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Sophiology in Vladimir Solov'ëv and in Sergej Bulgakov. A Comparative Analysis

Beginning with the impossible "...describes the dynamics of religious life and thought, a life and a thinking that is fired by faith that is driven by a messianic hope for something impossible, something always to come. The impossible is what is absolutely unforeseeable, what surprises us or shatters our horizon of expectation."¹

Explaining the possibility of the impossible has been Vladimir Solov'ëv's theosophical program: man is, as he claimed, by no means an end in itself but God called him to *unite the Created with the Creator*. Solov'ëv firmly believed that Creation is incomplete. Especially the fifth book of *Istoriia i buduchshnost' teokratii, 1885-1887*², unambiguously declares Creation as awaiting man's conscious reunification with God.

The confidence in Creation continued by mankind is what held together "Silver Age" thought as it developed in Solov'ëv's wake. Especially Bulgakov shared the belief that Creation is incomplete and that *bogochelovechestvo* (humanity following the example of the second Adam Jesus Christ) must arrive at organizing social life according to man's God-like creativity and hence fulfill Creation until the "eighth day"³ dawns. Although the idea of an "eighth day" cannot be found in the writings of Solov'ëv or Bulgakov, it organizes, as this essay argues, their thought about Creation and Godman's co-Creative task.

Vladimir Solov'ëv prophesied the Universal Church, the embodiment of "Sophia," as to be established on this eschatological "eighth day"

¹ Cf. Caputo, J., *Philosophy and Prophetic Postmodernism: Towards a Catholic Postmodernity*, Lecture on the International Congress "Philosophical Reason and Christianity at the threshold of the 3rd Millenium," World Conference of Catholic University, Paris (Unesco) 24. 3. 2000, 12.

² Cf. Solovyov (Solov'ëv), S. *Vladimir: His life and Creative Evolution*, E. Gibson (transl), 2 vols., Virginia: Eastern Christian Publications, 2000, 216-228, on biographical and bibliographical details concerning the development of this unfinished work.

³ The idea of an "eighth day" to Creation was already propounded by St. Augustine. Cf. Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, Cambridge UP, 1998, 1182.

whereas Bulgakov envisioned a particular type of 'sophianic materialism' (my expression, KB) that unambiguously defined the Church to promote godman's co-Creativity.

Both St. Athanasius, the generally acknowledged Father of the Orthodox Church, and St. Augustine had a fully explicit sophiology at the heart of their vision. Both see Sophia as the final embodiment of the glorification of human nature in Christ, in His mystical body the Church. This view of Sophia is in agreement with the content of the great Biblical texts of *Proverbs* 8, 9, *Ecclesiastes* 24, and *The Song of Solomon* 7, which all describe Wisdom as a quasi-personal and feminine reality.⁴ Nonetheless, the idea of created wisdom never held a prominent place either in Catholicism or in Orthodoxy.

The interest in Sophia, namely the quasi-personal Wisdom of God was revived as late as in sixteenth century by the German mystic Jakob Boehme. The pietistic theologian Jacob Arnold transmitted Boehme's views to German idealist philosophers of nineteenth century, especially to Franz von Baader, and, through his intermediary, above all to Friedrich Schelling. There is no doubt that the revival of Sophiology in Vladimir Solov'ěv proceeds directly from the influence of Schelling.⁵

Solov'ěv agrees with Boehme that upon the final and full attainment of Sophia - an image that also imbues Solov'ěv's poetry - humanity as a whole will be transformed into "the body of Christ."⁶⁷ Although it is impossible to present an unambiguous picture of Solov'ěv's Sophia in discursive terms⁸ her attributes are certainly evident. In *Rossia i vselenskaia Terkov*, Sophia appears as the *archetype of humanity's social relations*. This yet-to-be manifestation of Sophia will spring off the marriage between the world's masculine principle, its personified logos in Christ, and the feminine principle, i.e. nature

⁴ Cf. Bouyer, L., *An Introduction to the Theme of Wisdom and Creation in the Tradition*, in: *Le messager orthodoxe*, Colloque P. Serge Boulgakov, Trimestriel n° 98, Paris 1985., 149-161.

⁵ Cf. Valliere, P., *Modern Russian Theology. Bukharev, Soloviev, (Solov'ěv), Bulgakov. Orthodox Theology in a New Key*, Clark Ltd. 2000, 119-129, and cf. Lazarev, V., *Filosofia VI. Solov'ěva i Shellinga*, in: *Filosofia Shellinga v Rossii*, P. Pustarnakova (ed.), St. Peterburg 1998, 477-499.

⁶ Cf. David, Z., *The Formation of the Religious and Social System of Vladimir S. Solov'ěv*, (Ph D, Harvard University) Cambridge, Ma. 1960, 190-205, on Boehme's theosophy as having decisively inspired Solov'ěv's views. For both, Sophia is the substantial or bodily aspect of God, the *heilige Erde, materia Bozhestva* (holy earth, Divine matter). For Boehme and Solov'ěv it is necessary that the force of the One (the incipient spirit of God) clashes with the opposing force of multiplicity. They characterise the One not only as "unity" and "freedom," but also as the universal bearer of love. Solov'ěv makes also use of Boehme's (originally Plato's) symbolism, associating the One, the source of love, with the sun's light and / or the lucidity of an idea.

⁷ Cf. David, op. cit., 287.

