

Internal Visions, External Changes :

Russian Religious Philosophy 1905-1940

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## Notes

### On Transliteration

Every effort has been made to use the Library of Congress system consistently in transliterating the Russian words and passages in this thesis. Spellings from the *Biographical Dictionary of Twentieth Century Philosophers* have been used for Russian and European thinkers well known in the West. At the risk of inconsistencies in the text, where other scholars' transliterations are quoted I have not altered their spellings in quotations so that the original passage quoted can be easily found.

### On Abbreviation

In citation, each secondary source is referred to by the author's surname, not the title, after its first instance of citation in the text. For multiple works by the same author the year of publication has been added to the surname to differentiate each work. For convenience, the abbreviation (such as [Rosenthal 1992]) is also given following the bibliographical entry. Bibliographical entries for authors with multiple works cited are listed in reverse chronological order.

In the case of primary sources, the full citation has been abbreviated differently. Frequently cited primary sources are, following the first instance of citation in the text, referred to either by the author's surname and an acronym of the Russian title of the work or by the author's surname and the year of publication. The method of abbreviated reference reflects whether the note refers to a translated or original version of the text. While this might seem complicated, the intention was to help clarify the origin of the material without necessitating reference to the full citation in a majority of cases. When the original Russian text is cited it is abbreviated as [Author's Surname, Acronym of Russian Title of the Work] and when the work is cited in translation it is abbreviated as [Author's Surname, Year of Publication]. How a particular primary source is cited is also given in brackets following the bibliographical entry.

### On Translation

I have translated all passages unless otherwise stated. In the case that both the original work and its translation are cited, the first citation is the primary reference with support from the

second. For example, a quote cited [Florensky SS, 190; 1997, 201] is primarily taken from Florensky's collected works, but influenced by the translation, notes or editor's comment in the English language translation. A reversed citation [Florensky 1997, 201; SS, 190] indicates that I have cited the translated work, but would like to refer the reader to the original passage.

## **Introduction**

### **0.1 The Aims of the Thesis**

Four ideas are so pervasive in and intrinsic to Russian religious philosophy that their presence is practically required for a text to be considered a part of this school of thought. These ideas are all-unity, *sobornost'*, *Sophia* and Godmanhood.<sup>1</sup> All four of these words connote ideas that blend Western philosophical influences with concepts from Orthodox Christian theology and topics of specific concern to the Russian cultural context.<sup>2</sup> This unique blend makes these words seem mysterious and complex, yet they appear regularly and pervasively in Russian religious philosophy and have consistent meanings. One way to better understand the phenomenon that is Russian religious philosophy is to get a more detailed picture of its fundamental ideas. A good way to approach this task is to see how the meanings of these ideas develop by observing them in use over time.

This thesis aims to test the hypothesis that between 1905 and 1940 Russian religious philosophy itself changed and that this change can be gauged by looking at how the meanings of these ideas changed.<sup>3</sup> One possible cause of this change is the historical context, and therefore

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<sup>1</sup> Specific treatment of these ideas in Russian philosophy can be found in M. Epstein, 'The Phoenix of Philosophy: On the Meaning and Significance of Contemporary Russian Thought', *Symposion: A Journal of Russian Thought*, 1 (1996), 35-74 [all-unity]; J. Pain, 'Sobornost: A Study in Modern Russian Orthodox Theology', D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1967 [*sobornost'*]; J. Kornblatt, *Divine Sophia: The Wisdom Writings of Vladimir Solovyov* (Ithaca, 2009) [*Sophia*]; and chapter four in F. Copleston, *Russian Religious Philosophy: Selected Aspects* (Tunbridge Wells, 1988) [Godmanhood]; among other works.

<sup>2</sup> Namely, the social questions that dominated Russian thought such as the legacy of the *mir* and the questions about development that were particular to the Slavophil Westernizer debate. For more on the questions and issues particular to the Russian cultural context, see V. Tolz, *Russia: Inventing the Nation* (London, 2001) and G. Hosking, *Russia and the Russians* (London, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> This is not to say that this period is the only important period in the development of Russian religious philosophy or indeed in the development of these ideas.

this research looks at how the major historical periods of pre- and post-revolutionary Russia influenced the meaning and use of these ideas. But it also considers the possibility that inherent contradictions or untenable aspects of these ideas exerted an influence over how Russian religious philosophy changed by constraining the potential avenues for development and influencing the ways philosophers who used these ideas were able to engage with their everyday context. The existence of these ideas in religious philosophy is real and openly acknowledged by historians and linguists, but until scholarship has failed to consider the ‘lives’ of the ideas themselves—their growth or disability, their successful and failed uses—as separated from the lives of the thinkers who used them. This situation causes Russian religious philosophy to appear to be more discontinuous and less integrated a school of thought than it may have been. In the following work, all-unity, *sobornost’*, *Sophia*, and Godmanhood are foregrounded in order to illustrate this school of thought as a whole. By looking at religious philosophy through these ideas we can see it in a new light and better understand the intellectual climate of the period.

### **0.1.A Summary of Content**

This research is presented in three parts. In Part One the idea that Russian religious philosophy should be considered a coherent school of thought and the hypothesis that it would be useful to look at the four central ideas examined in this work are raised and challenged. Chapter 1 considers the overall argument that religious philosophy is better understood as a whole than as the sum of several philosophers’ individual works. The theory that a ‘discourse’ of religious philosophy united texts in this period is examined, and this chapter concludes that discourse theory can act as an aid in analysis of religious philosophy in this period. In Chapter 2 the question of whether the ideas of all-unity, *Sophia*, *sobornost’* and Godmanhood are unique actors within the religious-philosophical discourse of the day is raised and answered. Here, these ideas are postulated to fit the definition of a ‘discursive structure’ and as such can be used as tools to investigate a discourse. Having thoroughly grounded the methodology in Part One,

Parts Two and Three contain the bulk of historical analysis. In Part Two Russian religious philosophy before the revolution is examined. In order to clarify what themes, trends and pressures characterized the revolutionary period, I introduce and discuss the broad issues of concern at that time in Chapter 3. Then, in Chapter 4 I look more closely at the influence the revolutionary period had on religious philosophy. The post-revolutionary Russian religious thought is analysed in Part Three. The experience of exile is introduced in Chapter 5, and its effects on Russian religious philosophy are examined in Chapter 6. Chapters 3 and 5 set out the focal historical contexts of this work, drawing attention to the key dates and events that bear on the chronology of publications and development of the four ideas explored here. In Chapters 4 and 6 the use of these four ideas is considered in historical context in order to demonstrate the ways that Russian religious philosophy changed and reacted to the external conditions of this period.

In the conclusion to this thesis the findings of this research are presented: (1) that changes within religious philosophy took place during this time and that these changes can be detected through the careful study of the ideas that make up this philosophy; (2) that although these changes owe something to the extreme circumstances of the first half of the twentieth century, they can only partially be attributed to external circumstances because internal constraints also affected the capacity of these ideas themselves to change; (3) that more often than not, these changes were part of a decline in production, popularity or relevance of religious philosophy; and finally (4) that it is possible to explain why certain areas of their use remained relevant while others became obsolete.

### **0.1.B The Methodology**

The ambition behind the aims of this research called for an inventive methodological approach. Working with texts raised the question of how to interpret them as historical-cultural artefacts, and three literary analytical concepts stood out as appropriate theoretical support for approaching religious-philosophical texts as such. The first concept is the idea of discourse, or the idea that texts have a meaning established by their cultural context and not just by their

internal structures.<sup>4</sup> The second is the idea of dialogue, or that meaning is established in the conjunction of two parties, such as author and reader, and not by the author on his own.<sup>5</sup> The final analytical tool is that of the metaphor as a semiotic construct that helps to assign meaning to a concept through comparisons with other like concepts, and thus both define and emphasize the individuality of an idea.<sup>6</sup> All three literary tools were central to the structuralist methodologies that emerged in the twentieth century to help identify different factors present in the creation and reception of culture. What these methodologies share is an understanding of culture and cultural artefacts as systems of meaning in which changes can be identified over time.

To be able to use the concept of discourse effectively a precise definition of its meaning in this thesis needs to be set out. A variety of meanings, theories and applications have developed out of the basic premise of discourse. In this work, the term discourse does not denote the domain of all meaningful speech, but is instead ‘an individualizable group of statements’ that share ‘particular structures’, force and coherence.<sup>7</sup> It is important to remember that a discourse in this sense is not a concrete conversation or series of communications between individuals.

For our purposes a discourse is a set of texts that are connected by the type of structure, power and meaning that they share. Discourse, so defined, helps differentiate Russian religious

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<sup>4</sup> The theory of communication denoted by the word ‘discourse’ was comprehensively addressed by the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984) in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* in 1969. Other important philosophers who have contributed to and elaborated upon discourse theory are Valentin Voloshinov (1895-1936), Michel Pêcheux (1938-1983), Louis Althusser (1918-1990), and Paul Hirst (1947-2003). At present, the idea of a discourse as an entity that can control participants’ speech is included in the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*: ‘any coherent body of statements that produced a self confirming account of reality by defining an object of attention and generating concepts by which to analyse it’(C. Baldick (Oxford, 2008)). Every attempt has been made in this work to use the term discourse only to denote this type of theoretical discourse. So as not to confuse the reader, other communications that could be termed an actual discourse will be termed either a discussion or conversation and the participants will be named.

<sup>5</sup> Theoretical dialogue is a less commonly used tool in academic writing than theoretical discourse. To prevent confusion, the use of the word dialogue in this thesis refers to the theoretical construct. No communications between two parties are referred to as dialogues unless the intention is to highlight the theoretical implications of the communication on constructing dialogical meaning.

<sup>6</sup> As with the terms discourse and dialogue, every effort has been made to use the term metaphor only in its theoretical sense.

<sup>7</sup> S. Mills, *Discourse* (London, 1997), 7.

philosophy from other types of contemporary writing because the idea of a religious-philosophical discourse becomes a means by which to define religious philosophy itself. In postulating a religious-philosophical discourse, this thesis contends that (a) Russian religious philosophy contains specific language structures that indicate a reflexive identity, and (b) although an affinity with a few other types of writing can be drawn, this identity is *distinct* from other contemporary forms of writing. Therefore, discourse theory helps us see that religious philosophy constitutes a subset of philosophy and does not communicate ideas with the same rhetorical methods as other Russian texts with philosophical content, for example, materialist philosophy, ideology or propaganda. This self-identifying sensibility borrows from German philosophy and theological works, but maintains an intent and emphasis not just specific to Russian religious philosophy, but also quite uniform regardless of author or topic.<sup>8</sup> The meaning of these philosophical works builds upon a self-referential foundation, which uses common signals and sources of truth.

This is not to say that individual traits cannot be detected amongst works by different authors, but rather to emphasize that the overall similarities between the works justify viewing them as constituting one group or body of thought. Each part of this thesis provides specific examples which point to the coherence and unity of the philosophy in question and constitute evidence of the presence of a religious-philosophical discourse.

Identifying the presence of discursive structures is one way to indicate the presence of a discourse. Discursive structures are defined systematized ideas, opinions, and concepts.<sup>9</sup> They

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<sup>8</sup> In her conclusion to *Motherland*, Lesley Chamberlain postulates that ‘Russian philosophy is not quite its own subject. It is a branch of German philosophy, perhaps even of German poetry, and has always needed outside thinkers to make clear what it holds as its own’ (*Motherland: A Philosophical History of Russia* (London, 2004), 281). Chamberlain presents a convincing argument for the interrelationship between Russian and German thought throughout the period of her study (1820-1991), although her statement above can be seen as contradictory to the central argument of her monograph: that Russian philosophy is an idiosyncratic ‘other’ to Western Philosophy. Her observation is bold because it addresses head-on how extremely influential German thought has been on the development of Russian philosophy, whereas other historians of Russian philosophy have been more circumspect in their assessments of its influence. It is beyond the scope of this research to meaningfully address all of the German thinkers who have influenced Russian thought, but where appropriate the most influential men and ideas are introduced.

<sup>9</sup> Mills, 17.

also indicate the potential presence of ‘subsidiary products’, or effects of the discourse. In other words, considering the possibility of a religious-philosophical discourse necessitates viewing religious-philosophical texts as both the products of a discursive context and as producers of by-products, both processes that cumulatively create a religious-philosophical discourse.

When thinking of the relationship between a discourse and its discursive structures, one may be inclined to attribute a certain circularity to the logic that holds these two concepts together: The discourse is evidenced by the presence of discursive structures, and discursive structures can only be found in a discourse. It must be borne in mind that this perceived circularity is hermeneutical. By postulating a discourse and identifying potential discursive structures, it is possible to establish a means of interpreting religious philosophy. Formulating static definitions of the meanings of terms and texts is an important step towards identifying contents of work. But, if Russian religious thought is itself a living thing (a growing, changing, active and reactive body of work) then static definitions do not do justice to its life. The circular nature of the discourse/discursive structure relationship facilitates interpretation of these changing meanings, and interpretation is a step towards providing potential explanations of the circumstances of religious philosophy in this period.

A focus on the discursive structures of the religious-philosophical discourse is one method for understanding the relationship between the context and the texts. In this thesis the ideas of *sobornost*, *Sophia*, Godmanhood and all-unity are considered to be ‘discursive structures’ within the religious-philosophical discourse for several reasons. Not only are they defined and systematized ideas, they are also ideas that systematically influence how thinkers think about them. These ideas are both products of a discourse and necessitate subsidiary or by-product ideas. As fundamental constitutive ideas of religious-philosophical discourse, *Sophia*, Godmanhood, all-unity and *sobornost* can be considered discursive structures of this discourse.

In this thesis the idea of a religious-philosophical discourse is a critical framework in which the internal rules or constraints and the external pressures on religious philosophy can be understood by viewing all of these philosophers’ statements as essentially ‘rule-governed’ by

the same, or a similar set of, implicit rules.<sup>10</sup> In an analysis of these ‘rules’ the historical context becomes especially vivid and relevant to the meaning of the ideas as they were presented over time, because the theoretical discourse model helps establish the existence of structures (political, social or otherwise) external to the text that, because of the text’s ‘situatedness in the social’, influence its inception and reception.<sup>11</sup> The ‘institutional nature of discourse’ helps us draw connections between the historical circumstances surrounding ideas and the ideas themselves.<sup>12</sup> Without this theory, drawing these connections would be problematic.

The discourse model might not always be helpful when trying to explore the relationship between an idea and its historical context, though. Hannah Arendt suggests that some external experiences may not manifest themselves in a discourse because they are experiences beyond articulation. She uses the idea of violence as an inexpressible circumstance, ‘where violence rules absolutely... not only the laws—*les lois se taisent*, as the French Revolution phrased it—but everything and everybody must fall silent.’<sup>13</sup> The experience of violence is irrational and indigestible, and therefore it cannot have rational existence. She further explains,

Because of this speechlessness [of violence] political theory has little to say about the phenomenon of violence and must leave its discussion to the technicians. For political thought can only follow the articulations of the political phenomena themselves, it remains bound to what appears in the domain of human affairs; and these appearances, in contradistinction to physical matters, need speech and articulation, that is something which transcends mere physical visibility as well as sheer audibility, in order to be manifest at all. A theory of war or a theory of revolution, therefore can only deal with the justification of violence because this justification constitutes its political limitation.<sup>14</sup>

Arendt’s observations suggest that some of the external context that might be expected to have played a strong role in the religious-philosophical discourse during this period, revolution and civil war for example, may be unable to be integrated into a language-based expression of the human experience. A completely philosophical response to the ‘unspeakable’ violence of the twentieth century could be impossible. Therefore the extent and nature of some of the

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 9.

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

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> H. Arendt, *On Revolution* (London, 1990), 18.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 19. Underlining my own.

experiences that are part of the historical context of religious philosophy will be unapparent in an analysis of religious-philosophical discourse. Establishing a concept of discourse is intended to clarify some connections of religious philosophy to its context, but, as in this example, it cannot clarify every connection.

In some instances the idea of dialogue is perhaps a better model than discourse for setting out, identifying and analysing connections between texts. Traditionally a dialogue is thought to be between two parties, but in this research the focus is not on any two participants; in fact they are assumed. Instead the focus is on an important third entity: the relationship that exists between the parties, be they speaker and listener or author and reader. These interactions frame language and form a meaning for language use that is not personal to any one user. Unlike a discourse study, which seeks to uncover the institutions and structures that govern certain language use, the idea of dialogue helps us to examine the intertextualities that exist due to the fundamentally two-partied nature of any text.<sup>15</sup>

In this thesis, the idea that multiple language users developed their terminology, at least in part, dialogically is one way to think about the control, or lack thereof, any individual religious philosopher had over the meaning of the ideas that he used in his thought.<sup>16</sup> The four ideas considered here were held in common by several thinkers. At certain times, one thinker may have dominated the use and definition of an idea but, for the most part, these ideas were shared. The amount of control any one thinker had over the meaning of an idea, therefore, varied according to his context and the context of the language that he used.

Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) uses the concept of *heteroglossia* to explain the dialogical nature of language.<sup>17</sup> This word denotes how language consists of multiple personal voices and,

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<sup>15</sup> Intertextuality, coined by the theorist Julia Kristeva (b. 1941), denotes relationships between texts, such as allusion and when texts refer to themselves or each other rather than to an external reality (Baldick, 171).

<sup>16</sup> Multiple language users, here, are individual religious philosophers with each other, or religious philosophers and other intellectuals.

<sup>17</sup> Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin was a philosopher and literary critic, and his work has had a substantial influence on current ideas about literary criticism. See K. Clark and M. Holquist, *Michael Bakhtin* (London, 1984); and for his general uses in literary theory, M. Booker, *A Practical Introduction to Literary Theory and Criticism* (London, 1996).

at the same time, is unified and shared. In his view speech reflects the speaker's and listener's personal and separate interpretations of language (their own language) and 'worldview', but the use of language also involves a fusion of the language participant's perspectives into a whole.<sup>18</sup> *Heteroglossia* denotes the result: a dialogue where language emerges as a spontaneous unity that forms new meanings; whereas originally each participant had an independent language with personal meanings, in conversation these independent meanings change. This is an important theoretical concept because it thinks of dialogue as specific to instances of use, and specific in time. Before speech any person has total ownership of the meaning of his words, but at the moment of speech the words enter a common domain and have a meaning that is assigned dialogically and therefore partially out of the speaker's control.

*Heteroglossia* has several ramifications for the methodology of this research. For one, it suggests that the transition of ownership of meaning from the author's internal understanding to actual use occurs with every speech act, so dialogical meaning is highly dynamic. For another, it suggests that these shifts in meaning are often unconscious and therefore beyond authorial control. What is particularly relevant to the methodology of this thesis is the effect that *heteroglossia* has on our perception of certain types of language as the domain of certain fields: when we think that a word has certain connotations of meaning in one context that it does not have in another. *Heteroglossia* explains the tendency to view certain words and language structures as having a specific meaning not assigned by the individual:

For any individual consciousness living in it, language is not an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete heteroglot conception of the world. All words have the 'taste' of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour.<sup>19</sup>

*Heteroglossia* explains why specific language use is adhered to in the circle of dialogue among religious philosophers.<sup>20</sup> In these dialogues, either between religious philosophy and other

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<sup>18</sup> M. Bakhtin, *The Word in the Novel*, tr. A. Shukman (Cambridge, 1980).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 293.

<sup>20</sup> Bakhtin argues, 'Alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and dis-unification go forward'; that is, distinct language structures (discourses) are produced within the greater fields of meaning production (*The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin, 2002), 272).

contemporary philosophies or among the religious philosophers themselves, certain words and concepts gain a common meaning. The four ideas, or discursive structures, of all-unity, *sobornost'*, *Sophia* and Godmanhood have a dialogical meaning that is constructed in partnership, yet is also subject to flux. Each word and its meaning are constructed by the dialogues in which it is used. For this reason, the highly dynamic situation of a dialogic speech act is the ideal site to identify uncontrolled change in the meaning of a word. Thus, *heteroglossia* can help us understand the reasons why and how some words are used, changed and/or abandoned.

Dialogue can also be used to analyse how language use facilitates control of ideas. Part of discourse theory is the assumption that access to a specific discourse is not always equal amongst every possible stakeholder.<sup>21</sup> Bakhtin uses his idea of dialogue to 'signify a voice', by which he means a 'method of using words which signifies authority'.<sup>22</sup> At times a dialogue can be clearly dominated by the voice of one participant. The presence of such authorial voices with respect to the ideas discussed in this thesis illustrates the changing accessibility of religious-philosophical words. Indeed, the dialogues in which these words were used might even, to some extent, have controlled access to the religious-philosophical discourse itself. Certainly, the changing historical circumstances in which the Russian thinkers thought and worked influenced who had access to their ideas; for example, emigration greatly reduced their readership. Yet the thinkers themselves also reduce the accessibility of their work by continuing to use peculiar untranslatable Russian words when consciously writing texts for translation. This preserves their domination of the genre and protects the meaning of their philosophy in the context of a diasporic philosophical community. All of the ideas discussed here changed in use and accessibility between 1905 and 1940. But, the ideas of *sobornost'* and *Sophia*, especially, appear to have been intentionally controlled by their philosophical users.

In this respect Bakhtin's contrast of dialogue with theoretical monologue, an idea that acknowledges a means of using language outside of the constraints of dialogue, is a particularly

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<sup>21</sup> Mills, 14.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 8.

insightful model. A monologue, a text without dialogical reference, is a conceptual part of this research insofar as the dwindling academic communities and readerships, as well as ideological isolation, provoked this style of writing in religious philosophy. Religious philosophy exists within discursive frameworks of interconnection, but it did not always take part in dialogues with other thinkers or schools of thought. This can especially be said of the idea of *Sophia*, which became progressively isolated from religious-philosophical dialogues after the Russian Revolution. Overall, this thesis demonstrates the narrative shift in religious philosophy from a wide context of dialogue to a narrower, post-emigration dialogue among a few.

The final framework in which to consider the changing language use by the Russian religious philosophers is theoretical metaphor. In his essay *The White Mythology* (1972), Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) discusses the place of metaphorical language in philosophy.<sup>23</sup> The title of his essay refers to an understanding of philosophical words as ‘white’, or cleaned of metaphorical meaning. The way that he describes the traditional terms of philosophy ‘as metaphors’, and of all philosophy as a series or succession of displaced metaphors, informs this analysis of the progression of religious philosophy across the period because it shows a theoretical model for changes in meaning. In this context, transitions in a philosophy can be seen as the constant displacement of one metaphor for another. By looking at the succession of metaphorical meanings transitions in a philosophy can be seen. Thinking about ideas as serialized and transplanting each other is conceptually helpful when thinking about ideas in history.

As a theoretical approach, ‘metaphor’ is helpful because it describes a fundamental component of communication. The idea that philosophical language is founded on premises opposed to metaphor, or that philosophical language attempts to avoid metaphorical meaning, only highlights the presence of metaphorical language within philosophy. This opposition to metaphor is fundamental because philosophical speech often treats words and concepts as if

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<sup>23</sup> *Marges de la Philosophie* (Chicago, 1982).

they were self-identical.<sup>24</sup> ‘Philosophy is committed to thinking that every genuine concept, and every genuine distinction, is non-metaphorical.’<sup>25</sup> Michael Morris explains this idea of opposition further. He considers philosophers to have ‘defined their goals by implicit contrast with metaphorical description,’ and ‘repeatedly shown themselves to be committed to the view that concepts and distinctions are, in general, independent of any particular mode of expression’.<sup>26</sup> The reason the use of metaphor is less appealing to the philosopher-author than to other authors is suggested by Edith Clowes:

Although philosophical discourse needs the vivifying energy of metaphor—the promise of delivering more meaning than what is embedded in a concrete signifier—philosophers are also wary of the ambiguity, evasiveness and inability of metaphor to limit its own reach and to mean precisely that which is intended.<sup>27</sup>

The use of metaphor entails the recognition of ambiguity, which philosophers, so interested in clarity, refuse.

To better understand how metaphor works as a conceptual tool, it helps to think of words as consisting of two parts: the word itself, as it is written or uttered, and the concept to which the word refers. A metaphor associates one word with the concept of another, introducing a synthetic property alien to its proper definition: ‘although things which are metaphorically X do in some way fall within the rationale for the... concept of X, there is nevertheless a sense in which they do not.’<sup>28</sup> A useful example is: if I were trying to explain the idea of a fly with the statement ‘a fly is like a bee’, whether the listener understands this

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<sup>24</sup> Here the term self-identical is intended in its original Hegelian meaning, i.e. equal to itself. The idea of self-identity, discussed in *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences [Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse]* (1817) in Part 1, the Encyclopaedia of Logic, refers to a thing that finds its definition in itself—essentially a tautological thing. This concept is connected to the Law of Identity (A=A) and attempts to isolate concepts lacking in internal contradiction. What a theory of metaphor helps us see more clearly is the reality that no such self-identical thing exists, because all things are either connected, in motion, or in transition, even such abstract things as meaning.

<sup>25</sup> As a philosophical concept, not a literary term, metaphor has been used more recently to explore statements outside of the paradigm of truth; in other words, statements that are not truth-conditional (M. Morris, ‘Metaphor and Philosophy: An Encounter with Derrida’, *Philosophy*, 75 (2000), 227).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 228.

<sup>27</sup> *Fiction’s Overcoat: Russian Literary Culture and the Question of Philosophy* (London, 2004), 113. A concrete signifier is a word that directly represents its meaning. For example, ‘angel’ as a concrete signifier means ‘a spiritual being believed to act as a messenger of God’, although metaphorically it could mean a ‘very good person’.

<sup>28</sup> Morris, 231.

statement to mean that the fly is small, an insect, winged, or yellow-and-black and stings is beyond my control. In this respect an author using metaphor will always risk being misunderstood, even though a metaphor typically serves to highlight a greater, if not immediately visible, truth about its subject.

To use Derrida's terminology, the true meaning of the concept is its 'proper' meaning. When philosophers do choose to define the meaning of a word with the use of metaphor, they are adding a non-proper meaning of the word to the proper meaning in an effort to highlight an aspect of the proper meaning. Differentiating between a 'proper' and a 'non-proper' meaning is clarified by the idea of univocity.<sup>29</sup> Morris defines univocity as a conventional standard of meaning.<sup>30</sup> The non-proper meaning of a word must therefore be considered as isolated and unable to participate in univocity because it is excluded from the common, standard definition. This is why metaphor is ultimately enriching to language; it provides a means of expanding the meaning of a word through association with a new concept.<sup>31</sup>

The religious philosopher Pavel Florensky (1882-1937) addressed this topic in *The Pillar and The Ground of the Truth* [*Stolp i utverzhdnie istiny*] (1914): 'If A really is self-identical, it is then unexplainable, irreducible to "something else,"' meaning that if a word can only have its common meaning and nothing else then words can have no relationship to each other.<sup>32</sup> Metaphorical speech assumes that all concepts are associated with each other in some way, so there is no concept A that exists unrelated to any other concept. Paradoxically, it is the

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<sup>29</sup> Univocity is similar to Bakhtin's idea that an overriding unity governs language use, but it differs in that the unity of univocity is a 'common standard', whereas Bakhtin identifies unity in a common origin in the tension between two, or multiple, personal meanings.

<sup>30</sup> Morris, 230: 'In order to make sense of the possibility of truth and falsity in the use of a particular word or concept as being answerable to a certain common standard.'

<sup>31</sup> As Morris explains, this understanding of metaphor implies that the non-proper meanings have some form of identity with the proper, in so far as some connection between them is drawn by the metaphor-creator.

<sup>32</sup> Tr. Boris Jakim (Oxford, 1997), 24; and *Sobranie Sochinenii*, iv: *Stolp i utverzhdnie istiny* (Paris, 1985), 29. *The Pillar and the Ground of the Truth* was written in parts between 1908 and 1911, although published in 1914. Florensky was ordained in 1911 and continued in spiritual work until the Revolution, at which point (from 1919-28) he worked on the electrification of Russia. For at least a decade from 1928 he moved between several work camps. He is the subject of a few studies at all, most notably in English Slesinski's biography, *Pavel Florensky: A Metaphysics of Love* (Crestwood, 1984) and Pyman's biography *Pavel Florensky: A Quiet Genius* (London, 2010).

existence of distinct and opposing words that actually facilitates metaphorical speech: ‘The proper stands to the non-proper as the literal stands to the non-literal; these concepts and this distinction are presupposed by the concept of metaphor.’<sup>33</sup> To say that A is like B in some respect would have no meaning if A was in fact considered identical to B and therefore like it in every respect. Thus, A and B must be considered separate entities for a metaphor to have meaning. Therefore, for philosophical writing to be successful an important balance that allows metaphorical language to enrich and not obscure the author’s intention must be achieved.<sup>34</sup>

Russian philosophers use metaphorical and literary language extensively. Clowes argues that the reason is partially to satisfy a contemporary Russian readership’s desire for specific genres of literature and partially due to the philosophers’ preferences for literary expression.<sup>35</sup> The fragmentary and aphoristic impulses occasionally expressed in the writings of more literarily-minded thinkers, such as Lev Shestov (1866-1938) and Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948), illustrate the tension between codification and anarchy in Russian thought.<sup>36</sup> Diffuse ideas and ideas of dispersal and negation also punctuate the systematic thought of Florensky and Semen Frank (1877-1950).<sup>37</sup> The impulse to enact mental life, to embody the thought process

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<sup>33</sup> Morris, 229.

<sup>34</sup> Joseph Adamson describes this balance in terms of discourse theory when he discusses the uses of metaphor in literary theory: ‘Philosophy’s law of the proper [adherence to only one meaning] attempts but fails to restrict the margins of its own discourse’ (I. Makaryk, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Literary Theory* (Toronto, 1993), 652).

<sup>35</sup> Clowes, 131.

<sup>36</sup> Of all the religious-philosophical thinkers Nikolai Alexandrovich Berdyaev is perhaps the most prolific and well known in the West. Berdyaev’s popularity in the West has provoked translation of much of his oeuvre into English, even during his lifetime. He is the subject of two English biographies published as early after his death as 1950: E. Allen, *Freedom in God* (London, 1950), and O. Clarke, *Introduction to Berdyaev* (London, 1950). Despite an abundance of interest and published material mid-century, Berdyaev as a topic has not yet been exhausted by scholars of philosophy, history and Russian culture. James McLachlan’s *The Desire to be God* considers Berdyaev and Jean Paul Sartre’s (1905-1980) existentialism (New York, 1992). In *Dilemmas of Reaction in Leninist Russia*, Christian Gottlieb examines Berdyaev’s response to the Revolution (Odense, 2003). See Chapter 1 for comparison and elaboration of biographical details about the thinkers mentioned here.

<sup>37</sup> Western academia is not very familiar with Semen Ludvigovich Frank, but he is widely known in Russia as an important philosopher from this era. In secondary literature Frank is most often grouped with Bulgakov and Berdyaev as the subject of study, for example as the authors of *Landmarks*. Only one biographical monograph of Frank has been published in English, P. Boobbyer’s *S. L. Frank: The Life and Work of a Russian Philosopher 1877-1950* (Athens, Ohio, 1995). Because his work was neither directly literary nor theological, he has not benefited from scholarly attention in those fields in

in a creative rather than formulaic format, is carried out in all these forms of writing. This observation is not to say that religious philosophy is written in a style different from traditional types of philosophy at the time. Work by Frank and Vladimir Solov'ev (1853-1900) does much to bridge the creative gap between more anarchistic thinkers and the Western tradition.<sup>38</sup> A whole picture of Russian philosophy, the conjunction of form and content, can be appreciated by looking at the thematic links between these forms of writing. However, metaphorical language use in some of these cases serves more to obscure than to elucidate. Meanings and philosophies ultimately can fail to reach a readership and be superseded by new meanings. As will be seen, this process takes place in religious philosophy when frequently-used words take on new meanings.

As the only subjects of this research are philosophical texts, some means of analysis must be employed to draw out the deeper connections and implications of the text. Much of Russian thought is expressed in a literary format and much research on Russian thought is done by academics in literary studies, so it is neither surprising nor inappropriate that the use of tools from literary critical theory have become increasingly popular in Russian studies. By acknowledging this growing popularity and looking toward these tools, this research is linked to other studies of Russian philosophy. Yet it must be acknowledged that discourse, metaphor and dialogue are philosophical ideas themselves and, here, serve only as tools to know religious philosophy in new ways. These theories of language use are helpful because they provoke a fresh view of familiar texts, as all of the works considered here have already been published and are available for analysis. What is new about this research is the breadth of the approach; the

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the way that Bulgakov and Berdyaev have. Perhaps the imminent publication of his complete works in German will help attract the interest of Western philosophers.

<sup>38</sup> See P. Allen, *Vladimir Soloviev: Russian Mystic* (Blauvelt, New York, 1978), and J. Sutton, *The Religious Philosophy of Vladimir Solovyov: Towards a Reassessment* (London: 1988) for more on Solov'ev's life and work. Solov'ev's work undoubtedly influenced later religious philosophy in three significant ways. Firstly, his method of combining religious and philosophical thought set a powerful example of how to mix genres in religious-philosophical texts. Secondly, Solov'ev integrated the competing impulses of dialogue between the Slavophiles and the Westernizers about the relationship between Russia and the West. Thirdly, his theories about the importance of the ideas of Godmanhood and *Sophia* opened these topics to the philosophical community. Solov'ev did not create a monologue about these ideas, instead his writings on these topics attracted other thinkers, facilitating these ideas' growth into powerful discursive structures of religious philosophy.

intention to survey the state of religious philosophy throughout the period by looking for evidence of change or stasis in these texts. As will be seen in the following subsection, research on religious philosophy is often influenced by contemporary ideas and approaches. These literary tools, particularly useful to my purposes, show how this research, too, is a product of its time.

## 0.2 The Secondary Literature

The formation of this research project has been heavily influenced by earlier publications: the decisions of what topics to look at, which philosophers to study, what period to consider and how to frame this research were taken with other scholars' contributions to the field in mind. This subsection of the introduction draws attention not only to the secondary literature in the area of Russian philosophy, and especially Russian religious philosophy, but also to the works that have been most influential in the conception, development and intent of this project. As an undergraduate student in a modern languages faculty I stumbled into the web of Russian philosophy and, fascinated, became stuck. Russian religious thought is intriguing, mystifying and enchanting—not the least because, to a student wholly unfamiliar with it, it is at first very opaque. As a postgraduate, I hoped to do research on Russian religious philosophy that would foreground its quintessential characteristics so that later students could find their footing in this area more easily than I had. In many ways this subsection is organized as a narrative of the journey I took into the study of Russian religious philosophy and the conclusions that journey led me to make about this field.

By the mid-twentieth century three significant scholarly considerations of Russian philosophy had been published in English: Thomas Masaryk's (1850-1937) *The Spirit of Russia: Studies in History, Literature, and Philosophy*, Vassily Zenkovsky's (1881-1962) *A History of Russian Philosophy*, and Nikolai Lossky's (1870-1965) *History of Russian Philosophy*.<sup>39</sup> While each of these works supports a different view of the field, on two points

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<sup>39</sup> (London, 1955), (London, 1953), and (New York, 1951), respectively.

they are in agreement.<sup>40</sup> They agree first that this subject warranted a detailed and comprehensive text because the intellectual history of Russia had yet to be sufficiently documented; and secondly, that the main cause of this lack of documentation was that Russian philosophy diverged from the Western standards of the discipline in some respects. These first histories of Russian thought portray it as, if not deficient, then at least different from Western philosophy.

According to the master of this canon, Zenkovsky, although ‘Russian philosophy is much concerned with the “influences” of Western philosophy’, it also has an independence and unity that mark its originality.<sup>41</sup> The authors of subsequent histories have been less than completely convinced. In volume ten of his history of philosophy, *Russian Philosophy*, Frederick Copleston describes the set of Russian texts that would meet commonly accepted Western criteria for philosophy as ‘very restricted’.<sup>42</sup> Andrzej Walicki agrees in *A History of Russian Thought From Enlightenment to Marxism*.<sup>43</sup> He adds that the Russian thought that would qualify as philosophy in the West is not very original: ‘There is no doubt that in a restricted view of the subject, the originality of Russian philosophy is not easy to define whereas its dependence on Western European thought is obvious.’<sup>44</sup> Insofar as the points of Russian philosophy that conform to Western standards also appear dependant on Western

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<sup>40</sup> Thomas Nemeth’s contention, ‘No consensus exists on which works it [Russian philosophy] encompasses and which authors made decisive contributions,’ overstates the case. In fact these three weighty tomes agree for the most part on which thinkers and texts merit attention. However, it is clear that Masaryk’s account situates Russian cultural history apart from Western European culture. He describes a strong role for ‘faith’ and ‘myth’ as well as using terms like ‘childlike’ to describe Russian thought, all of which could be considered derogatory (Masaryk, 66-78). Whether he does this because he understood the Russian mind to be different from the Western European mind, as Nemeth argues, or because his view of Russian cultural history was formed before the Revolution, or because he was influenced by his own non-Russian perspective—or indeed by earlier Russian thinkers who themselves identified as non-European—cannot be determined. Zenkovsky and Lossky both place a greater importance on historical barriers as an explanation for the separation of Russian thought from the West, and describe the separation in terms of differences of style and philosophical emphasis (T. Nemeth, ‘Russian Philosophy’, *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [peer-reviewed web resource] <<http://www.iep.utm.edu/russian/>> accessed 30 January 2011).

<sup>41</sup> Zenkovsky, 10.

<sup>42</sup> (London, 1999).

<sup>43</sup> (Oxford, 1980)

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, xii.

European thought, it can be concluded that the topics that are original could also be considered to diverge from standard Western philosophy.

In Copleston's less bulky work, *Russian Religious Philosophy: Selected Aspects*, he highlights religiousness as an important point of divergence.<sup>45</sup> In focusing on the religious tendencies of a few chosen thinkers, Copleston builds upon his description of Russian singularity from his earlier survey of Russian philosophy. Like Copleston, Walicki draws attention to religious philosophy, but he also comments that religious thought is too generously surveyed by Masaryk, Lossky, and Zenkovsky.<sup>46</sup> The attention given to religious philosophy by Copleston, Masaryk, Lossky and Zenkovsky is merited, despite Walicki's concerns, because this type of philosophy is considered to be a particularly good example of the influence the historical separation of Russia from the Western course of development had on Russian philosophy. In understanding the development of Russian thought as a whole, the idea that Russian philosophy was denied the key Western influences of the Catholic Church and the Renaissance has been the subject of much consideration, and since Russian religious thought seems particularly linked to this developmental course it has drawn interest.<sup>47</sup> The first thinker to draw attention to philosophical consequences of Russia's separation from Europe was Pyotr Chaadaev (1794-1856). In his justification of Russian religious philosophy, Copleston does not blindly accept Chaadaev's understanding of Russia's relationship with the West. However, it would have been impossible for him to organize a survey of Russian thought without acknowledging Chaadaev's paradigm, which was to some extent a self-fulfilling prophecy after it was formed in his *First Philosophical Letter* [*Filosoficheskie pis'ma*] (1836) and expanded upon in the Slavophil-Westernizer debate.<sup>48</sup> The conventional idea that Orthodoxy and Russianness go hand in hand conforms to this paradigm, so it is logical that Copleston sees Russian religious philosophy as a particular by-product of Russia's past relationship with Europe. He argues that the presence of Christian concepts that complicate religious philosophy

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<sup>45</sup> (Tunbridge Wells, 1988).

<sup>46</sup> Specifically, he criticises these thinkers for bias against non-religious philosophy (Walicki, xii).

<sup>47</sup> This separation is credited by most historians as the cause of Russian thought's dependence on the West, and of its focus on social thought (Copleston 1999, 1).

<sup>48</sup> See *Philosophical Works of Peter Chaadaev*, R. T. McNally and R. Tempest, eds (Boston, 1991).

is out-weighed by the philosophical merit of the ideas themselves, and that it is worthwhile to ‘take them as they come.’<sup>49</sup> The fact that Russian religious philosophy is of philosophical interest is undeniable to Copleston and so he is unable to consider its inherent religiousness as a characteristic that prevents analysis.

It is not just in the philosophical context that Russian religious philosophy has raised concerns about categorization. Surveys of Russian theology and religious thought have considered it from the opposite perspective, that of theology, and found a different set of barriers. Unlike philosophers, for whom the presence of religious concepts is of concern, theologians are concerned by the use of philosophical methods. In *The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century* Nicholas Zernov (1898-1980) addresses the influence of Orthodoxy on the intelligentsia in terms of the Church.<sup>50</sup> He explains that the Church acted as an important support system for émigrés.<sup>51</sup> To Zernov, the Christian ideas and tone of religious philosophy are a product of rediscovered faith and based in Orthodox belief and practices. Zernov’s focus on rediscovery alludes to the problem of Russia’s relationship with the West. While the historians discussed above are concerned with how religious philosophy represents an intellectual connection to Western philosophical traditions, Zernov is more concerned with the return of Russia’s ‘Westernized’ intelligentsia to its Orthodox roots.<sup>52</sup>

Alexander Schmemmann’s introduction to *Ultimate Questions: An Anthology of Modern Russian Religious Thought* explains the centrality of Orthodox thought in religious philosophy in terms of the intellectual heritage of the Church.<sup>53</sup> For him, the significance of Russian religious thought is in ‘the fact that in it [religious thought] the historical identification of Orthodoxy with the East is overcome from within and its universal perspective is re-established’.<sup>54</sup> Like the other thinkers above, Schmemmann regards the significance of religious philosophy as its ability to unite Russian thought with the West, with the addition of his view

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<sup>49</sup> Copleston 1988, viii and ix.

<sup>50</sup> (London, 1963),

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 212.

<sup>52</sup> Zernov, vii.

<sup>53</sup> (Oxford, 1977).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* 8.

that Orthodox theology is as rightfully ‘Western’ as the other philosophical influences on Russian religious thinkers.

Clearly, the notion of a sub-group of Russian thought that is both religious and philosophical in nature has already been established in the above works. The fact that no standard definition of religious philosophy exists is beneficial in that it allows freedom in research of the area and promotes a variety of approaches and conclusions. This situation has a detrimental effect as well. Efforts to address the relevance of the movement and create an on-going place for philosophers of this school in wider study of Russian history are hindered by the looseness of consensus in the field and the varied approaches to understanding the interconnections religious philosophy has with Russian and Western philosophy. These apparent needs reveal two ways this thesis could contribute to Russian intellectual history:

- To view Russian religious philosophy as a whole.
- To view Russian philosophers and their ideas, not only in a Russian cultural context but in the broadest possible context.

The concern that earlier research has shown for how Russian philosophy relates to Western philosophy clearly demonstrates that the choice of context in which to consider Russian thought is central to its analysis. In keeping with earlier approaches, this research aims to consider the relationship religious philosophy has with Western thought. This is especially important because the implication of not doing so is that religious philosophy can be important only in a Russian cultural context. It is true that the relevance of religious philosophy to Russian history and Russian culture can be more easily established than its wider connections can, but it is false that this school of thought is important or historically relevant only to the Russian narrative. Connections to wider discussions about the role of Christianity in the modern world and about how to react anthropocentrically to modernity have attracted thinkers and historians outside the fields of Russian history, language and literature to Russian religious philosophy. Attempting to construct the broadest possible framework in which to situate religious philosophy allows for the development of all of its possibilities to interest or inspire future scholars in this field.

### 0.2.A Intellectual History and the Framing of this Research

The consideration of pioneering works on Russian intellectual history also drew my attention to the role of intellectual history in the wider study of history, a puzzle many historians have also had to contend with. The problem historians interested in the history of ideas face is that it is not immediately clear how histories of ideas connect to other historical narratives.<sup>55</sup> For the most part, attempts to understand the history of Russian philosophy have been aimed at supplementing and developing a better understanding of other areas of Russian history, such as the history of the intelligentsia, of radical movements, or of literature. For a few, such as Lossky, Zenkovsky and Zernov, the history of Russian thought is also a personal history—touching on topics and individuals in the authors' autobiographies.

All human experience, perception and reaction, including individual biographies, take place within the boundaries of time, i.e. in history. 'Ideas are mental artefacts,' and their history tells us about the 'identity of man, the artificer'.<sup>56</sup> The study of ideas in order to learn about a specific 'idea maker' or about humans-as-thinkers in general raises the question of how human consciousness is formed and influenced by its context. Indeed an idea can never be fully separated from a historical context because the it is strongly connected to the first person who thought it and the person thinking it now.

Abraham Edel (1908-2007) describes this context as a 'socio-historical matrix' and explains that in interacting with this matrix ideas become 'historicized'.<sup>57</sup> How ideas are formed by circumstance and how ideas can be the creators of a circumstance are murky areas for the student of Russian thought, the Russian experience having been so polarizing as to

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<sup>55</sup> Arthur O. Lovejoy coined the terminology 'history of ideas' as an alternative to 'intellectual history', which could also connote the history of intellectuals. As a relatively young discipline, resources for further reading are not intimidatingly great in number; for an introduction see: A. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (London, 2009); I. Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas* (London, 2003); and J. Pocock, *Political Thought and History: Essays on Theory and Method* (Cambridge, 2009). Lovejoy's preference notwithstanding, 'history of ideas' and 'intellectual history' are used interchangeably here.

<sup>56</sup> H. Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, ii: *Willing* (London, Secker & Warburg, 1978), 5.

<sup>57</sup> A. Edel, 'Levels of Meaning and the History of Ideas' in D. R. Kelley, ed., *The History of Ideas: Canon and Variations* (Rochester, 1990), 73.

produce ideas completely divorced from reality or entirely subject to it. Edel lists four useful ways in which to think about ideas in the socio-historical matrix (see Figure 1).<sup>58</sup> Each of Edel's hypothesis help to focus the thematic attention of this study and to put attention on to the time period between the 1905 Revolution and the Second World War.

(a)	Social processes make ideas appear in history.
(b)	The development of an idea is isomorphic with social development.
(c)	An abstract idea 'requires supplementation by socio-historical material' to complete it.
(d)	Philosophical ideas serve instrumental functions for social groups.

Figure 1: Edel's model of interaction between ideas and history

Edel's first way raises the question of whether religious philosophy developed in Russia due to social processes. Walicki suggests that religious philosophy is a phenomenon associated with the social process of professionalization of the study of philosophy in Russia.<sup>59</sup> Yet other larger social movements were contemporaneous to religious philosophy's zenith. For example, modernization and urbanization within *fin-de-siècle* Russian society, as well as the political changes brought about by the 1905 revolution, dramatically influenced the intelligentsia. It is reasonable to assume that religious philosophers also felt that influence. Edel's first way indicates that looking at events of the early twentieth century, as this thesis does, is worthwhile for those interested in finding a meaningful connection between events in Russian history and the intellectual history of religious philosophy. Edel's second way, suggests that it is worth examining the possibility that constituent ideas that are part of religious philosophy originated in congruence with social developments. For example, Zernov believes that the intelligentsia's increased closeness to the Church was isomorphic to the intelligentsia's experience of exile.<sup>60</sup> The potential for development of ideas with specific meaning in the context of the diaspora, that help represent or contextualize the experience of exile, adds attention to the production of religious philosophy in the interwar period as potentially particularly revealing about émigré intellectual experience. Edel's third point is relevant to all four ideas focused on here—all-unity, *Sophia*, *sobornost'* and Godmanhood—because they have a unique meaning in the

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* 74.

<sup>59</sup> Walicki, 371.

<sup>60</sup> Zernov, 212.

Russian historical and cultural context and must be considered in that context in order to be fully appreciated. Edel's fourth point raises the questions: Might religious philosophy have served to distinguish the religious philosophers as a group among other cultural and philosophical groups in Silver Age Russia? Could this body of thought have provided a philosophical framework for religious philosophers to contain and analyse the great changes in their lives? And finally, is it possible that religious-philosophical ideas could have functioned as a means to protect the religious philosophers' identities as Russians abroad? In short, the ways religious philosophy was instrumental to its authors should be attended to. Analysing the connections between religious philosophy and its socio-historical matrix has helped narrow the subject of this thesis by locating specific periods, namely the revolutionary and interwar periods, and identifying specific ideas of consequence to the history of religious philosophy.

In addition to Edel's model, the formulation of this research concerned resolving to problem of how to establish causal relationships between ideas and actions. It seems instinctively true: ideas must have some influence on peoples' actions, especially ideas about how the world is structured and functions. Aileen Kelly comments in the introduction to *Toward Another Shore: Russian Thinkers between Necessity and Chance*, that the relationship between ideas and actions is particularly stark in the Russian context: 'The power of ideas to inspire actions, good or bad, is a reality from which Anglo-Saxon intellectuals have hitherto been largely shielded. I believe that the Russian experience contains lessons that we would do well to note before it is too late.'<sup>61</sup> Kelly's remarks highlight a potential connection between religious philosophy and the wider world. Leo Spitzer (1887-1960) points out that clear lines must be drawn between thinking in history and actions taken in history.<sup>62</sup> He writes: 'To shift continuously from an idea in the realm of thought to an idea in the realm of action and to assume their basic identity seems to me to be based upon an illicit generalization.'<sup>63</sup> However,

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<sup>61</sup> This is not to say that philosophy never influenced behaviour in the Anglo-Saxon context, but rather to highlight the contrast between the use of ideas as guiding principles in one context, and their role as inspiration to radical action in the other (London 1998), 5.

<sup>62</sup> 'Discussion: *Geistesgeschichte* vs. History of Ideas as Applied to Hitlerism', in D. R. Kelley, ed., *The History of Ideas: Canon and Variations* (Rochester, 1990).

<sup>63</sup> Spitzer 1990, 43.

in his response to Spitzer, Arthur O. Lovejoy (1873-1962) asserts a basic unity or ‘internality of relations’ that unites actions to ‘concomitant’ ideas.<sup>64</sup> Spitzer and Lovejoy were engaged in a debate about the relationship between German philosophy and Nazism when they made these observations. Although few topics have as much significance in twentieth century history as Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia is one of them, and their debate raises conjecture about whether religious philosophy contributed to the actions taken during the Revolution. Kelly’s observation suggests that, along with the *fin-de-siècle* and emigration periods, the revolution and its aftermath deserve close attention in this study because religious philosophy contributes to our understanding of coexisting rationales beside those of the purely revolutionary.

In *On Revolution*, Arendt examines the actual experience of revolution and its intellectual consequences. She describes reciprocity between ideas and actions:

Without the French Revolution it may be doubted that philosophy would ever have attempted to concern itself with the realm of human affairs, that is, to discover absolute truth in a domain which is ruled by men’s relations and relationships with one another and hence is relative by definition.<sup>65</sup>

Here she attributes philosophical concern for the condition of mankind to the French Revolution, an event that was itself caused in part by new ideas about humanity. The French Revolution is a paradigm with significant influence on the history of Russian thought because it emerged on the European scene, and began its maturity in a European context, almost contemporaneously to the French Revolution.<sup>66</sup> Russian philosophy developed in a world where philosophies were powerful. The effect of this integration of the ideal with the potential can be seen in the high level of social commitment in Russian philosophy from its inception. It is reasonable to assume that a sensitivity to the revolutionary potential of ideas is present in Russian religious philosophy.

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<sup>64</sup> ‘A Reply to Professor Spitzer’, in D. R. Kelley, ed., *The History of Ideas: Canon and Variations* (Rochester, 1990), 47.

<sup>65</sup> Arendt 1990, 53.

<sup>66</sup> Chamberlain goes so far as to assert: ‘The life of the modern intelligentsia, and with it philosophy, in Russia can be seen as beginning with the French Revolution, delayed in its impact in Russia by about thirty years’ (Chamberlain 2004, 3).

An understanding of the role of the *intelligent* in Russia is also bound up in this legacy of the French Revolution and the question of the interrelationship between ideas and actions. The idealist vision of the intelligentsia does not necessitate a strong correlation between ideas and actions, while the materialist approach is action-oriented. For the materialists the intelligentsia is mandated to promote and provoke action among the remainder of the population and to effect change in society, as it had in the French Revolution. From the idealist perspective the 'action' of the intelligentsia is thinking on behalf of society. When philosophers act as the conscience of the people, the sheer creation of ideas becomes action enough. The materialist point of view focuses on the role of the idea as cause and the idealist on the role of the idea as outcome. In *The Passing of an Illusion*, François Furet (1927-1997) considers interest in and attraction to the action of the Russian Revolution to be the result of a confirmation of the initial connection between idea and action exhibited in the materialist understanding of the French Revolution:

What was so spellbinding about the October Revolution was the affirmation of the role of volition in history and of man's invention of himself... the late-eighteenth century French had been the heroes of that re-appropriation of the self; the Bolsheviks picked up from where the French left off.<sup>67</sup>

To Furet the October Revolution had lasting philosophical significance in Western Europe because it reawakened awareness of the potential to connect ideas to actions. The two approaches, materialist and idealist, divide the legacy of the French Revolution, and both views of the relationship between ideas and actions are pertinent to religious philosophy. The thinkers considered here seldom 'act' on their ideas, but it is reasonable to assume that, in their view, having created the ideas was an action in itself.

Intellectual history makes an important contribution to understanding people and events of the past by helping present-day people know the 'thought climate' or 'thought fixtures' of the past, and making the 'landscape' of past thought more real. In the words of historian John Burrow, 'we know that we do not think in important ways exactly as our forebears did, nor they

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<sup>67</sup> (London, 1999), 63.

like theirs'.<sup>68</sup> Identifying with people in the past is an important part of how we construct human identity today. These Russian religious philosophers are interesting subjects of study because they add to our understanding of the Revolution and emigration. They are also interesting because they enhance our understanding of ourselves: the accessibility of the ideas they produced during their lifetimes shares human experiences with present-day people. It is easy to identify with these men, their moral reactions to the Revolution, and their bewilderment in the subsequent upheaval.

### **0.2.B The Place of This Work in a Wider Context of Scholarship**

As noted earlier, there have already been several academic studies that consider Russian religious philosophy, and this work is consciously building on that earlier research. One legacy of these earlier publications is the need for a synthesis of this literature. The most apparent feature of the secondary literature to date is that various disciplinary approaches have divided a whole body of appraisal of religious philosophy into many disciplines. Russian philosophy sits at a crossroads of many disciplines: literature studies, culture studies, history, theology and politics. The questions analysed and the resultant research in each discipline can leave other facets of the topic unexplored to the detriment of an understanding of the study as a whole. The small number of works that constitute straightforward studies of Russian philosophy are complemented by a wider variety of specialist research into the ways that Russian philosophy has had an impact on other disciplines within Russian studies. These many approaches to Russian philosophy constitute a large body of scholarship, but because they have conflicting methodologies and terminologies they often end up divided theoretically and physically (in different faculties and areas of libraries).<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> 'The Languages of the Past and the Language of the Historian: The History of Ideas in Theory and Practice', The John Coffin Memorial Lecture (London, 1987), 2.

<sup>69</sup> This situation is also acknowledged by James Scanlan in his introduction to *Dostoevsky the Thinker* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2002), 3.

As these works currently co-exist, however, there is an unnecessary conflict between works written from a literary/philosophical approach and from a historical/political approach. Although these works could be considered as a coherent group, this takes some effort, because they often do not complement each other to provide a more nuanced understanding of the subject. For example, the results from one study sometimes cannot be easily interpreted and integrated into another study in a different discipline because they use different methodologies. A case in point is the difference between the quantitative analysis in historical/political research and qualitative analysis of literary/philosophical research. Each disciplinary approach usually reflects a specific intention for the research, and sometimes this can be at cross-purposes to the research in another discipline. For example, one discipline, say politics, hopes to use an author to illustrate the fact that an idea is an enduring part of Russian culture, while another discipline analyses that author's text to illustrate how his work was unique within Russia. And finally, because the research is often kept in separate locations and studied by people working in different locations, even within the same university, academics are able to begin new projects without a full awareness of recent work on similar subjects but in different disciplines. Often these barriers are not substantial enough to prevent interest by non-specialists, but they become significant in the need to ensure that, in the formulation of a new interdisciplinary study, the standards of both disciplines and the compatibility of research across them are upheld.

Within wider studies of Russian philosophy, the post-revolutionary religious intelligentsia is especially little studied, magnifying the effect of division caused by a diffuse inter-disciplinary focus and creating an inconsistent picture of Russian philosophers as a whole group. However, Russian intellectual history, to a greater extent than some other histories of national thought, has been of popular interest, and in this respect some specialist books focusing on specific aspects of Russian philosophy, such as Marxism-Leninism, and books aimed at a non-specialist readership have been published. Adam Ulam's *The Bolsheviks*, Kelly's *Toward Another Shore* and Walicki's *Legal Philosophies of Russian Liberalism* are scholarly studies

that focus on specific aspects of Russian thought.<sup>70</sup> The highlighted aspects are largely of interest because of the provocative position of Marxism vis-à-vis Russian history. The adversarial nature of the Cold War brought attention to Russian philosophy but it also subjected works in this area to a high degree of politicisation and perhaps more scrutiny for political relevance than was appropriate for works debating philosophical and religious topics. More recently, after the fall of the Soviet Union, books like Lesley Chamberlain's *Motherland* have focused on the history of Russian philosophy from the standpoint of assumed Western interest in Russia's culture as an enigmatic foil or 'other'.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, Russian religious philosophers are often fascinating and foible-full characters that are interesting subjects in their own right and thus promote a focus on their interesting biographies.

