teilhard. We find these parallels in a specific view of the world, its cognition and also in reflections on further evolutionary perspectives of mankind.

### Some parallel thoughts in Soloviev's and Teilhard's conceptions

Finding parallels between Soloviev's and Teilhard's philosophical ideas is often an interesting and surprising matter. In the philosophical reflections of these authors it is possible to identify such topics and problems whose solution shows signs of their common way of thinking, although they did not know each other personally and never met. Furthermore, it is remarkable to see that some of their ideas take a stronger timeless form than was the case during their activity.

In this context, I also reflect on the wide spectrum of various globalisation tendencies in the present world. For example, in my view, there are concrete

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<sup>1</sup> This contribution is the result of the project VEGA 1/0061/14.

(although complicated and ambivalent) economic-social and spiritual processes on the level of unifying Europe.<sup>2</sup>

In order to reflect and realise these processes we note that they may be viewed through the prism of interpretation—how do we understand the basis of Unity itself. The notion of Unity (and its variations) belongs to the central themes of the philosophical endeavour of both authors and immediately correlates with the ontocreative and unifying impact of love. The idea of love and the idea of unity are essential pillars underlying the concept of both our thinkers.

I must admit that from very outset of my investigation I was struck by the very close, although unique for each of them, lifetime orientation of Soloviev and Teilhard. This is concentrated in their vision of the world, with an emphasis on the spiritual dimension. In its context the challenges that they left to particularly future period are also highlighted. In this connection we can also conclude that in common there was an affinity of a professional and spiritual orientation, and therefore the interest in the development of the world, its orientation, historical and spiritual transformation and the role of the human community and the individual human being in this process.<sup>3</sup>

Both thinkers belonged to the European mainstream of the Christian philosophical tradition against the background of the prevailing positivist orientation of Western philosophy and science. Both had tried to unify science, philosophy and theology and were convinced of the possibility of a great synthesis. Both were extremely sensitive and intuitively creative—transposed to their intellectual professions, as was manifested, on the one hand—by a lot of suspense and—on the other hand—by a search for balance between—metaphorically speaking—*heart* and *mind*.

The typical feature for both thinkers is also personal spirituality and its depth was in the fact reflected in some form or prophetism or visionary. It was manifested—in particular—in that they focused on reflecting of the topics which were still waiting for their “opening.” Both anticipated the problems of modern times that other contemporaries did not see, and even if they guessed, they were unable (or unwilling) to address them openly.

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<sup>2</sup> In this connection we could even examine what is a real contribution of these authors to the process that we nowadays describe as links between Eastern Christian spirituality and Western spirituality; as well as links between philosophical and scientific tradition of western culture. In this context many authors work on the heritage of Soloviev. See Ambros et al., *Vladimir Solovjov a jednotná Europa*.

<sup>3</sup> Jan Komorovsky compares both thinkers as Christian evolutionists in the context of their interpretation of the idea of a cosmic Christ, see Komorovsky, “Idea kozmického Krista,” 9–16.

Both thinkers respected the idea of evolution and focused their efforts on an understanding of the whole being and on the interpretation of the developmental stages of the structure of universe. For them it meant to reveal the ontocreative and unifying principle of being, which is the principle of *love*.

When we analyze Soloviev's and Teilhard's ideas about love, we find many similarities.<sup>4</sup> I consider the understanding of the semantic field of love as one of them. It concerns both the understanding of love as an universal force that underlies the evolutionary dynamics of love as a basis for the development of the individual, personal dimension of man in unity with universal meaning.

Therefore, the connection of ontological (metaphysical) and anthropological and especially personal dimension in interpreting evolutionary dynamics of the universe, man and God, allows us to understand their concepts as the image of unity—unity of what evolutionary forms and becomes (and that is researched and validated by science) and what they believed in (in the context of Christian thinking).

## Evolution and Love

Teresa Obolevitch helps to bring Soloviev to authors who have tried to unite evolution and Christianity.<sup>5</sup> We can also count here Teilhard de Chardin. For both authors it meant accepting the theory of evolution against the background of religious-philosophical conception. Teilhard expressed this connection as follows:

(1) Evolutionism and Christianity unite in their basic vision of the world (they coincide from the aspect of direction of evolution towards higher status of consciousness and spirituality); (2) Evolutionism and Christianity need each other (from the aspect of backing up the one and completing the other); (3) Evolutionism and Christianity need to form a synthesis (from the aspect of enrichment of each other i.e.complementary values for each other).<sup>6</sup>

We would like to add that both thinkers knew Darwin's theory very well.<sup>7</sup> The idea of evolution was one of the key trends in thought and part of their

<sup>4</sup> An interesting comparison between the concept of love in the works of Soloviev and Florensky is provided by Lenka Naldoniová, "The Meaning of Love," 12–13.

<sup>5</sup> See Obolevitch, "O recepcji."

<sup>6</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, "Introduction à la vie Chrétienne," 183–84. These positions of Teilhard allow us to understand his further statements and to grasp the formulation of universal evolutionary laws; and thus also a more complete meaning of his evolutionary conception.

<sup>7</sup> During his Moscow studies Soloviev became acquainted with Darwin's ideas. We may state that Soloviev perceived reality as a process of development. Soloviev relies on evo-

vision of the world. Both assumed that evolution was a fact and in this sense Teilhard wrote that it was more than a hypothesis or theory.<sup>8</sup>

In relation to Darwin's ideas and the main evolutionary power—"struggle for life" we can trace a new aspect by Soloviev as well as by Teilhard. In opposition to "struggle for life" Soloviev opts for altruism and love. Teilhard writes about Darwin's principle of the "survival of the fittest," but "in order this fight for existence functions, the elements in conflict expect a tough tendency towards preservation and survival."<sup>9</sup>

This tendency or factor has—according to Teilhard—a mental attribute, dimension which (expressed through notions of human experience) is defined as a real desire or "appetite to live" because "it is the basic spring, which drives and directs the cosmos (universe) on the main axis of complexity and consciousness."<sup>10</sup> Thus Teilhard—despite accepting Darwin—supplements purely biologically interpreted evolution with a psychological dimension. And this dimension is a very important background for his metaphysics of love and unity. Love as a central evolutionary power is manifested as a "will to live" towards "will to survive well" up to "will to live more as." All of them are representations of "appetite to live" (*le goût de vivre*).

We can sum up at this point: Teilhard's interpretation of love connected with "will to live" is not in conflict with the biological "survival of the fittest" (neither to natural choice nor to possible mutations and adaptations to the environment). Just the opposite—it may be the background for this struggle, even its main psychological drive.

A very important identity between Soloviev and Teilhard from the aspect of evolution is their common persuasion about the teleological character and deeper sense of evolution. These ideas surpass the competence of natural science and also a purely scientific explanation of the evolutionary process.

## Love and its manifestations through the prism of Soloviev

The subject of my examination, however, will not be all of the contexts and dimensions of love which are associated with them. I focus only on some of their interpretations on the level of human existence and life. Soloviev was

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lutionary succession. He was persuaded that the evolution of "the lower" is a presupposition of "the higher" stage but the whole reality in its development has a metaphysical basis. For more see Obolevitch, "O recepcji," 113–18.

<sup>8</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, 140.

<sup>9</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, "Le Goût de vivre," 241–42.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.

persuaded that the fundamental principle of unity, the ontocreative principle of our authentic being—is love. He puts a stress on its meaning at the level of unifying our individual and universal life. Therefore, the solutions of our individual life are always being placed in the position of universal life. And universal life is being placed into the whole evolutionary process.

Our regeneration is indissolubly bound up with the regeneration of the universe and with the transfiguration of its forms of space and time. The true life of individuality, in its full and absolute significance, is accomplished and perpetuated only in the corresponding development of the life of the universe, in which we can and ought to take an active part but which is not created by us.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, according to Soloviev, each individual human existence has the whole world reaching universal meaning. It is a theme which represents the wide-spectrum of the problem of *humanism*.

Soloviev developed his philosophy of love predominately in his work *Meaning of Love*, which he wrote towards the end of his life. He distinguished several manifestations of love: sexual, parental (primarily motherly love), mystical love, love to a friend, love to homeland—patriotism, love to mankind, love to science and art. This characterisation ought to prove that love is a challenge to reach the identity of another person.

Soloviev outlines the universal meaning of love. He identified the greatest enemy of love in the egoism of man. We may ask: what can eliminate the roots of such egoism? The answer again is: *love*.

There is only one power which can from within undermine egoism at the root, and really does undermine it, namely love, and chiefly sexual love. The falsehood and evil of egoism consists in the exclusive acknowledgement of absolute significance for oneself and in the denial of it for others. Reason shows us that this is unfounded and unjust, but simply by the facts love directly abrogates such an unjust relation, compelling us not by abstract consciousness, but by an internal emotion and the will of life to recognize for ourselves the absolute significance of another. Recognizing in love the truth of another, not abstractly, but essentially, transferring in deed the centre of our life beyond the limits of our empirical personality, we by so doing reveal and realize our own real truth, our own absolute significance, which consists just in our capacity to transcend the borders of our factual phenomenal being, in our capacity to live not only in ourselves, but also in another.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Solovyov, *The Meaning of Love*, 104–05.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 45.

We can conclude with Soloviev:

The meaning and worth of love, as a feeling, is that it really forces us, with all our being, to acknowledge for *another* the same absolute central significance which, because of the power of our egoism, we are conscious of only in our own selves. Love is important not as one of our feelings, but as the transfer of all our interest in life from ourselves to another, as the shifting of the very centre of our personal lives.<sup>13</sup>

Thus we may with Soloviev add:

The task of love consists in *justifying in deed* that meaning of love which at first is given only in feeling. It demands such a union of two given finite natures as would create out of them one absolute ideal personality.<sup>14</sup>

At this point Soloviev rehabilitates the importance and value of sexual love as the love of an individual (in opposition to moralism and false spiritualism). The value of such a love is not in the pure reproduction of species. It is in fact in creating a higher sense, which enables two persons of a different sex to fulfill and create an ideal being. The meaning of such a love is not in physiological unity, but in uniting with God, in spiritual love.

Only God as the highest being, in which beauty, truth and unity are combined, can breathe in the human love an imprint of Godhead and therefore immortality, only God can cause this idealisation in reality.

Love is *de facto* the elimination of egoism, it is the inner rescue power enabling us to arise upon one's personality. Soloviev's emphasis on the personal moral endeavour of man, emerges from being interpreted only in conjunction with our individual life and our life for the other. At the same time, it is rooted in relationships of a universal content, in the worldwide process of uniting the whole.

## Love and its manifestations through the prism of Teilhard

Teilhard also regarded love as the most important dimension of the entire development process. Uusula King even remarks that Teilhard develops the theme of love as a musician in successful variations on different occasions

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 55.

and contexts.<sup>15</sup> The French thinker considers love as a universal power, or even cosmic energy, which is the most mysterious of all energies, but at the same time the most obvious form at the level of our being, at the level of the individual human life and human society. Love is a universal cosmic energy and power and acrosses all stages of the evolutionary process.

The strength of love is in the reflection of a unifying energy of which it could be said that it is up to the sacred power, because it is the basis for all creative cosmic forces. Only love is able to create and lead the world, the human being and human existence forwarded to the expected final phase of the common spiritual unity—in God. It is love that unites, a spiritual love which deepens and leads to personal growth. It therefore has an eminently personalised dimension.

The starting position of the love subject is Teilhard's belief in the special form of whole cosmic "amorization." According to Teilhard, our widespread examination of love is wrongly concentrated only on sentiment, yet we often miss a more appreciable dimension. In this sense, Teilhard notes:

We are accustomed to consider (and with what a refinement of analysis!) only the sentimental face of love, the joy and miseries it causes us. It is in its natural dynamism and its evolutionary significance that I shall be dealing with it here, with a view to determining the ultimate phases of the phenomenon of man.<sup>16</sup>

Thereby Teilhard outlines that his reflections on love respect its evolutionary dynamism.

Teilhard's interpretation of love is commonly represented in four basic forms. His *Esquisse d'un Univers Personnel* introduces four possibilities or "faces" of love in the same content.<sup>17</sup> They are a manifestation of our life, its fundamental forces that we capture on the individual and the social level, on level of humanity as a whole and also in a cosmic (or Christic) sense.<sup>18</sup>

The first form of love in our life is sexual love. It is testimony to our sexual attraction. Sexual love is a special kind rooted in the biological world. From the vital point of view it enables us to complete its specificity, so the relevance of the necessary connection of the male and female principle is indisputable. In a certain respect, we might even state that through it there is an awareness of ourselves, a confirmation of our individuality.

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<sup>15</sup> King, *The Spirit of One Earth*, 176.

<sup>16</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, 264.

<sup>17</sup> See also Bartnik, *Teilhardowska wizja dziejów*, 175.

<sup>18</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, "Esquisse d'un Univers Personnel," 91.

If we interpret sexual love in its historical-biological significance, we could notice a rise in its strength, its intensity. On the human level, however, this intensity does not act in a purely “biological” dimension, but also in a spiritual.

The second form of love has a social, collective and universal human character which we can call “human love.” This applies to individuals, groups and communities of people, even all humanity, which is increasingly coming together until it reaches spiritual unity. This represents a higher stage of the unique process of antropogenesis itself (i.e. level of humanization, not only hominisation), which is implemented on the level of noosphere.

Achieving this unity constitutes in certain aspects also the sense and purpose of mankind, though not the last, final. The meaning of humanity is achieved throughout the whole noosphere, where the energy of love is completed and totalises human molecules.<sup>19</sup> The importance of such love Teilhard also describes in his essay *La Montée de l'Autre*. He wrote: “Love is the inner expression, emotion, relatedness which connects and attracts in it other elements of the world, the center to the center.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, it is the force that binds individual human centres, their “centres.” That centric strength is also an expression of universal synthesis.

The third form is the cosmic love and the cosmic sense connected within. We could consider it as an analogous extension of social, collective love that actually affects the entire universe. It represents a combination of individuals and the whole of humanity with the cosmic universe. This connection, if conscious, can be seen as a significant value. “I call the cosmic sense more or less confusion affinity (relatedness) which binds us psychologically to the whole that surrounds us.”<sup>21</sup> Our ability to love the whole universe corresponds to that cosmic sense.

The fourth form is an omegal (the Christ) love. It is love that goes beyond past and present, and leads to the final future. This is the highest achievement of synthesis in the Omega point, in the last point of evolution.

The above mentioned four forms of love, each of which actually has its “face,” are not contradictory. On the contrary, they are complementary and Teilhard rejects the interpretations of love that oppose love for the world (man and universe) and love for God against each other. And because love with its sense of universal unification penetrates, according to Teilhard, as a wave new life, it allows us to perceive the flavour of Absolute.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>20</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, “La Montée de l'Autre,” 77.

<sup>21</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, “Esquisse d'un Univers Personnel,” 101.



We might state, that combining love with the process of personal growth is indisputable. The deepening of our entity only happens in the environment that surrounds us, in the context of the relationships in which we enter.

The fact that we examine experientially creative effects of love around us, leads us to accept the paradoxical proposition which, according to Teilhard, contains deep secrets of life. That argument actually argues that the true unity does not suppress the elements that come together but mutual fertilization and adaptation restores their life.

Our personal growth—in the process of personalization—is not conceived as merely an individual matter, but also as a decisive cosmic tendency, as the aim of the universe which results in the highest personal centre of all centres, in God, or in the mystical point Omega, identified in the context with the cosmic Christ.

Similar ideal connections between the developmental universal tendency of cosmic being and human life can also be found in Soloviev. In his philosophical considerations there often dominates the search for links between our existence and the existence of the world.

Both of them consider the value of our actions only in the context of a universal developing tendency and believed that human life can be understood only in relation to final aim of universe. Without the assumption of this aim, all our individual goals would lose their meaning and purpose.

This perspective therefore always led them forward and upward, but with respect and love for all that has been overcome on this journey, because love is the only royal road to holiness and that is divine.

## Love, Unity, and the Contemporary World

If we extrapolate the idea of Love and Unity and reflect from the perspective of European unity, we could perhaps accept this assertion: our ignorance of concrete details by the realisation of this unifying process connected with some unpredictable consequences is the guarantee for a wide range of our freedom to act. If the work of our national and also personal character is really authentic, we may hope that it is—at the same time—also the realisation and individualisation of this processing unity.

This does not influence the very true fact that mankind goes through various critical periods full of misunderstandings, difficulties and painful experience. The crisis may reveal—in media res—conflicts, but these inner conflicts also arouse in mankind a desire to unite in a better and better way.

We can assert once again that the transformation of the world on the spiritual level is absolutely necessary; it is however important to fill it with content of

our present aspirations and hopes. The evolution of spiritual unifying process will be reached in Someone, not in something. The consequences of this point of view are evident. If we admit that the peak of human spiritual evolution is of an impersonal nature, we could not protect the individualised personal character which becomes part of the whole.

## Conclusion

What can we conclude at the very end? Perhaps so much that both Soloviev and Teilhard lived rooted in problems of their time, but also as above or prior to it. So they were not only the architects of units, process planners, policy visions, but also lonely pilgrims, as often happens in cases of exceptional individuals. Although these thinkers never met, their thinking, perception, experience and actions allow us to look for the parallels in their spiritual holistic approach which is, moreover, peculiar and extremely strong intellectual and mystical passion. Without them, the marks of prophetism and the visionary nature of their message would no longer be justified and perhaps they would have already been forgotten. I think that now again comes the right time that we, so to speak soberly, without prejudice or exaggeration, search for new ways to these messages in the context of today's problems, struggling and yet uniting the world.

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## The Reactualization of the Ethical Doctrine of Russian Religious Philosophers in the Era of Post-Secularism

The social orientation of Russian religious thought, as well as its “pan-moralism,” has been noted by many researchers. However, the “social ethics” phenomenon presented in the works of Russian religious thinkers of the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries is still poorly understood. It is the subject field of social ethics that seems a debatable issue today. In modern ethical studies, both domestic and foreign, the issues of social ethics and morals, regarded as one of the most effective regulatory systems, are actualized. In this aspect, Russian thought, with its focus on the moral dimension of social reality proves to be more relevant and sought-after than ever. Recourse to the texts of Russian religious philosophers allows building and defining theoretical grounds of public morality, bringing morality into real social practice.

The actualization of this problem is related to the growing interest in the open questions of morality of the contemporary society. In the field of ethical reflection, the understanding of social problems is conceptualized in terms of “public morality” and “social ethics.”

At the beginning of the twenty first century, Russian researchers began to discuss the phenomenon of “public morality.”<sup>1</sup> Publications in the *Voprosy filosofii* journal and the discussions at the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences<sup>2</sup> highlighted the need for a research perspective of “social

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<sup>1</sup> See Guseynov, “Ponyatiye morali;” Apresyan, “Ponyatiye obshchestvennoy morali;” Apresyan, *Obshchestvennaya moral’*; Prokofyev, *Moral’ individual’nogo sovershenstvovaniya*.

<sup>2</sup> The discussion, organized by the Section of Ethics at the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences took place in 2006–07 within the framework of the project *Public Morality: Research Methods, Normative-ethical, and Applied-ethical Issues*.

ethics” in the context of the development trends of the modern applied ethics. A number of articles focused on the basic concepts and the identification of subject field of the research. For example, in the article *The Concept of Public Morality* Ruben Apresyan points out the terminological analysis difficulties:

The terms “public morals,” “public morality,” and “social ethics” are vague in ordinary speech, as well as in special philosophical, political, religious texts and in their journalistic versions. In other words, public morality or social ethics are understood as definite by content normative systems which regulate the activity in specific areas of society.<sup>3</sup>

In interpreting the meanings and values of these concepts, the author refers to the English tradition and introduces the terms “social morality,” “social ethics” and “public morality.” As the researcher notes, most of these terms are found in modern theological and religious texts (mainly Catholic and Protestant). Arthur Rich, a theologian, ethicist, and economist, founder of the Institute of Social Ethics at the University of Zurich, is considered to be one of the fathers of modern social ethics. According to Rich, integral ethics is synonymous with social ethics; it includes social structures and integrates all major aspects of ethical responsibility.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, while being seemingly synonymous at first sight, they are quite clearly varied in the amount and the subject field. “Social ethics” is regarded as a certain level of ethical reflection, as a theory in its substantive and disciplinary space and the “public morality” acts as the subject field of social ethics.

Due to the necessity of conceptual analysis and the translation of terms, it should be noted that Russian thought conceptualized social and ethical problems into an accurately built terminological system. Thus, the term “social ethics” is found in the work by Semen Frank entitled *The Spiritual Foundations of Society*. He defines it in the context of the social philosophy as “based on social phenomenology and ontology, the philosophy of law can even essentially coincide with the social philosophy, differing from it with not substantially but only psychologically—the difference lying precisely in the fact that the main interest of investigation in this philosophy is the problem of the social ideal.”<sup>5</sup> The meaning and purpose of social ethics is understood as follows: “ethics in general requires knowledge of the eternal essence of man and his relationship to God, so social ethics requires knowledge of the eternal essence of human society, of the foundations of communal human life.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Apresyan, “Ponyatiye obshchestvennoy morali,” 4.

<sup>4</sup> See Rich, *Wirtschaftsethik*.

<sup>5</sup> Frank, *The Spiritual Foundations*, 11.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

Frank defines society as “a genuine integral reality:”

An individual conceived as isolated is only an abstraction. What we call man is genuinely real only in communal being, in the unity of society.<sup>7</sup>

The philosopher links social ethics and philosophy of law, treating them in the broader field of social philosophy; ethics, in his concept has anthropological and, therefore, social and philosophical justification for being religiously cogent. Thus, for Frank, the ethical is woven into the fabric of the social and, along with the legal, forms an integrated system of which the basis is the religious principle. Frank seeks to withdraw ethics from the theoretical sphere into specific social realities.

The genuine content of the moral life is not the abstract moral ideal as such but the concrete, *real moral will of man*. The moral consciousness must be directed towards that concrete point of being where the ideal touches the real; on the one hand, becomes the real active force—but a force that must overcome the countercation of other, anti-moral forces of the human spirit.<sup>8</sup>

Frank, referring to the ideal as the main dominant value of moral consciousness, affirms its effective relation towards reality:

Thus, concrete ethics cannot simply be a system of prescriptions and pure goals. Rather, concrete ethics must be a orientation in the integral *ideal-real* drama of man's being—an orientation that gives an understanding not only of goals but also on the means to their attainment, as well as of the limits of this attainment.<sup>9</sup>

A distinctive feature of Russian religious thought was to overcome the metaphysical detachment of ethics, the original heterogeneity of morality, to get to understand the harmonious combination of personal and public, personalistic view and social analysis.

The problem of the subject of morality leads Russian thinkers to the necessity to analyze Immanuel Kant's autonomous ethics. In their attempts to overcome Kant, primarily the subjective beginning, the Russian philosophers come to the problem of social ethics and its ontological grounds that they see in the religious beginning. The religious basis of morality, from the Russian thinkers' point of

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

view, adds a universal character to morality and allows one, according to Vladimir Soloviev, to avoid the trendy lies of today: *moral subjectivism*, which deprives the moral will of its tangible ways of implementation in common life, and *social realism*, in which public institutions and interests are crucial for the value of life itself, so that the highest moral principles become only means or instruments for the preservation of these interests. From a very common nowadays point of view the *real form* of public is, in fact, genuine and most important, although there are attempt to give it a moral justification and to link it with the moral principles and norms. But when looking for moral supports for the human society, it is thereby demonstrated that not only some form of society, but also the public, *as such*, is not the ultimate and absolute definition of man.<sup>10</sup>

Soloviev defines society as “an organized morality.” The moral foundations of society, according to the philosopher, are religion, family and property. The universal principle, uniting society into a coherent whole is Christianity as the embodiment of absolute moral ideal, as a universal moral principle. The true beginning of the society is “not in the external protection of the institutions that may be good or bad,” but “in a sincere and consistent diligence to improve all institutions and social relations, which can be good, internally, increasingly subjecting them to a single and unconditional ethos of the free unity of all in perfect good.”

According to Soloviev, “Christianity has put this ideal as a practical task for all people and nations.” The philosopher, when speaking on the beginning of the society, refers to the term “community,” “Christian community.” Soloviev asserts the necessity from the standpoint of Christian morality to analyze such spheres of social life as politics, law, economics and national relations. Thus, the Russian idea sought to escape from the metaphysics of ethics to open social problems, towards the solution of moral dilemmas—the problems of war and peace, death penalty, violence, social and law enforcement, etc. During this period the term “applied ethics” appears in the title of one of Soloviev’s works.<sup>11</sup>

The problem of social morality, moral life and moral household are analyzed in the Russian school of philosophy of law. Morality and law are considered by thinkers as social regulates and fundamentals of social life, the greatest attention to their relationship and interaction is given in the works of Boris Chicherin, Pavel Novgorodtsev and Ivan Il’in. The main objective of the social being seen by Chicherin is in the “harmonious agreement of the two opposing elements that make up the community: individual and society.” Personality is the “cornerstone of society at large,” it is “the root and the

<sup>10</sup> See Solovyov, *The Justification of the Good*.

<sup>11</sup> Solov’ev, *Pravo i pravostvennost’*.

determining principle of all social relations,” but as a “coenobitic being” cannot be thought of any man’s freedom nor true morality outside of society. In the *Philosophy of Law* Chicherin analyzes the social structure, highlighting four types of “human association:” the family (natural union), civil society (legal union), the Church (moral union) and the state (the absolute union).<sup>12</sup> The basic concepts of the Russian school of philosophy of law are the social ideal and the sense of justice. The social ideal is, above all, a sensible community arrangement, harmonious combination of individual and society. According to Il’in, a sense of justice is inextricably linked to moral consciousness.

In the Russian tradition, together with all the thorough elaboration of an institutional nature of social morals, the comprehension of this phenomenon has more to do with the search for spiritual reasons. Social Ethics in Russian religious philosophy is not ethics, striving towards analysis and justification, the legitimization of social institutions; it is aimed at the search for a holistic social principle, which is seen in the catholicity, in personal and social harmony in the Christian universalism. In Russian social thought the social is represented as a sphere of moral and spiritual relationship, not a system of social institutions, Russian religious philosophy sought to build a moral and religious consciousness together, forming social cohesion, and social integrity. The subject of social ethics in the interpretation of Russian thinkers is a social ideal, the social good, social morality, social life, the sense of justice in the unity of the moral consciousness. The main categorical row, allowing to present value vectors of social ethics—justice, community, conciliar unity, goodness, truth, and love. All of these values are the basis vectors of the social concepts of the two largest Christian churches: the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church.

*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* was prepared in 2004 by the Pontifical Council “Justice and Peace.” Its first part sets out the doctrine of the Catholic Church, society and man. The second part describes the doctrine of the family and the Church’s attitude towards the economy, politics, peace and protection of the environment. The final part “Social doctrine and ecclesial action” explains how the social doctrine of the Church must be implemented into everyday life. The document summarized a thousand year experience of the Church teaching, as well as various documents of social orientation (papal encyclicals, letters, documents of Second Vatican Council, etc.) that have been created since the end of the nineteenth century, and also the works of Catholic philosophers (e.g. Emmanuel Mounier’s personalism<sup>13</sup>). The anthropological and the personalistic orientation of the *Compendium* already becomes clear in

<sup>12</sup> See Chicherin, *Filosofiya prava*.

<sup>13</sup> See Mounier, *Personalist Manifesto*.



the title of the introduction “Holistic and solidary humanism.” The aim of its social activities the Church sees in the creation of “civilization of love” (the title of the conclusion is: “To the civilization of love”). The personalistic orientation of the social doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church has increased during the pontificate of John Paul II, in the works of whom, and especially in the famous encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* the integrity of the person is emphasized: “Man is called to a fullness of life which far exceeds the dimensions of his earthly existence, because it consists in sharing the very life of God.”<sup>14</sup>

The Catholic social teaching started to emerge at the end of the nineteenth century. The social teaching of the Orthodox Church was formed in the 1990's. Its codification took less than ten years. *The Basis of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church* was adopted in 2000. The ethical issue has become the main theme of the fourth section: “Christian ethics and secular law. The basic social concepts of the Russian Orthodox Church.” It discusses the legal framework for social concepts and demonstrates the relationship between law and ethics. The so-called “Golden Rule” is the basis of the legal and moral relations:

The law contains a certain minimum of moral standards compulsory for all members of the society. The objective of the secular law is not to transform the evil world into the Kingdom of God, but not to let it turn into hell. The fundamental principle of law is: “Do not do to others what you do not want to be done to yourself.”<sup>15</sup>

In the Basis, as well as in *Compendium*, there is a desire for a holistic understanding of human reliance on natural law and the pursuit of the common good. But if the last term in the Catholic tradition is rather clearly defined as “sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment,”<sup>16</sup> the social concept of the Orthodox Church speaks of “the good people” and “the good society,” but there is a tendency to allocate Orthodox Christians of the “entire human family.”<sup>17</sup> The Roman Catholic Church in its documents tends to talk about humanity as a whole. But overall, the ethical ideas of both documents are very close to the ideas that have been developed within the framework of Russian religious philosophy, which formed a sufficient potential to build a specific social religious doctrine. The analysis of moral component of the social concept of the Russian religious thought

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<sup>14</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, no 2.

<sup>15</sup> Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, *The Basis of the Social Concept*, IV, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, no 26.

<sup>17</sup> Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, *The Basis of the Social Concept*, XVI, 1.

and the detection of theoretical dominants, value vectors and praxeological opportunities—all this allows to reveal its particular relevance in the post-secular world. And in this aspect—the Russian thought, with its focus on the moral and religious components in a number of social normativity.

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# Historical Focuses

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## The Main Features of Russian Religious Philosophy

One who appreciates at first in philosophy a system,  
the logical trimming clearness of dialectics,  
in other words, the scientific skill,  
may leave Russian philosophy  
without any consideration  
and without painful meditations.<sup>1</sup>

Russian religious philosophy is a peculiar phenomenon in the culture of the world and of human creativity. It is something like an “anti-philosophical philosophy”—if we consider philosophy as a systematic science of the European type (for example that of Hegel). And, alternatively, it is the authentic philosophy in accordance with the first meaning of the word which says that it is a love of wisdom, the love of the wise to Wisdom. Thus the activity of Russian religious thinkers in some ways resembles the activity of Socrates who helped his listeners to make dialogue, to have an experience. And often it pretends (as Rev. Sergey Bulgakov writes) to be connected with the spirit, in accordance with a definition: *amor Dei intellectualis*.

Really, concerning the question of the significance of the Russian religious philosophy there is something like “a collision of two irreconcilable ‘points of view,’ of two primary ‘faiths.’”<sup>2</sup> The former supposes that everything in the world may be comprehended with the help of objective rational knowledge and, correspondingly, philosophy has to be rational and conceptual without

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<sup>1</sup> Losev, “Russkaya filosofiya,” 67.

<sup>2</sup> Frank, *Unknowable*, xviii.

any reference to the transrational element of being. The latter assumes that our conceptual language is useful only up to some definite limit (in this four dimensional world), and further there is a frontier, after which the region of the uncomprehending superrationality begins. Russian philosophers, such as Ivan Kireevsky, Alexei Khomiakov, Vladimir Soloviev, Nikolai Berdiaev, Rev. Sergey Bulgakov, Semen Frank, Rev. Pavel Florensky and others, support the second point of view.

It is worth noting that this point of view is closely connected with the “apophatic” trend in the Christian theology, represented mainly by St. Dionisius (or Pseudo-Dionisius), St. Gregory of Palamas, Vladimir Lossky and Cardinal Nicolas de Cusa. This kind of theology says that our positive conceptual knowledge cannot be applied to the real God and so it is possible to speak about Him in only a “negative” way: as Invisible, Incomprehensible etc.

The main ideas of eastern Christianity: *theosis* (“deification”), unity of mind and heart, keeping the gifts of Holy Spirit, “sobornost” (from the word “council” or *sobor*), the ontological and epistemological value of love—are reflected in the writings of Russian religious thinkers and also many of them are personalists. For example Rev. Pavel Florensky says directly that Truth is Person, God Trinity. Thus the Subject, the Truth “is *causa sui* both in essence and in existence ... ‘is through itself and is known through itself’”<sup>3</sup>

The main role in this philosophy is played by the so called “living ideas.” These ideas are the experienced existential axiomatic ideas which impress not only the mind but the whole person. They exist usually in the text like initial intuitions. The “living idea” of Kireevsky is the integrity and the authentic nature of the spiritual knowledge, for Soloviev—the Godmanhood, for Bulgakov—the sophiological or “noumenal” nature of the whole creature, for Florensky—the ontologism of love. These “living ideas” are often appear as the result of the illuminations which took place in the lives of the thinkers and we can easily find references to these facts.<sup>4</sup>

It is possible to find unsolved paradoxes or antinomies in theology such as the statements of the main dogmas: the confession of the Trinity (3=1), the statement of the unconfused nondivision of two natures in Christ (Chalcedonean dogma), etc. It is worth noticing that Jesus Christ, according to the Gospel, sometimes behaved in a “paradoxical way.” For instance, Christ strongly judged the Pharisees and, at the same time, He visited their homes. In principle, it is possible for a modern adult man to be educated in positive

<sup>3</sup> Florensky, *Pillar and Ground of the Truth*, 34.