⁸ Cf. Kochetkova, T., *Vladimir Solov'jov's (Solov'ěv's) Theory of Divine Humanity*, (Ph. D., Nijmegen University), Nijmegen 2001, 134.

inside and outside of man. This marriage's terrestrial and yet-to-be portrayal is the "Universal Church," whose design reflects Trinity. The Solov'ëvian notion of All-unity (*vseedinstvo*) takes Trinity as a cosmic concept. Ideal society, viz. the universal Church – *Sophia's* highest incarnation - has a threefold structure. The "Universal Church" is crowned by a "pope" who heads an "assembly of bishops" that has another large "assembly of priests" at the basis.⁹ This Church, like every historical Church, performs the ministries of a "priest," a "king," and last but not least the one of a "prophet." The priest's ministry is based on traditional knowledge of the "mystery," while the kingly function of the Church is displayed by supporting "Christian politics," i.e. supporting reforms directed at the Good's achievement and alteration of existing abuses by the help of "Christian tsars."¹⁰

The anthropology of man as a "Godman (*bogochelovek*)" broadens, for, man is proud to simultaneously be God's *priest* and *king* of the inferior world. Thirdly and prominently, he is a *prophet* of the future reunion of both,¹¹ which is the Universal Church *Sophia*. The question arises what is the indigenous place of prophets because the "prophetic ministry" performed by the Church is also given to everyone within the clerical body as well as to everybody in general irrespective of denominational confession. In this precise sense everybody, be it a Christian or a non-Christian has "exactly the same rights as the pope or the tsar,"¹² a demand that obviously corresponds to secular freedom of speech.

The question arises how Solov'ëv conceived history, or to be more exact, by which means history would arrive at *Sophia's* prophetic incarnation? His short and disputed writing *Smysl' ljubvi* (1892-1894, *The Meaning of Love*) ends by regretting that during the "second era" nature has not yet been sufficiently spiritualised. Apart from singular "poets," people did not afford the necessary type of love to "spiritualise nature."¹³ *What time span did Solov'ëv have in mind when speaking of this "second era" and what did he mean by spiritualising nature? As for the first question, it is impossible to find in Solov'ëv's work a single definition of history in the same register. He distinguishes a "theology of history" from a "philosophy of history." As for the first register, there are three periods, viz. from Jesus Christ until the schism (33-1054), from then to Solov'ëv's lifetime (1054-1880), and from this point of time until the end of history (1880's-?). In the third period "...all efforts*

⁹ Cf. Solov'ëv, *Rossija i vselenskaia tserkov*, in: op. cit., t. 11, 163, and cf. *Evrejsstvo*, in: op. cit., t.4, 163, and cf. footnote 57.

¹⁰ Cf. idem, *Velikij spor i khristianskaia politika*, 1883, in: op. cit., t. 4 vt. izd., 4.

¹¹ Cf. idem, *Rossija*, op. cit., 327, and many other places.

¹² Cf. *ibid*, 343f.

¹³ Cf. idem, *Smysl' ljubvi*, 1892-1894, in: op. cit., t. 7 vt. izd., 59f.

would, or at least should, be concentrated on unifying humanity, starting with the Christian community."¹⁴ As for "philosophical history," "...he posed that history is made up of three successive phases, undifferentiated unity, separation, and differentiated unity between and within these fields."¹⁵ Obviously the afore mentioned "second era" that is characterised by a "lack of love to nature" coincides with the second period in the historical and in the theological registers. *What type of love did Solov'ëv have in mind when he diagnosed a lack of it and how is related to prophecy?* Discrediting the Marxian variant of materialism thoroughly¹⁶ the young Solov'ëv introduced the notion of "religious materialism" in *Evrejstvo i khristianskij vopros*, 1884. Christ's advent to the Jews accounts, as he explains, for their deep religiosity, but also for the fact that they were people of law and order, and simultaneously a prophetic people. In this context, he distinguishes three forms of "materialism:" "practical materialism" means no more than crude, egoistic, hedonistic, little sensible forms of life. As Solov'ëv sees it, practical materialism is equivalent to Marx's "scientific materialism:" the "practical materialist" is a shallow type of personality that Marx objectified and prolonged into historical determinism, an eschatology that excludes liberty. A third type of materialism, "religious materialism," describes the Hebrews' thought and mentality. They did not separate "spirit" from its material appearance: "matter" did not have any independent existence, it was neither God nor devil, but represented rather a yet "undignified dwelling," inhabited by God's spirit sanctifying the vessel through man's co-creativity. The faithful Hebrew desired the entire nature, the world he lived in, to have God's "wholeness" at its disposal, given that He also is a "holy" or "spiritual corporeality."¹⁷ Because the Hebrews deeply believed in this type of "holy corporeality," meaning in fact a permanent interrelation between God and man by means of spiritualised nature, they were the chosen people to whom Christ first appeared. Yet, as Solov'ëv affirms, Christ demanded from them a dual deed, namely the renunciation of national egoism and secondly a temporary, partially limited relinquishment of the world's welfare¹⁸.

¹⁴ Cf. Courten, M. de, *History and the Russian Nation. A Reassessment of Vladimir Solov'ëv's Views on History and Social Commitment*, (PhD Nijmegen), Bern 2004, 85-92.

¹⁵ Cf. *ibid*, 139.

¹⁶ Cf. Gleixner, H., *Vladimir Solov'ëv's Konzeption vom Verhältnis zwischen Politik und Sittlichkeit. System einer sozialen und politischen Ethik*, Frankfurt a. M., Bern, Las Vegas, 1979, 250, see also, Breckner, K., *Vladimir Solov'oyv (Solov'ëv) as the Mentor of Anti-Marxian Socialism. Concepts of Socialism by S.N. Trubetskoj, S.N. Bulgakov and N.A. Berdiaev*, 461, in: *Vladimir Solov'oyv (Solov'ëv). Reconciler and Polemicist*, E. v. d. Zweerde et al. (eds.), Louvain: Peters 2000, 461-473.

¹⁷ Cf. Solov'ëv, *Evrejstvo i khristianskij vopros*, 1884, in: *op. cit.*, t. 4, 147-150.