Philosophy has had a key role in Russian history—the most obvious example being the role Marxism played in the October Revolution—drawing Russian historians to the study of philosophy. The resultant research tends to focus on political or social thought and ideas that motivated individuals or movements to take concrete action. Clearly, then these research projects have focused the most on the development of social thought, and in particular the way that Marxism took hold as a political force in Russia. In *Soviet Philosophy, The Ideology and the Handmaid*, Evert van der Zweerde distinguishes between philosophy as ideas, and ideology as a 'world-view' and powerful motivator.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, Ulam's *Russia's Failed Revolutions: From the Decembrists to the Dissidents*, focuses on political movements.<sup>73</sup> A key feature of these types of exploration of Russian philosophy is a focus on a political movement and the concrete historical circumstances that surrounded that movement along with the philosophy that was central to it. Two books of this type, which have influenced my own research, are Christopher Read's *Religion, Revolution, and the Russian Intelligentsia 1900-1912* and Jane Burbank's *Intelligentsia and Revolutions 1917-1922*.<sup>74</sup> Both of these books focus less on the

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<sup>70</sup> (New York, 1965), (London, 1998) and (Oxford, 1987), respectively.

<sup>71</sup> (London, 2004).

<sup>72</sup> ([s.l.], 1994).

<sup>73</sup> (London, 1981).

<sup>74</sup> (London, 1979) and (Oxford, 1986).

ideology of the intelligentsia than on the historical circumstances surrounding the production of their philosophies.

One obvious method of enquiry, and a very dominant type of scholarly work on the history of Russian philosophy, is biography. For many of the philosophers considered in this thesis, their lives constitute genuinely interesting subjects and stories unto themselves. Many of these thinkers have English language biographies, such as that of Frank by Boobbyer, Sergei Bulgakov (1871-1944) by Catherine Evtuhov, and Solov'ev by Jonathan Sutton.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, biographies of these thinkers often combine research into their lives with an analysis of the texts they produced within the context of those lives. These works are invaluable because when taken together they provide a detailed background for the picture of religious philosophy as a whole. Yet these studies can often imply that the ideas and theories of each thinker are highly personal to him alone, and that personal circumstances were the main cause for philosophical production. For example in *The Cross and the Sickle*, Evtuhov closely links Bulgakov's personal family experiences to his philosophical conclusions. While circumstances of upbringing and profound life events can provoke ideas or be catalysts for the production of great works, the form this expression takes is dictated by a wider and richer context. Nevertheless, biographical works are a foundation for understanding the lives of participants in wider philosophical movements.

Historians of religious philosophy have consciously concerned themselves with the biographical information about the key thinkers, but a less conscious concern has been the influence of global politics on the production of histories of Russian philosophy. Secondary

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<sup>75</sup> *The Cross and the Sickle: Sergei Bulgakov and the Fate of Russian Religious Philosophy* (London, 1997); and *The Religious Philosophy of Vladimir Solovyov: Towards a Reassessment* (London, 1988). In the West, Sergei Nikolaevich Bulgakov is probably the best known Russian theologian of his time, despite the fact that he had in many ways the archetypal life of a Russian religious philosopher, because Western publication about Bulgakov centres on his theological contributions. Paul Valliere's *Modern Russian Theology* and Rowan Williams' *Toward a Political Theology* consider Bulgakov's theological views in the context of contemporary society. Part of the credit for English language publication about Bulgakov must be given to the British organization The Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius. Not only did this group host prominent Orthodox theologians, Bulgakov among them, to speak at conferences within the U.K., but it has since provided a space for English language study of these thinkers. For more on this group, see N. Zernov and M. Zernov, *Fellowship of St. Alban & St. Sergius* (Oxford, 1979).

literature about the history of Russian philosophy, like that of Russian history in general, has suffered a high degree of politicisation in the past century.<sup>76</sup> On the whole this politicisation can be attributed to the existence of the Soviet state and its polarization of foreign and domestic academic communities.<sup>77</sup> Thinkers and academics from any period of history, whose study had been banned within the Soviet Union, took on a certain political relevance abroad and became the subject of studies for Russian-based political alternatives and for resistance. Marxist ideology also imposed tension on the history of Russian thought because the Soviet authorities created the false impression of a dichotomy between sanctioned (i.e. revolutionary, socialist or Marxist) and unsanctioned (i.e. conservative) thinkers. This division obscured continuity in Russian thought by emphasizing socialist and populist sympathies and minimizing the nationalist, conservative or Slavophil aspects of any one thinker's work.

An excellent example of this is the case of Alexander Herzen (1812-1870), who opposed the Tsarist regime but also held strong, conflicting beliefs in liberal Western principles and the power of the commune in Russian life. Leonard Schapiro, conscious of this conflict, gives an example of its effect on his field:

Our historical assessment of the Russian revolution is so much consciously or unconsciously coloured by the influence of Marxist historians that there is a risk that we may view the entire Russian liberal movement merely as something that stopped half-way on the road to revolution for lack of courage or consistency or class consciousness, and thus fail to distinguish the very different strands of which it was in fact made up.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> In her introduction to *Motherland*, Chamberlain identifies this political influence on earlier histories: 'It would surely be fair to say that that the discipline of Russian thought had its political reason to exist because the West urgently needed to understand how the Revolution was made' (Chamberlain 2004, xi). She also identifies the need to rectify it: 'Russia's philosophical history needs to be described in a new way, especially now that it is a free country (*Ibid.* x).'

<sup>77</sup> In 'The Uses and Abuses of Russian History', Alexander Dallin explores Western historians' political motivations and how such motivations might be expressed (in T. S. Thompson and R. Sheldon, eds, *Soviet Society and Culture: Essays in Honour of Vera S. Dunham* (London, 1988)). Dallin writes that it is an understandable fact of life that historians use and shape the historical record for their own purposes (181). His concern is to encourage Western, and particularly American, historians to admit that their views are conditioned by political circumstances: 'In condemning those in the Soviet Union who would let history be made into a tool of politics, we must guard against those among us who intentionally or otherwise would likewise tailor history to suit their political needs' (191).

<sup>78</sup> 'The Vekhi Group and the Mystique of Revolution', *Slavonic and Eastern European Review*, 34/82 (1955), 76.

The premise that heritage, or the history of thinking about and using an idea, lends legitimacy to the idea helped researchers direct their focus and determined which philosophers were studied. Clearly the thinkers of most importance to the history of Russian thought are the ones who have had the most influence on subsequent thought. But, the origin and nature of influence is also a subjective construct of the present-day historian. Burrow opposes the tendency of historians to focus on the topics that are most relevant to the *present*, rather than relevant to their time. It is inappropriate to make ‘a selection from the life of the past in terms of a notion of significance which is derived not from the conversation of the past but from what appears to be pregnant or prophetic for the future, and most specifically for ourselves.’<sup>79</sup> An example of Burrow’s definition of misguided choice is the way that the heritage of revolution and resistance to the Tsarist regime was highlighted by the Soviet authorities who allowed and encouraged discussion of the contribution Vissarion Belinsky (1811-1848), Herzen, Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876), and Nikolai Mikhailovsky (1842-1904) had made to the ultimate end of Marxist revolution—to the point of excluding how these thinkers furthered other aspects of the development of Russian thought.<sup>80</sup> Similarly, in the West, the search for democratic roots and potential in Russian heritage led to a focus on thinkers like Boris Chicherin (1828-1904) and Peter Struve (1870-1944), and not on the democratic aspects of early socialist thought.<sup>81</sup> Due to these tendencies the thinkers who had been largely neglected, either as subjects of praise or hatred, by Soviet authorities also fell off the academic radar in the West. Ideology was able to dominate the agenda of what constituted a legitimate history of Russian thought through its selection of legitimate thinkers, which in turn directed the attention of scholars in the West.

Although unfortunate, Burrow understands this tendency for an amount of present-day influence to bear on historical analysis of thought:

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<sup>79</sup> Burrow, 10.

<sup>80</sup> For more on these four, see V. Terras, *Belinskij and Russian Literary Criticism* (Madison, 1974); E. Acton, *Alexander Herzen and the Role of the Intellectual Revolutionary* (Cambridge, 1979); A. Kelly, *Mikhail Bakunin* (Oxford, 1982); and J. Billington, *Mikhailovsky and Russian Populism* (Oxford, 1958).

<sup>81</sup> For more on these two, see G. Hamburg, *Boris Chicherin and Early Russian Liberalism* (Stanford, 1992) and R. Pipes, *Struve: Liberal on the Left* (Cambridge, Mass, 1970).

It is natural to assume that the ideas to be particularly attended to are those which seem embryonically ours, while the anachronisms which surround them, the magic, the millenarism, the metaphysics, or whatever our sense of modernity and its anticipations excludes, can be passed by as irrelevant, embarrassing and even somehow aberrant.<sup>82</sup>

For an accurate understanding of the intellectual environment in the past, the stranger aspects of a philosophy must be taken along with the more comprehensible, even if then viewing the whole becomes problematic. Therefore, religious philosophers ought to be considered in their place alongside the more politically oriented thinkers of their day; but when they are, some of the less savoury neo-Slavophil or nationalistic aspects of religious philosophy must be included because they are also part of the whole body of Russian religious thought.

Almost all of the thinkers discussed here were exiled from the Soviet state and took up residence to its existence from abroad. Their opposition to the Bolshevik revolution influenced Western publishers and academics to take an interest in their cause. To a certain extent this opposition became the sole subject of Western interest in religious philosophy, to the neglect of its more subtle aspects, creating the impression that religious philosophy represented a potentially politically viable political sensibility rather than a niche form of philosophy. When, after the fall of communism, religious-philosophical topics were again open to assessment, this hope for the political viability of religious-philosophical ideas significantly reduced.

Interest in Russian history brought one group of Russianists to the study of philosophy, and interest in Russian literature brought another. A large proportion of works that ultimately focus on Russian philosophy have their origin in literary studies. These books are the logical result of exploring Russian literature because philosophical impulses drove many prominent Russian authors. Scholars often continue to explore the core philosophical concepts after researching the philosophical direction within a literary work itself, either in a comparison to other literary works or in the original philosophical texts themselves. For example, in Marina Kostalevsky's *Dostoevsky and Soloviev*, the content of Feodor Dostoevsky's (1821-1881) fiction is connected to the philosophy of Solov'ev, drawing out several key themes that unite the

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<sup>82</sup> Burrow, 10.

two men's work.<sup>83</sup> In *Nietzsche in Russia*, edited by Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, essays draw together Fredrick Nietzsche's (1844-1900) influence on philosophical and literary movements.<sup>84</sup> These works are the products of two circumstances. One, censorship and the absence of organized philosophical study in Imperial Russia caused a vibrant philosophical vein in Russian literature. The other, a common situation in Western academia, is the fact that those best positioned to embark on broader Russian culture studies have been scholars in Modern Language and Literature faculties.

These circumstances also provide an indication of the potential weaknesses of this type of study.<sup>85</sup> As could be anticipated the authors' primary experiences are with Russian literature, not with philosophy in general. Likewise the methodology used is borrowed from literature studies. These circumstances predispose the analysis to be oriented toward the context of literature and a comparative context that situates philosophical texts amongst literary texts and evaluative works that use critical theory. Morris sets out the distinction between the philosophical and literary approach to texts:

If we follow a commonplace conception of a philosophical approach to a text, we will suppose that the philosopher is concerned to ask whether what is said is true... A literary approach to a text, by contrast... is not concerned with the truth of what is said, and consequently can dwell on and exploit what is non-straightforward about the use of concepts, that cannot be precisely unified with other uses of the same concepts.<sup>86</sup>

In short, the two disciplines have very different approaches to text. Philosophical criticism of the text seeks to evaluate its content against other philosophical truths. Literary criticism, on the other hand, views the philosophical text as another cultural artefact of a different type from, but similar in nature to the novel. Literary criticism can be useful in describing a historical period or a cultural theme but often ignores the philosophical nuances and influences of philosophical

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<sup>83</sup> (London, 1997).

<sup>84</sup> (Princeton, 1986).

<sup>85</sup> Lovejoy 1990a: 'Most contemporary historians of any national literature...recognize in principle—though many still recognize too little—that ideas derived from philosophical systems have had a wide, and sometimes a profound and decisive, influence upon the minds and the writings of the authors whose works they study; and they are constrained therefore to deal with these systems and to expound these ideas for their readers. But they do not—it is perhaps not too unmannerly to say—always do it very well.'

<sup>86</sup> Morris, 234.

texts. Furthermore, the differences between literary and philosophical prose are multifold: in construction, in intended audience and in style.

Literary criticism, then, may have limitations, but it can be a valuable tool in historical enquiry. Edith Clowes's *Fiction's Overcoat* and Hilary Fink's *Bergson and Russian Modernism* are two literary/philosophical works to which I am particularly indebted.<sup>87</sup> In *Fiction's Overcoat*, Clowes uses the tools of literary criticism to analyse philosophical texts carefully. In her book, Fink develops a methodology that indirectly connects literary themes to philosophical influences by acknowledging similarities without assuming a causal relationship. While both of these works overcome the limitations of their genre to provide insight into the history of Russian thought, they remain works whose origin is in primarily literary questions.

Clearly, several detailed and pioneering studies have already been completed about the period in question, Russian religious philosophy and specific religious philosophers. Yet the exploration of this territory is incomplete. There is still a need for scholarship to add new pieces to the jigsaw puzzle that is the phenomenon of Russian religious philosophy. One goal of this work is to synthesise the whole, so that those who do embark on projects in this area can get a glimpse of what that puzzle might be showing us. I have consciously tried not to politicize these characters or their works from a current standpoint, in order to show them for what they are. Literary approaches have been insightful and by using them intentionally in the wider context of philosophy and history I hope to bridge the disciplinary gap that a strict literary perspective would otherwise entail. This thesis attempts to address what the completed picture of Russian religious philosophy might have to say about the movement itself, and how that movement can tell us more about Russia during the time of revolution, Russians in emigration and the impact of Russian philosophy.

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<sup>87</sup> H. Fink (Evanston, 1999).

## **PART ONE:**

Part of the premise of this research is that some fruitful conclusions about the state of Russian religious philosophy at the time of the Russian Revolution and afterwards can be gained by thinking of Russian religious philosophy as a discourse, and looking more closely at how ideas are present and used within this discourse.

In this Part, this premise is scrutinized more closely. First in Chapter 1 the reasons to think of Russian religious philosophy as a discourse and some of the conclusions that can be made by doing so are entertained. Second, in Chapter 2 the structures that help define the discourse are examined more thoroughly in anticipation of using these structures as tools of analysis in the remainder of the thesis.



## **Chapter 1: A Discourse of Russian Religious Philosophy**

Religious-philosophical texts are concentrated geographically and temporally to such an extent that an explanation is warranted. Is there something particularly Russian about this religious philosophy? Is there a reason the Russian philosophers were so very productive on specific topics at the turn of the twentieth century? It seems as though the majority of conclusions about the nature of religious philosophy in general, such as what constitute its origins, significance, important thinkers and themes, are agreed upon only by scholarly consensus and in some cases murkily defined. One way of answering these questions more definitively is to think of the commonalities between Russian religious philosophers in this period. It is possible to identify a number of similarities in their biographies, and this might be one reason to think of them as a group. Another commonality, though, is thematic and conceptual similarities in their work. This chapter entertains both approaches and concludes that, with the help of discourse theory, the most interesting insights into the nature of Russian religious philosophy at the turn of the century can be found in the second approach. On the basis of this conclusion discourse theory is used throughout the remainder of the work.

### **1.1 Russian Religious Philosophy Before 1905**

As discussed in the introduction, Masaryk, Zenkovsky and Lossky agree that Russian philosophy is notably different from Western philosophy, and Copleston identifies 'religious philosophy' as one difference between Russian and Western philosophy that can be considered valuable and unique, instead of derivative. That a meritorious sub-group of religious and philosophical Russian thought exists, therefore, has been established. This section will consider

the origins of this body of thought and whether these origins lend a coherence to Russian religious thought in the lead up to the period of concern here (1905-1940).

The origins of Russian religious philosophy are still debated. Although the separation of Russia from the West has been cited by many as a cause for Russian religious thought, there are many other individual perspectives on its origins. As well as originating in the 'spiritual schism' between the Russian intelligentsia and in the Russian faith, according to Zernov, religious philosophy was born in reaction to Marxism and fostered by the circumstances of exile that changed the intelligentsia's attitude toward religion, facilitating the development of religious thought.<sup>88</sup> If Zernov's idea is correct, then it could be argued that this thesis analyses a significant period in the origins of Russian religious philosophy.

It seems most logical though, to place the birth of Russian religious philosophy in the nineteenth century, alongside the birth of other secular philosophy and significant literary creativity in Russia. Attributing the origins to this time period is supported by Masaryk's assessment that religious philosophy tries to solve questions of religion and history, an ambition that aligns with nineteenth century Western philosophical themes. This would suggest that despite the seemingly alien aspects of Russian religious philosophy in a Western context, it actually has much in common with contemporary European philosophies.<sup>89</sup> So although Masaryk also recognizes a 'schism' at the root of Russian philosophical difference, he still sees much in common between Western and Russian thought, particularly in the case of religious thought. The nineteenth century is also when philosophy faculties were formed in educational institutions across Russia.<sup>90</sup> Walicki suggests Russian religious philosophy is the product of this professionalization of the discipline. Therefore even though the period after 1905 can be still be considered formative, before exploring that period more closely it is reasonable to assess the state of Russian religious philosophy in the nineteenth century with special attention to the antecedents of important developments made in the early twentieth century.

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<sup>88</sup> Zernov, vii and 212.

<sup>89</sup> Masaryk, 475, 466 and 477.

<sup>90</sup> Walicki, 371.

It is widely acknowledged that professional, independent, secular philosophy did not, or was not allowed to, develop in Russia until late into the nineteenth century. The teaching of philosophy was banned outright in 1850 in reaction to the philosophically inspired revolutions and rebellions across Europe at that time, but before 1850 circumstances prevented Russian philosophy from truly developing in substance or independent character. Academic institutions in general formed late, so that professors who held philosophy posts from the early eighteenth century onwards tended to be foreign, specialists in non-philosophical disciplines, or both. Political pressures affected the type of philosophy taught to Russian students in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as the government exhorted universities to focus on the practically applicable aspects of philosophical thought. Additionally, censorship and prohibitions to travel abroad (intensified after the Decembrist Revolt in 1825) limited the materials available to Russian students for private philosophical enquiry. Meanwhile, there were no such similar barriers for clerical students in ecclesiastical academies.

To say there were limitations on the organized study of philosophy is not to say that those Russians who were vitally interested in philosophy could seek no outlet for this passion. Many great literary critics, politicians and academics who taught jurisprudence or mathematics published works on philosophical questions; these men conditioned the Russian philosophical environment to which Silver Age thinkers were heirs. Thomas Nemeth, perhaps over zealously, declares Solov'ev to be the true starting point of Russian philosophy because, after the defence of his master's thesis, *The Crisis of Western Philosophy* [*Krizis zapadnoi filosofii*] (1874), 'a sustained discussion within Russia of philosophical issues considered on their own terms' had finally begun.<sup>91</sup> It may seem strange to think of Russian philosophy developing so late, but we need only turn to the academic background of the religious philosophers considered here, and explored in the next section, to see that they came mere generations after the legitimization of philosophical pursuit in Russian academia—nary a one made philosophy the technical focus of his university study.

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<sup>91</sup> Nemeth.

Even if the starting point of philosophy in Russia cannot be attributed to Solov'ev, he is in many respects the single most influential individual in twentieth century Russian religious philosophy. His character as a man and as a thinker cannot be easily compartmentalized: Despite training as a philosopher and writing on traditionally philosophical topics, Solov'ev's position on these topics offered a fresh interpretation of the old paradigms, often attacking established ideas from the standpoint of faith-based reasoning. Not only was he a great philosopher, but he also was a great poet. As a young man he renounced Orthodoxy in favour of atheism only to be brought back to his original faith by a series of highly personal spiritual experiences involving the revelation of a female persona he labelled *Sophia* and described with both philosophy and poetry.<sup>92</sup> In terms of the topics under consideration in the subsequent chapters of this thesis, he has left a great legacy. The word, *vseedinstvo* (all-unity), was newly coined by Solov'ev at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>93</sup> His writings about the divine *Sophia* influenced the next generation of thinkers to consider a particularly Russian incarnation of this figure. He also introduced the word *bogochelovechestvo* (Godmanhood) to Russian religious philosophy by using it in a special religious-philosophical way. In addition to his legacy of ideas, Solov'ev also influenced the style of subsequent Russian religious-philosophical writing through his example of combining poetic observation, biblical references and philosophical rhetoric within one text.

Despite Solov'ev's significant influence, it would be misleading to over-attribute the state of affairs within Russian religious philosophy at the turn of the twentieth century to him alone. His work was itself the product, or synthesis, of a wider concern in nineteenth century Russian intellectual history: the Slavophil-Westernizer debate. The Slavophil movement, a school of Russian thought from the mid-nineteenth century, participated in an intellectual 'dialogue' with another school of Russian thinkers, the Westernizers, about the nature of Russia's future and specifically Russia's relationship to Europe. Solov'ev might be considered

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<sup>92</sup> P. Allen, 27, 116.

<sup>93</sup> S. Teresa Obolovitch presents two pieces of evidence for this: Solov'ev himself, in a letter to S. A. Vengerov (1892.07.12), and Frank's testimony in her paper *Duchovnoe nasledije Vladimira Solovieva* ('All-Unity According to V. Soloviev and S. Frank. A Comparative Analysis', paper presented at the conference All-Unity and Universalism, 22-25 October 2009, Bose, Italy).

a representative of a Western European academic achievement in philosophy, but his thought also relies heavily on the Russian Orthodox tradition and draws attention to Slavophil tenets, such as Russia's unique status in Europe. In this respect Solov'ev resembles an earlier thinker, Alexei Khomiakov (1804-1860), who was one of the leading thinkers of the Slavophil movement. Khomiakov advocated a model for Russia's development based on Russia's unique heritage. His rejection of Western models of development was not due to a lack of familiarity with the West: he had travelled abroad to Germany, France and England, and some of his most influential works are letters of correspondence with thinkers from these Western countries. He studied at the University of Moscow and was familiar with a wide range of subjects, including math, science, theology, philosophy and history.<sup>94</sup> Khomiakov may not have lacked for education and experience, but he did lack discipline; many of his scholarly works were not codified in finalized publications. Even so, his writings constitute an important foundation for religious philosophy of the twentieth century, and he importantly contributed the term *sobornost'* to the religious-philosophical lexicon.

These earlier thinkers and their religious philosophy participated in and contributed to how Russia's political and spiritual potential was later conceptualized. Along with Khomiakov and Solov'ev, thinkers like Ivan Kireevsky (1806-1856) and Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) had also considered the need for social and political change in Russia before the period under examination here.<sup>95</sup> During their time, the nineteenth century, only a few thinkers and individual works stand out, but on the verge of the twentieth century it becomes possible to discern a community of scholarship working on religious-philosophical topics. This collective effort produced a much larger and more coherent body of noteworthy monographs and articles that signify a maturation of intellectual production and draw critical attention to religious philosophy in the early twentieth century.

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<sup>94</sup> Copleston 1999, 48.

<sup>95</sup> For Kireevsky, see *On Spiritual Unity* (Hudson, 1998) and *A History of Russian Philosophy 1830–1930* (Cambridge, 2010). Tolstoy's essays are widely available in English.

## 1.2 The Biographical Similarities of Religious Philosophers Between 1905 and 1940

Whereas in the nineteenth century a few names portended much, many names are associated with religious philosophy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Berdyaev, Bulgakov, Frank, Lossky, Florensky, Shestov, Merezhkovsky, and Karsavin. Each individual has an interesting story and noteworthy publications in his own right. Yet these thinkers are often grouped together by scholars, presumably because of similarities between these thinkers' lives and works that encourage doing so. These similarities are largely biographical, and certainly the fact that all of these thinkers had reached the end of their careers by the Second World War established a natural end-point for the flourishing of religious philosophy. It is apparent in earlier research, discussed in the introduction, that obvious points of commonality have encouraged the most prominent scholars in this field to group religious thinkers from this time.

By looking at what motivated these scholars to sort religious philosophers in certain ways, patterns become visible. For example, religiosity is clearly one criterion. Zernov uses conversion to Orthodoxy to select a group; Schmemmann singles out Bulgakov, Berdyaev and Florensky as thinkers who have provoked on-going intellectual disputes in theology; and Walicki labels Bulgakov, Berdyaev, Lev Karsavin (1882-1952) and Frank as 'lay theologians.'<sup>96</sup> Another source of commonality is a philosopher's relationship to Solov'ev. Copleston chooses to group thinkers who are successors to Solov'ev.<sup>97</sup> Zenkovsky makes a more complex assortment in terms of the heritage of Solov'ev.<sup>98</sup> He groups Florensky, Bulgakov, Frank and Karsavin as heirs to Solov'ev's thought, and groups Dimitri Merezhkovsky (1865-1941) with Lossky and Berdyaev as strongly influenced by it.<sup>99</sup> Although each historian uses different

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<sup>96</sup> Namely Zernov selects Berdyaev, Bulgakov and Frank as notable thinkers in the movement. Walicki, 106.

<sup>97</sup> He gives attention to Berdyaev, Bulgakov and Frank, but also includes Lossky and Shestov as important members of the group (Copleston 1988, 126).

<sup>98</sup> He groups Berdyaev with Shestov and Merezhkovsky (Zenkovsky, 754).

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.* 393. Dmitri Sergeevitch Merezhkovsky is a popular figure in Western Russian studies, most likely for his exciting and bizarre religious views and his marriage to the equally controversial poet Zinaida Gippius (1869-1945). As an author he was much more than a Symbolist poet, writing on topics of

criteria that reflect his specific scholarly concerns, certain thinkers recurrently appear, namely Berdyaev, Bulgakov and Frank. It could therefore be assumed that these thinkers were the most influential members of the group. Others receive enough attention to suggest they played very important roles in the development of religious philosophy, such as Florensky, Lossky, Karsavin and Shestov. It is these thinkers that previous research suggests constitute the perpetrators of Russian religious philosophy, and it is to their works that this study should look if it wants to make any conclusions about the state of Russian religious thought.

The common comparison of Berdyaev, Bulgakov and Frank is not surprising. When thinking of Russian religious philosophers they most readily come to mind. These three thinkers might appear as prominent figures, but their similarities over the course of a lifetime become more apparent when considered alongside other religious philosophers and therefore become even more compelling and overwhelming. All, of these thinkers, not only Berdyaev, Bulgakov and Frank, share life experiences, from origins to education, career paths and geographical locations. All of these biographical commonalities suggest the similarities in their thought could come from the influence of common experiences.

These authors were all born within the same twenty-year period. They came from a variety of regions and backgrounds, demonstrating the cultural breadth of the Russian Empire in the late nineteenth century. Although Karsavin and Frank were born in St. Petersburg and Moscow, the only other philosopher from Great Russia was Bulgakov, born in Orel.<sup>100</sup> Both Berdyaev and Shestov were born in Kiev, and Lossky and Florensky were born in modern-day Latvia and Azerbaijan respectively.<sup>101</sup> Correlating to this cultural-geographical diversity is a

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religion, philosophy and politics. However, his literary achievements have been obscured by his involvement with eccentric groups and ideas, not least his association with Nazi fascism. Ultimately, the Merezhkovskys' endeavour to vivify Orthodoxy in practice with meaning from modern life, while an interesting project, was wholly rejected by the Church. As a figure in close relation to the philosophers in this thesis, especially Bulgakov and Berdyaev, some cross-fertilization of terminology and beliefs exists between his work and religious philosophy.

<sup>100</sup> D. Rubin, *The Life and Thought of Lev Karsavin: Strength Made Perfect in Weakness* (Amsterdam, 2013), 5; Boobbyer, 1-5; Evtuhov, 21.

<sup>101</sup> L. Chamberlain, *Lenin's Private War: The Voyage of the Philosophy Steamer and the Exile of the Intelligentsia* (New York, 2006), 14; Shein, iii; C. M. Sciabarra, *Ayn Rand: The Russian Radical* (University Park, PA, 1995), 42; Pyman 2010, 183.

social diversity: Berdyaev is the only member of this group to have been born to an aristocratic family.<sup>102</sup> Lossky had perhaps the most humble origins as the son of a forest warden, whereas Karsavin came from a family in the arts, and Shestov and Frank from successful middle class families.<sup>103</sup> Bulgakov and Florensky came from seminary families, with generations of priests, in contrast with Frank and Shestov, who came from traditional Jewish families.<sup>104</sup>

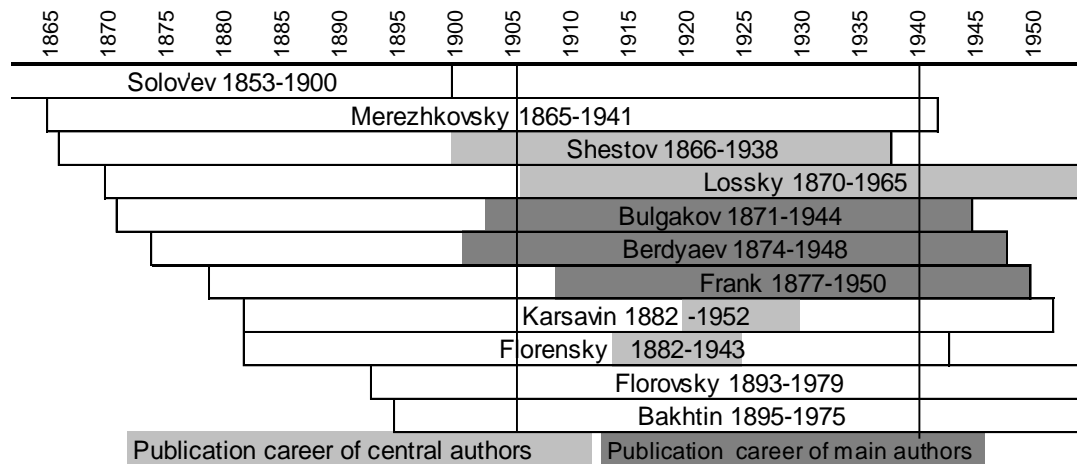


Figure 2: Religious Philosophers' Lives in Comparison

This diversity of origin has a bearing on the religious background of these thinkers as well. Although they go on to write texts that are typically thought of in an Orthodox context, they were not all raised Russian Orthodox. Most notably Berdyaev and Lossky had a mixture of Catholicism in their upbringing, and Frank and Shestov were raised Jewish and connected with Orthodox spirituality through marriage.<sup>105</sup> Shestov married a Russian Orthodox woman, but conversion was not necessary for the marriage and he was never baptized.<sup>106</sup> In contrast, Frank also married a Christian and did convert to Orthodoxy.<sup>107</sup> That Shestov did not choose to become a Christian helps contextualize whether Frank converted of necessity in 1912 or for reasons of faith. It is important to be aware of the personal spirituality of a thinker but, as can

<sup>102</sup> Chamberlain 2006, 14.

<sup>103</sup> Chamberlain 2006, 16; Rubin, 5; Scanlan 1994, 149; Boobbyer, 1-5.

<sup>104</sup> Evtuhov, 22; Pyman 2010, 10; Boobbyer, 5; L. J. Shein, *The Philosophy of Lev Shestov (1866-1938): A Russian Religious Existentialist*, Toronto Studies in Theology, 57 (Lewiston, 1991), 2.

<sup>105</sup> Berdyaev's mother was half French and gave him 'maternal Catholic influence', and Lossky's grandfather was an Eastern-rite Catholic priest (Chamberlain 2006, 14 and 16).

<sup>106</sup> Shein, 2

<sup>107</sup> Boobbyer, 75.

be seen from this array of backgrounds, the conclusion that Russian religious philosophy was mainly the product of thinkers motivated by a personal connection with Russian Orthodox spirituality is a narrow interpretation.

In terms of education, commonalities are also easily picked out. With the exceptions of Berdyaev, who studied philosophy in Kiev, all of these thinkers studied in Moscow or St. Petersburg.<sup>108</sup> Karsavin and Lossky studied in St. Petersburg; Karsavin history and Lossky history and philology.<sup>109</sup> Those who studied in Moscow tended to study law; Shestov jurisprudence, Frank law, and Bulgakov economics and law, although Florensky studied mathematics.<sup>110</sup> It is notable that for the most part theology and philosophy were not this group of thinkers' area of scholarly concentration.

Another interesting similarity is that many of these thinkers were expelled from study due to radicalism. Lossky was expelled from gymnasium before he even began higher education.<sup>111</sup> Berdyaev and Frank were expelled from university.<sup>112</sup> And Shestov moved between Moscow and Kiev due to expulsions.<sup>113</sup>

Partially due to the restrictions placed on Russian university life and expulsions, many of these thinkers studied abroad as part of the completion of their university education. When he was expelled from school Lossky studied in Switzerland, and after receiving his degree he studied in Germany.<sup>114</sup> Bulgakov, Berdyaev, and Frank also travelled to Germany to study. Berdyaev studied at the University of Heidelberg after he had been expelled from Kiev University for Marxist activities.<sup>115</sup> Bulgakov undertook research for his doctoral thesis there and Frank studied in Berlin as part of his academic programme before he took his degree.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Chamberlain 2006, 14.

<sup>109</sup> Rubin, 11, and Sciabarra, 42.

<sup>110</sup> Shein 10, Boobbyer 1-5; Evtuhov, 27; and Pyman 2010, 30.

<sup>111</sup> Sciabarra, 42.

<sup>112</sup> Chamberlain 2006, 15 and Boobbyer, 13-19.

<sup>113</sup> Shein, 11-12.

<sup>114</sup> Sciabarra 42.

<sup>115</sup> Chamberlain 2006, 15.

<sup>116</sup> Evtuhov 29, and Boobbyer, 19.

Karsavin travelled to Italy, Germany and France for research during his master's degree.<sup>117</sup> Shestov lived in Switzerland, Italy and Germany between 1896 and 1901 'for periods of treatment and reflection' while he wrote.<sup>118</sup> Although these thinkers studied abroad for different reasons, they all participated in a tradition of travel to receive a Western education as supplement study at a Russian university. This shared experience helps contextualize these thinkers' reaction to exile.

Having left Russia, willingly or not, for educational purposes seems to have engendered a willingness to leave for similar reasons after the Russian Revolution. Florensky, who had not studied abroad, refused the option of asylum offered by the Czech government.<sup>119</sup> Of those who did leave, a common experience can be discerned, and this is discussed in detail by Chamberlain in *Lenin's Private War: The Voyage of the Philosophy Steamer and the Exile of the Intelligentsia* (2006). According to Chamberlain's estimates Berdyaev, Bulgakov, Frank, Karsavin and Lossky were all exiled in 1922, and either travelled directly to Germany through the planning of the German and Soviet government, or made their own way out of Russia.<sup>120</sup> Shestov had already made preparations and relocated his family to Paris in 1920. It is worth reflection that the majority of these thinkers were not proactive about leaving and continued to live and work in Russia for as many as five years after the revolution before they were exiled.<sup>121</sup>

With the exception of Florensky, who remained in Soviet Russia, another common biographical element is the experience of relocation to Western Europe. Almost everyone began their journey in Germany, because the German port of Stettin (now Szczecin in Poland) received the ships with intellectual exiles.<sup>122</sup> In Germany Berdyaev created a Free Religious-Philosophical Academy that also employed Karsavin.<sup>123</sup> Berdyaev also oversaw the department of 'Spiritual-Intellectual Culture' at the Russian Scientific Institute where Karsavin and Frank

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<sup>117</sup> Rubin, 13.

<sup>118</sup> Shein, 15.

<sup>119</sup> Pyman 2010, 173.

<sup>120</sup> Chamberlain 2006, 309-312

<sup>121</sup> Shein, v.

<sup>122</sup> Chamberlain 2006, 165-6.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.* 209.

worked.<sup>124</sup> There, in Berlin, Berdyaev and Frank had also helped to form a Writer's Club.<sup>125</sup> Shestov, having left Russia via Constantinople comparatively quickly relocated his family to Paris and joined the Russian academic groups there. Bulgakov also bypassed Germany, and began his émigré life in Prague with Lossky. Lossky taught at the Law Faculty of the Russian People's University.<sup>126</sup> Bulgakov also taught, for eighteen months, at the Law Faculty, the Russian Institute, and The Russian Pedagogical Institute, but he quickly moved on to Paris.<sup>127</sup> In 1926, Karsavin had also relocated to Paris, where Berdyaev's Religious-Philosophical Academy had relocated in 1924, and where the Orthodox Theological Institute and Seminary that drew Bulgakov from Prague had opened in 1925.<sup>128</sup> This community abroad, in emigration or exile, was socially close-knit even if geographically dispersed. When Karsavin chose to move East, to Vilnius in 1928, he left the shared émigré community behind.<sup>129</sup>

Another way to think about the interconnections of their lives is to imagine them plotted on a map. They would follow similar paths from regional origins, to university centres, joining in St. Petersburg and then flowing on to Berlin, Prague and Paris. The geographical joining in St. Petersburg, best exemplified in the meetings of the Religious Philosophical Society there, helps establish that they were not merely having similar experiences, or making similar life choices, but that these thinkers did actually meet and move within the same social circles. In his biography of Karsavin, Rubin describes St. Petersburg as an influential 'personality' in Karsavin's upbringing.<sup>130</sup> In *Lenin's Private War*, Chamberlain interprets the name change from St. Petersburg to Petrograd as symbolic of the shift from Silver Age bastion to an environment hostile to these thinkers.<sup>131</sup> Both of these commentators pick up on the ways that St. Petersburg was particularly culturally fertile for the Russian religious renaissance. It maybe

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<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.* 210.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.* 207.

<sup>126</sup> Sciabarra, 42, and Chamberlain 2006, 190. See also C. Andreyev and I. Savicky, *Russia Abroad: Prague and the Russian Diaspora 1918-1938* (London, 2004), 103.

<sup>127</sup> Andreyev and Savicky, 93, 103; Chamberlain 2006, 192.

<sup>128</sup> Lesourd, 66, and Chamberlain 2006, 230.

<sup>129</sup> Lesourd, 67.

<sup>130</sup> 6.

<sup>131</sup> 17.

that the appellation ‘Window to the West’ applies to Russian religious philosophy as well as it does to St. Petersburg.

In 1904, Berdyaev returned from study abroad to St. Petersburg and joined in the cultural developments of the capital. Lossky had pursued his career as an academic and philosopher there, and it was Karsavin’s home town.<sup>132</sup> The Petersburg Religious-Philosophical Society, hosted by the Merezhkovskys, and the proceedings of which, published in the journal *New Way* [*Novyi Put’*] (1902-1904), perpetuated the religious focus of philosophers meeting in St. Petersburg.<sup>133</sup> Shestov participated from Kiev in the St. Petersburg philosophical circles that united many religious philosophers to more artistic participants in Russia’s Silver Age.

At the same time as religious themes were raised in *New Way*, Florensky became the first of this group to turn fully to Orthodox theology by entering the Moscow Theological Academy.<sup>134</sup> Like Florensky, Bulgakov and Frank are more readily associated with the Moscow Psychological and Philosophical Society, and with a more seriously theological and political approach to religious philosophy. Pyman describes the transition of editorial control of *New Way* into the hands of Berdiaev and Bulgakov as ‘though Icarus had yielded place to a competent team of aviation engineers.’<sup>135</sup> By 1914 Shestov, who had criticized Merezhkovsky earlier, was one of those engineers.<sup>136</sup>

It may seem counter-intuitive to those familiar with the cultural stereotypes of Moscow and St. Petersburg to think of Moscow as the home of proficiency and St. Petersburg of mysticism, and perhaps this discontinuity with expectations serves to highlight how subjective regional characterization of thought can be when interpreting the ‘tone’ of a philosophy. The labels ‘mystical’ and ‘decadent’ are not exclusively Eastern. Distrusting such stereotypes might help to view religious philosophy less as a bridge between the distinct categories of ‘Western philosophy’ and ‘Orthodox religiosity’ and more as a unique manifestation of characteristics shared by Western philosophy and Orthodox mysticism.

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<sup>132</sup> Sciabarra, 44.

<sup>133</sup> A. Pyman, *A History of Russian Symbolism* (Cambridge, 1994), 156.

<sup>134</sup> Pyman 2010, 40.

<sup>135</sup> Pyman, 261.

<sup>136</sup> Shein, 9, and Pyman, 156.

In addition to similarities in their working lives, these religious philosophers are also united by similarity of ideas in their work. Bulgakov's famous journey *From Marxism to Idealism* [*Ot marksizma k idealizmu*] (1903) typifies the intellectual biography of a religious philosopher.<sup>137</sup> Berdyaev and Bulgakov's philosophical trajectories are most similar: initially uninspired by Orthodoxy, both turned to Marxism for answers to their philosophical questions, then left Marxism behind as well. In order to understand this journey we must understand the beginning point of 'Marxism', which can be understood as a bundle of ideas like positivism, materialism, technology, progress and liberalism.

For many thinkers the movement 'away' from Marxism was merely the formulation of a more accurate label for their original outlook. In Bulgakov's case, some of the principles which drew him to Marxism, such as historical necessity and universality, never left his thought.<sup>138</sup> For Frank and Berdyaev, socialist ideas formed persistent cores of their worldview. Marxism's coherent deterministic solutions would always appeal to Berdyaev. Bulgakov, on the other hand, was aware of the 'religious' character of his adherence to Marxism, and his condemnation of the Revolution and Bolshevism was based more on opposition to its atheistic character than its socialist aspect.<sup>139</sup> Shestov can also be seen to make a transition in his thought, as Clark explains:

A close examination of Shestov's early career reveals that ... between 1897 and 1911 Shestov believed God to be dead...during this period, Shestov's mental world was close to that of European Modernism... It was not until his works from 1911-14, when he began to meditate on the writings of Martin Luther and Lev Tolstoy that Shestov rediscovered religious faith, and began to articulate religious existentialism proper.<sup>140</sup>

The appeal of 'Marxism', as the only school that offered reformers like Frank a way to articulate their vision of a westernised Russia, can be considered analogous to Shestov's attraction to Nietzschean atheism. As the twentieth century progressed, some conflation of materialism, Marxism, atheism and science came to represent the real world and its problems in the minds of critics eager to champion some form of idealist humanism. Even though Lossky

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<sup>137</sup> Andreyev and Savicky, 83.

<sup>138</sup> Evtuhov, 31.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> R. Clark, 'Lev Shestov and the Crisis of Modernity', *Archaeus*, XI-XII (2007-2008), 233-248, 234.

did not move ‘from Marxism to Idealism’, his synthesis of Russian idealism and German philosophy similarly aimed to reconcile idealism and realism without completely forsaking either metaphysical approach.<sup>141</sup> It was often, as in the case of Karsavin, moral opposition to the Bolshevik regime, that spurred a turn towards idealism. His association with the Eurasianist movement can be seen as an attempt to blend the philosophical impulses of the East and the West: namely, what he saw as the immediacy of the absolute in Eastern thought, and ‘attention concentrated on the physically sensible’ in the West.<sup>142</sup> It is important to emphasize that Karsavin’s Eurasianism sought to unite these impulses, not favour one over the other.

By looking at these themes in thought it becomes apparent that the closeness in these thinkers’ lives is only a starting-point. This closeness is neither the cause nor the explanation for what is truly of interest: the similarity of their ideas that together constitute the body of Russian religious philosophy. By noting the chronological, geographical and biographical similarities that connect these thinkers it becomes possible to understand why historians of philosophy have grouped them in the way they have.

### 1.3 Discourse Theory

Internal, thematic connections unite the works of religious philosophy. The common subject-matter and its true nature can be better understood by examining the ideas and themes that these works share. Although there are similarities in many aspects of these thinkers’ lives these similarities do not sufficiently explain the similarities of their thought. The characteristics that connect the work of these thinkers are also, on their own, an important reason to view religious philosophers as a group. It is very possible that the reason these people grouped in location and lifestyle is that the common themes in their work and interests drew them to an

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<sup>141</sup> Sciabarra, 44.

<sup>142</sup> Eurasianism was an émigré movement based on Slavophil thought that placed a special hope on Russia’s third way of development (neither Western nor Soviet). Thinkers with the same religious-philosophical proclivities as Karsavin, such as Florovsky and Trubetskoi, eventually left the movement as it became increasingly pro-Soviet (J. Glad, *Russia Abroad: Writers, History, Politics* (Tenafly, 1999), 126 and 128). Lesourd, 70.

academic life and to each other, and not the reverse, that similarities in lifestyle caused these men to write about like ideas or themes. By thinking of the commonalities in thought as a cause, and not a consequence, of other commonalities it is possible to see religious-philosophical thought as a powerful determinant of other textual and physical factors in a philosopher's work and life. The project of fully understanding Russian religious philosophy in the first half of the twentieth century is therefore connected to the idea of a discourse, texts made meaningful by their cultural context as well as contents.

The question: 'does Russian religious philosophy constitute a discourse?' depends on whether Russian religious philosophy can be isolated as 'an individualizable group of statements' and whether the ways in which it shares 'particular structures,' force and coherence can be identified.<sup>143</sup> These signifiers of a discourse unite texts by different authors and on differing subject matter into a whole set of texts that constitute the Russian religious-philosophical discourse. The coherence of this set of texts is independent of any coherent concrete conversation or series of communications between individual religious philosophers.

That Russian religious philosophers carried out spoken and written conversations with each other in various combinations throughout this period has been established in the previous section, but this thesis is not the story of religious philosopher's inter-personal communications throughout this period. It is an examination of the development of religious philosophy in this period. Since a discourse is a set of texts that are connected by the type of structure, power and meaning that they share, it is very useful to look at examples of how structures and meanings are represented throughout Russian religious philosophy. Power, structure and meaning held in common differentiate Russian religious philosophy from other types of contemporary writing. The fact that Russian religious philosophy contains specific language structures that indicate a reflexive identity helps in the project of thinking of religious philosophy as a discourse. In this section the idea that religious philosophy has a distinct identity, even though it has an affinity with other types of writing, will be explored by examining the ways in which religious-

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<sup>143</sup> Mills, 7.

philosophical texts communicate ideas with the same rhetorical methods. In order to do so, word choice, style and argumentation will be considered more closely.

Common usage of certain terms helps indicate the coherence of religious philosophy. The use of Russian language terminology, especially while abroad, helped construct a purely religious-philosophical language. Words like *vseedinstvo*, *sobornost'* and *bogochelovechestvo*, are signs that within religious philosophy terms were deliberately chosen to reflect Russianness and Orthodoxy. Before 1917 these words signified a Russian perspective. In his consideration of *sobornost'*, Jonathan Pain points out that 'had some German term been employed, the whole discussion might have been much different.'<sup>144</sup> In the case of *sobornost'* advocacy of a Russian term was indeed Khomiakov's entire point. Still, Pain's observation holds true for terminology that is ambiguously deliberately Russian, such as *vseedinstvo* and *bogochelovechestvo*. As an imported discipline, little philosophical vocabulary was endemic to Russia, and French and German vocabulary within philosophical texts denoted national provenance of thought as much as they did a philosophical concept. For these ideas to be native to Russia, they need to be represented by Russian vocabulary. Furthermore, unique Russian vocabulary enabled philosophers to preserve ideas with unique meanings in their systems of thought better than using a translated counterpart would have done. In the case of *bogochelovechestvo* and its counterpart theandry the aspects of *bogochelovechestvo* alien to European thought would have been masked by simply using 'theandry'.

After 1917 this type of consideration was only more marked. Émigré communities, concerned to preserve Russian identity, would only be more inclined to use specifically Russian words.<sup>145</sup> Yet in the case of philosophical terminology the question of audience must be raised, and with this in mind it seems problematic that philosophers would choose terms that favour Russian readers over other readers interested in philosophy, such as Western academic colleagues. The fact that the Russian philosophical community had more control over a unique term, its meanings, use and reception, than they would have had over a Western counterpart-

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<sup>144</sup> Pain, 57.

<sup>145</sup> Glad, 109.

term must have contributed to the continued use of these words. If controlling the idea by controlling who had access to it, who could understand it and who could manipulate it, was an important matter, then discourse theory is a useful way to think about these terminology choices.

Common usage of terms also pulled Russian religious philosophers together. The similarities in uses of *vseedinstvo*, for example, could be thought of as several discrete uses with some aspects in common; but that religious philosophers also used the idea in likeminded ways demonstrates how a word could function as a means of uniting members of the religious-philosophical community. The conscious or unconscious adherence to the idea and use of the term *vseedinstvo* by any given religious philosopher could demonstrate desired membership in the school of thought. For example, Berdyaev, Bulgakov and Frank all use the idea of *vseedinstvo* in their philosophies to depict or clarify their metaphysical world view. This common usage and purpose of the word connects these three thinkers to each other and to other religious-philosophical thinkers of their time.

It stands to reason that authors who have chosen to work and live in proximity would also choose to communicate in ways that are intelligible to their colleagues and intended audience. By enlisting discourse theory, the idea that this natural word choice might reflect certain implicit needs of this group, such as to assert the validity of the Russian contribution to Western Philosophy, to protect the meaning of unique ideas, or to assert the bond between these thinkers, becomes more apparent. By thinking about a discourse of Russian religious philosophy, the fact that Khomiakov's use of *sobornyi* had spurred Russian translators to freely translate other types of 'universality' as *sobornost'* becomes meaningful.<sup>146</sup> The persistence of *vseedinstvo* as a term and as a metaphysical foundation in religious thought, when viewed in the light of the ways it might have helped establish and preserve the community, also becomes more understandable. Finally, discourse theory helps shed light on the additional motivations

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<sup>146</sup> Pain's examples are the translation of '*le dogma de l'universalite ecclesiastique*' as '*dogmata tserkovnoi sobornost'*' and '*l'unite de la foi universelle*' as '*edinstvo sobornoi very*' (transliterated by Pain, 94). These contemporary translations illustrate translators' willingness to use the term in ways implied neither by the Creed nor by Khomiakov himself.

for using a cumbersome neologism like *'bogochelovechestvo'* in emigration, a time when it might seem more reasonable to use a term (and adapt the idea of Godmanhood to be) more compatible with the ecumenical goals of Western and Orthodox theologians.

In addition to word choices, larger language structures can indicate a reflexive identity for a group of texts and authors. The format of a text and the way it is presented communicates authorial intention. Different means of writing about experiences can imply different types of experiences. In writing about philosophical topics it would seem reasonable to expect the author's experience of an idea to be purely intellectual and therefore to be communicated in an intellectual format. However, a feature immediately apparent in the study of Russian thought, as discussed in the introduction, is that Russian philosophical contributions just as commonly appear in literary format. Fiction and poetry seek to express extremely personal aspects of experience. It is difficult for philosophical writing to contain personal experience and also to maintain coherent arguments about human experience in general.<sup>147</sup> Philosophical writing that is rich with metaphor enables philosophers to include their personal experiences, and to call out to the personal experiences of their readership. While not completely fiction, metaphorical texts create a role for the philosopher as mediator and interpreter.

Western philosophers generally avoid literary and metaphorical terminology when expressing themselves, making the presence of poetic and metaphorical language in Russian philosophy appear more pronounced.<sup>148</sup> Clowes identifies a Russian tradition of this type of hypersensitivity to the uses of language in philosophical writing.<sup>149</sup> Furthermore, the use of metaphorical and poetic language suggests that Russian thinkers' experience of philosophy is

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<sup>147</sup> This recalls the discussion of metaphor in the introduction. A conceit of philosophy is the idea that 'concepts and distinctions are, in general, independent of any particular mode of expression' (Morris, 228). This is to say that something philosophically valid is not subjective and should not need to be expressed in personal language in order to communicate a particular personal truth.

<sup>148</sup> Western philosophers rely upon their philosophical discourse to be 'the most general, the most true, the most authoritative of human discourses' and thus must reign in figurative or individualistic language use (Clowes, 113).

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.* 131. In particular, after Solov'ev the thinkers Rozanov, Ivanov, and Bakhtin have such a sensitivity. Vasily Rozanov (1856-1919) is one of the most controversial thinkers from the pre-revolutionary and revolutionary period, for the most part because of his self-contradictions and focus on taboo religious-sexual ideas; see H. Mondry, *Vasily Rozanov and the Body of Russian Literature* (Bloomington, 2010).

more than just an intellectual experience, and that they would like it to be so for their readership, too. The preference for reaching a readership's intuitive senses as well as their rational mind can be understood as particularly Russian, and it is a particular feature of Russian religious philosophy that it relies on an intuitive basis for epistemology.<sup>150</sup> It stands to reason that if a philosopher came to an idea in a non-rational way, communicating information about that idea might need to be presented in a non-traditional format. The format of the text can then be interpreted not only as a means of communicating truths in content, but also as enacting the philosopher's mental life and meant to engender a similar experiential thought process in the reader.

In his philosophical works, Solov'ev's writing is notable for its creativity; he uses language rich in metaphor and poetry to convey his philosophical ideas. Clowes asserts that different intentions govern Solov'ev's use of different genres of writing and that he was aware of the effect his decisions about tone would have on readings of his work.<sup>151</sup> Clowes believes that his use of metaphor sought to expose the language of traditional Western Philosophy as vacant and devoid of real meaning. Solov'ev's poetry, on the other hand, represents experience as unreasoned, establishing an immediate and visceral connection between the text and the reader.<sup>152</sup> The seemingly different motives behind the use of these two types of writing delineate Solov'ev's understanding of creative non-rational language and its ability to convey meaning.

Both of Solov'ev's stylistic choices, to use metaphor in his philosophical writings and to present philosophical ideas in a poetic format can be seen in his writing about *Sophia*. In the poem *Near, Far Off, Not Here, Not There* [*Blizko, daleko, ne zdes' i ne tam*] (1875), Solov'ev describes his personal vision of *Sophia*:

I see you now not in a dream,  
Your speech is clear to me.  
I, who had been deafened in an alien world  
By the roar of incoherent speech,

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<sup>150</sup> Intuition is discussed further in Chapter 2.

<sup>151</sup> She argues that Solov'ev sought to create a new language that builds meaning purposefully and on an individual basis (Clowes, 110).

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.* 126.

Suddenly heard in your salutation  
The word of my homeland.<sup>153</sup>

In this poem Solov'ev is engaging in themes that he later picks up on in his philosophical work, such as reason, experience, language and nationality; but when reading it an individual can share the emotional experience of the author and identify with these subjects in a more immediate and non-rational way than when reading a philosophical explanation of ideas. In *Russia and the Universal Church* [*La Russie et L'église universelle*] (1889), a philosophical text, Solov'ev describes the complicated concept of *Sophia* with metaphor on several occasions, such as:

The reason and high degree of consciousness of the male, the heart and instinct of the female, and finally the law of solidarity or altruism which constitutes the foundation of every society—all of these are only prototypes of the real divine-human unity; they are a sprout which has yet to grow, to blossom and to bear its fruit. The gradual development of this sprout is accomplished in the process of universal history; and the threefold fruit which it bears is: the perfect female or divinized nature, the perfect male or the man-God, and the perfect society as the perfect communion of god with human beings—the final and definitive incarnation of Eternal Wisdom.<sup>154</sup>

Here, he is trying to explain a complex, threefold model of the Sophianic process, and by way of metaphor is able to convey the organic connotations of that process. Clowes also uses examples from Solov'ev's writing about love to demonstrate his poetic style in philosophical prose, but she uses his later work *The Meaning of Love* [*Smysl liubvi*] (1894), for her analysis.<sup>155</sup>

Bulgakov 'recognized the philosophical importance of Soloviev's poetry' as a reiteration of the mystical experience of nature.<sup>156</sup> Although Solov'ev's mystical and philosophical works were both widely recognized, Bulgakov's acceptance of the two groups as one whole body of work, contextualized by each other, reveals the type of inspiration Bulgakov sought as a thinker.<sup>157</sup> In this he was not alone; 'new reading of Soloviev coincided with a

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<sup>153</sup> Kornblatt, 107.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.* 209, my emphasis. Clowes points out that other scholars disagree with the consensus and have criticised Solov'ev for his dry style (f.17).

<sup>155</sup> 116.

<sup>156</sup> Evtuhov, 139.