<sup>4</sup> See Frank, *Unknowable*; Florensky, *Pillar and Ground of the Truth*.

classical science. There is no difference between the wisdom and speculative hypothesis based on any experiment. So, it is impossible to adjust theology to science. And this is a wrong false way. Similarly, the wrong way is to adjust science to theology. We cannot have any real convergence between science and theology. We may have only the recognition of the respect from one side to the other and mutual enrichment. Theology answers the ultimate questions referring to the transcendental experience—Revelation. Classical philosophy tries to formulate such questions without referring to Revelation and science does not deal with the ultimate problems of being and its substance. By the way, there exists side by side with classical philosophy the specific phenomenon of Russian religious philosophy which is based on the religious experience (usually of the Orthodox Christian origin) and it pretends to have some connection with the transcendental. It is sufficient to read the books by Father *Sergey Bulgakov*,<sup>5</sup> Father Pavel Florensky<sup>6</sup> and of Semen Frank<sup>7</sup> just to be convinced of this fact.

Thus Russian philosophy being religious in its essence does not contradict and oppose theology but rather in some way leads to it. The opposition appears only in the case of exceeding its authority—as it is the case with sophiology. In other words, Russian religious philosophy pretends to search for the values in which there is no difference between the pattern and the phenomenon, it tries to add the eternal point to the temporal point of view (*sub speciae aeternitatis*).

Russian religious philosophers have tried to speak about their profound experiences connected with Revelation with the help of modern language. Their ontological interest usually led them to the problem of *creatio ex nihilo*. Father *Sergey Bulgakov* tries to explain us the first moment of creation as the creation of *the meon* from *the oukon*.<sup>8</sup> Here *the oukon* is nothing and *the meon*—nothing in present but something in future, in potentiality (*neant*). The creation is sacrament, miracle. In accordance with the Greek holy fathers, Russian religious philosophers say that being is a gift, it was given and it is not the result of self-organization. And Nature is real in its essence because it has its roots in the divine “let there be.” God is completely transcendental in relation to the world and, at the same time, is immanent to the world in His energies.

This is an antinomy of the Divine and the created. As Bulgakov says: “the Lord is always creator, now and forever and unto ages of ages,”<sup>9</sup> it is an act

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<sup>5</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*.

<sup>6</sup> Florensky, *Pillar and Ground of the Truth*.

<sup>7</sup> Frank, *Unknowable*.

<sup>8</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, 207, 480.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

of Love. So we would like to suppose that Russian religious philosophy being prophetic and illuminated by the profound experience may help the modern speculative thinking scholar to come closer to the ultimate reality of Christian theology. Science is dealing with natural phenomena, theology with the substance of the world and of the whole nature. But the first does not exist without the existence of the second. Every evening, during the Orthodox service called “night service” (vigil) the creation of the world is remembered. The meonic reality became good because of God—as the Bible says. This belongs to the sacrament of creation, the Miracle.

Two relations with the world might be: to have and to be. The first is a utilitarian attitude when somebody is using another object or subject (like object). The second is the way of love, consubstantial—as Florensky calls it<sup>10</sup> (at first before other philosophers). Edmund Husserl frequently describes Nature as being objectivized, constructed by new scientific methodology.<sup>11</sup> Without knowledge which builds the bridge between the human and the divine, we live in a world of endless hypotheses where Karl Popper’s principle of falsification does operate. This knowledge might be achieved with the help of “living ideas” (the term of Russian philosophy) given by special illumination and Revelation.

Looking at the modern appearance of the ideas connected with the main stream of Russian religious philosophy it is important to note two religious thinkers: the philosopher Jakob Druskin and the modern martyr Father Pavel Adelgeim. The former called a Christian existentialist, proclaimed one directed synthetical identity as the basis for Christian theology<sup>12</sup> without any kind of rational speculation falsifying Revelation.

The main point for the latter (Father Pavel) was *sobornost’* (from Russian *sobor* or “council”) which was used by Alexei Khomiakov and is nowadays forgotten by many Orthodox people—*sobornost’*,<sup>13</sup> which helps human beings to be united in Love on their way to the Truth. The three main points in Russian philosophy are God, man as person, and Russia.

## Conclusion

Modern man is searching for peace in his heart, but he cannot find it in our civilized world without connection with the Eternity and Spirit.

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<sup>10</sup> Florensky, *Pillar and Ground of the Truth*, 39.

<sup>11</sup> Husserl, *The Crisis*.

<sup>12</sup> Druskin, *Vblizi Vestnikov*, 87–92.

<sup>13</sup> Adelgeim, *Dogmat o Tserkvi*, 86–94.

Classical science and technology created our present world without any references to God but the new modern science (especially modern physics) shows us the limits of our mind and indicates in the specific way the “meonic” nature of the world.

It is important to note that Russian religious philosophy with its “living ideas” (inherent in many people) is closer to modern physics and to modern man with his suffering and the search than classical philosophy. Thus it may help to find calmness for the soul by showing the way to God, the Creator of human beings and the Universe around him through *metanoia* (change of mind) and real Revelation.

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## Concepts of Russian Moral Philosophy in the Enlightenment<sup>1</sup>

Moral philosophy in Russia was not a homogeneous theory. Its content, problems, forms, principles, system of authorities, representations, notions, and concepts depended on the philosophical networks in Russia in the Enlightenment.

It is possible to mark out three philosophical networks at that time. One of them was the system of academic institutions, including both “visible” and “invisible colleges.” The second network was represented by theologians from Church schools, first of all in Kiev and Moscow, and so called “learned monks.” The third was developed in the circles of the enlightened noble elite. A thinker who had enough time, income and education to spare, to devote himself to “free philosophizing” represented the “nobleman-philosopher.”

### The academic network

The academic network was connected with the Petersburg Academy of Sciences and Moscow University and represented by Dmitry Anichkov (1733–1788), Semen Desnitsky (1740–1789), Mikhail Lomonosov (1711–1765), and others. Furthermore, many academics were foreigners, primarily Germans. Moral problems were generally studied as a part of metaphysics where a rational and sub-social approach was used. Thinkers discussed the soul-body problem, the character of moral qualities and the sources of moral ideas while professors of law might teach moral aspects of legislation. The principal (and officially recognized) authority in this milieu was Christian Wolff (1679–1754).

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Philosophy was not really studied with Wolff's works, but rather with his popularizer Friedrich Christian Baumeister (1709–1785), whose works *Logic*, *Metaphysics and Moral Philosophy* were translated and printed in Russia several times. This fact was connected with the popular character of the books of this thinker and with the possibility to term something "Wolffianism" despite it not being exactly Wolff's doctrine.

It is well known that Wolff was a supporter of the pre-established harmony, and in corresponding parts of his works it was this model he used to explain the connection of mind and body. Neither the system of "occasional causes" nor the "pre-established harmony" were accepted by Russian thinkers who rejected them mainly because of moral reasons. The main shortcoming of all these systems was a peculiar justification of evil that became objective and inevitable. The mechanism, a consequence of the Cartesian-Leibnitian pneumatological scheme, took thought outside morality, and Russian philosophy refused to go there. The Wolffianist Dmitry Anichkov emerged as a critic of these doctrines and in his works, primarily in *A Discourse on Human Understanding*<sup>2</sup> and *A Discourse on Various Ways to Explain the Union between Body and the Soul*,<sup>3</sup> he analyzed both the methodological and ethical basis of the problem in detail.

Finding itself between logic and morals, Russian metaphysics chose the latter, contrasting a kind of dualism with monistic mechanism and deism. The most relevant way to explain the mind-body problem was thus a peripatetic theory of "physical influx," which did not juxtapose them but rather joined them together.

## The theological network

The second network consisted of theologians from Orthodox Church schools, first of all from Kiev and Moscow. Important names here were "learned monks" Feofilakt (Lopatinsky, ?–1741), Feofan (Prokopovich, 1681–1736), Stefan (Yavorsky, 1658–1722), Innocent (Gizel, c. 1600–1683), Iosaf (Krokovsky, ?–1718), another Stefan (Kalinovsky, c. 1700–1753), Mikhail (Kozachinsky, 1699–1755), and Georgy (Konissky, 1717–1795) and others.

The moral problems were discussed in the context of virtues and sins, and the divine origin of the human being. Some of the traditional problems of religious philosophy (and theology), such as the problem of theodicy, or the

<sup>2</sup> Anichkov, *Slovo o svoystvakh poznaniya*.

<sup>3</sup> Anichkov, *Slovo o raznykh sposobakh*.

proving of God existence, were never discussed in that circle, because it was against Orthodox traditions.

We can see two directions in the Orthodox ethics during the eightieth century:

- 1) an academic tradition developed in the Church schools;
- 2) a “practical” tradition of the spiritual support that was realized in sermons, confessions, and discussion with repentant sinners.

The most important Church schools were the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy in Kiev and the Slavic-Greek-Latin Academy in Moscow.

Ethical thought was developed mostly in Kiev under the strong influence of Catholic theology and the tradition of the Second Scholasticism. Aristotle’s ethical treatises such as *The Nicomachean Ethics*, *The Eudemean Ethics*, *Magna Moralia*, and also his *Politics* were of great importance there.

Moral philosophy included only willful and reasonable actions. It was divided into monastic issues (actions of the individual), economy, and politics. The highest value was the supreme good (*blago*), and those involved in it.

Interestingly, moral problems were popular in rhetorical works. They opened up the world of emotion, for example, in wedding and funeral speeches. Professors wrote about a “winter of old people” and “sorrow in general” (Illarion [Yaroshevsky]), or *On Oppositional Passions of the Soul* (Illarion [Levitsky] and Illarion [Negrebetsky]).

Feofan’s *Ethics* was one of the key texts and it discussed such problems as: “On goodness, what it is and how many species it has,” “Any desire is good,” “What is the last goal of human behavior: is it the supreme good or the supreme happiness?,” “What is the greatest happiness, and whether it is in this life?,” “Does the intelligence move the will or is it moved by the will?,” “How does the will set the internal potentialities in motion?,” “Why is free will the beginning of human actions?,” “On human actions or skills,” “On the principles of external human behavior: first of all about God who moves the will,” “On the other principles of external human actions, and the various ways they can motivate the human will to action.”<sup>4</sup>

Stefan Kalinovsky in his *Cursus Philosophicus* elaborated on the ontological status of the supreme good. He proved that a human being could not wish evil, his will could not reject it and he thought that virtue could not be studied rationally since it was not knowledge. It depended on the will as well as on the intellect and could not rely merely on studying, but also needed practice. One might call it an “intellectual virtue.” A material aim of ethics was the human

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<sup>4</sup> Stratiy et al., *Opisaniye kursov filosofii*, 216–17.

being whilst the formal aim of ethics was a worthy deed (*dostoinnyy postupok*) and worthy life.<sup>5</sup> Ethics was also important for rational thinking, because it purified the human mind from desire.<sup>6</sup>

Peter I's and Catherine II's reforms of the Russian Orthodox Church reduced its spiritual influence upon society in general and especially upon intellectuals. Thus the "enlightened minority" used to discuss moral problems independently of religious ones. This brings us to the third and last network, the "noblemen-philosophers."

### The enlightened noble elite

The third network of moral philosophy was developed inside the enlightened noble elite and the intellectual elite in Russia was in close agreement with the political elite at that time. Thus many moral problems that were close to political philosophy, legislation, and the philosophy of history were discussed as moral meditations as well as problems of cognition. The problem of moral qualities of the ideal sovereign, moral lessons taken from Russian history, the moral basis of the law code, etc. were discussed. Utopian projects were full of descriptions of how to raise a new generation of highly moral citizens. Pedagogical utopianism became the basis for the system of noble education.

The French authors Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, Montesquieu, d'Holbach, as well as such British authors as Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Smith, Ferguson, and Bentham and others were important authorities for the Russian nobility.

Aristocrats did not need to dress their philosophical ideas in the form of a scholarly looking treatise, because they discussed them in noble salons and private conversations, but never *ex cathedra*. Because of this, many of them used the classical genre of "platonic dialogues," e.g. Mikhail Shcherbatov (1733–1790), Alexander Beloselsky-Belozersky (1752–1809/1810), and Andrey Bolotov (1738–1833). Literature was the main field of noble intellectual activity and, in the Enlightenment, it had not yet been commercialized. Noble authors could receive the highest approval in forms of new ranks or material support, but never in terms of any honorarium from publishers. Sometimes they printed their works using their own money to create an intellectual reputation since only so-called "low genre" texts (the novel, for instance) could be written by marginal persons (like Fedor Emin) for money. Noble authors very often used literature as a means to state their philosophical ideas. Thus,

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 287–88.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 288.

we find moral philosophy expressed in “political novels” (M. M. Kheraskov), odes (A. P. Sumarokov, M. V. Lomonosov, G. R. Derzhavin), full-scale allegories (F. I. Dmitriyev-Mamonov), “voyages to an unknown country” (M. M. Shcherbatov, V. A. Levshin), “letters to a friend” (A. P. Sumarokov, V. A. Levshin),<sup>7</sup> and so on. The last genre was naturally connected to noble culture, where the letter was the main medium of communication.

Literature was understood as an important tool to improve social behavior and morals. Vasily Trediakovsky (1703–1769) wrote that every genre had its own task. Epic poems intended to give instructions by demonstrating the important and heroic actions of the past. Odes glorified the deeds of great people of the present and stimulated others to follow them. Tragedy made evil deeds horrid, and made virtue a role model. Comedy and satire corrected persons by demonstrating the funny sides of vice. Elegy taught people compassion and sympathy. Eclogue praised the virtues of rural life.<sup>8</sup>

Moral philosophy in the noble milieu was represented as a system of practical recommendations to create a new type of people or to improve morals. Many noblemen, like prince Mikhail Shcherbatov, author of the critical treatise *On the Corruption of Morals in Russia*, were sure that they knew how to improve people. This notion led to the popularity of the idea of an ideal state and the perfect society, which was expressed in various forms of social utopianism.

Another means of moral perfection was educational theories. They proclaimed that it was possible to create an “ideal person” and even an “ideal ruler” and described special methods and social institutions which could achieve these aims. There were some attempts to realize such pedagogical ideals in Russia, for example, institutes for noble maidens (Smolny Institute, established in 1764, was the most famous among them)<sup>9</sup> and a boarding school for noble boys, the Page Corps (established in 1759). Programs for them were written by a high Russian official, Ivan Betskoy, in the fashion of regulations of the famous Saint-Cyr founded by Madame de Maintenon. Betskoy also followed ideas of rational pedagogy developed by Claude Adrien Helvétius and John Locke, who argued that a child is just raw material to be molded by an experienced educator.

Sometimes nobles found moral examples in the past. Russian historians V. N. Tatishchev, M. M. Shcherbatov, N. M. Karamzin believed that the main function of a historical work was moral teaching or the recovery of the past emotional experience.

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<sup>7</sup> See Artemyeva, *Obshchestvennaya mysl'*.

<sup>8</sup> Trediakovskiy, “Mneniye,” 177–78.

<sup>9</sup> Cherepnin, *Imperatorskoye Vospitatel'noye obshchestvo*.

Some nobles wrote regular scholarly works. Alexander Radishchev (1749–1802) was the author of the fundamental treatise *On Man, his Mortality and Immortality*<sup>10</sup> (1792–1796). In this work he discussed the problem of immortality of the soul and the fear of death.

Alexander Beloselsky-Belozersky composed his *Dianologie, ou Tableau philosophique de l'entendement* (Dresde, 1790) in French.<sup>11</sup> In that work he studied human nature and created a typology of human qualities. Beloselsky-Belozersky was sure that human beings were not intellectually equal from their birth. This inequality had a natural character unlike social inequality. He wrote about five spheres of intellect, or spheres of reason (*l'entendement*). The first one was a sphere of stupidity (*la sphère de bêtise*), the second was the sphere of simplicity, or judgment (*la sphère de simplicité ou de jugement*), the third was the sphere of reason (*la sphère de raison*), the fourth was the sphere of perspicacity, or transcendence (*la sphère de perspicacité ou de transcendance*), and the fifth was the sphere of spirit (*la sphère d'esprit*). A human being could not overcome intellectual qualities given to him/her by nature, but was able to develop him/herself only within his/her intellectual type. In opposite of that, moral qualities could be developed. Thus Beloselsky-Belozersky increasingly appreciated the moral qualities, rather than intelligence.

The work of the Russian thinker was highly appreciated by his contemporaries. Kant wrote to Beloselsky-Belozersky after reading the book:

Your Excellency has elaborated the subject I have been working on for many years. It is a metaphysical definition of the limits of human knowledge. But what I did from an anthropological angle, you did from a very different angle.<sup>12</sup>

A. T. Bolotov was especially interested in the context of moral theories in Russia. He was known as a classical type of Russian encyclopedist. He was famous writer, physician, biologist, garden architect, painter, economist, agronomist, historian, philosopher, etc., who enjoyed a long and fruitful life. According to S. A. Vengerov's account, the results of his every day work were thousands of papers which would amount to more than 350 volumes of usual format.

He was a contemporary of eight monarchs from Anna Ioannovna to Nicholas I. He had the opportunity to take part in Catherine's famous "revolution" in 1762, because Grigory Orlov was his friend, but he refused. After the *Manifesto on the*

<sup>10</sup> Radishchev, "O cheloveke."

<sup>11</sup> See details in: Artemyeva et al., *A.M. Beloselsky-Belozersky*.

<sup>12</sup> See Gulyga, "Iz zabytogo," 104.

*Freedom of the Nobility* (*Manifest o vol'nosti dvoryanskoy*) was issued in 1762 he left military service and went to his country estate.

Not to serve did not mean not to work. Bolotov's life in his family country estate of Dvoreninovo was very intensive. He wrote many scientific papers, re-planned his house, made a beautiful garden. In contrast to traditional types of parks, namely "the French regular park" and "the English park," he created "Russian parks" in his estate and in Count Bobrinsky's estate in Bogoroditsk, connecting regularity with romanticism. He did not try to find a beautiful place, he created beauty around him.

Philosophy was also an important object of his studies. In contrast to other "noblemen-philosophers" in Russia he was more inspired by German thinkers than by French Enlightenment philosophers. At first he followed Christian Wolff, but soon he found that Wolff's works were destructive for his religious belief. Immanuel Kant was also too "Wolffian" (or rational) for him, and he preferred to attend the lectures of the Albertina pietists when he served at Königsberg during the Seven Years War (1756–1763).

One of his philosophical authorities was the German philosopher and theologian Christian August Crusius (1715–1775). Crusius was known primarily as an opponent of Leibniz's and Wolff's philosophy. He criticized their system of determinism and attempted to vindicate the freedom of the will. Bolotov highly esteemed his telematology, a special branch of practical psychology and a theory of the free will.

Crusius understood freedom as the main moral value. Happiness was based on morality, and that meant that determinism contradicted the human intention to be happy. These ideas were closer to Bolotov than the popular Wolffian system. Wolff's determinism and, first of all, the doctrine of the pre-established harmony, however logical it might seem, challenged Bolotov's religious belief.

When Bolotov decided to marry, his choice was Alexandra Mikhailovna Kaverina. She was only twelve when she was recommended to him as a candidate. Bolotov was not glad that she was still a child and could not share his interests. Finally he began to play with his idea to become a "tutor-husband" and decided to write a kind of a manual entitled *Children's Philosophy* to educate his future wife. He was inspired with the works of French writer and a pedagogue Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont (1711–1780) who was a very popular author in Russia. More than twenty of her books were published in Russian in the eighteenth century. These included: *Magasin des enfants, ou Dialogues d'une sage gouvernante avec ses élèves de la première distinction* (1757), *Le Mentor moderne, ou Instructions pour les garçons et pour ceux qui les élèvent* (1773), *Magasin nouveau des jeunes demoiselles, ou conversations entre la jeune*

*Emilie et sa mère* (1783), *Éducation complète, ou Abrégé de l'histoire universelle* (1758), *Instructions pour les jeunes dames qui entrent dans le monde...* (1764).

The volumes of Bolotov's *Children's Philosophy, or Moralizing Talks between a Certain Lady and Her Children...* (1776–1779)<sup>13</sup> were written in the form of dialogues between a mother and her children Feona (14 years old) and Kleon (13 years old). In a popular form, Bolotov explained tough metaphysical, philosophical, moral and theological issues.

The form of the dialogue allowed him to ask naïve (children's) questions: "What are we? What is a human being? How does it differ from animals? How and why did we come into the world? How was the world created? Whom had we been before we were born, and what will our fate be after our death? What is God? What is God like? What are God's perfect qualities?"

In answering these questions, the mother tried to avoid any primitive simplification as well as excessive complication. She stirred their imagination, so they could grasp such abstract ideas as "eternity," "infinity," "omnipotence," etc.

Bolotov's comprehensible and clear philosophical discourse was the result of a set of metaphors and a system of examples being developed. He never used special terminology and preferred to resort to detailed descriptions, allegories, and metaphors. He was sure that philosophical texts should be very clear, and tried to make his meanings simple.

Bolotov's aim was not only to popularize philosophy and rational theology. His book was easily understood, but it advanced philosophy and demonstrated an effective approach to philosophical research. Bolotov understood that knowledge may be realized on several levels, such as: scholarly or scientific knowledge, and common-sense knowledge.

He never confused them in his work, despite the usual mistakes made by his contemporaries. The basic idea of *Children's Philosophy* was to offer an encyclopedic vision of the main spheres of human knowledge. The book may be called *Children's Encyclopedia in Dialogues*.

After the successful *Children's Philosophy*, Bolotov wrote an ethical composition *A Guide to the Real Human Happiness...* (1784).<sup>14</sup> In this philosophical and allegorical treatise he tried to explain the connection between reason and senses and the nature of moral rules. For this he imagined the structure of the human soul. In European metaphysics the soul was represented as a transcendental whole. Bolotov understood the soul as a dynamic system of struggle between wishes and thoughts. He created a beautiful allegory and represented wishes as small animals and thoughts as birds. The freedom of will

<sup>13</sup> Bolotov, "Detskaya filosofiya."

<sup>14</sup> Bolotov, "Putevoditel."



and reason led troops of thoughts against wishes and finally overcame them. It meant that human beings could learn how to control their emotions and bring them under the guidance of reason.

In 1823, when he was quite old and was thinking about his impending death, Bolotov wrote *About Souls of Dead People...*<sup>15</sup> In it he meditated upon the problem of the immortality of the soul and the future life. Bolotov put forward several philosophical hypotheses and tried to reflect the world of transcendent substances in a language of ordinary notions and ideas. As a genre his work looked like a “philosophical-theological utopia,” because Bolotov imagined everyday life in the world of super-natural essences. He attempted to see “life after life” from the point of view of “an ordinary human creature,” who was afraid of death but had to be prepared to meet it.

*About Souls of Dead People* was written in the form of a dialogue between a grand-father with his grandson and repeated the archetypical form of Plato’s *Phaedo*. The composition of this work broke the problem into separate dialogues and inside them into “questions” and “answers.” This “popularizing” approach made the text clear for a non-professional reader, and nevertheless avoided banality.

The grandson’s questions “Are souls immortal?,” “What forms and condition do they possess when they go out of a body?,” “Where do they go?,” “What will happen to them?,” etc., formulated archetypical pneumatological problems. Bolotov showed that proofs of the immortality of the soul were situated on different levels of knowledge. They were based on “conclusions of reason,” “inspiration of God,” “human experience.” To adduce “the principal proofs” he used the metaphysical tradition. He wrote that the idea of the eternity (ontological argument), the desire of eternal life (psychological argument), similar ideas about eternal life of different nations (historical argument), the feeling of incompleteness and imperfection of happiness in usual life (axiological argument), the human life brevity incompatible with God’s eternal wisdom and goodness (teleological argument) testified to the immortality of the soul. We could think only hypothetically about the soul’s “size,” “image,” and “configuration.”

Bolotov supposed that the soul preserved the “state and shape” it had during human life. He thought that the soul (or its “envelope”) was “elastic,” “ethereal,” and “delicate.”

Very close to that work were Bolotov’s other works, first of all manuscripts from the Manuscript Department of the Library of Academy of Sciences in St.

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<sup>15</sup> Bolotov, *O dushakh*.

Petersburg: *Probable Events in the Other World...* (*Predpolagayemyye naugad proisshestiya na tom svete...*, 1823), *An Old Man and His Grand-Son...* (*Starik so vnukom...*, 1822).

All of Bolotov's compositions were connected with certain stages in his life. He did not create problems, but dealt with the problems his life burdened him with, living his life as a real philosopher, in meditations, far from vanity.

Alexander Sumarokov (1717–1777), Nikolai Novikov (1744–1818), Alexander Radishchev (1749–1802), Grigory Teplov (1717–1779), Alexander Bestuzhev (1761–1810) were also among the important moral writers.

## The moral ideas of Russian masonry

Because of the weakness of the above mentioned academic institutions and due to the strong spiritual censorship in the country many philosophical and ethical problems, for example, the problem of the immortality of the soul, God's existence, theodicy, etc., were studied and discussed more often in secret Masonic documents or in metaphorical literary forms than in special scholarly editions.

Masonry appeared in Russia during the reign of Peter the Great (1682–1725). It was brought to Russia by invited specialists from Europe, mainly from Britain. Later Russian Masonry was influenced by Prussian, Swedish and French masons. From the very beginning it was a marginal space where representatives of various social strata could meet. Masonry in Russia was never as open as in Britain or France. If Peter I or Alexander I were quite favorably disposed to Masonry, the governments of Elizaveta Petrovna or Catherine II were against them. As a result, Masonic lodges became secret (or semi-secret) organizations. For nobles, Masonic lodges were sometimes the only places where they could discuss theological and metaphysical problems and unite with representatives of other circles, for example, academics. Masonic magazines, first of all *The Morning Light* (*Utrenniy svet*), *The Dusk* (*Vechernyaya zarya*), *A Hard-Working Man at Rest* (*Pokoyashchiysya trudolyubets*), edited by eminent Moscow mason Nikolai Novikov, published various papers on ethical problems. His activity as a publisher provided a generation of Russian intellectuals with specific production, including favorite Masonic authors, and created a special interest in moral and spiritual problems. In most cases Masonic works were not published and still remain in a manuscript form. It is the least studied of all Russian eighteenth century philosophy sources.

Masons believed that moral perfection, or “correction of the heart,” “cleansing of the mind” could help one to “work” upon the imperfect human nature

(“gray stone,” “wild stone”). This would help to “take off old Adam” and to form the perfect man. Masons not only brought to Russia an interest in mystics and the Hermetic philosophy of Böhme, Swedenborg, and Fludd, but also tried to realize their moral principles in the ritual life of the Masonic lodge.

Personal perfection was an important part of a mason's life and works. The system of qualities for a real mason included individual perfection, honesty, truthfulness, charity, and protection of the unfortunate, modesty, contempt to vanity, fidelity to the monarch.<sup>16</sup> A “true mason” should esteem his sovereign and obey him in any controversies, whether he is kind or obstinate.<sup>17</sup>

The principal document for Russian masons was the “Catechism” written in French by Ivan Lopukhin as *Catéchisme moral pour les vrais F. M.* It was published anonymously in St. Petersburg in 1799 and disseminated together with other spiritual works by Lopukhin, such as *A Spiritual Knight*, in written form by “an unknown foreign author.” Later the work was translated into German by Docteur Ewald and Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling.

Lopukhin remarked that the *Catechism* was the result of his discussion on Masonry with Metropolitan Platon (P. E. Levshin, 1737–1812). It is instructive to note that Metropolitan Platon was the author of the first Russian Orthodox *Catechism* published around 1778.<sup>18</sup> We can find an analogy in utopian writings like M. M. Shcherbatov's *Journey into the Land of Ophir*, where a special moral *Catechism* used for education of Ophir citizens and first of all their rulers was described.

Personal examples were also important for masons and the lives of some were really legendary. Semen Gamaleya (1743–1822) was a real Christian ascetic and disinterested person. His biography may be called a realized personal moral utopia.

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<sup>16</sup> Pozdneyev, “Ranniye masonskie pesni,” 26–64.

<sup>17</sup> “On dolzhen tsarya chtit' i vo vsyakikh sporakh povinovat'sya emu ne tokmo dobromu i krotkomu, no i stroptivomu.” See Lopukhin, *Masonskie trudy*, 44.

<sup>18</sup> Platon, *Sokrashchennyy katekhizis*.

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## Post-Secular Thinking in the Age of Reason: Gregory Skovoroda's Apology of Religion

The eighteenth century in Russia was a time of great changes and transformations caused by the reformation activities of Tsar Peter the Great. A nearly monoethnic and mono-religious state was rapidly transformed (by the will of a single man) into an empire.<sup>1</sup> "Having cut through," as he figuratively put it, "a window to Europe," Peter opened it wide enough to let something more than mere European influence in, but also the strongest wind, storms, and violent tempests of European culture. This was undoubtedly the wind of change which shaped not only the Russian state, but also Russian society in a specific way.

In Europe, the eighteenth century is known as the Enlightenment or *the Age of Reason*. It was a time which saw an intense struggle between the Old and the New. It was a time of social, political, and intellectual transformations for Europe, which could only be compared with the trials of the wandering of nations in late Antiquity or the dreadful and terrible tempest of the European Reformation. However, this time there was something utterly new, which clearly distinguished these perturbations from those of the past. It was a distinct challenge to the whole of European history and culture since neither had the barbarians of late Antiquity so ferociously denied the importance of Roman culture, nor had the "fathers" of the Reformation so abruptly and fervently rejected the "old religion" as was the case by representatives of the Enlightenment. Their major intention was to build a new world instead of the old one, and that the new one ought to be inevitably better, and more beautiful, and just, and perfect, than the old one had been.

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<sup>1</sup> We could mention here a verse by Nikolai Iazykov, which was taken by Alexander Pushkin as an epigraph to his *The Blackamoor of Peter the Great*: "Russia, / Transformed by Peter's iron will..." See, e.g. Pushkin, *Complete Prose Fiction*, 11.

It seems almost the same as what Peter the Great felt in relation to Russia when he chose to reshape his old-fashioned state in a new, modern, European way.

One of the most renowned features of the European Enlightenment was its secularism, which at this time had become the major cause of attacks on the Church in particular—the most renowned is the Voltairian “*Écrassez l’infâme!*,” and religion in general (and, first of all, on the Christian Religion). The same, although with a slight difference, could be observed for Russia, where Peter himself, as well as those who inherited his throne, reshaped the political and social reality as it seemed best to them. Therefore, almost the same secular winds blew in Russia as they did in Europe. The Church, and religion itself experienced one of the most dramatic and challenging periods in their history; and the challenge had to be answered.

As the ancient Christian apology in the late Antiquity had first had to overcome the noxious influence of the ancient paganism (preserving its treasures) within the Church, and hereon only addressed its message to the non-Christian world, which could be considered an act of the post-pagan thinking. Thus in much the same manner the Christian apology of religion in the Age of Reason had to overcome the influences of the secular world which could be considered an act of the post-secular thinking. It is no less notable that these post-secular efforts were the first stirrings in the awakening of Russian (and Ukrainian) thought, which itself became a landmark signifying the dawn of future Russian (and Ukrainian) philosophy.

On the territories of the Russian Empire, one of the firsts, who could be called a post-secular thinker was Gregory Skovoroda (1722–1794).

Gregory, the son of Savva (Sabba), Skovoroda was born in Little Russia, Kiev government (province), Lubny district, in the village of Chernukhy, in 1722. He was educated at the Kyiv Mohyla Academy. For a while, he served as a chorister of the Royal Chapel in St. Petersburg, and later as a choirmaster in the Orthodox Church in the Russian mission in Tokay, Hungary. Upon his return to his homeland, he tried his hand at being a college professor and a private tutor, teaching poetics, Ancient Greek, and the Orthodox Catechesis, until he felt he had a vocation to pursue the life of a hermit. However, he did not retire to a monastery, but led the life of a peripatetic teacher, visiting his friends and writing his works that contained his vision of spiritual life and the rest of related issues.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The only trustworthy and detailed account of Gregory Skovoroda's life was composed in February 1795, not long after Skovoroda's death, by his beloved student, disciple, and the

Whatever changes Skovoroda's views would undergo during his lifetime, the focal point of his doctrine—which is the existential reality (wants and needs) of a human being—remained unchanged, as well as forming the kernel of his teaching and philosophical interests: Skovoroda mostly focused on moral and religious issues. Therefore, the central topics were of the same nature: e.g. the ways and means for overcoming existential fears—the strongest existential fear of Gregory Skovoroda himself, it seems, was the fear of death, the question about the possibility of and the ways to true human happiness, the meaning of religion and religious life.

Thus it seems it would not be very untrue to say here that the problem of human happiness is the key issue throughout Skovoroda's philosophy. Almost the same aspiration for human happiness can easily be found in the works of representatives of the European Enlightenment, wherefrom we can draw the conclusion that it was a general tendency of the time. However, whilst the majority of European thinkers were mostly focused on social and political issues (within the horizons of the earthly human life), Gregory Skovoroda rather felt the necessity, first, address the inner human life, meet the basic existential needs of a human being. It seems he considered the attempts to transform the life of society without having transformed the inner life of a person who is an acting member of the society and social life to be insufficient.