¹⁸ Cf. *ibid*, 160ff. Cf. Strémooukhoff, D., *Vladimir Soloviev (Solov'ëv) et son oeuvre messianique*, Reprint, Lausanne 1975, 298. He reports that Solov'ëv devoted his last prayer,

His early anti-Marxian concept of “religious materialism” flows into his complex concept of spiritualising existence. Spiritualisation represents the “central element” in Solov’ëv’s religious philosophy.¹⁹ In the *Justification of the Good* he indeed maintains the position that between spiritual and material being there is no dichotomy, but both are intrinsically bound to each other, which is why every transformative process is a development of “God’s material (*protsess bogomaterialny*).”²⁰ “(M)atter has a right to spiritualisation,” spiritualisation originates in love and leads to the moral organisation of material life.²¹

Humanity dawns by redeeming material nature, viz. by spiritualising the *physis*. In Christian terminology, spiritualisation signifies a sort of transfiguration that brings redemption. Redemption became a Biblical metaphor for describing the saving work of Jesus delivering humanity from sin and evil by His transfiguration, by the sacrifice of his natural body out of love to man. Christ’s transfiguration *anticipated* the transfiguration of all material being. Self-sacrificing love is central in Solov’ëv’s theosophy, too. Self-sacrificing love transfigures and herewith redeems. His early *La Sophia* (1876, *Sophia*) brings to mind a threefold typology of love. There is “all forgiving love” (cf. Kor. 13) conform to “*amor dei intellectualis*.” Forgiveness obviously needs overcoming of egotism, of self-administered justice, of personal insistence on righteous, legitimate punishment. As it were, “all forgiving love” is human acting that aspires to the Divine and seeks to correspond to Divine grace. Secondly, there is, as Solov’ëv continues, corporeal love, love’s strongest form. Yet, erotic love is as exclusive as it ends in exclusivity, namely in family founding that in turn brings forth a third, a “familial” form of love. Already at this early point of his intellectual career, the young Solov’ëv wondered whether the first and the second forms of love intersect at a certain point and hence share common ground. This certainly is a question beyond tradition, for standard sociology regards the family (-tribe) as basic cell of all social formations: family ties are prototypical. Social relations profit from familial bonds that is prolonged into society. By contrast, “all forgiving love” is so to speak faceless in character; agape rather describes a general attitude face to face with humanity. It is a regulative idea in the Kantian sense, not a personal form of love directed at a specific person for specific

before dying on July 31st 1900 (old Russian calendar) to the Jews, for his hope on their self-communion was related to believing on a drawing near of theocracy only in this particular case.

¹⁹ Cf. Sutton, J., *The Religious Philosophy of Vladimir Solovyov (Solov’ëv). Towards a Reassessment*, Hampshire 1988, 72.

²⁰ Cf. Solov’ëv, *Opravdaniia dobra. Nравstvennaia filozofia*, 1894-1897, in: op. cit., t. 8 vt. izd, 211.

²¹ Cf. *ibid*, 369-385.

individual reasons. Solov'ëv wondered *how could this self-less love profit from eroticism's power that is possessive and self-centred*.²² At this point of his intellectual career, in 1876, he did not yet find an answer on this seemingly paradoxical question. Love is, as he posited in general terms, a sense of ascendance, viz. participation in the Absolute. The absolute Divine is, as already the idea of *bogochelovestvo* implies, as much inherent in man and in nature as it is transcendently located outside of him in immeasurable height. To encounter the Divine by loving ascendance effectuates love that descends, for the beloved Absolute lovingly gives away spiritual abundance to the lower being.

Eighteen years after he had written *La Sophia*, Solov'ëv took up the *Meaning of Love* again and discussed it more comprehensively on about eighty pages. "In the main, the arguments in this writing balance on the borders between philosophy, science, and poetry, promising fresh interaction between these three discourses."²³ As is commonly known, this writing is a sort of polemic paper against Lev Tolstoj's and Arthur Schopenhauer's views on (physical) love as to merely guarantee reproduction and continuation of species²⁴. The matured philosopher finally completed his early self-given task and was successful in systematically reconciling *amor dei intellectualis* with the *eros* that he radicalised significantly. In Plato, the *eros* prescind from all physicalness whereas Solov'ëv, as we have seen already, targets at the *physis'* deification by transfiguration and hence redemption. As he now argued, *eros'* true task consists in personality's "redemption"²⁵. The Solovë'vian *eros* does not designate either a purely natural or purely spiritual event, but, again, rather signifies a spiritual challenge to transfigure human nature. Solov'ëv suggests a paradoxical situation: spiritually, the corporeal unification of the masculine and the feminine should bring forth a metamorphosis, namely create androgynous spirituality.²⁶ Spiritually, also erotic love must above everything else ascend to the Divine and hence receive descendent love that never regards either race or sex.²⁷ Solov'ëv denies the Platonian variant of the *eros*,²⁸ for he – a consequent thinker – admits the possibility of nature's spiritualisation. If nature's de-materialisation is a principle call spiritualisation must be ubiquitously valid. True erotic

²² Cf. Solov'ëv, *La Sophia*, 68

²³ Clowes, E., *The Limits of Discourse: Solov'ëv's Language of Szyzygy and the Project of Thinking Total Unity*, in: *Slavic Review* 55 (1996), 3, 554.

²⁴ Cf. Kochetkova, *Theory*, 121f.

²⁵ Cf. Solov'ëv, *Smysl' ljubvi*, in: op. cit., 16ff.

²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 24, and 41-43. Cf. also, *Zhiznennaia drama*: op. cit., 235.

²⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 47, and 41-43.

²⁸ Cf. *idem*, *Zhiznennaia drama*: op. cit., 327-332.

love hence strengthens personality, for deification implies the loss of sex and acquisition of *androgyny* instead. Until his lifetime, as he regretted, love had unfortunately not yet flowered out. Love's development was at the same low stage as the development of reason within the animals' kingdom. Love still is the greatest cosmic enigma there is²⁹.

Basically, love is based on tripartite "faith," namely faith in God's existence, in my own exquisite being in God, and last but not least faith in the 'you's' uniqueness in God. Egoism's abandonment necessitates unique recognition of everybody's individual and exquisite being in God. Consequently, love needs ascendance to God by definition. Simultaneously, God's gracious love descends to "the other," to the "passive," the "feminine," to Created nature³⁰. Human (carnal) love receives outmost "beauty" (italics, KB) when experienced as the gracious descending of the Divine upon nature that in turn ascends out of love. This is said to be true with regard to personal and to social aspects³¹.