<sup>157</sup> Newman speculates that Bulgakov felt 'obliged to "rescue" the divine name' from Solov'ev's eccentricities (1978, 44). It is very possible that Bulgakov felt that the religious meaning of Solov'ev's poetic vision was underemphasized by Silver Age decadent poets, but Bulgakov himself also partook in

broader re-interpretation of Soloviev among the intelligentsia in general.<sup>158</sup> Specifically, *The Nature of V. Solov'ev's Philosophy* [*Priroda v filosofii V. Solov'eva*], Bulgakov's contribution to the collection of articles *On Vladimir Solov'ev* [*O Vladimire Solov'eva*] (1911), encouraged movement away from a solely artistic appreciation of Solov'ev's work toward a holistic appreciation of Solov'ev's contribution to Russian thought.<sup>159</sup>

The new generation of philosophers after Solov'ev was aware of the constraints religious-philosophical discourse placed upon the popular reception of their works. Florensky's *The Pillar and the Ground of the Truth* was a popular religious-philosophical work, combining personal experience with historic religious texts and philosophy. In it Florensky directly addresses the inadequacy of solely philosophical discourse:

'Only do not think my cold words are metaphysical speculation, "Gnosticism", they are only poor schemata for what is experienced in the soul. That monad about which I speak is not a metaphysical essence given by logical determination.'<sup>160</sup>

Although Florensky uses terms like 'metaphysics' and 'monad,' he applies them more broadly than in the strict sense necessitated by a purely philosophical discourse. Another illustration of how indefinite Florensky's understanding of monad was is his definition of a small thing as 'a fiction, an atom, a monad and such.'<sup>161</sup> Georges Florovsky (1893-1979) even describes Florensky's style in this text as a literary device intended to convey a spiritual tonality.<sup>162</sup>

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some of the more 'eccentric' aspects of Solov'ev's legacy of thought on *Sophia*, such as the feminine persona, so it seems unlikely that Bulgakov was affronted rather than inspired by Solov'ev.

<sup>158</sup> Evtuhov, 139.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> Florensky 1997, 236, and SS, 324.

<sup>161</sup> Florensky SS, 28.

<sup>162</sup> Florovsky 1997, 277. Georges Florovsky had just begun his career at the University of Odessa in 1919 when his family was forced to emigrate from the young Soviet Union. A generation younger than the other thinkers here, Florovsky's approach to the history and heritage of Russian thought is markedly different, perhaps due to his early emigration. He was not only educated abroad, but also educated in the context of Russia Abroad. However, his life and work tied him closely to Berdyaev and Bulgakov in the Paris émigré community. There, at the St. Sergius Institute of Orthodox Theology, he was the chair of Patristic Theology. His focus on grounding Orthodox theology in patristic writing is one shift that profoundly affected the creative impulse of religious philosophers who hoped to genuinely influence Church tradition with their thought. One of the greatest arguments for considering Florovsky a successor to, rather than a participant in, religious philosophy is the fact that in his life time he was able to do what many religious-philosophers could not. He became fully part of Western academic institutions, working at Harvard, Columbia and Princeton, where he viewed Russian history in its entirety and ceased to consider only the revolutionary period. Florovsky's consideration of the

In *The Pillar and the Ground of the Truth*, philosophical terminology is not dominant, and Florensky denies that the foundation of truth is the study of metaphysics. Like Solov'ev, Florensky made a conscious choice in this respect and 'regarded language as central to his thought,' specifically engaging in a philosophical exploration of the name.<sup>163</sup> This book is not arranged as a philosophical tract; in this case it is as a series of letters between close friends. This format allows Florensky to use a creative style. Furthermore, as with Solov'ev, personal experience and poetic testimony are given equal credence in Florensky's work.

A similar style choice can be seen in Karsavin's text, *Noctes Petropolitanae* (1922).<sup>164</sup> In this book he duplicates the style of a medieval tract, bringing his personal interest in history into the form of the text. *Noctes Petropolitanae* employs a very creative writing style for the organization and discussion of Karsavin's philosophical argument. He uses metaphor to blend philosophical and personal musings in order to put forward his ideas about all-unity.<sup>165</sup> He divides the text into several 'nights of reflection' and does not impose strong, logical argumentation. Instead he introduces each evening to his readership gently and poetically. For example, he begins one 'night' (chapter) with the description, 'another quiet, frosty, lunar night...'<sup>166</sup> This style appeals to readers' emotional responses to the topic, breaks up the philosophical polemics into digestible, conversational units.

Solov'ev's writing style also influenced subsequent readings and writings about *Sophia*. He greatly contributed to the idea of *Sophia* being a composite of concepts portrayed in a composite of styles in Russian religious philosophy. But it must also be born in mind that the influence of his stylistic choices was not limited to religious philosophy. The roots of the

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Revolution from a distance illustrates his ability to move beyond the religious-philosophical discourses of the emigration.

<sup>163</sup> S. Cassedy, 'Pavel Florenskij's Philosophy of Language: Its Contextuality and its Context', *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 35/4 (1991), 5370. A preoccupation with language and especially the meaning of the name characterizes much of religious philosophy. Bulgakov's *Philosophy of the Name* (1917) is another example of pre-revolutionary exploration of this topic.

<sup>164</sup> Zenkovsky also makes a note of the similarity in styles between these texts, although he does not group Florensky and Karsavin together (843).

<sup>165</sup> M. Sergeev, 'Orthodoxy and Democracy: Sophiological Themes in the Philosophy of Nikolai Losskii', paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Boston, Nov. 1999, 2.

<sup>166</sup> *Noctes Petropolitanae* (Petersburg, 1922), 81.

Romantic eternal feminine in Symbolist literature can be found in Solov'ev's poetry about *Sophia*, and Symbolist theories of aesthetics are dominated by the idea of *Sophia*.<sup>167</sup> The poetic use of the eternal feminine figure demonstrates how authors experience the idea of *Sophia* in ways that are not intellectual. This development was contemporary to the philosophical concept of *Sophia*.

Poetic presentations of *Sophia* imply that as an idea it is understood or experienced in non-intellectual ways. This can undermine an author with purely philosophical intentions, even when the poetic presentations are written by others. The problem of 'credibility' in non-traditional philosophical discourse is therefore inherent in religious philosophy after Solov'ev. The poetic view of *Sophia* as the subject of sexual love, a representative of ancient non-Christian culture or the possessor of a female body can distract or oppose academic attention to the cosmic implications of *Sophia*. In this way, the appearance of *Sophia* in poetic texts could threaten its acceptability for readers encountering *Sophia* in theological texts.

Florensky is aware of a power relationship, like a religious-philosophical discourse, and he illustrates his consciousness of this power when discussing *Sophia*. He acknowledges that when considering this subject matter the constraints of terminology from the conventional philosophical discourse prevail: 'I am compelled to use a metaphysical terminology, but my speech terms do not have a strictly technical sense, but a conventional or rather symbolic one.'<sup>168</sup> One can interpret this, as Cassedy does, by linking Florensky's word choices to his theory of language. For Florensky every use of a word is an instance where it is spoken 'anew' and 'only the outer form of the word can be objectively one and the same thing in conversation but never the inner form.'<sup>169</sup> Contextuality changes the meaning of words, and in Florensky's thought this idea resembles the conceit of metaphor, that each use of a word constitutes a new layer of its meaning. Alternatively, one can attribute it to Florensky's consciousness of the existence and needs of an audience beyond his fellow academics, and the need to write a text

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<sup>167</sup> Evtuhov, 55.

<sup>168</sup> Florensky 1997, 236, and SS, 324.

<sup>169</sup> Cassedy, 546.

that would sit comfortably in the imagination of readers familiar with Solov'ev, Symbolism, and Orthodox rhetoric.

With these interpretations in mind, consider how Florensky's introduction to Letter 10, on *Sophia*, is as though this discussion will be a poetic account of personal experience:

I was alone. I had no furniture... the rain would beat down like clumps of frozen earth falling on the lid of a wooden coffin. The sensation I had was of my chest being open and of the cold rain flowing straight through my weary and sorrowing heart<sup>170</sup>

Later in the 'letter', Florensky moves on to a more traditionally philosophical style but the text remains peppered with lyrics and poetry. He writes of three things with equal weight: his personal experience of *Sophia*, iconographic depictions of *Sophia* and theological dogmatics about *Sophia*. This can be seen as following Solov'ev's stylistic choices and as an effort to connect *Sophia* to everyday life as well as more esoteric thought.

This type of writing results in texts that cross the borders between literary, philosophical and theological academic disciplines. That dividing religious philosophy among many disciplines can present a problem for study has been raised in the introduction, but by looking at writing styles it can be seen that the problems of such divisions are embedded in the original texts of religious philosophy. For example, references to *Sophia* in Russian thought can be found in literary, philosophical, and theological formats with romantic, erotic and reverential connotations. Much of *Sophia's* unique identity in the Russian philosophical context comes from this complicated mixture of styles and connotations.

In the discourse of religious philosophy texts that depend upon the idea of *Sophia* intermingle heavily with those relating to Godmanhood and all-unity. Texts about Godmanhood tend to be interpreted as more openly theological in nature, whereas texts about all-unity are generally interpreted as more philosophical. Richard Gustafson refers, for example, to Solov'ev's 'philosophy of All-unity and theology of Godmanhood'.<sup>171</sup> He assumes that each idea fits within the genre of philosophy or theology. *Sophia*, embraced by both disciplines and belonging to neither, helps to clarify whether a distinction between theology and

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<sup>170</sup> Florensky 1997, 231-2, and SS, 319.

<sup>171</sup> Florensky 1997, xi.

philosophy truly exists in Russian religious ‘thought’. The near association of Godmanhood and all-unity to *Sophia* also suggests that they might not be discipline specific, like *Sophia* is not, even though at first they may appear to be so. This observation is especially relevant to Godmanhood, for which treatment as a theological construct is often a foregone conclusion.

Another rhetorical method often used in religious philosophy, biblical referencing, complicates viewing it vis-à-vis theology. Again this can be seen in the case of *Sophia*, where Florensky’s style contrasts with Bulgakov’s. Even though Florensky is clearly writing under Christian auspices, using the Bible and Christian iconography to support his argument, he also includes the aforementioned (Solov’ev influenced) poetic language. Bulgakov, although he was also inspired by Solov’ev, ‘concentrates on the original biblical connotations of *Sophia*’ in a more traditional style.<sup>172</sup> By foregrounding connections to the Biblical origins, Bulgakov’s texts appear more formally serious than Florensky’s. Religious-philosophical texts can gain credence by using the Bible and other respected theological texts. In the case of *Sophia*, the Biblical contributions can primarily be found in three places: in the Old Testament’s Proverbs, and in the New Testament epistles Corinthians and Ephesians. However, in many ways these sources reinforce, instead of disambiguate, some of the problematic aspects of the idea, as it exists within the religious-philosophical discourse, and therefore they are worth a closer look.

In *Proverbs*, wisdom is personified and although female, not feminized.<sup>173</sup> This text presents the idea that wisdom, if not divine, is closely associated with God.<sup>174</sup> The way that wisdom appears here has a bearing on religious-philosophical *Sophia* because personification is carried through to later use and the implication that wisdom existed before creation supports arguments about the relationship between *Sophia* and creation. In Corinthians and Ephesians the characteristic of wisdom is associated with Christ.<sup>175</sup> Ephesians further links the wisdom of

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<sup>172</sup> Evtuhov, 179.

<sup>173</sup> Kyrke-Smith, 1. Here Wisdom is a strong and grand personality, exhorting mankind to follow the way of Wisdom and to seek her. In Chapter 8 she is presented as a female figure, and she speaks in the first person.

<sup>174</sup> She says, ‘I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, before the earth existed’ and ‘when he established the heavens, I was there.’ (Proverbs 8:23, 27).

<sup>175</sup> Kyrke-Smith, 11. For example, in Corinthians 1:24, ‘Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God’, wisdom is considered to be one among several aspects of God personified in Christ.

God with the structure of the emergent Church.<sup>176</sup> These texts place wisdom's role within the context of earthly life, and suggest that wisdom exists with a purpose for humanity, and to change human life, very like the process of development modelled in religious-philosophical Sophiology. These sources provide, for a theological audience, credible and shared sources for *Sophia*.

As in the case of *Sophia*, the Bible and other patristic texts support Godmanhood in religious philosophy. These texts play an important part in providing a legitimate foundation for Godmanhood.<sup>177</sup> Solov'ev uses Biblical support, such as in Acts, to identify the super-human element of humankind.<sup>178</sup> Seeking God and being in God are features of Godmanhood in religious philosophy supported by the Bible.<sup>179</sup> Solov'ev describes man as the natural mediator between material being and God because man contains this 'divine idea' in himself.<sup>180</sup> These aspects of Godmanhood seemingly come from an irrefutable place.

Biblical sources are not a refuge from controversial connotations, however. In *God and the Goddesses* Barbara Newman argues that Ecclesiasticus and The Wisdom of Solomon add key feminine aspects to the essential formative texts about *Sophia*.<sup>181</sup> These references are more

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<sup>176</sup> Ephesians 3:10, establishing an important connection between God's wisdom and temporal reality: 'His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.'

<sup>177</sup> Without the contributions of Orthodox thought, Godmanhood would—in a Western context—appear to be another type of humanism.

<sup>178</sup> Krasicki, 127. 'The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.' (Acts 17:24-25). His superiority to mankind does not emphasize mankind's inferiority.

<sup>179</sup> 'God did this [made man] so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being.' (Acts 17:27-28). Mankind is portrayed here as having a purpose that is innate and inherent from the point of creation.

<sup>180</sup> Solov'ev 1948, 198.

<sup>181</sup> In Ecclesiasticus 24:17-27, wisdom herself voices a luscious potential:

I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus, and as a cypress tree on mount Sion. I was exalted like a palm tree in Cades, and as a rose plant in Jericho: As a fair olive tree in the plains, and as a plane tree by the water in the streets, was I exalted. I gave a sweet smell like cinnamon, and aromatical balm: I yielded a sweet odour like the best myrrh: And I perfumed my dwelling as storax, and galbanum, and onyx, and aloes, and as the frankincense not cut, and my odour is as the purest balm. I have stretched out my branches as the turpentine tree, and my branches are of honour and grace. As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odour: and my flowers are the fruit

poetic and opaque than those in Proverbs, Corinthians and Ephesians. They provide a stylistic model that reinforces the poetic *Sophia* in the religious-philosophical discourse. The feminine aspect of *Sophia* in Solov'ev's poetry, that complicates her relationship with the rest of the Christian understanding of the world, originates in the Bible.

Biblical aspects of *Sophia* are also truly present throughout the *Sophia* depicted in religious philosophy, and so it can be concluded that referencing the Bible and other early religious texts was part of the discourse and not a practice used to dissociate a text from religious philosophy. The contradictions and problems *Sophia* encounters as a concept in religious philosophy, discussed in below in Chapter 2, are not resolved by using textual support from the Bible, or transplanting *Sophia* to a theological discourse. It seems clear that an idea like *Sophia* is, in fact, more comfortably situated within a religious-philosophical discourse, than in any other.

#### **1.4 Conclusions: A Distinct Identity for Religious Philosophy**

This chapter posed the question of whether or not thinking of Russian religious philosophy as a discourse would be useful. It seems that even though the authors most readily associated with religious philosophy can be analysed individually or in subgroups for a variety of legitimate reasons, looking at their scholarly output as a whole also bears fruit. Closer inspection of religious philosophy as a discourse helps even more readily expose the problem encountered by earlier scholars that it is not philosophy and not theology. It is even easier to make the judgement that religious philosophy is a distinct subset of Russian thought when considering the works of a broad group of authors. The point of enlisting discourse theory is

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of honour and riches. I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope. In me is all grace of the way and of the truth, in me is all hope of life and of virtue. Come over to me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits. For my spirit is sweet above honey, and my inheritance above honey and the honeycomb.

This rendering is far more sensual. Newman argues that rendering Wisdom as a lush fecund figure was done in order to compare favourably with contemporary alternative feminine, specifically, the Cult of Isis (191).

not to establish a discourse; it is to bring a different tool of analysis to these texts. Viewing them as one group or body of thought for the purposes of understanding that thought is justified.

Although the logic may seem circular, the idea of a religious-philosophical discourse is a means by which to identify and define works of religious philosophy and works of religious philosophy so identified help set the parameters and definitions of that discourse. The purpose of the next chapter is to continue this discussion by moving from the basic question of whether a discourse can be said to exist, to the next step: given its existence what are the common signals and sources of truth within it?

## **Chapter 2: Discursive Structures**

The purpose of this chapter is to establish that four main ideas act as structures—meaning systematized ideas, opinions, and concepts—within the discourse of Russian religious philosophy.<sup>182</sup> Since the purpose of this research is to examine the state of Russian religious philosophy between 1905 and 1940 by looking at the way religious-philosophical discourse changed in this period, it makes sense that the ideas that act as structures within the religious-philosophical discourse will play a very important role. This research focuses on four systematized ideas: all-unity, *sobornost'*, *Sophia*, and Godmanhood and this chapter explains why.

Before looking more closely at these ideas, it is necessary to ascertain whether such attention is warranted. Therefore, this chapter will first consider the ways in which these ideas constitute unique place holders within Russian religious philosophy and how they came to be so. In addition to addressing their unique position in religious philosophy, this chapter also questions whether they exerted an influence on religious philosophy. As discussed in the introduction, all four of these ideas are simultaneously products of the religious-philosophical discourse and producers of subsidiary or by-product ideas. It is the intention of this section to establish how this can be the case. This section further supports viewing these ideas as discursive structures by establishing that they are not merely the subjects of some thinkers' works but are also ideas that influence the philosophers who use them. Finally, this chapter will establish that in the time period in question these ideas are systematized conceptual schemes, and therefore can justifiably be considered discursive structures. This chapter makes it possible

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<sup>182</sup> See page 9.

to entertain the fundamental questions of whether or not these ideas are discursive structures by giving attention to how these ideas function.

## 2.1 Becoming Unique Placeholders in Russian Religious Thought

Although it is plain that these four ideas have a special meaning and role in Russian religious thought, upon closer scrutiny it becomes clear that all-unity, *sobornost'*, *Sophia*, and Godmanhood each hold uniquely essential places in it and could therefore be considered potential discursive structures, were it to be analysed as a discourse. All-unity [*vseedinstvo*] is a good starting-point for exploration of discursive structures because it has an undisputed central place in Russian religious philosophy; therefore, understanding its role in religious philosophy aids understanding of other ideas within the body of thought.<sup>183</sup>

Unity has a unique and varied presence among Russian thinkers throughout the history of Russian philosophy. Some analysts consider unity to be particular to Russian philosophy.<sup>184</sup> Epstein is one such scholar. In 'The Significance and Impact of Russian Thought: 12 Theses' he describes the metaphysics of all-unity as a key characteristic of Russian philosophy: 'The concept of integrity, or totality, is the seminal Russian contribution to the theory of knowledge. This principle also extends to the ontological dimension, as the axiomatic unity of knowledge and being.'<sup>185</sup> Epstein also states that this presence of unity contributed to Russian philosophy engaging with large-scale projects for transforming the world. A current question in Russian

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<sup>183</sup> Kline expresses concern over the translation of the Russian *vseedinstvo* into English as all-unity because the two elements derive from different languages: *all* from Anglo-Saxon and *unity* from Latin. He has the same objection to pan-unity, and therefore prefers total-unity ('The Religious Roots of S L Frank's Ethics and Social Philosophy', in Kornblatt and Gustafson, eds, *Russian Religious Thought* (Madison, 1996), 228). I prefer 'all-unity' even though it may be linguistically objectionable. The terms all and unity have been used in English for long enough that neither sound alien or provocative and the combination of words with different origins is, although not normal, a common enough feature of regular English. The other potential translations are inadequate in terms of representing the meaning to an English-speaking reader because 'pan' is an awkward, less common prefix and 'total' carries the connotation of entirety and wholeness more than the connotation of expansion and every-ness carried by all. Finally, *vse* and all have a similar short, simple, basic sound that helps both the terms *vseedinstvo* and all-unity have a similar cadence.

<sup>184</sup> As opposed to the term '*vseedinstvo*', which is definitely Russian.

<sup>185</sup> <[http://www.emory.edu/INTELNET/rus\\_thought\\_overview.html](http://www.emory.edu/INTELNET/rus_thought_overview.html)>

culture scholarship is what meaning to take from this predominance of ‘metaphysics of all-unity’ in Russian philosophy.<sup>186</sup>

Russian thinkers developed ideas about unity from Western sources. In Western European philosophy beginning with the work of Plato and carrying on through medieval and modern Western thought, unity dominated thought about the universe.<sup>187</sup> As the influence of religion in Western society receded in the nineteenth century, secular speculation in science and philosophy rejected themes of unity, causing the topic to cease to be a vibrant source of Western thought despite this rich heritage. Works from the Western tradition, such as those of Plotinus (204-270) and Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) continued their popularity among many Russian thinkers, however. The many ways that unity is employed in Western European philosophies is seen by some as an indicator of extensive connections between Russian and Western thought. In using the presence of all-unity as a definitive characteristic of Russian thought, Epstein is sensitive to this relationship between Russian and Western thought. In Religious philosophy all-unity came to have a uniquely strong place, as the premise of a world state of wholeness, connecting the human world to God by placing it in the context of God’s own wholeness.<sup>188</sup>

The popularity of all-unity among Russian thinkers at the turn of the twentieth century can be easily explained. For one thing, as a neo-platonic idea all-unity claimed heritage from ancient civilizations, and interest in the ancient world was a characteristic of the Russian

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<sup>186</sup> For example, Marian Broda in ‘Russia and the West’ contends that the neo-Platonic view manifested in all-unity conflicts with the West’s primarily Aristotelian philosophical standpoint, thus providing a foundation for subsequent ideological conflict in Western and Russian philosophical history (*Studies in Eastern European Thought*, 54/1-2 (Mar 2002)). On the contrary, Andrey Shirin argues in his doctoral thesis, ‘Post-Foundationalist *Zhivoznaniye*: Splitting the Difference Between American Pragmatism and the Russian Tradition of All-Unity’ (Ph.D thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary, 2005), that an affinity between pragmatism and all-unity should support rapprochement between the two cultures. Importantly, both authors connect modern political and social situations with philosophical foundations, thus illustrating an imagined, if not real, on-going role for the philosophical idea of *vseedinstvo* in modern life.

<sup>187</sup> Explanations of the universe in Platonic and neo-Platonic ideas as well as in early Christian thought used unity to establish metaphysics. In *Ethical Implications of Unity and the Divine in Nicholas of Cusa*, David De Leonardis sums up the history of unity in Western thought: ‘The predominant view of Western civilization until the end of the seventeenth century was one of an essentially unified and coherent cosmos, in which meaning, value and truth were inherent and integrated’ (Washington, DC, 1998, 11).

<sup>188</sup> For example, Solov’ev’s use of the term *vseedinstvo* to strike a balance between the issue of God’s immanence and transcendence in the world situates the temporal in a divine context (Sutton, 63).

cultural flourishing of the Silver Age.<sup>189</sup> Another reason is that, in alluding to a sphere greater than the known world, it collaborated with the aims of symbolist mysticism.<sup>190</sup> All-unity, with its Western heritage, longstanding role in Russian thought and contemporary points of interest, had a natural place in Russian religious philosophy.

All-unity could be considered an overarching structure that lends coherence to the other three ideas considered here. For example, Godmanhood, deals primarily with the co-existence of God and man in the person of Christ; in other words, the unity of the divine and human. Likewise, *sobornost'*, describes the unity of community. And finally, theories of *Sophia*, though not inherently related to the unity of the universe, are so in Russian thought.<sup>191</sup> It is not surprising that the conceptual groundwork of a theory explaining the interconnectedness of everything should interpenetrate other similar theories that existed contemporaneously in the same philosophers' work.

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<sup>189</sup> The widespread interest in ancient Greece and Rome in Russian Silver Age cultural circles drew attention to the metaphysics of all-unity because of unity's Platonic roots and prevalence in medieval and Renaissance philosophy. Cultural movements at this time referred to classical mythology and Renaissance figures as sources of decadent and archetypal subjects. Interest in this subject matter was to some extent caused by creative parallels drawn between societies at the end of the nineteenth century and previous eras in terms of enduring human cultural achievements and the heights of civilization. Russians travelling abroad at this time went to Rome and Greece, further arousing their interest in the ancient world and its religious and social principles. The results of this exposure can be seen in the themes of such subsequent publications as Merezhkovsky's *Akhmaton King of Egypt* (1924), *The Birth of the Gods: Tutankhamen in Crete* [*Rozhdenie Bogov: Tiutankhamun na Krite*] (1925), Mandelshtam's *Egyptian Stamp* [*Egipetskaya Marka*] (1928), Ivanov's *Dionysus and Pre-Dionysism* [*Dionisis i Praddionisiistvo*] (1923) and Shestov's contrast of *Athens and Jerusalem* [*Afini i Yyerusalem*] (1937). Florovsky writes that it was specifically Merezhkovsky who first articulated the Hellenic and classical influence on artistic and religious thinking (*Collected Works of Georges Florovsky, vi: Ways of Russian Theology, Part 2*, [Vaduz, 1987], 239). This trend can also be seen in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, where classical subjects were the topics of literature and the subjects of painting: for example, Victorian interest in Greece, and the role of mythology in pre-Raphaelite art.

<sup>190</sup> Symbolism, the major literary movement of Silver Age Russia, was also concerned with the sphere of existence beyond immediate apprehensions. Michael Wachtel explains the Symbolist ideal of *zhiznetvorchestvo* as a synthesis of creation and life such that the whole act of living becomes an artistic act. In Symbolist work, magical idealism and mythopoesis connect ideal, some might say imaginary, realities to everyday life through art (*Russian Symbolism and Literary Tradition: Goethe, Novalis and the Poetics of Vyacheslav Ivanov* (London, 1994), 144). The idea of all-unity supports Symbolist aims because the integrated whole universe that it describes implies a harmonious union between the tangible and intangible aspects of daily life, giving daily life a significance beyond obvious mundane transactions.

<sup>191</sup> As Zenkovsky explains, 'Thanks to Solovyov the sophiological theme became very closely bound up—both in terminology and substance—with the idea of total-unity' (842).

How *sobornost'* was first used, and how it was commonly used in Russian thought, further supports its interpretation as a discursive structure in a discourse of religious philosophy. The origin of the idea is most commonly attributed to Khomiakov, whose original thinking about the Orthodox Church spurred on the intellectual re-discovery of Orthodoxy's spiritual richness already begun by his contemporaries.<sup>192</sup> However, as noted by Pain, Khomiakov did not actually coin the word, or attempt to define it as part of a new way of thinking about the Church.<sup>193</sup> No writings in which Khomiakov uses the word '*sobornost'*' exist.<sup>194</sup> It can be surmised therefore that the mission to defend the righteousness of the historic Eastern Church superseded his goal of defending the use of Slavonic.

*Sobornost'* is attributed to Khomiakov because the word *sobornyi* drew his attention during an argument with Father Gagarin, a Russian expatriate and convert from Orthodoxy to Catholicism, then in Paris, about the Catholicity of the Orthodox Church.<sup>195</sup> One part of Gagarin's argument condemned the nationalistic use of Slavonic in the Orthodox Church in Russia, and highlighted the inadequacy of the word *sobornuiu* in the Creed to address the concept of universality because it was from a non-universal language.<sup>196</sup> Khomiakov countered this argument with an in-depth analysis of the meaning of *sobornuiu*, and concluded that the Slavonic word may be even better suited to the Christian meanings behind the word than the Latin *catholicam*.<sup>197</sup>

In his defence of '*sobornyi*', Khomiakov described the state of the Church as such a specific ideal that a new word was required to encompass all of these concepts.<sup>198</sup> In doing so

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<sup>192</sup> Shevzov, 30. Mid-nineteenth-century Slavophil interest in Russian spirituality was accompanied by such 'church projects as the revival of spiritual life at Optina Pustyn and the publication of a Russian Bible' (Pain, 56).

<sup>193</sup> Pain, 93-4.

<sup>194</sup> All of Khomiakov's writings on this subject were, ironically, written in French (*Ibid.* 82).

<sup>195</sup> Gagarin argued that the Catholic Church was a more correct faith than Orthodoxy because it was more universal.

<sup>196</sup> In this respect Gagarin's attack could be considered partially responsible, along with Khomiakov's defence, for the existence of *sobornost'* because it framed Khomiakov's attention to the word.

<sup>197</sup> In Latin: *Et unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam*, and in Russian: *Vo edinuiu sviatuiu sobornuiu u apostol'skuiu Tserkov'*.

<sup>198</sup> Because his conversation with Gagarin was in French, the publication of the first Russian translations of his letters in 1868 is a more true starting point for use of the word *sobornost'* in Russian thought,

he relied on contemporary intellectual traditions of the Russian intelligentsia on the whole and the Slavophiles in particular: assumptions about the power of language; Romanticism; and Orthodox theology. For example, contemporary Western views of language and the spirit in the Russian intellectual community correlated linguistic theory to theosophical ideas like those of Jacob Boehme (c.1575-1624) to generate a spiritual significance for language use. Boehme's idea of *Natursprache* described the concept that:

There is a natural relationship between the essence of a thing, its name and the physiological and auditory factors in speaking and hearing the name. When the name is properly understood, then the one who thinks, speaks and hears it has access to the inner essence of this thing.<sup>199</sup>

Khomiakov's belief that when Saints Cyril (827-869) and Methodius (c. 817-885) translated the Greek *katholike* as *sobornaia*, this event had a spiritual meaning fit well with the idea of *Natursprache* and influenced his conclusions that the word *sobornyi* has a special relevance to faith.<sup>200</sup> Khomiakov accuses Gagarin of ignoring Cyril and Methodius' role in the use of *sobornost'*, 'You, who have opened a whole thought in its unity, have betrayed a symbol without participation or consciousness of your Eastern brothers who you have not dealt with in a certain Church, which was bequeathed to us by Cyril and Methodius.'<sup>201</sup> Khomiakov's line of thought includes the word *sobornyi* as part of the whole mystical bequest of these saints. If any one of their acts is considered of sacred significance then this act must be as well.

Another current Western intellectual inclination, toward Romanticism, added credence to Khomiakov's promotion of the Slavonic language.<sup>202</sup> Romantic Nationalism focused on the development of national languages and folklore as a natural extension of geographical and cultural boundaries. In particular, the work of the German philosopher Johann Fichte (1762-

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despite the fact that this publication was posthumous, because they contain the earliest print usage of the word (Pain, 82).

<sup>199</sup> R. Brown, *The Later Philosophy of Schelling: The Influence of Boehme on the Works of 1809-1815* (London, 1977), 76.

<sup>200</sup> Pain, 2. Constantine, later St. Cyril, and his brother Methodius are credited with inventing the Cyrillic script for missionary purposes among the Slavs. The invention of this alphabet is considered significant as the beginning point of Slavic cultural history, and as a precedent for democratic access to literary culture and the universal validity of all nations or cultures (B. Angelov, *Cyril and Methodius* (Sophia, 1970), 26). Both saints had to defend the use of this new missionary language, and thus argumentation about its validity and superiority as a theological language has been present since its inception.

<sup>201</sup> Khomiakov 1900, 313.

<sup>202</sup> Bird, 212-213.

1814) contributed to the conflation of nation with national language. Conceiving of ‘the word’ as weighty with meaning, as a form of the biblical ‘*Logos*’ and with the Romantic idea of nationhood, establishes a unique relevance to the use of this specific Slavonic word.

The third idea considered here, *Sophia*, is a cosmological philosophical word addressing the order of the created universe and also holds a unique position of power in Russian thought. *Sophia* has deep pre-Christian roots and was reappropriated by Solov’ev in the latter half of the nineteenth century, however, making *Sophia*’s exclusive ‘Russianness’ more debatable than that of *sobornost*’. Solov’ev’s role in bringing the concept of Divine *Sophia* and the eternal feminine to the forefront of Russian culture in the late 1800s was decisive and one of the greatest legacies of his work.<sup>203</sup> Unlike all-unity, the religious nature of *Sophia* is undisputable because the idea ultimately originated in the *Wisdom* directly referred to in the Bible.<sup>204</sup>

Its origin gives *Sophia* permanent unique characteristics in religious thought, such as a strong connection to Western Christianity and femininity. These traits go hand in hand. In Newman’s research it is apparent that there is a difference in the Western portrayal of wisdom [*Sapientia*] and Eastern *Sophia*, both in the visual symbols and in the frequency of their representation, even though both share religious texts in origin.<sup>205</sup> In her discussion of Gnostic ‘wisdom’, Jean Kyrke-Smith argues that a female *Sophia* is more persistent in the East because the scriptural sources for wisdom as *Hokma* (Hebrew) and *Sophia* (Greek) lend themselves to personification as female, whereas *Sapientia* (Latin) does not lend itself to personification in the same way.<sup>206</sup> The tradition of personifying *Sapientia* in medieval Christendom as either Christ or Mary, both pre-existing figures with rich symbolism, contrasts with the personification of

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<sup>203</sup> For the most comprehensive discussion of Solov’ev’s work on *Sophia*, see Kornblatt.

<sup>204</sup> *Sophia* as it exists in the Russian religious-philosophical context is an idea that requires the simultaneous existence of, and acceptance of, a Christian world-view: ‘Sophiology, as the doctrine elaborated by these men has come to be known, is pre-eminently concerned with the way in which the link between God and his created world is effected and manifested’ (Klimoff, 67).

<sup>205</sup> *Sapientia* is less frequently represented in medieval Catholic devotional imagery than *Sophia* is in Orthodox iconography. When *Sapientia* is portrayed it is as a feminine Christ, Mary or a lesser muse, not as a powerful figure in her own right.

<sup>206</sup> Why Kyrke-Smith should believe this to be the case is undeveloped; however, her contention that *Sapientia* is simply a less figurative word is unsatisfactory because it underemphasizes the strong traditions of text about Wisdom in Eastern Christianity and Judaism that were simultaneously developed with the Gnostic development of *Sophia* and the eternal feminine (Kyrke-Smith, 30).

*Sophia* in the Eastern Orthodox, and especially Russian, tradition as a unique and mysterious woman.<sup>207</sup> The sapiental Mariology and feminization of Christ described by Newman suggests that in the West the scriptural writings about *Sophia* were equally difficult to digest and equally suggestive of personification, but Newman's work leaves the unique direction Russian religious philosophy chose to take unexplained. For this the contribution that Solov'ev made to the Biblical representations of *Sophia* must be considered.

A figure of divine wisdom was present in Western thought, but in Russia, due to Solov'ev, *Sophia* went on to become the preoccupation of many artists and thinkers in a way that it had not in Western European culture. *Sophia's* place in his legacy can be judged very significant because *Sophia* is so prominent in the next generation of religious-philosophical writings.<sup>208</sup> In 'The Influence of Jacob Boehme on Russian Religious Thought', Zdenek David helps define Solov'ev's unique contribution to *Sophia* vis-à-vis other sources. He concludes that Solov'ev's *Sophia* is an original concept, despite the native and Western influences on him: 'Neither in Schelling's system nor in Eastern patristic thought is there an adequate basis for the concept of *Sophia* as it appears in Soloviev.'<sup>209</sup> He also promotes the view that Boehmist ideas, prevalent throughout the whole theosophical movement in Western Europe, were integral to Solov'ev's conception of *Sophia*. Russian exposure to theosophy from the time of Peter the Great onward must have complemented any direct influence Solov'ev might have taken from Boehme. With Solov'ev's original writings on this topic, *Sophia* was placed in the appropriate context to capture momentum among Russian thinkers. His use of *Sophia* allowed it to retain in the Russian context literary-inspirational and Gnostic-mystical aspects within a more rigid philosophical framework. *Sophia's* origins in Christian texts and influential treatment by Solov'ev interacted to create an idea unique to religious philosophy.

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<sup>207</sup> Newman 2003, 193.

<sup>208</sup> Zenkovsky, however, argues that Solov'ev's impulses toward unity and ecumenism were more influential than the legacy of *Sophia* (483).

<sup>209</sup> Z. V. David, 'The Influence of Jacob Boehme on Russian Religious Thought', *Slavic Review*, 21/1 (Mar. 1962), 60.

Like *sobornost'* and *vseedinstvo*, *bogochelovechestvo* [Godmanhood] is a unique Russian word as well as a unique Russian idea.<sup>210</sup> During the late nineteenth century Solov'ev introduced this word to Russian religious philosophy by using it in a special religious-philosophical way, specifically in *Lectures on Godmanhood* [*Chteniia o bogochelovechestve*] (1881).<sup>211</sup> Of all the ideas explored in this thesis Godmanhood is the most fully and convincingly a product of the history of Russian thought, suggesting that it could act as a discursive structure. Valliere considers the word to originally have been a simple Slavonic translation of a Greek theological concept, much like the origin of *sobornost'*. In his interpretation *bogochelovechestvo* was used in Russian thought to represent the idea of theandry.<sup>212</sup> Yet Valliere points out that *bogochelovechestvo* was infrequently used in Russian theology; and earlier Russian Orthodox thinkers like Archimandrite Bukharev (1824-1871) used Godmanhood in a purely theological way (i.e. as a synonym for theandry).<sup>213</sup> It must therefore be concluded that Godmanhood has a specific philosophical connotation of meaning that encouraged its use outside of the discipline of theology. If the term '*bogochelovechestvo*' lay dormant as theandry in Russian Orthodox theology, why, then, did it become a popular religious-philosophical word before and into the revolutionary period? To answer this question, and to understand the significance of Godmanhood in the twentieth century, we must turn to

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<sup>210</sup> Paul Valliere translates *bogochelovechestvo* as 'the humanity of God' instead of as theandry or Godmanhood because he believes that 'the traditional English translation gives the [false] appearance of being a literal semiotic equivalent of the Russian.' His reason for finding the impression given by Godmanhood as false is that *chelovek* has no gender and, therefore, *chelovechestvo* [humanity] is not adequately conveyed by 'manhood.' For Valliere, even though a translation of 'humanity' risks confusion from the connotations of *chelovechnost* [being humane], 'the humanity of God' is worth the risk because it makes the connection, so strongly implied by the terminology, between God and Man (Valliere, 11-13). The standard terminology 'Godmanhood' is cumbersome on an English speaker's tongue, but I use it here in place of theandry or the humanity of God for a few reasons. Firstly, the Russian *bogochelovechestvo* is not an easy or common word in Russian, so it is fitting that some of its 'constructed nature' in the Russian comes across in the English 'Godmanhood'. Secondly, in this thesis attendant ideas of God-man [*Bog-chelovek*], man-God [*chelovek-Bog*] and mangodhood [*chelovekobozhie*] are explored, and I want to make use of the ways all these terms are constructed.

<sup>211</sup> In these lectures, Solov'ev elaborated upon the meaning of the word as a concept that linked human nature to divine life through the specific implications of Christ's incarnation. Available in English as V. Solov'ev, *Vladimir Solovyov's Lectures on Godmanhood*, tr. P. Zouboff (London, 1948).

<sup>212</sup> Valliere, 11-13. '*theandric*, adj, of or pertaining to both God and man; partaking of both the human and the divine', *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (1989), *OED Online*, Oxford University Press <<http://www.oed.com:80/Entry/200217>>.

<sup>213</sup> Valliere, 144.

Solov'ev and his use of the word, where a strong case can be made for secular humanist contributions to the development of Godmanhood.

Humanistic thought along the Western philosophical model was popular in Russia.<sup>214</sup> Western Humanism developed out of Christian thinking, but it eventually created a non-religious forum in which to consider the place of Christian inspired ideals in everyday life.<sup>215</sup> The influence of Auguste Comte (1798-1857) was especially marked in considerations of anthropology in pre-revolutionary Russian intellectual circles.<sup>216</sup> Comte appealed to a Russian audience for a variety of reasons: his work was published in French and therefore accessible to francophone Russian intellectuals; his philosophy is functionalist and views society as a whole, a tendency prevalent in Russian philosophy and therefore sympathetically received; and his ideas (much like those of Marx) proposed an achievable social project that would address and solve present day problems, which appealed to the social activist inclinations of the intelligentsia.<sup>217</sup> The unrestrained acceptance of Comte's ideas, and the will to execute them and to draw out their most extreme conclusions was typical of Russian philosophical reactions to exciting new Western ideas.<sup>218</sup> Secularism was considered to be a necessary component of Comte's thought, and so Russian enthusiasm for Comte entailed acceptance of it. In *The*

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<sup>214</sup> For more on Russian Humanism see Hamburg, especially the introduction. One explanation for Russian philosophy's emphasis on social thought is the moral situation of serfdom, which was an immediate focus for the intelligentsia. That serfdom could exist in Russia concurrent to events inspired by European humanistic thought, like the French Revolution, drew attention to Russia's particularly undeveloped state vis-à-vis the rest of Europe and encouraged a practical and humanistic inclination in Russian philosophy.

<sup>215</sup> Western Humanism, by which I mean: 'A European intellectual movement or climate of thought from the 14th to the 16th cent., which was characterized in scholarship by attentiveness to classical Latin (and later Greek), in neo-Latin and vernacular literature by the creative imitation of ancient texts, in education and public life by the promotion of some or all of the wide range of cultural ideals which these texts were supposed to transmit, and in the fine and applied arts by creative response to Roman and Greek artefacts or principles', *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, *OED Online*, Oxford University Press accessed 16 March 2011 <<http://www.oed.com:80/Entry/89272>>.

<sup>216</sup> For example, Copleston notes that Comte influenced Lavrov (1988, 193). However, the influence of Comte on Russian thought, seen most strongly in the 1860s, is not as well explored in secondary literature as the influence of thinkers like Hegel or Nietzsche. Manon de Courten writes that Comte is 'massively overlooked' (*History, Sophia and the Russian Nation: A Reassessment of Vladimir Solov'ev's Views on History and his Social Commitment* (Bern: 2004)), and Kornblatt supports this concern (2009, 212).

<sup>217</sup> D. Gray, 'Russian Sociology: The Second Coming of August Comte', *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 53/2 (Apr. 1994), 165.

<sup>218</sup> A good example of this reaction can be found in the work of Visarion Belinsky, see footnote 80.

*Intelligentsia and the Religion of Humanity*, James Billington argues that the Comtist secular view left a space to be filled by ‘religiosity’ or ‘spiritualism’. In his argument, the atheistic part of humanism could not exist in the Russian context without arousing a sort of theistic response. He argues that, by the late nineteenth century, interest in Western humanism had led to the development of a ‘religion of humanity’ in Russian intellectual circles:

These alienated urban intellectuals of late imperial Russia [namely Lavrov, Mikhailovsky and Nikolai Shelgunov (1824-1891)] created something that could only be described as a new religion, one which took Russian thinkers further than those of any European nation toward realizing Comte’s latest visionary hopes for a new religion of humanity.<sup>219</sup>

According to Billington, these thinkers could be considered to be acting religiously in an anthropological sense because these thinkers used ‘myths, rituals and slogans’ along with their reasoned philosophy.<sup>220</sup>

When entertained alongside the development of Godmanhood, the suggestion that increasing acceptance of atheistic ideas created a sort of vacuum for late nineteenth century Russian intellectuals to fill with theism or pseudo-theism gives Solov’ev’s writings and role a special relevance.<sup>221</sup> Solov’ev was connected to both of these developments. Billington points out that Solov’ev attended Mikhailovsky’s Comtist circles, where he must have discussed his ideas with thinkers who did not share his assessment.<sup>222</sup> Notably, in ‘The Idea of Humanity in Auguste Comte’ [*Ideia chelovechestva u Avgusta Konta*] (1898), Solov’ev states his relationship to Comte, explaining that although he disagrees with the French philosopher, he

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<sup>219</sup> J. H. Billington, ‘The Intelligentsia and the Religion of Humanity’, *American Historical Review*, 65/4 (July 1960), 808. For Lavrov, see footnote 480; for Mikhailovsky, see footnote 80. Very little is published on N V Shelgunov in English; for details of his life and work, see N. V. Shelgunov, L. P. Shelgunova and M. L. Mikhailov, *Vospominaniia*, Vol. 1 (Moskva, 1967).

<sup>220</sup> Billington 1960, 808.

<sup>221</sup> He goes on to argue that the pseudo religion inspired in these circles anticipated ‘many of the forms and procedures of the new secular faith which would eventually become institutionalised by Soviet ideologists,’ and he identifies the tradition of Comte and Populist thinkers as a source for the more ritualistic aspects of ‘Soviet’ atheism (*ibid.*). It is true that the antipathy to religion in Marxism alone cannot explain the ‘religious’ fervour with which Russian intellectuals embraced atheism. Very possibly Comtist and Populist sources of condemnation for religion and the old social order that it supported were sympathetic to each other and mutually reinforced the emergence of a spiritually infused atheistic society.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.* 814.

also identifies important contributions in his work.<sup>223</sup> In this lecture Solov'ev commends Comte for his idea of *Humanité*:

He [Comte] clearly distinguishes humanity as a sum of national familial and personal elements (his *humanité* with a small h) from Humanity as an essential, actual and living principle of all these elements (*Humanité* with a capital H).<sup>224</sup>

But, Solov'ev must also add his view of Godmanhood, a different but similar kind of *Humanité*, as a counterweight. He writes that:

It is clear that true humanity as the universal form of the union of material nature and Divinity, or as the form of nature's reception or taking in of the Divine, is as necessity Divine Humanity [Godmanhood] and Divine Matter. It cannot be simply humanity, in as much as this would mean that it takes in without being taken in; it would be form without content, or empty form.<sup>225</sup>

Solov'ev presents his idea as a correction to Comte, and goes so far as to attribute his own meaning to Comte's unconscious mind.<sup>226</sup>

The meaning of Godmanhood in Solov'ev's lectures included both theological and Western philosophical input.<sup>227</sup> As much as it is difficult to think of Godmanhood without also thinking of Solov'ev and his *Lectures on Godmanhood* it is important to note that in *Lectures* he uses the word only three times. As Khomiakov's was to *sobornost'*, Solov'ev's legacy is giving this word to religious philosophy so that other thinkers could use and develop it. Although Solov'ev's Godmanhood was clearly founded in a Christian understanding of the world, it extends to all of humanity, not simply to avowed Christians.<sup>228</sup> Godmanhood only took on a

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<sup>223</sup> Available in English in Kornblatt, 213-229. Copleston finds Solov'ev's appreciation of Comte 'unexpected and surprising' (1999, 227).

<sup>224</sup> 2009, 223.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.* 226.

<sup>226</sup> When Solov'ev suggests that God and Christ surely must forgive Comte his oversight (2009, 227), he engages in a typical tendency to generalize that borders on chauvinism. In his drive for ecumenism and quest for universality he is often more keen to find similarities than to honour differences, and in doing so he tends to see all 'others' only in terms of their relationship to his ideas and his understandings of Christianity.

<sup>227</sup> Even in recent philosophical assessments the theological basis of Godmanhood remains powerfully present. For example, Jan Krasicki emphasizes the strong contribution the Church Fathers made to Godmanhood in his article about the relevance of Godmanhood to modern philosophy: the 'dogmatic foundation for Godmanhood/theosis was given in the fourth council Chalcedon,' which 'depicted the nature of the Incarnation and of the Godman' (128).

<sup>228</sup> Solov'ev saw Christian meaning and potential in almost all of the world's religions and had a difficult relationship with the Orthodox Church and other forms of organized religion. There is no reason to believe that he intended his thoughts on Godmanhood to apply only to Orthodox Christians, or even only to Christians for that matter.

unique meaning in Russian thought, as divergent from theandry, because Solov'ev connected the idea to Western philosophy. A 'chain of ideas' about the sovereignty and sanctity of the person fed Solov'ev's idea of Godmanhood.<sup>229</sup> Although parallel models of theosis and theandry exist in other philosophies, Godmanhood is unique to Russian thought, as it was developed by Solov'ev and dealt with by his successors.<sup>230</sup> This idea is part of Russian thinking on the human condition and it acts as a philosophical construct within religious philosophy to help determine 'the relationship of religion to humanism'.<sup>231</sup>

In terms of considering whether these ideas act as structures in a religious-philosophical discourse, it is important to note that all four of them contain bridging properties. First, they all connect religious or theological concepts to secular thought. To some extent this can be interpreted as way of modernizing or refreshing theological concepts for a twentieth century audience, but whether it was deliberately so can be debated.<sup>232</sup> Second, these ideas also bridged Russia and the West by containing components of Western origin and Russian identity simultaneously. Therefore they could be useful in advancing arguments for Russian exceptionalism as well as arguments that Russian thought integrated with Western traditions. The liminal place these ideas occupied is best seen in this position between Russia and the West. The combination of both Russian and Western heritage in all-unity, for example, might have made it particularly appealing to religious philosophers in Silver Age Russia because these two sources of origin gave the idea both Russian authenticity and Western credibility. That credibility was important in supporting Idealist arguments against other Western ideas like Materialism and Rationalism. In the case of *sobornost'*, the idea certainly maintains the mystique associated with Eastern Christianity even though Khomiakov used philosophical premises from the West, such as the idea that words and nations have mystical meaningful properties, to promote and reinforce the seemingly 'Eastern' mysticism. Western influence on

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<sup>229</sup> A. Papnikolaou, 'Personhood and its exponents in twentieth-century Orthodox Theology' in M. B. Cunningham and E. Theokritoff (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology* (Cambridge, 2008), 232.

<sup>230</sup> Copleston 1988, 59.

<sup>231</sup> Copleston, 66.

<sup>232</sup> A. Louth, 'The Patristic Revival and its Protagonists' in M. B. Cunningham and E. Theokritoff (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology* (Cambridge, 2008), 198.

*sobornost'* is a good example of the ambiguous affinities to East and West in Khomiakov's legacy.<sup>233</sup> Religious philosophy in the early twentieth century, in addition being influenced by the Slavophil tradition, was tremendously influenced by Solov'ev and contemporary Western philosophers. Therefore, even though Khomiakov's original understanding of *sobornost'* seems to be closely linked to Orthodox traditions, the influence of Western ideas cannot be categorically excluded from his legacy.

Pain also observes a more mundane impulse generated by Khomiakov's relationship with the West; namely, that 'Khomiakov wished to see Russian established as an accepted and respected language of philosophical and theological discourse'.<sup>234</sup> At a time when the greater Russian intellectual community was asserting its individuality vis-à-vis the apparent Western European monopoly on scholarship, Khomiakov contributed to the quest to join Russia to European academia by repeatedly invoking the Slavonic language as a viable alternative to Latin.<sup>235</sup>

As discursive structures, the role of these ideas in connecting Russian thought to the West was not merely to appropriate Western ideas and incorporate them into Russian philosophy, it was also to enable Russian thought to engage with and contribute to Western thought. The ways that these ideas connected to native intellectual traditions were not in opposition to conversation with the West. By being authentically Russian, these ideas also brought Russian-ness to the West, just as they brought Western ideas into Russian philosophy. This can be seen in the example of *sobornost'*, where Khomiakov emphasized that the all-

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<sup>233</sup> Pain's observation that 'whatever influence German idealism had upon his [Khomiakov's] thought, he consciously repudiated any system of Western Philosophy' does not apply to subsequent philosophers (62). Pain points out that Solov'ev also did not use the term *sobornost'* with frequency or coherence (194), a surprising thing considering Solov'ev's great focus on ecumenism. Plekon writes that Khomiakov was arguing for a 'dialogue between the Church and modern culture' (M. Plekon, 'The Russian Religious Revival and its Theological Legacy' in M. B. Cunningham and E. Theokritoff (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology* (Cambridge, 2008), 204).

<sup>234</sup> Pain, 57. The fact that Khomiakov wrote his arguments in favour of Slavonic in French seems to undercut Pain's assertion. However, Khomiakov's work in a prevalent European language need not automatically refute his support of Russian as a potential language of philosophical discussion. By writing in French, admittedly also a natural choice for domestic intellectual discourse, Khomiakov partook in international debates he could not have had he doggedly stuck to Russian.

<sup>235</sup> *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii A S Khomiakova*, ii: *Alekseia Stepanovicha Khomiakova Sochineniia Bogoslovskiiia* (Moscow, 1900), 312.

encompassing nature of *sobornyi* made it broader than ‘universal’. In this argument he relies upon the Orthodox philosophical approach of apophasis to explain why this was a better word choice. His use of negative description might have been intentional mimicry, or inadvertent but he chose to focus on and refute what *sobornyi* did not represent.<sup>236</sup> The *Sophia* used by Solov’ev, albeit linked to Western roots, also had specifically Russian, origins, inspiration and emphasis, most specifically visible in Orthodox iconography of *Sophia*. The ways that Godmanhood interacts with Western Humanism and Orthodox thought completes this picture of Russian religious-philosophical ideas bridging Russian and Western thought.

It is notable that in these examples the ‘Russian’ components of these ideas are also Orthodox. This is not surprising, as Orthodoxy was a major signifier of Russian ethnic identity, though in ‘Church Fathers and the shaping of Orthodox theology’ Augustine Casiday writes that ‘Orthodoxy quite simply is patristic Christianity’.<sup>237</sup> It is therefore worth questioning how seriously the project of connecting Western thought and culture to Russian thought and culture could be understood without also considering the connecting of secular philosophy to theological concepts and Western to Eastern Christianity. The heritage of the Church Fathers is not exclusively Eastern, but access to it was to a certain extent through Russian scholarship. The four discursive structures discussed here could not have been produced had Russian theological academies not developed the best patristic libraries in Europe over the course of the nineteenth century.<sup>238</sup> In light of this, it seems only natural that thinkers like Khomiakov and Solov’ev would therefore negotiate fidelity to these texts alongside the impulse to convey interpretations of these necessarily exotic ideas to Western audiences and furthermore that subsequent thinkers would continue to do so. The many ways that all-unity, *sobornost’*, *Sophia* and Godmanhood function to bridge Russian academic, theological and cultural experience to Western European cultural experience reinforces still further the argument that these ideas acted

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<sup>236</sup> Doing so left a broad definition of the word that allowed subsequent thinkers much creative freedom with its interpretation. Khomiakov’s method of examining the meaning of *sobornost’* perpetuated its mystical and religious connotations.

<sup>237</sup> In M. B. Cunningham and E. Theokritoff (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology* (Cambridge, 2008), 167.

<sup>238</sup> Louth, 191.

as discursive structures because they are interconnected thoroughly and through many mutually reinforcing structures of thought.

## 2.2 Symmetrical Influence

Now that it is clear that these ideas are unique in Russian religious thought and fulfil necessary positions within that thought, let us look more closely at how and whether they can be said to exert an influence over the men who thought of them. As discussed above, discursive structures necessitate subsidiary or by-product ideas. One way to think about this requirement of a discursive structure is to consider whether accepting an idea as valid or using an idea in a larger argument would limit the other types of potential thought processes that could be included in that argument without causing contradictions or weaknesses. For example, accepting the idea that killing another human being is murder in all circumstances would limit the types of arguments a thinker could make about the military, capital punishment, self-defence and so on. Such a principle could be said to structure that thinker's ethics. In another example, the word 'homophobia', used to describe antipathy toward homosexuals, can be said to include connotations that such aversion is irrational or a medical 'phobia'. Use of such a word could condition how homophobic behaviour is understood in a society. In this subsection attention is given to whether and how all-unity, *sobornost'*, *Sophia* and Godmanhood could be said to structure religious philosophy by demonstrating that they influence how other ideas are understood within a religious-philosophical context.

### 2.2.A The structure of all-unity

All-unity's connections to Western thought create a pressure to connect religious philosophy to the traditions of Western European thought. This pressure is most easily seen in the discussion of the relationship between science and non-rational epistemology. All-unity contributes two premises to this discussion: the first, that intuition or some non-rational

epistemology best explains how humans understand the world; and the second, that the rationalism inherent in scientific discourse must be addressed, included or accommodated in religious philosophy.<sup>239</sup> Both of these premises are heavily structured by aspects of all-unity because metaphysics of all-unity supports intuition and all-unity also mandates that opposing ideas be included in a ‘whole discussion’.<sup>240</sup>

In religious philosophy the reality of unity is often internalised through the act of knowing. For example, Florensky defines the human in the context of the act of reason by creating an epistemological bridge between the real universe, defined by total-unity, and human reason: ‘Whatever we may think of human reason, we can affirm that it is an organ of man, his vital activity, his real power, logos... if that is the case the act of knowing is not only an epistemological but an ontological act, not only ideal but also real.’<sup>241</sup> His observation is comparable to other discussions of intuition, a method of knowing that connects the individual thinker to the Absolute, the infinite, or the irrational.<sup>242</sup> In religious philosophy human beings

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<sup>239</sup> The problem of differentiating the English terms ‘reason’ and ‘rationality’ arises in order to understand the Russian use of reason and aversion to ‘rationalism’. As Scanlan points out, with regards to Dostoevsky’s thought, the distinction between the meanings of the Russian words *rassudok* and *razum* are pertinent to discussions about orders of ‘reason’ where some are better than others. Whereas rationalist thought, and sometimes scientific thought, can be the subject of criticism, reason itself is associated with the truth, and therefore the Absolute (2002, 6).

<sup>240</sup> Thinkers who discuss intuition at length are Frank, Karsavin, Trubetskoi, Lossky and Florensky. Of those five, Frank’s philosophy is most fully developed and discussed in secondary literature (see Boobbyer, 57; Fink, 37; Copleston 1986, 358). Lossky and Florensky can both be considered related to Frank in important ways. In Lossky’s case, *The World as an Organic Whole*, his early work on unity, was published at the same time as Frank’s master’s thesis, *The Object of Knowledge* (1915). Florensky himself acknowledges that his ideas belong to the school of thought that considers the coincidence of opposites, and his closeness to Frank’s argumentation in *The Pillar and the Ground of the Truth* (Florensky 1997, 24, and SS 29).