Therefore, one of the main tasks Gregory Skovoroda had to deal with was the apology of religion, which in his opinion is the only thing that is able to transform the inner self of a person in the right way. For Gregory Skovoroda, as for many representatives of the Christian tradition, the human being (microcosm)<sup>3</sup> is a being set betwixt the material and the spiritual elements of life. Moreover, the human being is a complex compound of both, and human life is being consisted of these two elements, but the spiritual one is (rather) more fundamental, and therefore more important. Religion reveals the spiritual element which is necessarily present in the entire building of the being, and the disregarding of which would bring us to nothing good.

At first sight it may seem strange, but Gregory Skovoroda asserts almost the same denial of religion among those who declare themselves to be the members of the Christian Church as much as among those, who are strictly opposed to the Church and Christian religion from secular positions. Therefore, there are two parties in face of which the apology of religion is to be made: one within the Church, and another outside of it. Thus, the apology itself must be

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closest friend Michael Kovalynsky. See Kovalynskiy, 1343–75. More about his life, see, e.g. Chernyshov, "Grigoriy Skovoroda," 205–43.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g. Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka tvoriv*, 248.

as though twofold: on the one hand, it must be directed against secularity, open atheism, and materialism, and on the other—against narrowing the Church perspective to the outward forms of cult and its historical practices. Gregory Skovoroda charges the first with *hypocrisy*, as the second—with *superstition*.

Skovoroda called himself “a lover of the Holy Bible.”<sup>4</sup> Considering the Bible to be “the third, symbolical world,” along with “the big world—macrocosm” and “the little world—microcosm—a human being,” Skovoroda, tries to find there symbolic and enigmatic analogies that can be called the archetypes of everything that happens in both the big world as the macrocosm and a human being as the microcosm.<sup>5</sup> However, he warns that the Bible is “the Book of Theology,” since it guides us solely towards the knowledge of God, leaving behind everything corruptible.”<sup>6</sup>

He calls contemporary materialists and atheists of the Enlightenment “*hypocrites*,” obviously referring to them all the rebukes and reproves which Jesus Christ addresses in the Bible to the ancient “hypocrites.” However, he calls his contemporary churchmen, who reduce the understanding of Christianity to the literal one, “*superstitious people*,” obviously, borrowing the name from both the pagan tradition of the late Antiquity (Cicero, Horace) and the contemporary criticism of religion made by intellectuals of the Enlightenment.

It is worth noticing that in his earlier works Gregory Skovoroda is mostly against those, who represent the secular party outside the Church, as in his latter ones (especially from 1775), he increasingly criticized those who called themselves Christians (and are often devout Church-goers), but rather shared a worldly superstition than a living and saving faith.

The *first part* and starting point of Skovoroda’s apology of religion, in the answer to materialistic and atheistic renunciation of the Enlightenment, a lively reality of human existential experience. Materialism and atheism come from an existential break from reality of being, lack of knowledge and wisdom in those who propagate them. For Skovoroda, they are intellectual and existential errors of the time. Knowing nothing about the true and living faith, critics of religion confuse religion and superstition.

The confusion of religion and superstition is a fundamental error itself, but besides it, almost all secular critics of religion share the same collection of the other *fundamental errors*. Skovoroda tries to discover the reason of their misinterpretation of religion, and their enmity towards it.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 648.

<sup>5</sup> Kovalyns’kyj, “Zhyzn’ Grigorija Skovorody,” 1369–70.

<sup>6</sup> Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka tvoriv*, 591.



The *first error* of the critics of religion is the false ontological belief that there is nothing in the world except for something that can be experienced by senses. The *hypocrites* behold only “the face” of things, but they are unable to penetrate into their nature, their sight slides on the surface, without observing the divine principles. Skovoroda says that they are like snakes that “creep upon the earth,”<sup>7</sup> “eat the dust of corruptible flesh,”<sup>8</sup> as only the faith is able to raise them up.<sup>9</sup> They know nothing about the spiritual reality of being: it is wherefrom their materialism and atheism come.

The *second error* is that they are also very much misguided about the nature of true knowledge, believing that the progress in natural sciences could improve their position and bring happiness. As a result, striving for such sort of knowledge, they are utterly ignorant of “the highest science” that is the eternal wisdom of the “Christ’s philosophy,” which is the only thing that could make them truly happy.

The *third error* (coming from the first and second ones) is that they disregard the inner, spiritual life of human beings, believing them to be confined to their earthly lives and sensual existence. The *hypocrites* know nothing about the high destiny of human beings; therefore, they believe them to be like the rest of earthly animals.

The *fourth error* is that they believe human happiness consists rather of *having* (or experiencing) than of *being*, and therefore pay much more attention to collecting possessions and indulging themselves to debauches and carnal pleasures than to discovering a true calling (*srodnost'*), which would endow their lives with the inner sense and true meaning. Thus, they know nothing about true joys and spiritual delights, which can make them truly happy.

Thus, the main task of Skovoroda's apology of religion here is finding the effective means to correct the errors, showing the imperishable value of religion as such, underestimated by his contemporaries who advocate secular ideals.

Although, the reasons for such errors are manifold, but the major one—as Skovoroda puts it—is that *they do not know themselves*. The lack of self-knowledge makes any other knowledge as if the outer (material) world, so about God and the spiritual world either useless or impossible. Living in the outer world, they are unaware of who they truly are, as well as whom and what they are to be. Knowing nothing about their true callings, each of them goes the way, which seems to be good but eventually brings them to unhappiness.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 237, 311, 344, 436, 460, 505, 563, 565, 570, 581, 648, 732–33, 787, 797, 954, 958.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 330.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 460.

Religion reveals and constantly witnesses, alongside the habitual sensual world, the existence of the other reality, where we know nothing of a *homo saecularis*. Moreover, the truth of which the religion is an undying witness to can easily be discovered by philosophy, using a logical method, with rational means. If they were only to give them trouble to calm themselves and to think a bit they would surely discover (with all certainty!) the truth even in the most usual things of the sensual world: the truth about existence of the spiritual world that religion teaches everyday, everywhere, always. Every clay pot,<sup>10</sup> and every picture,<sup>11</sup> every house,<sup>12</sup> and every material building<sup>13</sup> or thing<sup>14</sup> preach the existence of the intelligible world alongside the sensual one; and that spiritual world, which contains many levels, is not to be confined to mere “forms.” It is much more important to know about inner intentions or destinations of things, the purposes for which they have been created, and their ultimate end.<sup>15</sup> The analysis of human nature gives the same evidence; moreover, it shows with all possible clarity that the sensual world is utterly dependent on the intelligible one as a tail on the head.<sup>16</sup> The material human body is guided and governed by immaterial, by intelligible mind.<sup>17</sup> Skovoroda believes that this discovery inevitably refutes completely the materialism and atheism, opening the way to faith and “Christ’s philosophy.”

The intellectuals of the European Enlightenment were very optimistic about the perspectives afforded by mathematics and natural sciences (Jean-Jacques Rousseau was the only exception). They believed that only progress in sciences could eventually bring humanity to happiness. Skovoroda states that this infatuation and enthusiasm for natural sciences can scarcely be fruitful and true, while the deepest existential needs and wants of human beings remain unsatisfied, being either ignored or neglected. The main purpose of sciences in the things and matters of the outer world, as the deepest existential cravings of human beings are for the things that are spiritual and divine. Following the steps of Apostle Paul,<sup>18</sup> Gregory Skovoroda opposes to “the empty philosophy (according to the elements of this world),” the “Philosophy according to Christ.” He also calls the latter “Christ’s philosophy,” “The Highest Science,”<sup>19</sup> “The

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 243–44, 790.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 168, 562, 567, 686, 928.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 240, 242–43.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 243.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 244, 254, 309, 439, 503, 513, 650, 654, 878, 899–900, 906, 927, 1278.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 214, 236–37, 239, 270–71.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Col 2:8.

<sup>19</sup> Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka tvoriv*, 300.

Catholic Science,”<sup>20</sup> “The Universal Science,”<sup>21</sup> pointing that any other sciences receive their meaning and become valuable only in relation to this “Highest Science.” Skovoroda emphasizes that the rest of sciences deal with temporal things when this one with the things eternal. Those who believe there is a need only for worldly sciences, being ignorant of the Highest Science, Skovoroda calls “sirens,”<sup>22</sup> “proud wises of the fat flesh,”<sup>23</sup> and “suckling wises.”<sup>24</sup> Focusing on vanity, they become vain.<sup>25</sup> They promise happiness, but are unable to fulfill the promise, since it is not in their competence.<sup>26</sup> Skovoroda does not say that their knowledge is useless—he does not reject science<sup>27</sup>—but he is rather trying to distinguish among the areas of competence of “the modern sciences” and “The Highest Science.” His conclusion is that the borderline between these two kinds of knowledge is that the former concerned themselves with things of the outer world and the latter with the existential reality of human being.<sup>28</sup> The knowledge of modern science deals only with things of the material world, as the knowledge of the Highest Science, missing out everything temporal, focuses on the very foundations of being, dealing with the eternal things and God himself. It is utterly religious and immediately connected to religion, without which it would have lost itself.

The Highest Science is nothing but true wisdom, which eventually may bring true happiness. This wisdom is the perennial treasure of human knowledge about happy life. It depends neither on time nor on place, but is the Highest Science and the Highest Art of living, and living happily. Although, according to Skovoroda, it is most fully revealed in the Bible, but to a certain (and quite sufficient) extent it is revealed in the pagan world, both in ancient and modern times. Therefore, Skovoroda mostly teaches about perennial human wisdom, which has ever been present among people: it did not appear in the recent times of the modern progress.<sup>29</sup>

The wisdom knows the things of which the modern sciences are unable to know anything. Its main discourse is about hidden, invisible, spiritual things of another world, which, however, is the firm foundation of the visible and ever-changing world. Skovoroda repeats insistently that the first step to know things

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 562.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 390.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 457.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 560.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 391.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 561–62.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 514.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 163, 177, 513–14, 562.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 456, 513, 562, 575, 740.

rightly is to divide each thing in two, since everything is a compound of two different “natures:” visible and invisible, matter and mind, associations and thoughts, sensual and intelligible, temporal and eternal, flesh and spirit, creation and God. Secular knowledge permits us to know only a half, a part of all that, since only religion, with the means of faith, can make the knowledge complete.

Religion does not merely contemplate elements of the world, but reveals “the eternal plan” according to which the entire framework of the universe is built.<sup>30</sup> In a human being, religion discovers “two men in one,”<sup>31</sup> the one of which is temporal and perishable and another is eternal. The eternal “true man”<sup>32</sup> is nothing but the very God’s image, imprinted on the animal nature of the “corruptible man.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, Skovoroda states that there is the other nature in the human being, alongside the biological or animal one, that enables the human being to become God, to inherit the everlasting life.

According to Skovoroda, religion exists to provide humanity with the knowledge of how to live, founding the life not upon “the sand”<sup>34</sup> of “human evil will,”<sup>35</sup> human beliefs or opinions, but upon “the rock”<sup>36</sup> of God’s good will, true faith and the truth. This art of living begins with knowledge of oneself, which reveals the duality of human existence, set between time and eternity, temporal and eternal. Skovoroda is convinced that the only thing God demands from a human being is that one may discover the own personal calling and truly become the self.

This way starts with discovery a tiny “spark”<sup>37</sup> in the inner deep of own human nature of spiritual life, and then the discovery in the Self two “irreconcilable armies”<sup>38</sup> of spiritual intentions, inclinations, and thoughts, representing the wills that belong to two different masters—God and Devil, God and the World. The latter draws the human being outward to perish, when God draws to become the Self, sharing his divine plan about the world and the human being that can be saved both in God and eternity. Choosing God’s side, the human being discovers his/her calling, which comes to be an “inexhaustible source” of peace and joy of heart, enabling him/her to meet any challenge of this earthly life with inner courage, endowing the life with sense.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 216, 389, 737.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 238, 781.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 218, 295, 298.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 73, 213, 260, 310, 399, 406, 428, 797, 903.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 64–65, 82–83.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 55, 64, 66, 70, 83, 85, 105, 218, 302, 312, 321, 389, 391, 395, 400, 404, 406–07, 797.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 565, 660–61, 792, 848.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 455.

Summarizing the first part of Skovoroda's apology of religion it must be mentioned that his response to the secular criticism of religion includes, on the one hand, negative statements, describing the errors of secularists, and on the other, Skovoroda develops his positive teaching of religion. It can possibly be called his philosophy of religion, since he appeals rather to rational argumentation. Therefore, Skovoroda's intention is to prove religion to be one of the most important spheres of human life, offering the most important existential knowledge on which, after all, depends human happiness. However, religion is not to be confused with superstition, this confusion is rather caused by a mere likeness in appearance, that is why those who does this confusion Skovoroda calls "the hypocrites," i.e. those who judge things by face, not by heart.

The *second part* of Skovoroda's apology of religion addressed superstition, which Gregory Skovoroda recognizes as a secular influence within the Church. On the one hand, superstition, confused with religion, becomes a cause of secularist attacks; on the other, it does a great harm to the spiritual life of those who wish to lead a Christian life. The superstition is a sort of imposture, pretending to be a godly life, though it is not: superstitious people are rather "monkeys of the true sanctity,"<sup>39</sup> as Skovoroda puts it. Besides that, the position of the superstitious people within the Church is almost a direct reflection of hypocrites' one outside the Church, but on ecclesiastical grounds.

The *first error* of superstitious people is that they falsely confuse sensual and spiritual lives, believing that the spiritual life depends on the sensual one. Thus, they pervert the truth, as the truth is rather the contrary, since the sensual life is directly dependent on the spiritual one. The confusion shows that the superstitious people (the same as the hypocrites) know nothing about the spiritual life, but rather keep the belief that is materialistic in nature. Skovoroda associates this position with idolatry, saying that "A superstitious person believes in the vanity, an idolater worship the emptiness."<sup>40</sup>

Their *second error* is that they do not understand the Holy Scripture, taking it in a merely historical and profoundly literal way. As a result, they believe many things that are rather nonsense, vain and useless, which neither change their life for the better nor help them to grow into the knowledge of God. Moreover, the literal understanding of the Bible, along with the understanding of Christianity confined to the narrow historical perspective become cause for many plagues of the human history, such as heresies, bloodsheds, wars, etc.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 841.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 738.

The *third error* is that they firmly believe that saving grace can be obtained only through the liturgical worship, arranged in a special way. Therefore, they disregard the fact that any form of liturgical worship is rather conventional and may vary, depending on time and place, culture, and groups of people who perform the worship. Thus, they tend to absolutize their own position and religions (or pretending to be such) experience, opposing it to the rest of the world.

Their *fourth error* is that they believe in the saving power of mere outward actions, being completely unaware that firstly they would have to inherit the salvation is the inner conversion. Therefore, they are rather eager to sing psalms or go to pilgrimage than to change their lives, bringing them in accordance with the divine principles.

However, the main feature of superstition—at least according to Skovoroda—is the connection with the flesh. Superstition can see and aim at nothing but flesh and carnal things. Often superstitious people justify their own offences and wrongdoings by finding the same in characters of the Bible. This way superstition justifies with God's word the ungodly works and actions: drunkenness, adulteries, concubinage, jealousy, fear of death, greediness, arrogance, etc. Even the faith is reversed by superstition to vain things: “flesh and blood of saints,” “matter in incense and candles, in pictures, in images and ceremonies, having forgotten there is nothing good but God.”<sup>41</sup>

Everything said above brings us to a *conclusion*.

Firstly, it must be concluded that the present study gives us a rightful opportunity to say that Skovoroda's apology of religion is a fine example of post-secular thinking, as well as Gregory Skovoroda himself can be rightfully recognized to be a representative of post-secular thinking in the territories of the Russian Empire.

Secondly, Skovoroda's apology of religion appears to be a response to two tendencies, which are quite different, but both hostile to even the spirit of religion and religious life. The first tendency comes from the secular world, and the second from within the Church. However, Skovoroda recognizes the second as a mere reflection of the first, but on Christian grounds. The first he calls *hypocrisy*, and the other *superstition*.

Thirdly, *hypocrisy* appears to Skovoroda to be a result of misunderstanding of the very nature of religion, along with a perverted vision of the world and human life. Therefore, Skovoroda develops his criticism of this position, taking as his starting point the lively existential reality, interests, wants and needs of

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 782–83.

a human being. Taking for his focal point human aspiration and craving for happiness, Skovoroda gradually demonstrates that there is nothing to satisfy the craving but religion. As far as he demonstrates the urgent necessity of religion for humanity, he also disproves errors that laid the foundation for the criticism religion of intellectuals' religion of the Enlightenment.

Fourthly, criticizing *superstition* (which was also one of the most favorite targets for the fervent criticism of the enlighteners as well as general objections of the time against religion) Skovoroda distinguishes it from religion. The distinction helps him to demonstrate that superstition is not the same as religion, but is rather a perversion of religion, made under the influence of the secular world. Skovoroda states that the very foundation of superstition and superstitious beliefs is nothing but materialistic beliefs and complete unawareness of what the true spiritual life and religion are like.

Fifthly, Skovoroda's apology of religion, therefore, offers a fine example of post-secular criticism, based on both the Christian tradition and the achievements of the secular culture of the Age of Reason. In this way, Gregory Skovoroda endeavors to find a *via media*, a way between the extremities of secular enmity towards religion, on the one hand, and religious fanaticism on the other.

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## Fulfillment of Prophecy: Problems of Philosophy and Russian Socio-Religious Thought in the Doctrine of Vladimir Soloviev

Vladimir Soloviev derived his law of historical development from the “general goal” of human development, which has as its subject humankind as a genuine organism, though one united from separate parts.<sup>1</sup> The collective nature of any organism identifies humankind, he believes, as “a genuine organic subject of historical development.”<sup>2</sup> One clear example upholding what Soloviev sees as the general law of any development is provided by the European Union, which certainly does not realize how closely it is connected with the Russian philosopher’s teachings. Soloviev started from the premise that any “form commonly accepted by of human life”<sup>3</sup> has three interconnected categories: an economic foundation (will); the political nature of society (the state and the law); and a third, the Church (the spiritual foundation). The latter plays the cardinal role in human development.

The question arises of what sort of priority applies to each of these categories today, if we keep in mind that the general trend of worldwide development justifies the logic of discussing it. After all, in today’s world the force that exerts power over all other forces remains, as before, religion, while the Church itself (which is not the same thing) serves as testimony to the level of civilizational progress, helping or, more precisely, unveiling the “face” of the social development of all peoples.

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<sup>1</sup> See Solovyov, *Philosophical Principles*, 24.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 25.



Soloviev names three historical worlds: the Muslim East, Western civilization, and the Slavic world.<sup>4</sup> The geography that applies to them has undergone some changes, of course, but in general, these “worlds” have retained the properties that differentiate them and what we might call the “niches” they occupy. It should also be noted that the Slavic world is almost purely concentrated in Russia, while the Muslim world, with all its international differences and internal contradictions, remains as cohesive as ever from the point of view of the West.

While characterizing the “Muslim East” as “one sovereign and a lifeless mass of slaves” (which essentially remains the case today), Soloviev compares it to Western civilization with its striving towards “the freedom of individual life,”<sup>5</sup> and its emancipation of individuality. Unlike the Muslim world, which has been transformed into a “petrified, undifferentiated mass” which is being born before our eyes to the “force of exclusive unity,”<sup>6</sup> Europe underwent a journey of profound changes, successfully avoiding socialism (that did not apply to all countries, but in one way or another it helped, later, with Poland, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, etc.); the Church was separated from the state, and faith became a personal matter for each individual. In other words, the Muslim East asserts the idea of the “inhumane God” (in this case, we mean not Islamic teachings as such, and not the Quran and its verses, but the facile interpretations with which modern-day Muslims approach their own text, permitting Scripture to be interpreted for political expediency<sup>7</sup>); at the same time, Western civilization has started down the road of asserting the idea of the “inhumane man,” thereby reducing individual freedom to an absurdity. Emmanuel Levinas inevitably comes to mind: “It is certainly a great glory for the creator to have set up a being capable of atheism, a being which, without having been *causa sui*, has an independent view and world and is at home with himself.”<sup>8</sup>

During their development, the paths these worlds took did not proceed in isolation. European civilization opened its gates to the other worlds (most of all to the Muslim world), but failed to win in the process, instead suffering continuous frustration. The offensive might of the “undifferentiated”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Solovyov, “Three forces,” 25.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>7</sup> Russian-Azerbaijani writer and Quran expert Chinghiz Gusseinov has repeatedly emphasized the discrepancies between the Quranic text and the actions of Islamists, arguing that “the linearity of these interpretations of the divine text led to the shaping of a program for jihad, which replaced the apotheosis of life with the apotheosis of death,” and so on. See i.e., Gusseinov, *Tracing the Quranic Verses*, 13, 8.

<sup>8</sup> Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 117.

<sup>9</sup> Solovyov, “Three forces,” 25.

Muslim masses is clearly evident. To a certain extent, this is predicated, one might think, on the weakness of Russia as the Slavic world, and in the context of Soloviev's idea, universal human development is stalling. In the end, Europe (and America) took all the weight of the "Muslim world" onto its own shoulders. And the imbalance that took shape would inevitably have an effect on subsequent human development. The socio-political situation that has taken shape shows that any absence of cooperation between the "worlds" results in a danger that the balance will be upset, and that the truth will be lost in tiny fragments.

The question arises: Why is it that the "Russian world" not only failed to become an ally in the cause of bringing Western civilization closer to the Muslim East, not only failed to cope with, on the universal scale, the purpose of its own destiny, but also was unable to overcome the revolutionary catastrophe, and did not survive, or even thoroughly recognize, its consequences, coming in the end to a state in which paganism masquerading as orthodoxy has spread throughout the country? The great Russian philosopher foresaw all of this, and he warned against it.

However, no man is a prophet in his own land, and Soloviev's teachings confirm that. In all the artificial utopianism of his pronouncements, the philosopher's ideas, in general, are still current, and yet not sought after.

Almost one hundred and fifty years ago, he wrote:

Nobody can say when the time will arrive for Russia to manifest its historical calling—but everything demonstrates that this our is near, notwithstanding even the fact that there exists in Russian society almost no real consciousness of its higher task. But great external events usually precede great awakenings of social consciousness. Thus even the Crimean War, although completely fruitless in a political respect, strongly influenced the consciousness of our society. The *negative character* of the consciousness awakened by this war corresponded to its *negative result* (emphasis is mine—E.T.). One must hope the great struggle that is being readied will serve as a powerful impulse for the awakening of a *positive consciousness* of the Russian nation ... and in expelling false little gods and idols from our soul, we whereby introduce into it true Divinity.<sup>10</sup>

The quotation is from Soloviev's 1877 speech entitled *Three Forces*, which reinforced his reputation among his contemporaries as a mystic and Slavophile, something he contemplated with admirable forbearance and irony. Meanwhile, he literally predicted the future "KrymNash" ("Crimea is ours") movement and

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 33.

the clamor surrounding it. There was a reason that society in those days, with its ultra-patriotic moods, responded with hostility to the philosopher's critical remarks about the Russian people, which, he insisted, ought to free themselves from all limitations and overcome their narrow interests in order to become an *intermediary* between humankind and the discovery of the higher, Godly world. His explanation for the shape of the situation was that the Russian people did not have a Church that was worthy of it. Here, the philosopher was in step with the Slavophiles, though he took a more radical position with respect to Orthodoxy.

Traveling into the depths of time, we may arrive at the source of this breakdown in the unity of human society, which was partly predicated on Russian spiritual isolation (according to Soloviev, its "spiritual naturalization"<sup>11</sup>) and its concomitant claims to the status of the Third Rome, that is, to an "exclusive significance in the Christian world."<sup>12</sup> At the same time the people, having rejected the old-fashioned idea of the national Russian Church, "came to identify themselves not as a Church, but as a state."<sup>13</sup> The choice the people made between these two non-exclusive sides of universal human life, the Church and the state, became a stumbling block which hampered the future of Russia, which was later unable to stand firm against social upheaval and revolution. Furthermore, the false premise current among Slavophiles, against which Soloviev levied harsh polemics, that Russia had its own individual path of development, corrupted for entire centuries not just the path itself, but also all understanding of it. "The idea of the nation," Soloviev emphasized, "is not what it thinks of itself in worldly time, but what God thinks of it in eternity."<sup>14</sup> Surprisingly enough, the Russian people—who were prepared neither practically nor conceptually to connect Christianity with the Jews as their own forebears, who were inclined to anti-Semitism out of poor education and an elementary lack of knowledge of the Biblical texts—appointed *themselves* messiah, claiming their own self-determination in a usurpation of the role from the Jews. Many times over, various peoples (or, more precisely, their philosophers) have rushed to claim Israel's experience as their own. One example is Poland during the years of its lost statehood and World War II (starting with Mickiewicz). But Russia distinguished itself from many of the others by not enriching itself spiritually with that experience, instead servilely closing its eyes to it, declaring itself the executor of the

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<sup>11</sup> Solov'yev, "Ocherki iz istorii russkogo soznaniya," 296; cf. Solov'yev, *Russkaya ideya*, 9.

<sup>12</sup> Solov'yev, "Ocherki iz istorii russkogo soznaniya," 292.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 299.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., cf. Solov'yev, *Russkaya ideya*, 29.

Supreme Will (according to Soloviev, Russia could have become just that, if it had had a different Church, one that was autonomous and independent). Russia, Soloviev believed, aligned itself with Christianity (thanks to Prince Vladimir) and entered into European civilization (along with Peter the Great), but was never able to recognize its true destiny—to be the bridge between East and West. And, in the end, it transformed into the vehicle for the “great idea” it had itself postulated, sometimes Serbian, sometimes Bulgarian.<sup>15</sup> The philosopher concluded that Russia had been and still was ruled by “the pagan idea of the absolute state.”<sup>16</sup>

However, it bears remembering, the philosopher insisted, that the meaning of a nation’s existence lies not in that nation itself, but in humankind,<sup>17</sup> and that the universal mission of a people may be carried out only under the condition that other peoples consent.<sup>18</sup> For present-day Russia, which over the past twenty years has found reason to quarrel with all of its neighbors (Georgia, Ukraine, and Poland), that sort of consent can never be obtained due to the aggressive nature of Russian policies. Certain people and nations can only live and maintain a sense of themselves in a condition of acute conflict, which they use to explain their own individuality and position in the world. Still, actions are one thing, and their motivations are another. Russia has long confused these two concepts. For Russia, an action is a verbal phenomenon, some sort of statement, and having committed an act, it will then spend entire periods forcing it into a verbal pattern.

There are issues for which the Russian intelligentsia still must answer. For example, why did so few people take an interest in the people’s ignorance, until its monstrous forms, stemming from time immemorial came to the surface? It was the Slavophiles, led by Ivan Aksakov, who spoke up in objection to the harmful influence of the Poles (and, of course, the Jews) on the Russian people.<sup>19</sup> Who could have foreseen that, after all the divisions of Poland (from 1795 up to the most recent time), when Russia received richly populated lands to rule over, that population would turn out to be more literate, better educated, and more highly developed than the natives? This superiority over the native population was all too apparent, and obvious injustices were noted. Why, for example, did the Jews, even in the poorest families, teach their children a trade,

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<sup>15</sup> Solov’yev, *Russkaya ideya*, 42.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>19</sup> Aksakov, *Pol’skiy vopros*. In this context, Polish historian of ideas Andrzej Walicki examines the “Polish question” in the chapter on Aksanov and anti-Catholicism in Walicki, *Rosja, katolicyzm i sprawa polska*, 112.

and teach them Hebrew in religious schools? Why were all Polish peasants literate, even able to enter the gentry if they liked?

A strange dissonance was in place: formally speaking, all the different statuses of the former Polish state, after transferring into Russian sovereignty, remained legally in place. Polish aristocrats retained the right to be aristocrats, and Jews retained freedom of religion (and, most importantly, the right to read and write their religious texts in their own language), while Russian peasants continued to eke out their servile existence. Few gave any thought to the fact that the battle to overturn serfdom, which they had begun fighting while they were still Decembrists, had been joined not by the despondent Russian peasantry, but by the enraged Polish peasantry, who discovered overnight that they had become serfs. Fear not the one who has nothing to lose, but the one to whom nothing belongs.

Did the Russian Church ever stop to consider that the people, whom it cost nothing to round up in herds, might understand spiritual community in a way that differed from the Russian clergy's interpretation? "Not only is it understood," Soloviev wrote, "that the Russian people are a Christian people, but it is bombastically declared that they are a Christian people by virtue of their superiority, and that the Church is the true foundation of our national life."<sup>20</sup> And the philosopher, whose main goal in life was to convince people of the unity of all humankind, draws his most important, timely conclusion, one that is politically significant and absolutely realistic: The reason for such statements is essentially to allow a later confident assertion that "only we have a Church, and we have a monopoly on faith and on Christian life."<sup>21</sup> In other words, the Church, which ought to be a rock of unity and solidarity, has transformed into "a palladium of narrow national particularism," and it was a short journey from that place to purposes serving the national ego and the politics of hatred. That is why Soloviev refuses to permit the Russian Church to act as the official institution—whose representative parts (the religious administration as well as the theological academy) used all available means to support particularism and unilateralism—to speak as the truly living body of the Universal Church.<sup>22</sup> The anger provoked in him by what he observed to be the state of the Russian Church then, we must note, could easily be just as strongly provoked by the Church of today.

What does the Russian Church need? The writer Ivan Aksakov asked that question painfully, almost neurasthenically, and Soloviev quotes him

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<sup>20</sup> Solov'yev, *Russkaya ideya*, 48.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 49.

abundantly in his *Russian Idea*, including his call for the “spirit of truth, spirit of love, spirit of life, and spirit of freedom” to descend upon the Church.<sup>23</sup> Soloviev is much more radical: He believes that this “false Church institution” is based on servility and material interests, and that it acts through deception and force, and that it deserves “annihilation.”<sup>24</sup>

But the saddest aspect of all of this is that, just as during his own lifetime, Soloviev’s entreaties remain unheard, misunderstood, and disregarded. The Russian philosopher recognized how far he was reaching, but he always predicted that the world would never see a “polity of moral obligations,” or justice, until such a time as the Russian people’s internalized qualities of religiosity ceased being paralyzed by the violence and obscurantism that ruled them. “I am speaking of a new idolatry, of an epidemic of the insanity of nationalism, pushing peoples toward worshiping their own image instead of the supreme and universal God.”<sup>25</sup>

Even then, the need for a reconstruction of the Russian Orthodox Church had become thoroughly apparent, and Soloviev put great hope in that, proposing that the model that had emerged could be altered, reorganized, and corrected. Time has confirmed not only how right he was, but also how idealistic are the convictions that such a transformation is possible.

Soloviev always saw a difference between the Church as an institution and religious life (faith), seeing the Universal Church as the apotheosis of the unification of humankind in the individual, socio-political and spiritual sense.

Soloviev had a broad concept of the unity of humankind: the human race, all peoples and nations, and finally all Christian branches under the leadership of the Universal Church, which is rooted in the religion of its forebears, the Jewish faith. Now, when an uncontrollable and almost guerrilla-style invisible war is going on all around the world between Muslims and the Jews (Arabs and Israel) and the Catholics (Muslims and France), with the events of September 11, 2001 in the United States before that, an unwanted conclusion presents itself: if the hierarchies of all the religious faiths and branches cannot come together and do not address the question of the Universal Church as a real-life model rather than a utopian one, if Soloviev’s calls to unification on the economic, socio-political and religious levels at the scale of all humankind go unheard, then the world will continue to be shaken at the very foundations by war and terror.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 63.

Soloviev's chief philosophical task was to aim for synthesis, for a unification of various aspects of life and activity on the part of the peoples of the world "on the path of unity of the human race." He believed the essence of religious truth lay in that unity, in the social organism that constitutes this "great collective being."<sup>26</sup>

For Soloviev, universality is always in the process of development; indeed it is itself development, and therefore also life. Only when it is developing does "humankind has a common goal of its existence," and this in turn assumes that there is a developing subject, and also that it is a "unified being," that it is a "living organism."<sup>27</sup>

These propositions, formulated by the philosopher in one of his first works, *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge*, were innovations at the time in terms of how they applied to human history, and meanwhile they continued, in their own way, Hegel's ideas about the general law of all development, as well as those of Herbert Spencer, who, Soloviev pointed out, applied that law to biology. "The general law of all development" implies, for Soloviev, not just "pure scholastics," or philosophical teachings as such, but also practice, the application of those propositions to the socio-political and economic situation actually at hand (*Three Forces* and *The National Question in Russia*). This is the reason why his work is relevant today. The "Russian idea" and its analysis of Russia's present-day condition, including how it is seen by the West, is completely applicable to what is presently happening in Russia.