*All social spheres work by the same principles as individual love: two wholly different yet equally dignified beings positively complement and by no means negatively delimit each other. In erotic love the 'other,' the non-I, qualifies as everything. In social life, the collective corpus, the singular elements of which are reigned by solidarity, analogously denotes the 'other,' and this non-I should become a complementing animated being. Active compositions between the personal I and the social corpus signify an "enlivened syzygial relationship (zhivym sizicheskim otnosheniam)."*³² As may be concluded, man's body, the social corpus, and the corpus of the world have ideal-real character; each represents a mystical corpus. Here finally is the central argument: the corpus, be it a natural or a social corpus does not bear independent existence, it does not exist until it is spiritualised. The social and the human corpus are identical in substance, for both belong into the sphere of nature, which seeks complementary union, seeks syzygy, complementary union with light and / or spirit.³³ Solov'ëv held that nature is to be redeemed and that "the transfiguration of Christ *anticipated* the transfiguration of all material being."³⁴ In physical life too, the surrender of the self affords to regain it in enriched form.³⁵ This is what is said about love

²⁹ Cf. *idem*, *Smysl' liubvi*, 23f.

³⁰ Cf. *ibid*, 43-45, and cf. footnote 24 in this chapter.

³¹ Cf. *ibid*, 59.

³² Cf. *ibid*, 57f.

³³ Cf. Clowes, *op. cit.*, 560.

³⁴ Cf. de Courten, *op. cit.*, 60.

³⁵ Cf. Solov'ëv, *Dukhovnye osnovy zhizni*, 1882-1884, in: *op. cit.*, t. 3, 376. "Truth" must manifest itself in all realities including the corporal. "(D)ivine principles" (*bozhestvennye nachala*) must make part of nature, otherwise "free theosophy" is unthinkable.

in Matthew 16; 24, 25, Lucas 9; 23, 24, and Marcus 8; 34, 35. All texts are on this essential truth of regaining the self by sacrifice, excluding, of course, the carnal aspect of love. In Solov'ëv spiritualised carnal love is a form of syzygy (literally from the Greek *syzygia*, appearances in pairs) when segregation between creature and spirit is overcome.³⁶

Consequently, man's body, the social corpus, and the corpus of the world have ideal-real character representing each a "mystical corpus."³⁷ There are three items determining love's highest form: androgyny, spiritualised human corporeality, and Godmanhood. The erotic pathos of love always seeks after corporeality (*sviataia telesnost'*). Yet, dignified corporeality, beautiful and eternalised by Spirit corporeality does not sprout by itself, but needs *spiritual deeds by the Godman*. Solov'ëv commiserates with Plato to philosophically have been on a limb with "empty hands," for his understanding of eroticism failed acknowledge this point.³⁸

In the *Justification of the Good*, 1894-1899, is just one, yet meaningful reference to the cited above argument: as he regrets, Christianity has merely endorsed "cherubic" existence beyond marriage. Christianity has, as Solov'ëv regrets, merely deified marriage as an institution, worthy of man's multiplication (cf. Lucas 34-36, First Corinthian, 7). However, there is a third, the "highest," namely "God's way" to look at spiritualised carnal love. In this context, he hints at the two writings just discussed, namely *Plato's Life Drama* and *The Meaning of Love*.³⁹ After a sharp critique by Russian Orthodoxy,⁴⁰ he seemingly had decided not to broach the ideal content of corporeal love. In the *Justification of the Good* this form of love holds the place of negative, offending senses: "shame (*styď*)" epitomises the difference between human and the animals' being. Even in the case of humanity's multiplication, "shame" plays a role; many pages are concerned with this problem.⁴¹ Solov'ëv situates the feelings of "shame (*styď*)," "pity (*zhalost'*)," and "reverence (*blagogovernii*)" (respectively matching the moral principles of "asceticism," "altruism" or "solidarity," and "piety"), at one and the same axiomatic level. These three attributes conform to the

³⁶ Cf. *ibid*, 46f. See in this context esp. Strémooukhoff, *op. cit.*, 274f. He suggests this idea was inspired by a number of sources: 1.) Reading of Gen. I, 27 by Church Fathers like St. Johannes Chrystosomos. 2.) Caballah-teaching on man as to be androgynous. 3.) Jakob Boehme and his theosophy on the restoration the *Jungfrau* (virgin) in God by human activity.

³⁷ Cf. Solov'ëv, *Smysl' liubvi*, in: *op. cit.*, 29ff.

³⁸ Cf. *idem*, *Zhinennaia drama Platona*, 1898, in: *op. cit.*, t. 9, 326f.

³⁹ Cf. *idem*, *Opravdaniia dobra. Nравstvennaia filosofii*, 1894-1897, in: *ibid.* t. 8 vt. Izd., 79.

⁴⁰ Cf. Zweerde, Evert v. d., *Liefde maakt ziend. Vladimir Solovjovs (Solov'ëv's) metafysica van de liefde*, in: *Tydschrit voor Slavische Literatuur* n. 46, 2007, 38f.

⁴¹ Cf. Solov'ëv, *Opravdanie*, in: *op. cit.*, 53-84.

conscience's requirements. They constitute the three-unitarian foundation of "moral perfection."⁴²

Yet, in his encyclopaedic entry on *Liubov'*, 1896 - composed while Solov'ëv was working on the *Justification of the Good* - he again specified carnal love to simultaneously manifest the "strongest form of individual self-affirmation" (corresponding to ascending love) and of "self-negation" (corresponding to descending love). As such an ambiguous event, carnal love is the "highest symbol" (*vysshij simvol*) of "the ideal relationship between personal and social principles."⁴³ Though spiritualised carnal love does not serve humanity's but the individual's perfection, it nevertheless represents one of cornerstones of ideal society's development. For Solov'ëv society "...is the supplemented or expanded individual, while the individual is the condensed or concentrated society."⁴⁴ As may be concluded, only perfected individuals - individuals experienced in spiritualising syzygy in order to experience *holy androgynous being* - may form ideal society.