<sup>241</sup> Florensky 1997, 55, and SS, 73.

<sup>242</sup> The method of knowing called intuition has an acknowledged, well-established role in Russian epistemology. Generally speaking, intuition signifies knowing in an immediate, and therefore less rational or analytic, way. In the Russian context two Western thinkers’ use of intuition can be singled out as especially influential. The first is the German philosopher Friedrich Schelling (1775-1854) who described two types of intuitive processes, intellectual and aesthetic. Roughly, both types of intuition rely upon a premise that the subject and the object are connected in such a way that the knowing subject is able to derive knowledge of the self not only from the self but also from that which is not the self. The second clear Western influence is the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941) who developed the idea of intuition and used intuition as his method. To him, intuition allowed the knowing subject to access the entirety of an object and to understand its ineffable qualities in a way that rationalism could not because analysis involves the critical destruction of the known object into parts. For more on this subject see: F. Nethercott, ‘*Mysl’* and the Intuitivist Debate in the Early 1920s’.

are able to, and do, know of the universe as a consequence of all-unity: For Frank, the unified nature of reality is the very cause of a human's ability to know it; For Berdyaev, only a reality unified by freedom can be known and understood as 'familiar'. Furthermore, Florensky describes the process of knowing as follows: 'Thus knowing is not capturing a dead object by a predatory epistemological subject, but a living moral communion of personalities, from which each serves as object and subject for everyone.'<sup>243</sup> Knowledge and the process of knowing in religious philosophy are akin to deification; it is the way that a person can enter into the unity of the world.

At first it may seem that these types of descriptions about the act of knowing, so antagonistic to empiricism, might also be antagonistic to the scientific developments of the early twentieth century, but they are not. The ability for religious philosophers to consider both rational and non-rational thought as having a place within their philosophies is a by-product of the prominence of all-unity in their thought. In a universe where everything is compatible, including opposites, divergent ideas are not mutually exclusive. For example, Florensky's understanding of unity can be seen as connected to contemporary scientific and mathematical understandings of the universe. The ideas of limitation and infinity contribute to his definition of total unity. He notes that 'contemporary mathematics is entirely built on the concept of limit and limit process, with which one must deal explicitly each time the idea of infinity appears explicitly and without the silent participation of which one cannot take steps in the building of science.'<sup>244</sup> The way he understands infinity contributes to his understanding of the total unity of the infinite and the definite. Study of the 'convergence and divergence of infinite series' was particularly illustrative of the relationship between the limited and unlimited aspects of

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*Studies in Soviet Thought*, 41 (1991); Fink; and P. T. Grier, 'Adventures in dialectic and intuition: Shpet, Il'in, Losev' in G. Hamburg and R. A. Poole, *A History of Russian Philosophy 1830-1930* (Cambridge 2010).

<sup>243</sup> Florensky SS, 73. Karsavin's understanding of 'knowing' as a surrendering of the self and Frank's idea of intuition echo this idea of communion.

<sup>244</sup> Florensky 1997, 364, and SS, 513.

reality.<sup>245</sup> Florensky concludes that these mathematical ideas have ‘enormous significance for philosophy’, and encourages their study.<sup>246</sup>

Lossky also uses scientific theories in his philosophy, namely the ideas of atomism and evolution.<sup>247</sup> Both of these theoretical constructs helped scientists and philosophers in the early-twentieth century make sense of the universe. In Lossky’s thought the idea of all-unity contextualizes both the scientific ideas of an atomised universe and a world defined by relations between people, instead of between parts of a whole. All-unity enables Lossky to recognize the emerging scientific mechanisms for understanding the world while simultaneously including intuitivism in his work.

In Berdyaev’s work all-unity helps to place science in the context of wider knowledge. Berdyaev presents a picture of science as the lesser of two understandings of the world, and faith as the greater: ‘The defect of science is not in science itself but in its object. Faith necessitates respect for knowledge as a necessary good in the given defective condition of the world and humanity. True faith does not depend on science, but also does not degrade it.’<sup>248</sup> This understanding includes science as one of the ways of knowing the world.

Vladimir Katasonov describes the different cultural assumptions that predisposed Russian religious philosophers to directly address the relationship of science to their ideas in ‘Integral Reason: Science and Religion in Russian Culture’.<sup>249</sup> He attributes the easier relationship between science and religion in Russian thought to the fact that Russian thinkers had largely been excluded from the ‘Western science-religion’ dialogue.<sup>250</sup> The impulse to make connections between scientific and religious thought is a common trait in religious philosophy because of the influence of all-unity. This impulse manifests itself in varying degrees of intensity from Florensky, who actively engages with science (Katasonov

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<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>247</sup> In his metaphysics, the substantial agents are very much like atoms and their behaviour is as atoms were thought to behave at that time (acting both freely and in reaction to forces). Nethercott writes, ‘Evolution is one of the key elements of Lossky’s philosophy of the living being’ (217).

<sup>248</sup> Berdyaev FS, 62.

<sup>249</sup> *Science and Spirit* [online journal], 9/3 (2002), 1.

<sup>250</sup> Katasonov, 1.

characterizes Florensky's relationship with science as a 'critique of the foundations of science') to Lossky who was merely heavily influenced by contemporary Western scientific consensus.<sup>251</sup>

In religious philosophy scientific knowledge supports human understanding, but unlike all-unity it is not able to remedy the broken nature of the world as perceived by humankind. This tension between unified reality and the broken reality necessary for reasoning is made explicit by Florensky, 'to explain A is to reduce it to "something else" to not-A, to that which is not-A, to generate A.'<sup>252</sup> Florensky sees through this type of logic and finds a fundamental problem in expressing all-unity with it. In his victory over the law of identity he writes:

The law of identity, which pretends to absolute universality, turns out to have a place nowhere at all. This law sees its truth in its actual givenness, but every given actually rejects this law *toto genere*, violating it in both the order of space and the order of time—everywhere and always. In excluding all other elements, every A is excluded by all of them, for if each of these elements is for A only not-A, the A over against not-A as only not-not-A. From the view point of the law of identity, all being, in desiring to affirm itself, actually only destroys itself, becoming a combination of elements each of which is a centre of negations, and only negations. Thus all being is a total negation, one great not. The law of identity is the spirit of death, emptiness, nothingness.<sup>253</sup>

The only solution to the problem of the universe existing in a state of total negation is the idea of all-unity. If every object in isolation can only have an identity of negation, then in order for a positive definition to be possible objects must be connected, not only in meaning but in identity and in reality. The absolute necessity of this solution in Florensky's thought helps explain the direction Frank took toward all-unity in his thought.<sup>254</sup> Florensky distinguishes between the knowable world and the unknowable world and describes the connection between the two worlds (knowable and unknowable):

If the Truth exists, it is real reasonableness [*real'naia razumnost'*] and reasonable reality [*razumnaia real'nost'*]; It is finite infinity and infinite finitude—or to use a mathematical

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<sup>251</sup> As a scientist himself, Florensky is able to 'reveal the metaphysical and theological underpinnings at the base of science' (*Ibid.* 3).

<sup>252</sup> Florensky 1997, 24, and SS, 29.

<sup>253</sup> Florensky 1997, 23, and SS, 27.

<sup>254</sup> Considering Florensky's ideas alongside Frank's in this matter clarifies the 'choice', as Zenkovsky puts it, to develop a metaphysics of unity. I would postulate that due to the discourse of Russian religious philosophy, unity in Frank's metaphysics is a practically mandatory component of his thought.

expression—actual infinity, the infinite conceived as integral Unity [*tselokupnoe Edinstvo*], as one Subject complete in itself.<sup>255</sup>

The truth can be known through real reason, but the truth remains infinite in nature. Therefore, Science contributes to our understanding of the world: ‘What science has discovered is the lawfulness of the world, the orderliness and the harmony of the world.’<sup>256</sup> This interest in science and mathematics is in the extent that it is supplemental to the full human experience of unity.

Florensky only implicitly defines knowing the truth as such, and his views echo Berdyaev’s: knowing the truth is a different and an implicitly higher order of knowing than rational knowledge. From this standpoint, Florensky argues against science as the definitive arbiter of human knowledge and experience. ‘Inspiration, creativity, freedom, asceticism, beauty, the value of the flesh, religion and much else... stand outside the methods and means of scientific research.’<sup>257</sup> By including the rationale of math and science in their metaphysics, religious philosophers allow all-unity to structure their writings about knowledge.

All-unity was not always a straightforward or undemanding concept, and, as a discursive structure, contradictions in the very fundament of the idea influenced religious philosophy. Wrestling with questions like: How can an idea that describes God and the world as unified, ensure that there is enough distinction between these two entities? What explanation can we make for the presence of sin and evil in a world that is fundamentally interconnected with God? And why is an idea that is supposed to be so fundamentally intuitive, so often explained in very rational terms? were included in the religious-philosophical discourse because the idea of all-unity mandated their discussion. The ways all-unity structures religious philosophy is apparent in how thinkers who engage with the idea are compelled to engage with the more complicated and less satisfactory aspects of it.

The idea of a completely unified universe is incompatible with the Christian distinction between created and un-created. The word pantheist describes belief systems that attribute to

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<sup>255</sup> Florensky 1997, 33 and SS, 43. Frank draws the same distinction in *The Unknowable* (1939); see Boobbyer 165-166.

<sup>256</sup> Florensky 1997, 93, and SS, 126.

<sup>257</sup> Florensky 1997, 94, and SS, 127.

God too much of a presence in created things, to the point that Creator and created become conflated.<sup>258</sup> From a Christian perspective the created aspect of the world and Christ's interaction with the created world are very important matters of faith; If God is essentially already in the world, His choice to become human in the body of Christ is less consequential. Philosophers of unity in the West, as well as in Russia, had been accused of pantheism. Religious philosophers, therefore, were conscious of this tendency and struggled to prevent the interpretation of their work as pantheistic by other Christian critics.<sup>259</sup> It is due to this awareness that, in Zenkovsky's view, the pantheism inherent in religious-philosophical use of all-unity was atypical in the context of Western Christian pantheism. The pantheistic problem was that all-unity related 'the two [Absolute and world] in such a way that the Absolute becomes "co-relative" to and inconceivable without the world'.<sup>260</sup> Religious philosophers may have tried to avoid pantheism, but ultimately they simply dug themselves into complicated philosophical trenches, trenches with names like 'sophiology' and 'panentheism'.<sup>261</sup> In the end this issue, discussed at greater length in Chapter 4, was unavoidable because it was inherent within the concept of all-unity.

The second problem visited upon all-unity metaphysics by the constraints of Christian doctrine is the question of how to understand evil. If the Creator is 'co-relative' to creation, to use Zenkovsky's language, then to admit evil into creation is to admit evil as a part of God. Complications in the concepts of sin and evil are endemic to all-unity metaphysics. Therefore as with pantheism, earlier thinkers had also made efforts to address these problems by clarifying

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<sup>258</sup> '*pantheism*, n., 1. A belief or philosophical theory that God is immanent in or identical with the universe; the doctrine that God is everything and everything is God. Freq. with implications of nature worship or (in a weakened sense) love of nature', *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, 16 March 2011 <<http://www.oed.com:80/Entry/136995>>.

<sup>259</sup> Boobbyer, 171: 'Frank was keen to resist the charge of pantheism.'

<sup>260</sup> Zenkovsky, 847. See his sections on Berdyaev and Trubetskoi especially.

<sup>261</sup> '*panentheism*, n., The theory or belief that God encompasses and interpenetrates the universe but at the same time is greater than and independent of it. Freq. contrasted with *pantheism*', *Oxford English Dictionary* 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, 10 May 2011 <<http://www.oed.com:80/Entry/239255>>.

the words used in their thought.<sup>262</sup> Russian religious philosophy continues this tradition of careful definition. In general, this process of defining evil avoids explanation of man's will to do evil and God's permission of evil in the world.

Most definitions of evil made to help reconcile the idea of evil with all-unity are abstract and describe evil as some contradiction of the unity of the world. Such definitions are especially lacking in practical guidance to people who confront evil every day. For Russian religious philosophers, attempts to clarify their understanding of evil often led to neglect of evil as a powerful subject in its own right, and tended to favour niggling semantic arguments and elaborate, abstract philosophical constructs.

It is not just concerns over how all-unity addresses the question of pantheism and evil that draw attention to problems with all-unity. Some Russian thinkers have resisted the impulse, that Epstein describes as so characteristic, toward unity. One such thinker is Shestov, who, despite similarities that would suggest an acceptance of all-unity such as his acceptance of faith as an epistemological method and driving influence on human life, does not embrace a philosophy of all-unity.<sup>263</sup> Indeed, the fact that unity is so very prevalent in religious philosophy draws attention to the over-riding themes Shestov's work shares with his contemporaries and serves to illustrate the greater matrix of ideas for which all-unity in many respects acts as a proxy concept. Therefore an exploration of how Shestov challenges unity helps to clarify how this concept has been problematic for thinkers who do use it.

The distinction between reason and faith that is apparent in and characteristic of religious philosophy is also articulated in Shestov's work. He opposes knowledge to experience, but he does not use unity to do so. In *The Apotheosis of Groundlessness* [*Apofeo*

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<sup>262</sup> For example, Solov'ev understands evil as isolation from the whole, or the breaking of the world into units (Zenkovsky, 124). Nicholas of Cusa has an equally unsatisfactory understanding of evil, that it is 'implicit in finitude' or due to a focus on the limited aspects of mankind (DeLeonardis, 147).

<sup>263</sup> How Shestov's work fits into religious philosophy is debated, specifically due to his religion. Whether or not the Judeo-Christian influences apparent in his work should be considered mainly Jewish can be disputed. See Tabachnikova, 189, especially her espousal that thematic links between Hassidic theology and apophysis belie the connection of Shestov's philosophy with traditions of Russian religious-philosophy. However, it is also important to note the strong influence of the Old Testament and Cabala on Vladimir Solov'ev, and religious philosophy in general, that also connects Jewish religious and cultural markers to the wider background of religious philosophy.

*bezpochvennosti*] (1905), Shestov challenges the ‘coincidence of opposites’ and unity by undermining the basic logic of the identity principle upon which all-unity is so often based. He addresses the topic of  $A=A$  as a foundation of logical thought: ‘without this condition logic is decidedly unable to exist’.<sup>264</sup> The fact of  $A=A$  is both the starting point for the religious-philosophical explorations of all-unity and the foundation of logic. Within this concurrence is the foundation for and outward illustration of the religious-philosophical tendency to form a connection to the very processes of reason and science it argues against. By using logic to describe the unfathomable unity of the world and process of intuition of that unity, religious philosophy makes concessions to discourses of Western philosophical thinking while simultaneously conversing about a means of understanding in conflict with it. Shestov separates the abstract structure of philosophical argument and the reality of existence. The mere fact that Shestov takes a different path from the starting point of  $A=A$  than his fellow religious philosophers do illustrates the element of choice on their part, to see all-unity where there may be none.

Shestov criticizes the identity principle as an abstract construct that may not have a real bearing on reality. He writes:

A has merely an empirical origin. In fact, in reality, A always more or less equals A. But it might be otherwise. The universe might be made such that it might allow fantastical metamorphoses of itself. So what now equals A in the time of a second could equal B, and then C etc. Now a stone is and contentedly must remain stone, a plant a plant, and an animal animal. But it might happen before our very eyes that a stone turns into a plant and a plant into an animal.<sup>265</sup>

Shestov acknowledges the fact that reality often conforms to logical constructions, but he also emphasizes that logical possibilities do not exhaust the potential of reality. In this sense reason cannot fully account for experience, and the prolonged analyses of the process of intuition and the unity of the world become explanations of reality that could, or just as easily could not, depict the truth. Shestov concludes his reflection on this topic, ‘I am compelled to repeat anew that everything, anything might arise from everything, anything, that A might not equal A and

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<sup>264</sup> *Apofeoz bezpochvennosti* (Paris, 1971), 120.

<sup>265</sup> Shestov AB, 121. This passage bears comparison with that of Florensky and Frank; see pages 187 and 120 respectively.

that logic, consequently, binds its own empirical authenticity to observed laws of comparatively constant existence outside of our own.<sup>266</sup> With these statements Shestov pulls the foundations of unity, and the foundations of thinking about unity, out from under religious philosophy. He does not propose an alternative systematic view of or explanation for the universe. What he does is reintroduce the fundamental question at the heart of the religious-philosophical enquiry into the unified nature of the world, namely the need to attenuate contemporary Western philosophical rationalism with a sense of the mystery of the universe as greater and more infinite than man's comprehension. Shestov critiques, 'admit the possibility of supernatural interference and logic loses the unquestionableness and all-obligatoriness of its own deduction that is so attractive to the mind.'<sup>267</sup> In this statement Shestov highlights a prominent problem in the religious-philosophical discussions of all-unity: that the coherence of the idea of all-unity often overwhelms its purpose as a means for describing the numinous aspects of existence.

Clowes describes this difference between Shestov and his cohorts as a product of the fact that for him 'philosophy is not a science but an art'.<sup>268</sup> In his writing about unity Shestov points out that by attempting to be a science with respect to order, method and reason, philosophy is divorced from its actual subject, explaining human experience. However, the immediately apparent opposition between Shestov's approach and that of other religious philosophers, in particular Frank, Florensky and Lossky, who did systematize their work with all-unity, belies a similarity of intent. In thinking of philosophy as an art form Shestov attempts to bring philosophy as close as possible to being a true portrayal of human existence. In many ways this intention is the same motive for other thinkers who turned to science and logic to make sure that their philosophies were most compatible with the world as it is known.

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<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>268</sup> Clowes, 143. This can be contrasted with Boobbyer's assertion that Frank thought of the practice of philosophy as a spiritual calling (165). Frank and Shestov, it would seem, are in agreement that the point of philosophy is to explain what is not-rational about human experience. Boobbyer quotes Frank in *The Unknowable*, 'The only true philosophy that deserves the name is the *philosophical overcoming of all rational philosophy*' (169, emphasis in Boobbyer).

All-unity is a very abstract concept, and rightly critiqued by Shestov. As Brian Horowitz surmises, ‘one can either flee from real problems into knowledge, or embrace evil.’<sup>269</sup> Shestov’s work points out that as a logical abstraction all-unity may better serve as a means to avoid direct analysis of evil than as a means to analyse or eradicate it. Horowitz describes Shestov’s philosophy as intended not to ‘comfort, but to irritate’.<sup>270</sup> In turning away from comforting constructs Shestov does the opposite of other religious philosophers. He embraces groundlessness and has no need for the calming coherence of unity.

All-unity as a discursive structure brings attendant problems to the philosophers who use it. What at first might have seemed a straightforward concept that aided epistemological and spiritual understanding of the world also had discursive demands that at times strained the philosophies in which it was used. All-unity required thinkers who used it to look for solutions that would separate the divine from the world and evil from the divine. As Shestov’s critique shows, satisfying the demands of all-unity could distract philosophers from addressing their true intentions. What is clear, though, is that to the same extent that all-unity was an integral structure in the religious-philosophical discourse, discussing the problems of unity was also a part of this discourse. Most thinkers who used the idea also had to address the question of pantheism, evil and rationality. Even the work of Shestov, a thinker who did not ascribe to all-unity metaphysics, was conditioned by the discursive structure of all-unity to consider the ramifications of this concept. While some thinkers, like Berdyaev and Bulgakov, found compromise solutions, others, like Frank, were constrained by all-unity to avoid fully solving some of the problems that faced their philosophies. The fact that the idea of all-unity acted as a stumbling block for religious philosophy is a good example of how discursive structures can act as constraints.

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<sup>269</sup> ‘The Tension of Athens and Jerusalem in the Philosophy of Lev Shestov’, *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 43/1 (Spring 1999), 156–73, at page 160.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.* 161.

### 2.2.B The structure of *sobornost'*

The various meanings of *sobornost'* as it was used between 1905 and 1940 were undoubtedly framed by the original use of this word by Khomiakov.<sup>271</sup> His defence of the word *sobornyi* in the Slavonic Creed and his exploration of this word's relevance to Orthodox spiritual life inadvertently set parameters and projections for the subsequent development of this idea in the greater context of Russian religious thought. Khomiakov's intentions, as well as the intentions of his translators and contemporaries, played a strong role in the inception of *sobornost'* as a singular and meaningful word. Some meanings of *sobornost'* seem to come directly from Khomiakov's original use while others seem to be allowed or encouraged by it. Of these, two necessary subsidiary ideas seem to have been engendered. Firstly, that Russian gatherings and communality are unique and secondly, that there is a real relationship between a state of being and action.

The first entailed-idea, inherited from Khomiakov's treatment of *sobornost'* as non-political in his use, is the implication that it should maintain a counter-political element in every manifestation in a social or political context.<sup>272</sup> Vera Shevzov writes, 'In fact, *sobornyi*, as Khomiakov understood it, had nothing in common with secular democracies or any other form of purely human social organization since its underlying ordering principle was a metaphysical, divine, spiritual one.'<sup>273</sup> *Sobornost'* illustrated that the hierarchical makeup of the Catholic

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<sup>271</sup> See footnote 192.

<sup>272</sup> This is despite *sobornost'*'s recent adoption by some Russian political parties. The anti-Western and anti-modern aspects of some Orthodox fundamentalism involve no critical revision of 'Church subservience to the autocratic state' and use the concept of *sobornost'* to 'justify the suppression of individual rights' (Stoeckl, 295). This trend can also be demonstrated in recent Russian nationalist movements and proto-fascist literature. These political groups use *sobornost'* to support an argument for a strong, authoritarian government similar to that of Soviet times.

<sup>273</sup> Shevzov, 3. In terms of this observation of Shevzov's, it must be considered that contemporaneous theories of democracy were far more coarse, crude and populist than our current understanding of democracy. It might be more useful to think of the development of democratic theory along with *sobornost'*'s own development in time. Thus, this special understanding of communal life is able to influence ideas of governance in Russia positively and negatively. For example in Frank's *Spiritual Foundations of Society*, the underlying element of *sobornost'* facilitates a beneficent democratic governmental system. Alternatively, the assumed natural inclination of the Russian peasantry to

Church was a failing. Khomiakov argued that Fr. Gagarin's understanding of catholicity treated the Church as a political entity, and wrote: 'Poor Catholics! Poor Protestants! It [authority] is not there. The Church is not the authority of God, not the authority of Christ; external authority is nothing for us. It [the Church] is not an authority I say, but a truth'.<sup>274</sup> *Sobornost'* denotes an apolitical society and opposes hierarchies representing the state in favour of collaborative decision making.<sup>275</sup> The religious debate from which *sobornost'* emerged left it unprepared for political usage. Its initial usage was not directed toward political practice in the then tsarist autocracy and it was too conceptually amorphous to be directly applied to politics.

Therefore, a completely apolitical understanding of *sobornost'* is closely related to Khomiakov's ecclesiological usage: 'nowhere in his [Khomiakov's] writings did he equate the idea of *sobornyi* with the 'will of the people,' juxtaposing the hierarchical principle and the communal as two diametrically opposed principles.'<sup>276</sup> As a discursive structure *sobornost'* supports ontological conceptions of community, not active volition within a community. It is focused on consensus and an abstract concept of the Church as gathered across space and time.

Using *sobornost'* depends upon a distinction between people gathered politically and people gathered spiritually. Understanding *sobornost'* as restricted to Church life endures to varying degrees in religious philosophy. For example, in Khomiakov's original statements of *sobornost'* and in Florovsky's later discussion of its significance both use the word to represent a spiritually united apolitical society.<sup>277</sup> At times such a distinction could be conceived of as simple co-existence, but spiritually-gathered-people can also be considered a force adverse to political power. Bulgakov uses *sobornost'* in *The Orthodox Church* (1935), and in Frank's model of society in *The Spiritual Foundations of Society* (1930), the sobornal community uses

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Socialism strongly influenced Mikhailovsky's disregard for pursuit of democratic political reforms (Billington 1960, 807-21).

<sup>274</sup> Khomiakov 1900, 54.

<sup>275</sup> Pain, 93.

<sup>276</sup> Shevzov, 31. This observation is a counter to arguments that Khomiakov's attention to the whole church was too focused on the role of the laity and therefore Protestant.

<sup>277</sup> See below 278 for an example of Florovsky's use of *sobornost'* in emigration in G. Florovsky, 'Evkharistia i sobornost'', *Put'*, 19 (Nov. 1929).

its *sobornost'* to militate against the government.<sup>278</sup> Here, *sobornost'* is used to conceive of a society constructed on apolitical values, either able to function despite government or to actively counter the atheistic Bolshevik regime. However, it is important to note that no matter how much agency *sobornost'* gives to the community, the self-same apolitical characteristics that enable a *sobornyi* community to oppose Bolshevism in these works also prevent *sobornost'* from being compatible with any ideas of government at all, including democracy. Asserting that society is based on *sobornost'* faces constraints brought along with the idea and can end up as advocacy of a society incompatible with classical liberalism.<sup>279</sup>

This ability of *sobornost'*, to structure attitudes towards politics, raises several questions important to the post-Soviet re-appropriation of religious philosophy: Can *sobornyi* society be compatible with any participatory government at all or must a society based on *sobornost'* disengage from political activity? Is advocacy of *sobornost'* a philosophical crutch to avoid the problems associated with actual partisan politics in a possible democracy? Although these questions might be uncomfortable, they bear serious consideration. Bulgakov and Frank, amongst others, participated in contemporary politics. It is troubling, but possible, that eventual reluctance to engage in political activity on the part of some religious philosophers might have been influenced by their understanding of *sobornost'*. Opposition to democracy in religious philosophy could be conditioned by *sobornost'*, which offers no practicable social solutions to the potential infringements on personal liberty it could bring about.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> See S. Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, tr. E. Cram, ed. Donald A. Lowrie (London: 1935).

<sup>279</sup> Liberalism refers to 'support for or advocacy of individual rights, civil liberties, and reform tending towards individual freedom, democracy, or social equality', *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, 16 March 2011 <<http://www.oed.com:80/Entry/107864>>.

<sup>280</sup> Sergeev's defence of the apparent opposition to democracy in religious philosophy is that it was primarily based on the philosophers' opposition to the prevalence of secularism in democratic societies as well as the 'formal' 'mechanistic' nature of democratic process which emphasize procedure at the expense of truth (1999, 7). Although his observations are objectively true (religious philosophers oppose secularism, and the mechanical and indifferent aspects of democracy, see below 218, 251, and **Error! Bookmark not defined.**), whether this defence adequately explains this tendency in religious philosophy is a matter of opinion. After the fall of the Soviet Union new generations of Russian philosophers who had rediscovered religious philosophy did question whether the eventual success of socialist political ideas was facilitated by this apolitical, and therefore anti-political, aspect of the religious-philosophical opposition to Bolshevism. Russian idealism can be held at fault 'for its secret or

Another way Khomiakov's use of *sobornyi* with reference to Russian communities frames subsequent use is the way that this idea connotes a gathering across space and time. Khomiakov writes of uniting the whole Church: 'Sobor implies the idea of assembly, not necessarily gathered in some place or other, but existing virtually without a formal gathering'.<sup>281</sup> An earlier statement of the idea that Russian gatherings are unique can be found in Konstantin Aksakov's writings on the *obshchina*, but *sobornost'* includes a theoretical implication of supra-physical communal living among Christians. Khomiakov implies that the unity of *sobornost'* is more than a simple gathering when he writes:

'The Church expresses the idea of assembly not only in its manifest meaning, the invented combination of many in a space, but also in the greater general meaning of the perpetual possibility of such a combination, in other words: it expresses the idea of unity in multiplicity'.<sup>282</sup>

The assembly might not always be physically real, but it is spiritually so in the constant potential for assembly.<sup>283</sup> This aspect of *sobornost'* structures ideas about the ideal Russian community in émigré writings. Notably, Bulgakov in *The Orthodox Church* (1935) and Berdyaev in *Freedom and the Spirit* (1927) both invoke *sobornost'* in their discussions of community in order to describe the émigré experience as a legitimate part of the overall Russian experience.<sup>284</sup>

The second aspect of *sobornost'* that necessitates subsidiary ideas and has been inherited from Khomiakov, is the idea that *sobornost'* is of a state of being that entails actions imbued with *sobornyi* qualities. This underlies much of the potency of *sobornost'*. Khomiakov presumed that *sobornost'* represented reality, not a figurative exploration of potential communality. Pain observes that, 'it is in terms of his [Khomiakov's] desire to make clear the

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unconscious complicity with the communist revolution by supposedly preparing the ground for this social cataclysm' (Epstein 1996, 3).

<sup>281</sup> A. S. Khomiakov, *On Spiritual Unity: A Slavophile Reader* (Hudson 1998), 139.

<sup>282</sup> Khomiakov 1900, 312.

<sup>283</sup> This feature comes to dominate *sobornost'* in its modern secular usage where texts attempt to use the 'state' of *sobornost'* to explain realities under and after communism. For *sobornost'* as an excuse for the poor formation of civil society in modern Russia, see V. Sergeev and N. Biryukov, *Russia's Road to Democracy: Parliament, Communism and Traditional Culture* (Aldershot, 1993).

<sup>284</sup> N. Berdyaev, *Filosofia svobodnogo dukha*, 2 vols (Paris, [1927]), ii, 194 and N. Berdyaev, *Freedom and the Spirit*, tr. O. Clarke (London, 1935), 331.

teachings of the church that the discussion of *sobornost'* is best understood.<sup>285</sup> As *sobornost'* takes place in time, it links the eternal spiritual realm to our daily lives. This belief in a compatibility between the teaching church (the structural hierarchy) and the taught Church (the Church as received by believers) influences later understandings of *sobornost'*. This is especially so in the development of communist and revolutionary connotations of *sobornost'*, because when a philosopher writes about *sobornost'* as a state of being he also mandates *sobornyi* living. In this respect *sobornost'* is powerful concept that has the potential to cause action in daily life.

The equivalence between doctrine and practice, implied by Khomiakov in the connection he saw between the creed and the way Church life should be organized, facilitates the extension of theoretical *sobornost'* into the everyday lives of church members. Here is an impetus to extend the 'activity' of *sobornost'*, or the active aspect of the idea of *sobornost'*, into a religious community that includes the participation of the laity. Once the idea of *sobornost'* leaves the theological realm and becomes a part of the experienced Church, i.e. the church as known by laity it is open to new meanings. In religious philosophy *sobornost'* out of the Church is free to become a characteristic of the Orthodox people and in turn the Russian people. This transference is possible because the idea that doctrine and practice are equivalent is inherent in *sobornost'*. It assumes that rules reflect practice and that ideas reflect reality.

*Sobornost'* cannot be shown to structure the whole of the religious-philosophical discourse, as all-unity arguably can, but this is because *sobornost'* applies mainly to religious philosophy aimed at defining community. In the context of this topic, *sobornost'* does structure, or influence, religious-philosophical writings about politics, society and unique aspects of Russian communal life. It also places constraints on how religious philosophy can address community by bringing limitations to how to conceive of and express political and social ideas. However, some of these limitations could also be considered beneficial. The way that *sobornost'* defines community, for example, might be a barrier to developing political ideas, but facilitate thinking about more abstract connotations of community.

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<sup>285</sup> Pain, 87.

### 2.2.C The structure of *Sophia*

The idea of *Sophia*, as it is used in Russian religious philosophy, integrates and competes with other ideas about the nature of the world, mankind, and God. Some aspects of *Sophia* can be said to ‘structure’ religious philosophy by burdening sophiologoccal systems of thought with certain necessities, five of which will be explored here. The first is the need to use *Sophia* in the context of a Christian system; the second, to negotiate the complications arising from *Sophia*’s feminine persona; the third is participating in the literary and philosophical uses of *Sophia*; the fourth, engaging with an ever expanding definition of the idea; and the final necessity is to maintain these competing pressures within a coherent understanding of *Sophia*. The ideas’s earlier history compels Solov’ev to address the first two aspects. Solov’ev added the final three necessities through his use.

It can be argued that *Sophia* was theologically complicated before additions were made by religious philosophy. The best examples of these complications are the problems caused by considering *Sophia*’s relationship to God, the gender of God, and the idea that God may have a female personality. This is especially apparent in the ways that *Sophia* challenges the main Christian female figure, the Mother of God, who shares characteristics with *Sophia*.<sup>286</sup> Commonalities between Mary and *Sophia* can be found in religious philosophy. Florensky used the example of the patronal Icon of Cathedral of St. Sophia in Kiev to support the parallel between Mary as the home of God and the idea of God’s wisdom as having a seven-pillared house. In *The Burning Bush*, Bulgakov also equates the Mother of God to *Sophia*. Crucially, these conjectures about how *Sophia* and Mary are alike are built on the traditional interpretation of Mother of God. In other words, the more potent and durable idea is that of Mary, and the links between these two female figures serves to highlight that, theologically speaking, a duplicate female figure serves little purpose.

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<sup>286</sup> Mary breaches the divide between God and the World by providing a means for God to enter the world, and while she may not be herself divine, Mary is as close as a human can get to being so. In addition, the equivalence between Mother of God and heavenly Jerusalem can be connected to historic Orthodox thinking as expressed in Byzantine icons.

Another difficult aspect of *Sophia* is ‘her’ alluring, although never openly sexual, persona.<sup>287</sup> *Sophia* as a representation of a non-Marian ‘eternal feminine’ seems especially present in writings by Solov’ev, but has more universal roots.<sup>288</sup> This female persona, while still chaste, is an archetypal figure and has a potential sexual energy. In Boehme *Sophia* is connected to the feminine in an incarnation of eternal virginity—as an eternal young maiden.<sup>289</sup> Although virginity implies chastity, it also highlights *Sophia*’s sexual nature by making the absence of, and therefore potential for, sex a highly relevant attribute. In *The Wisdom of Solomon*, she is presented as a feminine divine spirit and as bride for those who seek her:

Wisdom I loved; I sought her out when I was young and longed to win her for my bride, and I fell in love with her beauty. She adds lustre to her noble birth, because it is given her to live with God, and the Lord of all things has accepted her. She is initiated into the knowledge that belongs to God, and she decides for him what he shall do.<sup>290</sup>

Newman also draws attention to this aspect of *Sophia*, recounting how St. Cyril’s saintly life was said to have been based upon a boyhood encounter with *Sophia*, in which he claimed they were betrothed.<sup>291</sup> This role of *Sophia* as scholarly muse recurs: as she was to Solomon in the Old Testament, so she was St. Cyril and later to Solov’ev. The inspiration for a life devoted to *Sophia* is equated with a romantic relationship of betrothal to a maiden which is a problematic metaphor in the context of philosophical integrity.

Arguably, the most interesting philosophical writing about *Sophia* is by Solov’ev perhaps due to the way he negotiated these constraints. He not only acknowledged but took advantage of many stylistic ways to discuss and express the idea. Florensky and Bulgakov in his earlier works continue this trend, as discussed above in Chapter 1. *Sophia* can be discussed

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<sup>287</sup> Ecclesiasticus 6:19-20 is another example of bountiful Wisdom: ‘Come to her as one that plougheth, and soweth, and wait for her good fruits. For in working about her thou shalt labour a little, and shalt quickly eat of her fruits.’

<sup>288</sup> Kyrke-Smith, 65.

<sup>289</sup> Newman 2003, 317.

<sup>290</sup> Wisdom of Solomon 8:2-5.

<sup>291</sup> Newman 2003, 196. St. Cyril the Philosopher, brother to Methodius, not to be confused with St. Cyril of Alexandria or St. Cyril of Jerusalem. This notion of betrothal emphasises the generative and sexual potential of *Sophia* in a way that contrasts with Mary. Mary has fulfilled a reproductive role, and her enduring virginity and chastity will not be compromised. *Sophia*, on the other hand, is the subject of fascination for men, a virgin not yet a wife, and an instigator of male productivity (Cyril’s, Solomon’s and Solov’ev’s).

in literary and philosophical ways, and Evtuhov postulates that for this subject, 'Literary imagery proves more accurate than rational explication.'<sup>292</sup> Her observation suggests that, ultimately, philosophy may be the wrong medium for contemplation of *Sophia*. The fact that literary imagery is so persuasive in texts relating to *Sophia* challenged religious philosophy to define and control the meaning of the idea.

Solov'ev's writing left another legacy: that *Sophia* must be continuously developing. Zenkovsky explains that 'Soloviev's separation of the concept of the World Soul from the idea of *Sophia* was fruitful for the development of cosmological principles in subsequent Russian thought.'<sup>293</sup> The World Soul is the aspect of *Sophia* concentrated on the 'process' of divinizing the world, a process that is apparent and embodied in Christ's incarnation but is also always an on-going process. The World Soul in Solov'ev is therefore most integrated with worldly life and human life, while the greater whole of *Sophia* also has another aspect of divine life unconcerned with the world. Solov'ev's evolving '*Sophianic* world view' set a precedent. His definition of *Sophia* was expansive as a result of his research and personal experiences. In Solov'ev's thought *Sophia* grew to encompass almost every idea or experience.<sup>294</sup> By defining the entity of *Sophia* as distinct from a more encompassing World Soul, Solov'ev isolated the agent '*Sophia*' from a greater, chaotic understanding of the idea that 'one entity should breach the divide between the created and uncreated.'<sup>295</sup> Instead of liberating Russian thought this freedom is paradoxically, a form of constraint. *Sophia* is positioned as able to take on many properties. In this way the idea opens religious philosophy to new genres of writing and it demands that religious philosophy include ideas, even ones that may engender disrepute.

Solov'ev's combination of the existent Christian and philosophical concepts of World Soul and *Sophia* was not radical. Newman points out that even the biblical *Sophia* referred to in the Wisdom of Solomon is 'Hellenized' and like the Platonic World Soul in its spiritual

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<sup>292</sup> Evtuhov, 154.

<sup>293</sup> Zenkovsky, 509.

<sup>294</sup> Kornblatt notes that Solov'ev is not concerned with the self-contradiction this brings about (166).

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*

abstraction.<sup>296</sup> In Solov'ev's conception of *Sophia* she 'can detach her centre from divine life' and with this movement away from the Absolute and toward creation solidify the 'particularized' nature of the elements of the universal organism in which *Sophia* takes part.<sup>297</sup> While Kyrke-Smith finds a place for *Sophia* as World Soul in Solov'ev's thought, the simple view of bifurcation into an earthly and divine *Sophia* does not do justice to the many aspects and faces Solov'ev eventually attributes to this idea.<sup>298</sup> However, the connection Solov'ev establishes between his 'new' idea of *Sophia* and the historic conceptions of this idea laid a rich foundation for subsequent philosophers to develop it in their own direction. Solov'ev's use of Platonic ideas like the World Soul was a particularly beneficial legacy to religious philosophers who were drawn toward the concept of *Sophia* supported by a religious world-view based on historically philosophical and reasoned traditions and away from the Eternal Feminine/inspirational muse that had so personally moved Solov'ev himself.

In Solov'ev's philosophical system an initially simple *Sophia* became associated with every complexity of the World's existence, and thus continuously added breadth and depth of meaning to its definition. Subsequent thinkers were forced to contend with these two legacies of Solov'ev. Another idea with as many and as wide-ranging conceptual bases would be hard to find. Take, for example, Zenkovsky definition of *Sophia*:

There are three themes the inner combination of which forms the nucleus of every Sophiology: (a) The theme of nature philosophy, a conception of the world as a 'living whole'—what is now called 'biocentric' conception of the world with the related problem of the 'world soul' and the timeless ideal basis of the world; (b) the theme of anthropology which relates man and the mystery of the human spirit to nature and the absolute; and finally (c) the theme of the divine aspect of the world, which relates the ideal sphere of the world the what is 'beyond being' in Plotinus's expression.<sup>299</sup>

This overwhelming theme of *Sophia* (connecting the world as it is known to the divine world) is supported by structures of belief in the divine nature of mankind and the world. Zenkovsky's expansive definition of a sophiology, above, can be considered a reflection of the multiple

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<sup>296</sup> B. Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: 2003), 192.

<sup>297</sup> Kyrke-Smith, 72.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.* 71.

<sup>299</sup> Zenkovsky, 841.

identities *Sophia* could have in religious philosophy. Contending with the varied needs of this idea was a pressure on religious philosophy after Solov'ev.

### 2.2.D The structure of Godmanhood

The unique mixture of philosophical and theological approaches that characterizes all religious philosophy is especially strong in the concept of Godmanhood and these dual sources made it an idea that is problematic both within and outside of a Christian perspective of the world. Godmanhood intentionally conceived of man in a religious-moral construct. In *Lectures on Godmanhood* (1881), Solov'ev synthesized theological and philosophical traditions to create a broad description of human nature and an explanation of the concept of God's immanence. One of the ways Godmanhood structures religious philosophy comes from the legacy of Orthodox thinking and tradition that Solov'ev drew upon, and most readily in his use of idea of theosis which contributed the connotation of process to Godmanhood.

Theosis, or deification, is the process by which humankind can be saved and 'share in God's glory'.<sup>300</sup> The possibility of salvation through theosis is based upon the truth of Christ's divinity and humanity established in the first six ecumenical councils. Orthodox Christians aim to achieve theosis in their daily lives, although what this achievement means for the body and spirit of a man is also very carefully qualified to preserve the integrity of both God and man.<sup>301</sup> Salvation is not a foregone conclusion, though. Each person must work to make himself conform to the role-model of Christ. Therefore, the doctrine of theosis is underpinned by the idea that faith causes action and that actions invigorate faith. Godmanhood has a procedural model due to its origin in theosis. Religious philosophy is constrained by this aspect of

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<sup>300</sup> T. Ware, *The Orthodox Church: New Edition* (London, 1997), 21, and *Oxford English Dictionary* Second edition, 1989; online version September 2011. <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/200433>>. Valliere argues that the connection between Godmanhood and theosis in the Western scholar's mind had been falsely implanted by neo-patristic scholarship, and that it is in fact the idea of kenosis (emptiness) to which Godmanhood is connected (14).

<sup>301</sup> Ware, 232-233.

Godmanhood to see the identity of humanity as engaged in a process of constant continuous movement toward perfection.

The textual basis for theosis, therefore, contributes concrete premises for the elaboration of Godmanhood as a philosophical concept. Patristic texts, such as those by Athanasius and Irenaeus in particular contributed to the Orthodox understanding of the consequences the incarnation has for man, and the type of relationship with God theosis describes. In *On the Incarnation* [*De Incarnatione*] (c. 318) Athanasius set out a comprehensive understanding of God based in scripture which Solov'ev refers to: 'He indeed assumed humanity that we might become God' in his explorations of Godmanhood.<sup>302</sup> In *On the Incarnation*, Athanasius describes God's special role as creator of all things and makes a distinction between creation from nothing, and creating out of existing matter. 'If He only worked up existing matter and did not Himself bring matter into being, He would be not the Creator but only a craftsman.'<sup>303</sup> This distinction recurs as a point of concern in religious-philosophical discussions of Godmanhood; whether Godmanhood is a new affirmation or a reiteration of Athanasius.

In *Against Heresies* [*Adversus Haereses*] (c. 180) Irenaeus also influences Solov'ev's ideas about Godmanhood. Irenaeus described the process of theosis and specifically addresses the body in terms of salvation and resurrection.<sup>304</sup> Religious-philosophical discussions of humanity's relationship with God are heavily influenced by Godmanhood, and therefore echo Irenaeus's influence. His focus on the fact that Christ's incarnation was in a human body, the attendant inference that the body must have a special place in salvation and resurrection, and the spiritualization of the mundane can all be seen in how religious philosophy used Godmanhood as an idea to intervene in everyday morality. Some of Godmanhood's ability to apply to the needs of worldly life is a legacy of this influence.

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<sup>302</sup> (London, 1944) Athanasius, 54:3, and Solov'ev 1948, 140.

<sup>303</sup> Athanasius, 2:13.

<sup>304</sup> Irenaeus's conclusion that 'the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who did, through His transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself,' resonates with Athanasius own conclusions (Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against Heresies*, Book 5, Preface, *The Writings of Irenaeus*, tr. A. Roberts and W. H. Rambaut (Edinburgh, 1868-9)).

The strength of these patristic influences on Solov'ev and consequently on religious philosophy can be considered factors that cause Godmanhood to limit the possibilities when developing an anthropology in religious philosophy. Within a Christian perspective Godmanhood is redundant, but without it Godmanhood does not make sense. Copleston and Krasicki point out that Solov'ev's Godmanhood must be understood in terms of Christianity; as articulated by Krasicki: 'the only element distinguishing it from other religions is Christ's message about himself. Pointing to Himself as the living and incarnated truth, "I am the Way the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father but through me."'»<sup>305</sup> A religious context for Godmanhood seems prerequisite; unlike in the cases of *sobornost'* and *Sophia* the religious basis of Godmanhood is integral. It is the focus on the role of Christ in Godmanhood that makes this so. According to Solov'ev, the experience of Jesus began the world process and so the example of Christ, as the perfect man, manifests humanity's collective potential and future.<sup>306</sup> Godmanhood begs the question of whether new, and especially uniquely Russian, terminology is necessary for Christians the world over to understand humanity. In this sense, Godmanhood could be considered pleonastic. Unlike the case of *sobornost'*, where Russia's exceptional development was arguably a source of unique communal instincts that could be modelled for the world, Russian exceptionalism does not legitimize Godmanhood. However, Copleston points out that Godmanhood does contribute to Christology by not only describing the 'brief temporal existence of Christ', but also by elaborating 'Christ's existence throughout time in a universal divine human organism'.<sup>307</sup>

The problem that Godmanhood is superfluous has the paradoxical rival problem of being not deeply rooted enough in Christianity. *Sobornost'* was developed from the Nicene Creed and *Sophia* is discussed in the Bible, but Godmanhood is a constructed concept. Indeed, Solov'ev develops his idea of Godmanhood from a Christian basis into philosophical territory

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<sup>305</sup> Copleston 1988, 71, and Krasicki, 133, quoting from Solov'ev: 'Solov'ev goes on to write, "if one is to find the characteristic content of Christianity in the teachings of Christ, even here one must admit that this content means Christ himself" (V. S. Solov'ev, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, ii, ed. S. M. Solov'ev and E. L. Radlov (Brussels, 1966), 113).'

<sup>306</sup> Sutton, 71.

<sup>307</sup> Copleston 1988, 62.

that is more abstract than either *Sophia* or *sobornost*'. Especially when contrasted to *Sophia*'s concrete embodiment (The idea's connection to creation and feminine persona), Godmanhood appears more abstract.<sup>308</sup> *Sophia* facilitates the idea of Godmanhood by connecting the Divine to the created.

That use of Godmanhood depends on the balance of Christian and secular influence is part of religious philosophy. Zenkovsky writes that 'all the defenders of metaphysics of totality convert the concept of Godmanhood, which has meaning in Christianity only on the foundation of the incarnation, into a general metaphysical concept.'<sup>309</sup> Godmanhood was integrated into Solov'ev's overall philosophy as a key to understanding humanity and religious-philosophical thinkers thought about Godmanhood in similar philosophically, rather than religiously, oriented ways.<sup>310</sup>

As in the case of *Sophia*, aspects of Solov'ev's writing on Godmanhood also influence and constrain later writing. In this case it is the use of Godmanhood to describe a process, thinking of it as a tri-part model and use of the idea to address and balance 'modernity'. Firstly, by connecting Godmanhood to theosis and therefore treating it as a 'process', Solov'ev gives it an active connection to progress. Godmanhood embodies Solov'ev's idea of 'world process', which was 'a religious process within mankind, the goal of which is the transfiguration of the world into the Body of Christ.'<sup>311</sup> Christ is central to this process, in his writings 'Christ was regarded as the active principle of the process of reform,' because Christ 'regenerated spiritual humanity' as 'the head of a divine human organism'.<sup>312</sup> Christ can be understood as both the source of man's self and the proposed result of man's progress. The Godmanly nature of man dictates subsequent human action. The role of mankind in Solov'ev's construct of 'world process' is the divinization Godmanhood represents. Godmanhood integrates humanity to allow this process, 'attainable only in and through membership of a divine human organism', to take

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<sup>308</sup> 'Sophia is the realized idea of Godmanhood' (Solov'ev 1966, 115).

<sup>309</sup> Zenkovsky, 865.

<sup>310</sup> Copleston 1988, 62.

<sup>311</sup> Kostalevsky, 82. The role of the Body of Christ in thought about Godmanhood continues in the revolutionary period.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*

place.<sup>313</sup> Through this process the original nature of man is restored. Thus, Godmanhood's effect on humanity is very like *Sophia's* effect on the universe, and in this sense Godmanhood represents human nature's potential in a similar way to *Sophia's* representation of the potentiality of the world.<sup>314</sup>

Godmanhood as process in Solov'ev's work can be interpreted in terms of progress and a theory of history. As a result of this idea the whole of nature and the whole of history unite to fulfil a purpose embedded in their very design made possible because 'Jesus Christ entered the course of human history and sanctified it.'<sup>315</sup> Kostalevsky explains that 'the positive meaning of history is embodied for V. Soloviev, in the image of the Godman, Christ.'<sup>316</sup> Godmanhood influenced later religious-philosophical perspectives on history.

The second way that Solov'ev influenced later use of Godmanhood is in the triune nature of his explanation of man. His use of Godmanhood was constructed in a trinity.<sup>317</sup> The triune nature of Godmanhood reflects other Western models. Solov'ev 'elaborates a Trinitarian schema in which the three divine subjects (spirit, mind and soul) are correlated with the three means of being (will, representation and being) and three ideas (good, truth and beauty).'<sup>318</sup> In Lecture Seven, he writes,

Thus, we have three orders of living forces, forming the three spheres of the divine world. The individual [*individual'nye*] forces of the first order in which the principle of will predominates, may be called pure spirits [*chistymi dukhami*]; the forces of the second order may be called intellects [*umami*], and those of the third order, souls [*dushami*]. The divine world is thus composed of three main spheres: the sphere of pure spirits, the sphere of intellects and the sphere of souls.<sup>319</sup>

What Solov'ev identifies in the divine world corresponds to human life, and he goes on to discuss these connections in Lecture Eight and Nine. He explains that 'Divine forces constitute the single, integral, absolutely individual [*individual'nyi*] organism of the living logos.

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<sup>313</sup> Copleston 1988, 77.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.* 63.

<sup>315</sup> Sutton, 71.

<sup>316</sup> Kostalevsky, 107.

<sup>317</sup> Kornblatt, 168-173.

<sup>318</sup> Cassedy, 539.

<sup>319</sup> Solov'ev 2009b, 178, and <<http://www.vehi.net/soloviev/chteniya/07.html>>

Similarly, all human elements constitute a similarly integral organism...<sup>320</sup> These matching groups of three may be based upon the expansion of, and attempt to illustrate the idea of, being made in God's image. However, the division of human existence into a relevant three need not be assumed to be based in the Trinity. It is similar to Plato's connection of the three virtues of the soul (wisdom, temperance and courage) to the three members of society (the producer, the warrior and the ruler) and to Sigmund Freud's (1856-1939) model of human psychic apparatus (the id, ego and super ego).<sup>321</sup> Three represents the complexity of human nature, as opposed to duality which contains 'reductionist assumptions'.<sup>322</sup> By having Godmanhood represent three parts the human experience can be described as greater than a simple duality of God and man wherein some aspects are divine and others human. In this way Godmanhood avoids the implication of an opposition between divinity and humanity.

An example of a later thinker who continued Solov'ev's triune understanding of Godmanhood is Merezhkovsky. For him, Solov'ev's model had generative implications; because Godmanhood implied a model with three, Merezhkovsky sought the missing third to his idea. Kostalevsky writes that Solov'ev's influence on Merezhkovsky helped him establish an idea of a third part of the scripture and three stages of man, she also sees a link between Godmanhood and his philosophy of apocalypse: 'a transformation of the idea of Godmanhood into an idea that would later take the shape of Merezhkovsky's conception of a "third testament"'.<sup>323</sup> His use of the model of three parts leads to his conclusion that after the old (first) and new (second) testament a third testament must be. In his work the second coming of Christ coincides with the creation of his 'third testament' and the creation of the true 'new man'. A resultant third humanity composed of Godmen is the product of a true physical change in the nature of the world.<sup>324</sup> Merezhkovsky's development demonstrates that a triune nature for

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<sup>320</sup> Solov'ev 2009b, 184. In these passages he freely refers to an 'individual human'.

<sup>321</sup> Freud's idea, first published in 1920, is not related to Solov'ev's own system. Instead his use of threes supports an argument that Western traditions of analysing human character rely on three parts, and that Soloviev's use of three connects his own work to such a tradition.

<sup>322</sup> Kornblatt, 168: 'spirit and matter, God and humanity, heaven and earth.'

<sup>323</sup> Kostalevsky, 38.

<sup>324</sup> B. G. Rosenthal, *Dmitri Sergeevich Merezhkovsky and the Silver Age: The Development of a Revolutionary Mentality* (The Hague, 1975), 93.

Godmanhood is permissive and how this permissiveness could structure religious philosophy. Solov'ev's model is generative, and by postulating three parts of man, Solov'ev asks subsequent religious thinkers to leave duality behind and seek the third part of their idea in order to satisfy his construct.

Solov'ev's use of Godmanhood to address modernity structures religious-philosophical thinking on that topic. Within Solov'ev's work Christ is a moral model for man. Godmanhood unites Christ to contemporary man:

The traditional form of religion has issued forth from the faith in God, but it has failed to carry out this faith to the end. The modern extra religious civilization proceeds from the faith in man, but it too remains inconsistent—does not carry its faith to its logical end. But when both of these faiths, the faith in God and the faith in man are carried out consistently and realized in full, they meet in the unique, complete and integral truth of Godmanhood.<sup>325</sup>

So much of Godmanhood in Solov'ev is associated with progress that this comment on modernity is to be expected.

For Solov'ev Godmanhood remedied the 'scientific' stance on the meaning of human life that had dominated late nineteenth century rhetoric. Nineteenth century scientific discoveries and approaches to life had seemed to reduce man to a sum of his parts, and connected mankind to apes more than to a divine calling.<sup>326</sup> With a more naturalistic argument about morality that countered modern 'mechanism', religious philosophy was able to consider humanity in a wider context than as an 'animal'. Starting with his Master's thesis, *The Crisis of Western Philosophy (Against the Positivists)* (1874), Solov'ev's philosophy countered the positivist philosophy that had been so popular in the 1860s and 1870s. But after Solov'ev, scientific developments continued to antagonise religious philosophers who tried to maintain a focus in the essential and unchanging qualities of humanity.

Solov'ev incorporates scientific data in *Lectures on Godmanhood*. In this example, 'Science, namely geology, shows that our natural or earthly man appeared on earth at a definitive moment of time... but man as an empirical phenomenon presupposed man as a

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<sup>325</sup> Solov'ev 1948, 99.

<sup>326</sup> Darwin's *Origin of Species*, published in 1859, was translated into Russian and published in 1864. For more on the relationship between scientific discovery and politics in Russia, see: J. A. Rogers, 'The Reception of Darwin's *Origin of Species* by Russian Scientists', *Isis*, 64/4 (Dec. 1973).

conceptual being', Solov'ev demonstrates how scientific approaches must be entertained.<sup>327</sup> This is similar to his acceptance of Comte's thought. As seen earlier in this chapter religious philosophy incorporates scientific contributions into the 'whole' system of thought. The way that Godmanhood structures religious philosophy contributes to this tendency. This approach can be seen in Frank's discussion of how a scientific understanding might reduce our appreciation of reality. He wonders:

'Does it not appear wholly unfathomable that our fortunes, the happiness and bad luck of our lives, the quality of our characters, everything that we call our "I," are determined by the composition of elusively tiny "genes" or "molecules"?'<sup>328</sup>

Both Solov'ev and Frank demonstrate an awareness of scientific developments and an understanding that they are not entirely satisfactory. In its engagement with the questions of modern man Godmanhood demands that thinkers look at and question modernity and how it impacts mankind.

### 2.2.E Conclusions

One requirement for an idea to be considered a discursive structure is that it influences the construction of other ideas within the discourse. To varying degrees each of these four ideas (all-unity, *sobornost'*, *Sophia* and Godmanhood) do function in this way. In short, it seems that acceptance and use of these ideas in a system of thought does necessitate subsidiary ideas, and in this way these ideas do structure how religious philosophers think about certain topics and problems. The next section looks at whether, given that they can be said to structure thought, it is possible to interpret these ideas as systematic in nature, or as constituting conceptual schemes.

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<sup>327</sup> Solov'ev 1966, 123

<sup>328</sup> S. Frank, *Nepostizhimo* (Paris, 1939), 34.