Soloviev was one of the first to take a critical approach to the "Russian idea" as an object of philosophical investigation (that is a separate topic), the meaning of which resonates directly with the work of Nikolai Berdyaev, who emphasized that he was interested not in Russia's empirical thinking about itself, but in what "the thought of the Creator about Russia."<sup>28</sup>

And so why does the heritage Soloviev left us remain unread in Russia, given that the repeating model of "Russian development," which never seems to want to keep pace with general human development, remains, as Soloviev said, firmly in place? To some extent, an explanation, if not a justification, for this could be found in the complete intellectual breakdown to which the Russian people were subjected after the 1917 revolution. The Russians were deprived not just of religion, for which the ideology of communism was accepted as a substitute, but also of their chance for decent historical and philosophical development. To this day, Russians must be reminded that changing the facts of history is

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>27</sup> Solovyov, *Philosophical Principles*, 20.

<sup>28</sup> Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*, 1.

not allowed, that history is a science, not the fruit of self-expression. This can be noticed even in the statements of government officials. Something similar is taking place in our understanding of philosophy, which, as an act of free thinking, arose in Russia relatively late, at the end of the nineteenth century. Both its stormy initiation into European thought and its mature presence within it were wrecked by the 1917 revolution and the subsequent taboo applied by the Soviet regime against any and all forms of intellectualism. Today, we are dining on the fruits of an undeveloped, deformed consciousness, in terms of law, society, politics, economics, religion, and a total lack of mutual understanding. Soloviev demonstrates, with relentless evidence, the amorality of the state of mind(s) in Russia, unless they are “governed by pure force.”<sup>29</sup>

The philosopher comes down hard on the Russian Orthodox Church in the form which it had taken by the 1870s or 1880s, calling on the Church to overcome national egoism, obscurantism, religious particularism, and militarism. He believed that those phenomena prevented people from understanding their place in the world and, worse, stalled the development of the country, and along with it all of humankind. Those descriptions, formulated over one hundred fifty years ago, sound just as prophetic and topical today. Interestingly, Soloviev saw his “prophet of the future” as walking step by step (in the poem *Prophet of the Future*) to his “sacred temple” (in the poem *In the morning fog with tentative steps...*).<sup>30</sup>

Solzhenitsyn's 1990 manifesto *Rebuilding Russia* resembles, in its pathos, Soloviev's “Russian idea.” But unlike Solzhenitsyn, Soloviev saw the new Russia from the perspective of all humankind, in a closed space of potential interconnections, giving a fuller picture of a disease that has already been diagnosed, and now demands treatment.

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<sup>29</sup> Solov'yev, *Russkaya ideya*, 65.

<sup>30</sup> Solov'yev, *Izbrannoye*, 200, 38. Soloviev admitted that he wrote *Prophet of the Future* as a way to complete and improve upon similar poems by Pushkin and Lermontov. “My prophet, in the end, is the prophet of the future (which perhaps is already becoming the present); in him, the contradictions with the surrounding environment reach a stage of absolute incommensurability” (ibid., 201).



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## In Search of a New Rationality: Some Peculiarities of the Russian Religious Philosophy of the Early Twentieth Century

In this paper we consider the process of the formation of Russian philosophy in the beginning of the twentieth century. This period can be defined as the period up to the middle of the second decade of the twentieth century. This was the time of the formation and clearance of the school which we qualify as the Russian religious philosophy of the early twentieth century. If we use the term of Vasily Zenkovsky that was used in a different context, we can say that it was a period of system formation. This period, spanning just over a decade, conceptually allows us to emphasize a certain common thematic space during the formation of a particular school of philosophy. As a rule, the Russian philosophy researchers distinguish in Russian philosophy a number of areas—sophiology, personalism, intuitionism et al. We believe that one should recognize the fact that these areas received their systematic design just about the middle of the second decade. At the appointed short time period, the development of these trends arise; here there are works of Russian philosophers of the early period of their creativity. Thematically, we can identify a certain ideological integrity, which includes a variety of thinkers, but we nevertheless define them as representatives of the Russian religious philosophy of the century. We can distinguish several leading themes that were developed in this direction. First of all, we are talking about the need to create a new philosophy, the philosophy is not purely speculative, but a philosophy that is based on a new metaphysics, a new doctrine of being. This task, or rather the meta-task concretized in this period, gets its concrete expression in the development of several major themes. One of the main themes in the formation of the Russian philosophy of this period were gnoseology problems. Researchers of Russian philosophy almost unanimously approved of the thesis that the gnoseological

ideas of Russian philosophers were not original. However, in the formation of Russian philosophy as a school, these ideas played an important role. As well as in Western philosophy, criticism of psychologism and subjectivism in philosophy takes place; the object of criticism is the philosophy of neo-Kantianism.

This integrity is a critical attitude towards Europe's leading school of philosophy of that period. However, in the course of this criticism the philosophical direction is made, which to some extent is the answer to the questions and problems posed by the neo-Kantians. The criticism of neo-Kantian philosophy is a critique of European philosophy of the Modern era but it is the influence of this philosophy, the desire to solve the problems it posed.

The main focus of criticism is focused on the neo-Kantian gnoseological constructions. Exposing mistakes in the constructions of neo-Kantians in this area, Russian philosophers try to rethink and discover all the shortcomings of the former European philosophy. Russian philosophers of the early twentieth century seek to overcome the rationalistic idealistic point of view. Idealism, rationalism reproach that they do not allow access to the object, on the contrary, in this case the object is deduced from the subject, it is impossible to break into existence. Another important drawback in the rationalist gnoseologism is, according to Russian philosophers, an inability to substantiate the reality of the other "I" within its field. What is the logic of these arguments? First of all, they emphasize the fact that the neo-Kantianism is a philosophy of "the middle." This middleness reveals itself in the fact that it is trying and cannot get away from psychology and subjectivism, which to a large extent are inherent in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. The essence of the problem in the history of philosophy is interpreted as follows: since all knowledge is an act flowing into the consciousness of the subject to the extent it does not express the essence of the object itself, but condition of the subject. Therefore, the knowledge is "closed" by the circle of subject's experiences and therefore cannot qualify for the necessity and validity. In this case there is the absolutisation of the moment of "subjectivity" that is specific and unique in knowledge. As is well known, Kant assumed the laws of science are generally valid and a necessary source of knowledge; the source of validity and necessity knowledge is not in the object but in the subject. In the field of theoretical knowledge the subject, according to the doctrine of Kant, has to deal with reality as an object of knowledge. Reality itself is a "thing-in-itself," existing, but not knowable. The subject of knowledge is always subjective, but this subjectivity is not a subjectivity of empirical, psychological "I." It is achieved by processing the material of sensations by *a priori* forms of sensibility—time and space. Subordinating diverse material of sensations to the *a priori* forms, we submit them to this very unity of our

“I” as a pure form, as a general knowledge of the subject—the gnoseological subject at all.

However, despite the fact that Kant insisted on the transcendental nature of the *a priori* forms of sensibility, understanding and reason, he could not get rid of the fact that they still appear as a subject capabilities, partly understood as an individual entity, partly as a universal. Neo-Kantians tried to get rid of psychology, to reform fundamental Kantian gnoseology scheme—the opposition of transcendental subject to transcendental object (“thing-in-itself”). With all the specific differences of each of the schools of neo-Kantianism “thing-in-itself” is deprived in their logic its objective nature, and becomes just a concept in the variety of categories. Consequently, the transcendental subject is constructed as an ideal system, which is devoid of objective criteria and retains an element of subjectivity, psychology. At the same time, it should be noted that the central task of the Marburg school of neo-Kantianism (Hermann Cohen, Paul Natorp, Ernst Cassirer) was the task of overcoming the psychology of Kant. They sought to liberate Kantian philosophy from psychology, based on transcendental-logical method. The logical tendency is focused on scientific knowledge, so the task of theoretical philosophy was understood as asking for the logical premises that make it universal and necessary. They sought to find the elements of knowledge that give it a universal and necessary character. An object of knowledge, in their opinion, is the result of knowledge, it is stated in the learning process, the subject of science is that which is created by pure thought. In fact, the problem of knowledge is seen in the elucidation of the internal connections and relationships that exist within knowledge. They sought to exclude alien thinking from the knowledge of any factor. The world, reality were understood as the system of scientific knowledge, or rather, the reality appears in their construction as a stage in the development of knowledge. Neo-Kantians insisted on assumption—free nature of knowledge, they sought to find the knowledge and justify the elements that give knowledge of universal and necessary character. Cognition in this case is not an analysis of the subject, the object of knowledge is. The subject of knowledge, in their opinion, is the result of knowledge, it is stated in the learning process, the subject of science is that which is created by pure thought. Insisting on infinity and continuity of the process of cognition, neo-Kantians completely excluded from thinking anything which was alien to them.

All this led to the fact that philosophy was treated as a methodology of different areas of knowledge or science of knowledge, as the methodology of science. In fact, the problem of knowledge and philosophy in general is seen in the elucidation of the internal connections and relationships that exist within knowledge.

Russian philosophers have criticized the neo-Kantian Marburg school from the standpoint of ontology knowledge, they stress the point that the subject-object relations theory of knowledge and philosophy in general should be based on ontology. The focus of philosophical studies should be analysis of existence, philosophy should investigate primarily the structure of being. Psychology and subjectivity in neo-Kantian philosophy could not be eliminated, because they come from the teachings of the mind as a set of subjective mental states. This criticism was directed against the tradition of transcendentalism, and neo-Kantian philosophy was understood as a clear expression of the most modern of this tradition. It was opposed to the new true philosophy, the basis of which shall be prepared as “ontological gnoseology.” The term itself requires explanation. This term is actually synonymous with the concepts of modern philosophy—ontology of knowledge and the sociology of knowledge. Here we emphasize that knowledge is an existential attitude, the relationship between the object as existent and the subject as existent. In this regard, it was about the need for the “restitution” of the subject which is not constructed in the learning process, but exists objectively. It must be borne in mind that Russian philosophers emphasize the indisputable fact that virtually any philosophical system solves the problems of ontology in a specific way. However, the version of the ontology, which was proposed in the classical European tradition, the tradition of transcendentalism, is insufficient. This “old ontology” (Frank) that puts the object depending on the subject, must be overcome by the new ontology. Frank stressed that the subject and object of knowledge are a kind of secondary ratio within the original unity.

Old ontology—as pointed in this regard Frank—is strictly correlative with old already today, with psychological gnoseology, and therefore falls together with the latter. The concept of “being out of my mind” is a correlate of the concept of “my mind” or internal, immanent being me. The development of the gnoseology leads us to the notion of being as a unity, which rises above the opposition between subject and object. ... This ontology ... does not explore our being transcendent to consciousness, but certainly immanent, the primary way existence given to us, on the basis of which inescapable contrast between subject and object, consciousness and the subject being arise.<sup>1</sup>

Here it was about the need to overcome the identity of being and thinking, subject-object relationships are included in the sphere of existence. Objectivity is treated as being in the narrow sense, this generates an area where

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<sup>1</sup> Frank, “Krizis sovremennoy filosofii,” 36.

consciousness and being embraced the sphere of absolute being, which is understood not in the sense of an absolute idea by Hegel, but in the sense of Soloviev, Schelling and the neo-Platonic tradition of European philosophy. The development of problems of epistemology leads to the problem of constructing new ontological systems that derive their systematic expression a bit later.

A subject of knowledge is not an epistemological subject of transcendental philosophy, as a subject of knowledge acts on the integrity of the human person as a being, as an ontological reality. The tradition of transcendentalism treated as subjective (there is no going beyond consciousness), true philosophy must understand knowledge as an aspect of the ontology and the object of knowledge and the subject of knowledge included in the sphere of existence. Subject and object of knowledge are united. But they represent a kind of secondary unity rests on the assertion of having superlogical, religious and metaphysical foundations of being and knowledge (Logos, Sophia, Trinity). Therefore philosophy acquires the status and nature of religious philosophy, introduced to the concepts of the patristic, Platonism and Neoplatonism: One (Unity of all things), Sophia, Logos etc. It is in this case of going beyond the classical rationality of modern times, which is at the forefront of epistemology, ontology and epistemology treated the dependent. Philosophy as a reference had science and scientific knowledge. Offered in this case, a new ontology of knowledge, the new "ontological epistemology" led to the formulation and development problems of the status and specificity of religious philosophy as a type of reflection.

If we consider the Russian philosophy of this period as a certain integrity in relation to the criticized neo-Kantians one can reveal the two directions. Representatives of the first (Nikolai Lossky, Evgeniy and Sergey Trubetskiy *et al.*), in criticizing the German neo-Kantians understood their task as the more in-depth formulation and development of the transcendental method and overcoming subjectivism and psychology as a continuation of the neo-Kantian school. These philosophers say that you need to develop a more strictly logical and transcendental method, thereby clearing philosophy of psychology and subjectivity. The most important role in the development of a number of themes which are true both to type of European as well as Russian national tradition, belongs to Nikolai Lossky. The initial version of Lossky's system was presented in the *Justification of Intuitionism*. This work was printed in the magazine "Problems of Philosophy and Psychology" (1904–1905) under the title *Rationale of Mystical Empiricism*. In 1906, it was published as a separate edition, followed by multiple re-issues in Russia and abroad. In some of his later works Lossky gives a complete system of intuitionism, clearly articulates its basic ideas and positions. The essence of innovation ideas of Lossky's intuitionism is that his system gave its answer to the essential problems of

Russian philosophy and its commitment to realism, true being. This is due primarily to the fact that Russian philosophers tried to prove a breakthrough into being, the world of “things-in-itself.” In this regard, *Justification of Intuitionism* was perceived as an important milestone in the construction of philosophy, free from gnoseologism and subjectivism.

Lossky sought to find a synthesis between empiricism and apriorism, to overcome gnoseologism and subjectivism, to go beyond the positivist gnoseological installation, following which the world is given to us only as a series of events. Lossky actually proves the possibility of knowing the Kantian “thing-in-itself.” Radically transforming cognitive schema of previous philosophical tradition, he reinterprets the essence of consciousness. The philosopher emphasizes the principled “openness” of consciousness: cognitive consciousness sort of illuminates the objective reality and the layers of being “displayed,” given to us immediately, in the original, not as copy of reflection. According to him, the knowledge of the outside world is as direct as well as knowledge of the world “I.” In *Justification of Intuitionism* philosopher carefully analyses the nature of sensations and concludes about their transsubjective character. To avoid criticism in this regard (feelings are completely objectified and do not belong to the world “not-I”), Lossky introduces an additional differentiation in the concept of transsubjectivity—he makes differences between intrabody and outside body transsubjectivity. Sensations, according to Lossky, have the character of intrabody rather than an outside body transsubjectivity. Feelings in relation to I are “data” and are not “mine,” however, because they depend on the senses and in this sense are subjective, they belong to the sphere of intrabody rather than outside body transsubjectivity.

Distinguishing between “mine” and “given to me,” highlighting the presence of two types of transsubjectivity, Lossky comes to the conclusion that metasensations are not metaexperience. This enables the philosopher to say that the experience is not limited to the elements of sensory experience, that there (because the world “not-I” is experienced in its inner being) are connections and relations between things, the thing itself is given in the original, the outside world presents too. The philosopher believed that the “real presence” of subjects in the act of knowledge allows us to break through to the world of reality. The processes of the external world are simply seen intuitively. Intuitive knowledge was interpreted by the philosopher as “reality, life itself.” The ontological basis of this intuitive knowledge is an inseparable link of the subject with his being that is termed by Lossky as gnoseological coordination. A prerequisite of the intuitive comprehension of things is understanding by the philosopher the world as a whole, in which neither knowable item exists by itself without the necessary relationship to other elements. The philosopher

singled out hierarchical levels of the world as an organic system: the scope of ideal being, real existence, as well as metalogical being, i.e. being that goes beyond its basic logical laws. The three main types of life are learned by means of sensual, intellectual and mystical intuition.

Along with this, the most important component of the new path in philosophy is its orientation on life experience and interpretation of experience, understood not as a scientific experiment of “this” but as human’s life experience. Somewhat later, Semen Frank noted that life experience is exactly the basis of all Russian thinking and Russian philosophy. Orientation on a holistic experience that combines three slice of reality—sensual, rational (perfect) and metalogical principles and an understanding of the fact that in this holistic experience the meaning of human existence and the whole world is revealed as an important point in the development of Russian religious philosophy. This setting is the variety of experience nevertheless accentuated the primary role of religious experience.

Philosophy—emphasized Lossky—that takes this experience into consideration inevitably proves to be *religious*. Since the highest and most complete stage of religious experience is that attained by Christianity, it is natural that a philosophy that probes into the inmost depths of being should have a Christian character. The most characteristic feature of the Russian philosophy is that in it a number of thinkers devote their energies to working out a comprehensive Christian world conception.<sup>2</sup>

A slightly different form of philosophical search for a new way led to the Neo-Slavic school in Russian philosophy at the beginning of the twentieth century (Nikolai Berdyaev, Pavel Florensky, Sergey Bulgakov, Vladimir Ern). This direction is characterized by a negative attitude towards the philosophy of Kant and neo-Kantians. Kant for them—a symbol of Modern philosophy, that has fragmented knowing and being and thereby have put the subject to immerse net of its own subjective constructions. The main drawback of the philosophy of Kant they see in unknowable “thing-in-itself,” and thus it is impossible to combine the learning person with authentic being. For these philosophers Kant is the spokesman of an era of humanism and its most characteristic features are subjectivism and psychology. Neo-Kantians, in their opinion, are the most brilliant exponents of the spirit of Kant’s philosophy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; they are typical representatives of subjectivism and psychology in cognition. So for them the task of philosophy (Logos—

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<sup>2</sup> Lossky, *History*, 405.



for Vladimir Ern, consubstantial—for Pavel Florensky) seems to overcome psychologism and subjectivism in the ways of faith and religious metaphysics.

For representatives of this trend, despite the appreciation of philosophy of Lossky, his view of intuitionism is insufficient.

Berdyaev wrote that the weak point of Lossky's theory is that he does not see the sinfulness of our fallen state of the world, "the disease of being." Florensky wrote about this more specifically:

Different kinds of realism—on the one hand and on the other rationality—form two parallel lines, limiting the scope of the theory of knowledge, which wishes to remain within the human givens and excludes the possibility of new experiences and revelations other worlds. Not being able to finally choose a one or the other way ... the theory of knowledge is contained in these limits, which are inscribed to her by her belief in the reality, or rather its lack of faith in the higher worlds. Equally opportunity of subjective and objective constructs in the theory of knowledge—is the main antinomy of science knowledge, and the solution to this antinomy can be found just outside the field of view of humanity.<sup>3</sup>

For the early period of Florensky the idea of consubstantiality of the Christian Trinity is understood as the starting position of true philosophy and true knowledge. Knowledge is treated by Florensky as an act of metaphysically interpreted love. The unique nature of Florensky's approach was in his doctrine of antinomies and "transformation" of the mind as a kind of self-sacrifice of the mind. In the form of reason, he believes, the mind splits into antinomy. To find genuine intelligence, he believes, can only be in the way of moral and religious formation of man. At the heart of true knowledge is love, because love is possible only through true knowledge, can be acquired "consubstantiality loving God." Knowledge is treated as a living moral communion of persons, each of which serves for each object and subject. True knowledge is possible in the way of religious consecration of man, it is conceivable only in love.

In the works of Berdyaev and Ern during this period, Russian philosophy was treated as a philosophy of the *Logos*, as opposed to Western philosophy as rational, based on the *ratio*. For supporters of the *Logos*, as opposed to an abstract, rational philosophy is a specific *Logos*—*Logos* is the beginning of something that permeates being and knowing, it is primary, undivided in the subject—object unity. Because this is a divine *Logos* beginning, it gives to this philosophy religious orientation too. To the extent that the *Logos* can be known personally, it requires strong-willed individual activity.

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<sup>3</sup> Florenskiy, "Predely gnoseologii," 149.

Ern argued that the Logos is different in relation to the rationalist tradition cognitive installation, connecting the knowing subject with being. It is kind of ontological gnoseology, that understands knowledge as a kind of ontological relations, one of the most significant species.

In the treatment by Bulgakov in the times of *Philosophy of Economy* knowledge is understood on the basis of an early version of his sophiology where Kant was complemented by Marx and Marx was interpreted in the spirit of Boehme. The transcendental subject of knowledge is treated by Bulgakov as a World Soul, Sophia, it is the universal subject of an object, a self-developing in the process of life. This single subject knowledge, World Soul, proves knowledge not only in the variety of content, but also in the unity of form—required norms, laws of logic, transcendental forms of sensibility and cognitive categories.

These thinkers have built their position on the basis of a religious tradition which is based on faith as the basis of overcoming of psychology and subjectivism and to a genuine breakthrough to being. They argued that the acquisition of being only happens in the Church gnoseology. In this connection, they have criticized the ideal of autonomous philosophy of the Modern era that deified the mind and severed ties with being.

The origins of this gap are seen in the historical paths of Western culture and philosophy, including that went by separation of reason and faith, the sphere of philosophy and theology. In contrast, in criticizing these settings, religious philosophers assert the idea of creating a culture of religious philosophy which is based on a certain way of philosophizing, cognitive setting, allowing us to overcome subjectivism and psychology, finding ontological background knowledge, connecting with knowing being.

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## The “God of Philosophers” or The “Other” God? Faith and Knowledge in the Philosophy of the Later Frank (With Some Parallels in Russian and European Thought)

Justification and amazement<sup>1</sup>

In his short speech *Some Words on the Actual Task of Philosophy* delivered in 1874<sup>2</sup> (one of his early texts which remains relatively little known) Vladimir Soloviev formulated the task of overcoming the duality of philosophy and religion, cognition and faith. The historical and intellectual basis for this synthesis was the open and tragic split between the traditional manner of the religious life and the so-called autonomous reason of rationalistic and scientific Western thought. The latter approach to reality had been uncritically assimilated and transformed into a sort of ideological belief by the Russian intelligentsia while the “faith of our fathers” received its first defence in the teaching of the Slavophiles who argued for the preservation of the unreflecting faith of the simple good people. For at least half a century and especially in Russia of the 1860–1870, this duality, and even flagrant opposition, became a kind of constant challenge for the whole of Russian religious philosophy. As a rational school of thought it was confronted by a singular philosophical and existential problem: how could such a split be justified in the presence of faith, religious experience or life in the Church? In fact, every Russian thinker

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<sup>1</sup> In Russian: *Opravdaniye i udivleniye*.

<sup>2</sup> Solov'yev, “Neskol'ko slov o nastoyashchey zadache filosofii,” 155.

whose thought proceeds from faith or real experience of God contributed to the solution of this question, and we can consider Semen Frank's philosophy as the crowning achievement of these efforts of reconciliation between two approaches to reality: a purely rational approach to reality, on the one hand, and, on the other, a mystical experience, reflecting an intimately personal cognition.

Justification of both was, so to say, the soul of Frank's philosophy. But at the bottom of this soul one may find yet another sentiment which was neither ever pronounced, nor suppressed, because it concealed the deepest core of his living pre-rational experience. This sentiment was wonder or surprise. It seems to me, that C. S. Lewis, who wrote the autobiographical book called *Surprised by Joy*, could have lent this title to the Russian thinker. Frank was also "surprised by joy," an experience which accompanied the life of his thought and was constantly revealed in him. In his late years this inner experience made him write such confessing books as *The Light in Darkness*, *God with Us*, but this surprise was not the fruit of a sudden and radical "conversion" (as in Lewis' case). It was a profoundly silent and peaceful joy, a self-reflective surprise. Thus, it is better to say that Frank was *tuned by amazement* throughout his life. Amazement or wonder, according to the famous intuition of Aristotle, is the true origin of any authentic philosophy. Indeed, it is a precondition of philosophical inquiry. A man who dares to see and to grasp true reality, first of all, should feel it as incomprehensible, infinite, strange, if not holy and marvellous. This primary pre-rational sensation or mood determines a rational activity and runs through it.

Martin Heidegger uses for this precondition a Greek term—*pathos*—and after a subtle hermeneutical analysis of this word he defines the origin or pre-origin of philosophy as something in its ground—a slightly sad, hardly perceptible bitterness in its tonality.<sup>3</sup> In "pathos"—experience as amazement, Being presents, gives, leaves, reveals itself to man who creates on the basis of this "self-leaving" his metaphysical systems founded upon the speculative keywords (or interpretations) of what that something really is, appearing as it does to us from its unfathomable depth. Any system of thought has behind it these hidden roots of *pathos*.

In the case of such a major philosopher as Semen Frank, the initial source of amazement, if not materially tangible, is nonetheless clearly perception—pervaded by a spiritual awareness. Frank was really amazed by a certain experience or maybe by the "object" of this experience, and this "object"

<sup>3</sup> Heidegger, *Was ist das—die Philosophie?*, 24 ("Das Erstaunen ist als πάθος die ἀρχή der Philosophie").

became the main theme and the "pathos" for the life long period of his philosophical thinking. Moreover, his amazement had little to do with that ancient, pagan, slightly mournful sense, stemming from the fact that the Great Pan is irrevocably dead; Frank was truly immersed in wonder before the living reality which he sought to rethink and to proclaim in his own philosophical manner.

## The ontological proof

How shall we define this "object" or this reality? Frank himself gave it a name, and this name became the title of the most profound, the most philosophical of Frank's books—*The Unknowable* (*Nepostizhimoye*), that is, the unknowable, the unfathomable, the inaccessible to cognition. This unknowable is a primordial experience, an immeasurable source of knowledge. But the knowledge of what?

We may say: there was an awareness that stems from a certain experience, from a meeting with a living mystery which resides inside and outside of consciousness. The thinker becomes a witness of the evidence which is hidden in his existence, but which at the very same time infinitely surpasses this individual's empirical being. This hidden, invisible life in him binds him together with the whole universe. This life, this reality, this source of wonder is the presence of God in creation, in the moral law, in the ontological ground of the act of human cognition that proceeds from this mystery. The philosophy of Frank wants to translate this presence into a rational message, into an *Object of Knowledge* (the title of his first fundamental philosophical work); he needs to procure for this experience an abstract thinking as a form, as a manifestation, as a sort of "apparition" of the unknowable. As noted above, one can read this message in every one of his philosophical works, but his treatise *The Unknowable* articulates and highlights this concept on the highest speculative level.

Frank begins *The Unknowable* with an affirmation that to "understand" means always to "recognize," to find new truth in an old one. This is a "platonic" postulate, for we remember Plato's intuition of cognition as a return to a hidden (as if inserted in us) memory-knowledge. This memory becomes a key for the whole itinerary of his thought. He "recognises" one knowledge in another, which is more deep and concealed and which is, nonetheless, all the more evident. For Frank, this is a method of an intellectual apprehension of an intuitive reality, a sort of immediate contemplation:

We have not one but two kinds of knowledge: (1) abstract knowledge about the "object" expressed in judgements and concepts—knowledge which is always of a second order;

and (2) *immediate perception or intuition of the “object” in its metalogical wholeness and indivisibleness*—primary knowledge upon which abstract knowledge is based and from which it originates.<sup>4</sup>

This primary knowledge is deeply rooted in its origin, which is not the kind of unknown that may be seized one day and mastered by our reason; it is always unknowable. Frank built his philosophy on the conviction that, in spite of all their differences, this first deep, primordial knowledge and any subsequent abstract, logical knowledge may express one and the same truth that can be felt, and experienced, but may also be proven by reason which has the same “substance” or nature, or mystery as the truth.

In this sense, Frank’s essay entitled *The Ontological Proof of God’s Being* is characteristic of his thought. It is in this work that he, first of all, destroys the so-called “ontological argument” of Anselm which is based on a confusion of essence and existence. Moreover, immediately after his criticism of Anselm, Frank, by means of fine and subtle reasoning, shows (or rather witnesses) that God is not a certain dark object whose existence can be proven by some efforts of intellectual enlightenment. On the contrary, God is a light that procures a force or evidence of His own existence: “All our knowledge has as its own ground a self-discovering of absolute reality.”<sup>5</sup> In this reality the human vision coincides with an “object” which is viewed and perceived. The unfathomable ground or the “idea” of this reality has its dwelling not in external space, but within itself. It is the same reality which awakens the amazement of pre-rational thought, the reality of the unknowable being of God who reveals Himself as light and as life. And since both of these are interwoven with our own existence, it is from this source that we get our knowledge of the unknowable. This special knowledge, according to the formula of Nicolas of Cusa, the philosophical and theological godfather of Frank, cannot be anything else but the famous *docta ignorantia*, learned ignorance.

Can philosophy, then, be simply “learned ignorance?” Every philosophical book of Semen Frank says: yes, such is the only true ontological philosophy, faithful to its own roots. However, if this were really so, philosophy and rational knowledge would make way for pure theology or become indistinguishable from Revelation, from the Word of God who speaks in the word of man. Orthodox theology, for example, begins with so-called apophatism, the divine darkness or the unfathomable that makes and silences all human speeches.

<sup>4</sup> Frank, *Unknowable*, 27.

<sup>5</sup> Frank, “Ontologicheskoye dokazatel’stvo bytiya Boga,” 119.

And everything that we have to say about God should be born of this silence and must be sealed by what cannot be said.

Frank was well aware of this problem. And for this reason, throughout his life as a philosopher as he looked for this "silent" or "ignorant" true knowledge of God, he defended his own identity, his own vocation as a Christian who searches and confesses his faith by means of philosophical knowledge. He gave many forms to this philosophical confession. His own solution was as follows: true knowledge which corresponds to a wise or learned ignorance, is a *living* knowledge. (In this sense Frank, like all Russian religious philosophers, remains in the school of early Slavophilism) Living knowledge "creates the essence of religious faith."<sup>6</sup> Spiritual life coincides with reality which constitutes the object of faith, and this object is revelation which reveals the reality of this object.

Thus, the circle of ontological evidence closes itself. One form of evidence calls to another and, in a sense, simultaneously rests upon, reflects, and "develops" it. We possess, we bear within us a certain enigmatic, deepest being, the evidence of which we must demonstrate on a rational, logical level while this deepest being is *already* evident. We need to prove the being of an object, and yet this object already exists in us without any proof—it precedes our intellectual effort. It exists in our remote, forgotten but always awakening amazement; it exists in our ontological memory, in our inner certitude, and, finally, in the faith we confess. This faith calls to philosophical knowledge which is capable of transmitting this unknowable but not unknown, this silent but not unspeakable, this irrational, but not incomprehensible message. The way of the religious philosopher leads Frank from the state of awe in front of the unfathomable mystery, which is interior and discovered in its own existence, to the same mystery confessed as a personal God who appears as the *Object of Knowledge*.

## The concept of the Unknowable

We can observe this tendency in all its fullness in Frank's treaty on the unknowable, a work with which we began this analysis. His starting point in *The Unknowable* can be formulated as a question: is it possible to discover the objective presence of the unknowable in the composition of reality as such? Here the word "objective" is worthy of attention. "Objective" means always something altogether opposed to the subjective, to the vision that proceeds

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 150.

from my own solitary existence whose roots in the unknowable are evident in my experience. From these invisible roots the immense tree of “objective” and unknowable reality must grow. Frank discerns two forms of unknowable reality: the unknowable for us and, most important, the unknowable in itself. He finds the unknowable in the content of our consciousness—dark and bottomless ground (*Ungründlichkeit*—as he says, using a borrowed German word)—which perceives every object as surrounded by thousands and thousands of relations, reflections, and contacts. Our consciousness embraces potentially all the variety and infinity of things, and this infinity lives inside of it, because our gaze which cognizes holds the whole unknowable in its fullness.

At the same time, in a very subtle intellectual argument, Frank proves the existence of the unknowable in itself (in *Selbst*, as he puts it), in the so-called objective being. He proceeds from a particular cognition which Goethe calls “the quite better knowledge” (*das stille bessere Wissen*),<sup>7</sup> as well as from that intellectual intuition which discovers the unknowable both outside of us and within us. This kind of knowledge is very near to that religious contemplation which regards “invisible things” without seeing them. For this reason Frank rejects Kant’s conception of *Ding-an-sich* as analogous to his idea of the unknowable. Kant’s “*Ding*” is definitively close to human thought and experience, while Frank’s unknowable is a source of knowledge: it is a dark and unfathomable reality which in some way is absolutely open to us. The “invisible things” are revealed; they take the part of a revelation of an all-embracing subjective-objective reality. This reality is similar to the ocean which comprises and hides everything that our cognition or our intuition can touch. It is a maternal womb of what we call an objective world.

This premise of Frank’s philosophy can, in traditional terms, be called mystical, and this draws him nearer to classical existentialist thinking. “What we mean by the word ‘is’ in the existential judgement, is nothing but the *essentially unknowable*,” he says. “The giddy question, nearly bringing us to the edge of insanity—what do we mean by the word ‘is’—answers itself if we note that *the transcending of all that is conceptually knowable and expressible is precisely the essential defining characteristic of what we mean by reality*.”<sup>8</sup>

What we can see in this conception of the unknowable (or of reality) is the surprising nearness to the idea of the so called *Umgreifende* of Karl Jaspers’ philosophy: “Das Umgreifende ist entweder das Sein an sich, von dem wir umfassen sind, oder es ist das Sein, das wir sind” (“The all-embracing is either

<sup>7</sup> Frank, *Unknowable*, 29.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 67.



the being in itself in which we are embraced or it is the being that we are").<sup>9</sup> "This all-embracing being is always—inseparably—*with us* and *for us*"<sup>10</sup> and, what is more important, always within us. In Frank's thinking, reality as such means the unity of being and truth. And this reality can express itself in the pair of predicates: am—is, with a strong emphasis on the "being" of the verb, the verb which becomes a noun, a substance or a mystery—the Being, *das Sein*.