Already in *Filosofskie nachala tsel'nogo znaniia*, 1877, he had introduced a tripartite scheme of society: 1.) the "material society (*materialnoe obshchestvo*)" is located at the fundament, the "political society (*politicheskoe obshchestvo*)" occupies the midst, and the "spiritual (*dukhovnoe*)" or "holy society, the Church (*sviashchennoe obshchestvo, Tserkov'*)" tops both. As may be concluded, the third type of society appears to be the syzygial unification of the other two.⁴⁵ The "Universal Church" signifies unification of masculine and feminine elements, which correspond to Christ and nature respectively.⁴⁶

No scholar has yet presented a survey on his image of existence in pairs (syzygy) as something spread throughout his entire works. Solov'ëv claims this Greek expression to best express his idea of "composition (*sochetanie*)."⁴⁷ *Krasota v prirode*,⁴⁸ 1899, briefly treats another syzygial phenomenon, namely beauty. Beauty is not at all an indefinable property and beauty is not an expression of mere subjectivity either. Beauty signifies another fertile

⁴² Cf. *ibid*, 66-118.

⁴³ Cf. *idem*, *Liubov'*, in: *op. cit.*, t. 11, 236.

⁴⁴ Cf. Kostalevsky, M., *Dostoevsky (Dostoevskij) and Soloviev (Solov'ëv). The Art of Integral Vision*, New Heaven and London 1997, 113.

⁴⁵ Cf. *idem*, *Filosofskie nachala tsel'nogo zaniia*, 1877, in: *op. cit.*, t.11, 257-259.

⁴⁶ Cf. *idem*, *Rossia*, in: *op. cit.*, 327-344.

⁴⁷ Cf. *idem*, *Smysl' liubvi*, in: *op. cit.* 57, first footnote on this page. Solov'ëv distances himself from the Gnostic usage of this terminology and uses *syzigia* in the narrow Greek meaning. Cf. Kolerov, M., *Smysl' liubvi v filosofii Vladimira Solo'ëva i gnosticheskie paralleli*, in: *Voprosy filosofii* 1995 n. 7, 59-78, for an account on Solov'ëv's preoccupation with Gnosticism between 1891 and 1893.

⁴⁸ Strémooukhoff, *op. cit.*, 266. He proposes to regard the three short writings *Smysl' liubvi*, *Krasota v prirode*, and *Obshchij smysl' isskustva* as an extra unit of discourses.

form of *syzygy*, for the sun's light elucidates matter. Nature's elucidation by the sun denotes the unification of two elements that are independent from each other. Their unification radiates beauty.⁴⁹ Man's self-consciousness relates to the animals' as beauty in art relates to beauty in nature. Art is not a mere repetition of the artistic deeds begun by nature but their continuation by analogously creating syzygial unities between the lucidity of human ideas and nature.⁵⁰

Syzygy opens out into Solov'ěv's metaphysically religious notion of Trinity. I call this interdependence between unity in pairs and Trinity a '*trinitarian double helix*.' This expression indicates the *trinitarian structure* of the cosmos, of the world, and of ideal society (the Universal Church, viz. Sophia). The (self-) realisation of the latter depends in turn on multiple unifications of opposites. *Syzygy* is the way of repairing dissociation. *Syzygial unities* generate "mystical" and / or "religious experience"⁵¹ making man anticipate the 'sophianic' social ideal.

To conclude: 1. Unification of opposites releases mystical experience. Mystical and / or religious experience thus denotes the individualisation of All-Unity, a unity that bears androgynous character. Conscious experience of *syzygy* generates, as I conclude, prophetic faith, a type of faith that is sufficient to bestow on people a befitting foundation of social life. 2. Conscious loving thus bears objective power that surrounds Creation in spiritualising nature, and vice versa, in materialising spirit. This is the central idea to Solov'ěv's notion of *theurgy*, which he did not elaborate into a re-defined discourse. For him, *theurgy* apparently was a self-evident matter, since he made permanent use of it from the beginning without explaining it at any length. His encyclopaedic entry on mysticism (1896, *Mistika, Mistitsizm*) explains: "Mysticism describes phenomena and human acts, which independently from the spheres of space, time, and physical causality relate man with mysterious creatures and energies (...) There is *prophetic* mysticism (...) and *practical* mysticism that attempts (...) to call forth plastic forms and materialise spiritual creatures, or de-materialise (spiritualise, KB) corporeality and such alike more."⁵² 3.) Spiritualisation of nature thus is *theurgy*, for it unites the spiritual 'I' with the 'empirical-I' by means of de-materialisation and / or conscious spiritualisation. 4.) Divine Wisdom (Sophia) descends by virtue of syzygial experience and desirably indwells human consciousness. Co-creative activity springs from this peculiar type of experience that does

⁴⁹ Cf. *idem*, *Krasota v prirode*, 1889, in: op. cit., t. 6, vt. izd., 35-49.

⁵⁰ Cf. *idem*, *Obshchij smysl' iskusstva*, 1890, in: *ibid*, 74.

⁵¹ "Religious" and "mystical experience" are synonyms throughout Solov'ěv's entire works.

⁵² Cf. *idem*, *Mistika – Misticizm*, 1896, in: op. cit. t. 11, 243f.

not need to be rationalised, or exhaustively explained in order to improve personal and social life. As it stands, Christian faith in the trueness of the experienced is the sufficient condition to co-creativity that prepares free theocracy in a first and Sophia, the Universal Church, in second step.