## 2.3 Systematic Conceptual Schemes

In addition to being unique to religious philosophy and influential on coexisting ideas within religious philosophy, these four ideas are complex and sophisticated enough that they could be considered a system or scheme of thinking. An idea that acts as a conceptual scheme is a place holder for a pattern of thoughts or a world-view. By demonstrating how these ideas constitute pervasive conceptual schema it can be easily concluded that their role in the religious-philosophical discourse is highly influential and therefore can be considered a structure of that discourse.

### 2.3.A All-unity as a system

It is possible that for religious-philosophical thinkers all-unity acts as a conceptual scheme. Although they share the important terminology of *vseedinstvo*, not every religious-philosophical thinker uses all-unity in exactly the same way. As Zenkovsky defined it, all-unity, or total-unity, is a unity in which the absolute contains its creation in itself; All of creation is connected to itself.<sup>329</sup> This criterion of Zenkovsky is most fully articulated in the work of Bulgakov, Frank, Karsavin and Florensky.<sup>330</sup> For these four thinkers the Absolute and the world become very close to being one and the same thing. Zenkovsky makes a distinction between thinkers who unite the Absolute with the world of its creation and thinkers who write of the unity of creation, and this distinction can make thinkers like Bulgakov and Frank appear closer to each other and further from Berdyaev or Lossky. This division would appear to suggest that there was not a coherent religious-philosophical idea of all-unity.<sup>331</sup> Such an impression is

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<sup>329</sup> Zenkovsky, 493-494.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.* 840.

<sup>331</sup> Zenkovsky includes Karsavin and Florensky, along with Bulgakov and Frank, as thinkers of all unity (840-917).

false.<sup>332</sup> This subsection explores the extent of common use of all-unity by a variety of religious philosophers in order to demonstrate that all-unity represents a conceptual scheme.

By looking at all-unity in religious philosophy several key themes that constitute a conceptual scheme become apparent. Most notably that all-unity is strongly connected to other philosophical concepts like *Sophia*, that a metaphysics of unity has consequences for religious-philosophical approaches to epistemology, and finally that all-unity is a means for religious-philosophy to address subjectivity. These three concerns are present in many religious philosophers' work and are not divided along Zenkovsky's differentiation.

First let us look at the connection between all-unity and *Sophia*. This is most apparent in both Bulgakov and Florensky's use of unity, two of the thinkers Zenkovsky highlights as using all-unity in a fully articulated way. In Bulgakov's philosophy, the use of all-unity is best understood through his sophiology.<sup>333</sup> When all-unity is personified as a World Soul or *Sophia*, then the system of thought that uses all-unity can be called a sophiology. The idea of *Sophia* has a central place in Bulgakov's ontology. *Sophia* is a third entity that stands on its own between the Absolute and the Cosmos, and between the Creator and his creation in Bulgakov's work. In this position the idea acts as both a bridge and a barrier.<sup>334</sup> In terms of all-unity it is the bridge aspect of *Sophia* that facilitates the connection between God and his creation. Yet, the ideas of *Sophia* and all-unity are not one and the same. Bulgakov's use of *Sophia* can be seen as early as 1912, in *The Philosophy of Economy* [*Filosofia khoziaistva*] but, *Sophia* does not take on the unifying role, and is not discussed in relation to all-unity until 1917, in *The Unfading Light* [*Svet nevechernii*].<sup>335</sup> His differentiation between the two ideas goes so far as to explaining how other religious philosophers also use the concept of *Sophia* as parts of their

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<sup>332</sup> Deviations and disagreements between thinkers within the body of religious-philosophical thought appear smaller in the context of the whole of religious philosophy; instead of being divisive the deviations supplement and expand upon the work of any one thinker. This context is important when looking at the work of only one or two thinkers, since these deviations could otherwise mask the greater conformity of the thinker's ideas to the wider school.

<sup>333</sup> See Zenkovsky Ch XXX, subsection 7 for discussion of the connection between Bulgakov's use of all-unity and *Sophia*, especially 899.

<sup>334</sup> Zenkovsky, 899.

<sup>335</sup> S. Bulgakov *Philosophy of Economy* (London, 2000) and *Svet Nevechernii* (Farnborough, 1971).

ideas of unity, or as a means to express all-unity, even though they still also discuss all-unity in its own right. For Bulgakov, *Sophia* is the major representation of the unified nature of the world, and this may be possible in his case because his epistemology is, compared to that of his cohorts, less developed.<sup>336</sup>

Like that of Bulgakov, Florensky's all-unity is connected to a sophiological world view, but his unity is incompletely subsumed by *Sophia* and he discusses the two topics separately. He describes the 'Truth' in terms that establish it as similar to the 'Absolute' in Solov'ev's thought; 'totally one authentic being'.<sup>337</sup> For Florensky, the unified nature of the world is how the world and God's place in it can be rendered meaningful and knowable, 'the cosmos merges with the Absolute in total-unity and the spiritual experience of the fullness of being is made intelligible'.<sup>338</sup> Florensky uses all-unity as a means of explaining the ontological organization of the universe and of approaching the epistemological ways that humans can know of the universe.

All-unity is regularly used in relation to the epistemological aspect of a thinker's system of thought. In Frank and Florensky's work unity has significant consequences for each thinker's approach to epistemology. For Frank the metaphysical supposition of all-unity supported his epistemological method of understanding reality established in his early work. Frank connects individual objects to their environment in the condition of all-unity, that is, in a situation that encompasses all things. For Frank a meta-logical unity [*metalogicheskoe edinstvo*] underlies the primordial relationship between a thing and its opposite and the same primordial relationship connects a thing to anything else.<sup>339</sup> One way to think of this is to consider everything in the world as co-existing with everything else. In his analysis of Frank, Zenkovsky emphasizes the choice Frank made to interpret this situation as one of all-unity. He remarks that the ideal reality that is the subject of Frank's work need not be concluded to be an

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<sup>336</sup> It is reasonable to assume that because Bulgakov does not focus his philosophical thought on questions of epistemology, his use of all-unity remains confined to the subjects in which the idea of *Sophia* is its dominant expression.

<sup>337</sup> Zenkovsky, 881.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.* 888.

<sup>339</sup> PZ, 236.

‘all-unity’.<sup>340</sup> If his interpretation is correct, what might have motivated Frank to choose to develop a metaphysics of unity? Frank’s interest in Nicholas of Cusa, Plotinus and Solov’ev are well documented so it is safe to assume that he was familiar with their uses of unity and all-unity, but his own conviction that all-unity accurately explains the universe must be at the root of the choice.<sup>341</sup>

It is interesting to consider the direction towards unity in which Frank took his philosophy as a choice, because an author’s philosophical system, like a belief system, often seems to be unconsciously chosen. By thinking in terms of choice, Frank’s own reasoning can be interpreted as personally motivated. For example, his choice to use all-unity in his thought could illustrate his ‘urge to bring contemporary and antique philosophical ideals into an original synthesis’.<sup>342</sup> Frank was aware that he looked to the past in his work: ‘New and creative work in philosophy is possible in general only insofar as old and forgotten ideas are reborn in a new form.’<sup>343</sup> In ‘The Great Catalyser’, Mihalo Mihajlov postulates that with a modern focus on Nicholas of Cusa, Frank closed the circle of European thought by developing its themes to a point that was actually a return to the beginning.<sup>344</sup> Frank’s philosophy does tend to ‘recapture and restate for our own age’ the ideas of earlier centuries.<sup>345</sup>

But in the context of the religious-philosophical discourse, Frank’s ‘choice’ openly demonstrates his connection to the intellectual trends of his day. His ‘eagerness to champion the value of a branch of philosophical inquiry obsolescent in the West was typical both of him and the movement of which he was a part’.<sup>346</sup> Frank’s all-unity could have been conditioned by his involvement in the group of religious philosophers. This commitment to earlier philosophy

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<sup>340</sup> ‘Frank immediately makes another assumption, one which completes his system but which is wholly arbitrary and without rational motivation. ‘The primordial unity,’ he writes, ‘not being itself a determination, has nothing outside of itself, i.e. it is an absolute unity or total unity’ (858).

<sup>341</sup> Boobbyer, 90-91, 165-171.

<sup>342</sup> Frank 1993, xviii.

<sup>343</sup> Frank N, 7.

<sup>344</sup> In B. G. Rosenthal, ed., *Nietzsche in Russia* (Princeton, 1986), 134.

<sup>345</sup> S. Frank, *Reality and Man: An Essay in the Metaphysics of Human Nature*, transl. N. Duddington (London, 1965), xi.

<sup>346</sup> S. Frank, *Man’s Soul: An Introductory Essay in Philosophical Psychology*, transl. B. Jakim (Athens, Ohio, 1993), xiv.

is characteristic of the religious-philosophical school. For example, Frank shared this concern for connection to earlier philosophies and thinkers with Karsavin, whose use of a theory of unity is part of his unique approach to philosophy from the study of medieval history. This influence can be seen in *The Philosophy of History* [*Filosofia istorii*] (1923). In this work Karsavin uses the idea of unity freely, creating words such as di-unity, tri-unity and all-unity for the purpose of expressing the varied relationships of unity that could characterize any given situation: ‘All-unity in each separately taken existence is actually empirically only as one quality that in rare cases can appear as a many-unity, a di-unity or a tri-unity’.<sup>347</sup> Unity underpins the characteristics of reality, and as such Karsavin places his emphasis on the union, the quality of being united, rather than on the idea of an all-unity.

Frank’s ‘choice’ is also shared with Lossky, a thinker who does not qualify for Zenkovsky’s definition of a complete metaphysics of all-unity.<sup>348</sup> For example, both Frank and Lossky consider rational connections to exist in a supra-substantive environment. In *The Object of Knowledge* [*Predmet znaniia*] (1915), Frank presents his basic premise of intuitive knowledge. There, he explains that the link between an object (A) and its opposite (~A) is a connection of two in one element. Lossky’s epistemological argument is very similar:

The judgement that ‘2 plus 2 equals 4’ as an absolutely true judgement about everything presupposes that everything actual and conceivable is subordinate to a certain unity, or in other words, it presupposes that there is a pan-unity an absolute consciousness in which everything knowable is timelessly determined by thought, so that every thought is eternal.<sup>349</sup>

Known facts coalesce in a unity formed of interconnections between concepts. Thus, for Lossky, as with Frank, insofar as meaning is established through the interrelationships of facts, ‘unity is a condition of the world being knowable’.<sup>350</sup> In a deduction very much like Frank’s, Lossky explains that ‘such a relation between A and B can only become intelligible on the supposition that they are not two completely different entities but aspects of a single whole, and

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<sup>347</sup> (Berlin, 1923), 31.

<sup>348</sup> ‘Lossky, though not advocating all-unity as such, manages to still incorporate intuitivism and an Abstract Logos—much like a *Sophia* [into his philosophy]’ (Zenkovsky 666). Lossky’s idea of unity was connected to Neo-Platonic traditions as well as to Solov’ev and Florensky’s works (Nethercott, 213).

<sup>349</sup> ‘The Successors of Vladimir Soloviev’, *Slavonic Review*, 3 (1924-25), 93.

<sup>350</sup> *The World as an Organic Whole*, transl. N. A. Duddington (London, 1928), 8.

that their qualities exist not on their own account but only as forming a part of a system.’<sup>351</sup> While A and B may be parts, Lossky’s epistemology clearly shares enough with Frank’s to also share implications of unity. These similarities raise the question of how much ‘choice’ Frank or Lossky had when it came to representing their epistemologies given the potential constraints of the religious-philosophical discourse.

That Lossky explains opposition as two parts of a like whole, not as unity: ‘It is certainly true that disconnectedness is a fact and that it can be known; but it is never a complete disconnectedness’ indicates the individuality in his thought.<sup>352</sup> Later in the text he elaborates on his idea of conflict: ‘These agents cannot be absolutely separated from one another; they must possess an aspect of unity, otherwise they would not even come into conflict.’<sup>353</sup> In these respects, Lossky conceives of a world in which cognition and knowledge take place in ways that support the conception of a world resembling one within an all-unity system although he is also interested in preserving the potential for genuine conflict. He has a unique interpretation, but is pulled towards all-unity. Perhaps Frank also negotiated this balance between individuality and the communal discourse in his all-unity metaphysics.

It is in Lossky’s treatment of the elements that constitute the world that this desire to preserve conflict is most apparent. Instead of expressing the unity of the world as the unity of the substance of the world and the unity of that substance with the Absolute, as would be more consistent with other instances of all-unity, Lossky concludes that there must exist a principle that ‘is the source of the world’s plurality and of its original unification’, and which ‘does not contain any plurality in itself and therefore stands above all systems’.<sup>354</sup> For him this principle is properly named the Absolute, and as such it is apophatically ‘subject to no positive definition’.<sup>355</sup> Lossky’s consideration of a dis-unity between the Absolute and its creation can be considered a significant difference.

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<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.* 6.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.* 13.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.* 56.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.* 69.

<sup>355</sup> Sergeev 1999, 4.

Lossky's thought is different, but not to the extent that he is unable to share commonalities with other thinkers. For example, he emphasizes the existence of many discrete substances that compose the world—'We have discovered the Absolute in our search for the ultimate condition of the systematic character, the organic structure, the *unity* of the world which consists of *many* substances'—and in so doing implies that the condition of unity is achieved despite them.<sup>356</sup> In this respect Lossky's view is like Berdyaev's, because both men think of unity as a unity of parts. Lossky labelled the parts that compose the world as 'substantial agents', and he defined them as active entities that originated their own manifestations in time, that is that they are freely acting.<sup>357</sup> These substantial agents interact freely and organically, and can therefore be considered part of an organic whole of independent parts. Berdyaev considers unity within a framework much like Lossky's unity of parts. In the book *Philosophy of Freedom [Filosofia svobody]* (1911) Berdyaev discusses the reality of discrete substantial beings.<sup>358</sup> For Lossky, how the parts interact with the Absolute is of concern. His agents are 'living' in the 'concretely ideal reality', which is united in an organic unity, but not united with the Absolute: 'the whole is prior to its parts; the absolute must be sought in the domain of wholeness, or rather beyond it and certainly not among the elements.'<sup>359</sup> Here the universe is suggested to be many unified parts presided over by a separate Absolute.

Lossky's theory of the 'consubstantiality of substantial agents' hypothesizes an organically constructed and unified world.<sup>360</sup> This is the case because his substantial agents are units, but they are 'open and free to interact with each other' and to take part in a 'creative evolution' on the path toward absolute perfection.<sup>361</sup> Lossky uses the free agency of parts to explain how they are unified, and this use of freedom is also like Berdyaev's. For Berdyaev, since the beings that make up the unity of universal being are substantial, the freedom that lies

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<sup>356</sup> Lossky 1928, 70.

<sup>357</sup> Sergeev 1999, 4.

<sup>358</sup> (Moscow, 1989), 116.

<sup>359</sup> Lossky 1928, 2. This statement does not shed a specific light on the location of the Absolute in relation to creation.

<sup>360</sup> Fink, 33.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.* 29.

at the base of existence is the freedom of will of discrete beings. The defects of this world, of its being, lie in the fact that these discrete substantial beings do not have free conciliarism. To him, ‘causality presupposes the substantiality of freely consequential beings’ and therefore when free beings make choices, they direct their will and act as part of the process of existence.<sup>362</sup> The universe is founded on discretely acting beings, but it is united by the commonality of their freedom and will to unite. For Berdyaev, necessity is born out of substantial beings’ state of mutual disavowance from each other.<sup>363</sup> Depending on whether the relationship of each substantial being to each other being is as unity or as isolation, the relationship can be viewed as one of necessity or freedom. In a unified reality freedom reigns, and in a broken, dis-unified reality everything is reduced to necessity. Lossky’s epistemology intersects both Frank and Berdyaev’s use of unity because like Frank he uses intuition, but like Berdyaev he has a modified understanding of all-unity that allows for more freedom of individual agents within the unified world.

What could be considered an individual choice is shared with other thinkers, as well, further suggesting that greater forces are at work in religious philosophy, when it comes to all-unity at least. The epistemology Frank develops within the context of unity extends to the experience of consciousness and self-consciousness. This idea also appears in the writings of Karsavin and Prince Evgenii Trubetskoi (1863-1920).<sup>364</sup> For Frank, a human being is able to

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<sup>362</sup> Berdyaev FS, 65.

<sup>363</sup> Berdyaev ST, 282.

<sup>364</sup> Prince Evgeny Nikolaevich Trubetskoi (1863-1920) could have been considered ‘one of Russia’s major religious philosophers,’ but his contribution to religious-philosophy was significantly limited by his early death in the Crimea in the process of emigration (R. A. Poole, ‘Religion, War and Revolution: E. N. Trubetskoi’s Liberal Construction of Russian National Identity, 1912-1920’, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 7/2 (2006), 196). Trubetskoi’s study of law and medieval history resembles the early careers of other religious philosophers like Frank, Shestov and Karsavin. Moreover, his association with the Moscow Philosophical Society and the Union of Liberation connected him to intellectual and political circles frequented by other religious philosophers, such as Bulgakov (Poole, 196-197). Before his death his thought focused on Russian politics, nationalism and religion. To a greater extent than other thinkers considered here, Trubetskoi was inspired by the work of Solov’ev, although it is difficult to judge the extent to which any thinker is indebted to his forbearers for the inspiration of an idea. The literary critic Harold Bloom’s theory that many thinkers deny the impact of previous philosophers and ‘received work’ as a means to establish an independent space for their own theorizing adds a complicated element of wilful denial to this question (E. Clowes, ‘Literary Reception as Vulgarization: Nietzsche’s Idea of the Superman in Neo-Realist Fiction’, in B. G. Rosenthal, ed.,

know other human beings because both of them ‘know’ within the same unity. In *The Spiritual Foundations of Society* [*Dukhovnyia osnovy obschestva*] (1930) Frank explains: “I” ideally has a relationship to “thou” before any external meetings with a separate real “thou,” thus this ideal relation to “thou”, this initial unity with “thou”, constitutes the essence of “I” in itself.<sup>365</sup> The capability of knowing is supported by all-unity, the act of knowing takes place in the context of unity, and the ability to know in this way defines the conscious subject. Trubetskoi discusses these same topics in *The Meaning of Life* [*Smysl zhizni*] (1922). He writes that, ‘the all-unity mind sees and knows, but we, the people, see across it and through it we co-know.’<sup>366</sup> To him humanity accesses knowledge of the Truth, his word for the Absolute, and shares in its knowledge. Trubetskoi considers truth to be ‘the fully perfect and absolute consciousness of all’, and therefore describes the world as an inclusive consciousness, a knowing-world.<sup>367</sup> In *Philosophy of History* [*Filosofia Istorii*] (1923) Karsavin also explains how the unity of the world is reflected in the human experience of existence and self-consciousness. His use of all-unity focuses on the idea of an all-embracing unity of reality in which the conscious subject can express itself. Karsavin contrasts the qualified (i.e. personal) subject with the unqualified (i.e. impersonal) subject, which is all-unity. How humans know of their own existence explains the ontological and epistemological necessity of all-unity in his thought. Karsavin writes, ‘an unqualified subject, an unqualified I, simply does not exist and as such is never conscious of itself. Self-consciousness in that which is unqualified is pure fiction. Outside of concrete qualified-ness there is no self-consciousness.’<sup>368</sup> The soul defines itself and knows itself in the context of surrounding existence, and aspects of subjectivity that define the self can be

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*Nietzsche in Russia* (Princeton, 1986), 315). Trubetskoi’s open recognition of the influence of Solov’ev on his own thought illustrates a partial truth of Bloom’s theory; because he did not distance himself from his mentor, Trubetskoi did not make sufficient room for himself as an independent thinker. *The Meaning of Life* [*Smysl’ Zhizni*] (1918) must be considered a religious-philosophical book. However, in comparison with other thinkers whose careers had been shortened, such as Florensky or Karsavin, Trubetskoi’s contribution to the social and cultural development of the religious-philosophical discourse can only be considered minor.

<sup>365</sup> (Paris, 1930), 89.

<sup>366</sup> Trubetskoi SZ, 29.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>368</sup> Karsavin FI, 29.

discerned within the context of the greater unity. In order to explain this, Karsavin first establishes the comprehensive unified identity of the self, ‘My subject, my soul, it is I myself. Naturally then, it is my conscious self, my aspirations, thought, sense, love, all of my qualities’.<sup>369</sup> He proposes that it is not the self on its own, but the reflection of the self in the unqualified subject that differentiates the identity of the self from the whole.<sup>370</sup> These similarities in representation across three philosophers strongly suggests that the common presence of all-unity had some common effect on epistemology in religious philosophy.

For all three thinkers, in order to explain subjective experience the separation of the self from the whole must be understood. For Frank, consciousness is the root of subjectivity. Without being conscious, people could not have a personal experience.<sup>371</sup> A person has a separate experience not by virtue of the weight of the self, but simply because he exists as separated from the whole.<sup>372</sup> Trubetskoi has more difficulty with this question: If everything is unified, then how can consciousnesses be separate entities? Trubetskoi explains that, ‘if all-unity represents itself, then it is not possible for an absolutely other [alien] consciousness [to exist]’.<sup>373</sup> Trubetskoi trusts that his senses are incapable of betraying the truth to his consciousness, in which case the reality of all-unity is true because he senses it.<sup>374</sup> Karsavin describes personal experience in the context of love. Love is an example of an experience that can be thought of in the abstract, but in reality is personal, and often related to specific circumstances. Karsavin addresses the realities of personal subjective experience: ‘I do not love any man abstractly, but I love a specific man for his characteristic of “such and such”’.<sup>375</sup> He addresses the topic more passionately in *Noctes Petropolitanae*, admonishing his audience not

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<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>370</sup> He asks, ‘Do I know myself better from all of these special qualities, or from the unqualified subject [the all-unity]?’ (*ibid.*).

<sup>371</sup> Frank RC, 210.

<sup>372</sup> Frank DOO, 89.

<sup>373</sup> Trubetskoi SZ, 23.

<sup>374</sup> Trubetskoi does not entertain the possibility that some sort of medical malady or psychosis could influence individual consciousness and divorce a subject from a true perception of all-unity; ‘We are a priori convinced of [the unconditional unity of everything] and we all feel the psychological terror in the face of the reality of all-unity; that all of our notions, senses, experiences, have only one possible meaning, and permit only one possible interpretation’ (SZ, 22).

<sup>375</sup> Karsavin FI, 33.

to ‘speak of self-love, love of the faraway, for distant others, for the unending God. Love is near to us’.<sup>376</sup> Even though he accounts for the individuality of the sensations of love or hate, for Karsavin, they must exist within a unity or a di-unity because these sensations are the result of two interpenetrated qualified subjects within the overriding unity.<sup>377</sup> Karsavin explains that there is no existence outside of the di-unity of love: ‘You leave, but I love you, Love. I love your love! You are my beloved, you—myself and you—are our di-unity, an integral-eternal, immortally-living, all-perfection!’<sup>378</sup> The di-unity experience underpins existence.<sup>379</sup>

This necessary connection to the unified whole of reality is not limited to personal emotional experience, but also composes the intellectual experience of self-knowledge.<sup>380</sup> Reciprocity of the beloved to the lover is a much easier concept to understand than reciprocity of the known to the knower, especially in a case where the known is an object and not a subject. Karsavin describes the process of knowing as a process that is partially volitional on the part of the knowing subject: ‘It appears to me that it is not my own thought, but that the process of thought is disclosed to me “given to me;” that it is not “I myself am concentrated and act” but that someone other wills and acts to me’.<sup>381</sup> In these acts of loving, hating and knowing part of the individual aspect of subjectivity is left behind.<sup>382</sup> In this passage, ‘I must first disclose myself in him and appreciate him. This I must do, this my soul wants’ the all-unity, from which the qualified subject emerges as a personality, remains integral to the experience of the person and the soul ‘wants’ to participate in the unity of which it is originally a part.<sup>383</sup> Trubetskoi also

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<sup>376</sup> Karsavin NP, 82.

<sup>377</sup> Karsavin FI, 34.

<sup>378</sup> Karsavin NP, 100. This passage may seem disordered, but it is a good example of Karsavin’s poetic style. Here he is addressing Love personified, and describing the relationship between himself and Love in terms of di-unity.

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>380</sup> Karsavin explains that ‘In love, as in knowledge, real perfection is in loving and being loved; only loving or knowing is nothing. But being loved—it is itself all-unity’ (Karsavin NP, 82).

<sup>381</sup> Karsavin FI, 35; underlining my own. This is very close to Frank; see below 283.

<sup>382</sup> ‘In both love and hate I lose consciousness. I must love a person in such a way that he is made amiable to me, and hate in such a way that he is hateful.’ By losing consciousness the subject epistemologically enters unity to find the source of personal sensations outside of his own personality (*Ibid.* 33). This observation of Karsavin’s connects to Frank’s own emphasis on consciousness as an essential component of the personality.

<sup>383</sup> Karsavin FI, 33.

uses the quality of unified reality to resolve the apparent conflict between personal desire to partake in the unity on one hand, and the differences between a person and unity that are necessary in order to establish the self on the other hand. Trubetskoi uses the coincidence of opposites to explain how both contradictory and unified experiences can simultaneously exist.<sup>384</sup>

The example of time differentiates individual perception from the ‘unified consciousness’ or a personal experience from the general reality in Trubetskoi and Karsavin’s work. For Trubetskoi understanding unity groups truth and time together.<sup>385</sup> He contrasts the unified reality of time with our perception of it:

We are clearly aware of the continuity of real process—and the idea of continuity of movement is assessed in our minds at each precise point of movement. How every moment in time gives into its flow is entailed in intuition—and the meaning of ‘super-time’ because it is not possible for it to be interpreted in time [is also intuitive].<sup>386</sup>

This description of personal apprehension of time describes specific moments as comprehensible on an individual basis, but the coherence of perception as a result of an intuitive connection to all-unity. As a result of the way that human beings perceive time, they are unable to really appreciate the whole of time; ‘If we could appreciate all elements of movement as one from another, and not think of them all at once, in one instant, then we might bind these moments and their points into one uninterrupted whole.’<sup>387</sup> In other words, in any given instant, humans can perceive the fullness of time, but they cannot join up these specific instances into a perceptible series. In Karsavin’s work knowledge of the self primarily originates in the unified context of knowledge, so the ordered and personal perception of time prevents personal senses from being overwhelmed by the contradictory sensations simultaneously present within the all-unity. The personal identity of the qualified self is possible because, taken out of all-unified

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<sup>384</sup> SZ, 22: ‘If truth is not an all-unity, then there could not be two opposing truths of one and the same subject.’

<sup>385</sup> In his definitions of all-unity, time is frequently invoked as an important part of all-unity: ‘Truth wills us to be as one—meaning unity and comprehensive time, i.e. as an all-unity of meaning. Truth is of all and in all time it is one’ (SZ, 22). ‘Truth is unified and all in one with time (SZ, 22).’

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.* 15.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*

time, subjects avoid the circumstance of ‘rejoicing and grieving, loving and hating, wanting and not wanting,’ all at once.<sup>388</sup>

Both of these thinkers’ approaches emphasize the need for intuition in order to have subjective knowledge, and are therefore connected to the work of Bergson, a French contemporary who also influenced Frank and Lossky.<sup>389</sup> Trubetskoi most explicitly makes this connection to intuition in reference to his understanding of human knowledge of history, ‘outside of consciousness there is no history—if the process of history lives on in our subjectivity, the consciousness of humanity, then history *is* only to the extent that we constitute it.’<sup>390</sup> The human perception of time gives an order and meaning to history that only exists for humans and is not an inherent quality of time. Likewise, the human perspective influences intuition of all-unity according to Trubetskoi: ‘between intuition of unity and intuition of time there is a necessary “relationship”. Intuition of time appears one from the quality of intuition of unity’.<sup>391</sup> It is only through the nature of intuition of all-unity that specific moments of time can be joined up into one whole time in the human mind.

Karsavin also makes this distinction between ways of knowing (or intuiting) all-unity when he differentiates between knowing the world and knowing other qualified subjects—other humans—through different processes of connection within the overriding unqualified subject. He writes, ‘We perceive any instance of thought by other people with subjective certainty as “given” to us in our consciousness, drawn to it, we sense the quality in our other subject’.<sup>392</sup> Each qualified subject, souls or self, can detect in another a sense of itself—the quality that differentiates a qualified subject from an unqualified subject. When this happens each qualified subject feels an attraction to the other caused by their consciousness of the other being one of ‘ours’, one of us. Another person is an ‘other’, but he also is another; recognisably another qualified subject.

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<sup>388</sup> Karsavin FI, 33, 32.

<sup>389</sup> Fink, 39. See also footnote 242.

<sup>390</sup> Trubetskoi SZ, 94.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.* 92.

<sup>392</sup> Karsavin FI, 35. This statement establishes how we see another as ‘another one of us’. The same quality that we sense in ourselves we can also sense in other thinking people.

Karsavin's description of the process of two subjects knowing each other as different from knowing an object resembles Frank's explanation of human connections to each other being grounded in a primordial unity that prefigured the existence of man. Frank describes the 'thou,' or other I, as a 'primordial image for me, emanating from inside me'.<sup>393</sup> Even though for Frank others are seen as objects, not as other qualified subjects, they have the ability to reciprocate the act of perception and create a circumstance of 'mutual understanding'.<sup>394</sup> Karsavin's definition creates stronger connections between the two people, and understands their linkage to be based on the unity of all subjectivity. To Karsavin the danger of this unity of perception of another is the potential to over-identify with the other and in so doing deny one's own individuality:

However, in these cases we are especially susceptible to the tendency to interpret them [the other subject] with a bias, only reproducing another's [subject] as our own subject. The convincing hypotheses of imaginary imagination and psycho-physical parallelism hold us back.<sup>395</sup>

Unlike Frank, who emphasizes the need to see others as ourselves to the greatest possible extent so as to identify with them and love them as we love ourselves, Karsavin is wary of the opposite tendency: assuming that other human beings have identical subjective experiences to our own and therefore denying them individuality. Each philosopher protects subjective experiences within the construct of all-unity. Frank's advocacy of similarity between humans connected in unity serves to protect people from being objectified and harmed by an 'other' who believes that he himself is the only subject. Karsavin's focus—on the uniqueness of the individual experience—serves to protect each person's identity within the unity of humanity.

The above detailed discussion of subjectivity in the work of Frank, Trubetskoi and Karsavin, along with the ways that these thinkers' works intersect on key features of all-unity, such as the Absolute and *Sophia* demonstrate the ways this idea constitutes a conceptual scheme in religious philosophy. It can be concluded that the discursive structure of all-unity set

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<sup>393</sup> Frank DOO, 89.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.* 107.

<sup>395</sup> Karsavin FI, 35. Karsavin points out that we are prevented from completely identifying with the other as ourselves by convincing evidence of his psychological and physical self differentiated from our own psychological and physical selves.

parameters for the discussion of subjectivity, epistemology, and ontology in the religious-philosophical discourse. The overall system of meaning of all-unity in religious philosophy is not given by one philosopher to his audience, but established in dialogical tension with among religious philosophers and in the context of the religious-philosophical discourse as a whole.

### 2.3.B *Sobornost'* as a system

In comparison to all-unity it seems obvious that an idea like *sobornost'* cannot constitute an equally elaborate system of thought. All-unity is, more or less, the structure of religious philosophy. In terms of understanding society or community, *sobornost'* does stand in for a network of concepts, however. This section looks at *sobornost'* more briefly than the previous one did at all-unity in order to establish that, when it comes to ideas about community, *sobornost'* is a conceptual scheme in religious philosophy. As such it conditions ideas about community in two specific ways: first by creating a need to resolve community to government or the state, and second the integration of spiritual universality into ideas about Russian community make it an exceptionally large, amorphous and supra-temporal community.

It has already been noted that *sobornost'* has inherent conflict with politics, including democratic politics. In order to help understand the relationship of *sobornost'* to the state, Frank divided his concept of community into two communities. In *The Spiritual Foundations of Society* (1930), Frank explains that society has an underlying inner society [*sobornost'*] that facilitates outward appearance of the mechanical society [*obshchestvennost'*].<sup>396</sup> In other respects his understanding of *sobornost'* continues the types of uses implied by Khomiakov, it is this exception of balancing *sobornost'* to a dialectical 'other' that is novel.<sup>397</sup>

Frank likens the complexity of society to that of an individual: 'The whole of *sobornost'*, of which the person [*lichnost'*] feels himself a part, and which makes up the substance of the person, must be as concretely individual [*konkretno-individual'no*] as the

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<sup>396</sup> Frank DOO, 100-103.

<sup>397</sup> Levitsky observes that Frank's social philosophy *adds* to the body of Russian thought about *sobornost'* an 'original embodiment,' but does not suggest that this embodiment is by any means contentious (S. Levitsky, 'Etika Franka', in V. Zenkovsky, ed., *Sbornik Pamiaty S L Franka* (Munich, 1954), 131).

person is himself.<sup>398</sup> Society must be conceptualised as an entity with the same characteristics of concrete existence as a person has. But, just because society is like a person does not mean everyone will like society. In this model people may oppose society, although this would involve denying their intuition of the Absolute. In such circumstances, the external form of society, *obshchestvennost'*, can correct this human tendency.

One such method of correction is instituting laws. The laws of import to Frank, though, must have as their source the ideal convention of *sobornost'*, they must be ontological teleological organic laws of social life'.<sup>399</sup> This is because the nature of man, though saved by Christ, is not so changed that Law itself must change. Frank quotes *Matthew 5:17*

‘Think not that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled,’

in order to reinforce the necessity that humans live by law. Yet, it is not clear in the practical, governmental, sense which laws satisfy his criteria.<sup>400</sup>

Berdyayev also draws a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate laws in light of *sobornost'*. In *Freedom and the Spirit* (1927) he explains the fundamental incompatibility of a society based on *sobornost'* with cold rational law:

Scientific and juridical obligation could never have arisen in an atmosphere of spiritual unity and love. In such an atmosphere knowledge can be a communal *sobornyi* contemplation of existing truth and communion of people formed not by juridical norms, but by love itself and spiritual community itself.<sup>401</sup>

Berdyayev elaborates that the truth of freedom is in the spiritual beginnings of the human, not granted by law.

What is to be done when the self denies society is the reason laws are necessary. Frank observes his construct *obshchestvennost'* as such, ‘the outer layer [of society] exists explicitly in the fact that this unity disintegrates into division, opposition and confrontation of many “I”s’.<sup>402</sup> In order to see laws in this way religious philosophers must have a certain understanding of

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<sup>398</sup> Frank DOO, 116.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.* 51.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.* 53.

<sup>401</sup> Berdyayev FSD, 164.

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.* 98.

people in *sobornost'*. For example, in Frank's thought society and the person are symbiotic, and it is the denial of this that causes harm. 'Any depreciation of the action of *sobornost'*, any disconnection from it, a person experiences as a deprecation and impoverishment, as a privation of his own self.'<sup>403</sup> With this in mind, Van der Zweerde contends that Frank's conception of *sobornost'* is more an alternative empowerment of society than it is compatible with ideas of civil society.<sup>404</sup> The basis of this argument is the fundamental opposition between the religiously empowered individual and the secular requirements of the state.<sup>405</sup> *Sobornost'* is, unlike democracy, not a modern word, and thus the *sobornal* society must be a more religious alternative to today's idea of civil society. Though Frank's model may appear to be compatible with modern government, by allowing for an externalized hierarchy, it is really only more compatible than other instances of *sobornost'* in politics.

The complicated relationship between *sobornost'* and participatory government meted out by Frank is similar to the *sobornost'* debated in 1917 by the All Russian Church Council.<sup>406</sup> Despite theorizing a *sobornost'* compatible to politics, this idea cannot shake its traditional opposition to the state. The state, divorced from *sobornost'*, has an inferior ability to channel the inherent goodness of man. Frank writes, 'since faith, attaining outward incarnation, requires realization in spontaneous relations between persons: in other words, since the morally determined unity of *sobornost'* constitutes the unity of society as the empirical substrate of social culture,' it cannot be planned any more than spiritual life—i.e. not at all.<sup>407</sup> As a superstructure capable of dispensing order, the state in fact acts counter to *sobornost'*, or counter to the human impetus toward *sobornost'*.

The second way that *sobornost'* could be said to be a conceptual scheme is the way that it explains the communal aspect of being in an ontological way. For example Berdyaev's

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<sup>403</sup> Ultimately, like his depiction of the human choice of evil, the choice to neglect society is as harmful to the individual who chooses it as it is to society itself (Frank DOO, 115).

<sup>404</sup> E. v. d. Zweerde, "Civil Society" and "Orthodox Christianity" in Russia: A Double Test-Case', *Religion State and Society*, 27/1 (Mar. 1999), 23.

<sup>405</sup> Zweerde 1999, 30.

<sup>406</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>407</sup> Frank DOO, 171.

concept of *sobornost'* interprets the extent of the being of the church beyond the boundaries of the Church proper, in and amongst the community, and therefore all Russians. Berdyaev connects to Khomiakov's original meaning, most notably in acceptance of an apolitical aspect of *sobornost'*, but he also moves away from *sobornost'* as a characteristic specific to church organization.

In *The Realm of the Spirit and the Realm of Caesar* [*Tsarstvo dukha i tsarstvo kesaria*] (1949) he explains that, 'Church *sobornost'* does not mean authority, not the authority of a Council of Bishops, or even an ecumenical council: rather it is the communion in love of the Church people with the Holy Spirit.'<sup>408</sup> Berdyaev moves away from looking at how *sobornost'* affects Church hierarchies to look at its role as an agent organizing people. In *Dream and Reality* (1949) he also emphasizes this distinction between *sobornost'* and Church life:

All the value of the thought of Khomiakov was in that he thought of *sobornost'*, which was his creative discovery, in an imperforated connection to freedom. But, he did not think this idea to its end. Not in any way can *sobornost'* be turned into an external authority. Absolute primacy belongs to freedom. In the case of conflict, of which Khomiakov little thought, conscience chooses freedom.<sup>409</sup>

A direction toward universality might be implicit in Khomiakov, but Berdyaev's movement toward using *sobornost'* in such a universal sense is a key aspect of the idea as it was used in religious philosophy over the past century.

Another part of this ontological communality implied by *sobornost'* is the idea that people retain their personal freedom within it. This connotation clarifies understanding life in *sobornost'* as a distinctly personal life by emphasizing personal freedom. Khomiakov's ecclesiological example of the free relationship of persons within the Trinity represented a situation in which the members of society maintained their individuality. Freedom, though, is most relevant when *sobornost'* is used in a wider discussion, outside of the Church. Much of this concern about freedom focuses on distinguishing *sobornost'* from 'collectivity', and is of interest in situations where *sobornost'* is not realized and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6. Just as *sobornost'* has compatibility barriers with political activism, it is not easily

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<sup>408</sup> Berdyaev 1952, 122, and TDITK, 108.

<sup>409</sup> Berdyaev 1950, 53, and SOFA, 66.

compatible with liberal thinking on personal freedom. Rosenthal interprets religious philosophy as antagonistic to personal freedom because of the very close distinctions that must be made in order to understand *sobornost'* as supportive of democracy.<sup>410</sup> She writes that although fin de siècle Russian idealist thinkers:

‘condemned authoritarianism, compulsion and force, by 1917 they were as opposed to individual freedom as the Bolsheviks... Unwittingly and unintentionally, their lofty ideal of *sobornost'* degenerated into an ultra-communalist vision in which the individual virtually disappeared’.<sup>411</sup>

A criticism like this is bold, and hard to square with the accepted understanding of the Christian humanism also apparent in religious philosophy. While Rosenthal’s critique is justified, and some thinkers did indeed use Slavophil language to advocate for theocracy or dictatorship, it is helpful to consider these ideas within the context of the wildly idealist approach religious philosophy had to all practical problems and the stresses of self-governance exhibited in the Provisional Government after the February Revolution. Rosenthal identifies and condemns the strong anti-individualist aspects of traditional *sobornost'*, but she also acknowledges that the fracture in revolutionary society might have made the ideals of *sobornost'* appealing to religious philosophers.<sup>412</sup>

It is important that a distinction be made between thinkers like Merezhkovsky on the one hand, who used Silver Age social experimentation to propose very radical changes to Russian society and the Orthodox faith, and thinkers like Bulgakov, who on the other hand had inventive ideas within the infrastructure of the Church and state as they existed. Radical ideas characterized fin de siècle Russian thought, and it is not appropriate to group all thinkers from this period together willy-nilly; it is even less appropriate to allow the most extreme of these thinkers to besmirch religious philosophy’s reputation for moderation. After the Revolution

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<sup>410</sup> In other words, *sobornost'* as it is usually defined is not blatantly supportive of democracy; a reader must carefully define many concepts (community, individuality, government) before *sobornost'* can be considered supportive of a democratic governmental system. In this sense the two problematic aspects of *sobornost'* in religious philosophy can be considered interconnected.

<sup>411</sup> B. Rosenthal, ‘Lofty Ideals and Worldly Consequences: Visions of *Sobornost'* in Early Twentieth Century Russia’, *Russian History*, 20/1-4 (1993), 181.

<sup>412</sup> Rosenthal 1993, 195.

Frank and Berdyaev both address the topic of individuality and freedom in relation to *sobornost'* in light of the realities of Soviet communism, which will be discussed in Chapter 6.

### 2.3.C *Sophia* as a system

Berdyaev writes in *The Russian Idea* that: ‘The subject matter of *sophiology* is the theme of the divine and created world. This is above all a cosmological theme and one which has aroused the interest of Russian religious thought more than Western religious thought.’<sup>413</sup> He asserts that *sophiology* is of specific concern to Russian thinkers, and that it is not just in comparison with a generally atheistic Western Philosophy that *sophiology* appears prominent in Russian thought. Can this prevalence be considered a system or conceptual scheme?

In almost all of its later manifestations *Sophia* maintains a multivalent aspect and therefore concurrently encloses several concepts within one idea and in this respect it can be considered a system. Perhaps it is best considered a more specific version of all-unity and in this respect one major characteristic of *Sophia* as a system of thought is its specific use to resolve the antinomies of divine and created worlds, just as all-unity attempts to resolve A and not-A. *Sophia*, by bridging the gap between the empirical world and a higher reality, exists in both places and has characteristics of both:

The empirical world is immersed in ‘process’, in time and space, in history, and as such is imperfect and dis-harmonious; yet, like humanity itself, is never wholly separated from a higher metaphysical reality, from the divine *Sophia* that ever soars above the world, illuminating it through reason, through beauty, through... economy and culture. *Natura naturata* with its mask of death still remains a creation of the *natura naturans* and though they are *in actu* separate, they remain externally linked *in potentia*.<sup>414</sup>

In this passage, *Sophia* is all sources of order to empirical reality: reason, beauty, economy and culture. In *The Philosophy of Economy* Bulgakov describes *Sophia* as a huge variety of things—existing in time, and space simultaneously and complementarily. According to Bulgakov, ‘*Sophia* rules over history manifesting itself as fate, as causality, as the law of

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<sup>413</sup> Berdyaev 1947, 241, italics his own. Here he acknowledges the strong tradition of religious thinking in Western thought, often under-emphasized or ignored by historians focused on the unique character of Russia’s philosophical tradition.

<sup>414</sup> Bulgakov 2000, 145.

progress'.<sup>415</sup> Bulgakov highlights the multivalent characteristics of *Sophia* as an attribute of process, the act that links humanity to *Sophia* and conditions *Sophia's* varied existence. He writes, '*Sophia* acts through the medium of Historical Humanity, and it is *Sophia* that determines the teleology of the historical process.'<sup>416</sup> Reason, economy, and culture are all civilizational aspects of humanity and their growth through *Sophia* is progress.

When classifying *Sophia's* many incarnations, these manifestations arrange themselves in pairs, a consequence of Solov'ev's penchant for dualism. Perhaps due to constructing *Sophia* as overcoming created and uncreated, a paradigm of dual *Sophias* has emerged in most religious-philosophical systems. *Sophia* can be considered both personified and abstract, with the personified *Sophia* associated with worldly *Sophia* and the abstract with divine *Sophia*. Bulgakov also describes 'a heavenly timeless *Sophia* and an empirical *Sophia*'.<sup>417</sup> In this way many of the characteristics of *Sophia* can be arranged to fit this duality:<sup>418</sup>

Earthly	Divine
Female	Abstract
Organizing the world	Above the world
Spiritually infusing creation	Interacting with the Godhead
Created	Uncreated

Two ways these many manifestations of *Sophia* are built upon are in the areas of the implications of sophiology for freedom, and of the deeper discussion of *Sophia's* potential position as a fourth hypostasis. First let us consider the relationship between *Sophia* and freedom. Berdyaev, ever concerned with freedom, criticizes other sophiologies for considering the place of freedom indirectly: 'the chief difficulty of sophiology arises from the problem of

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<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.* 145.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.* 153.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.* 151.

<sup>418</sup> Interestingly, Solov'ev also visually represented his ideas about *Sophia*, creating charts and drawings of the relationship *Sophia* had to the rest of his system (See Kornblatt, 129, 170 and 173). Perhaps it is because he thought of *Sophia* in such a way that subsequent analysts have also used spatial representations to support their descriptions of his ideas (see Clowes, 113, and 115).

evil which is indeed inadequately stated and left unresolved. It is an optimistic system; the fundamental idea is not that of freedom, but of *Sophia*' itself.<sup>419</sup> This criticism correctly identifies the fact that of all the philosophies of all-unity, sophiology focuses on the unifying agent, the persona of *Sophia*. As the main subject, *Sophia*, might take more religious-philosophical attention than freedom, but in fact in philosophies of all-unity *Sophia* acts as a solution to the question of freedom and evil.

In this criticism Berdyaev draws attention to how *Sophia* represents a free relationship between God and the World, a topic in Trubetskoi's sophiology. Freedom exists at the forefront of Trubetskoi's theory. He defines *Sophia* as 'not a being but only a norm, an ideal image', differing from Solov'ev's use of an actual persona in his poetry.<sup>420</sup> In this concept 'the individual is outside the divine life and is free to accept or to reject the ideal end thus set before him.'<sup>421</sup> Instead, in Solov'ev *Sophia* facilitates the conflation of God and the World such that the existence of evil becomes a difficult concept to justify.

*Sophia* for Trubetskoi represents a situation in which 'God is free from the world and the world is comparatively independent of God; without such freedom on both sides the relation between God and the world could not have the character of love, or on the part of man, hostility.'<sup>422</sup> Trubetskoi's emphasis is on mankind's independent potential to overcome evil and rectify the Fall through the model of Godmanhood. *Sophia* is the potential, the light and the beauty of the world.<sup>423</sup> As Sergeev explains, in Trubetskoi's work the 'divinity of *Sophia* excludes its substantial sameness to the natural world'... 'The sophianic element or the idea of creation is not its nature but another reality which can be reached by the efforts of free will.'<sup>424</sup> Trubetskoi clearly minimizes *Sophia*'s active role in deification, '*Sophia* is completely not an

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<sup>419</sup> Berdyaev RI, 241.

<sup>420</sup> Lossky 1924, 94. Trubetskoi's distinction is similar to the distinction Lossky makes between the Absolute and creation. According to Lossky the Absolute only created the 'potential of human agents'; if God had created the manifestation of a person in time, Lossky extrapolates that the connections between the life of the world and the life of God would connect too fully: 'God is free from creatures and from participation in their evil deeds' (Lossky 1928, 112).

<sup>421</sup> Lossky 1924, 94

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>423</sup> Trubetskoi SZ, 161

<sup>424</sup> Sergeev 2006, 178.

intermediary between God and creation—for Christ combines with humanity unmediatedly. *Sophia* is inseparable from Christ as God’s Wisdom and Power.<sup>425</sup> This interpretation of *Sophia* may seem strictly biblical outside of the religious-philosophical context, but Trubetskoi’s use of the word *Sophia* to represent this idea and his discussion of Bulgakov and Florensky’s work picks out his use of *Sophia* as part of the religious-philosophical discourse. The special status of *Sophia* as a necessary idea for religious-philosophical systems is demonstrated by Trubetskoi’s inclusion of the idea, and manipulation of it to support his other philosophical statements.

The second development, the question of whether or not *Sophia* is a hypostasis, gets considerably more attention. In terms of Solov’ev and Christian doctrine the chief ‘problem’ the next generation of religious philosophers encountered is the created and uncreated nature of *Sophia*.<sup>426</sup> Bulgakov, Lossky, Karsavin and Florensky faced the challenge of the effect that considering *Sophia* as hypostasis presented to Orthodox theology. Neither earlier Christian understandings nor Solov’ev set specific conditions of a hypostatic quality on *Sophia*, so this challenge was free to be addressed in the early twentieth century. The place of *Sophia* in relation to the uncreated God and the created world is indeterminate. As a philosophical construct, *Sophia* exists to bridge these two states and explain the relationship of each to the other. But in theological terms, *Sophia* itself must be considered either created or uncreated. To simply probe the existence of an uncreated *Sophia* has limited philosophical value, when the existence of an uncreated God is already integrated into a philosophical system. The philosophical value of *Sophia* is in the idea’s ability to better explain human existence through exploration of the border between created and uncreated aspects of itself. Unfortunately, philosophical exploration of *Sophia* in search of this value leads to the valueless pursuit of explaining the nature of *Sophia*.<sup>427</sup>

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<sup>425</sup> Trubetskoi SZ, 130.

<sup>426</sup> In fact, this was a question that Solov’ev himself faced (see Kornblatt 8), but in his case the problematic nature of the question was minimized because whether or not his philosophy alienated the Orthodox Church, or the Catholic Church for that matter, was none of Solov’ev’s concern.

<sup>427</sup> Explaining exactly what *Sophia* is is far more tedious than (and not as enlightening as) speculating about what an idea like *Sophia* could mean for human life; see below 272-274.

Despite *Sophia's* obvious origin in Christian texts, as developed in Russian religious philosophy many aspects of Gnostic and pre-Christian thought have also influenced a critical interpretation of *Sophia*. Even though it is possible to interpret certain biblical passages about wisdom as Solov'ev and later religious thinkers did, does not mean that it was normal or easily acceptable for other Christians to do so. In *The Russian Idea*, Berdyaev explains this miss-fit: 'there is no absolute division between the creator and his creation. The uncreated *Sophia* exists in God from all eternity; it is the world of the Platonic ideas. Through *Sophia* our World was created, and there exists a created *Sophia* which permeates creation.'<sup>428</sup> The effort to produce conformity between the Gnostic *Sophia* and Christian theories of creation complicates defining *Sophia* in the religious-philosophical context such that careful distinctions and convoluted definitions characterize any comprehensive discussion of the concept.

The question of where the created and uncreated *Sophia* meets remains. David writes that In Russian religious philosophy, '*Sophia* supplied above all the final principle of integration of the correlative physical and moral elements in God's essence, the tie linking man to God and His nature, and the latent basis for the perfection of man and through him the world.'<sup>429</sup> Pursuit of what constitutes the boundary between created and uncreated bound religious philosophers to abstractions. A potential solution to this question is the idea that *Sophia* might have a hypostatic element in her nature. However, few aspects of Orthodox Christian theology are more complex and sacred than the doctrine of three persons in one essence. Thus, what could have been a site of discussion caused further problems of reconciling *Sophia* into Christian doctrine.

In the experimental atmosphere of the Silver Age both Florensky and Bulgakov approached the heresy of pantheism. In doing so, the two thinkers followed Solov'ev and built on the basis of the biblical descriptions of *Sophia* a conclusion that the personified entity described as part of God in the Bible might be a hypostasis. Richard Gustafson comments that 'while the designation of *Sophia* as a fourth hypostasis (albeit by nature) was perhaps

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<sup>428</sup> Berdyaev 1947, 241. His underlining.

<sup>429</sup> David, 45.

unfortunate and to some seemed heretical, Florensky succeeded more clearly than Solovyov in bringing the concept of *Sophia* into relationship with the whole trinity.<sup>430</sup> Although the conclusion that *Sophia* was a hypostasis was controversial and experimental, Gustafson's statement best explains the part *Sophia* had in these two men's thought: as the obvious solution to clear up ambiguity in Solov'ev's conception of *Sophia* with the support of scripture.

The connection between *Sophia* and God made by these thinkers is like the connection between the uncreated 'energies' defined by Gregory of Palamas, and 'Divine Glory' in the biblical understanding.<sup>431</sup> In Bulgakov's reasoning; 'God has or possesses or is characterized by Glory and Wisdom, which cannot be separated from him since they represent his dynamic self revelation in creative action and also in his own life.'<sup>432</sup> After Bulgakov carefully establishes Wisdom as a character element of God, how this part of God co-exists with the established understanding of God must be addressed.

It is clear that Florensky and Bulgakov both try to make a differentiation between *Sophia* as hypostasis and the rest of the Trinity's hypostatic nature. For example in the meaning of Florensky's fourth Hypostatic element, *Sophia* is allowed to enter into the Trinity's communion of love by divine humility, establishing a power relationship that clearly implies *Sophia* is inferior to the rest of the Godhead.<sup>433</sup> In his work Florensky's main focus is on the implications of *Sophia's* creaturely essence, but as the personality of the fourth hypostatic element *Sophia* was also clearly in a special relationship with the Divine.<sup>434</sup> When discussing the hypostatic nature of *Sophia*, Florensky writes of the relationship between the Divine and *Sophia* as a relationship of condescension. He writes,

'This love-idea-monad, this fourth hypostatic element, brings about, with respect to itself, a difference in the order of the hypostases of the Holy Trinity. And the Holy Trinity condescends to this correlation of itself with its own creature.'<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>430</sup> Florensky 1997, xxi.

<sup>431</sup> Kyrke-Smith, 25.

<sup>432</sup> Bulgakov 1937, 53.

<sup>433</sup> Kyrke-Smith, 110-111.

<sup>434</sup> Zenkovsky, 888.

<sup>435</sup> Florensky 1997, 235-236, and SS, 323-324.

To Florensky, the nature of *Sophia* as hypostasis and the relationship between *Sophia* as such and the Trinity does not threaten the Trinity. He writes ‘*Sophia* takes part in the life of the tri-hypostatic divinity, enters into the interior of the Trinity, and enters into communion with Divine love.’<sup>436</sup> Clearly, this description elevates *Sophia* from a purely creaturely position. Although Florensky admits *Sophia* is a hypostasis, he does not view her as a co-equal to the rest of the absolute. He continues his definition by explaining, ‘*Sophia* is a fourth, creaturely and therefore non-consubstantial Person, as she does not form a Divine Unity. She is ‘allowed’ to enter’.<sup>437</sup>

Bulgakov makes a different qualification of his *Sophia*-as-hypostasis. He explains that: ‘this principle in itself is non-hypostatic, though capable of being hypostasized in a given hypostasis and thereby constituting its life.’<sup>438</sup> Therefore, although *Sophia* is not a hypostasis in its own right it can be hypostasized, when necessary, in order to interact with the remainder of the Godhead. Clearly, while both of these proposals are interesting, they are theologically unsound because only three hypostases exist.

*Sophia* is closely associated with Bulgakov and Florensky, but it is important to bear in mind that this concept was also used and accepted by most religious philosophers. In religious philosophy *Sophia* personified all-unity and allowed for a more specific articulation of all-unity metaphysics. Depending on how satisfactorily the hypostatic element of *Sophia*’s persona was resolved, this idea could act as a system of thought. It must also be born in mind, as will be explored in the case of the Sophiological Controversy discussed in Chapter 6, whether thinkers who did not take satisfaction in the conceptual scheme of *Sophia* did understand this idea to be a system of thought, albeit an illegitimate one.

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<sup>436</sup> Florensky 1997, 252, and SS, 349.

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>438</sup> Bulgakov 1937, 59.

### 2.3.D Godmanhood as a system

It is a contention of this thesis that, along with all-unity, *sobornost'* and *Sophia*, Godmanhood created a conceptual scheme in religious philosophy. The most interesting feature of this system is how it has an opposite or reciprocal idea as a key feature of its definition. For religious philosophers this 'other' was also the product of the Russian intellectual tradition. Famously portrayed in the work of writers such as Chernyshevsky and Lavrov, the archetype of revolutionary man was thought of by religious philosophers as mangodhood.<sup>439</sup> As a participant in the aforementioned Comtist God-Humanity groups, Solov'ev connected the influences present in the formation of Godmanhood to the influences on the formation of its 'other', mangodhood.<sup>440</sup> Both of these understandings of mankind, from an atheistic and a religious context, are woven together. This subsection looks more closely at mangodhood and Godmanhood together, and how they create a conceptual scheme in dialogue with each other.

An example of how these two approaches complement each other to generate ideas can be found in Solov'ev's lecture on Comte, wherein he contrasts the dual origins of human rights as being both in the French Revolution and in *John* 1:12.<sup>441</sup> He points out that the true origin of human worth is derived from the religious meaning of humanity's creation. However, he also allows that, for those who have lost sight of this, the French Revolution, by which he means the advent of secular humanism, is another point of origin. In this lecture, Solov'ev demonstrates a dialogue and tension between these two competing humanisms. The proximity of religious philosophers who preferred to advocate specific rights within the framework of Godmanhood, to secular Russian thinkers, who found the value of the person in a Humanist heritage, can be explained in part by the humanism present in both. Berdyaev observes the closeness of the two

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<sup>439</sup> The 'ideal revolutionary' exemplified in the character of Rakmetov in *What is to Be Done?* is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

<sup>440</sup> Billington 1960, 814 n. 22.