Being (or "reality" in Frank's still "pre-existential" philosophical language) is simultaneously the unity of consciousness and the substance of consciousness. The unfathomable plenitude of Being is accessible exclusively to a free, disinterested, and integral contemplation which can only be the fruit of resignation. (Here we can remember the Heideggerian concept of *Gelassenheit*, the self-giving to Being). True cognition does not possess its object, it opens itself to it. Self-giving to Being means the openness of Being itself. In cognitive terms: it signifies learned ignorance.

The parallels are numerous but there is one substantial difference between the German way of existential philosophical thinking and its Russian counterpart, in our case represented by Frank. Jaspers, for instance, builds a classical religious philosophy with the notions of *Umgreifende*, *Transzendenz*, *Existenzerhellung*, etc. He stands aloof from the religious soil as such with its ecclesiastical teaching and biblical Revelation. Similarly, Heidegger affirms in his little book *Philosophie und Theologie* that while philosophy is a particular thinking in the openness of Being itself, theology is a concrete science based on religious experience, and the Bible or Church history is something more closed and limited. For him, a special religious philosophy would have to be an absurd notion. Frank, by contrast, conceives his philosophy (especially in his latest mature books) as his own existential way to confess his faith in the living God. His concept of the unknowable is, first of all, a path towards this unique philosophical discourse.

## Philosophy and faith

But is this path really trustworthy? Is it really possible to confess or to express one's own faith by means of philosophical work? This question can be addressed not only to Frank, but to Russian religious philosophy as a whole. Nonetheless, in the *pléiade* of Russian thinkers Frank's endeavour is most difficult, and contains the most profound tensions. Philosophy for him is an

<sup>9</sup> Jaspers, *Der philosophische Glaube*, 16.

<sup>10</sup> Frank, *Unknowable*, 72.

effort, an initial intention to perceive Being without any rest that cannot be unfathomably grasped. In the process of such perceiving it becomes clear that such an intention can not be realized. The highest moment of cognition is a sober awareness that a great multitude of things around us must remain unknowable. True philosophy necessarily surpasses any kind of rational thinking. At the same time, Frank's own philosophy, in the old classical sense, is both rational and traditional. One can note here a characteristic detail: his book *The Unknowable* was written initially in German and then rewritten in Russian. Its Russian dress, however, is rather transparent, and we recognize at once through it a rather slow, pedestrian Germanic style of reasoning. This external impression betrays the inner dramatic process of his thought. By strictly rational means Frank seeks to unravel the enigma of the irrational, of the rationally untouchable, of learned ignorance.

For example, in his conception of truth, we can see at least two interpretations that inwardly contradict each other. The first interpretation is traditional and logical: truth is the coincidence of our ideas with the content of reality. This means in Latin: *adaequatio intellectus et rei*. The other, second interpretation may be called existential or rather religious: truth is that unknowable which undoes or reveals itself from the depth of our intimate, infinite existence and from bottomless reality as such. According to Frank, therefore, "The very act of *realized knowing* is a pure gift, received by the individual from outside: the act of communion of the individual with light existing outside the individual."<sup>11</sup> What is this light? It is a light which is outside of us, but which is nearer to us than we are to ourselves; it takes fire from within us before it becomes "a light from outside." It is a light or reality of Being, a light received as a pure gift from God. It is a light of cognition, but at the same time it is a light of faith.

This conscientious (conscious) philosophical orientation characterizes the whole of Frank's thought: the light of true cognition and the light of faith are not different in their essence. The metaphysical and logical truth as *adaequatio intellectus et rei* and the existential or religious truth of the unknowable reality (or of the reality of the unknowable) constitute the same truth, the same condition of learned ignorance. But there is one interesting parallel here: there is a profound intrinsic likeness between Frank's gnoseological description of the unknowable and St. Paul's definition of faith as the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen (Heb 11:1; King James Version). Or: "Faith gives substance to our hopes and makes us certain of a reality we do not see" (New International Version). Frank argues for a very similar stance

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 105.

in all of his books: "faith ... makes us certain of reality we do not see," the reality we cannot even think and comprehend. This reality becomes certain, manifests itself as substantial only in "our hopes," and the unknowable would never exist if it were not a link, an affinity between our inner truth (our "moral law," our consciousness, our awe and trembling before the mystery we can not comprehend and, at last, our hopes) and the reality outside of us, the "starry sky" (Kant) and the mystery of creation.

There are, however, some notable differences. For St. Paul, truth means something very real and concrete: it is God's revelation in Jesus Christ. For Frank who does not depart from his philosophical tradition, truth is always an "expression of necessity" (meant as logical and structural necessity). Is it possible, however, for truth as necessity to be at the same time truth as a gift of being which unveils itself as a response to our hopes, to our faith? It may be strange, but Frank never raises such a question. He sees no problem in this regard.

Nonetheless, there is a problem that stems from his own position as a religious philosophical thinker. In spite of all his numerous quotations from Plato, Plotinus and Nicolas of Cusa, Frank—in his theory of cognition, in his conception of truth, in the style of his arguments and reasoning—follows the old solid way of the great German classical philosophers. At the same time, he is a fervent disciple of St. Augustine and Pascal, of St. Paul and Meister Eckhart. Reading him, one is aware of the traditional and systematic school of thinking, Kantian or Hegelian, but this external impression does not deceive his readers because they sense that the true origin of Frank's thought is not rational, but rather mystical. There is a mystical existentialist concealed in his quiet, slow, well-grounded, strictly logical mode of thinking. Nonetheless, the form invades the content of his thought. The two conceptions of truth are preceded by two vastly different visions: (1) the vision of a heavy, objectified and fallen world where truth is always a submission to necessity and (2) the vision of an almost paradisiacal, created world where truth is a gift and a light of unknowable reality.

From the very beginning of his philosophical work, Frank defended the identity and value of his own intellectual and vital vocation: his right to be a free wise man who returns to his God and proclaims his faith by the way of philosophy. It is possible, however, that this necessity of defending his position was provoked by an inner living difficulty: to be a true believer in a true philosophy, to believe and to be in a love, in *philia*, for wisdom. In short, how is he to be a free sage who is loyal only to himself and his own intellectual option and, at the same time, a faithful disciple of Christ who called "blessed" those who are "poor in spirit?"

This problem exists for the whole of Russian (and not only Russian) religious thinking, but it is especially acute for Frank. He did not turn from religious philosophy to pure theology as Bulgakov and Florensky had done. He did not choose, as Berdyaev chose, the way of infinite philosophical freedom full of religious spirit but at the same time completely independent from it. Nor, like Shestov, did Frank stand all his life before an enigmatic God who evaded all human definitions. He wanted to confess his Christian faith, the reason of his heart (in Pascal's words), by means of philosophical reasoning. For me this is the most interesting and dramatic part of his heritage, of his message.

### God with us. The answer to Pascal

In 1922 in his lecture at the opening of the Religious Philosophical Academy in Moscow, Frank said that God is "the unique object of philosophy."<sup>12</sup> God means in this case the unfathomable ground of Being and of consciousness; it is the first and the only object that the philosopher should seek and care for.

If one does not sense (this first-foundation of being), breathing as it were? this invisible atmosphere, it is not generally possible to philosophize, but only possible to pronounce idle "philosophical" words or to come up with empty ... purely linguistic ideas. ... In order to see the object of philosophy it is therefore necessary, as Plato said, "to turn the eyes of the soul." ... Thus, philosophical creativity assumes a religious frame of mind, a religious direction of spirit; a religious intuition lies at the foundation of all philosophical knowledge.

However, the following problem ensues: can we think of God as *the* object of any philosophical knowledge or as *an* object at all? Frank says: God is not a concept, He cannot be even "He," and the judgement "God exists" is in a sense blasphemous because a Person, who exists outside of me, cannot be fully my personal God. First and foremost, God responds to us and afterwards exists for us.

If God really responds and exists in me, in that part of my being which belongs to Him, He can respond also to my philosophical search and knowledge and can even enter into them. He can exist there, first of all, as the great infinite Unknowable within this knowledge or *as* my knowledge. He can exist in the concept of truth as its very foundation. He exists as a point of attraction of any real, authentic philosophical research, and He exists as an eternal Thou,

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<sup>12</sup> Frank, "Filosofiya i religiya," 322.

exists in communication, in communion, in love. He is Love Who lives in me. All these conceptions (or visions, intuitions) are present in Frank's philosophy, permeated with the idea of a living, personal, "face-to-face" God. And Frank was convinced that the "face-to-face" God can live in such a house as rational philosophy, based in logic. At the same time, Frank is also aware of the narrowness, of the fragility and instability of this human house.

Who does not feel the otherness and transcendence of Divinity in relation to all else does not have Divinity. But one who does not feel its presence in everything, its mysterious resemblance to everything, does not have it either.<sup>13</sup>

God enters into His philosophical dwelling as into His own (which always remains slightly alien to Him) in, so to speak, two of His virtues: as a Divinity, or as a Sacred Object, and as an Unfathomable "Thou." And Frank insists that this is one and the same God.

The "idea" of Divinity cannot be separated from the living, concrete experience of Divinity, from *my* experience of Divinity. ... Its essence Divinity is always "God-with-us" (Emmanuel) and, in the final analysis, "God-with-me," ... the concrete fullness of the inseparable and unmerged duo-unity of "God and I."<sup>14</sup>

That great Nameless or All-Named which we conditionally designated as Holiness or Divinity becomes *God—my God*. God is Divinity as it is revealed to me and ... in inseparable unity with me. ... Divinity becomes "Thou" for me, reveals itself as "Thou," and only as "Thou" is it God.<sup>15</sup>

Here is the heart of Frank's thought—the unity of the real, mystical experience with its rational, objectified form. We can find many descriptions and definitions of Divinity in Frank's writings (as, for example, "the translational unity of unity and duality, identity and difference"<sup>16</sup>), but he never departs from his Emmanu-El, "God-with-us." "God-with-us" is subject of experience (it does not matter whether this experience is mystical, religious, or intuitive), but Divinity is a subject of philosophical thought. And when the subject of experience becomes an object of philosophy, it passes through some essential transformations. It loses a part of its unfathomable, "unseizable" ground. It leaves its cloud of learned ignorance and enters into the solid or fragile house

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 323.

<sup>14</sup> Frank, *Unknowable*, 225.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 97–98.

of human knowledge. In this house it becomes an object that one philosophical thought communicates to another. And in this case it is much easier to speak of its attributes than to address it as my "Thou."

At the same time, the "God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob and God of philosophers is one and the same God"—that is the central message of Frank's religious philosophy, and his personal answer to Pascal. "In some idea," in principle, He is or should be one and the same even though the "idea" that Abraham had of God who had revealed Himself to him, cannot be put into an abstract thought. Can this "idea," then, be transformed in a certain image of God or in a certain common feeling that becomes a social and dogmatic ground for any Christian community? This problem weighed heavily on the religious consciousness of Kierkegaard. But Frank noticed neither this problem of the communication of faith nor Kierkegaard as philosopher. In this sense he belongs to the pre-Kierkegaardian *époque*, to that period in the history of thought when the, all-embracing philosophical systems and their branches, with their "idea of God" at the top, the theory of cognition in the centre, and ethics or aesthetics at the bottom, were still possible. And for this reason Frank could create one of the last philosophical systems in Russian and, maybe, in world philosophy.

### "God of Abraham..." Buber, Shestov and Weil

As a Jew who received a certain traditional Jewish education in his early years, Frank could not help but bear the deepest religious heritage of his people. Therefore, it is worth comparing his thought with the great religious thinkers of his time, who had the same heritage and the same roots: Martin Buber, Lev Shestov and Simone Weil.

Martin Buber's thought is based on two principal concepts or intuitions: dialogue and confidence. His main book of mystical philosophy *I and Thou* is a message of dialogue in its absolute, most profound form. In this dialogue or primary relation the "I," the person, of the thinker, which can be described as the core, as the essence of his personality, opens himself to his ultimate, to his infinite "Thou." Buber insists on the primordial character of the personal (*I and Thou*), but also the impersonal, instrumental (*I—It*) relation. And in this relation it is the "I" who is more active and makes the decisive choice. It is not properly "Thou" who finds my "I," it is "I" who decides and chooses to be with his "Thou" and to be confident and faithful to him. With a certain simplification one may say that a believer finds his God only in the intimacy of this "Thou." But does this intimacy of inner dialogue remain always a real dwelling for the God of Abraham?

In Shestov's case, this intimacy is not the most important. The philosopher is more preoccupied with what is alien to God, even hostile for Him. His enemy "number one" is rational human knowledge, "general ideas," conceptions and everything that he considers as the ideas of Job's rational friends. Reason as such is the incarnation of this enemy. Shestov desperately searches for his God, but can find only the footsteps or vestiges of His remote presence, of His "flash," and only when all our knowledge admits its false pretensions and recognises its total defeat. This means that all individual discoveries cannot be conveyed to another person. The God of Abraham remains only his own God, whom our philosophy (or even religion) wants, in its arrogance and complacency, to generalise, to put into notions, to rationalize and, thus, to kill. In this sense, Shestov remains an antipode to Frank in Russian philosophy.

The case of Simone Weil is even more dramatic. She finds her God, she becomes a follower of Christ, but she accepts neither the Christian religion, nor confession, nor any Church. She is in a sense more "believer" than any of the Christians, but she cannot find a way to a God of Abraham, to a God of Jesus Christ beyond or apart from the God of the philosophers (or theologians). That is why she remains always in a state of tense, poignant waiting for her God (*L'attente de Dieu*, according to the title of one of her books). This eternal waiting, eternal interrogation of God becomes her martyrdom.

In all these cases there is a strong emphasis on a singular person with his particular experience. Frank's thought is less intimate than the thought of Martin Buber and Simone Weil and much less individualistic than the thought of Shestov, but it is simultaneously more social and more harmonious. Even his "unfathomable" is social because it is always unfathomable for us and with us. The mystery itself unites us before the same God Who gives us the grace to be present in us and amongst us, to be alive in our knowledge and in our experience. No only the absolute "*Thou*" of our inner dialogue discovered in our heart (Buber), no longer the absolute unknowable who rejects any blind claim of human reason to cognise Him (Lev Shestov), no more is He the cause of the eternal and nostalgic waiting on the eve of the last mystery (Simone Weil); He is our God, God with us, with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, with philosophers and believers. He is the God of Jesus Christ who is the ground and message of his community and faith.

### The "religious experience:" the dwelling of the truth

Frank's inquiry into human cognition invariably brings him to the discovery of faith in God whose main characteristic is to stay, to be with us. "With us"—

it is as essential as with me. As we remember, his description of the knowledge of the unknowable is rather close to St. Paul's definition of faith. The social knowledge of truth (which is a necessity!) and the intimacy of faith meet each other in his thought. They become a unity: knowledge-faith, a kind of *sobornost* according to the Russian orthodox tradition, although Frank avoids this word. But what is faith? Frank distinguishes faith as confidence from faith as inner trustworthiness. Confidence is considered, first of all, as obedience to authority; it is the faith of a child, a child who is full of trust in his Father in Heaven. But faith as confidence leans upon faith as trustworthiness which means "*the actual presence of the object of thought or knowledge in our consciousness*. Such actual presence ... is called experience."<sup>17</sup>

In his description of faith, Frank is very close to Martin Buber's famous distinction between faith as *pistis* of the New Testament and faith as *emunah* of the Old one (*Two Types of Faith*). Buber, however, is inclined to absolutize and even to oppose these two interpretations. Frank, on the contrary, wants not only to reconcile them; he sees something whole and unified—the one and invisible entity of faith—in this submission to Tradition, to dogma, to the Church, to faith as *pistis* and as the profound ineffable experience of his "own" God in the childish instinctive trust in Him. For him faith is, first of all, an experience (*Lebenserfahrung*). In his essay *Die russische Weltanschauung* (1926), Frank proposes the idea of two different types of empiricism, one based on sensual evidence and another, Russian empiricism, which proceeds from inner experience. In this latter case, what is most important is not external contact with the world as object of cognition, but the acquisition of the complete reality of objects through human spirit in its living wholeness.

Faith can be defined exactly as the acquisition of the complete reality of the unknowable, or of that "divine" element within the human spirit which is inherent in him. But for Frank faith is concrete: the unknowable becomes a Person; its "element" has a historic name. This conception of faith (which remains one of the most indefinable things in the history of thought) has the virtue of being a philosophical vision, free from any kind of religious intolerance or the spirit of confessionalism. The thought of Frank is initially mystical, that is "ecumenical" in the primordial sense, because it can understand any form of authentic religious experience and enter into dialogue with it. He even opens his book *The Unknowable* with the words of the great Sufi mystic, Hussein al-Hallay: "To know is not merely to see things but also to see how they are submerged in the Absolute."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Frank, *God with Us*, 34.

<sup>18</sup> Frank, *Unknowable*, 1.



In fact, the faith which gives us this vision cannot exist without living, intimate experience, but even this statement has its own limits. Can the Absolute be an "object" of our experience? Yes, says Frank "the Divine reality becomes accessible to us because we respond to it, because we apprehend it through that which is divine in ourselves."<sup>19</sup> It is more the witness of a mystical poet than an author of the theory of knowledge. Yes, the Absolute can be open to our thought, as all human religions witness; and no, at the same time, it is not so open, because all manifestations of the "Divine being" always surpass the human faculty for apprehension of them.

It seems to me, that Frank does not insist sufficiently on this antinomy. The entire "positive" content of faith he is inclined to consider in, so called, empirical terms, even if empiricism in this case is of a purely mystical nature. Even Revelation, which does not depend on me, he regards as a sort of intimate message, which reveals itself inside of me, that is, as a form of religious experience. He explains: "to 'confess Christ,' to believe in the positive revelation—not so much proclaimed as *manifested* by Him—means to experience in a direct and immediate way that in and through Him the fullness of the Divine truth is given us."<sup>20</sup>

Here, to my mind, the philosopher is obliged to follow to the end the logic of his thought even if he is somewhat captivated by his ideas and oversteps the limits of his own field. The Absolute cannot be rationalised even as mystical experience, the "positive Revelation," cannot be reduced to that which my solitary or even social "I" feels to be the truth of God. This truth is much bigger than my soul or my reason and all my experience has room for. But at the same time, can it exist at all if God does not find His sojourn in me?

The works of Frank in all their richness and depth bring us to the following question: is a true religious philosophy, which operates with its "living knowledge," really able to convey to us the living reality of faith? When Frank defines his task as the "philosophical comprehension of religious experience and its subject which is God," when he builds his "ontological proof" on the "self-disclosure of God in the soul," does he speak of the "God of philosophers" or also of the "other God," God Who is always *in* and infinitely *beyond* our experience, our reason, the God of our faith to Whom we address the prayer: I believe, my Lord, help my unbelief?

Perhaps, Frank might respond: this contradiction has no right to be. After all, the very reason for his life and work is the great endeavour of reconciliation. Reconciliation between those "things" which had been so often separated

<sup>19</sup> Frank, *God with Us*, 47.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

in European thought, such as reason and faith, philosophy and religion; reconciliation between Russian, Jewish and Western philosophy or better styles of philosophical thinking, between truth as logical necessity and truth as gift and miracle, between abstract knowledge and mystical life, between knowledge as such and the unknowable, at last, between God as concept, rationally comprehensible and common to all, and God as unfathomable mystery, as my inner “Thou,” open only to me, concealed in the bottom of my soul. Frank in fact succeeded in this reconciliation that he articulated and perfected in his work, but, to my mind, he was only able to do so at the cost of a somewhat excessive broadening of the notion of “religious experience” itself and its reinterpretation. His philosophy as a whole, can be seen as this profound interpretation, as a creation of thought permeated, guided, inspired by the evidence of the living presence of God and our capacity to feel and to grasp it. This capacity or, better, this gift of God to be with us, to disclose Himself in us, Frank tied together with those “things” which can be felt, touched, experienced and demonstrated in some mystical, spiritual way. In this vision, the word “experience” (as trustworthiness, as our inner inherent truth) becomes in his philosophy a sort of great maternal womb for our faith and even for our God.

Perhaps, this will be seen as somewhat problematic from the traditional religious point of view. The Living God always surpasses everything we can feel, think or experience. But Frank himself was more aware of this than anybody else, for his thought comes into being from the profound joy and amazement, from the wonder before the overwhelming, real presence of God, Who dwells in us, touches us and calls us, and this presence gives strength and harmony to his philosophical witness. When Frank remembers the words of St. Augustine that truth dwells inside of man, we believe them both, because they speak the truth about themselves, their faith and their inner evidence, but first of all because it really is so—that is, ontologically faithful to being.

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## A Discussion on Christian Socialism: Semen Frank's Forgotten Paper

The reason for the present study is the discovery of a paper of Semen Frank's which had previously never appeared among the bibliography of his works before. The paper bears the title: *Christianity and Socialism*. It was published in "Vestnik russkago studencheskago Hristianskago Dvizhenia" ("The Herald of the Russian Students' Christian Movement") in 1930 (Issue 4.) There is also another paper of Frank's on the same topic: *The Problem of "Christian Socialism,"* which was first published in journal *Put'* ("The Way") in 1939. This latter looks like it is intended to make a positive statement, but the afterword written by Nikolai Berdyaev, reveals its polemical involvement. The newly discovered paper, which Frank had written almost a decade before, could help to recreate content of this implication. This paper explicitly involves a discussion: Semen Frank responded to Sergey Bulgakov's *The Orthodox Christianity and Socialism (Letter to Editor)*, which had been printed before in both—*Vestnik* and *Put'*. The text is relatively short but important in order to specify the different approaches of the Russian religious philosophers to this important issue, as well as the discussed subject.

However, we must acknowledge the fact that the "discussion on the Christian socialism" mentioned in the title is not a particular event in the history of philosophy. In a wider context, we speak about the relation between Christianity and socialism which European thinkers have been discussing at least since the 1830s. On the other hand, along with a number of other sources, this paper still belongs to a concrete historical situation (the Russian emigration of the late 1920s and early 1930s), and it can be called a "discussion." However, this discussion never crossed the line to become a polemic; it remained within the frameworks of stated positions, with the positions of thinkers that were close to each other, but somehow still substantially different.

The discussion began with a *Letter to the Editor* written by Fr. Sergey Bulgakov.<sup>1</sup> It might seem as though it was merely by chance that Bulgakov's responded to *High Church Administration of the South of Russia Records of Proceedings* (Crimea, 1920) that had been published in the Soviet Union. He was participating in the work of the High Church administration himself, and was entrusted with the task to "compose a draft of a dogmatic constitution on the nature of socialism."<sup>2</sup> It is scarcely to be believed that Bulgakov's intention was to respond to the author, B. Kandidov, or somehow justify himself in face of the Soviet authorities. It was rather personally important for him, who was at the moment not only a priest and religious thinker, but (in a certain sense) a spiritual leader and innovative dogmatic theologian. It was important for him to adjust his own position, formulating that which, due to the tragic circumstances of the late 1920s, he had not formulated before.

However, it is possible that in the late 1920s and early 1930s, certain tendencies of the spiritual development, both the European as well as those of the Russian emigration, had become the nourishing source that fed this personal need.

Firstly, the Stockholm conference (1925) must be mentioned, which focused on practical, social Christianity within the ecumenical movement. It is also to be remembered the big change within the Roman-Catholic Church to focus on social questions, which had begun in the late nineteenth century with Pope Leo XIII's Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), and whose principles were ingeniously developed by Pope Pius XI in his own Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931). After series of revolutionary perturbations in Europe; on the background of the first results of the communist experiment in Soviet Russia; and the great depression in the West: either general social question or particular question on socialism (communism), both acquired a new meaning, which had queerly woven together sinister zombie marches of social utopias, social demagoguery (including fascist and Nazi) as well as the growing counterpoints of the future "welfare state." Then, there emerged original theories, combining religious and social ideas, e.g. the Religious socialism by Leonhard Ragaz and Paul Tillich.

Concerning the Russian emigration, it is to be said that the *modus vivendi* during a few years after the revolution was rather discouraging for an objective (theoretical) attitude towards the idea of socialism. Berdyaev wrote:

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<sup>1</sup> The letter, dated 13 December 1929, had been sent simultaneously to the editors of *Vestnik RSHD* and *Put'*, but, due to different periodicity of the issues, it first appeared in *Vestnik* (Issue 1, January 1930), and then in *Put'* (Issue 20, February 1930).

<sup>2</sup> Bulgakov, "Pravoslaviye i sotsializm," 7.

Psychological atmosphere was very discouraging for understanding the ideal world of communism. In Russian emigration, the communism evoked against itself a passionate affective reaction of gravely injured people. Too many people, answering the questions “what is communism?” would say: “this is something that destroyed my life, this is my unfortunate fate.”<sup>3</sup>

However, the necessity to organize a life under new conditions, and the unavoidable integration within the social environment of countries of residence, especially for emigrant youth, gradually put forward the daily tasks that had already required not just emotional, but also intellectual and practical position with regard to the contemporary intellectual movements and political trends.

In this sense, the evolution of the Russian Student Christian Movement (RSCM) is quite unique. We should also remember that the first place where the “discussion on Christian socialism” began was the RSCM journal. During the later twenties, due to the urgent need of rethinking its tasks and goals, RSCM was in crisis. There were people who said that the movement could not confine itself only to religious and moral education of the Russian emigrant youth, and their spiritual education for “the future work in Russia,” as had been thought before. They thought there was a necessity to turn towards the social reality, to solving particular life problems, to doing practical social work. Firstly, the question was brought up so sharply during the seventh RSCM meeting, held in Boissy, in September 1929.<sup>4</sup> A discussion on the ideology of RSCM preceded the meeting. During the meeting, Nikolai Berdyaev argued over the program paper prepared and offered by Vasily Zenkovsky. Berdyaev clearly declared that “neutrality” relating to social problems, justified by a fear of political involvement, utterly contradicts the ideas of the churching of life and creation of Orthodox culture, proclaimed by RSCM ideologists. The life churching does not mean a diverted liturgism and spirituality that cut off from the fullness of life, but “creative answer of Orthodoxy to the painful questions of life,” among which “and the attitude towards social question, towards the question of labor management is the world question of Christian conscience, but not politics.”<sup>5</sup> Different viewpoints had been stated during the Conference, but among the most distinctive were the words of Bulgakov, who stated that despite all the eschatologism of Christian conscience “we have no right to

<sup>3</sup> Berdyaev, “Pravda i lozh' kommunizma,” 3.

<sup>4</sup> However, Berdyaev had already articulated the similar ideas before, in the RSCM meeting in Argeronne (1925) wherein his appeals to make Orthodoxy “an active religion to transform the world” met strong objections from Bishop Benjamin (Fedchenkov).

<sup>5</sup> Berdyaev, “K voprosu ob ideologii R.S.Kh.D.,” 13.

move away from those Christian tasks to which history has bequeathed us, which are our ecclesiastical duty today," in which "social question, which must entirely become a matter of Christian conscience and responsibility, it must be excluded from the authority of socialists and communists, who have monopolized it."<sup>6</sup>

Thus, Bulgakov's *Letter to the Editor* was not only reflections of the past, but a lively response to the problems of the day. However, we should have mentioned here that during the first period of the Russian Revolution Sergey Bulgakov acted as one of the most conspicuous supporters of the idea of Christian socialism in Russia.

Having made his "conversion from Marxism to idealism," with the freshness of a neophyte, in 1905, Bulgakov felt a deep rupture between Social and Christian in contemporary politics. He asks the question: Is it true that politics, in a broad sense, is something strange to Christianity, as the letter deals with the world of moral issues? The answer was unambiguous:

Christianity, however, as any other religion, claiming to be an absolute one, spreads its interests and influences to the whole life. ... There can be no excuse for principal indifference in politics and social matters.<sup>7</sup>

In fact, he stands for Christian politics as a solid political program and as a political party. His plans to create Christian party ("Union of Christian politics") were unsuccessful. It should be noticed that later, in 1917, Bulgakov himself avowed that Christianity should not become a party.<sup>8</sup> However, he continued to believe that social and economic program of socialism was completely in accord with Christian values.

Thus, Bulgakov's position, expressed in the *Letter to the Editor*, is that socialism as such is not a matter of faith and therefore it is not to be anathematized.

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<sup>6</sup> "Tserkov', mir, dvizheniye," 5. The discussion on RSCM ideology and its internal crisis was continued in September 1933, during the eighth RSCM meeting. Again, it was prompted by Berdyayev who had sent a letter, addressed to the meeting, where in the strictest terms he had been accusing the movement of tolerating the ultra-nationalistic, and even militaristic and fascist tendencies within itself, ending with appeal for "awakening of Christian conscience in relation to social life" (Berdyayev, "Ob ideologicheskoy krizise dvizheniya," 29–33). The meeting responded with having elaborated articles *On Relation Between Religious and Social Work of the Movement*, wherein though it had been said about the "work to create social and legal circumstances for (everyone's) spiritual personal growth," yet, the priority of religious and liturgical life over social service of a Christian prevailed ("Ob otnoshenii religioznoy i sotsial'noy raboty dvizheniya," 33–35).

<sup>7</sup> Bulgakov, "Neotlozhnaya zadacha," 30–31.

<sup>8</sup> Bulgakov, "Khristianstvo i sotsializm," 228.

Bulgakov distinguishes the social and economic nature of socialism from the militant atheism, which often (and in Russian in particular) accompanied it. It is clear that the latter is unacceptable for him as for a priest and orthodox thinker, but the former seems quite a Christian thing for him. "The goal of socialism, understood as execution of social justice, defense of the weakest, struggle against poverty, unemployment, exploitation is to such an extent morally evident that any discord may only be in relation to practical expedience or practicability of this or that measures"<sup>9</sup> (but he certainly does not approve of "untimely and enforcedly urged forms of the state socialistic bondage").

Separating this way social content of socialism from its political forms, Bulgakov joins together under the same notion "all the diversity of forms from the soviet communism to social control of capitalist industry."<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, he believes it is wrong to say that the inviolability of private property is grounded on Christian morality. In other words, it is evident for Bulgakov that Christian doctrine cannot be associated with any defined social and economic system if regarded as a number of historical forms and property institutions. Even less can it be associated itself with a system that is an "organization of class exploitation" (the Marxist understanding of capitalism lasted far longer than the Marxists period of Bulgakov's spiritual biography). However, it is also doubtless for him that Christianity proclaims the ideal of truth and social justice, commanding social love and charity to all those who work and are heavy laden, "everyone will be questioned in the Last Judgment." Therefore, his thought is that the Church cannot condemn anyone for social activity, whoever they are, but, what is important, must "fully possess its royal freedom and justice, in social matters as well," i.e. practically support social reforms.<sup>11</sup>

Frank fully agrees with Bulgakov's principal statement of this issue, and first of all with the fact that "both Gospel and the Tradition of the Church demand an active attitude of a Christian to social question, obliging him to strive for social justice."<sup>12</sup> Although, he also believes it is necessary to make an important correction. Bulgakov's main point is that the social and economic nature of socialism is beyond the doctrine of the Orthodox Church. The only thing that is to be really condemned is the militant atheism with which it is confused. However, Frank insists that not only must openly professed atheism be rejected, but also the condemnation must be spread to latent atheism: the grounds on which the dominant type of the socialistic mood rises.

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<sup>9</sup> Bulgakov, "Pravoslaviye i sotsializm," 8.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>12</sup> Frank, "Khristianstvo i sotsializm," 15.



At the same time, Frank formulates a “substantial difference” between the Christian (and religious in general) attitude towards the issue of “social justice” and the socialist one. For religious conscience, the social injustice that rules the world “is a mere part of the common injustice among people,” as for socialism it is the only substantiation of “every evil in the world.” Religion believes that the source of injustice—and the social injustice too—is in sinfulness, human wickedness, as for the socialism “the only source of injustice is the social organization.” For a religious believer “the major way” to overcome every injustice lies in Christian education and self-discipline, as for a socialist, respectively, such a way is seen as the way of changing the existing social order. So here comes the conclusion: if for socialism the existing social order—bourgeois and capitalist—is “the absolute hindrance to truly human relations,” and another one—socialist—as though automatically brings to complete triumph of goodness and justice. For the Christian outlook, then, “there is not such, yet the worst order, which could hinder doing good and just, and there is not such a social order, which could prevent human relations from evil and injustice.”<sup>13</sup>

It should be noticed that this position is the position of Christian realism. Christian realism states a relative value of politics and state as such, as well as a specific social or political order (it is a value in sense of persistent need to guard it against the outer evil, but it is relative, since it cannot make you do good.) This idea is present in Frank's works of that period (*The Religious Foundations of Society*, *The Spiritual Foundations of Society*), as well as in the latter ones (*The Light Shineth in Darkness*, *Heresy of Utopism*, etc.) It may be noticed that here we are dealing with a position that was probably inherited from Vladimir Soloviev, and connected with his idea of Christian politics.