Recalling Solov'ëv's reading of *Genesis* I, his metaphysics of history, we remember that the state (symbolised by the moon) rules the dark, whereas the Church (as if the sun on the firmament) is installed in the midst of light. The third now, the multicoloured stars, correspond to prophets brightly lighting the way in the dark.⁵³ As we have seen, every man potentially is a prophet. Consequently, the Church's natural allies are prophets, singular personalities who accelerate progress during history's lengthy seventh day in order to arrive at an eighth when Universal Church, the archetype of God's Creation, embodies Sophia and brings forth "social trinity." "Social trinity" denotes another form of All-unity, namely trichotomy of powers in the name of one single principle.⁵⁴ Each representative of free theocracy has his own non-interchangeable sphere of action. The brilliant play on words Solov'ëv presented in order to unambiguously clarify the triple actions' inter-dependence is untranslatable. The Russian word *pravliat'* (to organise) is the fundamental lexical unit. Various prefixes modify the sense of the word: *sviashchennik pravliaet* (the priest, i.e. the Church governs) and therefore thus constitutes the legislative (KB). *Tsar' upravliaet* (the king, viz. the state administers), thus constitutes the executive (KB). Last but not least *prorok ispravliaet* (the prophet, the people emends), hence constitutes the judicative (KB).⁵⁵ The prefixes *na-*, *u-*, and *is-* make the words convey a specific, non-interchangeable meaning while commonality is maintained in each by the word *pravliat'*. This play on words mirrors separation of powers in free theocracy and designates "authority" the Church, "might" to the state, and "liberty" to prophets while each sphere arises out of and stays within the same principle.

The prophet is a "representative of future time."⁵⁶ Certainly, prophets play a very difficult, even risky role, for they ignite dynamics within the hierarchical body of the Church itself. Mere reproduction of the existing historical Church facing state and people is avoided only if individual religious creativity - irrespective of whether pronounced by members of the clergy or by lay people - is successfully communicated within the hierarchical body of the Church. The Church bears a conservative character by definition. As it stands, Solov'ëv calls for a reconciliation of nature and spirit, and of

⁵³ Cf. *idem, Istoriia*, in: op. cit., 574-579.

⁵⁴ Cf. *idem, Rossiia*, in: op. cit., 327-344.

⁵⁵ Cf. *idem, Evrejstvo*, 161.

⁵⁶ Cf. Sutton, op. cit., 80.

creativity and conservatism. These are the central forms of co-creativity. The Church must be successful in reconciling the individuals' religious creativity and the Church's proper conservatism. This certainly is a standard problem with regard to any "religious politics" and is a task that enjoys immense ecumenical importance in a world that is characterised by multi-cultural societies. These stand in dire need of reconciliation, a problem Solov'ev certainly well understood.

The next section looks at Bulgakov's concepts of reconciling the created and the Uncreated, of Sophia. His *Filosofia khoziazstva*, 1912, subtitled *Mir kak khoziazstvo* and the earlier, preparatory treatise *Osnovnye motivy filosofii khoziazstva v Platonizme i v rannem khristianstve*, 1911, present attempts at an ontology of economy.⁵⁷ *Fundamental Motives* discusses nature in Platonism and in early Christian thinking and prepares the *Philosophy of Economy*, a comprehensive work that was inspired by Bulgakov's desire to "overcome" Marx's "economic materialism ...from within" by unmasking its limitations as an "abstract principle,"⁵⁸ an effort that recalls Solov'ev's *Kritika otvlechennykh nachal*.

In *Osnovnye motivy filosofii khoziazstva v pannem Khristianstve i v Platonizme*, Bulgakov emphatically declares the Platonic ideas as to have fulfilled a similar function as does Heaven. Yet, neither Plato nor the Neo-Platonists successfully built a ladder between spirit and matter, but instead left a dreadful abyss between them. Christian thought then offered answers to questions posed by Plato and substituted impersonal erotic ascent by Christ's personal love. Christianity substituted the Platonic "ideas" by the *Divine Sophia*.⁵⁹ Of course, such a sentence requires further elucidation of Bulgakov's sophiology.

For most scholars, theologians or philosophers, concerned with Bulgakov it has become almost a commonplace to differentiate either between the creaturely and the heavenly *Sophia* (the former bearing shares of the latter), or between an earlier (more philosophical) and a later (more theological) conception of it. In either case, the first conception does not appear as perfectly reconcilable with the second. In my view, the Russian Bulgakov specialist Sergej Khoruzhij most clearly has understood the solution to this problem. As he suggests, the Bulgakovian Sophiology substitutes the "impersonal" Platonic "all-Unitarian ontology" by an 'all-Unitarian personal ontology (my expression, KB).' He ascribes *Sophia* - correlating to the Aristotelian

⁵⁷ Cf. Bulgakov, S., *Philosophy of Economy. The World as a Household* (transl. by C. Evtuhov), New Heaven 2000, 38.

⁵⁸ Cf. *ibid*, 39f, see also, *idem*, *Tserkov i kul'tura*, 1906, in: *Dva grada. Issledovanie o prirode obshchestvennykh idealov*, 1911, reprint Russkij Khristianskij Gumanitarnyj Institut, St. Peterburg, 1997, vol. 1/2, vol. 2, 349.

⁵⁹ Cf. *ibid*. 191ff.

ousia – to each of the three hypostases respectively.⁶⁰ By simple logics, this three-fold construction defines the heavenly and the creaturely Sophia as signifying one and the same. The ‘sophianic’ nature of God reaches out into the world. In *Ipostas’ i ipostasnost’*, 1924/25, the dichotomy of the created and the Uncreated is explicitly at stake. This writing shows the development of a hierarchy in Bulgakov’s vision of the different incarnations of *Sophia*. Those modes and forms are what he calls a “hypostasis,” viz. the essential nature of a substance as opposed to its attributes. *Ipostasnost’* denotes the potentiality of someone or something to turn into a hypostasis, i.e. to incarnate the Godly substance, *Ousia-Sophia*, on Earth.⁶¹ In this text, Bulgakov comprehensively discusses her modes and forms from the highest in God to the highest on earth, which, of course, is the Church.⁶²

Already in his early *Philosophy of Economy* Bulgakov maintained, “(t)he purpose of economic activity is to defend and to spread the seeds of life, to resurrect nature. This is the action of Sophia (italics mine, KB).”⁶³ He explicitly refers to Nikolaj Fëdorov’s *obshchee delo*: “The content of economic activity is not the Creation of life but its defence, its resuscitation from a deathlike state.”⁶⁴ My analysis thus wonders: *How is resurrection possible? What exactly is resurrection and what is its relation to cognition?* My analysis turns around this complex of questions.