<sup>441</sup> 'But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name'; Solov'ev 2009, 215.

schools in Solov'ev's work when he writes that, 'Soloviev tried to give religious meaning to humanism.'<sup>442</sup>

In this context Solov'ev's Godmanhood opposed an 'other'.<sup>443</sup> Like Comte's *Humanité*, the 'Superman' was another construct of ideal humanity that has many qualities in common with Godmanhood. Nietzsche's thought had reawakened Russian thinkers to the possible meaning of 'Superman'.<sup>444</sup> These ideas, secular and religious, countered assertions that man is merely an animal. In 'The Idea of the Superman' [*Idea sverkhocheloveka*] (1899) Solov'ev directly addressed the enigmatic role of the Superman as both an inspiration to philosophers and as an antithesis to religiously-minded philosophers. Despite the apparent similarities between Nietzsche's ideas and religious philosophy profound differences provoked a strong reaction because, although his ideas supported anthropocentric philosophies, religious philosophy interpreted Nietzsche's superman as having emptied the meaning from human life by denying the divine meaning present in God's example of Christ and instructing man to create his own meaning.<sup>445</sup>

Dostoevsky also dealt with the implications of ideas like the Superman or 'mangodhood' in relation to Godmanhood. Whereas Solov'ev wrote about Godmanhood, it can be said that Dostoevsky's interest was to illustrate Godmanhood through an exploration of mangodhood.<sup>446</sup> His contributes to the dialogue between these two ideas. In his novels the impulse to murder can be considered as an impulse to explore the 'omnipotent' element of man, or an exploration of mangodhood. Kostalevsky develops this theme in her analyses of *Crime and Punishment* [*Prestuplenie i nakazanie*] (1866) and *The Devils* [*Besy*] (1872).<sup>447</sup> In these novels murder is a 'revolution' that establishes a character, and by proxy the nature of all

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<sup>442</sup> Copleston 1988, 73. This view is congruent with Billington's assessment of Solov'ev's place in relation to humanistic thought in late-nineteenth century Russian intellectual circles.

<sup>443</sup> A. M. Lane, 'Nietzsche Comes to Russia: Popularization and Protest in the 1890s', in B. G. Rosenthal, ed., *Nietzsche in Russia* (Princeton, 1986), 66.

<sup>444</sup> Lane, 65.

<sup>445</sup> Krasicki, 129: 'By reducing God Nietzsche reduced man; by reducing heaven he reduced earth.'

<sup>446</sup> In *Dostoevsky and Soloviev*, Marina Kostalevsky argues that Godmanhood is a part of both thinkers' strivings for unity. Kostalevsky physically links the two thinkers to the topic by pointing out that Dostoevsky attended Solov'ev's lectures on Godmanhood (Kostalevsky, 81).

<sup>447</sup> Kostalevsky, 82; *Crime and Punishment* (London, 2007); and *The Devils* (London, 1971).

men.<sup>448</sup> In dissecting the act of murder Dostoevsky can contrast the impulses of the mangod and those of the Godman; revealing the emptiness of the mangod's attitude toward human life. Let us look briefly at how these mangodly attitudes are depicted in Dostoevsky.

In *Crime and Punishment* (1866) Raskolnikov, the central protagonist, justifies his will to kill in terms of his will be the 'overman' and satisfy his own needs. Through the act of murder Raskolnikov has the power to assert his will over other humans. Murder is a central facet of his character; the act of murder renders all else in human life a 'trifle'.<sup>449</sup> Dostoevsky's portrayal of Raskolnikov is a condemnation of utilitarian ethics.<sup>450</sup> In *The Devils* (1872) a clandestine society of young men plans to murder one of its own members as a revolutionary act. The failure of this plan forms the main plot of the novel and establishes the connection between murder, 'mangodly' behaviour, and revolutionaries in Dostoevsky's thought. The intended victim, Shatov, represents Russia and, as Scanlan postulates, Dostoevsky's alter-ego.<sup>451</sup>

*The Devils* (1872) also addresses the highest manifestation of mangodly will: the will to kill oneself.<sup>452</sup> For the character Kirilov, striving to be the fullest most revolutionary of men results in suicide. Here Kirilov is able to assert his will over not only others, but most importantly his creator. Kirilov professes these convictions to the anonymous narrator of the novel:

Life is pain, life is fear, and man is unhappy. Now all is pain and fear. Now man loves life. And that is how they have done it. You're given life now for pain and fear, and that is where the whole deception lies. Now man is not yet what he will be. A new man will come happy and proud. To whom it won't matter whether he lives or not. He'll be the new man! He who conquers pain and fear will himself be a god. And that other God will not be.<sup>453</sup>

For Kirilov, and by extrapolation Dostoevsky, the logical endpoint of personal control over existence and the ultimate action of creation is the nullification thereof. Kirilov is Dostoevsky's illustration of an extreme interpretation of philosophical principles and is portrayed as an absurd and solitary man. He is often found meditating or doing odd gymnastics alone symbolic of his

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<sup>448</sup> Kostalevsky, 86.

<sup>449</sup> Dostoevsky 2007, 4.

<sup>450</sup> Kostalevsky, 85.

<sup>451</sup> Scanlan 2002, 176.

<sup>452</sup> Kostalevsky, 89.

<sup>453</sup> Dostoevsky 1971, 126.

self-contradictory and isolating philosophy. In the cases of the characters Raskolnikov and Kirilov, Dostoevsky demonstrates mankind's desire to approach God-like powers of creation through destruction.<sup>454</sup> By killing oneself or others these characters appear to have a control over life that God does not.

The epistemological construction of man's knowledge is connected to the ethical structure of man's knowledge in these texts.<sup>455</sup> A conscious person is obliged to behave ethically because part of awareness is knowledge of right and wrong. In *The Devils* (1872), Dostoevsky connects the enlightening experiences of the youths, Kirilov and Shatov, abroad in America with the development of their Nietzschean dilemma. Shatov relates the American enlightenment experience to the narrator, telling first of how they laboured for capitalist exploiters to learn by 'personal experience' the 'worst possible social conditions' and then how they lay in poverty together in a hut: 'So after that Kirilov and I, unable to obtain employment, lay on the floor of a hut side by side for four months in that filthy little town; he thought of one thing and I of another.'<sup>456</sup> Clearly this experience shaped Kirilov and Shatov in different ways. Each man thought of his own philosophy, and while Kirilov lay in the hut conceiving of the suicidal mangodhood that Shatov terms a 'sore', Shatov himself made a different transformation; he states that although he was once a 'Russian liberal', which he equates with being a 'flunky' he is now 'not a flunky'.<sup>457</sup>

In these examples knowledge and self-knowledge are the roots of ethics based in mangodhood which Dostoevsky explores deeply and unsympathetically. These characters that are meant to have overcome humanity, in the end appear all too human. Shestov, in *Dostoevsky and Nietzsche; the Philosophy of Tragedy [Dostoevskii i Nitshe: filosofiiia tragedii]* (1903), makes much of Raskolnikov's lack of repentance in the epilogue of *Crime and Punishment*: '[Raskolnikov], right up to the end in the depths of his soul he could not repent, for he sensed that in this he was innocent and knew that Dostoevsky only charged him with murder for the

<sup>454</sup> Frank condemns this in his contribution to *Landmarks*, discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>455</sup> Kostalevsky, 89. The necessity of pairing conscience and consciousness is also discussed by Frank below, page 286.

<sup>456</sup> Dostoevsky 1971, 147-8.

<sup>457</sup> *Ibid.* 147.

sake of the novel.<sup>458</sup> Shestov sees the emphasis on the word ‘blunder’ as a confirmation of mangodhood, where Raskolnikov has moved beyond good and evil and into a world where murder is banal. However, if murder is the ultimate act why then is Raskolnikov not rewarded as an overman? In fact, in the final assessment Dostoevsky describes murder as an accident that has befallen Raskolnikov, not an empowering and self-willed act. It is just an accident that ‘could have happened to anyone.’ Shestov concludes that in the prison Raskolnikov ‘was crushed for unknown reasons. His task, all his aspirations now amount to justifying his misfortune, to restoring *his* life—and nothing, not the happiness of the whole world, not the triumph of any idea can in his eyes give meaning to his personal tragedy’<sup>459</sup> Likewise, before Kirilov finally commits suicide, Dostoevsky permits the reader to question Kirilov’s psychology in a long dialogue with the other major nihilist character of *The Devils*, Peter Verkhovensky. In this conversation humanity in general, Kirilov to some extent, and especially Verkhovensky, are portrayed unsympathetically: Verkhovensky and Kirilov conclude that ‘all men are scoundrels’; Verkhovensky sees Kirilov as ‘something like half a man’; and Verkhovensky himself is throughout the conversation only concerned with how quickly he can induce Kirilov’s much theorized suicide.<sup>460</sup> This conversation reassures the reader that for all of his talk, Kirilov is much more normal than the superman he aspires to be: He, unlike Verkhovensky, assigns a value to human life and often repeats his personal philosophy like a self-soothing mantra—‘I’m bound to shoot myself because the most important point of my self-will is to kill myself’.<sup>461</sup> In the end, Kirilov reveals himself to be fundamentally concerned with the existence of God. Regardless of his beliefs, his entire suicidal mission has God at its core. Dostoevsky balances portrayals of nihilism with portrayals of belief.

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<sup>458</sup> (Paris, 1971), 123. ‘He judged himself severely, and his hardened conscience did not find any especially terrible guilt in his past, except perhaps a simple *blunder* that could have happened to anyone’ (Dostoevsky 2007, 543). Emphasis in the original.

<sup>459</sup> DIN, 123, emphasis in the original. Shestov emphasizes the self-centred nature of Raskolnikov’s mentality by pointing out that the murder is only meaningful in relation to Raskolnikov’s life with a special emphasis on ‘his’. Raskolnikov is the foundation of his morality and meaningfulness.

<sup>460</sup> Dostoevsky 1971, 610, 612, and 609-618.

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.* 612.

This contrast is foregrounded in Dostoevsky's portrayal of the salvation of Christ and the salvation of the Grand Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov* [*Brat'ia Karamazovi*] (1880).<sup>462</sup> In fact, in *Dostoevsky and Nietzsche* (1903) Shestov groups Raskolnikov, Kirilov and Ivan Karamazov as one type of Nietzschean protagonist.<sup>463</sup> Ivan Karamazov's Grand Inquisitor is concerned with the salvation of mankind on earth and solving the earthly problems of man, at the cost of recognizing the inherent value of Christ's existence to mankind. On the other hand, the salvation of Christ, offered by way of Godmanhood, is a fulfilment of man's ideal potential, and thus the ultimate salvation.

Contemporaneously to *Dostoevsky and Nietzsche* (1903) In 'Ivan Karamazov as a Philosophical Type' [*Ivan Karamzov kak filosofskii tip*] (1902) Bulgakov also expresses the connection between Solov'ev and Dostoevsky's anthropologies. In this essay, Bulgakov addresses mangodhood six times, but Godmanhood only once. This is important because Bulgakov puts the 'mangodhood' label to Dostoevsky's ideas and connects that type of character to what Solov'ev had discussed in his *Lectures on Godmanhood* (1881). Bulgakov connects Ivan Karamazov and Dostoevsky's concept that 'everything is permitted' to Nietzschean terminology, drawing a direct comparison to the Superman, and alluding to 'master-slave morality' with the word 'slave-man [*raba-chelovek*]'.<sup>464</sup> Yet it must be noted that Bulgakov's criticism is not entirely negative. He recognizes, as Solov'ev did in Comte, that some kernel of truth exists, albeit in a twisted form, in mangodhood. He writes, 'So in order to live in hope of a bright and glorious future for humanity and to work toward this distant prospect, it is necessary to believe in humanity; believe that people really can become the mangod.'<sup>465</sup> Bulgakov identifies this faith as a positive thing, the negative thing being when 'mangod replaces faith in Godman'.<sup>466</sup>

<sup>462</sup> (London, 1992); Kostalevsky, 104.

<sup>463</sup> He contrasts these three characters with two others, Prince Mishkin of *The Idiot* [*Idiot*] (1869), and Alyosha Karamzov, who for Shestov represent the opposite type (DIN, 21). However, it is clear from his derision, 'Prince Mishkin is only an idea, a void' and Alyosha is an 'infant' with 'importunate and monotonous babbling', that Shestov judges these characters to be more poorly developed than Dostoevsky's anti-heroes are (110 and 117).

<sup>464</sup> Bulgakov OMKI, 85 and 91.

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.* 99.

With Nietzsche, the Superman, or mangodhood as a foil, religious philosophy could follow Dostoevsky and use opposition to these ideas as a springboard to assert the divine basis for human life. In religious philosophy the Superman is a powerful figure in the context of his relationship to the 'historical' superman, Christ.<sup>467</sup> Florensky, for example, appears to have completely accepted Nietzsche in *The Pillar and the Ground of the Truth* (1914) but this casual acceptance is part of Florensky's greater assumptions of the existence of Christ and the natural compatibility of Nietzsche and Christianity. Merezhkovsky also combined religious impulses with Nietzschean philosophy in a less than adversarial manner. His vision of the second coming is apocalyptic and compatible with Nietzschean striving for a Superman. The figure of the Superman is only part of the construct of mangod, that acts as the dialectical opposite of Godman. Rowan Williams discusses this tendency of religious philosophers to consider all things in relation to Christianity in 'Bulgakov and Anti-Semitism'. He describes an insensitivity to the existence of Jewishness in its own right that 'the real identity of Israel is constituted by its relation to the Church; the resolution of its historical 'tragedy' lies in the acceptance of its history as a vocation defined in Christian terms'.<sup>468</sup> The same type of conclusion can be drawn of the religious-philosophical acceptance of Nietzsche, which was done to the extent that he supported the religious-philosophical system.

Co-entially, Dostoevsky and Solov'ev presented Christ/Anti-Christ and Man-god/godman antinomies through which Godmanhood became established as a philosophical principle. Dostoevsky's literary illustration of mangodhood expands upon the basic theological principles upon which Godmanhood is founded. Both thinkers use Godmanhood in a way that is connected to Christ as the personification of this ideal. Later, in Russian religious philosophy Godmanhood acts as a system for articulating the conflicting need to glorify man and God. The works of Solov'ev and Dostoevsky, when considered together, show an emerging dialogue that facilitates use of Godmanhood to address paradigms of modernity.

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<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>467</sup> Krasicki, 127. Krasicki supports this assertion with reference to Frank, Bulgakov, Berdyaev, and Solov'ev.

<sup>468</sup> R. Williams, *Towards a Russian Political Theology* (Edinburgh, 1999), 298.

## 2.4 Conclusion

These four ideas constitute important structures and functioned as signals within the discourse of religious philosophy. All-unity, *sobornost'* and *Sophia* had become more or less established ideas by the turn of the twentieth century. What these ideas could mean and how they could be used had already been set. Godmanhood, on the other hand, had been less developed by the late nineteenth century. All-unity formed a widespread basis of thought in religious philosophy, and manifested its influence in the ways ontologies, epistemologies and philosophies of subjectivity were developed by philosophers. The idea of *sobornost'* influenced how the discourse of religious philosophy understood social organization and government. While a case could be made for a general understanding of all-unity and *sobornost'* in Russian thought, the philosophical development of *Sophia* and Godmanhood took place almost exclusively within Russian religious philosophy.

Dialogically constructed aspects of all-unity, *sobornost'* and *Sophia* and Godmanhood have been noted in this chapter. For example, part of the ontological construct of unity overcomes, or invites, dialogue by engaging with the opposite or other; *sobornost'* seems especially meaningful in contrast with the views of other stakeholders interested in collectivity; and what *Sophia* could mean in religious philosophy was conditioned by its impetus toward the divine and the mundane. Godmanhood is an idea that exists in dialogue with a theoretical opposite; mangodhood.

Having considered the ways that these four ideas are prominent and influential in Russian religious thought, it is only natural to be curious about how these ideas functioned within the religious-philosophical discourse between 1905 and 1940, a time of great change. Economic and social pressures on Russian thinkers, political upheaval, and changes in prevalent European religious and philosophical ideas all brought new ideas and adversaries to religious philosophy. The ways that these four ideas change in this period offers insight into how the philosophy as a whole reacted to the twentieth century.



## **PART TWO:**

Russian religious philosophy at the time of the Revolution existed in a polyphony of creative voices, and was expressed in surprising volumes of productivity in comparison to the late-nineteenth century. It can truly be considered a discourse, with many participants.

In this Part, the history of the Revolution and its influence on philosophy are examined. First in Chapter 3 the chronology of events and how religious philosophy understood those events is explained. Second, in Chapter 4 the structures that help define the discourse of religious philosophy are examined more thoroughly in the context of perceived trends in thought about the Revolution in the hopes that a better understanding of the Revolution's influence on religious philosophy will be exposed



### **Chapter 3: The Key Theme of Revolution**

The historical events that constitute the wider political and social upheaval that accompanied the transition from Russian Empire to Soviet Union had profound effects on the development of religious philosophy. The period under study here begins with the Revolution of 1905 because this political event is indicative of the revolutionary fervour that was present in Russian culture in the early twentieth century, and because it created new political and cultural freedoms that had a direct influence on Russian cultural life. Revolutionary questions, raised in 1905 and answered in 1917, were a dominant feature of Russian intellectual life.<sup>469</sup> Russian religious philosophy, as a party to wider Russian cultural experience, was necessarily affected. The revolutionary period is more important to the development of religious philosophy than the simple extension of wider Russian cultural experience to this school of thought; religious philosophy must be particularly considered as thought generated in the presence of revolution. This chapter sets out and examines the paradigms of interpretation that theoretically and practically link religious philosophy to revolution.

Even though revolutionary themes were already prevalent in Russian philosophy in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the decades immediately prior to the 1917 Revolution are particularly unique for two reasons: the dramatic shift in Russian culture during the this time, and the high volume of philosophical consideration of revolutionary acts both before and after they took place. Before 1905 events in Europe ensured that the political questions of revolution

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<sup>469</sup> Lenin also thought of the Revolution in terms of 'questions'. In 'One of the Fundamental Questions of the Revolution' he identifies 'state power' as the primary question explored in 1917 (*Lenin Collected Works*, Vol. 25 (Moscow, 1977), 370). Richard Stites' concept of 'utopian vision' is another way to articulate 'revolutionary questions'. In *Revolutionary Dreams* he explores the fantastic, impractical, and utopian aspects of the idea of revolution and elaborates ways in which the terms 'socialism', 'utopia' and 'revolution' are often too simplistically conflated in scholarship about the Russian Revolution (Oxford, 1989).

were a topic of interest despite the fact that a Russian revolution had not yet taken place.<sup>470</sup> Earlier religious philosophy had participated in and contributed to ideas about the political and spiritual potential of revolution in Russia.<sup>471</sup> In the period under examination here (1905-1918) the influence of revolution on religious philosophy only grew in dominance and consequence, as is manifest in the dramatic shift in Russian culture that provoked comment from religious philosophers even before 1917.

One hypothesis about the relationship between revolution and religious philosophy attributes a strong influence on the development of Russian philosophy to the Bolshevik Revolution. It states that a crucial influence of this political change was the early demise of the Silver Age of Russian cultural expression and with it such cultural productivity as the ‘new religious consciousness’ and the religious-philosophical societies of St. Petersburg and Moscow. The changes that took place in Russian culture at the early part of the twentieth century, whether they were brought about by revolution, make this a very interesting period in the history of Russian philosophy because the Silver Age was such a fecund period of Russian cultural production that a variety of rich philosophical material exists from this period.

The existence of an abundance of philosophical publications at this time is useful for chronicling the development of religious philosophy. Especially unique are three essay collections, *Problems of Idealism* [*Problemy idealizma*], *Landmarks* [*Vekhi*] and *From the Depths* [*Iz glubiny*], published in 1902, 1909 and 1918 respectively.<sup>472</sup> The chronological spacing and the collaborative nature of these texts are important features because they demonstrate both the trajectories of philosophical ideas throughout the period and the way that

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<sup>470</sup> The greatest European revolutionary spectacle was provided by the 1848 revolutions, but Russian sympathies were especially roused by Slavic rebellions such as those of the Serbs and Bulgarians against the Ottoman Empire before and after 1848.

<sup>471</sup> Such thinkers as Ivan Kireevsky (1806-1856), Alexei Khomiakov (1804-1860), Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), and Solov'ev had considered the need for social and political change in Russia before this period. The contributions of Solov'ev and Khomiakov are discussed in this thesis. For Kireevsky, see *On Spiritual Unity* (Hudson, 1998) and *A History of Russian Philosophy 1830–1930* (Cambridge, 2010). Tolstoy's essays are widely available in English.

<sup>472</sup> (Moscow, 1902), and in translation, *Problems of Idealism: Essays in Russian Social Philosophy*, tr. and ed. R. Poole (London, 2003); (Moscow, 1909), and in translation, *Vekhi = Landmarks: A Collection of Articles about the Russian Intelligentsia*, tr. and ed. M. Shatz and J. Zimmerman (London, 1994); and (Moscow, Novosti, 1991), respectively.

religious-philosophical ideas were constructed collectively in organized group publications. The wealth of material from this period also supports the project of linking ideas to historical circumstances. In this respect a strong case for the interrelationship between history of ideas and history of events can be put forward in an argument that states that, at the very least, the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 interrupted the process of religious philosophy's development.

The high volume of philosophical consideration that the topic of revolution was given by religious philosophers, even before any revolutions in Russia had taken place, suggests that the actual event of revolution would be of great significance to religious philosophy when it did happen. The Russian Revolution as an event can be linked very easily to the history of Russian ideas because it was in many ways a philosophical event: it was an event founded on philosophical ideas, conducted in many cases by people who had premeditated their actions in a philosophical context, and it greatly influenced subsequent thinkers. Revolution had been envisioned, theorized and anticipated, both directly and abstractly, by many Russian thinkers. Furthermore, revolutions as concepts in political theory had already occupied thinkers in Western Europe for centuries.<sup>473</sup> By creating and participating in a revolution, the Russian people were party to what was then a very *Western* political and philosophical event. As Furet points out, 'The Russian Revolution would not have had the same significance for the contemporary imagination if the revolutionaries had not cast it as an extension of the French precedent, and endowed this break in time with a privileged place in the fulfilment of history by human will.'<sup>474</sup> Revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries were hyper-aware of the momentous and historic nature of their situation, even so far as to lend undue significance to their actions and beliefs. Thus, in its actualisation—the process by which it became an event—the Russian Revolution challenged the role philosophy could play in the making of history and the relationship between thoughts and actions.

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<sup>473</sup> Beginning with Aristotle's definitions of revolution in *Politics*, Western thinkers have considered revolution as a unique type of political change.

<sup>474</sup> Furet, 64.

### 3.1 Background

Radical solutions to the problems presented by an autocratic regime had existed as a theoretical event in the imagination of the Russian intelligentsia from almost the first sign of the intelligentsia's existence, during the reign of Catherine the Great.<sup>475</sup> Although the Empress' interest in Enlightenment philosophy is much commented upon, her fear of the effects that Enlightenment values might have on her power was very real.<sup>476</sup> Catherine's promotion of education and development, and therefore philosophy, combined with a harsh response to social criticism. This set a precedent for future dynamics between Russian thought and the State. The French Revolution inspired terror in monarchies across Europe as a concrete example of the unquantifiable results that could arise from combining an uncontrolled spread of Enlightenment ideas with empowerment of the populace.

In the nineteenth century the Tsarist Regime's resistance to gradually incorporating the liberal principles which had slowly influenced Western European monarchies had a marked effect on the evolution of Russian political thought and the behaviour of the intelligentsia. Most political conjecture took on a maximalist approach to change. In light of the limited possibilities for gradual reform, the intelligentsia's approaches to change were often fanciful or even downright impossible.<sup>477</sup> The major context to nineteenth century Russian philosophy is

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<sup>475</sup> Although self-consciousness of the intelligentsia did not manifest itself until the 1800s, Catherine's promotion of universities and learning along with her interest in Enlightenment philosophy encouraged the growth of an educated elite. Alexander Radishchev's observations of Russian society in *A Journey from Moscow to St. Petersburg* [*Puteshestvie iz Peterburga v Moskvu*] (1790) focus on the Russian people and social injustice, typifying the kinds of social criticism the intelligentsia would come to regularly produce (Evanston, 1995).

<sup>476</sup> During the French revolution Catherine, herself embroiled in military campaigns with Sweden and Turkey and therefore all the more dependent on domestic stability, condemned Louis XVI as a weak monarch and remained mindful of Russia's own potential for revolt. Radishchev's publication reinforced her fears. He had been educated at government expense and was able to publish due to Catherine's liberalization of the presses. Radishchev's behaviour had illustrated the double-edged nature of Catherine's interest in the Enlightenment and the ease with which 'French Madness' might infect Russia (J. T. Alexander, *Catherine the Great: Life and Legend* (Oxford, 1989), 278).

<sup>477</sup> Stites writes that this is a form of utopianism and that 'social day-dreaming was very much a part of the mental universe of the Russian intelligentsia' (28).

the Slavophil-Westernizer debate; and it certainly bore signs of this type of extremism.<sup>478</sup> The Slavophil Konstantin Aksakov (1817-1860), describes Russia's relationship with the West in extreme terms: 'The Western state rests upon a foundation of coercion, slavery, and hostility and the Russian state is founded on free will, liberty, and peace'.<sup>479</sup> The Westernizer Peter Lavrov's (1823-1900) populist ideas were equally untenable, aiming for the development of an advanced democratic sensibility from a country largely populated by politically inexperienced peasants.<sup>480</sup> Other populist movements sidestepped the state altogether.<sup>481</sup>

Furthermore, the fact that any criticism of the government was considered subversive radicalised even moderate personalities, usually at a young age. Examples from intellectuals as different in outlook as Herzen and Solov'ev reveal the fervent passion with which young Russians developed the 'political awareness' that characterized adult intellectuals. Often this awareness was expressed in very emotional, even melodramatic, terms. Herzen's oath to political radicalism made with his best friend, Nicholas Ogarev (1813-1877), on the Sparrow Hills is a classic example. He remembers that,

Flushed and breathless, we stood there mopping our faces. The sun was setting, the cupolas glittered, beneath the hill the city extended farther than the eye could reach; a fresh breeze, we stood leaning against each other and, suddenly embracing, vowed in sight of all Moscow to sacrifice our lives to the struggle we had chosen.<sup>482</sup>

Even Herzen admits that this remembrance could seem affected.<sup>483</sup> Through this memory Herzen shares the very emotional side of his commitment to radical politics. Allen recounts Solov'ev's conversion to atheism at the age of fifteen in equally dramatic terms: in the presence of his school friends,

[Solov'ev] made a speech in which he solemnly repudiated his former belief in the Church, in Christ, in God, proclaiming his new creed of materialism. As a sign of his irrevocable determination to follow this new path, he asked his friends to his room, and taking down his personal icons from the wall, he destroyed them.<sup>484</sup>

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<sup>478</sup> See Tolz, 60-99.

<sup>479</sup> K. S. Aksakov, *Sochineniia istoricheskiiia* (Moscow, 1861), 1-7.

<sup>480</sup> *Historical Letters*, tr. J. P. Scanlan (Berkeley, 1967), 109-113.

<sup>481</sup> Ulam, 70-95.

<sup>482</sup> *My Past and Thoughts* (London, 1999), 62.

<sup>483</sup> Herzen, 62.

<sup>484</sup> P. Allen, 33.

Unlike Herzen, Solov'ev was to eventually turn his back on materialism and return to the Church. However, the similar fervour with which both men formed an adolescent attachment to these new ideas illustrates two aspects of revolutionism in mid-nineteenth century Russia: the extreme excitement this philosophy could arouse and the violent commitment necessary to break with tradition.

Anticipation of a great political struggle and the necessity of violently altering Russia's political system were symptomatic of the intelligentsia's consideration of political questions in the late nineteenth century. Gradual reform was not considered an option for several reasons: the growing disparity between Russian and European society, combined with a growing awareness of this disparity; the failure of Alexander II's (1818-1881) reforms; and the establishment of a paradigmatic revolutionary personality. Although Alexander II's liberalizing reforms significantly changed Russian social organization, they were neither rapid, radical, nor long-lasting enough to quell the revolutionaries' desires to see substantive changes.<sup>485</sup> Despite Schapiro's evidence that the liberal Chicherin responded to the freeing of the serfs with support for the government, in reality most intellectuals found the reforms to be too conservative to meet their ambitions.<sup>486</sup> Tolz describes the intellectual reaction to the reforms as a telling moment in Russian popular history, namely, when the political inclinations of a majority of Russians were revealed to be socialist, rather than liberal.<sup>487</sup> In this respect, belief in the need to make radical changes to the government in anticipation of a *socialist* revolution bolstered further speculation about revolution.

Within the context of the longstanding debates among intellectuals about the place of Russia vis-à-vis the West, the shared experience of travel abroad provided many of them with the exposure to Western social and political standards that was necessary to confirm their fears that developmental distances were too great to make up with incremental steps. Some Russians abroad compared Russian parochialism and the abstract *narod* favourably with their Western

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<sup>485</sup> The Alexandrine Reforms deserve 'thorough criticism', 'failed to satisfy the peasantry' and 'disappointed Russian radicals' (N. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia* (Oxford, 1993), 373-374).

<sup>486</sup> Schapiro, 76.

<sup>487</sup> Tolz, 95.

counterparts.<sup>488</sup> But overwhelmingly, the disparity between the level of development in Western Europe and Russia remained obvious to those who travelled abroad.<sup>489</sup> The perception of a need for change did not always entail a perception of Russia as inadequate. As Tolz points out, ‘idealization’ played a strong role in the interpretation of Russia’s potential, and of the West’s progress.<sup>490</sup> Intellectuals who held Slavophil hopes that Russia offered a special developmental path were just as unaware of peasant realities as those who believed that the West offered a perfect developmental model; and both were subject to the same potential for disillusionment when actual revolution took place.

Moreover, in literature and real life personalities exemplifying the ‘revolutionary spirit’ emerged and promoted revolution as a superior form of political action. In Ivan Turgenev’s (1818-1883) *On the Eve* [*Nakanune*] (1860), the hero Insarov who captures the heroine Elena’s heart is the ideal of a Romantic revolutionary.<sup>491</sup> In *What is to be Done?* [*Chto delat’?*] (1863), by Nikolai Chernyshevsky (1828-1889), the revolutionary ideal portrayed in the hero Rakhmetov has a far more utilitarian and materialist nature than Insarov does.<sup>492</sup> Dostoevsky’s addition to these many literary revolutionary characters, in his book *The Devils* [*Besy*] (1872), critically addresses the mystique of the revolutionary and, in doing so, the ‘danger implicit’ in revolution.<sup>493</sup> In addition to fictional personalities, the likes of Bakunin and Sergei Nechaev (1847-1882) functioned as contemporary role models for those attracted to revolutionism.<sup>494</sup> Although each of these personalities is distinct, they all exhibited a commitment to revolutionary change and assumed that the form that governmental change in Russia would take was revolution.

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<sup>488</sup> ‘*narod*, n., people, specifically the common people’, J. Speake and M. La Flaur, *Oxford Essential Dictionary of Foreign Terms in English* (Oxford, 1999).

<sup>489</sup> In Chapter 5 the legacy of travel abroad and its consequences for the second half of the period under consideration are discussed.

<sup>490</sup> Tolz, 75.

<sup>491</sup> (Bath, 1976).

<sup>492</sup> (London, 1989).

<sup>493</sup> Schapiro, 66.

<sup>494</sup> Nechaev, born to a sign painter and a seamstress, both of whom were former serfs, had clout with revolutionaries because of his peasant background. Nechaev’s murder of a fellow member of his students’ circle caused a public sensation upon which Dostoevsky based the plot of *The Devils*. See P. Avrich, *Bakunin and Nechaev* (London, 1987).

Religious philosophers felt these political pressures as keenly as any other contemporary *intelligent*. Most notably Frank and Bulgakov began their philosophical careers from a political basis, but almost all the philosophers discussed here and were associated with radical groups as students. Bulgakov's transition 'from Marxism to Idealism' can also be viewed as a transition from political activism to philosophical activity, a transition he shared with many religious philosophers. Gottlieb's observations on Berdyaev's early response to the Revolution confirms that, if not for all the religious philosophers considered here, then for Berdyaev at least, 'The problem of the Revolution and the confrontation of Marxism with Christianity had therefore been with him for about two decades at the point when the outbreak of revolution suddenly made the theories stark reality.'<sup>495</sup> In order to understand reactions after 1917, earlier understandings of revolution must be examined.

Indeed, the topics addressed in the volume *Problems of Idealism* provide us with a glimpse into the mind-set of religious philosophers before the Revolution of 1905, and that is why although this text was published before the period in question, it is worth looking at the contributions of religious philosophers in it. In this essay collection Bulgakov, Berdyaev and Frank all identify tendencies of socialist thought they would later indict. In his contribution to *Problems of Idealism*, 'Basic Problems of the Theory of Progress' [*Osnovnye problemy teorii progressa*], Bulgakov discusses what he identifies as the religious nature of atheism among socialists, an idea that he would later use to analyse the Revolution: 'Non-religious people do not exist, but pious and profane people exist, righteous and sinful.'<sup>496</sup> Although he identifies the misplaced nature of this religiosity, he does not yet condemn it. Likewise, Berdyaev does not condemn the revolutionary tendencies in Nietzsche's philosophy. In his contribution, 'Ethical Problems in the Light of Idealism' [*Eticheskaia problema v svete filosofskogo idealizma*], Berdyaev equates ethical imperatives to revolution: 'There is an utter failure to understand that the pure idea of "should-ness" is a revolutionary idea, a symbol of revolt against reality in the name of an ideal, against current morality in the name of a higher one, against evil and in the

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<sup>495</sup> Gottlieb, 12.

<sup>496</sup> PI, 4. Bulgakov goes on to discuss Comte's religion of humanity and Nietzsche's cult of the Superman, asking, 'Is this not its own type of religious cult?'

name of Good.<sup>497</sup> In this passage Berdyaev represents revolution as an ethical ideal. He points out that the striving to overcome reality in Nietzsche is like this ethical imperative.<sup>498</sup> In ‘Nietzsche and the Love for the Far Away’, [*Nitsshe i liubov’ k daln’emu*], Frank’s contribution to *Problems of Idealism*, he also sees in Nietzsche’s work an idealism that he can use to construct a critique of utilitarianism. Only later does Frank attack Nietzsche’s philosophy for being rooted in the wrong ideals.

Continuity between the early essays of *Problems of Idealism* and the thinkers’ later publications is clear in themes, topics and styles that recur in later work. For example, Bulgakov shows a preoccupation with religion, equating Marxism to religion, and an apparent interest in determining the true foundations of faith; Berdyaev’s interest in Nietzsche and individual freedom continues throughout his career; and Frank’s tactic of making careful philosophical distinctions and definitions is a characteristic also of his later writing style.<sup>499</sup> The differences between the arguments of these early essays from those in *Landmarks* and later works provide a basis upon which to judge these thinkers’ reactions to current events. One example of such a comparison is the difference between Bulgakov’s view of history in *Problems of Idealism*, which attributes little to chance, and in his later writings where he does allow room for freedom or chance. In *Problems of Idealism* he considers history to be the revelation of the absolute: ‘The causal necessity of history has significance only as an auxiliary means for the ends of the absolute.’<sup>500</sup> This idealist understanding of history leaves little room for explanation of disaster. What caused this change? It is plausible that the experience of disaster in his lifetime led Bulgakov to think of history differently, or that the emphasis on freedom in modern European philosophy persuaded him to give these questions more attention.

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<sup>497</sup> *Ibid.* 94.

<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.* 93: ‘The whole of Nietzsche has a passionate and bitter protest against reality, against existence and protest in the name of an ideal, in the name of shouldness’.

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.* 45: ‘Marxism represents its own bright version of the theory and religion of progress.’

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid.* 35.

### 3.2 1905

Just as philosophical writings had anticipated political revolutions, the events of 1905 foreshadow the Revolution of 1917. The same type of insurrections characterized both revolutions in both years, and in both cases and popular discontent with the Tsarist government of Nicholas II (1868-1918) came from similar groups. Initial cracks in autocracy and the growing role in government for political opposition, very manifest in 1905, carried on throughout the next decade to provide a basis for further regime change.<sup>501</sup> The constancy of principles and players between the two revolutions allowed the behaviours and opinions of the intelligentsia when reacting to 1905 to appear especially prescient, and even prophetic, by 1917.

The political changes of 1905 began with a bang when a peaceful demonstration resulted in the slaughter of civilians by guards of the Winter Palace in what has come to be known as Bloody Sunday. In response to the injustice embodied in Bloody Sunday, protests and strikes of solidarity broke out across the Empire. This unrest was closely followed by losses in the Russo-Japanese War, which further weakened faith in the Imperial government. Mutiny in the Black Sea consolidated the sense of dissent from all quarters of the Empire.<sup>502</sup> Meanwhile the year ushered in the emergence of public displays of previously clandestine parties and politics. The Social-Democratic Labour Party (SDs) and the Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries (SRs) emerged as leaders of rebellion and mobilized the workers and peasants against the aristocracy. The Constitutional Democratic Party, established in October, provided an outlet for Liberals to unite their political concerns in a public forum. Furthermore, the establishment of the St. Petersburg and Moscow Soviets created a local outlet for popular governance.

The regime reacted to these signs of unrest with the October Manifesto, a document that promised civil liberty and freedom of conscience, speech and association.<sup>503</sup> It also instigated

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<sup>501</sup> G. Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917* (London 1998), 425.

<sup>502</sup> This event was later immortalized by Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948) in *Battleship Potemkin* [*Bronenosets 'Potemkin'*] (1925).

<sup>503</sup> R. Service, *A History of Twentieth-Century Russia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997), 14.

the beginning of a reformed autocracy, by checking the Tsar's power with an elected body, the Duma. While some citizens were able to view these reforms optimistically, the SRs and SDs continued to agitate for greater political change. However, Nicholas II used his military might to support his reforms, re-establish his political supremacy over the Duma and suppress these further uprisings. While the crisis had been largely averted, the political wounds sustained by the regime were only lightly plastered and continued to fester.

Nicholas's reaffirmation of absolute power certainly suggested to intellectuals that conservative reforms were impossible and confirmed the general opinion that to pursue actual political reform would necessitate the pursuit of radical change in the Imperial government. The intellectual community flourished after 1905, engaging in political activities and artistic expression.<sup>504</sup> Philosophy had been a subject under a high level of state control and scrutiny, so philosophers welcomed the new freedom to participate in theoretical discussion about political possibilities brought about by the 1905 Revolution. Liberal thinkers especially had hopes for greater political latitude to promote their theories and to improve society. Among the religious philosophers, some exhibited liberal tendencies and participated in political activities during this period. This was especially the case for Frank and Bulgakov.<sup>505</sup> In 1905 the politically inclined eagerly anticipated their new roles in government.

Bulgakov was elected to the Second Duma as a representative of the Christian Socialist party. Although he was less vocal a politician than he was an academic, his participation in parliamentary debate gave him a better understanding of how parliamentary politics works. Evtuhov describes the Second Duma as caught in an irreconcilable conflict between the

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<sup>504</sup> In *Culture and Power in Revolutionary Russia* (London, 1990), Read describes this period as particularly culturally fruitful. He points out that the intelligentsia was acutely politicised by the events of 1905 (24), and attributes these developments to economic progress in the period (35), not to autocracy, which they fundamentally opposed (38). However, Stites adds to this generally positive picture the observation that 1905 precipitated the first fiction writing about 'fear-laden dystopia', pointing to Valery Bruiusov's (1873-1924) *Republic of the Southern Cross* [*Respublika iuzhnogo kresta*] (1910) and Nikolai Fedorov's (a pseudonym, not the philosopher) *An Evening in the Year 2217* [*Večer v 2217 godu*] (1906), both of which portray overbearing state authorities, alienation of the citizenry from the state and a 'uniformity of life' (35).

<sup>505</sup> After 1905, Frank's political inclinations were short-lived: 'July 1906 marked the end of his direct links with the political scene' (Boobbyer, 46).

intelligentsia's and Prime Minister Peter Stolypin's (1862-1911) visions of political change.<sup>506</sup> Bulgakov watched as the Duma's radical ambitions were crushed by Stolypin from his superior political position. This experience of politics in action discouraged further political ambitions in Bulgakov; after 1907, he embarked fully on his philosophical career. However, this experience serves as a representative example of the extent to which the 1905 Revolution provoked a true flourishing of the potential for political activism amongst the religious philosophers.

The most coherent and marked group response by these philosophers was the publication *Landmarks*.<sup>507</sup> This volume is a collection of articles evaluating the then-recent political and philosophical changes taking place within the intelligentsia. It constituted, to some extent, a reunion of the authors of *Problems of Idealism*, and in this respect *Landmarks* follows up on the opinions of the idealist thinkers. The essays in this second collection were a very serious indictment of the radical viewpoints that had dominated Russian political and social thought in the preceding years. The authors of *Landmarks* rejected the cult of revolution and the resultant maximalist politics that went with it. The theme of opposition to the radical tradition is articulated much more strongly in *Landmarks* than in *Problems of Idealism*, but the range of idealist viewpoints in this second volume remains as diverse as in the first.

*Landmarks* responded to 1905 with important interpretive paradigms that recur in the contributors' later evaluations of 1917: the danger inherent in revolution in the Russian context; the problematic rift between the intelligentsia and the Russian people; and the need to address the causes of revolution spiritually instead of politically. Although Berdyaev, Bulgakov and Frank had begun to develop careers as intellectuals before *Landmarks*, their contributions to this volume are among the first of their writings recognizable as religious philosophy. Considered alongside *Problems of Idealism*, the publication of *Landmarks* further connected these thinkers to each other and cemented religious philosophy as a school of thought. While it is true that the later religious-philosophical response to the Revolution of 1917 was much more nuanced and

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<sup>506</sup> Evtuhov, 124.

<sup>507</sup> See footnote 472.

developed than the initial response to 1905 recorded in *Landmarks*, a significant foundation for the interpretation of 1917 was set out in these essays.

In his contribution, ‘Heroism and Asceticism’ [*Geroizm i podvizhnichestvo*], Bulgakov focuses his critique of revolution on the nature of revolutions in themselves: ‘Revolution is a negative concept; it has no independent content and is characterized solely by the negation of what it destroys.’<sup>508</sup> This focus on destruction also occurs in Frank’s essay, ‘The Ethics of Nihilism’ [*Etika nigilizma*], especially in his conclusion that nihilism loves destruction for its own sake.<sup>509</sup> Both men describe the revolutionary impulse as action that is the opposite of creative. This view differs from other Western interpretations, specifically the traditional definition of revolution as a political act that creates a new state by returning (or revolving) back to the original purpose of governance.<sup>510</sup> This difference of interpretation illustrates the gargantuan spectre revolution placed over these philosophers’ appreciation of political change. Frank, although categorizing revolutionaries as lovers of destruction, does illustrate an awareness of this Western position on revolution, when he comments that:

‘Such historical movements as, for example, the great English or French revolution tried to bring to life new, independently reasoned and developed philosophical ideas and values, and to lead national life onto the still un-trod paths revealed by the profound, bold investigations of creative political thought.’<sup>511</sup>

For Frank it is in the opposition of the two impulses, creativity and destruction, that he finds the distinct negative aspect of revolution particularly articulated in the Russian context.<sup>512</sup>

The theme of the divide between intellectuals and the whole of Russian society is addressed in Struve’s contribution to *Landmarks*, ‘The Intelligentsia and Revolution’ [*Intelligentsia i revoliutsiia*].<sup>513</sup> Struve’s work was more political than philosophical, but his

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<sup>508</sup> V, 30.

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.* 152.

<sup>510</sup> Arendt 1990, 42.

<sup>511</sup> V, 154.

<sup>512</sup> Although Bulgakov and Frank both consider the topic of creativity before 1917, in their post-1917 philosophies this focus on the special role of creativity recurs with greater force.

<sup>513</sup> The division of the intelligentsia by way of life, education, language and politics from the average Russian had been the subject of some concern to the intelligentsia themselves because this division meant that intellectuals often acted on behalf of a group that they could not be a part of. This problem was intensified by the geographical dislocation of emigration, as explored in Chapter 5.

observations in *Landmarks* are included here because this divide is so important after 1917. According to Struve, ‘intelligentsia thought and popular thought came together only in our revolution.’<sup>514</sup> This simple statement both acknowledges a long existent rift between the two groups and the potential Struve saw in the Revolution to unite the two. Indeed, the widespread nature of revolution in 1917 empowered Russian citizens to play a never-before-enacted role in their political future. However, Struve was also drawing attention to the falsity of the perception that revolution could permanently overcome this divide. For religious philosophers, the idea that they and the populace were of like-mind would later fuel abstractions and false hopes. Struve’s observations connect to Berdyaev’s observations in his contribution to *Landmarks*, ‘Philosophical Truth and Intelligentsia Truth’ [*Filosofskaia istina i intelligentskaia pravda*]. Berdyaev identifies the estrangement of the intellectual from the society on the behalf of which he purports to advocate and describes an isolated *intelligent* who, although quixotic, presents a dangerous threat to absolute values.

Both men also conceive of and characterize the ‘Russian people’ as a theoretical group rather than acknowledge the realities of everyday life for these people. After 1917 religious philosophers continued view the Revolution as an epochal event in the history of these ‘theoretical’ people at the expense of attention to the realities of revolution. In this sense the divide between the intelligentsia and people identified by Struve and Berdyaev somewhat ironically, also applied to their circumstances. However, the criticism they raise toward the intelligentsia—that this rift between intellectuals and the populace presents a political danger—cannot also be applied to religious philosophers without some qualification. The religious philosophers were indeed divorced from everyday life in Russia, but they did not support a violent overhaul of the government, or advocate the sacrifice of present day Russians for a revolutionary ideal. Thus, the fact that religious philosophers belonged to the very group that they criticized, namely, the intelligentsia, does not necessarily invalidate their criticism.

In addition to drawing attention to the destructive power of the intelligentsia in revolution, and the relationship between the intelligentsia and the people during revolution,

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<sup>514</sup> V, 122. Emphasis my own.

*Landmarks* also shows these thinkers' propensity to think of revolution abstractly. Bulgakov's conclusion, that 'only a religious feat, invisible but mighty, can cure Russia and free her from this legion', illustrates how, from early on in their careers, thinkers placed a strong emphasis on spiritual regeneration over practical solutions.<sup>515</sup> Although the largely political background of these thinkers is apparent, the transition from political advocacy to spiritual reflection was not as stark as the phrase 'from Marxism to idealism' suggests. For many religious philosophers the original draw to Marxism was part of a quest to find humanitarian solutions for the suffering they observed. A religious approach that coexisted with Marxism is apparent in their work from this period, perhaps due to the same pressures Billington identified in the God-Humanity group, or due to the religious nature of the homelife most of these thinkers came from.

The tendency to focus on the general situation and to avoid details is notable in *Landmarks* and can be considered an effect of the long theoretical build-up to the actual revolutionary event. For decades revolution had been thought of theoretically and on a national scale. Therefore it seems only natural that the events of 1905, and later of 1917, would not be interpreted in terms of the changing daily lives of Russian people, but instead as part of a grand historic meaning. That much of the intellectual understanding of the revolution was Marxist is one reason why it was thought of so abstractly. The Marxist paradigm was prone to emphasize the grand aim of social reorganization because it shared this goal with non-Marxist revolutionaries. Thinking of revolution as an abstraction was normal because of the popularity of materialist and socialist thought among the intelligentsia. Gottlieb notes that this approach even affected Berdyaev's appreciation of the 1917 Revolution: 'Berdyaev, in his desire to concentrate on the spirit of the Revolution, deliberately and expressly declines to be specific about what he considers the "external" realities of the Revolution,' a surprising thing given how stark the realities of revolution were in 1917.<sup>516</sup> This observation holds true for religious philosophers during the revolutionary period. Their abstract approach can be attributed partially to the fact that idealist thinkers and materialist thinkers constructed the meaning of revolution in

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<sup>515</sup> V, 49.

<sup>516</sup> Gottlieb, 17.

dialogue, and therefore these thinkers by necessity included aspects of the materialist approach to revolution due to the shared definition of 'revolution'.

For example Frank explains his opposition to the 1905 Revolution in terms of his opposition to socialist ethics. Socialist values are inherently destructive according to Frank, and 'revolutionism merely reflects the metaphysical absolutization of the value of destruction.'<sup>517</sup> The socialist destruction of obstacles is not enough to guarantee the achievement of social ideals for Frank; these must be positively constructed. While his observation that simply destroying the old order will not solve all social problems may be true, it can be argued that it is a necessary part of solving them. In 1909 Frank describes organized rebellion against the old order as immoral. Later in his career, in *God With Us [S nami bog]* (1946), Frank contrasts the value of destruction, earlier identified with revolutionism, with the attitude of stewardship. 'The dignity of the free man,' he writes, 'demands that he should behave not like a recalcitrant slave, but like the bearer of a high office,' and therefore oppose a slavish rebellion.<sup>518</sup> Therefore, Frank's opposition to revolution can be considered consistently abstract, contributing to impractical ethics and not answering to the realities of life in a revolution.

The abstract approach could be caused by more than a simple dialogue with interlocutors who also think of the Revolution as abstract. Another explanatory factor could be ignorance, or wilful ignorance, of the very immediate severe human rights and health consequences of the social upheaval. The continuation of a non-utilitarian approach to revolution, even as dire realities approached the everyday lives of these thinkers, suggests that if they were not actually living apart from everyday concerns, religious philosophers were certainly trying to. Perhaps such avoidance was due to the difficulty they faced condemning a political change that also had some compatible components with their own political and philosophical goals. Goals based on communitarian, if not communist, principles to achieve modernization, development and more representative republican government were not abhorrent to these thinkers. Gottlieb notices the sympathy between Berdyaev and revolutionary

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<sup>517</sup> V, 144.

<sup>518</sup> (Paris, 1964), 155.

interpretations of events: ‘Although severely critical of the Revolution, [Berdyayev] also shares with it a number of important principles.’<sup>519</sup> Berdyayev, Bulgakov and Frank belonged to an intellectual group that shared some affinity for political change with revolutionary circles. Yet compatibility of goals in the abstract did not equal support for actual political changes, a situation which contributed to religious philosophy’s mixed reception of the implementation of revolution in real-time.

### 3.3 1917

Considering the speed with which events took place in 1917, it is fair to allow that some of the abstract nature of their response could have been because religious philosophers were not able to keep up with the extent and quality of political changes taking place in their country.<sup>520</sup> In much the same way as in 1905, the strains of war and a consolidated rift between monarchy and the people had caused a breakdown of imperial government by February 1917. Another key similarity to 1905 is the factionalism that developed amongst intellectuals and within the Provisional Government. These parallels help to show that the intelligentsia’s response to both 1905 and 1917 political events followed a pattern despite the fact that 1917 had much more profound effects upon Russian’s material circumstances.

What happened in Russia in 1917 can properly be considered two revolutions, the February Revolution and the October Revolution. The February Revolution resembled more the events of 1905: a popular uprising against the government took the earlier constitutional reforms to the monarchy to the next level and formed a *de facto* republic. The October Revolution, on the other hand, can be considered a coup by the Bolshevik Party. The very different natures of these two political changes made a significant contribution to the diversity of responses to ‘1917’ in religious philosophy.

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<sup>519</sup>Gottlieb, 16.

<sup>520</sup>Read 1990, 39: ‘The atmosphere of the first months of 1917 was one of trying to carry on as normally as possible.’

The two main differences between Russia in 1917 and Russia in 1905 were the autocracy's loss of support from the military due to failures in World War I and the growth in strength and practice of political opposition to the monarchy. At the outbreak of war, Russia was economically stronger and more politically cohesive than it had been in 1905, but these advantages were soon sacrificed to Germany's superior military strength.<sup>521</sup> In just a year immense losses had consolidated opposition in the Duma to the executive's management of the war. Although the army rallied, the government could not. Nicholas II's presence at the front left unable ministers and an unpopular empress in charge in St. Petersburg while the growth of inflation and other economic weaknesses provoked further unrest amongst the populace, fatally weakening the government. As in 1905 soviets formed, and the Soviet of Soldiers' and Workers' Deputies joined a temporary committee of Duma members in taking responsibility for the country when the generals finally convinced Nicholas to abdicate.<sup>522</sup> The Provisional Government, formed from former Duma members with approval of the Soviet, took charge.

Throughout this turmoil Lenin (1870-1924) was abroad, and the Bolsheviks joined the revolutionary ferment after the Provisional Government had taken power. Over the next several months scandal and mismanagement plagued the new government. Popular insurrection in July reacting to the failures of the government was reluctantly supported by the Bolsheviks, but it was only after the failure of the military and then the SRs to take leadership that Lenin and the Bolsheviks finally took the decision to rise up. The Bolsheviks gradually occupied Petrograd, eventually taking the Winter Palace and then the rest of the country.

After these events, the mythic status that revolution had achieved in Russian thought needed reassessment. At the outset, theoretical revolution had been assumed to be the agent for all social change and the only format for interpreting post-revolutionary experiences. Arendt described this effect in terms of freedom: 'The impact of revolutionary experience had overruled all notions of a freedom which was not preceded by liberation, which did not derive

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<sup>521</sup> J. S. Curtis, *The Russian Revolutions of 1917* (Malabar, Florida, 1982), 22.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.* 32.

its pathos from the act of liberation.<sup>523</sup> Just as revolution had limited freedom to the context of liberation in Arendt's case, it also limited the scope for interpreting a new way for Russia to the context of a Russia born from revolution. This idea excluded religious philosophers and other dissenters to revolution from being able to meaningfully engage in discussions about Russia's future. Even proponents of revolution were dissatisfied by the fact that the 'event' itself so overshadowed the outcome. Unlike the aforementioned (largely fictional) revolutionary personalities, few thinkers intended revolution to be an end in itself.<sup>524</sup> Liberals and socialists alike had visions of a future government that would be the product of the Revolution but not continuously 'revolutionary'. In *Landmarks*, religious philosophers had already recognized and rejected the limitations of the revolutionary paradigm. After 1917, more thinkers could see the limitations of revolution as a political event.

Yet many intellectuals continued to praise the revolutionary idea. The 'cult of revolution' is a topic identified in the work of Ulam and Schapiro. Ulam describes the psychological hold revolutionism had on Russian intellectuals in the nineteenth century as 'revulsion against the humdrum, unromantic aspect of the everyday life of most ordinary people.'<sup>525</sup> Such sentiments represent rejection of the normal and everyday in favour of fantastic possibilities, revealing the fantasy nature of many revolutionary dreams. Idealization of peasant communal life and exaltation of Russia's potential are both components of this fantasy.<sup>526</sup> Ulam describes this revolutionary temperament as arrogant because revolutionaries 'could not and would not be appeased by any reforms.'<sup>527</sup>

Ulam's assessment from the perspective of a twentieth-century historian greatly resembles the intelligentsia's own critique, explored by Schapiro. In Schapiro's article 'Vekhi and the Mystique of Revolution', he explains that the mystique of revolution had a 'concomitant inability to see reality separately from the preconceived theoretical idea of that reality,' and he identifies two ways in which this theoretical construct of revolution contributed to the actual

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<sup>523</sup> Arendt 1990, 134.

<sup>524</sup> See above page 159.

<sup>525</sup> Ulam, 45.

<sup>526</sup> Tolz, 98.

<sup>527</sup> Ulam, 61.

events of the 1917 Revolution.<sup>528</sup> The first is that, instead of working together to implement change, political groups focused on their own utopian goals. The promises of revolution made ‘co-operation between the so-called bourgeois parties and the socialists, after the February revolution, a forlorn hope.’<sup>529</sup> For Schapiro, the failure of the provisional government was driven by this mystique of revolution. The second is that that the mystique of revolution was a key source of Lenin’s personal extremism, which dictated the nature of the October Revolution.<sup>530</sup> Schapiro’s ideas have implications for the attitude of most Russian intellectuals at the time. The theoretical possibilities of revolution promised unqualified success and drove the politically minded to think of actions only within the boundaries of extremes.

Schapiro’s choice to focus on ‘mystique’ came from Frank’s assessment of *Landmarks*.<sup>531</sup> Yet just because they had been able to diagnose the ills of the intelligentsia, this ability did not immunise idealist thinkers from the same problems. Perhaps Frank’s consciousness of this mystique was rooted in his self-awareness of being susceptible to it. Schapiro emphasizes the restraint and legal traditions of religious philosophy at the expense of other important components of this thought, such as its mysticism, commitment to the traditions of the intelligentsia, and abstract understanding of revolution. Therefore it can be seen that, just as Schapiro identifies a mystique surrounding revolution, he himself contributes to a *mystique* of *Landmarks*’ authors. He underestimates the level of conflict between Slavophil and Westernizer traditions within these thinkers’ work, saying, these authors ‘accepted Slavophile veneration of Russian national tradition, while rejecting their [the Slavophiles’] romantic idealization of innate Russian virtues as a substitute for the more usual civic virtue.’<sup>532</sup> As can be seen throughout this thesis, situating themselves between Russia and the West was difficult for these men. Schapiro does address the conservative elements in *Landmarks* to some extent.