The latent atheism of socialism, according to Frank, is that the human responsibility for the evil that predominates in human relationships whenever taken away, ceases to be the matter of human conscience and becomes completely a casual one, depending on circumstances—on “the social order.” A human being is not considered to be a creator of his/her social life, but an irresponsible “product” of his/her “environment.” Frank's opinion is that this per se atheistic thought is common both for the open cynicism of the Marxist socialism as well as for the modern European humanism (the “humanitarianism”). The latter, as a philanthropy and compassion to those who are oppressed and those who suffer, rises from Christianity and obligatory for a Christian. Yet, as far as it considers a human beings to be mere victims of extrinsic powers that

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

are outward to them and do not call him/her above all to the moral perfection, it turns to be an anti-Christian mood.<sup>14</sup>

The philosophical and moral foundation of Christian realism for Frank is the idea that it unifies personal and social moral (duty). On one hand, he calls it a spiritual blindness to move away from the duty of social service for the sake of justice, devoting oneself completely and uniquely to self-perfection. On the other hand, it is no less than blindness to believe in “the mechanical enhancement and perfection of life with the help of social reforms and revolutions.” The philosopher emphasizes that “Social service is merely a special form of personal service; the success of social reforms ultimately depends on the morals of those who carries them out.”<sup>15</sup> It is worth noticing that later, in his book *The Light Shineth in Darkness*, Frank, as though continuing and complementing the thought about the unity of morals and politics, writes: “Social reforms are fruitful and lead to the good only insofar as they take into account the given moral level of the people for whom they are intended.”<sup>16</sup> Therefore, he does not concern himself only with personal service and the duty of certain public figures, but anyone, since nobody can deny responsibility for moral evil only on grounds that he (or she) is “an ordinary person,” and there is “nothing that depends on the common people.” Denying the social utopianism, revolutionism and “the satanic idea of class struggle,” Frank states: “True—i.e. Christian—politics are always sensibly meets the living needs of the living people, and means a specific activity for the benefit of neighbors.”<sup>17</sup> Their task is the living moral education, and gradual, harmonious bettering of life, realized with the spiritual means and efforts. The idea of personal and social unity in morals means that any social reform must follow the moral enhancement. It is no matter however hard and slow it seems—due to the unavoidable human wickedness. However, the social reform is by all possible means to avoid opening the “Pandora’s box” of the fundamental human passions that eventually become sinister tools of social preparation to undertake projects for creating a paradise on earth, which long beforehand had been proven to be utopian ones.

Mainly agreeing with Fr. Sergey Bulgakov that the social and economic nature of socialism is not a matter of religious dogma, Frank believes it is possible to specify the attitude of Christian conscience towards one or another social order. This attitude (it is discussed in detail in the book *The Spiritual Foundations of Society* that had just been published a day before) based on a religious

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Frank, *The Light Shineth*, 222.

<sup>17</sup> Frank, “Khristianstvo i sotsializm,” 16–17.

understanding of society as a catholic service to execute justice that “require of social life to observe two fundamental principles on which the service depends: the personal freedom and social solidarity.”<sup>18</sup> From the Christian point of view, social order, whose appearance had been wholly forced by the power of the state, even for the sake of social justice; as well as an order of unlimited economic individualism, even for the sake of freedom: are deviant. It is not a dogmatic issue to decide in which form and how far under a concrete social order, the principle of personal freedom and the one of the state and social control must be joint and operate together, “but the regime, which absolutely denies either of these principles, is to be utterly and fundamentally, i.e. religiously condemned.”<sup>19</sup>

We should say that Bulgakov did not answer to Frank directly. Although, in the Seventh issue of the *Vestnik* in the same year, two readers' letters were published with criticism of Bulgakov's position, as well as his answer to them. However, the editor warned that these responses were “printed with a considerable delay.” We can make an assumption that they had been received and handed over to Bulgakov, who had written his answer immediately, yet before Frank's article appeared. After Frank's publication had appeared, the editor could have expected that Bulgakov would develop his recent answer or write a new one, but it never happened: either because the position of one of the correspondents was similar to that of Frank, and Bulgakov, having answered to the former, believed he could have said the same to Frank himself, or because the editor of *Vestnik* in fact accepted the side not of their Paris inspirer, but of his Berlin opponent.<sup>20</sup>

The discussion in *Vestnik* had not been continued, but in *Put'* we could trace a number of articles that directly or indirectly touched on these issues. In Issue 28 (1931) N. Alexeev's paper appears, which bears the same title as the former by Frank, i.e. *Christianity and Socialism*. The editorial note not only directly refers it to the discussion, but also states the position of the chief editor, i.e. Berdyaev:

The editor of *Put'* believes that the problem of relation between Christianity and socialism is to be discussed from different points of view. The only exception is the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>20</sup> In the editor's introduction to the next Issue 5 of *Vestnik*, it is observed that in the last year, the interest of authors in social issues has multiplied exceedingly, yet only one author is mentioned: “In S. L. Frank's paper ... in classical formulations have been given the general, fundamental foundations of Christian attitude towards socialism. After this paper of his, we would merely like to stress the sharpness and urgency of the problem itself” (“1 maya 1930 g.,” 2).

defense of the capitalist system of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries from the Christian viewpoint.<sup>21</sup>

The paper *Religious Socialism and Christianity* by Fedor Stepun, published in the next Issue 29 (1931), can be regarded as an important satellite of information. There is a critical analysis of religious Christianity movement ideology on material of Paul Tillich's works. In his own turn, in Issue 30 (1931), Berdyaev published his own paper *Justice and a Lie of Communism*, which, however, did not have a direct polemical intention either (it should rather be regarded as preliminary outlines for a book, which would be published later in German, in 1937: *Sinn und Schicksal des russischen Kommunismus*.) In early 1932, there was a meeting in the Academy of Religion and Philosophy in Paris "Christianity and the contemporary social reality," where Nikolai Berdyaev, Vladimir Il'in, Georgy Fedotov, Sergey Bulgakov had presented their reports, which were published in *Put'* (in appendix to Issue 32, 1932.) We can also mention an article by I. Hofstetter, entitled *Social Christianity* (Issue 41, 1933.) At last, a bit delayed, but vivid final chord had been played by Frank's paper *Problem of "Christian socialism,"* which had also been commented by Berdyaev in his *Christianity as a Social Order*: both the paper and the comment were published in the penultimate Issue 60 (1939) in *Put'*. This new Frank's paper is bigger and more systematic in comparison with the previous one, and apparently had no polemic intention. Although the reference to Berdyaev's statement that success and attractive power of the atheistic socialism, first of all, is determined by original (historical) sins of the Christian world, its indifference about social need. The statement that "contains a part of doubtless truth,"<sup>22</sup> but from which Frank draws somehow different conclusions. It could indirectly bear witness to the fact that the new, longer explication of Frank's position had been provoked by Berdyaev's book mentioned above.<sup>23</sup>

As though summarizing the discussion with Bulgakov, Frank states that the concept of "Christian socialism" "contains dangerous confusion of ideas and is *contradictio in adjecto*," however, as well as the notion of "Christian social order."<sup>24</sup> It is doubtless for him that true Christianity means the virtue of love to one's neighbor, a vital attitude towards social injustice and need. Yet he insistently distinguishes two horizons of salvation: spiritual salvation in

<sup>21</sup> Alekseyev, "Khristianstvo i sotsializm," 32.

<sup>22</sup> Frank, "Problema 'khristianskogo sotsializma,'" 19.

<sup>23</sup> On "sins of Christians, sins of historical Churches" in social question Berdyaev writes in the last chapter of his book *Communism and Christianity*. See Berdyaev, *Istoki i smysl russkogo kommunizma*, 139.

<sup>24</sup> Frank, "Problema 'khristianskogo sotsializma,'" 29.

the Kingdom of God, and material salvation in earthly life. This distinction brings him to certain statements which can be comprehended even as a certain justification of social exploitation: "we ought to be patient now to be saved in the Kingdom of God"—Berdyayev's understanding and criticism of this position had been namely of that kind. The latter, however, with his personalistic socialism seems to be more utopian (with Marxist leaven), than Bulgakov's, at that time Frank represented himself as a Christian realist.

As opposed to Bulgakov, Frank does not confuse the socialistic and social state, i.e. the socialism as a social (legal) order, founded on forced collectivization, on one hand, and the social reforming on base of free market, on the other. Having included to the former not only Russian Communism, but also German Nazism, Frank gives Berdyayev an opportunity to say that "he as though does not recognize any other socialism, but the one of a fascist type."<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile as Berdyayev's opposition of personalistic socialism to state socialism, yet, reveals the ultimate contrast between Christian freedom and socialistic enforcement, stated by Frank.

Semen Frank distinguishes socialism as an idea of forced justice and brotherhood of people, from the social legislation as a limitation provided by the state against unacceptable exploitation. "Prescribed by authorities." Social solidarity and forced social justice have been regarded as "antichristian socialism," since they have denied the Christian ideal of free brotherly love. However, the social reforms, i.e. measures forced by officials, to defend and support poor and exploited, seem to be just and essential. Although, the state must not infringe on the initial spiritual freedom, which the only earnest force that enables people "to freely fulfill the covenant of Christian love." Comparing socialism and capitalism under such conditions, Frank comes to a conclusion that provoked a negative reaction from Berdyayev:

From the viewpoint of Christian religion and Christian understanding of life, the priority is to be given to that social regime or an order, which in the highest degree acceptable to strengthen the free brotherly love among people. Although, it can seem paradoxical, but such an order is not "the socialism," but namely the order based on economic freedom of personality and the freedom of individual disposal of property.<sup>26</sup>

Berdyayev does not accept the term "Christian socialism" rather because of his general distrust of historical Christianity and the outward the Church as one of the forms of social objectivation, but avows himself as close to religious

<sup>25</sup> Berdyayev, "Khristianskaya sovest' i sotsial'nyy stroy," 35.

<sup>26</sup> Frank, "Problema 'khristianskogo sotsializma,'" 30.

socialism, represented by Leonhard Ragaz, Paul Tillich, Reinhold Niebuhr. Justifying personalistic, anti-state socialism, Berdyaev rejects capitalistic economic forms as such. It is doubtless for him that bourgeois property is always inseparable from oppression, and therefore: “only personal labor activity, which does not enable capitalization, can be justified.”<sup>27</sup> Economic freedom means slavery of working people for him, and therefore the utter destruction of capitalism would be more like a Christian undertaking than, though partial justification. Berdyaev says, “theoretically, the Cross could rather be associated with the symbols of hammer and sickle than with Roman law or bank notes.”<sup>28</sup> He is accompanied by Bulgakov, who believes that “labor symbols” can be signed with “the sign of the Cross,” instead of opposing themselves to it.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, the problem of Christian socialism is one of the ever-present and ever-discussed topics among the Russian religious philosophers of the first half of the twentieth century. The attempts to solve the problem were connected with general social, philosophical, religious, and metaphysical premises, as well as peculiarities of spiritual development of specific thinkers; it has already presupposed (and explained) some disagreements between them. There are many positions within the general scope: from extrasocial, but fundamentally anti-capitalistic, personalistic socialism of Berdyaev, on one hand, and Christian realism of Frank that fundamentally rejects the social revolutionism and collectivism, advocating the priority of personal spiritual freedom in face of any outward forms of social organization, on the other. The position of Christian socialism, represented by Fr. Sergey Bulgakov, appears to be inconsistent and utopian. Therefore, we can make a general conclusion that the study of the correlation between Christianity and socialism in Russian religious philosophy convincingly demonstrates the shallow and artificial character of their “symbiosis.” It is obvious enough that the ultimate social ideal of Christianity can hardly be correctly formulated in predicaments of an ideological program, confining their vision of the salvation mystery to the narrow bounds of the material organization of earthly life.

*Translated by Victor V. Chernyshov*

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<sup>27</sup> Berdyaev, “Khristianskaya sovest’ i sotsial’nyy stroy,” 35.

<sup>28</sup> “Khristianstvo pered sovremennoy sotsial’noy deystvitel’nost’yu,” 9.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

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## “How is Religion Possible?” The Features and Contemporary Importance of Sergey Bulgakov’s Theological Method

The problem of finding out a theological method is a problem of theology if one sees it as a branch of science that has its own object, subject and terminology. In this case, theology must have its own method or, more precisely, a group of methods that are appropriate for the study of theology. Nowadays this problem is one of the most important and difficult questions for theology and especially for those people conducting theological or near-theological researches. Yet it is also very important to know that there were some quite successful attempts to solve this question, and one can find them in Russian religious philosophy too.

The question that is in the title of the article is one of those which Sergey Bulgakov puts in his work *Unfading Light*: this Russian philosopher was one of those who tried not only to make religious philosophy but also to think about how it’s possible for religion to be a part of human knowledge. It is important that Bulgakov searches for a scientific way to study religious understanding that science includes not only a sum of terms but also a specific method of studying.

In his different works Bulgakov gives different approaches to the problem of theological method, but these approaches are implicit: the philosopher tries himself various ways to make theological matters more scientific and, at the same time, to leave them in the frame of theology with its values, hope and believes.

Theological method as epistemological term, according to Bulgakov’s works and letters or diaries, can be divided into two parts (or two ways of understanding the phenomena of theological method):

(1) one using the methods of secular sciences for specific religious purposes, or objects;

(2) a special theological method that is based on the features of a religious mind and is aimed at the same object (religious purposes, or object).



It is necessary to study these two parts briefly in order to realize the specific features of each of them and to understand the importance of Bulgakov's epistemology for contemporary theology and religious studies.

Bulgakov's famous work *Unfading Light* has the subtitle: *Contemplations and Speculations*. These two words show Bulgakov's idea about theological method in the best way. On the one hand, one sees contemplation as living experience of being with God and in God. Contemplation is connected closer with the heart or soul, than with the mind or consciousness, and it's not possible for contemplation to be perceived. On the other hand we have speculations: the term means some thoughts that are available for logic and that can be expressed by human language using the logical structures of a language. This "philological" point is not about contemplations: they can usually be hardly expressed in words, only using some metaphors or poetical language that is rarely logic.

In *Unfading Light* Bulgakov uses the descriptive historical method but almost never explains this method explicitly. Almost all the chapters of this book have long historical notes; for example, section one ("Divine Nothing"), concerning discussion about opportunities of knowing God and especially about apophatic (negative) theology, includes notes from the history of philosophy and theology (Negative Theology in Plato and Aristotle, Plotinus, Church Fathers etc). By the way, the author says that these notes are quite short in order not to make the text very long, and they are necessary only to create a context for the problems discussed in the book. The historical method in Bulgakov's works means using historical and critical analysis, the importance of which, for Bulgakov, is that these facts are part of the world of human culture.

The work *Philosophy of the Name* that Bulgakov appreciated as his most philosophical work, uses philological methods for studying the theological problems of the Name. In the first parts that are called "Speech and word" and "About the philosophy of grammar"<sup>1</sup> Bulgakov uses not only philological terms (direct/indirect object, direct/indirect subject, discourse, noun, verb, adjective etc.) but also philological methods: for example, he speaks about the logical analysis of a sentence while discussing the problem of speech existing. Bulgakov discusses the functions of a sentence in detail in speech using different language examples, but his first conclusion is not philological but philosophical: the main function of a word, sentence or text (speech)—it does not matter—is to give a name. If one reads this work by Bulgakov it is clear that the philosophical conclusion isn't the last: the philosophy of language is only

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<sup>1</sup> Bulgakov, *Filosofiya imeni*, 35–40.

the way to theology, that is—to the theology of God's Name. So Bulgakov uses the methods of the secular sciences to discuss theological problems, but in *Philosophy of the Name* he does not explain these methods in detail.

But in *Unfading Light* Bulgakov speaks explicitly about the method and discusses the differences between science and religion as between two parts not only of human knowledge but also of a human being. In the first part of *Unfading Light* Bulgakov tries to describe the method when he points to the fact that it is possible to emphasize such a type of human knowledge as the phenomenology of religion. This epistemological part of Bulgakov's philosophy and theology is very important and relevant in post-secularism when one wants to find new opportunities for dialogue between religion and science, religion and philosophy.

The theological method in Bulgakov's works can be studied in three aspects: dogmatism, religious creativity, and living experience, or revelation. The dogmatic aspect means a desire to express the contents of religion. Anyway, in spite of the fact that the verbal formula of a dogma isn't equal to a dogma's meaning, dogmatism is a part of the method used to study theology.

The second aspect—religious creativity—is connected with the relationship between science and religion, one of the most important questions of contemporary theology and science. On the one hand, one can study religion as an object (to study *phenomenology of religion*, if we use Bulgakov's term): "Scientific interest in religion can be a manifestation of religious creativity, similar to religious philosophy."<sup>2</sup> It means something like if one is a religious person he can study, for example, hagiography as a kind of literature, but with *piety* (also Bulgakov's term). On the other hand, when Bulgakov speaks about *piety*, he is referring to morals in science:

We in no way see in science the highest manifestation of the human spirit. But once science in general exists, scientific piety is possible which to a certain degree the science of religion is<sup>3</sup>.

But the basis of theological method, according to Bulgakov, is a real experience of God-communication. This living experience, according to *Unfading Light*, is "not scientific or philosophical, aesthetic, or ethical."<sup>4</sup> Bulgakov compares it with beauty—one cannot understand or know beauty but only think about beauty. The same is with religion: if one wants to study religion and its specific features, it's necessary to study religious experience, real

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<sup>2</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, 100.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

God-communication: "one needs to study the life of those who are *geniuses* in religion ... the life of saints, ascetics, prophets and founders of religion and the living monuments of religion—literature, cult, custom."<sup>5</sup> Here Bulgakov speaks about *phenomenology of religion* that is not only saints' life but also scriptures, traditions, religious services (to say shortly, cult, or religious practice) which are better to study than to make religion the object for philosophy. So in order to study religion one has to study cult, because religious practice can be an object and a purpose of such researches, but not religion. It is connected with the specific of religion:

at the basis of religion there is an encounter with Divinity gained at personal experience.  
... Religion is conceived in the lived experience of God<sup>6</sup>.

Speaking about difference between methods of science and of religion Bulgakov gives two definitions: science uses the method of non-believing, while religion takes the method of holiness: "Science studies religion with an unbelieving eye, from the outside, and herein lies its advantage ... but also its limitation."<sup>7</sup> There is the unique nature of theological method: its logical critique is supplemented by real revelation, real experience of being with God and in God. Holiness, or *piety*, is the way in which religion is possible and how science of religion is possible. The example that Bulgakov gives to prove this is the Gospel: scientific analysis can explore the text in the original and in different translations, can study the text in the historical and culture context, but at the same time all this research will not be able to approach to understanding the eternal religious and moral content of the Gospel.<sup>8</sup> *Spiritual Notes (Spiritual Diary)*, because of its genre, shows this feature of the theological method of Bulgakov in the best way—the theological method is a living experience of communicating with God, a feeling of God's presence.

Thinking about theological method, Bulgakov goes *via media* as in almost all his works: "Religious thinkers like Bulgakov fought against both the anti-traditionalism of destructive revolutionaries and the traditionalism of dusty conservatives."<sup>9</sup> Bulgakov does not say no to science with its approaches and methods, and terminology, but he also realizes that it's impossible to study religion (or even *phenomenology of religion*) without *piety*, or without

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 98–99.

<sup>9</sup> Zwahlen, "Sergey Bulgakov's Concept," 172.

living religious experience of God-communication which one can get in the Church as in the Body of Christ. Another feature of Bulgakov's theological method which is important in the contemporary context, is that this method is intersubject, or ecclesiastical.<sup>10</sup> It connects Bulgakov's thoughts with the Russian philosophers of the ninetieth century (for example, with Alexei Khomiakov) and of the beginning of the twentieth century, especially with Vladimir Soloviev the main concept of whose works is *unity* (or, to be more precise, in Russian *sobornost'*). This feature means that Bulgakov understands theology as a science only inside the Church that is perceived as a living community, a living brotherhood of the faithful in Christ.<sup>11</sup> It is very important in the context of ecumenism as a constructive dialogue between different confessions. Finally, Bulgakov's method is integrative by itself, because it combines various branches of humanitarian knowledge (not only theology). The history of religion, philosophy, theology has its basis in dogmatism and in the empirical knowledge of God given in revelation, which is why one can speak about the integrative function of Bulgakov's theological method. This fact has great importance in post-secularism with its desire to stop disintegration.

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<sup>10</sup> Zhak, "Aktual'nost' bogosloviya," 135.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 136–37.

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## Aleksey Losev on Religious Essence and the Generative Power of Platonism

Each person who was brought up in the Soviet Union  
feels an incomparable sense of recognition  
upon first opening the relevant pages of Plato's *The Republic*.  
Paul Y. Rakhshmir, from a lecture of 1997

The idea of the high significance of Platonic studies for our comprehension of many phenomena in politics, ideology and philosophy of the twentieth century and of our days is all played out. The social project of Plato was considered to be the paradigmatic model for totalitarian regimes of Nazi Germany and Bolshevik Russia<sup>1</sup> or—recently—the only basis for the solution of all contemporary global problems.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Karl R. Popper, with his famous first volume of the classical *The Open Society and Its Enemies—The Spell of Plato* had the predecessors here. So, Bertrand Russell, having visited Soviet Russia in 1920, remembered in 1956: “I said ... that Russia was exactly Plato's *Republic* and it shocked the Platonists and shocked the Russians, but I still think it was true.” Russell, *Détente or Destruction*, 211. Multiple allusions on Plato's social project can be seen in the famous Eugene Zamyatin's novel-antiutopia *We* (1921), see Semyonova, “Roman E. Zamyatina ‘My’ i ‘Gosudarstvo’ Platona.” The approach to Plato as historically the first theoretician of a repressive state and hence—a politically actual thinker was presented in the works of Warner Fite and Richard H. Crossman, see Fite, *The Platonic Legend*, and Crossman, *Plato Today*.

The statements of Russell, Fite, Crossman and Popper, the hints of Zamyatin or Losev at the Platonic nature of the Soviet state are all the more interesting that Plato himself was considered in the official Soviet ideology or philosophy only as an ideological enemy, the creator of “the objective idealism,” but not as a figure authoritative for a Marxist philosopher. Karl Radek's surprise at the Russell's comparison of Soviet Russia with the Plato's *Republic* is very characteristic he re: “he says that in many respects soviet Russia reminds him of Plato's *Republic*. Since up to now, the word ‘Plato’ has not been considered derogatory, we ought to be grateful to Russell even for that.” Radek, “Sentimental'noye puteshestviye.” See also the series of Frances M. Nethercott's works on the issue: “Endings and Ends, Russia's Plato” and “Vospriyatiye Platona.”

<sup>2</sup> See Dillon, “Platonism and the World Crisis.”

In this paper I would like to discuss some of the main aspects of the analysis of “the social nature of Platonism” by the Russian philosopher and historian of philosophy Aleksey F. Losev (1893–1988)—predominately as this analysis is given in the outline of the same name, *Social Nature of Platonism*, included in *The Outlines of Antique Symbolism and Mythology* (1930).<sup>3</sup>

Two aspects make this outline extremely interesting for our discussion. Firstly, according to Losev, the analysis of the social nature of Platonism finds itself a necessary basis for the explanation of the social specifics of Orthodoxy and Catholicism. Secondly, having being forced to cover up his phenomenological and neo-Platonic *tropoi* with quasi-Marxist rhetoric, or to conceal his own philosophical and theological constructions and polemical statements under the screen of scholarly studies on the history of philosophy, Losev uses all the complex of indirect expressive ways to demonstrate the similarity of Plato’s social project and the reality of Bolshevik Russia. Moreover, he is able to explain this similarity with all the convincingness of logical necessity.<sup>4</sup>

Losev begins his consideration of the social nature of Platonism from the statement about the impossibility to examine Plato’s theory of ideas and Plato’s social project as two isolated doctrines. We cannot admire the sublime idealism and at the same time shut our eyes to manifold “unexpectednesses” and “inconveniences” in Plato’s project of ideal state. In fact, Losev affirms, “the only *quite definite* social system follows from Plato’s ‘Idea;’ his ‘Idea’ is throughout social and the social dimension of the Platonic reality is throughout ‘ideal.’”<sup>5</sup>

Losev formulates his task as an attempt to trace this dialectical inner dependency between the theory of ideas and the theory of the ideal state. He seeks to explain philosophically all these “strange places” in Plato’s texts, when the theory of family turns into “the doctrine of a stud farm,” when instead of a sublime theory of art and beauty we find in Plato’s texts recommendations about expatriation of artists and poets from the ideal state, together with prostitutes, actors, milliners, barbers, cooks, and other “mass of useless people.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Losev, *Ocherki*, 773–904.

<sup>4</sup> It may be noted that Losev’s strategy of “intellectual contraband” was not consistent enough: several months after publishing *The Outlines* Losev sent to the press his another book, *The Dialectic of Myth*, with the inclusion of some paragraphs which had not been approved by the censors. This led to his arrest on a charge of counterrevolutionary activities and his being sentenced to ten years in labor camps (in 1933, ahead of time, Losev was dismissed on the score of disability).

<sup>5</sup> Losev, *Ocherki*, 773, cf. 774: Plato’s “sociology” with dialectic necessity follows from the “ideology” and is itself the most developed form of it.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 775. It is important to note that this phrase, “mass of useless people,” typical for the Soviet rhetoric of twenties and thirties, is presented in Losev’s text as Plato’s. Ana-

So, what social structure, according to Losev, is deduced with dialectical necessity from Plato's teaching about ideas? Prior to proceed to the answer, our author offers a methodological note. Accordingly to Losev, each type of culture, in all multiplicity of its aspects, can be deduced with logical necessity from some basic principle. This principle may be not recognized by the representatives of this cultural tradition, moreover—in fact, these representatives may have some private views and tastes, which contradict the principle (so, some great scientist can be a committed Christian and some Russian Marxist can love Pushkin's poetry), but nevertheless this principle determinates the whole character of the tradition. Platonism, according to Losev, is one such cultural tradition and may be deduced from some initial principle that manifests itself in any aspect of this tradition: equally in Platonic social philosophy (and in practical implementations of such philosophy—as far as it has an occasion to be realized) and in the theory of ideas. So, Losev says, anybody who claims himself to be a Platonist “*must draw all the social conclusions, which follow with the inexorable dialectical necessity from Plato and were drawn by Plato himself.*”<sup>7</sup>

Everyone feels that any social-democracy, any parliamentarism, any equality, any liberalism at all are not consistent with Platonism. ... Platonism is not consistent nor with believing in progress (this believing is a creation of the European liberalism exclusively), nor with the religion rejecting rituals (a creation of European dualistic metaphysics), nor with economical materialism. ... We must ... demonstrate, how does some social structure enter in the essence of Platonism ... *what social doctrine is contained immanently in the clear Platonism?*<sup>8</sup>

Losev marks out in Plato's texts on the ideal state three main moments. In the first: individual life in the ideal state is entirely submitted to the total:

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logical examples are scattered throughout all the text of the outline: these are the phrases about “workers’ and peasants’ population” of the ideal state (p. 819), about ... and so on: cases of Plato's state are described by Losev in the terms of the Soviet reality of the end of 1920s. What is it? Losev's accidental anachronisms, stylistic negligence? No, Losev had a brilliant sense of style. I'm inclined to see here a very important feature of the text under discussion: in the situation of strict ideological control, Losev explores such intentionally “anachronistic passages” among other indirect ways for demonstration of the similarity of Plato's and the Soviet social and political projects. He never compares Plato's state with the Bolsheviks' project clearly. But already in this relatively early work Losev demonstrates the examples of the “intellectual contraband”—a strategy, which later, after his return from the labor camp in the White Sea–Baltic Canal, would become one of the most significant characteristics of his style.

<sup>7</sup> Losev, *Ocherki*, 778.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 779 (Losev's italic).

“Plato’s social philosophy is filled with aspiration for *the unity*, for *the totality*, for such kind of the social life that in all its aspects would be something absolutely united and univocal.”<sup>9</sup>

The second moment is linked with the specific meaning of *justice* (*dikaiosyne*)—the main value of Plato’s social philosophy. Justice here is interpreted as “the wise equivalence of all soul’s aspects, of all its virtues, and—consequently—of all social classes.”<sup>10</sup> No one certain element has here any independent force or significance. So, justice is the benefit of the total. *The Republic*, V 462ab, gives a good illustration of this understanding of justice: “Have we any greater evil for a city than what splits it and makes it many instead of one? Or a greater good than what binds it together and makes it one?”<sup>11</sup> “Justice” in the ideal state is the *geometrical* symmetry of sculpture: the ideal polis is “the whole statue, interesting only as *whole*,”<sup>12</sup> and the whole ideal polis is nothing more than a perfect statue, made beautiful by the perfect geometrical symmetry of its proportions.

Losev’s style becomes here very expressive and full of emotion. He just cites and paraphrases Plato, but the structure of sentences, the selection of words and the italicizing demonstrate that Platonism here is not a mere subject of distant scholarly interest.<sup>13</sup>

These statements about (1) the complete absorption of the personal by the total in the ideal state and (2) about the statuary, geometrical character of the ideal state’s perfection give Losev the possibility to postulate the final formula of the social nature of (ancient, heathen) Platonism. Yes, says Losev, essence of Platonism is the idealism. But the Platonic Idea is *the idea of a body*, but not of a person. This is the idea, which, having been embodied, doesn’t permit the transformation of a terrestrial individuum into a spiritual individuality, which “generalizes all individualities, formalizes their spiritual content.”<sup>14</sup> It is on the strength of matter’s and body’s primacy that social being in Platonism consumes all the individual and implacably subdues anything to the whole and to the total.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 808, see after, 811: “we find *the complete absorption of the personal by the total*” (Losev’s italic).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 809.

<sup>11</sup> *The Republic of Plato*, 141.

<sup>12</sup> Losev, *Ocherki*, 810 (Losev’s italic).

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, the italicizing of the sentence “*There is not and there cannot be any private property*” (p. 809). By the way, here again Losev explores the terminology specific for his own time in interpretation of Plato’s texts. After such “intentional anachronism” we will see in the phrase about the “workers’ and peasants’ population” of the ideal state.

<sup>14</sup> Losev, *Ocherki*, 811.



*Socially* Platonism is the doctrine about the *substantial primacy* of matter, about the essential priority of body and creature, earth; this results with necessity in the doctrine about formal and semantic primacy of the idea, about domination and priority of the whole over the individual. This is the logic of any materialism.<sup>15</sup>

This definition is a remarkable example of Losev's "contraband style." What is the real subject of this definition, its *definiendum*?—Platonism? Obviously. To be more precise—ancient, heathen Platonism, as the intellectual quintessence of the main intuition of the Greek culture—the intuition of body.<sup>16</sup> As the Platonic idea is, according to Losev, a sublime, abstract form of a geometrically perfect body, heathen Platonism paradoxically proves to be a form of materialism. But, since Platonism is the only possible form of any real dialectical thinking (for example, a form of Platonism having as its basis the idea or intuition of the absolute *person* is, for Losev, the genuine Christian philosophy), heathen, non-Christian Platonism is, for Losev, the paradigmatic form for *any* materialism, including the Russian Bolshevism. So, speaking about social philosophy of Plato, Losev reveals the (onto)logical schemes, which determine the theory and practice of—among others—Russian Bolshevism.<sup>17</sup>

All subsequent expositions of Plato's social project, in all the multiplicity of its details, Losev presents as the dialectical unfolding of this formula. His study demonstrates that in its relation to social practice Platonism reveals itself as a *religion*—embracing, overmastering and determining by itself all aspects and features of the social life. Aleksey Losev shows that the three estates of Plato's polis are turned, by the force of dialectic necessity, into the estates of a *heathen monastery*—monks (i.e. philosophers-rulers), policemen (i.e. guards) and novices (i.e. craftsmen and tillers);<sup>18</sup> that the real essence of mythology in the Platonic state is the dogmatic theology<sup>19</sup> and the only permissible forms of art are hymnography and iconography.<sup>20</sup>

He demonstrates that the only possible form of the theory of family in Plato's "heathen monastery" is such that excludes any privacy, any individual love:

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 812.

<sup>16</sup> Here we could recall the strong influence of Oswald Spengler upon the early Losev.

<sup>17</sup> See *ibid.*, 812–13: this paradox exists "not only in heathenism and in Platonism," but it will appear with the dialectic necessity "*anywhere* and *always* where the person is understood as terrestrial and material body. Materialism is dialectically connected with the abstract dictatorship of the general formal idea over the alive person."