The foreword of *Philosophy of Economy* refers to Solov’ëv’s notion of “religious materialism.” We read that it refers back Athanasius of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, and other fathers of the Church, whose teachings, as Bulgakov regrets, merely present “dead capital:” ... “economic materialism,” on the one hand, and “idealistic phenomenalism,” on the other hand, were built on its “ruins.”⁶⁵ Let us now attempt to understand what Bulgakov made from these “ruins.”

In *Svet nevechernyj*, 1916, a writing that testifies to his becoming more and more a theologian, Bulgakov explicitly refers to Gregory of Nyssa’s teachings on Creation and on resurrection:⁶⁶ Gregory developed the idea

⁶⁰ Cf. Khoruzhij S., *Sofia – Kosmos – Materija: ustoi filosofskoj mysli otsa Sergija Bulgakova*, in: *Posle pereryva. Puti russoj filosofii*, S.-Peterburg 1994, 82f.

⁶¹ Cf. Bulgakov, *Ipostas’ i ipostasnost.’ (Scholia k Svetu Nevechernemu, 1924-25)*, in: S. N. Bulgakov. *Trudy o Troichnosti*. Reprint, M. A. Kolerov (ed.), *Issledovaniia po istorii russoj mysli*, vol. 6, Moskva 2001, 28ff.

⁶² Cf. *ibid*, 38, and many other places.

⁶³ Cf. Bulgakov, *Philosophy*, op. cit., 153.

⁶⁴ Cf. *ibid*, 148f. See Bulgakov’s homage to Fëdorov, *Zagodochnyj myslitel’*, 322-331, and cf. *Svet*, 315f, on Fëdorov’s vision of reanimating the dead. Fëdorov’s “project” signifies, as Bulgakov says, the real “apotheosis” of economy.

⁶⁵ Cf. *idem*, *Philosophy*, 37f.

⁶⁶ Bulgakov refers to *Tvoreniia sv. Grigoriia episkopa Nisskogo, Chast’ I, O shetoneve*, cf. *Svet*, 209.

of Creation in two acts: "general" (*obshchee*) and "partial" (*chastnoe*) Creation, viz. Creation "in the beginning" and in a second step during the "six days." Bulgakov quotes: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void: and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."⁶⁷ "In the beginning" then is another expression for "Sophia." Creation began in "Sophia;" she is "potentiality," is a "unity of opposites, a *coincidentia oppositorum* (italics mine, KB)." This way Sophia is "double-centred," the Sophia is the "architect" of the earth and simultaneously is "transcendent" to it, for the world is created within the distance between heaven and itself. The difference between both, between "idea" and "matter," is the "foundation" of Creation. The establishment of a "living ladder" connecting Earth and Heaven is the final goal of the world's historical process.⁶⁸ Following Gregory of Nyssa, Bulgakov maintained, too, that after God's first Creational act further development of the Created takes place only by constant "creative participation" of matter (*material*), i.e. of the Earth (*zemlia*) itself. Sophia is the marrow of "Godearth" (*bogozemlia*). Sophia is the true "apotheosis" of matter as the birth of life originates herein.⁶⁹ Thus, the present world is good as God's creation, but is not yet perfect. Creation has not ended yet, but the *bogochelovek* is entitled to continue Creation. How did Bulgakov define co-creatorship?

As in Solov'ev, in Bulgakov, too, there is no dichotomy between matter and spirit, between body and soul. In each case, Bulgakov, has taken the distinction one ontological step back from dualism. Matter does not signify evil, but is merely shapeless, dependent upon form and upon its association with the Divine. The human person itself is made of spirit and matter and must properly dispose of each. If this correct, we must analyse in the next analytical step the possibilities, which pertain to man.

His *Priroda v filosofii VI. Solov'eva*, 1911, looks at the latter's variant of "religious materialism" acknowledging matter as "sacred corporality (*sviataia telesnost'*)." If man knows resurrection, the same must be true for nature as a whole, even though there certainly is a difference in quality. Logical thought would have to either deny man's spiritual essence or admit it for all nature and all creatures.⁷⁰ Despite the fact that Solov'ev never developed this

⁶⁷ The translation is from the English standard-translation, Gen. I, 1-3. The Russian Bible has another numeration. Cf. *Byt.* I, 1-2.

⁶⁸ Cf. *idem*, *Svet nevechernyj. Sozertsaniia i umozreniia (1917)*, reprint "Respublika," Moskva 1994 208f.

⁶⁹ Cf. Khoruzhij, *Sofiiia*, op. cit., 67-99.

⁷⁰ Cf. Bulgakov, *Chto daet' sovremennomu soznaniu filosofii Vladimira Solov'eva?*, 1903, in: S. N. Bulgakov. *Sochineniia dvukh tomakh. Ot marksizma k idealizmu*, 1903, 195.

concept into a refined, separate philosophical discourse, Bulgakov praised him for having prepared the ground for a magnificent Christian metaphysics that allocates the sparkling idea of nature as the “other God” or the “second absolute:”⁷¹ “Nature must be the visible spirit, and spirit must be the invisible nature.”⁷² Nature is humanised by becoming man’s “peripheral body, submitting to his consciousness and realising itself in him.”⁷³

His early religious philosophy already turned around the question of “man in nature and nature in man.”⁷⁴ The content of all activity – which is economic activity – is mere struggle between life and death, a matter of pure survival.⁷⁵ Yet, this struggle is not a struggle between “two principles,” but rather a struggle between “two states.” Life is a principle that differs from death in its potential for “self-consciousness.”⁷⁶ Potentially, all inanimate matter is organised by life and concentrated in “knots of life (*uzelki zhizni*)” interconnected to each other.⁷⁷ Nature waits for being man’s spiritual “peripheral body.”⁷⁸ This is the meaning of *Creation in two acts*, the second of which points to human and nature’s co-creatorship.