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<sup>528</sup> Schapiro, 69.

<sup>529</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>531</sup> Frank wrote in his émigré memoir that central to *Landmarks* was the ‘criticism of the basic sacred dogma of the intelligentsia, the “mystique” of revolution’ (Schapiro, 59, taken from Frank’s then unpublished memoir page 11, now entitled *Biografiia P B Struve* (New York, 1956)).

<sup>532</sup> Schapiro, 66.

His concluding observation, ‘When a major change in society has been accomplished the more important ally of liberalism is conservatism, not revolution,’ suggests the balancing act the authors of *Landmarks* needed to perform in order to both participate in the intelligentsia tradition and represent their religious-political values.<sup>533</sup>

As radicalism heightened after the Revolution, religious philosophers, as moderates, found this balancing act increasingly difficult to maintain, however. Over the course of 1917 the new government moved away from the conservative bourgeois policies of the early Provisional Government with ever more radical agendas. Frequent reversals of fortune reinforced the philosophers’ inclination to watch and wait out the political changes. Unrest and uncertainty throughout the year prevented normal daily life from resuming. The hardships that had begun due to sacrifices for the war effort were converted into difficulties due to revolution.<sup>534</sup> The Bolshevik victory at the end of the year was by no means assured at the beginning. This continuity of poor circumstance might explain the time and effort religious philosophers invested into remaining in revolutionary Russia by keeping their academic posts.

Mundane and theoretical spheres remained distinct for these thinkers, providing them with two arenas for interpreting the Revolution as an event.<sup>535</sup> Theoretically, the Revolution had already been considered, and in some cases rejected, even before it took place. A critique of revolutionary ideology ‘was thus available and directly applicable at the time when revolution was suddenly no longer merely an idea but an actual reality’.<sup>536</sup> Objections to the Revolution in reality based on its violent and Bolshevik nature were slower to follow because the outcome of the Revolution, although so long anticipated, was truly unknown.

Finally, it must be considered that the long-standing unique position of the Russian intelligentsia as a critic and advocate on behalf of wider society contributed to the ambivalent

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<sup>533</sup> Schapiro, 76.

<sup>534</sup> Read suggests that ‘the immense economic and social upheaval’ brought about by World War I played an important part in the erosion of the social and cultural structures that had supported late imperial intellectual life’ (1990, 38).

<sup>535</sup> Extreme situations, including forced exile, ultimately drove the true nature of the experience home to them.

<sup>536</sup> Gottlieb, 58.

response of religious philosophy to the Revolutions of 1917. The problem of two revolutions—the first approved of, and the second not—prevented many thinkers from taking a concrete stance on the success of these events. For religious philosophers in particular, their support for some socialist principles was mitigated by ambivalence about the efficacy of democratic principles and opposition to the Bolsheviks' atheism. These reservations ultimately prevented religious philosophers from supporting the Revolution.

### **3.4 A *Posteriori* Understandings of Revolution**

With so much intellectual anticipation of revolution, the response of the intelligentsia to the Revolution after it had taken place is, in retrospect, almost overwhelmed by its context. Despite such theoretical preparation for revolution, the post-revolutionary intelligentsia seems astonishingly bewildered by the actual Revolution. In response to the social and political changes brought about by the Revolution, there is evidence of optimistic excitement among the intelligentsia mixed with a confused scepticism about the relative merits of potential change. The seemingly paradoxical nature of this response was due to the diversity of the intelligentsia, the social role of many intellectuals, and the precarious position many members of the intelligentsia found themselves in after the Revolution.<sup>537</sup>

By 1905, many members of the intelligentsia shared social traits with the upper classes, such as education level, religion, geographical location and, to some extent, wealth and heritage. Overall these traits engendered conservatism that divorced the average academic *intelligent* from the radical. For academics connected to universities and other state controlled institutions for their livelihood, the threat of complete annihilation of the old system had to be balanced against opportunities that might become available once the new system had established itself. For those who were not passionate about revolution as an end in itself, revolution was merely a

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<sup>537</sup> Read comments that 'intellectuals underwent an extremely wide variety of fates in these years and it is easy to mistake the part for the whole' (1990, 51).

means to other goals.<sup>538</sup> The hope each *intelligent* had held for the Revolution, based in the fundamental counter-culture inclination of the intelligentsia, was reinforced by hopes for more freedom in creative pursuit. These hopes and expectations had a profound influence on their evaluation of the Revolution's outcome.

On the other hand, the long-standing role of the *intelligent* as a critic of the current regime and an advocate of the suffering masses favoured revolution. The role of intellectuals as 'outsiders' meant that the intelligentsia did not identify with the state.<sup>539</sup> Writers, thinkers and artists who advocated increased freedom were also dependent on patrons and publications, however, and to some extent could not be enthusiastic about the changes that jeopardized the very existence of their work. The inclination to reject the 'Old Regime' was deep-seated enough to extend through the revolutionary period into Soviet Russia, and into the diaspora.

As critics, intellectuals could not help but continue to question authority. When the great potential for progress and freedom promised in the theory of revolution went unrealized in practice, even some of the most radical of intellectuals second-guessed their earlier revolutionary convictions.<sup>540</sup> Those who remained in Soviet Russia often suffered for continuing to fulfil their established roles as critics of the state. Those who left the country also continued to criticize, although no single consensus of opinion was to emerge from these

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<sup>538</sup> As Read notes, most intellectuals were only involved with political changes secondarily (1990, 39), and they instead used the loosening of governmental control to 'promote their favoured projects' such as taking control of a university or an estate (1990, 40).

<sup>539</sup> Burbank writes, 'After the revolution, with its disappointments, Russian intellectuals mustered no support for the pre-revolutionary government, or for its political or economic potential, [which] suggests the extent of their alienation from the state before 1917' (244).

<sup>540</sup> For example, poets like Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893-1930) and Andrey Bely (1880-1934) initially welcomed the revolution and supported the Bolshevik government. Mayakovsky's support for the Bolshevik regime brought him fame and many freedoms other artists could not enjoy; however, exposure to Bolshevik censorship disheartened him and may have contributed to his suicide. Bely had an even more ambivalent relationship with the Bolshevik regime. Having left for Berlin in 1921, he returned to Russia in 1923 only to be denounced by Leon Trotsky (1879-1940). Read points out Alexander Blok (1880-1921) as another example of such an intellectual (1990, 52).

criticisms. Disagreement was a strong historic characteristic of the intelligentsia's internal relations and this tradition prevailed despite the hardships brought about by the Revolution.<sup>541</sup>

Although the overwhelming impression of academic and artistic communities' responses to the Revolution is one of variation, Burbank argues for a certain uniformity among them and religious philosophy did share some traits of the intelligentsia's response to the revolution.<sup>542</sup> In one respect, just as many members of the intelligentsia had been excited by the new possibilities and freedoms the Revolution could bring, religious philosophers also sought a potential for progress and improvement in Russia's political change. Yet, like their academic and artistic counterparts many were also dependent on the infrastructural aspects of the 'Old Regime'. For example, almost all of the philosophers discussed in this work attempted to maintain their teaching positions after the Revolution, even though they also had concerns about the new government. In another respect, just as the intelligentsia as a whole maintained its tradition of critique, religious philosophers continued to express the themes of critique raised in *Landmarks*.<sup>543</sup> Finally, religious philosophy also contributed to the intellectual community's overwhelming reluctance toward cohesion.

Religious philosophy, as discussed above, participated in the tradition of critique by viewing the Revolution critically even before it happened.<sup>544</sup> Afterwards it remained both critical and idealist through the revolutionary transition. Abstract themes and considerations pervade the religious philosophers' responses to the real events of the Revolution. It appears to a reader as though these thinkers might never find real-life satisfactory. Not only were certain beliefs and hopes championed by these thinkers unrealistic, such as establishing a rule of law, some were incredibly abstract and idealistic, such as regeneration of the populace with spiritual sustenance. From the perspective of the idealist philosophers, according to Burbank, 'The

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<sup>541</sup> The trends that Stites observes in his study, 'On the eve of the Revolution, it [intelligentsia] was undergoing extreme change and fragmentation, and was achieving new levels of articulation and self-analysis', continued throughout this period (6).

<sup>542</sup> Burbank, 239: 'In fact the revolution drew forth descriptions and opinions that reflect values shared by these adherents to the intelligentsia tradition.'

<sup>543</sup> *Ibid.* 191: 'As [the] Political intelligentsia resumed its criticism of the state, idealists took up their pens against the radicalist tradition.'

<sup>544</sup> See above page 164.

entire nation was suffering from a great moral flaw, not easily defined but pervasive and corrupting’—a tough job to fix.<sup>545</sup>

The essay collection *From the Depths* is one of the first publications to express a religious-philosophical critique of the revolution.<sup>546</sup> This and its relationship with *Problems of Idealism* and *Landmarks* justifies detailed consideration of religious-philosophical attitudes toward revolution in this collection. As a theoretical indictment of the Revolution and not a measured response to the political events and policies of 1917, *From the Depths* provides good examples of both the abstract and idealist reactions of religious philosophers to the Revolution. It is clear from the essays in this collection that certain interpretive paradigms are held in common by the authors of both *Landmarks* and *From the Depths*, although the contents of the latter cannot be considered vis-à-vis an audience in the same way that the contents of the former can because the anticipated publication date of this compendium coincided with the Bolshevik’s Red Terror, limiting the volume’s first publication run and significantly interfering with its distribution. Most notable among the commonalities are the theoretical nature and grand scale of the interpretation of revolution within the text. These two characteristics give a potentially false impression of emotional distance from what were, at the time of publication of *From the Depths*, then contemporary events.

Every contributor but Struve was non-specific and non-historical in his indictment of the Revolution, making it difficult to identify the source of the problem or a means of moving forward to rectify the situation.<sup>547</sup> Everyday concerns and needs appear to have been set aside in order to address greater principles. Read remarks that ‘if anything these essays show more of an ivory tower mentality than was the case prior to the revolution’.<sup>548</sup> Burbank somewhat disparagingly concludes, ‘For all their criticism of the intelligentsia’s ‘utopianism’, the idealist’s response to their situation was distinctly other-worldly,’ highlighting a valid failing of religious

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<sup>545</sup> Burbank, 192.

<sup>546</sup> See footnote 472.

<sup>547</sup> Burbank, 192; see footnote 513.

<sup>548</sup> Read 1990, 70.

philosophy.<sup>549</sup> A group of extremely gifted men poured their resources into a very impractical form of resistance to the Bolshevik regime. Yet it is important to remember that this conflict between effectiveness and intentions is not necessarily a sign of hypocrisy. Although, it is true that ‘the idealists who were constantly berating other intellectuals for their ignorance of life failed to provide an image of the Russian nation to which one could in good conscience be true,’ the consistent application of idealist standards in religious-philosophical works provided an objective ideal to which others could turn.<sup>550</sup>

Sergei Askol’dov (1870-1945) exhibits a typical ‘theoretical response’ to the actuality of revolution in his contribution to *From the Depths*, ‘The Religious Meaning of the Russian Revolution’ [*Religioznyi smysl russkoi revoliutsii*].<sup>551</sup> In this essay Askol’dov finds a positive significance for the Revolution that is very theoretical. He writes that the event revealed ‘the clear distinction between good and evil’.<sup>552</sup> Gottlieb observes that this essay provides no guide to behaviour for Christians in the present day: ‘Askoldov’s conclusions seem to suggest that in a longer perspective, Christians need have no cause for worry since time will work for them; hence they need not do anything.’<sup>553</sup> Other religious philosophers were not so hopeful as Askol’dov was, even if they were just as theoretical.

In his contribution to *From the Depths*, ‘Ghosts of the Revolution’ [*Duhki Russkoi revoliutsii*], Berdyaev’s approach to the Revolution is clearly theoretical and takes a long-term view of assessment. In his introductory sentence, ‘A deeper and more thorough perception would discern ghosts in the revolutionary spirit of old Russia, long since detected in the creativity of our great writers, and devils, long since already having taken hold within Russian people’, Berdyaev indicates that although his subject of analysis is the Revolution, he can only

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<sup>549</sup> Burbank, 192.

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid.* 193.

<sup>551</sup> Sergei Alexeevich Askol’dov was connected to religious philosophy in several ways. In addition to publishing in *From the Depths*, he also contributed to *Problem of Idealism*; he was a member of Merezhkovsky’s Petersburg Religious-Philosophical Society; and after the revolution he participated in a secret religious-philosophical society in Leningrad.

<sup>552</sup> Gottlieb, 89.

<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.* 90.

address this subject in a very wide context.<sup>554</sup> He goes on to look at the nineteenth century literary antecedents of the revolution and to make ‘a malevolent and disparaging account of Russian life’.<sup>555</sup> Gottlieb comments, ‘It is striking that he [Berdyayev] only has a very few comments left for his own actual Russian state whose deep crisis is after all what provoked him to respond in the first place.’<sup>556</sup> While indeed it is striking, Berdyayev’s lack of specific attention to the details of the Revolution is consistent with Bulgakov and Frank’s contributions to the volume appears more normal.

Frank also takes a theoretical approach to the Revolution in his contribution to the volume, the essay ‘*De Profundis*’. He writes that ‘we must rise above the current instant to understand and appreciate the nightmarish present in connection with all of our past’ because the Revolution is an opportunity to make ‘enduring super-temporal insights into human life and nature’ that should not be wasted on contemplating the mercurial short-term results of the Revolutions.<sup>557</sup> As self-aware here as he was in ‘The Ethics of Nihilism’, Frank even goes so far as to explain this tendency by writing that the hopelessness of the revolutionary situation leads people to ‘unconsciously seek historical analogies to draw consolation and faith from them’.<sup>558</sup> For Frank, taking the broad view of the Revolution in historical context is part of a process of rising above the events ‘by the power of free thought and conscience’.<sup>559</sup> It can be concluded, then, that a theoretical approach is not synonymous with an unfeeling approach. In fact, religious philosophers may have been working very hard to appear as dispassionate as possible, making the very distance apparent in these essays a sign of how intimately troubling revolutionary events had been.<sup>560</sup>

Bulgakov’s contribution to *From the Depths, The Feast of the Gods* [*Na piru Bogov*], is a departure from his typical style. In this essay Bulgakov uses several dialogues between

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<sup>554</sup> IG, 51.

<sup>555</sup> One Gottlieb views as ‘the most hostile analysis to appear in the revolutionary period’ (193).

<sup>556</sup> *Ibid.* 379.

<sup>557</sup> IG, 303.

<sup>558</sup> *Ibid.* 301, and see footnote 531.

<sup>559</sup> *Ibid.* 303.

<sup>560</sup> For example Gottlieb believes that revolution was highly personal to Berdyayev, ‘a part of his own inner development’, and that his striving to internalise events was a method of overcoming them (160).

different representatives of society to illustrate his conclusions about the Revolution. This style is a clue to Bulgakov's response in several ways. The dialogue gives the impression that Bulgakov is also working out answers for himself. Instead of writing in such a way that his opinion is perfectly clear, Bulgakov presents multiple views, obscuring his personal reactions behind false personas. This format is also very philosophical, resembling Plato's texts as well as more recent philosophical texts like Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* [*Also Sprach Zarathustra*] (1885) and Solov'ev's *Three Conversations* [*Tri razgovora*] (1900).<sup>561</sup> This style helps to mark a turn inward, to a philosophical and meditative method of digesting these events.

In his earlier book *Two Cities* [*Dva grada*] (1911), Bulgakov had already reflected on how the Revolution became a moment of analysis: 'Finally the Russian Revolution was set with unprecedented acuteness, this mirror of all our lives, ordeal of our spiritual and cultural-historical power and it remains an enigma posed to Russian Oedipus fixing his eye to the Sphinx of passion.'<sup>562</sup> In this musing, Bulgakov invokes the metaphor of revolution as a mirror in which he and the Russian people must evaluate an enigmatic past and future. In 'The Feast of the Gods' Bulgakov also describes the revolution as a form of apocalypse and looks to Russia's past and the revolutionary premonitions of Dostoevsky.<sup>563</sup> It is interesting that he is better able to address the subject of his concern directly before it has even taken place, and that after the cataclysmic event of the Bolshevik Revolution Bulgakov is less assertive in his conclusions. The abstract and philosophical style of his contribution to *From the Depths* represents his complete departure from the more direct and politically engaging texts of a decade earlier.

*From the Depths* also has ample evidence of idealist approaches to the Revolution. For example, Berdyaev describes the idealist aspects of the intelligentsia's earlier understandings of the Russian people as real and useful ways to envision the people. He emphasizes this paradigm when he explains that the Revolution had 'exterminated the Russian sins and Russian

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<sup>561</sup> Evtuhov concludes that Bulgakov consciously modelled this dialogue on Solov'ev's *Three Conversations* (231).

<sup>562</sup> (Farnborough, 1971), xvii.

<sup>563</sup> IG, 121-122.

temptations discerned by great Russian writers', among them the romanticization of the *narod* and the belief that Orthodox faith would protect Russia from the ills of socialism.<sup>564</sup> Even though he describes the Revolution as an event that brought an end to these idealist interpretations of the Russian people, he also treats the 'evils' and 'temptations' described by earlier Russian authors as real and valuable things to have identified. The fact that these idealistic sentiments partially caused the Revolution or may not have had any veracity does not factor into his criticism of the way that the Revolution destroyed these sentiments.

Frank also shows evidence of participating in idealism while simultaneously criticising parts of it. He is critical of what he considers the prevailing view, that "the people" [*narod*], by virtue of their ignorance and governmental ill-breeding [political inexperience], turned out to be in no condition to imitate or to bring about the beautiful reforms conceived by the revolutionary intelligentsia' because the reforms were policies that 'in their programs and form of execution considered the people as some sort of fictional ideal people, and did not consider the people that actually exist!'<sup>565</sup> His exasperation with the revolutionary intelligentsia is clear. Yet Frank himself indulges in an idealist interpretation of the people. 'This ideal [of religiously-enlightened effectiveness] can be understood as a revival of the Slavophil dream of organic development of spiritual and social culture from the deep historical roots of a popular religious-social way of life.'<sup>566</sup> Frank's reference to a 'religious-social way of life' particular to the Russian people indicates that he, like the intelligentsia he critiques, cannot help thinking of the Russian 'masses' in idealized or clichéd terms.

When considering these thinkers' responses to the Revolution, it must be born in mind that a whole flood of political and social changes accompanied revolution, and because the Revolution was an easily identifiable phenomenon it often became the label for other changes that were equally present but less identifiable at this time. The best example of this is how, although revolution and modernity are not the same thing, the changes brought about by

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<sup>564</sup> IG, 90. Despite this criticism that Orthodoxy could not protect Russia, Gottlieb considers Berdyaev's response to have been 'of a more or less Christian character' (11).

<sup>565</sup> IG, 304.

<sup>566</sup> *Ibid.* 320.

modernity and by of revolution were often conflated by philosophers and articulated as concerns about revolutionary changes. The desire for political development and the desire for social modernity were trends that had culminated at the turn of the twentieth century, and both ideas were closely linked in revolutionary rhetoric. In fact the pressures of modernity were felt across Europe and could exist without revolutionary change. Arendt explains the importance of the distinction between these two ideas: 'If we understand by revolutionary spirit the spirit which actually grew out of revolution, then this modern yearning for novelty at any price must be carefully distinguished from it.'<sup>567</sup> Arendt's observation illustrates how revolution can embody an ambiguous set of principles.

Revolution is a radical change and any number of other experiences of change can be linked or bundled with it. Initially in the process of reacting to the Revolution, religious philosophy attributed certain injustices and failures as attributed specifically to revolution. Yet over time, the fact that countries where no revolution had occurred also faced similar problems allowed religious philosophers to distinguish the Europe-wide phenomenon of modernity from the uniquely Russian experience of revolution. Religious philosophers eventually came to view the Russian Revolution as symptomatic of a greater social change towards modernity in the European case, instead of seeing the opposite, modernity as a by-product of revolution.

Focus on modernity in general, instead of revolution specifically, allowed religious philosophers to continue to argue about contemporary issues and to tie the revolutionary experience in Russia to the greater European experience. That is why it is important to consider the relationship between these two concepts in the early twentieth century, when the question of modernity and its impact on society was stark to religious philosophers even though it was associated with and sometimes masked by the question of revolution. Modernity eventually took the place of revolution as the continuous threat to traditional values.

Especially for Frank, modernity is a forceful concept that holds power over the human condition. The conceptual state of 'modernity' is always different from and beyond the current state of existence, in much the same way as the concept of future always denotes a different

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<sup>567</sup> Arendt 1990, 41.

time from the present, and is thus an unknown. From this perspective, the idea of a transition to modernity therefore is not about physical changes in the world or nature, but about changes to how humans understand the world, its development and future.<sup>568</sup> The modern state of being, like being sinful, is specific to the way humans construct and perceive the world rather than in the fundamentals of physical existence. Yet, these internal perspectives have an influence on physical development in external spheres. Modern philosophy is therefore as much a target for Frank's thought as modern society because the two are interlinked: philosophy develops and changes with society.

For Frank, modernity, realized or not, is an influence on the souls of men.<sup>569</sup> The German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) also observes this kind of conceptual power in modernity: 'The modern world picture cannot adequately be explained as long as attempts to understand it are simply in terms of contrast with the ancient and medieval worlds.'<sup>570</sup> For Heidegger, modernity is not a natural extension of human development thus far; instead it is new. Bulgakov's view of modernity, as a 'coming of age of humanity', is similarly conceptual and theoretical.<sup>571</sup> This type of modernity is easily linked with other abstract human situations: heaven, utopia or apocalypse alternatively. Such definitions illustrate the power of modernity as a concept by showing how modernity can promote a mental revolt against the boundaries of the present day in favour of the promises of a fantastic future. The pull of modernity resembles the pull of revolution in its promise of improvement for human life. These similarities explain how modernity and revolution were conflated.

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<sup>568</sup> As Laura Engelstein explains in her introduction, 'The term [modernity] need not designate an identifiable stage of historical development which Western societies presumably had attained and toward which Russia was objectively striving' (*The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siecle Russia* (London, 1992), 9). Instead modernity can be an abstract concept. The actions that she chronicles in her book were taken by liberals to modernize their society. The action of Modernization has a suggested 'end point' either implied by the direction of development, (e.g. the existence of computers today implies that more advanced computers will be a feature of the future), or by an existent model of development, (e.g. the 'developed world' uses telecommunications, so telephones will eventually be equally widespread throughout the remainder of the world). The inspiration for religious philosophy, however, was the vague *modernity*.

<sup>569</sup> Boobbyer, 210: 'Progress is not inevitable.'

<sup>570</sup> A. J. Cascardi, *The Subject of Modernity* (Cambridge, 1992), 1.

<sup>571</sup> P. Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology: Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov: Orthodox Theology in a New Key* (Edinburgh, 2000), 262.

In addition to this conceptual power, modernity can also be understood as a ‘mode of viewing the world’.<sup>572</sup> The argument that modern logic removes elements of mystery—leaving behind, as Iris Murdoch (1919-1999) explains, ‘the assumption that the world possesses no inherent qualities but is essentially a quantity of matter’—changes the way humans appreciate the world and live in it.<sup>573</sup> According to this argument, applying the modern view strips the world of its historical meaning and replaces mystery with a new interpretation. In this respect the same types of arguments that targeted revolutionism could also be used to criticise modernity in favour of faith and mystery, thus allowing religious philosophers to continue to write on earlier themes.<sup>574</sup>

The question of how religious philosophers integrated their concern about revolution in Russia with topics more pertinent to the European citizen is expanded on by Vladimir Kantor, a current Russian religious thinker, who evaluates the response to the Revolution by two thinkers, Frank and Trubetskoi, in the greater context of the European experience of devastation in World War I. According to him, ‘Russian thinkers were the first to take notice and to formulate the victorious breakthrough of hellish forces in the world.’<sup>575</sup> In this sense the religious-philosophical response can be considered a precursor to other twentieth-century European responses to the abhorrent events of the century. Kantor believes that Frank’s ‘constant reflections on the causes of the apocalyptic social outburst in Russia in October 1917 enabled [Frank] at the time of intellectual confusion among Western philosophers to formulate the principle of man’s dignified and conscious existence on earth’.<sup>576</sup> While the religious-philosophical school of thought may have provided a vehicle for prototypical responses to modern atrocities, what is less clear is whether the philosophers themselves saw their role as evaluators of a wider European phenomenon or were simply so taken up by the tragedy that had

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<sup>572</sup> One such recent philosophical perspective is Max Weber’s (1864-1920) reductionist idea of the ‘disenchantment of the world’ (Casgardi, 16).

<sup>573</sup> Casgardi, 36.

<sup>574</sup> Ultimately, though, they were unable to effectively apply these arguments in wider European contexts because of other barriers, see Chapter 5.

<sup>575</sup> V. Kantor, ‘The Principle of Christian Realism, or Against Utopian Self Will’, tr. N. Perova, *Social Sciences* [online journal], 31/1 (2000), 3.

<sup>576</sup> *Ibid.* 2.

befallen their country that they viewed the Revolution as an event of cosmic significance. Far from critiquing the wider European experience, Berdyaev recognized a form of salvation in Western Culture.<sup>577</sup>

Kantor supports the position that religious philosophy aimed to address universal questions by referring to Trubetskoi's observation from *The Meaning of Life* [*Smysl' zhizni*] (1918): 'Before our very eyes Hell is asserting itself as the only meaning of human existence and, therefore, of the entire human culture. Our bloodthirsty Russian chaos presents an acute form of that worldwide disease and as such it represents a particular danger for all.'<sup>578</sup> It is true that Trubetskoi was preoccupied with the meaning of World War I as well as the crises in Russia at the time of publication. However, the primacy of meaning he places upon the Russian experience as a central piece of the European puzzle (as an acute form) can also be attributed to his perspective as a Russian *intelligent*.<sup>579</sup> Frank's later publications, reflecting on the entire first half of the century, are perhaps a better example of the religious-philosophical evaluation of the Revolution as part of a greater European tragedy. For example, in Frank's work *The Light in the Darkness* [*Svet vo t'me*] (1949), he draws attention to the moral similarities between the roles of the state during the Russian Revolution and in Nazi Germany.<sup>580</sup> In this work it is clear that Frank has not diagnosed the disease of the West based only on a Russian symptomology. The observations of much later writing suggest that immediate responses to the Revolution, such as *From the Depths*, can be evaluated as just that: responses to the social and political events of the day. Only after emigration and with the benefit of hindsight do broader

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<sup>577</sup> Gottlieb, 159.

<sup>578</sup> Kantor, 3, quoting Kn. E. N. Trubetskoi, *Smysl' zhizni* (Berlin, 1922), and SZ, 255.

<sup>579</sup> Indeed Zernov writes that, as late as 1927, Russian thinkers were separated from their Western counterparts by their experience: 'The Russians [attendees at an Anglican Orthodox Conference in January 1927] had already witnessed the collapse of Christian civilization and experienced the beginnings of totalitarianism, while the English [attendees at the same conference] were still optimistic, believing that the League of Nations could eliminate war and that the establishment of a worldwide system of social justice based on Christian principles was at hand' (Zernov and Zernov 1979, 5). Even though a decade had passed since the turmoil of war and revolution, the lessons of the Russian experience of that time were not yet universal. Kantor rightly sees the Russian experience and the Russian critique as having Europe-wide significance, but he is too ambitious in his estimations of how soon the Russian case was accepted as of universal significance by a non-Russian audience.

<sup>580</sup> Kantor, 5, and S. Frank, *Svet vo t'me* (Paris, [1949]), 36.

themes of critiquing modernity and morality emerge as central parts of the religious-philosophical evaluation of the Revolution.

In religious philosophy, the response to revolution can be divided into three general stages; early response characterized by some elements of spiritual revival and hope, short-term evaluations characterized by condemnation of the Bolsheviks, and longer-term evaluations which critique the Revolution and subsequent Soviet Union in the wider context of the European experience of the twentieth century. By looking at the response of this group of thinkers, as we are encouraged to do by their collaborative texts, the trends in religious philosophy become more clear. The staggered character of these responses can be partially attributed to the fact that many thinkers had found some aspects of revolution inevitable or even necessary before the events took place. Before the Revolution the average Russian *intelligent* 'believed passionately in progress, in utilitarianism, the perfectibility of human society'.<sup>581</sup> Even if religious philosophers did not entertain all of these notions many of them maintained idealistic hopes for Russia's future. Yet the acceptance of the necessity of extreme change that legitimized the need for a revolution was challenged by the other characteristics entailed in the specific nature of the Revolution. Acceptance of socialism as a political system in light of the Bolsheviks' specific implementation of governance was harder to establish. As can be seen in this thesis, religious philosophers mainly supported the need for political change, yet they were ambivalent to socialism in general and hostile to Bolshevism in particular. They were also very aware of the historic nature of the Revolution, as can be seen in their discussion of the idea of *sobornost*' and Godmanhood. Revolution and revolutionaries remained important theoretical figures in the religious-philosophical discourse to which they all contributed, even after the events of the Revolution had taken place.

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<sup>581</sup>Schapiro, 57.

## **Chapter 4: Religious Philosophy and the Revolution**

Although there is good evidence that religious philosophers interacted with revolutionary political movements and were personally affected by the material circumstances of living in a time of political upheaval, it remains to be seen whether the content of religious philosophy (the ideas themselves) was affected by revolutionary nature of the cultural and intellectual environment. Just as it is possible to see trends in religious-philosophical attitudes towards the idea of revolution itself, explored in the previous chapter, it is also possible to discern trends in changing meanings and use of religious-philosophical ideas in this period. This chapter suggests that political and cultural developments associated with the revolutionary period, here limited to the time between the revolution of 1905 and the immediate aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, did influence the ways that the four core religious-philosophical ideas of all-unity, *Sophia*, *sobornost'* and Godmanhood were used by thinkers at that time as well as the role that these ideas played as constituents of the wider body of Russian religious thought.

The revolutionary period was very productive for religious philosophy. This chapter will first look at how the four core ideas demonstrate that productivity. As mentioned above in Chapter 3, the revolutionary period saw a dramatic shift in Russian culture, most notably the demise of the Silver Age, potentially cut short by the Bolshevik revolution. The second section of this chapter will consider to what extent this shift in Russian culture is reflected in religious philosophy, as evidenced by the changing use of its four core ideas. Finally two aspects of religious-philosophical writing about revolution are especially prominent: creativity and social criticism. Therefore the final two sections of this chapter will give both of these topics a closer look.

#### 4.1 A Generative Period

One overwhelming characteristic of this period is the productivity and licence it afforded authors. With so much productivity, discursive structures help to organize attention to what was produced. For example, all-unity raises questions about pantheism and evil, as discussed in Chapter 2, and both of these are addressed at this time. This was also a very productive period in terms of writing about *Sophia*, in part because this idea was also of interest to contemporary artistic circles. This section makes apparent the ways that all-unity and *Sophia* complement each other in this period.

Chapter 2 raised the idea that all-unity has intrinsic problems accommodating evil. In the revolutionary period the question of evil took on greater prominence in religious philosophy. Texts like *The Pillar and the Ground of the Truth* (1914) by Florensky, and *The Meaning of Creativity* (1916) and *Philosophy of Freedom* (1911) by Berdyaev address the topic of evil but do not offer adequate answers to the complexities of the problem. At this time, explanations of the possibility of evil in the world were connected to an idea of fracture.<sup>582</sup> Either the world exists in a fractured state, or an abyss exists between man and God, or evil is a form of broken union. Bulgakov describes this state of fracture as a cleft between God and creation.<sup>583</sup> In Bulgakov's revolutionary-period work, *Sophia* is 'outside of any process', allowing evil to essentially be a sophisticated deviation from *Sophia*, begotten of will and agency.<sup>584</sup> Thus the very nature of 'time' is one explanation for how evil is possible in the world. For Bulgakov, the limitations of time and history separate the world from the unified whole of the universe, making all-unity an invalid word in the context of the known present.<sup>585</sup> Evil, which functions as the dramatic opposite to the orderliness of God's Wisdom, is a product of the world as it exists within the confines of time and history. Evil is also a disruption in Berdyaev's work at this time. Berdyaev focuses on the problem of evil by examining the question of sin and its

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<sup>582</sup> Florensky, Lossky and Trubetskoi each write about evil as fracture.

<sup>583</sup> Zenkovsky, 907.

<sup>584</sup> Kyrke-Smith, 128.

<sup>585</sup> Zenkovsky, 914.

potential in human will. To Berdyaev freedom and unity are one potential outcome of will, and necessity and disorder another. Both experiences rely upon the volitional aspect of substantial beings (the individual conscious units in his philosophy).<sup>586</sup> Sin and evil are the result of misunderstanding on the part of substantial beings: 'The defect of our apprehension of the world and our knowledge is the result of sinful existence, a sickness, a rash covering the face of existence.'<sup>587</sup>

Berdyaev and Trubetskoi also share a view of freedom as, although causing, ultimately correcting the problem of sin. Berdyaev analyses the relationship between necessity and evil and comes to the conclusion that necessity, as a product of freedom, only results in evil when freedom is abused: 'Free existence creates a natural necessity born of the situation of constrained-ness.'<sup>588</sup> Humans are constrained in their existence and therefore their freedom also has necessity.<sup>589</sup> Yet the direction of the will of free beings creates a natural need to move beyond the constraints of existence, so although freedom opens the possibility of disorder it also allows humans to move beyond that constraint. There is a state of interrelation between substantial beings when they interact under these conditions of necessity that establishes the unified reality of interdependence and facilitates the possibility of salvation in unity.<sup>590</sup> Part of the way that human beings exist pollutes their ability to choose freedom and unity over necessity and disorder. Trubetskoi sees the failing of the human cognitive apparatus as the source of sin: 'Sense demands that in order for God to be in all, then the meaning of all-unity is not reconciled with the intentions of any other, who exists outside of the all-unity in such a way that the unity's truth is broken.' There is no possibility of free will originating outside of unity; if a will exists that contradicts unity then it is still within and part of it.<sup>591</sup>

Considering the propensity to connect discussions about epistemology to subjectivity in all-unity systems, it seems no coincidence that human subjectivity and the way individuals

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<sup>586</sup> See above 123.

<sup>587</sup> Berdyaev FS, 116.

<sup>588</sup> Berdyaev FS, 65.

<sup>589</sup> Berdyaev FS, 65: 'Necessity is the product of freedom, born from the free direction of the will.'

<sup>590</sup> 'Material dependence is the product of our free will' (ST, 374).

<sup>591</sup> SZ, 91.

relate to all-unity has a significant place in discussions of evil in the revolutionary period. Time, space, and death are all part of our reality, not God's reality, and our choice to focus on these aspects of human experience instead of unified reality results in evil.<sup>592</sup> Trubetskoi also describes the problems associated with human will as occurring in time.<sup>593</sup> Without the ability to apprehend the fullness of all-unity, created beings can make evil choices that are perhaps better understood in Trubetskoi's thought as 'dis-unified choices'. Perceptions of dis-unity in time can cause discontinuity in other aspects of consciousness as well. Thus, for Trubetskoi, evil belongs to the dysfunctional human perception of time as much as it does to the fact of time itself. When he writes, 'All the power of evil is in time and only in time; it is told as a parody and has not space in eternal life,' he makes it clear that, as it is for Bulgakov, evil is insubstantial in the all-unity reality.<sup>594</sup>

Berdyaev does not go so far to exonerate man. His descriptions of evil as a disruption to unity and sin and as the falling away from unity are congruent with Florensky and Frank. Yet Berdyaev makes a distinction between positive and negative freedom to account for evil. The material freedom of the world is supported by the positive freedom, the freedom that is the essence of unity. In *The Meaning of Creativity* [*Smysl tvorchestvo*] (1916) Berdyaev explains this distinction: 'In mankind not only must sin be negatively exposed by the law and redeemed, but its creative God-like nature must also positively be disclosed.'<sup>595</sup> Man's loss and retrieval of freedom takes place within the unified reality of existence. Berdyaev discusses the epistemological ramifications of this construct: 'Everything that is isolated from me, far, and alien I apprehend as given by material necessity. Everything near, familial and united with me I apprehend as freedom.'<sup>596</sup> So, for Berdyaev, man's will does affect the outcome of salvation, in that the essence of unity only takes mankind half way toward overcoming sin.

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<sup>592</sup> Bulgakov 2000, 152.

<sup>593</sup> Trubetskoi SZ, 91: 'We begin a movement away [from unity] with a fractured view that confuses religious consciousness in the forms of time.'

<sup>594</sup> *Ibid.* 135.

<sup>595</sup> Berdyaev ST, 478. Underlining my own. For more on Berdyaev's understanding of positive and negative freedom see below page 252.

<sup>596</sup> *Ibid.*

Trubetskoi's value of human freedom does not mitigate his perception of evil; to sin or to do evil is still a very real threat to humanity in his thought even though the ability to love is also a product of free will.<sup>597</sup> More so in Trubetskoi's writings than in Berdyaev's, the connection between mankind and the unified reality ultimately overwhelms sin. Trubetskoi explains that 'somewhere in the fully divine life, in the place the concentrated loving attraction of the human heart comes from, the kernel [of sin] is abolished; sin withdraws, is forgiven and defeated'.<sup>598</sup> This ultimate resolution of evil takes place in human consciousness where both free will and the attraction to all-unity reconcile in a victory of conscience.

The sinful freedom of creation appears as if it is incompatible with the meaning of God-love, although it is precisely in love, in it fully, in its highest revelation that we find justification for the freedom of creation and therefore a solution to this contradiction which listens to our thought and conscience, the greatest sources of doubt.<sup>599</sup>

In Trubetskoi's view humans have been given freedom out of love and free action manifests its fullest self in the prospect of returning that love.

The way that Trubetskoi describes evil as a helpmeet of the good is another characteristic view of evil shared by many Russian religious philosophers, and potentially a consequence of religious philosophy's dependence on all-unity. What these thinkers share is an attitude toward evil as secondary to good; as not an independent entity but one that supports the all-unity system and is therefore secondary in importance to it. Trubetskoi illustrates this view typically: 'Man could not be in reality freely a party to good if he was not saved by the choice between good and evil.'<sup>600</sup> Evil is a necessary by-product of the freedom that fully allows humanity to be good. Although Berdyaev is primarily concerned with explaining and describing the nature of human freedom, in that exploration he discusses evil as a necessary constituent part of the reality that facilitates freedom.

Even though they arose, questions of pantheism remained unanswered before the Revolution. Instead, diversion of the true substance of this problem took two forms, panenthism

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<sup>597</sup> 'Evil will is precisely a stand against all-unity—and sin is its violation' (*Ibid.* 102).

<sup>598</sup> *Ibid.* 103.

<sup>599</sup> *Ibid.* 104.

<sup>600</sup> *Ibid.* 106.

and *Sophia*. Whereas in pantheism the world and God are considered to be identical in some ways, in panentheism God and the world are only interconnected; the world resides entirely within God, but the subject God is not exhausted by the world. This allows for another part of God to be separate from the world and inaccessible while still allowing God to be immanent in the world. The movement toward a more panentheistic understanding of unity was intended by religious thinkers to address the problematic pantheism in Solov'ev's use. Teresa Obolevitch points out that Frank criticized Solov'ev's use of all-unity as pantheistic and Kline describes Frank's resultant thought system as more deserving of criticism for being panentheistic than for being pantheistic.<sup>601</sup>

The ambiguity allowed in sophiological cosmology and panentheism can be considered similar. For example, Paul Gavrilyuk describes sophiology as a type of panentheism that 'platonizes' revelation.<sup>602</sup> This is intended as criticism, because Gavrilyuk emphasizes the cataphatic instead of apophatic nature of sophiology. Although panentheism, like sophiology, is not an unproblematic concept itself, it is less problematic than *Sophia* because it does not harbour connotations of divinity or femininity.

For Bulgakov, the idea, and at times person, of *Sophia* represented the space between Creator and creation that prevented the unity in his philosophy from over-relating the two. *Sophia* acts as a bridge and a barrier between these two worlds. As a bridge 'she' facilitates all-unity, but as a barrier 'she' prevents the conflation or over dependence of the world and God. Bulgakov puts so much emphasis on his idea of *Sophia*, as a metaphysical and ontological idea, that his subsequent sophiology essentially is an all-unity metaphysics. His use of *Sophia* protects him from accusations of pantheism in his use of all-unity, but *Sophia* then becomes the area where Bulgakov's philosophy is subject to questioning and accusations of pantheism; therefore *Sophia* transfers the pantheism problem of all-unity to another part of Bulgakov's philosophy.

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<sup>601</sup> Obolevitch (citing Frank DOO), 3, and Kline 1996, 222.

<sup>602</sup> Gavrilyuk 2008, 712.

Bulgakov first wrote about *Sophia* in this time period but, unusually when compared to his émigré writings, he was not alone in thinking about this idea. In his research Sergeev argues for the ‘relative independence of sophiology, which may be combined with different epistemological and ontological teachings’, pointing out that sophiology, or sophiologies, should be considered as unique markers in Russian thought of this period.<sup>603</sup> Sergeev’s observation is useful because, unlike all-unity, *Sophia* did not dominate the other philosophical ideas of a given thinker’s world view. This circumstance allows for the many versions of *Sophia* that appear in pre-revolutionary religious philosophy, but it also explains the common impression that *Sophia* is a less substantial idea. Florensky, Lossky and Karsavin used *Sophia* in significant ways that complemented and enhanced Bulgakov’s work.<sup>604</sup>

Bulgakov presented an unusual vision of *Sophia* uniting the world through the vehicle of economic interaction in *Philosophy of Economy* (1912). Here he addresses the idea of *Sophia*, the topic that would become a fixation and ‘the central doctrine of his theology,’ at length for the first time.<sup>605</sup> In this work he explained his theory that ‘participants in the economic process were all part of a single transcendental subject’ in the context of unity.<sup>606</sup> The transcendental subject, unity, is the Sophianic aspect of the economy, a means by which humankind could approach the Divine. For Bulgakov in this work the process of divinisation is an economic process that uses *Sophia* in a very creative way.<sup>607</sup>

In *Philosophy of Economy* (1912) Bulgakov built upon the work of Solov’ev. Other thinkers at this time also followed Solov’ev very closely. For Karsavin the idea of *Sophia* can be seen as developed directly from Solov’ev: *Sophia* exists to link created and divine entities and has a feminine persona. His interpretation represents the more traditional end of the

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<sup>603</sup> Sergeev does this by describing Lossky’s peculiar sophiology as existent but, unlike the other sophiologies discussed in this chapter, not linked to his metaphysics (2006, 196).

<sup>604</sup> Karsavin’s theories of all-unity explored in *Noctes Petropolitanae* are connected to a sophiology (Sergeev 2006, 177).

<sup>605</sup> Bulgakov 2000, 7.

<sup>606</sup> Evtuhov, 146.

<sup>607</sup> This type of economic vision is like the later work of Vladimir Lossky and Leonid Ouspensky. Evtuhov chooses to also link this theory with contemporary agrarian problems of interest to Bulgakov (Evtuhov, 147).

spectrum of religious-philosophical thought about *Sophia* at this time; he even allows some of the dubious Gnostic elements of Solov'ev's *Sophia* to play a role in his conception. In *Noctes Petropolitanae* (1922), *Sophia* is described by Karsavin as *Sophia Akhamot* (an echo of Solov'ev and his use of arcane names) as descended from the divine, and therefore divine in nature.<sup>608</sup> He writes, 'She is creaturely Divine Wisdom [*premudrost'*], *Sophia*, fallen as *Sophia Akhamot* of Gnostic speculation, one with the logos—as a chaste virgin.'<sup>609</sup> The distinction between the created and uncreated *Sophia* is partially, and certainly not philosophically, articulated: as 'creaturely' and 'fallen' *Sophia* is part of the world, but as 'one with the logos' she is divine. Making his work resemble Solov'ev all the more, Karsavin references *Sophia*'s material form and emphasizes her creaturely existence using the exciting feminine persona of a chaste virgin.<sup>610</sup>

An additional influence of Solov'ev that can be seen in this period is the widespread use among religious philosophers of the Christian cosmological distinction between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Caesar [or the earthly world]. This theme illustrates how Lossky's writing about *Sophia*, who acted as an agent to link the two kingdoms in one whole universe, is also connected to Solov'ev's work.<sup>611</sup> In Karsavin's work, *Sophia* serves as a link between the spiritual world and the environment in which humans live: *Sophia* is partly divine and partly created and therefore a part of the Church and the unity of humanity.<sup>612</sup>

Defining *Sophia* as a fourth hypostasis especially in terms of her role in divine life can be considered adventurous and within the spirit of pre-revolutionary religious speculation.<sup>613</sup> *Sophia* is also connected to the Church for Karsavin, in the form of a created hypostasis united

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<sup>608</sup> Karsavin's word choice refers to gnostic spiritualism. Akhamot is the anti- or fallen *Sophia* derived from the Hebrew Hokma, essentially representing the creaturely *Sophia* (Newman 1978, 50)

<sup>609</sup> Karsavin NP, 158.

<sup>610</sup> *Ibid.* 160.

<sup>611</sup> Sergeev points out that Lossky's definition of *Sophia* as 'Supreme Substance' from the Absolute is much like Solov'ev's distinction of the difference between *Sophia* and the World Soul (1999, 7).

<sup>612</sup> *Ibid.* 2.

<sup>613</sup> Florensky's speculation was much more Orthodox in content and intent than the speculations of the Merezhkovskys' circle.

in all-unity to the Church.<sup>614</sup> In *The Unfading Light* (1917), Bulgakov describes *Sophia* as hypostatic, as more than just a mirror of Divine ways.<sup>615</sup>

Solov'ev also influenced subsequent religious philosophers to use the idea of *Sophia* imprecisely or to represent many concepts. At this early point in his career, 'Bulgakov took care never to define *Sophia* precisely', despite the fact that it was such a central and fixed part of his philosophy and theology.<sup>616</sup> This approach was shared by Karsavin, who also had an abstract and diffuse definition of *Sophia*, suggesting that this characteristic is one of the commonalities of *Sophia* in religious philosophy in the pre-revolutionary period.

Florensky emphasized the multivalent quality of Solov'ev's use of *Sophia*.<sup>617</sup> Kyrke-Smith categorizes Florensky's *Sophia* into three aspects: the root of created being, a guardian angel of creation, and the reason of creation.<sup>618</sup> Although written after the revolution, Lossky's 'The Successors of Vladimir Soloviev' (1924) also sees three types of *Sophia*. In her role as a progenitor of creation *Sophia* also acts as its compass, being at once the ideal substance of the created world, the 'reason' or meaning of the created world, and the spirituality, beauty and sinless-ness of the created world.<sup>619</sup> *Sophia*'s variety of personas is caused by manifestation in the created world, and outside of her relationship with creation *Sophia* has only one self. Florensky's writing shows that aside from the single characteristic of a strong relationship to the created world, *Sophia* has many overlapping personas or aspects. Florensky writes, '*Sophia* is the great root of all creation, *Sophia* is all-integral creation and not merely all creation.'<sup>620</sup> In this respect *Sophia* is both the source of creation and an influence on the actuality of creation.

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<sup>614</sup> Karsavin NP, 161.

<sup>615</sup> Bulgakov SN, 212-213. 'Mirror' refers to *Wisdom of Solomon* 7:26 '[She is] the unspotted mirror of the power of God' see Kornblatt, 73.

<sup>616</sup> Evtuhov makes this observation in the introduction to her translation of *The Philosophy of Economy* (Bulgakov 2000, 10).

<sup>617</sup> Each manifestation of *Sophia* Florensky discusses is within the context of creation because he focuses on created-ness instead of on the more divine aspects of *Sophia*: 'One in God she is multiple in creation and is perceived in creation in her concrete appearances as the ideal person on man' (Florensky 1997, 239, and SS, 329).

<sup>618</sup> Kyrke-Smith, 109.

<sup>619</sup> Lossky 1924, 98.

<sup>620</sup> Florensky 1997, 237, and SS, 326.

As the ideal substance of the world *Sophia* 'precedes the world' and is 'realized, imprinted in the empirical world in time'.<sup>621</sup>

The multivalent quality of *Sophia* allows it to have several functions within religious philosophy. For example, in *The Pillar and the Ground of the Truth* (1914) the third aspect of *Sophia*, the reason of the world, contrasts with rational epistemology. Florensky writes: 'With regard to creation, *Sophia* is the guardian angel of creation, the ideal person of the world, the shaping reason with regard to creation, *Sophia* is the shaped content of God-reason.'<sup>622</sup> Thus, *Sophia* conveys to the world the divine order and can represent the appropriate path of truth. *Sophia* acts as an imprint of and a turning towards the Divine, both descriptions capable of being shared by humans. Florensky appears to use *Sophia* in all of her manifestations as an example of how the creaturely world can pursue deification.

In his later work of the revolutionary period, *The Unfading Light* (1917), Bulgakov begins to demonstrate a distinction between divine *Sophia* and cosmic [earthly] *Sophia*.<sup>623</sup> When paired with *The Philosophy of Economy* (1912), these essays together explain Bulgakov's sophiology in detail.<sup>624</sup> Both works share an understanding of *Sophia* as existing in motion, progress and *potentia*. When *Sophia* is static, real, *in actu*, it is problematic because it must be labelled as one type of thing, but when *Sophia* is in motion it is in a transition, neither one thing nor yet another. The theological necessity of clarifying the nature of *Sophia's* divinity is more apparent in this work, although it is only later, in emigration, that this becomes a central concern to Bulgakov.<sup>625</sup>

The most important feature of *Sophia* at this time is that it was such a vibrant idea; Bulgakov's early work with *Sophia* illustrated new avenues along which Orthodox theology could have developed; Karsavin, Lossky and Florensky exhibited different poetic and

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<sup>621</sup> Florensky 1997, 251, and SS, 348. Zenkovsky explains Florensky's *Sophia* as the 'primordial nature of created being antecedent to the world, a God-created unity of the ideal determinations of created being' (Zenkovsky, 887).

<sup>622</sup> Florensky 1997, 237, and SS, 326.

<sup>623</sup> Kyrke-Smith, 123.

<sup>624</sup> Williams proposes that Bulgakov regarded the book as a sequel (124).

<sup>625</sup> This book is more theological (*ibid.* 125).

philosophical interpretations of daily life. Together these authors demonstrate the creative potential in this idea. Academic commentary agrees: Evtuhov even goes so far as to argue that Bulgakov's focus on a 'resurrective' model of history—emphasis on process and an effort to look at things beyond the physical—are modernist rejections of positivism.<sup>626</sup> This assessment is supported by Valliere's description of Bulgakov's 'modern' theology. Florensky, too, took risks in his definition of *Sophia*. Berdyaev sums up Florensky's contribution:

He stated problems which were not traditional, and such above all was the problem of *Sophia*, the Wisdom of God; this was not one of the problems of traditional theology, however much Florensky tried to find support in the doctors of the church. To possess the problem of *Sophia* indicates a different attitude to Cosmic life and the Created world.<sup>627</sup>

His depiction of *Sophia* in *The Pillar and the Ground of the Truth* (1914) corroborates our picture of *Sophia* before the Revolution: an idea that approaches controversy within the Church, serves to give meaning to the modern world in religious philosophy, and conforms to popular interest in spirituality.

Zenkovsky criticizes Florensky's work on *Sophia*, claiming that *Sophia* only masks the appearance of all-unity in his work, and that this unity is poorly established.<sup>628</sup> These criticisms are unfounded. In a comparative setting, some of the best work on unity and some of the most interesting and well-researched Russian philosophy was being written at this time; Florensky's sensational style only enhances this selection of work.<sup>629</sup> Berdyaev, Florensky, Karsavin and Lossky all contribute to a demonstration of the full extent of religious-philosophical writing about *Sophia* before the Revolution, when Bulgakov's writing about *Sophia* was in good company.<sup>630</sup>

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<sup>626</sup> Bulgakov 2000, 12-15.

<sup>627</sup> Berdyaev 1947, 239.

<sup>628</sup> This observation could be grouped with Zenkovsky's other criticisms of all-unity (Zenkovsky, 888); see page 291.

<sup>629</sup> Whether or not Florensky's non-traditional approach would have been altered by the events of the Revolution cannot be determined because he did not continue to write on the topic after it. See Pyman 2010, 89: 'The changing rhythms of Father Pavel's life were to have a profound effect on his work, but this is not immediately apparent from the chronology of his publications.'

<sup>630</sup> Florensky's work was widely appreciated by many different members of society, not just academics, when it was published in 1914. Pyman says, 'Florensky set out, quite deliberately to write... in a manner that would interest and seduce his uncommitted contemporaries' (2010, 71) and, that this style

The flurry of artistic activity during Russia's Silver Age is one potential reason that *Sophia* has such a prominent and productive position in the religious-philosophical discourse at this time. Many forms of writing about *Sophia*, in addition to religious, mystical and philosophical writings, saturated the Silver Age cultural experience. Development of theories about *Sophia* before the Revolution exceeded the bounds of theological and philosophical debate, bordering on mysticism and occult speculation.

#### 4.2 Dramatic Social Change

The figure of the revolutionary, an advocate for social change, was central to the revolutionary period. In him the construct of mangodhood—Godmanhood's early adversary—took corporeal form. The trials of modern life, totalitarian politics, and revolutionaries themselves were everyday examples of mangodhood. Religious philosophy addressed this figure by developing anthropologies that reintegrated spirituality into mankind and joined up scriptural anthropologies to the newly developing 'scientific' psychological approach to anthropology. In doing so the role Godmanhood played in argumentation of these views grew in sophistication and complexity. Part of the project of reintegrating spirituality into ideas about humanity entailed deeper discussions of the dialogue between Godmanhood and its philosophical 'other', be it a Nietzschean Superman, atheistic humanism, or the tailor-made mangodhood. In terms of connecting Biblical or Christian understandings of anthropology to modern developments, Solov'ev's use Godmanhood continued to be influential.

Godmanhood acted as a means of empowering humanity by recognizing the true divine origin of man. Berdyaev and Bulgakov both used Godmanhood to establish a vibrant religiously based ethics. Before the Revolution both philosophers had been attracted to revolutionary and Christian principles and both philosophers faced dilemmas related to the conflicts between these two principles. Godmanhood provided a potential solution to these

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left readers 'speechless with indignation', full of 'admiration'; 'Florensky's invitation to join his exploration... was irresistible' (2010, 72-73).

contradictory impulses. As an idea that represents humanity as ‘inexorably progressing, consciously or otherwise’, the God-man was a moral model of human potential, and a means by which humanity could radically change for the better.<sup>631</sup> For thinkers interested in ‘qualitative progress combined with a religious vision’, Godmanhood was an appealing idea.<sup>632</sup>

Initially the antinomy of Godman and mangod was not completely clear in religious philosophical text, and this could be due to sympathies for the revolution and sympathies for the Western philosophies from which much of the revolutionary mentality arose. What is interesting is that although they contrasted the Superman and Godmanhood, religious philosophers by and large did not condemn Nietzsche. In one of his earliest essays addressing Godmanhood, ‘Ethical Problems in the Light of Idealism’ in *Problems of Idealism* (1902), Berdyaev discusses Godmanhood and individuality in the context of a Nietzscheanism that he does not yet consider as completely adversarial to the mission of Godmanhood. For example, Berdyaev does not condemn Nietzsche’s idea of Dionysian and Apollonian human experience in *The Birth of Tragedy [Die Geburt der Tragödie]* (1872).<sup>633</sup> This idea is a crucial component of considering the experience of a mangod because it explores the connection man has to the sublime vast chaos of the world and mankind’s desire to put order to this world. Instead of criticising the Apollonian desire to achieve order or the Dionysian connection to chaos as problematic concepts in Nietzsche’s work, Berdyaev contextualizes them as a form of positive possibility. In fact he writes that these parts of human experience, identified by Nietzsche, are necessary and that ‘without moral self-consciousness the Dionysian craving for life will be satisfied exclusively by indulgence.’<sup>634</sup> Although Apollonian will could be considered at the heart of mangodhood, Berdyaev thinks of it as proper balance to Dionysian impulses. This sort of acceptance of Nietzsche’s ideas and terminology as basically accurate and as contributions to understanding the human condition can be seen in other religious-philosophical considerations of Nietzsche’s thought.

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<sup>631</sup> Gottlieb, 75

<sup>632</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>633</sup> (Oxford, 2008).

<sup>634</sup> PI, 130.