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 813–29.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 829–33.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 834–37.

antique Platonism permits the marriage, but throws away any spiritual and personal content from it. ... *Delivery of children is necessary, but nor family, that is nor a father, nor a mother, nor children (in proper sense), nor any love shall exist.*<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, as Platonism, is the highest (and, consequently, the general) form of dialectical thinking for Losev, and as the main opposition between Antiquity and Christianity is concentrated in opposition of two basic cultural intuitions—body and personality—the antique, *heathen Platonism*, in all manifoldness of its social explications, is contrasted with the *Christian Platonism*, the most strict form of which is found by Losev in Byzantine Palamism (with all dialectically deduced forms of appropriate type of sociality).<sup>22</sup> Catholicism, with all its specific forms of social explications, is interpreted by Losev as a transitive cultural principle—“the Christian Aristotelianism.”<sup>23</sup> Christianity rejects *heathen Platonism*, but any of its main historical forms is a special cultural form having at its heart a special form of Platonism, nevertheless: “the heathen Platonism is opposed to the Christian, in its three basic forms: (1) the Orthodox-Eastern (the Palamism), (2) the Catholic-Western, and (3) the Barlaamitic-Protestant.”<sup>24</sup>

Any described variant of Christian culture preserves its specific nature even in its degraded form. So, “Catholicism perverts into hysteria, casuistry, formalism and inquisition. Orthodoxy, having been perverted, gives hooliganism, anarchism and banditry.” Only degraded Protestantism is able to correlate these forms by means of “cold and dry lust of political and economical theories.”<sup>25</sup>

The similarity of the methodological approaches allows one to correlate the positions of Aleksy Losev and the German philosopher and theologian Paul Tillich (1886–1965):<sup>26</sup> a religion (and a quasi-religion, equally) in Tillich’s and Platonism in Losev’s works are models, generating one or another type of social reality, in inner necessity of the total complex of its multiform features.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 849; Losev’s analysis of Plato’s theory of family is presented on pp. 847–60.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 865–73.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 873–92.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 892.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 891–92. Surely, “degraded Protestantism” here is Marxism, and the synthesis of perverted forms of Christianity is one more formula of Soviet reality of twentieth century.

<sup>26</sup> See, first of all, his *Christianity and Encounter of the World Religions*, where Tillich develops the principles of his “dialectical theology,” elaborates the conception of “quasi-religion,” describes the mechanisms of unfolding of the highest value, immanent to one or another religion (or a “quasi-religion”) in all aspects of a corresponding cultural tradition.

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## The Ideal Ecclesia in the Philosophical Investigations of “Those from Kithezh”: The philosophy of The Other in the Inheritance of Aleksey Ukhtomsky, Aleksandr Meyer, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Mikhail Prishvin

The dialogic philosophy in Russian thinkers' works between 1914–1930 has become a special form of reasoning on social and cultural life. In works of Aleksey Ukhtomsky, Aleksandr Meyer, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Mikhail Prishvin the impact of religious and ethical motivation on the creation of new social links is analyzed. They also think on the ways of building the new culture. Valentin Khalizev<sup>1</sup> uses the term “those from Kithezh” (*Kitezhane*) coined by Vladimir Turbin for those philosophers who followed the traditions of Sergey Bulgakov, Sergey Trubetskoy and Evgeniy Trubetskoy. Another parallel can be seen between their ideas and thoughts of Russian émigré philosophers: Nikolai Lossky, Sergey Hessen, Georgy Fedotov, and Nikolai Arsenev.

There is a special kind of Ideal Ecclesia in Ukhtomsky, Meyer, Bakhtin and Prishvin works, i.e. the ecclesia of creative selves in Meyer's articles,<sup>2</sup> the culture or the world polylogue as a Church of a kind in Bakhtin's heritage, the ideal commune in Prishvin's prose and the idea of society and culture based on “conscience intuition” in Ukhtomsky's diaries.<sup>3</sup>

Here we can see the opposition between the personal activism in official culture and “a participant's thought” (*uchastnoye myshleniye*), “a cordial action”

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<sup>1</sup> Khalizev, “Nravstvennaya filosofiya Ukhtomskogo,” 222–30.

<sup>2</sup> Meyer, *Filosofskiye sochineniya*; for detailed interpretation of this work, see Konstantinova, “Filosofiya tvorcheskoy lichnosti,” 103–06 and “Poisk ideal'noy obshchnosti,” 156–65.

<sup>3</sup> Ukhtomsky, *Litso drugogo cheloveka*.

("the first impulse of the heart" as the key point in Prishvin's philosophy). This action is conceived as a path of ascesis (and the diminishing of *ego*): the person is coming to the Other and echoing to another self by overcoming his egoistic nature. Ukhtomsky wrote:

Only as much as we overcome ourselves and our individualism, the leaning on our own selves—are we able to see another personality. From the moment the other personality reveals itself, a man deserves to be called a personality himself for the first time.<sup>4</sup>

Later Khalizev evaluates this phenomenon as an actualization of the so-called *close reality* (*blizkaya real'nost'*) in works of Ukhtomsky, Meyer, Bakhtin, Prishvin. They oppose this kind of reality to metaphysical one which is far from everyday life of the person.

These philosophers do not accept the model of man's incorporation into social life but reveal in their own life the value of the other type of consciousness, i.e. the participant's consciousness (*uchastnoye soznaniye*). It leaves apart the schematization and abstraction and creates another ties between people and another creatures in the world as a special form of social being. Thus Gachev supposes that an important feature of Bakhtin's philosophical position is the overcoming of speculative idea of Conciliarity (*Sobornost'*) and Unity that the Soviet state transformed into the ideology of collectivism. The latter is based on the "object thinking" (*veshchnoye myshleniye*), i.e. theoretical thinking that sees the Other, a living creature, as a dead object and ignores the living image of common social life.

The opposition between the One and the Onliness is the most important peculiarity of the two thinkers' philosophical outlook. Seeking for the ideal of the community in the Soviet state, both of them come to the issue that the denying of each separate Self in the community is an ideology that is cruel to the single life. The Unity is a community in which different selves are melted into the whole. The person vanishes and each one could be replaced by another. But there is another idea of Unity that appreciates every person seen as unique and irreplaceable. These persons compose the choir of different voices, the Many-Faced Whole.<sup>5</sup>

The uniqueness of everyone in Bakhtin's works is revealed through the attitude of the consciousness that sees the world and the creatures in it not as "things" or faceless multitude but as allied You. At the same time this means a transition from subject-object relations to subject-subject ones. The latter

<sup>4</sup> Ukhtomsky, *Dominanta*, 150.

<sup>5</sup> Gachev, "Bakhtin," 109.

mean that Self sees the world and its creatures as Others. It shows attention to them and is engaged in a dialog with them.

So in Bakhtin's heritage the special way of community creation is revealed from the oneness to the association. It is based on Kenosis, i.e. the way of belittling the Self that allows it to hear the Other. People drawn with their inner need join the "collectives of the little meetings" (*kollektivny malykh vstrech*), talks and thoughts.<sup>6</sup> These "collectives of the little meetings" are seen by Gachev as a part of the worldly dialog and polylogue. He implies the existence of the peculiar "brotherhood of the culture" that unites the past and the future "through worlds and universes and generations of history."<sup>7</sup>

In Prishvin's heritage this problematics exists in the context of his experience acquired during the war and the building of the new totalitarian Soviet state.

In his texts Prishvin differs between the way to perfect "we" and the rationalistic ideals of community as they were seen by the society in the years of World War I and the Soviet period (i.e. the new state and the new type of collective). That Prishvin's way lies through the inner ascesis of the person. He teaches about the way from natural self to the person and to the revelation of cordial connection between people and other creatures in the society and nature.

One of the key points in Prishvin's plots of this period becomes the conflict of the living person and the rational ideology that does not take person into consideration. The examples of the latter are the German state ideology in times of World War I, the revolutionary ideas of the new society and the ideology of the collectivism in Russia.

At the same time, this conflict between the person and state ideology is already paradoxically solved in Prishvin journals in the years of Great War (1914–1916). World War, Civil War in Russia, and Russian revolution of 1917 are seen not only as the manifestation of external power that suppresses the individual. The real reason of the war is the fact that the man does not really take part in the abundant life and does not "feel with his heart."<sup>8</sup> The comparison between the war and childbirth is symbolic too: the man at war is reborn and redeems his sins such as rational and pragmatic attitude to the world and lack of compassion. In the last note of his 1914 journal Prishvin ponders the Christian path of salvation. He sees it as the submission of the will and attention to the Other, i.e. to the details of people and nature everyday life. Salvation comes through

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Prishvin, *Dnevnik 1914–1917*, 163.

humiliation, submission and suffering, happiness lies in misfortune. However, it is not the "failure" that saves but the fact that the humble man cares for other people and reveals the best features of his own in his suffering.<sup>9</sup>

This path of salvation, as Prishvin supposes, is the way of the birth of the immortal Self in man. During the war years, Prishvin witnesses the creation of the new world in hearts of men. The new world as Prishvin understands it is the interaction between the immortal Self and the Universe that overcomes the "naïve egoism of the state and the state fetishism."<sup>10</sup> As he supposes, the way of creation of the New World is opposed to the way of "state creation" (*tvorchestvo gosudarstva*). The creation of the new world is compared with the path of Christ who defeated death with death. During the war, the compassion to the Other is seen by Prishvin as the death of the Self and the birth of the person connected with the others by means of cordial attention (*serdechnoye vnimaniye*) and sympathy. So the All-Unity (i.e. the community created by the cordial compassion to each other) is gained. It is impossible to make war and be alone, Prishvin says.<sup>11</sup>

The opposition between "the name" and "the number" becomes the key note of Prishvin's journals of the period. The naming of the world is the sacred act. It highlights in everyone his own face, his Self, his foreordination. The name contains love that discerns the face and kern of every creature ("the Love Dis-cerning"). The name singles an animal out of the flock, reveals a special kern and face in every creature. The name of the Virgin stands over all the names of the creatures. She spins her yarn for all the hares, foxes and martens. So we can say that the names that are born by the cordial attention (*serdechnoye vnimaniye*) to each other are seen as the Protecting Veil made by the Virgin. The image of yarn becomes a symbol of the connections woven in her name.<sup>12</sup>

In the cosmic scale these connections are seen by Prishvin not as "terrestrial" but as "aquatic." Terrestrial bonds are the symbol of expulsion of everyone by everyone (the terrestrial bonds bind with the violence, Prishvin says), the aquatic bonds unite each other with concern and sympathy. They belong to another community. The path leading to it lies through the cordial concern and "kindred attention" (*rodstvennoye vnimaniye*).<sup>13</sup>

The number symbolizes the "diabolical" sensing of the world. The world is divided, splintered; it is seen as a "boiling bowl" or as a "legion" of the

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>12</sup> Prishvin, *Tsvet i krest*, 374–75.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 396.

elements inimical to each other: “the white” (*belyye*) and “the red” (*krasnyye*), “us” and “them.” In Prishvin’s journals written during the World War I the character refuses to distinguish between “the white” and “the red” (as was usual in terms of the war time ideology). Instead with a cordial concern (*serdechnoye uchastiye*) he reveals the essence of the each person, and it is “human.” The character says that his banner is not white or red one, but a blue one that symbolically represents heaven and humanity.<sup>14</sup> In another fragment of the journal Prishvin reveals such a name of Everyman as “brother” in connection with the emergence and rising of the Church. The Church is understood as a peculiar space based on the relations between people. Prishvin tells that in spite of information about Civil war and more and more battlefronts emerging that Russian people get from the newspapers the New World grows up in the soul of the Russian man. Whenever people are gathering they begin to talk with each other and there is always someone who calls the other with the name “brother” and not with the official “comrade.” This is the little church, Prishvin says, that has just began to sprout.<sup>15</sup> The idea of *sprouting* of the community (or the Church) from within the soil of the soul is opposed to the idea of *building* of the community. The latter is something brought from outside. This type of community is torn from the “cordial” apprehension of the life. (Such an ideological construction of state system can be seen in *We* anti-utopia by Evgeniy Zamyatin).

Thus during the cataclysms in society, Prishvin writes about *the creation of the little church as a model of social life transfiguration*. He writes about the special compassion to the Other that brings the man out from the self-absorbed condition. Instead of the ideology as a base of state creation Prishvin reveals another way of community fastening by means of cordial compassion and the “name-giving” attention.

Thus we come to the conclusion that dialogical philosophy reveals the peculiar type of relations between the religious ideal of community and social reality. Creating the image of the ideal community as the image of the ideal Church (such as Kitezh, ecclesia, the ideal “we”) the authors do not think it existed long ago or will exist in the future. They understand it as the sprouting of new bonds from within the souls of all the people. Kitezh reveals itself in the everyday life of man; it is an image that arranges the human behavior from inside.

So the dialogical school in philosophy (1900–1930) reveals the peculiar essence of the “ideal” society having another origin and nature than the “real” so-

<sup>14</sup> Prishvin, *Dnevnik 1918–1919*, 288.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.



ciety. At the same time it should be noted that in spite of that fact these philosophers overcame the opposition between "those who see the truth" and those who represent the state system and unleash violence. They deny the conflict of the mundane world and spirit. The Church that is created in the soul of the human is understood as a "common cause" of new culture building.

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# Contemporary Issues

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## Transhumanism in Russia: Science, Fun or a Threat to Traditional Values?

I heard about transhumanism for the first time during the previous *Krakow Meetings* in May 2014,<sup>1</sup> and I found the topic so interesting that I decided to develop the issue at the next conference. Transhumanism is not an exclusively Russian phenomenon, it does not originate from Russia, but, as it turned out, it found a lot of followers there. What attracts people to transhumanism? Which of their needs does it satisfy? Does it carry any danger to its followers and their environment?

In order to answer these questions, the very notion of transhumanism should be clarified. The most comprehensive of all the definitions I have examined says that transhumanism is a movement, the proponents of which support the idea that man is not the final link in the chain of evolution, recognize the possibility of progress towards the outlooks of scientific discoveries aimed at a fundamental change of the human body for the purpose of removing the ageing process in the human organism and, in the final stage, the staving off of death.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the basic ideas on which the transhumanism community is focused, are scientism, directed evolution and the achievement of immortality. All the differences between the approaches consist in the details.

The authors of transhumanism mostly assert that it is a special type of world view, and I agree with them on this point, since even if the judgments of transhumanists do imply a certain philosophical element, it only appears as a narrow theoretical stratum. Transhumanists themselves are not eager to consider their view of the world as an ideology, because they don't aspire to political objectives. However, such statements are disingenuous, since even

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<sup>1</sup> Madej-Cetnarowska, "Transgumanisticheskoye dvizheniye."

<sup>2</sup> "Transgumanizm," lines 1–8.

in Russia there have been some attempts to establish a political party based on transhumanistic ideas. Hence, due to the fact that an active approach is similar to all transhumanists, the best solution would be to call transhumanism a movement.

Taking into account that the first transhumanists in the USA became known at the end of the 1980's (although similar ideas had appeared earlier), and the World Transhumanists Association was founded by Nick Bostrom and David Pearce in 1998, we can say that Russians are not very far behind them. The Russian Transhumanists Movement, first as a site, and then as a non-governmental organization, has been functioning since 2000. In 2011 a group of like-minded persons initiated a strategic social movement *Russia 2045*.

Dmitriy Itskov, millionaire and founder of *Russia 2045*, funds and promotes the idea of the mass production of inexpensive computer avatars. What is meant here is a "full-fledged digital copy, capable of conscious activity: the 'content' of the human brain being uploaded into non-biological media in order to ensure that a person would live hundreds and thousands years of life."<sup>3</sup> The gravity of Itskov's plans is evidenced by the fact that in 2012, on the basis of the movement, he created a political party aimed to influence the government of the Russian Federation for the purpose of transhumanistic projects implementation.

The Russian Transhumanists Movement has far fewer pretensions. The organization holds scientific workshops, publishes books, and supports some research activities. Perhaps the most outstanding project of RTM was the registration of the company *KrioRus* in 2006, which provides cryoconservation services. According to information from the company's website,<sup>4</sup> forty people have signed contracts with *KrioRus* at the time of writing this paper.

As I've already mentioned, transhumanism is not a Russian invention. It is based on the concepts of evolution, eugenics, scientific progress; and these ideas, as the saying goes, have no nationality. We must refer here to such precursors and adherents of transhumanism as Julian Huxley, Jose Cordeiro and Raymond Kurzweil. At the same time, Russian transhumanists can boast some degree of originality, since they associate their theories with the "domestic" cosmism of Nikolai Fedorov and Vladimir Vernadsky.

I would add that, for myself, any relativism, rejection of metaphysical understanding of the world, dualism, and, as a consequence, the emphasis on consciousness are the ideological predecessors of transhumanism.

Let us look closely at the ideas of transhumanism once again. First of all, it is the concept of man as an imperfect being. Secondly, it implies the negation of

<sup>3</sup> Tselikov, "Kto vy, gospodin Itskov?," lines 16–18.

<sup>4</sup> <http://kriorus.ru/Krionirovannye-lyudi>.

the supernatural reality and the concomitant belief in scientific and technical progress. Thirdly, it is a kind of hedonism. These are, we could say, the three pillars on which any type of transhumanism is based. I will try to specify these ideas, paying attention to the peculiarities of the Russian movement.

A statement of human imperfection is not new. Probably, the same ideas in this way or another can be found in any religion; and philosophical anthropology considers it as a special human phenomenon (i.e., the conception of non-specialization by Arnold Gehlen). Any thinker who calls for self-cognition, the attaining of holiness, or the better organization of society, refers to such imperfection. In the same spirit, and typical for both Christian personalism and humanism, the defender of transhumanism I. Demin writes: "It is impossible to define the human essentially, because the way of being, which is inherent to mankind, consists just in overcoming any limits, transcending any definiteness and any bounds."<sup>5</sup> But the conclusions he comes to seem to be different: "A human being consists of the ability to transcend the essential parameters of his 'nature'.<sup>6</sup>

Transhumanists see the imperfection of the human being, above all, in his corporality. It is our physicality that entails intellectual limitations. Hence, their goal is to overcome this biological element in the human being. We can say that biology is declared as the main enemy, the originator of any evil, with death at the apex (the same opinion was shared by the cosmist N. Fedorov).

Transhumanists consider overcoming corporality in two possible ways. First of all, by means of directed evolution: someday, many years later, human beings will be able to overcome suffering and ageing, given that they will manage to reconstruct their genome. One of the most prominent propagandists of immortalism in Russia is Igor Vishev, who speaks not as much on the infinite life as about its unlimited prolongation, with all the functional characteristics of a young organism being preserved. As far back as 1983 I. Vishev wrote a letter to the Secretary General of the CC CPSU Yuriy Andropov, in which he proposed establishing a research center capable of translating the idea of practical immortality into reality, incidentally by changing the genetic program.<sup>7</sup>

But not everyone is ready to wait until the genetic changes work; therefore another alternative of the "final solution to the corporal issue" is more popular: the elimination of the body, the transferring of consciousness into non-biological media. According to Itskov, the immortality of the human being can be realized in a new body, which will be independent of habitat factors: the new

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<sup>5</sup> Demin, *Russkiy kosmizm*, 22.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Vishev, *Na puti*, 149.

mankind will be threatened neither by hunger nor cold, by the over-population of the Earth or by the lack of resources.<sup>8</sup>

The logic of transhumanists is as clear as day: if death is an evil, then we must fight it. And the methods that they propose are congenial, that is rational and modern (high tech, nanotech...). Moreover, in the last decade many Russians (as well as residents of other countries) have lived in virtual reality; this experience suggests not only that it would be nice to abandon corporality, but also presents the way in which to realize it. However, the technical details of bringing such ideas into life must be evaluated by competent experts.

As for me, I will present the philosophical analysis of Russian transhumanism. According to its representatives, it implies such principles as futurism, rationality, isotropic criticality, scientific narrativity, strictness of terminology, proceduralism, humanity, and courage.<sup>9</sup>

If we analyze these points in detail, we discover that the philosophy of transhumanism is intended to withdraw, as a matter of fact, from the whole previous philosophical tradition with its “pseudo-logical verbal garbage” (positivist attitude); to focus on the future scientific achievements and, most importantly for this study, to destroy the existing conceptions of what is acceptable and appropriate. As Elena Golubeva writes, the philosophy of transhumanism should not show piety towards the “eternal values.” We should not fear that the audience will be shocked by the sight of these dilapidated structures being demolished. The philosophy of transhumanism will suffer harsh criticism for its nihilistic attitude to the “classical culture,” however, as we know: “you cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs.”<sup>10</sup>

I would like to draw the reader’s attention to another detail. Having distinguished eight principles of transhumanistic philosophy, Golubeva mentioned that she proceeded from the perspective of carianity. Carianity (named after Titus Lucretius Carus) is an outlook which is based on the principles of exact sciences, practicality, atheism, relativism of the truth, and acceptance of solely material values. As a matter of fact, carianity is primarily supported not by humanists (hence, they misunderstand philosophy), being a post-modern phenomenon (which results in its antireligious character, also typical for many New Age systems which have been founded on the grounds of postmodernism).

The third idea on which the transhumanistic movement of any type is based, is a kind of hedonism. Here I should mention first of all the concept of David Pearce,

<sup>8</sup> Itskov, “My grubo narushayem svoi prava,” lines 52–55.

<sup>9</sup> Golubeva, “8 tezisov.”

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., lines 54–58.

named *The Hedonistic Imperative* (1995). In this manifesto Pearce considers the way of getting rid of human suffering by means of biotechnologies. This refers to the same issue: changing the human genome. The final output should be a creature that is constantly in a state of narcotic intoxication. Not without reason the author of the imperative points out that “In the Transitional Era, however, the widespread use of mind-healing drugs will in practice be unavoidable.”<sup>11</sup> In addition to the biochemical impact on the organism, Pearce offers the redesign of mind/brain. Together, these actions should create conditions where happy people will live in love for each other in a world with no aggression, competition, dissatisfaction, and anything else that hinders our well-being.

The hedonistic attitude of transhumanists is clear: if we achieve immortality, we shouldn't live in pain, discomfort or depression. This attitude can be described in the best possible way as a modern version of utilitarianism with its principle of “the greatest happiness of the greatest number.” Incidentally, Pearce extends the application of this principle to the world of animals, calling upon everyone to adopt vegetarianism.

And once again transhumanists flavour the idea of utilitarianism with an active position which is associated with just such a phenomenon as paradise-engineering. It is the joint actions of scientists that will result in the achievement of universal harmony and bliss. By the way, the simplest criticism of such ideas is that of their infeasibility. In the same way as new diseases appear instead of those already vanquished, people who will overcome mental and physical pain may face some other unknown sufferings.

Thus, the happiness of the man of the future, according to transhumanists, is concerned not only with the well-being that can be achieved without any intervention into the human nature (the robotization of production and the household, medical achievements). The point is that either, as in the case of Pearce, the human being will exist in a state of euphoria, or the very concept of pleasure will be revised, with intellectual and not sensual delight as its benchmark.

According to a shrewd remark of the Russian transhumanist Valeriya Prayd, any physical pleasure is fraught with satiety; hence, she suggests holding the course of intellectualization, when the main passion of man is not love, but cognition.

The opportunities here are boundless; one can be safe from satiety and find meaning in creating himself as the most rational power of the world or in the unlimited governance of the Universe... In this case sex can be cast away as a rudiment of our animal past.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Pearce, “The Hedonistic Imperative,” line 122.

<sup>12</sup> Prayd, “Chuvstvennost,” lines 246–49.



In yet another paragraph the researcher points out that stimulation is also applied in the intellectual sphere, having been already put into practice in even our time:

The work in laboratories is underway, and the interest in this topic is increasing like an avalanche. It may be assumed that in a few years the use of nootropics in Russia will become a standard practice too.<sup>13</sup>

The above mentioned ideas of transhumanism clarify the tasks established by this movement. It is significant that transhumanists see their main ethical task in fighting against the consumer society. It is this very type of society that stimulates science to solve most urgent problems like enhancing the human habitat, and does not allow it to push forward, which results in the improvement of the human being. Notwithstanding this trend, the social movement *Russia 2045* suggests that all the specialists concerned should combine their efforts in order to let Russia become a leader of scientific and technological progress, resulting in the evolutionary leap.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, instead of mindless consumption, humanity must set itself the most important task, with the achievement of immortality to be a very forward-looking option hereof. According to D. Itskov, “it is cybernetic immortality that is capable of ensuring real freedom for people, including the freedom from the influence of the environment, and the ability to master the deep space.”<sup>15</sup> However, in order to achieve this goal we need to create not only a new scientific and philosophical paradigm of humanity, but also respective values. What these values are exactly, the author of the project doesn’t specify.

The issue can be clarified by referring to anti-values. According to the philosopher David Dubrovskiy who supported the movement *Russia 2045*, transhumanists are called to “change the negative features of human nature such as irrepressible consumption, aggression towards each other, excessive selfishness.”<sup>16</sup> At first glance, this end is attractive. However, is it justified by the proposed means? This is the first question. It is followed by the second one: are these qualities inherent in human nature? And the third one: is it possible to change nature?

After all, the vices mentioned by David Dubrovskiy from the perspective of the healthy morality of any society are usually considered as just manifestations

<sup>13</sup> Prayd, “Nashe ul’trafiioletovoye budushcheye,” lines 53–55.

<sup>14</sup> “Manifest strategicheskogo obshchestvennogo dvizheniya ‘Rossiya 2045.’”

<sup>15</sup> Itskov, “Doklad initsiatora,” lines 17–19.

<sup>16</sup> Dubrovskiy, “Priroda cheloveka,” lines 51–54.

of an inhuman nature. Hence, this is where such comments as “your behavior is disgraceful,” “you behave like an animal,” etc. derive from. As proven by the centuries-old practice, these vices can indeed be eradicated physically, i.e., by asceticism. At the same time, a healthy Christian asceticism never implies a rejection of corporality, let alone any claims to the changing of human nature.

In order to achieve a better understanding of Dubrovskiy’s point of view, we should pay attention to another of his statements: the most ambitious attempt to change the human nature was the communist project of the USSR. It failed due to the fact that its authors endeavored to create a “new man” by means of education, while the negative features “are enrooted in the genetic structure, shaped in the course of biological evolution and anthropogenesis,”<sup>17</sup> and “it requires invasion of the human genome and its transformations.”<sup>18</sup>

Since the challenge of transhumanism is quite ambitious and requires changing the world view of many people, it cannot be realized in the current situation. “We believe—D. Itskov says—that the world needs a new social formation, which can be based on the ideas of transhumanism,”<sup>19</sup> and further on: “We need a technological revolution, not a street riot.”<sup>20</sup>

So, what should a “neo-man” be? Within the picture of the future proposed by Itskov robots work whilst people become spiritually enriched. In order to bring this idea to life, transhumanists right now need to reveal the sublime features of consciousness intrinsic to us Russians, namely globality and broad-mindedness, cosmic overlook, inner greatness, wisdom, kindness, purity, love for all living things, compassion and dedication. That greatheartedness of the Russian soul, which makes it mysterious and incomprehensible in the opinion of other nations.<sup>21</sup>

If you take a closer look at the above mentioned, it will turn out that those are not yet the values that the neo-man should possess. They only awaken the superpowers of the human being. This refers not only to the already mentioned intellectual abilities, but—above all—to the volitional capacity. The artificial being of transhumanists is called upon to control the nature, evolution, history, and—why not?—he/she is able to create a personal world to become a god in it. In fact, it is the translation of the virtual worlds of computer games into our real world. Or, on the contrary, it is an absolute transfer of human consciousness into such worlds.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., lines 54–55.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., line 57.

<sup>19</sup> Itskov, “Doklad initsiatora,” lines 32–33.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., lines 39–40.

<sup>21</sup> Itskov, “Evolutsiya 2045,” lines 26–30.

De facto what transhumanists mean is the complete power of will and mind over body and the related processes. While a man of Modernity felt his ability to conquer the environment and our contemporary pretends to understand the laws of the microworld, transhumanists encroach on the area which has been considered a certain taboo until recently. Our own animality, createdness and vitality itself becomes the subject of manipulation.

It is worth noting that not only have the achievements of science and atheism become prerequisites for this world view, but also the leap into freedom typical for the human being of the twentieth century. There is nothing wrong in the freedom itself, nor in the usage of computers. However, in the same way as the immersion in the virtual world may result in dependence, the aspiration to get rid of, one would think, our last bodily limitations in fact leads to dictatorship. What I mean here does not refer to dystopias with the horrible pictures of total control performed by superhumans, but to its invisible substitution by something else. One cannot but agree that the very idea of directed evolution poses a threat to freedom as spontaneity.

Hence, one of the ethical ideas of transhumanism which consists in expanding every person's freedom owing to scientific and technological achievements, is groundless. Even if the human being of the future is able to find the free time for leisure, successfully resists diseases and ageing, obtains unlimited opportunities for creation, this will not guarantee him/her freedom. Neither leisure, nor creative talent in itself, determines the spiritual development of human being, as well as a high level of intelligence is not always accompanied by virtues.

And what, actually, do transhumanists understand under spiritual development? By discarding the corporality and emotionality they face the risk of banishing friendship, family, love, as well as faith and hope, from the human life—since it makes no sense to believe in and hope for something, if the powerful knowledge has already dotted all the “i”s? According to the apt critical remark of Vladimir Katsanov, “we are offered to lose the highest sense of human existence, and only keep the possibilities of the unlimited scientific knowledge and pleasure.”<sup>22</sup>

By the way, the last remark of Katsanov refutes the claims of transhumanism to have overcome consumerism as it was declared by Itskov. After all, the unlimited acquisition of scientific knowledge is also a sort of consumption, the same as the usage of comfortable immortal bodies. Thus, it appears that transhumanists propose not to eliminate human needs, which allegedly abridge their freedom, but to absolutize and push them to their limit.

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<sup>22</sup> Katsanov, “Transgumanizm,” lines 205–207.

However, it is not the end of transhumanists' aspirations. The achievement of practical immortality is either too modest or too ambitious goal for them. Mastering the minds of millions of people seems to be a much more realistic task. And this is something typical for ideology. To my thinking, every ideology tries to make use of a sense of justice and desire to satisfy the basic demands of human beings. If in the former times social inequality could become an impulse for dissemination of ideology, nowadays it is, first of all, the desire to control one's own body and soul.

Not every desire is something blameworthy. However, breaking the limits of morality has always been considered a vice, while temperance is one of the virtues in many ethical systems. The ideas of transhumanism, in my opinion, exceed any limits of humanity and this is why I would take a risk to assert that their followers make use of the most dreadful vice, namely pride.

According to the ideas of transhumanism, we can consider something to be our own only if it is the result of our efforts. It turns out that the biological body received by a person from his/her parents is not entirely something of his/her ownership. Encroaching on the development of everyone and everything, transhumanists seek to construct a new body and, we mustn't forget it, a new consciousness.

But will such a constructed creature remain a human being? Criticizing the views of transhumanists, Vladimir Kutyrev admits that, contrary to their own positioning, they are antagonists of any humanism: the humanists consider a human being to be the ultimate goal of any activity, whereas their pseudo-followers regard a human being as only the material of progress.<sup>23</sup> In yet another passage the philosopher notes that "immortality is possible only in the form of the death of a living man and his transformation into a robotoid, with hardly anything human remained in it."<sup>24</sup> In view of the above-mentioned claims of transhumanists for the world scale support, Kutyrev states that "now genocide is declared to all mankind."<sup>25</sup>

In the ninetieth and twentieth century positivist and materialist thinkers tried to reduce the human being to a mere biological factor. Their followers in the twenty-first century, *vice versa*, tend not that much to cancel (as they recognize a biological factor in a human being), as to abolish and destroy corporality. Here we are with such a paradox.

It should be noted that our consciousness is largely conditioned by corporality and without a body it becomes something other than a human

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<sup>23</sup> Kutyrev, *Filosofiya transgumanizma*, 21.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

being. Not without reason does the Christian doctrine talk about new bodies in the new future world. Philosophy affirms the same idea.

Philosophical anthropology and phenomenology state that consciousness is intimately connected with the body; and the question of its separation from the body seems to be absurd; if we stay on materialistic scientific grounds, we simply cannot comprehend this separation.<sup>26</sup>

When at the beginning of the twentieth century Max Scheler opposed the spirit against the biological, psychical world, i.e., against life, could he have ever envisaged that this very spirit would be eager to destroy life? So, that is how immense the claims of transhumanism in terms of ontology are!

In conclusion I will try to answer the question posed in the title of my report: is transhumanism in Russia science, fun or a threat to traditional values? The answers to these three questions will prompt the following one: do we have the right to call transhumanism a (pseudo)religious movement?

Although both Russian and Western transhumanists stand up for the development of science in general and high-tech in particular, and even make their contribution to this process, they can hardly be considered as scientists in the truest sense of the word. They look more like futuristic writers trying to anticipate the scientific achievements of the future.

But they imply something more than merely a creative impulse and work of imagination. This can be proved by the active stand of the transhumanists' majority and their desire to not only predict the course of scientific progress, but also to convince a critical mass of people that the proposed way is not only inevitable, but also positive. Therefore, those who consider transhumanism as only a kind of "hobby" or pastime get it wrong. The goals and objectives of the movement are much more serious.

The question of whether transhumanism poses a threat to the traditional values of our society, i.e., first of all, to Christian values, is debatable. On the one hand, its anti-Christian orientation is obvious, even if the propagandists of transhumanism manifest their tolerance. The aggressiveness of transhumanism is hinted at by such critics as Kutyrev.

Even if some transhumanists do not intend to eliminate any other outlooks, in no way are their views consistent with Christian doctrine. I mean, above all, the claims for the prerogatives of God in creation and salvation.