Already Bulgakov’s early *Philosophy of Economy* implicitly contained this conceptualisation of Creation: while *production* is the conscious transformation of dead inanimate matter into a spiritualised body, *consumption* is “partaking of the flesh of the world.” Life is the “...capacity to consume the world” our bodily organs being “...like doors and windows into the universe, and all that enters us through these doors and windows becomes the object of our sensual penetration and becomes in a sense part of our body.”⁷⁹ Nourishment is the most vivid means of “natural communion,” because it allows man to partake “...of the flesh of the world.”⁸⁰ Nourishment is immanent to our world, whereas the Eucharist meal, “...nourishes immortal life, separated from our life by the threshold of death and resurrection.”⁸¹ Production and consumption hence is a form of spiritual communion with

⁷¹ Cf. *idem*, *Priroda v filosofii Vl. Solov'ëva* (1910), in: *O Vladimire Solov'ëve*, Reprint: Tomsk 1997, 8-20.

⁷² Cf. *idem*, *Philosophy*, op. cit., 85, quote from Schelling’s *Ideen zur Philosophie der Natur, Ausgewählte Werke in drei Bänden*, O. Weiss (ed.), Leipzig, 1907, I, 152. As Bulgakov decides, “...the true founder of the philosophy of economy” is Schelling, 79.

⁷³ Cf. *ibid*, 121.

⁷⁴ Cf. *ibid*, 35.

⁷⁵ Cf. *ibid*, 73.

⁷⁶ Cf. *ibid*, 98.

⁷⁷ Cf. *ibid*, 98f.

⁷⁸ Cf. *ibid*.

⁷⁹ Cf. *ibid*, 99-105.

⁸⁰ Cf. *ibid*, 103f.

⁸¹ Cf. *ibid*, 104.

nature. Seemingly, Bulgakov redefined the three cornerstones to every economic theory.

In order to understand his notion of *labour* we now consider his Trinitarian ontology. The *Glavy o Troichnosti*, 1928/30, unambiguously clarifies that the individual 'I' exists within a triangular relationship. It is a multiplicity of the eternally given 'I', the 'I-you' and, thirdly, the 'I-he.' As it stands, the 'he' hinders mere doubling of the 'I', ensures the recognition of the 'you' and hence is the condition for the 'we'. This 'we' forms the basis for all cognition. The 'you' is possibly alien both to the 'I' and to the 'he' after man has fallen and this is precisely why life is a tragic struggle. Nevertheless, from a metaphysical point of view, all three units form the 'we'.⁸² Man is entirely free to fill the gaps between these three parts of his being, either to recognise the them, or to give his unconscious, non reflected empirical 'I' the prominent, or worse, the absolute place.⁸³ Labour has a cognitive function: "Thanks to labour, there can be no subject alone, as subjective idealism would have it, nor any object alone, as materialism holds, but only their living unity, the subject-object."⁸⁴ Economy is a constant modelling of reality, the objectification of the 'I's' ideas, is a real bridge from the 'I' into the 'non-I'.⁸⁵

The Eucharist Sacrament is, as Bulgakov declares in his early *Philosophy of Economy* and in his much later *The Russian Church*, an active-passive event that reunites *the living* and *the dead*, the 'I' and the 'non-I', nature and spirit.⁸⁶ The identity of both is, as must be concluded, *Sophia* in terms of an existential form of her actualisation. This identity grounds on conscious consumption of the Created and on production, namely conscious *labour-intensive creation of new realities*, which must realise the world's *ipostasnost'*. The Eucharist sacrament bears "practical character" by definition⁸⁷ and it shelters the 'sophianic' knowledge needed to begin the world's transformation.

We conclude: 1.) If this is true, the Church bears full and undivided responsibility while Solov'ev does not decide the question of who is the promoter of sophianic progress unambiguously. In Bulgakov, "theurgy" is Divine descending action, whereas "Sophia-urgy" signifies man's ascent. The *Eucharist sacrament* portends the key to theurgy. Consequently, the clergy and laics – given they belong to a parish – have theurgical, co-Creational

⁸² Cf. *idem*, *Priroda v filosofii Vl. Solov'eva (1910)*, in: *O Vladimire Solov'ëve*, Reprint: Tomsk 1997, 59-62.

⁸³ Cf. *idem*, *Philosophy*, op. cit., 204.

⁸⁴ Cf. *ibid*, 114.

⁸⁵ Cf. *ibid*, 111.

⁸⁶ Cf. *ibid*, 104, and cf. *The Orthodox Church. Sergius Bulgakov 1874-1944* (transl., revised by L. Kesich), St. Vladimir's Seminary Press (ed.), New York 1988, 168.

⁸⁷ Cf. *idem*, *Philosophy*, op. cit., 69.

might at their disposal.⁸⁸ 2.) *Sophia* epitomises a *principle of change*, a principle that demands the *spiritualisation of nature*. Contrastingly to Solov'ëv for whom *Sophia* denotes the archetype of Creation, Bulgakov defined her an hypostatic, creational principle that bridges heaven and creature, spirit and matter, *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*. 2.) The posited return depends on the Church's dogmatic work, for if this is true, economy's and life's co-creative reorganisation hinges on the Church's conscious and deliberate choice to dispose over the world and make it become the Church's 'backyard' needing constant «Eucharist watering».

⁸⁸ Cf. *idem*, *Svet*, op. cit., 321f.