It should be noted that any sensible person immediately finds dissimulation in the appeals of transhumanism. The followers of the latter may write it off to the inertia of the masses, but, in practice, at the moment its ideas find no

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<sup>26</sup> Katsanov, "Transgumanizm," lines 43–51.

tangible support, at least in Russia although the presence of transhumanistic organizations itself creates a dangerous trend.

However, in this case, isn't transhumanism an alternative religious movement? In the strict sense it is not, because its creators don't recognize the existence of transcendent and supernatural reality. In the words of one eminent transhumanist, Mikhail Batin:

As a matter of fact, I am transhumanist by faith. I consider it as such a "religion of science fiction." Roughly speaking, the faithful believe in God's existence, atheists—in God's absence, and I believe that God will exist. Someday he will necessarily be. The thing is that it is mankind that should create him. However, this is my personal heretical understanding—after all, transhumanism has nothing to do with any religion and God; it is just a scientific and philosophical movement.<sup>27</sup>

It is worth noting that some ideas of transhumanism are pseudo-religious in character. The very reflections about the new world, a new body, and immortality are totally eschatological. Another sign of religious thinking that can be revealed by transhumanism consists in the fact that it is based on still unproven theories, which means that the primacy in their judgments is given to faith and not reason.

In conclusion, I can say that transhumanism is a pseudo-religion of a post-secular world. It has won supporters in Russia just because of the fact that the religious tradition was thoroughly destroyed there. Aspiration for transcendence lies in the very heart of human nature. Thus, it is no wonder that the people who broke free from the shackles of scientific atheism rushed to seek it in turn. And many of them have found it in what was closer and more familiar to them, namely in progressivism and scientism and, in a broader sense, in materialism, which tends to transcend itself.

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<sup>27</sup> Kaganov, "Transgumanizm," lines 1–4.

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## Russian Orthodoxy and Secular Movies: Orthodox Reactions to the Film *Leviathan*

Prior to the release of his latest film, the name of film director Andrei Zvyagintsev was known to only a handful of film critics and moviegoers around the world. Although his first film *The Return* (2003) was awarded a Golden Lion in Venice, won several awards from film critics around the world (including Russian and British film critics), and was even nominated for a Golden Globe, the box office return was very small. The largest significance of *The Return* seemed to have been the re-entering of Russian cinema on the world stage of film criticism. To some *The Return* signified “the arrested transition from Soviet to post-Soviet Russia by deconstructing a number of mythologies that have traditionally been part and parcel of Russian culture,”<sup>1</sup> while for other critics the film told the story “about men and generations, harsh, tender and tragic, not about Vladimir Putin’s Russia.”<sup>2</sup> His second film, *Elena* (2011), was received in a similar vein; the film was awarded several prizes and won praise from film critics both inside and outside of Russia, while at the same time hardly attracting major public attention. His third feature, *Banishment* (2007) was received as being more of the same, and *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* gave it a favourable review.<sup>3</sup>

Initially *Leviathan* (2014) seemed to go down the same route; it was released abroad to critical acclaim (first in France in May 2014) and ignored by most of the Russian media—a release in Russia itself seemed not to happen. Only after the film garnered its Golden Globe and an Oscar nomination in January 2015, did it receive more attention than any of Zvyagintsev’s other films.

The film *Leviathan* deals with Nikolai, who lives in a small town on the coast of the Barents Sea. One day, he discovers his house is to be demolished

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<sup>1</sup> “Kinokultura.”

<sup>2</sup> Meek, “From Russia with Compassion.”

<sup>3</sup> Kichin, “Gul.”



by the corrupt mayor of his town. Nikolai hires a lawyer to fight the mayor. The arrival of the lawyer only exacerbates the situation and plunges all concerned in further misfortune.

Ostensibly, the subject matter of *Leviathan* is based on the biblical book of Job, wherein the rich and god fearing Job has everything he possesses taken away from him by the devil, without ever losing his faith in God.<sup>4</sup> In the end, Job learns to accept that sometimes things are what they are—without any cause or reason.

This fourth film by Andrey Zvyagintsev is perhaps his most Russian film—there are direct references to Pussy Riot and Vladimir Putin—and his most scathing attack on Russian society. From the opening in the courtroom, through scenes inside churches and in confrontations with police officers, *Leviathan* is a satirical commentary on life in Russia at the beginning of the twenty-first century, whereas his previous films could be said to have an element of timelessness and could have been located almost anywhere else.

Since an important part of its satire was aimed at officials within the Russian Orthodox Church, it was no surprise that it was especially the Orthodox clergy who took offence at *Leviathan*. It was the awarding of the Golden Globe that apparently sent the Russian Orthodox press into a frenzy—with various authors voicing their opinion on the film.

## The Orthodox Critique of the Film

The critique concerning *Leviathan* can be divided into three strands: (1) The film is an attack on Russia; (2) The film is strongly anti-Church; (3) The function art should play in Russia today.

(1) The *Western Animosity* point of view, was most significantly voiced by Vsevolod Chaplin, chairman of the Synodal Department of Cooperation between Church and State. He was born in 1968 into an agnostic family. Like so many of his generation he came to the faith when he was in his teens, and was ordained in 1992. In March 2009 Chaplin was nominated as head of the newly created Synodal Department of Cooperation between the Church and State, comparable to a ministry of developmental affairs on a national level. The creation of an extra Synodal Department underscored the importance the Russian Orthodox Church laid on its relation with the Russian state. Its chairman can be seen as the official spokesperson of the Russian Orthodox Church in various matters that touch upon the Church-State relation.

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<sup>4</sup> “Kinokultura.”

Chaplin has commented on the film *Leviathan* on television after its Academy Award nomination, saying that the film was made to please western audiences and thus only showed lying stereotypes on Russia from a Western point of view. He said that, apparently, the film was made for Western tastes and “lying” stereotypes; vodka, fornication. Chaplin admitted he saw the film on a pirated copy, but was willing to compensate the authors with the price of a ticket. The religious idea of the film is anti-Christian, according to Chaplin. He added that the book of Job, one of the sources of this film, was a very optimistic book.<sup>5</sup>

Apart from the fact that Chaplin admitted he watched the film in an illegal way (odd for a representative of an institution which tries to instil adherence to the law and the state), was the fact that he watched it at all. Apparently the need to comment on the film became so great that Chaplin felt the need to say something, instead of waiting for an official release in Russian cinemas or DVD.

Other reactions in this vein were published by websites such as pravoslavie.ru and bogoslov.ru. Both websites often voice very conservative opinions and religious affairs, and can be considered to be pro-state.

The priest Sergey Karamyshev blamed the “Orgkom from Washington”<sup>6</sup> with the need to create a *Leviathan* to scare the children. The word Orgkom is a relic of Soviet times, short for Organisational Committee. Its use here is clearly meant as a derogatory word, to indicate that the award committee is doing whatever the American government wants. Karamyshev further tells that, for this reason the same people also created Pussy Riot and want to paint a picture of Russia full of drunkenness, immorality and blasphemousness.

Karamyshev sees this film more or less as a declaration of war, built on lies and propaganda. He calls for them to “come and get clobbered on the head.”<sup>7</sup> It is as if Zvyagintsev was making a film on orders from the West. Another point he raises is that the film was financed by the Russian Ministry of Culture. “We pay for this, so we have to undergo any rudeness. Who is it good for?”<sup>8</sup> he asks in a postscript to his article.

It is a question he himself answers rather obliquely in the title of his contribution *They Need a Russia Like This*. The “they” from the title is presumably the Orgkom from Washington that organises all these Un-Russian activities. It is as if there exists a Western conspiracy to weaken the Russian state. This assumption can be seen in various statements and contributions to this discussion.

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<sup>5</sup> Chaplin, “Leviathan.”

<sup>6</sup> Karamyshev, “Rossiya.”

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

The same day that Karamyshev published his opinion on *Leviathan*, Aleksandr Bogatyrev published an article on the same website in which he tries to link the assassination of 12 journalists from the magazine *Charlie Hebdo* to the awarding of the Golden Globe to *Leviathan*.<sup>9</sup> To Bogatyrev, while everybody takes to the street to commemorate twelve dead journalists who made their money mocking the founder of Islam—the liberal (Western) press constantly mocks Christ and the Christians. To him *Leviathan* is made from the same cloth as the cartoons of *Charlie Hebdo*.

He interprets the film as an attack by Zvyagintsev on the Russian state (the *Leviathan* from the title) and says that this is how Zvyagintsev sees all Russian people; constantly drinking vodka, bribing or being bribed. While he admits that such practices happen in Russia, they don't happen in the same way as depicted in the film.

Again here we see the link being made between the work of Zvyagintsev and the Western press—which is being perceived as too liberal with too much emphasis on free speech. Also, Bogatyrev seems to find that this film is being used by the West as a way of conceiving the truth about what is happening inside Russia.

On the happenings in the Donbass, western ordinary people learn from Ukrainian propaganda. From the winner of the Cannes festival—they learn the “truth” about Russia. Now, nothing stands in the way of tightening the sanctions against Russia.<sup>10</sup>

(2) The second strand of criticism levelled at *Leviathan*, concerns its supposed attitude towards the Church, rather than solely the clergy that function within it. This *anti-Church* sentiment was most clearly voiced on the website Education and Orthodoxy (orthedu.ru) by the Belarusian priest Aleksandr Shramko. To Shramko the film is not based on the book of Job at all, but more on the controversy surrounding *Pussy Riot*, in which five hooded women performed a “punk-service” in the Christ the Saviour Cathedral in Moscow in 2012. Subsequently three of them were arrested and two of them were sentenced to long terms in prison.<sup>11</sup>

More importantly, or so Shramko seems to think, is the anti-Church attitude of *Leviathan*. This goes beyond the anti-clerical stance, Shramko admits he himself sometimes adheres to. This *anti-clericalism* confines itself to a criticism on clergy's

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<sup>9</sup> Bogatyrev, “Strashnyy zver.”

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> For a more thorough investigation on the *Pussy Riot* scandal see Willems, *Pussy Riots Punk-Gebet*.

supposed influence on politics or social affairs. Neither the films supposed Anti-Russianness or Anti-Putinism is really important. Shramko resents the fact the film is trying to *subconsciously* manipulate someone to a negative attitude towards the Church.<sup>12</sup> This criticism is in fact an appraisal of the film's power to tell a convincing story, but Shramko takes it to be a negativism on the film.

Shramko interprets the film's ending as follows:

However, the skeleton at the end of the films seems to signify something more dark—than merely a rejection of the clergy. It is as if the filmmakers try to say “Beware”—let the Church remain a sleeping Leviathan and not be re-awakened. This is a thorough rejection of the Church as a whole.<sup>13</sup>

To Shramko the film acts as a wake-up call for churchgoers. Now they can get rid of the illusion that “we are good” and “everybody likes us.”

Look—the movie tells us [i.e. religious people—R.G.]—the big anti-Church *Leviathan* awakens, and if we do not do anything—it will cost many people's lives. Like it has happened before.<sup>14</sup>

In other words, Shramko sees the film as a call to arms for religious people to take action against the anti-religious feeling that has seemingly permeated Russian society.

(3) The third aspect of the film's reception displayed in the orthodox press is the *attitude towards art*. That stories have the power to explicate the world around us has been the subject of many different studies. In that way we can say that every story acts as a parable which can help us with our anxieties and dilemmas in the world around us.<sup>15</sup> If anyone should know, it should be members of the clergy, since the Bible and especially the New Testament is filled with parables told by Jesus to his disciples.

In his abovementioned piece, Aleksandr Bogatyrev is very clear about the function art must have: “Zvyagintsev, film after film, demonstrates a fundamental rejection of the fact that in all ages has been the norm for the Russian artist: art should elevate man.”<sup>16</sup> The difference, Bogatyrev points out, with the anti-heroes of Dostoevsky and other Russian authors of the nineteenth

<sup>12</sup> Shramko, “Leviafan.”

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> For one of the most famous examples see Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*.

<sup>16</sup> Bogatyrev, “Strashnyy zver.”

century, is that they lead the reader to catharsis—whereas Zvyagintsev only evokes “nausea and retching”<sup>17</sup> in its viewers.

Archpriest Georgij Krylov also attacks *Leviathan* on aesthetic grounds. He regards the film as “the death of Zvyagintsev,” as he makes clear with the title of his review.<sup>18</sup> In it, Krylov asserts that “the artist should not be a mirror of the world, but the creator of his own world.”<sup>19</sup> He subsequently fails to explain what the artist should do with this world; because he goes on attacking Zvyagintsev for the things he shows in *Leviathan* that happen in the real world.

However:

In my world there does not exist any Zvyagintsevs, Kuraevs or any other whose name I forgot to mention. I’m like a child who hides his eyes behind the palms of his hands. ... Behind the palms lives God. ... Child do not open your eyes.<sup>20</sup>

Krylov, in essence asks believers to not open their eyes to the reality in this world, but to try and let the faith in God stand between them and the world around them. This is his rejection of the world Zvyagintsev created. Krylov does not want to engage in dialogue on what other people perceive the world to be. Instead he focuses on the world as he wants it to be.

### Kuraev and *Leviathan*

Andrei Kuraev is a burly, stocky and bespectacled man who just as easily quotes from the Bible and the Koran, as he references pop culture movies like *Star Wars* (the original trilogy), *The Matrix* or *Titanic*. He is a frequent blogger—often writing multiple entries per day—on a great variety of subjects. His list of publications encompasses more than fifty books and articles on a plethora of subjects, ranging from Bulgakov’s *Master and Margarita* and *Harry Potter*, through to *The Da Vinci Code*.

For some time he has been a different voice amongst all the clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church instead of simply kowtowing to the line laid down by more conservative voices like Vsevolod Chaplin, Patriarch Kirill and others.

Andrei Kuraev has been critical on the Church–state relations for a long time. In his blogs he frequently addresses the acceptability of a perceived

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Krylov, “Leviafan.”

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

closeness between the Russian state and the Russian Orthodox Church. It was for this critical stance, and Kuraev's refusal to adhere to a more positive attitude towards state–Church relations, that he was ousted from his post as lecturer at the Moscow Seminary (*Moskovskaya Dukhovnaya Akademiya*) and professor at the Moscow State University. In his criticism of the film Kuraev addresses all the issues which can be found in the rest of the orthodox press.

Is the film anti-clerical or anti-Church? In his reaction to the Golden Globe which the film received in January 2015, Kuraev approaches the film as a parable as we can find many of them in the Bible. The function of a parable is to focus and raise one unexpected point of reality.<sup>21</sup> While Kuraev acknowledges the anticlerical point of view of the film, he distinguishes this from a strictly anti-Church viewpoint.

Anti-clericalism to Kuraev is not a bad thing, but should be embraced by the clergy because it is in the interest of both the state and the Church.<sup>22</sup> He can understand though, why clergy are taking offense at the film, it does not coincide with the image they themselves have on their own activities.

To be part of a Church which closely identifies with a Leviathan-like state, Kuraev finds offensive and bad for both the state and the Church.<sup>23</sup> This detrimental relationship causes the clergy to lose sight of what should really be important and relevant. Kuraev admonishes the clergy within the Russian Orthodox Church for trying to influence state policy for their own selfish reasons, and not in the interests of the people living inside Russia, and that their own consumer interests too much coincide with those of the bureaucracy.

If this was not the case, then bishops and priests could easily enter the state apparatus, which now they are prohibited from doing, and serve the people's rights, while hanging on to their own dignity.<sup>24</sup>

(2) Is the film anti-Russia or pro-West? When asked about this, Kuraev's answer was very to the point and short: "the film is not about Russia." Instead, Kuraev perceives the film can speak to people everywhere around the globe, be they Russian, Mexican or Chinese.<sup>25</sup> As such the film is not about Russia, but about the things people happen to experience in their contacts with the Church. This does not automatically mean Kuraev can be seen as a sympathizer with Western ideas. Far more, he wants to engage in a dialogue with the West—so that Russian interests can be guaranteed by cooperating from the inside.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Kuraev, "Ekho."

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Kuraev, "Leviafan."

<sup>26</sup> Kuraev, "Ne ob'yedinit' li nam Tserkov' i gosudarstvo?"

In the past, Kuraev has been critical or even dismissive of certain works of art—especially if he perceived in them a critical or derogatory stance towards Christianity.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, he has been very open and tolerant towards Western films, approaching them as objects in and of themselves.<sup>28</sup> In a lecture on *The Matrix* he explained why he did this; one can always escape from being a simple bystander, just by thinking and asking questions all the time.<sup>29</sup> In the past, Kuraev has been critical about showings of films like *Last Temptation of Christ* or *Passion of the Christ* on national television—often wondering why, when everybody seems to take offence at attacks on Muslim or Jewish values, Christians should take any attack, just at it comes.<sup>30</sup>

The film *Leviathan* elicits another response from him, more lenient and positive than towards Western films. He urges the clergy to go and see the film, “if only because they will understand how we look through the eyes of at least part of our society.”<sup>31</sup>

A couple of times in interviews and in his blogs, Kuraev explains that *Leviathan* is a film and not a documentary. As such it should be approached differently than as a reflection of reality. At most the film can give a distorted look of reality, “but we should be astonished with what that distortion presents to us.”<sup>32</sup>

## Conclusion

Orthodox authors see Zvyagintsev’s success in the West as a deliberate attack on Russia and Russian values as opposed to Western neo-liberal ideas.

This then creates an image of “us” against “them,” whereby Russia is the supposed underlying party. In this view the West is only giving prizes to Zvyagintsev’s film to create an image of a Russia where everybody drinks and swears all the time. In actual fact, the Orthodox thinkers themselves do what they blame on Western media; creating an image of the West where everything and everybody is out to denigrate and insult Russia. Instead of engaging the film as a Russian work of art—they tend to see the film as a Russian film made for Western tastes and for the express purpose to win prizes.

<sup>27</sup> Kuraev, “Zolotoy Kompas.”

<sup>28</sup> Kuraev, *Kino: Perezagruzka Bogosloviem*.

<sup>29</sup> Kuraev, “Smotrite.”

<sup>30</sup> Kuraev, *Kino: Perezagruzka Bogosloviem*.

<sup>31</sup> Kuraev, “Leviafan.”

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

Even though some Orthodox thinkers agree that the events depicted in the film actually can take place in Russia in the twenty first century—this does not excuse the filmmaker from actually showing them on the big screen. This coincides with the function art should have in their eyes. Art, they think, should elevate man. A film should be educational in that respect and try to convey a positive lesson to the beholder. From this position, art should be both cathartic and uplifting.

Orthodox thinkers in actual fact do regard *Leviathan* as a parable—one in which they project everything they perceive to be wrong with the West and Western values.

Kuraev, on the other hand, is far more positive on the film and finds many things which are positive about it—or at least worth checking out. To him the film is a parable about life today, which happens to take place in Russia and not another country.

To him, the function of a parable is clearly not only to depict positive things, but also to tell a story in which clergy are not so positively depicted. This of course coincides with his own experience on how clergy in Russia behave—thus using the film for his own purposes.

Kuraev also tries to engage the film directly and not through the prism of any preconceived idea about how Russia or the West should look.

The attitude in the Orthodox press is not conducive for any dialogue between Russia and the West. By choosing an “us” against “them” dichotomy, they forego any possibility of looking at the film and trying to see what the story may tell them; the function of a parable. Instead, they choose to see the film as a parable of how Russia is treated by the West.

Kuraev engaging the film head on, and looking at the story itself, trying to discover what it may mean to the viewer—does it leave room for a more constructive way of looking at art, which can pursue multiple goals instead of the single purpose of Orthodox thinkers?

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## Polish Studies of Russian Religious-Philosophical Thought: Basic Peculiarities

Nowadays the formation of a post-secular paradigm is possible on the basis of various ideological backgrounds. Simultaneously it is very important to find a way of keeping the universal meaning of the Christian core in an understanding of a human person in order not to lose its fundamental value.

Russia has its own traditions of post-secular dialogue between religious and secular consciousness. Serious discussions about national identity, cultural self-determination and the future of the nation require the full development of that part of cultural heritage which was suppressed and banned in the USSR. Basic Soviet myths about the dominance in Russian culture of ideas and traditions of materialism and atheism appear in the post-Soviet period as outmoded variants of Marxist-Leninist dogma. Nowadays historians of Russian philosophy believe in common that “the philosophy of the majority of Russian thinkers stands in close connection with the religious worldview” (Vasily Zenkovsky). A well-known fact from the Soviet past is that it was impossible to learn and to develop religious philosophy. Thus far students of philosophy in modern Russia from the post-Soviet generation cannot believe that Russian philosophy consists of various forms of materialism and atheism as Marxist dogma once claimed.

At the same time, the de-ideologization of philosophy generates new stereotypes and clichés. The new distortions developed in the modern philosophical literature are based on the fantastic notion that there was never any Russian philosophy except a religious one. Many researchers have emphasized religious philosophy as if there was no any other in Russia.

Nowadays there is a widespread prejudice that it is possible to understand the genuine Russia only by studying its “purely Russian” beginnings which are in an irreconcilable contradiction with all-European beginnings and are incompatible with the basis of Western European civilization. But the Russian

Europeanism, however, Westernism and liberalism are equally necessary for understanding the specifically Russian way of thinking, as are Orthodox theology, Slavophilism or the religious philosophy of the early twentieth century. At the same time, native Westernism is most often considered to be at least religiously indifferent or religious omnivorous, in a spirit of liberal pluralism with its freedom of worship principles, if not outright atheistic.<sup>1</sup>

A lot of archives have been opened and original works of Russian philosophers and interesting research by of local and foreign authors have been published in recent years. The new edition of the *Encyclopedia of Russian Philosophy* has an article entitled *Polish Historiography of Russian Philosophy* by Daniel Wańczyk and Michał Milcharek with a detailed bibliography at the end. Recently some works from this impressive list were translated and have become available in our country.<sup>2</sup>

First of all, these are Andrzej Walicki's scholarly works which have gained world recognition and were recently published in Russia.<sup>3</sup> Estimating the national originality of the Russian philosophy, Walicki remains committed to his methodological setting, according to which Russian philosophy is an organic part of pan-European philosophical thought and therefore can, and should, be considered not in opposition to it, but in comparison. The Polish philosopher contributed a lot to the distribution of undistorted knowledge of Russian philosophy and exposure anti-Russian stereotypes. His understanding of Russia as a socio-cultural reality in historical development can be correlated with modern problems and used in the current discussion about the future of Russia. The influence of Catholicism, the main topic of the book *Russia, Catholicism and Polish Question*, is traced throughout the whole complicated history of Russian-Polish relationships and in almost all spheres: history, politics, literature, philosophy.<sup>4</sup>

The research conducted by the Polish philosopher reveals a strong connection between pro-Catholic tendency of Russian thought and a keen desire to overcome the isolation of Russia.

The author convincingly confirms his thought on the extensive material of historical and philosophical research, of the traditions of Russian Westernism, of the influence of Polish religiosity on Russian pro-Catholics, of the analysis of Vladimir Soloviev's ideas. He also focuses on the fate of the Russian Jesuit, Ivan Gagarin's as well as Russian writers' and public figures' attitudes to Catholicism.

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<sup>1</sup> Shchukin, "Mezhdu polyusami."

<sup>2</sup> Van'chuk and Mil'charek, "Issledovaniya russkoy filosofii v Pol'she."

<sup>3</sup> Valitskiy, *Rossiya, katolichestvo i pol'skiy vopros*; Valitskiy, *Istoriya russkoy mysli*.

<sup>4</sup> Maslin, "Andzhey Valitskiy."

The aspiration to the Christian unity, the desire to get closer to the West were some of the main reasons for the increased interest in Roman Catholicism in Russia in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The first chapter is devoted to Chaadayev. The main sources of his philosophy of the all-encompassing unity and theology of culture are found in ideas of the German Romantics, including Schelling's philosophy. However, as Walicki emphasizes, Chaadayev differed from the German romanticism by his distinct distance concerning subjectivism and the irrationalism of religion. But he was close to the Catholic traditionalists who opposed the union of mind and tradition to the uncontrollable irrational forces which were destroying public discipline and thus clearing the path towards revolution.

Chaadayev's historiosophy was a search for God in history, an attempt at a new sacralization of history, secularized by Education. He remained committed to the dominant idea of world unity; it is impossible to dispute the assumption, as Walicki considers, that the evolution of Chaadayev's views led him to an understanding of the religious future of the world as a reunification of the Roman Catholic Church with the Orthodox.

Slavophilism appears to be studied in depth today. While it sounds counter-intuitive, Khomiakov, in proclaiming the Orthodox Church as the only keeper of the "conciliarity" spirit and, thereby, the only original Universal Church, was inspired in many questions by the works of Johann Adam Möhler, a Catholic theologian, a romanticist from Tübingen who criticized modern Catholicism. The similarity with Khomiakov's "conciliarity" defined as "unity in freedom" is quite obvious in this point. The aspiration to establishment and development of the pure, non-distorted Church tradition of the first centuries of Christianity was the common element for both thinkers, Walicki convincingly draws this conclusion.<sup>5</sup>

The relations of philosophy and religion were always difficult; the relation between the Orthodox Church and philosophy was also complicated by the especially strict dogmatic character of patristic theology. The impact of the Orthodox tradition on the Russian philosophy is obvious but even if it is love from the side of philosophy, it is unrequited, and as a rule, it is absolute heresy from the point of view of the Church.

Khomiakov was compelled to publish his theological works abroad as a strict clampdown was imposed on their distribution in Russia.

The attempts to modernize Orthodoxy undertaken by the Russian philosophers who addressed to Khomiakov's ideas were condemned in 1921 in the Synod of Orthodox bishops-emigrants in Sremski Karlovci.

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<sup>5</sup> Valitskiy, *Rossiia, katolichestvo i pol'skiy vopros*, 87.

Admitting his estimates of views of the Slavophilism ideologist as controversial, Walicki notes that from the point of history of ideas there is every reason to believe that Khomiakov's theology was not only an expression of Orthodox consciousness, but it also influenced the formation of this consciousness.

The name of Khomiakov, concludes the researcher, is associated not only with the remaining commitment to the traditions of the old Christian times which are really showed, but also with the theological and ecclesiastical innovation laying a way of democratization of the Church structures—both in the East and in the West. Jerzy Klinger used to call Khomiakov a “harbinger of orthodox updating” having compared him with Soloviev from this point of view.

The numerous parallels and isomorphism between the Polish ideologists and the Russian representatives of political and public life reveal a complex history of relations between Poland and Russia. Thus we can learn about the domination of Slavophile ideas in the cultural life of the Polish Kingdom and its main adherent Stanisław Staszic. That Pan-Slavism arose in Poland considerably advancing Russia. The pro-Russian Pan-Slavism was not a foggy idea of cultural “Slavic mutuality” in the ninetieth century but a political program.

The Slavophiles of the Polish Kingdom declared the mission of Slavs to be the creation of an absolutely separate civilization, much more developed than western civilization; they had an influence on the Decembrists.

Walicki convincingly exposes a strong prejudice both in Poland and Russia. Vladimir Soloviev holds a special place among Russian philosophers in Poland, he is the “most Polish” philosopher, who gave the starting point of the interest in studying Russian philosophy.

He is Russia's first author of a complete philosophical system, the greatest number of works are devoted to him and, therefore, Poles consider him worthy of a special approach and analysis.<sup>6</sup>

One of them, *Research of Philosophy of Vladimir Soloviev. God, Human and Evil* by Jan Krasicki is now available in Russian.<sup>7</sup> It is a fascinating work, a real philosophical dispute-dialogue, contemporaries and thinkers of the past are involved in discussion, opponents sometimes become allies and *vice versa*, the text surprisingly transfers the passion of live conversation, creating an effect of presence. The author openly declares his position and nobly in a chivalrous manner battles in one troop with Soloviev on the side of good, even if he sometimes disagrees with him.

<sup>6</sup> Kiyeyzik, “Russkaya filosofiya v pol'skom soznanii.”

<sup>7</sup> Krasitskiy, *Bog, chelovek i zlo*.

An aspiration to see the new in things considered to be studied and acquired long ago is a distinctive feature of the Polish researchers.

Soloviev brought his contribution into a dialogue of Christianity with culture, between faith and reason, notes Grzegorz Przebinda.<sup>8</sup> As the fact confirming the modern value of the Russian philosophers' works in the solution of this difficult question, John Paul II's encyclical published in the end of the twentieth century *Fides et Ratio* (1998) in which the name of Soloviev is mentioned along with names of the Russian Christian thinkers of two last centuries: Peter Chaadayev, Pavel Florensky, Vladimir Lossky—all of them made an essential contribution from the Christian East side to the process of the mutual understanding of "faith" and "reason," as the Pope originating from Poland writes.

The ideas of Communism in our country compromised themselves, and the Church's authority in the Soviet period was completely eradicated from public consciousness, something which it is obviously impossible to say about Poland where the Catholic Church retained its position as an authoritative participant in the discussion of philosophical questions.

In the ideas of the "Slavic" Pope John Paul II, stated in the encyclical *Slavorum Apostoli* (*Apostles of the Slavs*, 1985) and in the apostolic message *Euntes in Mundum Universum* (*Go Around the World*, 1988), written on the occasion of the Millennium of the Kievan Rus' Christianization, Walicki considers the position of Poland as a bridge connecting Slavic peoples with the West.<sup>9</sup>

The Polish historian of philosophical ideas proves the expediency of the past processes proceeding from the interests of today; the subject of discussion always finds a practical, fashionable note.

Also, all Poles are distinguished by their patriotism, their concern for the future of Poland is heard in all, even the most abstract theoretical reasonings like a refrain or main motive.

Soloviev's ecumenical project is a source of undying interest for Poles and, therewith, a certain asymmetry is observed if the issue is about a universal ecumenical theocracy ideal; if Soloviev was accepted in Russia, apart from his theocratic and ecumenical ideas, in Poland it was just the opposite, where they accepted his theocratic ideas and ecumenical initiatives, but rejected Soloviev's metaphysics.<sup>10</sup>

Walicki considers the modern dialogue between Catholicism and Orthodoxy as beyond the competence of a historian of ideas, but he sincerely admits sympathy to the ecumenical idea of the people and cultures

<sup>8</sup> Pshebinda, *Mezhdru Krakovom, Rimom i Moskvoy*, 237–48.

<sup>9</sup> Valitskiy, *Rossiya, katolichestvo i pol'skiy vopros*, 485.

<sup>10</sup> Krasitskiy, "Filosofiya V. S. Solov'eva v Pol'she."

rapprochement. Comparing the views of the philosopher and John Paul II encyclical *Orientalis Lumen* (*Light from the East*), the researcher finds that the Pope's interest in the great Russian thinker is not casual. And the basis of such a desirable rapprochement of Catholicism and Orthodoxy of the "Polish" Pope show an obvious similarity of initial prerequisites and purposes. John Paul II offers a holistic Europe growing from two Christian traditions—the Latin and Eastern, breathing with two lungs: Roman-Germanic and Greek-Slavic. The encyclical also says that Orthodox representatives can sometimes "outweigh" representatives of the Latin tradition in the interpretation of modern heritage. Nevertheless, the blame for the unity disruption burdens both parties and full mutual understanding demands permanent spiritual work on transformation from the side of the Roman Church as well.<sup>11</sup>

The rapprochement becomes internal and cannot help leading to an understanding of the general spiritual root of two traditions and to the creation of Christian unity from within, Grzegorz Przebinda hopes.

Jan Krasicki is sure that Soloviev's project is directed into the future and still waits its time. Krasicki sees in his project an escape beyond the time borders of the present, general cultural, political and religious "dialogism."

The respected expert on Russian philosophy and literature, Professor Andrzej de Lazari did not share the optimism of his colleagues, he is rather a realist and in much more counts on mutual understanding between cultures (civilizations) under legal order and civil society. In his opinion, these categories create the basis of reconciliation and cultural polyphony in today's world. Churches will continue to divide us for a long time to come.<sup>12</sup> But de Lazari does not give up conducting his small utopian "fight for our Russianness" in Poland. New Russian "Westerners," new *samobytnik* (authentic) cannot conceal their platitude and barbarity behind the notorious secret of the "Russian soul."<sup>13</sup>

Not as detriment of objectivity, Polish authors are frank supporters of an "empathic approach" which promotes an understanding of historical and intellectual features of the Russian culture in this case. They are sincerely excited by the events in our public, political and intellectual life, it causes the trust.

The Polish authors are very emotional in their estimation of today's us but it is a criticism which clears with sincere and friendly desire to make us better, worthy of the heritage of the best representatives of Russian intellectual life where Poles remain full participants.

<sup>11</sup> Valitskiy, *Rossiia, katolichestvo i pol'skiy vopros*, 377.

<sup>12</sup> Lazari, "Kak byt' russkim?"

<sup>13</sup> Lazari, *V krugu Fedora Dostoyevskogo*, 207.

Today Russian religious thought is perceived in Poland as a philosophical problem but, together with Teresa Obolevitch, we hope that the reception of the Russian philosophy in Poland will be even fuller.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Obolevich, "Ot Volgi do Visly," 124–31.