It is clear that Berdyaev envisions a spiritual life that challenges humanity to exist in its highest possible state and considers the ‘godmanly I’ to be a sort of Superman. Berdyaev is almost equating his view of the free man with Nietzsche’s ideas: ‘For life to be really strong, expansive and infinite it must be filled with valuable contents, with its spirituality must grow and within it the “I” of the Godman must be realized.’<sup>635</sup> Berdyaev’s ultimate belief in freedom allows for the possibility that people will choose Nietzsche’s Superman over the Godman: ‘man is wholly, unconditionally and unequivocally free in his ability to subordinate his divinity to his humanity.’<sup>636</sup> Man can choose to deny the divine potential in himself and do wrong but Berdyaev reduces the threat of the Superman by labelling the Superman as a part of an acceptable model of humanity.<sup>637</sup>

Frank similarly condones Nietzsche in his contribution to *Problems of Idealism* (1902), ‘Nietzsche and the Love for the Far Away’.<sup>638</sup> In this essay Frank contrasts the morality inspired by love for the near with that inspired by love for the far. Love for the near is for Frank compassion and the basis of all morality.<sup>639</sup> But, even though the ‘love for the near’ is the opposite of the ‘love for the far’, Frank does not regard ‘love for the far’ as a negative moral opposite. For Frank, ‘love for the far’ simply fulfils a different moral necessity in human ethics, by helping us to love all of humanity instead of only the people that we know.<sup>640</sup> In this way, Nietzsche’s idea is actually an aid to human morality, helping people to believe in the

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<sup>635</sup> *Ibid.* 131.

<sup>636</sup> N. Richards, ‘Berdyaev: Christianity and History’, *Journal of Bible and Religion*, 28/4 (Oct. 1960), 433.

<sup>637</sup> Berdyaev believed that ‘Nietzsche wants to “create” the Over-man, who is a “pseudonym of the divine,” in spite of the fact that—as Solovyov has it—“the true Over-man” has already revealed himself and one does not have to “make him up”’ (Krasicki, 127).

<sup>638</sup> It is surprising that Frank does not contribute more to the religious-philosophical construction of Godmanhood in the revolutionary period, but this can be explained. For one, his pre-revolutionary publications were far more philosophical than religious, excluding discussions of *Sophia* and Godmanhood. For another, Frank did write about topics apropos of Godmanhood in this period. The only book in which one might have expected to find Godmanhood is *The Human Soul* (1917). There he does discuss the idea of Godmanhood, although he does not use the word (1993, 241). Frank first uses Godmanhood freely, and quite traditionally it must be said, after the revolution in *The Meaning of Life* [*Smisl Zhizni*] (1926), where he uses the word six times.

<sup>639</sup> PI, 139 and 141: He describes it as both the instinct and the sense of compassion, suggesting that Frank sees love for the near as an intuitive love.

<sup>640</sup> *Ibid.* 141.

abstract high-minded ideals of politics, society and humanity that inspire truly altruistic acts. In this essay Nietzsche is not ‘wrong’ or an ‘other’ opposed by Frank, he is a misguided contributor to the religious-philosophical project.

In a work of a decade later, *Two Cities* (1911), Bulgakov echoes these accepting sentiments. In his writing it can be seen that Bulgakov pities the misguided Superman. He elaborates: ‘Humanity, joining onto the path of mangodhood, to a well known extent is natural and understandable, although in doing so humanity is enticing itself onto a false and fatal path, and falls into self-deception.’<sup>641</sup> Bulgakov respects Nietzsche’s ability to accurately label the trend in modern humanity towards mangodhood, and he does not categorically oppose Nietzsche’s contribution to this dialogue simply because he comes from outside of the Russian religious-philosophical context. He writes, ‘This individual man-god inevitably has the task of mangodhood, in which Nietzsche’s newest humanity, the Antichrist-Superman, and the apotheosis of the whole universe is found.’<sup>642</sup> The Russian word mangodhood is once again linked to the Superman in this passage.

As the practice of engaging with Nietzsche’s ideas illustrates, opposition to some sort of alternative model of humanity was an important part of constructing the meaning of Godmanhood in this period. The thinker who most focused on developing the ramifications of this opposition was Bulgakov. In his contribution to *Landmarks*, ‘Heroism and Asceticism’ (1909), Bulgakov does not directly contrast Godmanhood with mangodhood, but he does address themes surrounding Godmanhood that develop later in his work. His opposition of the revolutionary hero and the Christian ascetic as paradigms of ideal men conforms to the ‘God-man/man-god’ paradigm.<sup>643</sup> By identifying the belief system of the revolutionary as religiously atheistic (‘instead of atheism he adopts the dogmas of the religion of the man-god’), Bulgakov concludes that mangodhood has taken on a religiosity.<sup>644</sup> This essay echoes his earlier critique of Dostoevsky’s model of mangodhood in *Ivan Karamazov*: ‘The hero is the man who most

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<sup>641</sup> Bulgakov DG, xi.

<sup>642</sup> *Ibid.* x.

<sup>643</sup> See 147.

<sup>644</sup> V, 26.

completely realizes his idea, even at the cost of his life; he is the man-god.’<sup>645</sup> This depiction of the revolutionary hero as a man who believes in a religion of humanity and who is willing to prove the superiority of man through extreme acts of control, like suicide, continues to develop the earlier established understanding of mangodhood. The important distinction that Bulgakov makes here is in the origin and control of will in the individual. According to Bulgakov the man-god places his will above all even though the correct origin of will is from the divine. This understanding mirrors Dostoevsky’s portrayal of the placing of the person’s will above all. In contrast the God-man undergoes a ‘permeation’ of God’s will and human will.<sup>646</sup>

In ‘Heroism and Asceticism’ (1909), Bulgakov’s depictions of Godmanhood must be considered less developed than his critique of mangodhood.<sup>647</sup> He writes, ‘The human personality is not just intellect; it is will and character above all, and disregard of these elements is cruelly avenged.’<sup>648</sup> The development of a ‘full’ human personality as an example of Godmanhood is only hinted at in this work. Perhaps this lack of development is because Bulgakov’s opposition of Godmanhood to mangodhood is primitive. The two ideas vaguely share specific qualities, albeit with opposite aspects. For example, mangodhood and Godmanhood both share a religious sensibility, and both act as a guide for the ‘best’ type of man.

Each idea, Godmanhood and mangodhood, grows off the definition of the other and the two develop in tandem in Bulgakov’s thought. In ‘Heroism and Asceticism’ (1909), the opposition between the two types of man facilitates Bulgakov’s greater argument about the actions of Russia’s contemporary intelligentsia. Later, in *Two Cities* (1911), he develops this antinomy as an idea of interest unto itself. In *Two Cities* (1911), mangodhood is contrasted with Christianity, or a Christian life, in general. Bulgakov clearly and directly contrasts the two modes of life for the first time when he writes, ‘religious self-sacrifice has two fundamental

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<sup>645</sup> *Ibid.* 39.

<sup>646</sup> *Ibid.* 40.

<sup>647</sup> This disparity of interest is a continuation of the uneven attention in ‘*Ivan Karamazov as a Philosophical Type*’ and might reflect his interest in Dostoevsky, who also focused more attention on the failed model of man than on explaining what the best version of man exactly meant.

<sup>648</sup> V, 46.

paths, which result in divergence: Theism, finding its conclusion in Christianity, and pantheism, finding conclusion in the religion of manhood and anti-Christianity'.<sup>649</sup> In order for definitions of Godmanhood to grow in complexity, the religious-philosophical understanding of this 'anti-Christianity' had to develop as well.

In this way the contrast of Godmanhood to atheistic humanism contributes to the development of an understanding of what Godmanhood was and how it could contribute to religious philosophy. In *The Philosophy of Freedom* (1911), Berdyaev compares atheistic and religious anthropology: 'The deification of human nature is Godmanliness and has a new religious anthropology, which is the opposite of a religion-less anthropology of the religion of humanity, the religion of human self-deification and self-satisfaction.'<sup>650</sup> Berdyaev accuses the rationalist of supporting 'theory', 'intelligent doctrine' and 'abstract constructions' in the place of the 'mystical facts of universal history'.<sup>651</sup> In this text Berdyaev sees the Godmanhood construction of anthropology in relief against a background of atheistic anthropology.

In comparison, in *Two Cities* (1911) Bulgakov uses a critique of Ludwig Feuerbach's (1804-1872) work as a background for his focus on rejecting of manhood.<sup>652</sup> He argues that Feuerbach's humanism and naturalism do not conflict with Godmanhood except for in his 'refusing to see the real mystical unity in the Godman'.<sup>653</sup> Bulgakov's criticism of Feuerbach is similar to the criticism of the intelligentsia he made in 'Heroism and Asceticism' (1909): namely, that religiosity is correct but misplaced. He writes that Feuerbach's attempts 'simply to convert Godmanhood to religious humanity, by freeing religious Godmanhood, based on belief in the Godman, from His [God's] support are not impeded by anything, but draw theological sustenance' from the idea.<sup>654</sup> The choice to force a contrived religion of humanity into being makes no sense to Bulgakov. He writes:

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<sup>649</sup> Bulgakov DG, ix.

<sup>650</sup> Berdyaev FS, 164.

<sup>651</sup> *Ibid.* 156.

<sup>652</sup> The German anthropologist and philosopher was a popular influence on Russian 'positivists'; see Walicki 1979 157-160 for his influence on the Petrashevsk Circle, and 190-196 for his influence on Chernyshevsky.

<sup>653</sup> Bulgakov DG, 20.

<sup>654</sup> *Ibid.* 42.

Either God or man, such is the alternative of Feuerbach. In actual fact between them there is not only opposition, an either-or, but also between these diffidently constrained conceptions, is a factual uniting in the concept of Godmanhood. Faith in God is faith in man, and without these faiths man turns into a strange, half-understood contradictory bi-pedal creature.<sup>655</sup>

Bulgakov cannot understand the need to divide what to him is an obvious unity between man and God.

Bulgakov's definition of man in 'Heroism and Asceticism' (1909) as a combination of intellect, will and character, contrasts with atheist humanism, which, according to Bulgakov, attempts to replace the full religious understanding of mankind with a one-dimensional understanding of mankind established through 'knowledge'.<sup>656</sup> He makes a definite connection between Western humanism and its negative aspects, such as atheism: 'Instead of atheism it adopts the dogmas of the religions of manhood, in one or another of the variants produced by the Western European enlightenment, and thus turns religion into idolatry.'<sup>657</sup> That Bulgakov favoured the Eastern Christian approach to humanism is apparent in his comment that: 'humanistic progress, on the other hand, is scorn for the Fathers, aversion to the past and complete condemnation of it, historical and sometimes even personal ingratitude'.<sup>658</sup> The revolutionary ignores the path of mankind as indicated by Christianity and acknowledged by the Church Fathers because of the false conviction that he is able to forge a new path for humanity in the same way that the 'the hero [man-god] creates history according to his own plan'.<sup>659</sup> The contrast of man-god and God-man aids Bulgakov's indictment of the revolutionary mentality.

In contrast, Berdyaev does not reject atheistic humanism. He sees instead the constructive elements in it, and is open to the possibility that this dialogue is necessary or even helpful in the construction of man. In *Philosophy of Freedom* (1911), he writes that 'the entire humanistic emancipatory process is dual: it involves its own great truth, the part of the religion of Godmanhood, and its great lie, the part of the religion formed by human self-deification'.<sup>660</sup>

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<sup>655</sup> *Ibid.* 46.

<sup>656</sup> See footnote 648.

<sup>657</sup> V, 26.

<sup>658</sup> *Ibid.* 39.

<sup>659</sup> *Ibid.* 39.

<sup>660</sup> Berdyaev FS, 168. Emphasis my own.

Later, in *The Meaning of Creativity* (1916), he elaborates upon what he means by this collaboration. For Berdyaev, ‘the Godman is the revelation of not only the divine, but also of human greatness and involves not only faith in God, but also [faith] in man’.<sup>661</sup> Berdyaev sees Godmanhood at this point as representative of a collaboration between God and man, telling not only of the divine but also of what is special and interesting about man. He attributes participation and contribution to man: ‘In religion the Godmanly God reveals the will of God. But the will of humanity must be revealed to mankind. The religion of Godmanhood involves human activity’, which makes human nature as much a part of Godmanhood as the divine is.<sup>662</sup> Even though Bulgakov is much more focused on the Divine contribution to Godmanhood, he cannot deny this truth: his assertion in *Two Cities* (1911) that ‘such forms of perfect Godmanhood are in equal degrees impossible without God and without man’ acknowledges the need for human participation in the process of Godmanhood.<sup>663</sup>

Godmanhood served to reinvigorate understanding of mankind with spirituality, but in letting it do so religious philosophers did not always deviate significantly from Solov’ev’s legacy. By looking more closely at two texts, published in 1911, *Two Cities* by Bulgakov and *Philosophy of Freedom* by Berdyaev, it is possible to consider how use of Godmanhood in the revolutionary period is connected to Solov’ev and the earlier works that influenced him. In these two books Godmanhood is part of a triune construct; portrayed as an important process; and used to comment on progress and history. Even so, it will be clear that Bulgakov and Berdyaev do not simply repeat Solov’ev; they develop Godmanhood in these contexts and enhance its meaning with new features and examples.

In terms of thinking of Godmanhood as a triune construct Berdyaev uses the same model as Solov’ev and Merezhkovsky had, but on a cosmic scale to conceive of the ‘Third Testament’:

If the messianic-prophetic consciousness of the Old Testament led to the New Testament, then messianic-prophetic consciousness of the New Testament leads to a Third Testament.

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<sup>661</sup> Berdyaev ST, 330.

<sup>662</sup> Berdyaev ST, 362.

<sup>663</sup> Bulgakov DG, 63.

Godmanhood, the perfect union of humanity with the Divine, appears only as the result of the penetration of the Holy Spirit into the path of history and culture. Christ's Testaments remain individual; in them it is impossible to build a religious society and religious culture. The religion of Godmanhood is the religion of the Holy Trinity, the completion of the dialectic of the Trinity, in which the creature freely returns to the Creator. Positive religious anthropology, revealed in the religion of the Holy Trinity, will be the expression of God's will and humanity's will, that which in history was still divided will be revealed by the Godmanly man and humanity, the new closeness of the human to the divine.<sup>664</sup>

This passage considers Godmanhood to be a fulfilment or a completion of a need for three. In this same text Berdyaev is also critical of dualism, stating that 'the dualism of heavenly and earthly, religious and the secular' is a 'chronic disease of Christian history'.<sup>665</sup> If dualism is the disease, perhaps viewing the world in terms of three is a cure. Bulgakov uses a model of three reminiscent of Solov'ev's psychological use of Godmanhood in his definition of the human personality in 'Heroism and Asceticism' (1909). The person is made up of intellect, will and character, which takes more aspects than simply 'knowing', or consciousness, into account.<sup>666</sup> Even though Berdyaev and Bulgakov use different triune constructs both thinkers follow Solov'ev after a fashion.

They follow Solov'ev more closely in terms of treating Godmanhood as a process. In *Philosophy of Freedom* (1911), Berdyaev refers to Godmanhood in several contexts that suggest he considers it to be a process. He describes it as a 'plan of creation', a 'Godmanly path', and explains that it 'materializes' and that its ultimate objective is to 'transform'.<sup>667</sup> However, it must be noted that in all these instances, Berdyaev aligns Godmanhood closely with Christian terminology and concepts, as an agent of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit or the Church. In *Two Cities* (1911) Bulgakov also writes of Godmanhood in terms of 'process', but he does not place an emphasis on the Christian apparatus of the Church or the Holy Spirit. When he writes that 'the possibly revealed absolute, possible Godmanhood, *intends* a process in man, a familiar salvation, a familiar spiritual affinity, and man his "own image of absolute,"' Godmanhood

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<sup>664</sup> Berdyaev FS, 179-180. Emphasis my own.

<sup>665</sup> *Ibid.* 163-164.

<sup>666</sup> This is akin to Solov'ev's approach see footnote 648.

<sup>667</sup> Berdyaev FS, 145, 152, 168 and 171.

appears as an abstract idea of the full potential of mankind.<sup>668</sup> He also describes Godmanhood as the ‘free assimilation of the divine substance of life’ which is embedded in the historical process and eliminates the ‘suppression of the human element from the direction of divine power’.<sup>669</sup> In these descriptions of Godmanhood the process remains a fixture of the concept without specifically referring to Christ as an agent of Godmanhood.<sup>670</sup> Godmanhood cannot really exist without some reference to the divine, but as it is used more philosophically the role of the person of Christ becomes less important to the functionality of the idea.

The evidence of a transition to a more figurative use of Godmanhood in this period is balanced by the frequency with which Godmanhood is tied to concrete images of the mangod and Christ. For example, although Bulgakov makes Godmanhood less dependent on Christian structures than Berdyaev does he still links Godmanhood closely with the person of Christ. He defines the choice of atheist humanism as a rejection of Christ:

The way to mend all and uncover in the mind the concept of true Godmanhood, entirely including in itself all true humanism with all of its concern for people’s welfare and genuine humaneness, all must reveal itself with greater clarity in one of two courses: humanism with Christ and in his name or against Christ and in its own name.<sup>671</sup>

In *Two Cities* (1911) the body of Christ serves a metaphorical function as well: ‘Instinctively sensing all the greatness and all the necessity of this unity [i.e. Godmanhood] Feuerbach is forced to see this unity in leviathan and humanity instead of the body of Christ.’<sup>672</sup> Berdyaev repeatedly invokes the function of Christ in such phrases as the ‘Godmanhood of Christ’, or the ‘religion of Christ’.<sup>673</sup> Subsequent development of Godmanhood as a sophisticated integration

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<sup>668</sup> Bulgakov DG, 47. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>669</sup> Bulgakov DG, 63.

<sup>670</sup> This development contrasts with Florovsky’s continued use of Godmanhood to represent a process directly connected to Christ and to the Church: ‘The theologian must discover and experience the history of the Church as the ‘process of Godmanhood’ as a departure from time into a grace filled eternity...’ (1987, 296) This depiction of process does not have implications for the improvement of man’s lot on earth. Similarly, Florovsky’s assertion, ‘Godmanhood is a historical fact, not just a postulate of faith,’ relies upon the reality of Christ to establish a concrete basis for understanding Godmanhood (*ibid*).

<sup>671</sup> Bulgakov DG, 67.

<sup>672</sup> *Ibid*. 20. Emphasis my own.

<sup>673</sup> Berdyaev FS, 178 and 167.

of religious sentiment and philosophical humanism is dependent upon the reduction of a too-personalistic focus on the figure of Christ.

The metaphorical nature of the concept of Godmanhood—the way this idea functioned as a metaphorical expansion of the concept of humanity in religious philosophy—also develops in this period. Through continued use of contrast between mangodhood and Godmanhood, what Godmanhood is is continuously defined by what it is not. Although Bulgakov is able to describe different aspects of humanity, he obviously correlates the best in humans with the divine: ‘Humanity from dark creaturely elements to light God-relating and God-identifying, from beastmanhood [*zverechelovechestva*] to Godmanhood’.<sup>674</sup> Trubetskoi also takes advantage of the metaphorical potential of these types of words in *The Meaning of Life* (1918). Here he contrasts Godmanhood with beastmanhood [*zverochechestvo*] in order to emphasize the creaturely nature of man, with the manifestation of unity evident in Godmanhood.<sup>675</sup> Beastmanhood is, for Trubetskoi, full of temptations for the human spirit, and therefore it is ‘a process of evolution’ to move from a state of beastmanhood to a state of Godmanhood.<sup>676</sup> His use of the construct ‘from beastmanhood to Godmanhood’ is exactly like Bulgakov’s use; helping to illustrate the exact nature of the process of Godmanhood and how it affects definitions of humanity.<sup>677</sup> It is the unity between God and man that facilitates man’s ability to overcome evil in his philosophical reasoning.<sup>678</sup> Berdyaev is also interested in describing humanity in relation to more things than just God, but unlike Trubetskoi and Bulgakov, he sets aside the Godman [*bogochelovecheskoi*] antinomy, and addresses beastliness as part of an angel-beast [*angelo-zverenoi*] antinomy.<sup>679</sup> For Berdyaev, it is when people aspire to be inhuman angels that they are most vulnerable to becoming beasts, because Godmanhood

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<sup>674</sup> Bulgakov DG, 47.

<sup>675</sup> Trubetskoi SZ, 275.

<sup>676</sup> *Ibid.* 279.

<sup>677</sup> *Ibid.* and 275.

<sup>678</sup> *Ibid.* 107.

<sup>679</sup> Berdyaev ST, 309: ‘Apostasy and a fall has substituted the hierarchy of angel-beast for the divine-human hierarchy. Angelic substitute for the divine, beast the substitute for the human.’

recognizes human nature, but angelic nature excludes the possibility of fully being human and compels people to atrocity [*zverstvo*].<sup>680</sup>

Trubetskoi's elaboration of the meaning of beastmanhood illustrates the extent to which the paradigmatic discursive structure of Godmanhood had penetrated religious-philosophical terminology for describing and understanding humanity by the time of the revolution. The allegorical nature of contrasting manhood or beastmanhood with Godmanhood illustrates the flexibility of these concepts in pre-revolutionary religious philosophy. Godmanhood had developed beyond an idea only directly related to Christ into part of a construct that describes human nature. The three concepts, beast, man, and God, represent three co-mingling aspects of mankind and provided a more nuanced understanding of man through the metaphorical connection to his beastly and Godly natures.

### 4.3 Discussions of Creativity

Chapter 3 noted that religious philosophy appears to focus on the special role of creativity in human life during the revolutionary period. When considered in light of the discursive structures of *Sophia* and Godmanhood, it becomes apparent that an important part of religious-philosophical discussions of creativity at this time was the ability to evaluate it. Both *Sophia* and Godmanhood served to help philosophers make value judgements about creativity. It seems they did not view creativity as a universal good in this period. This could be due to the interesting balance between Creator and creation many of these philosophers were trying to maintain in the context of creating a metaphysics compatible with all-unity. In any case, it is interesting to consider the idea of illegitimate creation at a time when Russian culture in general was notably 'creative'.

Berdyayev and Bulgakov both address creativity by using the conceptual scheme of Godmanhood. For Bulgakov, in 'Heroism and Asceticism' (1909), the artist or creative person is a type of ascetic hero, and art is a form of submission to an ideal. In his description the

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<sup>680</sup> Berdyayev ST, 308.

genuine artist is constantly striving for an unattainable ideal, and is not engaged in that pursuit to promote himself:

‘The same sense of profound dissatisfaction with his own work, the feeling that it fails to correspond to the ideals of beauty and the purposes of art, distinguishes the genuine artist, too; his labor inevitably becomes a torment to him, although it is his whole life. No true artist lacks a feeling of perpetual dissatisfaction with his creations, and this may be termed humility before beauty.’<sup>681</sup>

In this passage he also explains that the ideal statesman or philosopher has a similar attitude toward his life. All of these people live in the shadow of their ideal aims. This passage links artistic pursuits to devotion to other, primarily intellectual, creative acts, including philosophy.

Bulgakov's artist/creator is motivated by duty:

‘This concept [of obedience] can be extended beyond the monastery and applied to any work whatsoever. In fulfilling their obligations the doctor and the engineer, the professor and the politician, the factory owner and the worker, can each bear obedience, guided not by personal interest... but by conscience, the call of duty.’<sup>682</sup>

In these passages it is clear that creative acts align with the ‘Godman’. In later work the antinomy between Godmanhood and mangodhood functions to help legitimize creativity only in the context of Godmanhood. Godmanly creativity is an extension of God’s creativity. The alternative view, man creating entirely new things, is associated with mangodhood. In *The Philosophy of Economy* (1912), Bulgakov writes:

The content of economic activity is not the creation of life but its defence, its resuscitation from a death like state, —this principle is what distinguishes the two religions from each other— mangodhood, for which man is not created but creator, and Christianity.<sup>683</sup>

This may seem to be a denial of human creativity, but it is actually an assertion of the positive role of man as re-creator.

Berdyaev’s sentiments echo Bulgakov’s of four years previous. In *The Meaning of Creativity* (1916) he describes the creative act as belonging to mankind; it is not ‘angelic’, but part of Godmanly nature and therefore connected to human nature.<sup>684</sup> He writes that ‘the revelation of Godmanly nature must be sought until the end, and it can only be found in the

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<sup>681</sup> V, 35.

<sup>682</sup> *Ibid.* 39.

<sup>683</sup> Bulgakov 2000, 149 and FK, 145.

<sup>684</sup> Berdyaev ST, 308.

creative act of the revelation of man himself'.<sup>685</sup> The first consistent use of Godmanhood in relation to creativity must be attributed to this period, although much more is added to this discussion in emigration.

*Sophia* is also important to religious-philosophical discussions of creativity at this time. In *Philosophy of Economy* (1912), Bulgakov writes: 'Man's participation in *Sophia*, which brings the driving forces of the logos to the world and plays the role of *natura naturans* toward nature, makes human creativity possible.'<sup>686</sup> As God is the only creator, it can only be through him that humans experience creativity. Bulgakov develops *Sophia's* effect on human creativity away from the Romantic approaches previously associated with the *Sophia-as-muse-for-creativity* of Solov'ev. Bulgakov writes, 'There is nothing physically new in human creativity; we can only reproduce a likeness of the images that are divinely given to us.'<sup>687</sup> Human creativity without *Sophia* had the potential to be evil. *Sophia* helps delineate how to create as a dutiful artist would. The choice against faithful reproduction is a deviation from the influence of *Sophia*. Bulgakov goes on to describe this situation, 'If creation takes matters into its own hands, seeking a model outside of the divine *Sophia*, it shapes shadowy satanic worlds alongside the given created one.'<sup>688</sup> With this distinction between the Sophianic model and deviation from it Bulgakov is able to blame empirical reality for the limitations on *Sophia*.

Godmanhood and *Sophia* were both used to help explain how some creativity is not valuable. It is interesting to consider the development of legitimate and illegitimate creativity in terms of Godmanhood and mangodhood, and what appears to be an emerging paradigm for delineating good and bad behaviour in many spheres: an ethics of Godmanhood. *Sophia's* contribution on the other hand clarifies the ways religious philosophy understood creation itself. In the post-revolutionary period artistic circles would face the problems of conflating creation and production, but it seems that even with some grounds for antipathy towards Marxist

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<sup>685</sup> *Ibid.* 520.

<sup>686</sup> Bulgakov 2000, 145 and FK, 139.

<sup>687</sup> Bulgakov 2000, 145 and FK, 140.

<sup>688</sup> *Ibid.*

aesthetics, religious philosophers also began the period with a similar understanding of the creative act.

#### 4.4 Abstract Social Criticism

During the revolutionary period many religious philosophers were politically active, and indeed were making direct and explicit social criticism of late imperial Russia. However, it can be seen by looking more closely at the discursive structures identified in this research that the basis for much direct social criticism was inherent within the themes of religious philosophy itself. Godmanhood provided a model and a basis for critique of 'revolutionism', but all-unity, *sobornost'*, and *Sophia* also have implications for what type of ideal political and social world was implied in this idealist philosophy.

One criticism highlighted in Chapter 2 is that religious philosophy, particularly as it is concerned with *sobornost'*, is not fundamentally liberal or supportive of liberal democracy. This is an important consideration because thinkers like Frank were involved with liberal political movements, and because texts like *Landmarks [Vekhi]* (1909) were supposedly offering a moderate critique of the prevalent radical socialist intelligentsia.

The revolutionary period was also a vibrant time for structural change within the Church. While 'proponents of religious renaissance radicalised the Slavophil concept of *sobornost'* as a response to the new issues of a revolutionary era', others saw a role for *sobornost'* with the 'revolutionary' Church.<sup>689</sup> For example, the All Russian Church Council that took place in Moscow in the summer of 1917 was important for Bulgakov because it was an enactment of the *sobornost'* of the Church that had been absent from its external organization since 1721 when Peter the Great introduced the Holy Synod.<sup>690</sup> Experiencing *sobornost'* in real time, instead of hypothesizing about it, occupied religious philosophers in 1917.

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<sup>689</sup> Rosenthal 1993, 198.

<sup>690</sup> Evtuhov, 192.

In this context it is worthwhile to look at *sobornost'* and whether it might offer a political model. One illustrative example is the use of *sobornost'* to describe social ferment in revolutionary Russia in *Legion and Sobornost'* [*Legion i sobornost'*] (1918) by Vyacheslav Ivanov (1866-1949).<sup>691</sup> His writing indicates that despite the All Russian Church Council the idea also had secular uses. He writes of *sobornost'* as part of the Russian people: 'Such is our Slavic meaning of the supreme steps of humanity; it is not an organization but *sobornost'*. And when I hear this word pronounced in our circles, my spirit rejoices in its own vitality and desire for this word.'<sup>692</sup> He equates the theoretical *sobornost'* to a socially enacted *sobornost'*: 'The meaning of *sobornost'* is the same for theoretical thought as the realization of *sobornost'* is for creative living.'<sup>693</sup> Ivanov is aware of the potential disconnection between these two and seeks to emphasize that *sobornost'* is real.

No matter how 'real' *sobornost'* might be among the Russian populace, Ivanov's discussion is very idealistic. When he writes that '*sobornost'* is a combination, where united people reach a perfect disclosure of their own singular, unique and original essence, their own overall [*tselokupnii*] creative freedom, which is expressive [*izglagolanii*], new, and for all lower language', it is clear that Ivanov is overstating the abilities of Russian people to join communally.<sup>694</sup> This description seems highly dynamic, energetic and optimistic. Along with recognizing the necessity of freedom, Ivanov describes *sobornost'* as facilitating some sort of personal idiom that allows self-expression and communication, even in daily mundane speech. In this passage Ivanov focuses on the way that *sobornost'* suggests potential for activity: '*sobornost'* is a task [*zadanie*] and not a given [*dannost'*]; it has never fulfilled itself on earth

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<sup>691</sup> Vyacheslav Ivanovitch Ivanov studied philosophy and history at the University of Moscow, and then went abroad to Germany to continue his studies. Ivanov's travel kept him abroad until 1905 when he returned to Russia and settled in St. Petersburg with his wife Lydia Zinovieva-Annibal. Her sudden death in 1907 influenced the trajectory of of Ivanov's creative focus from poetry to mysticism. After the revolution Ivanov emigrated to Rome in 1924. Ivanov's sensibilities are near to the intentions of the religious philosophers but his life and work diverged significantly from their patterns.

<sup>692</sup> V. Ivanov, *Sobrabie Sochinenii* Vol. 3 '*Legion i sobornost'*', 261.

<sup>693</sup> Ivanov, 260.

<sup>694</sup> *Ibid.*

completely and lastingly, and it can never be found here or there, like God.<sup>695</sup> This quote suggests that the actualizing element in *sobornost'* dominates the meaning, and that even though *sobornost'* does exist as part of Ivanov's perceived reality in 1918, he also considers it to be a dynamic fact about the future of Russian social life. By thinking of *sobornost'* as a task, Ivanov implies that the social perfection of *sobornost'* belongs more to the realm of possibility than to reality—a conclusion substantiated by religious philosophy in emigration.

The traditional incompatibilities between *sobornost'* and 'politics' present a problem for realistically enacting any sort of '*sobornost'*' community. Rosenthal writes that '*sobornost'* symbolized Ivanov's hope of transcending politics' in an anarchic, not authoritarian, way.<sup>696</sup> Ivanov's interest in Symbolism and participation in this movement as a poet and translator allowed him to engage more fully than the religious philosophers in the process of creating the myth of *sobornost'*.<sup>697</sup> His statements about *sobornost'* developed the original idea in directions that applied to the newly free situation of revolutionary Russia.<sup>698</sup>

At the time Ivanov was writing the older type of political *sobornost'* as imagined in the context of the church and which 'was explicitly distinguished from parliamentary democracy' was being exercised by the Council.<sup>699</sup> The emphatic political principle of *sobornost'* at the time of the Council served to protect the collective from the will of the majority. In the Council, A. V. Vasiliev argued against parliamentary democracy, saying, 'The majority treads on the needs and desires and will of the minority.'<sup>700</sup> The collective principle of *sobornost'* should protect vulnerable minorities from this type of government. Evtuhov explains that *sobornost'* is particularly incompatible with 'conflicting interest groups or parties'.<sup>701</sup> It seems

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<sup>695</sup> F. Sapienza, 'Mikhail Bakhtin, Vyacheslav Iavnov and the Rhetorical Culture of the Russian Third Renaissance.' From: *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 37/2 (2004), 132.

<sup>696</sup> B. Rosenthal, 'Transcending Politics: Vyacheslav Ivanov's Visions of Sobornost', *California Slavonic Studies*, 14 (1992), 148.

<sup>697</sup> Roesenthal 1993, 183.

<sup>698</sup> Ivanov ceased to write about *sobornost'* in 1921, after taking his PhD in philology and pursuing work in that field under the Soviet government (Rosenthal 1992, 148). In direct contrast to émigré uses of *sobornost'* his earlier characterization of it embraces the hopefulness in the idea.

<sup>699</sup> Evtuhov, 191.

<sup>700</sup> *Ibid.* 199.

<sup>701</sup> *Ibid.*

that in either context, *sobornost* was not really able to provide a functional means of thinking about collective government because of the vague way it alluded to protecting ‘individuality’ without permitting any practical structural means of doing so. This problem could be said to be a product of all-unity, or a preference within religious philosophy for the unifying principle over an individualizing one. However, within all-unity it also seems that disharmonious living is not an acceptable possibility under religious philosophy. Put another way it may be that all-unity prevents a system of competing valid opinions or competing valid actors from being functionally legitimate. This problem is apparent in discussions of sin in the context of all-unity.

Florensky identifies the problem faced by philosophers who use all-unity to define reality: if there is nothing outside of the Absolute, then what is sin? Where can it be found? And what causes it? ‘*Consensus omnium* testifies that there are two paths, but how is one to understand the possibility of this duality?... How can there be another path, then, if Truth is the source of all being and outside Truth there is nothing?’<sup>702</sup> Seeking to understand sin and needing to explain sin in a way that is compatible with a reality defined by all-unity is a problem for religious philosophy in this period, and it is a problem with a bearing on understanding social action. When it seems so clear that one path is the right path, how do we understand human action against this path? In essence it is such action against unity that makes *sobornost* unviable in any sort of real situation. This conflict is made clear when Florensky connects the idea of sin as fracture with the desire of the self to exist independently of others; sin is the ‘element of disharmony, decay and decomposition of spiritual life’.<sup>703</sup> Looking at the destructive element of sin, the way that it breaks up and destroys the healthy whole of a human being, a family, a society, or the world, is a common abstract approach among religious philosophers.

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<sup>702</sup> Florensky 1997, 125, and SS, 167.

<sup>703</sup> Florensky 1997, 129. This quote is also a particularly illustrative example of Florensky’s poetic prose in *The Pillar and the Ground of the Truth*: ‘*grekh—monet razlada, raspada i razvala dukhovnoi zhizni*’ (SS, 174).

Frank also sees a dis-unifying element in sin, as an atomization of the whole and an isolation of the individual.<sup>704</sup> This element of Frank's work is useful in critique of modernity, which opposes unity because the idea of 'a divided whole' is an essential part of definitions of modernity.<sup>705</sup> It logically follows that for one living in a culture of modernity, the ability to connect with the greater whole is reduced by experiences like alienation and industrialization. Yet what of the human will to disengage from unity? As in discussions of evil and subjectivity, it seems that the choice to sin is only understandable in the context of dissociating from the truth of all-unity. Trubetskoi explains that the highest exhibition of creation, when considered separately from God, is its independence and its freedom, but this independence is flimsy. Trubetskoi makes it clear that independence of perception is only contrary to unity in execution—not in its origin: 'The source of sin appears unholy, but the freedom of creation, its self-determination is given from God.'<sup>706</sup> This definition of sin, that it is the assertion of the self, is also illustrative of wider religious-philosophical views of sin, such as Florensky's: 'The root of all sin is the assertion of oneself as oneself, without relation to that which is other.'<sup>707</sup> In this sense sin is the denial of the ultimate unity, represented in Florensky's writings as the Truth, of which every human being is a part.

This statement of Florensky's can be understood in two ways. Firstly, it can be understood as an endorsement of human agents as participants in all-unity and congruent with Berdyaev's writing about human freedom as an essential ingredient in establishing unity.<sup>708</sup> In another sense, Florensky's statement draws attention to the potential for human will to act as an agent for undermining unity, and asks: what is the source of mis-will? He hints that sin is located in man's rational mind: 'Sin itself is something wholly rational, it is wholly according to

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<sup>704</sup> Barth Landor identifies this as a 'wrong state of the soul' ('The Religious Individual in the Thought of Valdimir Solovyov, Lev Shestov, Semyon Frank, and Nikolai Berdyaev', M.Litt. thesis, University of Glasgow, 1992, 132).

<sup>705</sup> Casgard, 179.

<sup>706</sup> Trubetskoi SZ, 104, 103.

<sup>707</sup> Florensky 1997, 132, and SS, 177.

<sup>708</sup> Berdyaev sees the state of interrelatedness as engendered by the will of free beings; our interdependence is the result of free will (Berdyaev ST, 374).

the measure of rationality.<sup>709</sup> This condemnation of rationality is in keeping with other religious philosophers' criticisms of modernity and materialism. Florensky echoes those who see modernity and materialism as debasing spiritual life and corrupting mankind: 'Sin is rationality *par excellence*; it makes God's entire creation and God himself absurd.'<sup>710</sup> It is interesting that Florensky avoids a deep discussion of the agency behind rationalism. For example, in *The Pillar and the Ground of the Truth* he mentions Nietzsche's work only in passing and then as though it is part of the religious-philosophical project and not opposed to it.

The source and execution of human will is deeply connected to ideas of freedom, but with all-unity freedom seems to only truly serve unity. To Trubetskoi freedom establishes the relationship between creation and God which entails both the possibility of sin and of love:

If man could not break from God, then he could also not be in divine union with God, not on his own, not as an independent strength of humanity. Man could not have [the potential for] *Godmanhood*, and a one-sided action of the Divine over a fully apathetic human nature and will would exist.<sup>711</sup>

This apparent potential for both the good and the bad to be a result of will is like Berdyaev's view that the potential for both unity and disorder rests with the volition of the substantial being. To refer back to Florensky, it is obvious which 'path' one should choose when given the options of unity and God's love on the one hand or disorder and sin on the other. To put it simply as Florensky did, Truth seems the 'right' way to go.

Lossky's thought also looks at human beings as capable of free action when he posits a multitude of free organisms. Sergeev questions whether these substantial agents might not irreversibly transform the universe into chaos by way of their free action instead of making the right choice, for 'Truth'. Sergeev postulates that perhaps like entropy, the freedom of substantial agents will eventually erode any divine order in the universe. In Lossky's view *Sophia* is on hand to rescue the universe and connect free substantial agents to each other in a coherent way, but he does not look more closely at the repercussions of freedom in *Sophia* until

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<sup>709</sup> Florensky 1997, 133, and SS, 179.

<sup>710</sup> *Ibid.* For religious-philosophical critique of modernity and materialism, see above page 182 and below pages 281-287.

<sup>711</sup> *Ibid.* 106.

after the Revolution has taken place.<sup>712</sup> In this setting it seems as though *Sophia*, in a new context, redresses pantheistic issues associated with all-unity.

This look at agency and *Sophia* turns the question of how to manage human freedom back to politics. Evtuhov writes that in Bulgakov's works '*Sophia* was potentially compatible with different kinds of institutions', vaguely hinting that *Sophia* does not oppose democratic government.<sup>713</sup> Bulgakov was not alone in thinking of politics in religious terms. For Berdyaev, in *Philosophy of Freedom* (1911), Godmanhood implies a perfect government. Religious philosophy, opposed to liberal democracy or not, favours theocracy. Berdyaev writes of 'the revelation of Godmanhood on earth, the revelation of the Holy Spirit in sobornal humanity,' as a desirable theocracy.<sup>714</sup> Bulgakov also indirectly criticizes democracy. In *Two Cities* (1911) he writes that 'anthropotheism [*Antropo-teizm*]', or in the Russian expression of Dostoevsky, 'mangodhood [*chelovekobozhie*]', is the idea 'that man is a separate chosen one, and that all mankind is aristocratic, oligarchic, egotistical, and democratic'.<sup>715</sup> These anti-democratic, or pro-theocratic, inclinations corroborate religious philosophy's wider attitudes toward freedom and politics in the revolutionary period. It is interesting that both thinkers come to similar political conclusions in publications of the same year.

Florensky echoes their concerns in his definition of sin: that sin is 'transgression of the law, perversion of the law i.e. of the Order that is given to creation'.<sup>716</sup> He cites 1 John 3:4, 'sin is lawlessness', as the basis for his reasoning. Here it seems that the natural order of things is all-unity and it is undermined or disrupted by sin and embodied in individual will. Florensky highlights the necessity of a correct, perfect, ordered, whole world in order for sin to corrupt and destroy: 'Outside of the law sin is nothing'.<sup>717</sup> All-unity is a fundamental premise for understanding sin as such transgression of order. In fact the very existence of sin is dependent

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<sup>712</sup> BIMZ, 301, and Sergeev 1999, 6.

<sup>713</sup> Bulgakov 2000, 15.

<sup>714</sup> FS, 165.

<sup>715</sup> This use of 'democratic' alludes to the power of men over each other in democratic governments where the majority tyrannizes the minority (Bulgakov DG, 16).

<sup>716</sup> Florensky 1997, 127, and SS, 170.

<sup>717</sup> *Ibid.* 170.

upon all-unity: ‘Sinfulness, even though it is, is something that does not have being [*est’ ne-sushchaia*].’<sup>718</sup> To Florensky sin can exist without possessing an existence, making sin a very strange thing. Without possessing an existence sin is excluded from unified reality, or it cannot be considered one of the things that exist in all-unity. By defining sin this way, Florensky obscures it.

It seems that democracy, and free will, along with sin, are the sorts of things that can exist, but cannot have an existence according to religious philosophy in the revolutionary period. The approaches to sin and human freedom have one thing strongly in common: none of them addresses the practical necessities. Instead religious experience and abstractions present an impossible picture of religious-philosophical utopia.

#### 4.5 Conclusions

This chapter has taken a closer look at how the four discursive structures identified in this research can develop and extend observations about the state of religious philosophy in the revolutionary period. *Sophia* was clearly the inspiration and subject of several religious-philosophical works in that time, and writings based on all-unity and Godmangood were also prevalent. The idea of all-unity engendered discussions of the problems traditionally associated with it, and some of the inherent questions about the type of communality implied by *sobornost’* were raised. The revolutionary circumstances spurred religious philosophy to raise these questions anew and answer them more practically than ever before. In post-revolutionary religious philosophy these topics would become sites of further discussion and development.

One change unquestionably wrought by revolution was that forced exile and execution reduced the breadth of discussion on these topics in the emigration period. Major contributors to the religious-philosophical school died or were otherwise prevented from continuing to participate. The inclusion of Karsavin’s, Florensky’s and Trubetskoi’s perspectives on all-unity

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<sup>718</sup> Florensky 1997, 125, and SS 168. Underlining my own.

here contrast with their lost voices after the revolution. They were not able to contribute to post-revolutionary émigré development of the themes of all-unity they helped to develop.

The revolutionary period was more than merely an inspiration towards later work in emigration. It can be concluded from the persistent abstraction and idealism in these texts that religious philosophy at this time was not concerned with constructing viable political alternatives, and although it might have been theoretically prepared for an event like the revolution it was certainly not practically equipped. Philosophers, by definition, are not politicians, so this observation is not intended as a criticism. It merely seems quite clear that the roots of religious-philosophical reaction lie here in this unpreparedness for revolution and its consequences. As will be seen in the next part, revolution and emigration constituted a traumatic experience, causing voices to be raised to a high volume indeed.

### **PART THREE:**

Part of the premise of this research is that some fruitful conclusions about the state of Russian religious philosophy during the émigré period can be gained from thinking of Russian religious philosophy as a discourse, and by looking more closely at how ideas were present and used within this discourse. The political and social upheaval to which Russians were subjected in the first half of the twentieth century was in no small part due to revolution, but for many the experience of emigration from Russia added to and complicated the meaning of the revolution.

In this Part the emigration period is examined in detail. Chapter 5 explains the realities of émigré life and its consequences for the intelligentsia abroad. Chapter 6 discusses the potential effects of emigration of religious philosophy, as highlighted by the four discursive structures.



## **Chapter 5: The Key Theme of Emigration**

For many Russians the traumatic events of the revolutionary period were followed by an equally traumatic exile from their homeland into interwar Europe.<sup>719</sup> The influence of revolutionary impulses on the history of Russian philosophy is particularly marked and identifiable, but the legacy of emigration is less apparent. This is due to four points of difference between the places the Revolution and emigration occupied in Russian intellectual life: first, there was less cultural sensitivity to the potential meaning of emigration; second, unlike in the case of revolution, there was no predetermined narrative of émigré experience for intellectuals to call upon; third, the émigré experience took place far less definitively; and finally the meaning of emigration was less of a priority than the meaning of its cause, the reality of Bolshevism. Religious philosophy in emigration continued to deal with the themes it had been concerned with in pre-1917 Russia because of these four factors; yet this is not to say that there were no recognisable consequences of emigration on religious-philosophical discourse.

To look more closely at the first point, it can be clearly seen in Chapter 3 that among the *intelligentsia* awareness of the potential for and the potential repercussions of revolution was very high. Especially when considering pre-revolutionary thought, it was much higher than awareness of the potential for exile and the repercussions of emigration. It may be that the particular intellectual consequences of *emigration* as a thing in itself were obscured by intellectual focus on revolution. Furthermore, it would have been impossible to entertain the idea of emigration in pre-revolutionary Russia because the Russian diaspora constituted the first mass political exodus. Even if some sort of exile had been anticipated, the idea that exile would

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<sup>719</sup> Raeff states the mean estimated number of émigré Russians in Europe and the Far East to be 718,000 in 1922, and that this number reduced to 503,000 by 1930 (*Russia Abroad: A Cultural History of the Russian Emigration 1919-1939* (Oxford, 1990), Table I, 202).

be permanent was not the obvious or desired conclusion of revolutionary rhetoric. Indeed, the situation of emigration, while real, was not the obvious subject of analysis because it was also supposed to be temporary. The hardships of concern to émigrés were difficult to distinguish from the general hardships of war and revolution.

The second point also bears closer scrutiny. Partially due to intellectuals' focus on revolution, no predetermined narrative of what an experience of dislocation would be like or what its overall meaning should be existed. This absence is in great contrast with the cultural narrative of the revolutionary experience, which had already been well established. Although parallels can be and were drawn between Russian émigrés and other post-revolutionary exiles like those who migrated due to the French Revolution, the scale and duration of Russian exodus was definitely unprecedented. This novel group of migrants posed a challenge to those who wished to conceptualise emigration, and was a particular challenge to those who wished to conceptualize it *in situ*.

The observation that the 'collective' or shared nature of the émigré experience was diluted or less easily recognizable than the shared experience of revolution is more difficult to establish. The émigrés went to various geographical destinations, contributing to a sense of diffusion in the Russian émigré experience. Yet even in these disparate locations, the ethnic and social distinctions of Imperial Russia persisted. Ultimately, the émigré experience had a unity that was not easily identified by its constituent members. The émigré experience could be broken down into smaller 'unique' units of experience common to the émigrés in specific foreign countries, or of particular classes. The commonality of experience was, therefore, elusive and often masked by the illusory distinctions that persisted from pre-revolutionary times, or had been artificially erected by the geographical dispersal of migrants.

All of these considerations facilitated the submersion of the meaning of emigration into other aspects of émigré culture, especially the meaning of the Revolution. The Revolution was part of a larger paradigm about the historical importance and meaning of Russia's history in a way that the émigré experience, which was meant to be only temporary, was not. The significance of emigration could not be considered on its own. It may seem as though the

experience of emigration was so tied to its cause, the Revolution, that it is not worthy of separate consideration. But of course it is distinct and significant enough in its own right to justify serious discussion.

The need to look particularly at émigré life has been addressed in earlier work such as that of Marc Raeff, himself a Russian émigré, who deals thoroughly with the topic of emigration caused by the Soviet regime in *Russia Abroad: A Cultural History of the Russian Emigration 1919-1939*. In *Russia Abroad: Writers, History, Politics*, John Glad addresses the relationship between literary movements in exile and Russian politics.<sup>720</sup> These two books discuss the ramifications of emigration for the intelligentsia after the Revolution. Undoubtedly, while the effects of emigration were less clearly or self-consciously articulated by the intelligentsia, they still bear separating out from those of the Revolution for consideration on their own. It is important to consider them precisely because emigration was an unanticipated event whose effects were not consciously recognised. As can be seen in Chapter 4, in the case of religious philosophy, coherence of subject and purpose persisted through the trials of revolution, partially because those trials had been anticipated to some extent and partially because concerns about Russian politics and revolution had been part of religious philosophy's original subjects and purposes. In the context of émigré thought, religious philosophy, therefore, faced a true turning-point.

The meanings and purposes that texts had before the Revolution were influenced by the dialogues of emigration to take on new connotations and applications. In the 1920s and '30s the need to adjust to the realities of new political concepts and national circumstances created a challenging environment for texts published abroad that continued to be oriented toward traditional themes or written in a traditional style. Because the way that revolution had previously been understood was theoretical, it can be argued that the realities of the revolutionary event were only absorbed by religious philosophers after the events, while they were also experiencing the difficulties of émigré life. By 1940, although many religious philosophers had continued to write, some in extreme adversity, the tone and object of their

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<sup>720</sup> (Tenafly, 1999).

written work had undergone major change. It is in the context of emigration that the true effects of the Revolution could be seen, assessed and reacted to. As such the experience of emigration and the effects of revolution can be understood as separate yet related themes in religious philosophy.

Another reason changes took place in religious-philosophical texts after emigration is that the context of religious philosophy changed at this time. Disruptions to university life, intellectual circles and research, as well as changes in the type of audience and the needs of religious-philosophical thinkers, meant that émigré objectives for texts differed from pre-revolutionary objectives. Historical events of the 1920s and '30s also had an influence, but by and large the rise of fascism and further political instability in Europe in most cases only confirmed what exposure to revolution and emigration had originally engendered in the religious philosophers: a nostalgia for an indefinable past, a distrust of politics and a sense of the potential for inhumanity in daily life.

### 5.1 In Theory and Practice

Theoretical considerations of exile conflicted with the real experience of many émigrés after the Civil War: extreme poverty and hardship. The vast scale of population displacement after the Revolution has been labelled the 'first wave' of emigration from Russia.<sup>721</sup> Although there was no theoretical anticipation of a mass emigration of this sort, there was a precedent for Russians travelling abroad. Living abroad in order to study or travel, as well as a way to resist the regime was a common enough experience for elites in Imperial Russia. Before the collapse of the Empire, the tradition of living abroad made the idea of travelling to Europe for an extended period theoretically, if not actually, familiar to many members of the intelligentsia. Living in Western Europe was part of a tradition of living abroad in pursuit of a freer intellectual life.

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<sup>721</sup> Emigration in the Soviet period can be broken down into three general waves. The emigration following the Revolution constitutes the 'first wave'. The second wave took place during World War II, and the third wave of exodus from the USSR peaked in the 1970s and '80s.

Politically motivated exile to Europe was also culturally understood, but for different reasons. The autocracy had gone unsupported by certain members of the population for some time; especially in the nineteenth century, many leaders of Russian cultural life spent a good deal of their lives outside of the Russian Empire. For the most part such people were revolutionaries who could not pursue their political agendas while living in Russia. Herzen lived abroad in Paris, London and Geneva from 1847 because he was exiled. Contemporaries of the religious philosophers, such as Lenin, also did so. While working and publishing abroad these Russians formed émigré communities. They associated in close groups of likeminded people, they pursued activities closely related to Russia's politics (instead of being concerned with local politics), and they supported themselves with intellectual pursuits or funding from home. These types of behaviour can be seen in post-revolutionary Russian émigrés as well, suggesting that a pattern of expected behaviour of Russians abroad had been set and that no matter how different the political agenda may have been for post-revolutionary émigrés, the Russian intelligentsia maintained some behaviours regardless of when they travelled abroad.

A distinction needs to be made between travelling or living abroad temporarily and a commitment to staying abroad permanently. The latter, as well as the large scale of post-revolutionary emigration, enabled these émigrés to create 'Russia Abroad', distinguishing them from earlier migrants. Raeff explains that among the émigrés the idea of 'Russia Abroad' came into existence because the 'homeland no longer conformed to what émigrés thought Russia should be'.<sup>722</sup> For Raeff the émigrés contributed to the creation, if not maintenance, of a mythologized ideal Russia. The idea that Russia was not living up to intellectuals' expectations was not a new one; but 'Russia Abroad' was created out of more than the need to counter contemporary Russia with a better alternative. For one, while previous generations had been able from the vantage point of the West to critique and assess their homeland, this practice was made all the more meaningful to the post-revolutionary émigrés because they were not physically able to return home. Furthermore, the longer they remained in exile the more they became aware that their homeland was becoming less like the Russia they had once known.

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<sup>722</sup> Raeff, 47.

If exile could be described as a culturally understood experience, the scale of this wave of emigration was not culturally understood. In addition to the psychological challenges, emigration was an unsettling experience physically. Prolonged exposure to a foreign environment without assurances of a probable return home was a clear cause of anxiety further compounded by the sickness, hunger, and poverty suffered by so many. The hardships and suffering began with the process of exiting Russia during the Civil War. In this process of mass exodus, émigrés were unable to bring many material possessions or much wealth with them, and what they had been able to bring was often sold or exchanged for accommodation and transport under predatory circumstances. The large numbers of men fleeing the White Army ranks caused problematic homogenous demographics of young ex-military men. Without the support of military structure, families or wives, these young men contributed to the instability of the community of émigrés in transit. Other travellers included orphans and broken families, further complicating social interactions in the close living quarters and cramped travel conditions of the diaspora. Combined with poor nutrition, over-crowded living conditions and lack of social support, the physical toll and psychological worry of disease added to this distressing experience.

The hardships of migration continued after settlement in Europe. Where émigrés ended up living had a significant influence on the quality of their experience. The intellectual capitals of the emigration were Prague, Paris, and Berlin. It is in these three cities that religious philosophers predominantly settled. Prague, as the capital of the newly formed Czechoslovakia, did not compare favourably with other established European capitals, whereas the attractions of Paris and Berlin had been well known amongst the intelligentsia before the Revolution.<sup>723</sup>

Deliberate policies on the part of the newly formed Czechoslovak government drew émigré intellectuals to Prague. For certain academics, invitations to join new institutions played a strong part in their decision; for example, Lossky's invitation to teach in Prague not only drew him initially but led him to settle there for the duration of the interwar years.<sup>724</sup> The Russian

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<sup>723</sup> Andreyev and Savicky, 81.

<sup>724</sup> Sciabarra, 44.

Law Faculty, formed with the express purpose of completing the educations of Russian youth abroad in order to support the type of institutions that would be necessary when these youths returned to Russia, briefly employed Bulgakov and the liberal thinkers Struve and Pavel Novgorodtsev (1866-1924). Florovsky completed his studies and began his academic career there. Lossky and Bulgakov also contributed to the doings of the Russian Institute in Prague.<sup>725</sup>

Another attraction that allowed Prague to vie with major European capitals as a centre of émigré learning was its libraries, which other new capitals briefly populated by émigrés, such as Sofia, lacked.<sup>726</sup> A further, albeit partial, attraction was that Prague was politically unstable, giving politically-minded émigrés an opportunity to influence domestic politics and providing an element of chance and freedom to those whose appetites for reform had been left unsatisfied in Russia.<sup>727</sup> Instability could act as a deterrent, however, to more introspective academics who were eager to settle into a routine and resume their research.

The decision to go to Prague was, on the whole, not a decision to settle there. The anticipated return to Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution had failed or stabilized coloured much of the activity taken up by the émigré community. Over the course of 1920s, as the Czechoslovak government developed closer relations with Soviet Russia, the sense of purpose among the émigré community in Prague necessarily shifted from attempting to influence the Russian Revolution from abroad to digesting the European consequences, not only of the Russian Revolution but also of the Treaty of Versailles. The émigré community had to acknowledge the apparent durability of the Soviet regime. This transition of purpose can be seen in the changing nature of the émigré press:

At first the Russian press in Prague had focused on Russia or the emigration as a whole and had addressed the issue of intervention in the Civil War. However, by the end of the 1920s and early 1930s, it had become the press of the Russian colony in Czechoslovakia.<sup>728</sup>

By the mid-1920s, most of the prominent intellectuals who had gone to Prague in order to teach had left for Paris.

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<sup>725</sup> Andreyev and Savicky, 103.

<sup>726</sup> *Ibid.* 83.

<sup>727</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>728</sup> *Ibid.* 121.

Although the government of Germany was less welcoming to émigrés than the Czechoslovak government was, Berlin was a very appealing location.<sup>729</sup> It had geographical proximity to Russia and held social ties for émigrés who had studied abroad there.<sup>730</sup> It was also less financially difficult for impoverished émigrés to live there, due to the collapse of the Papiermark. Because the Treaty of Versailles had isolated both Russia and Germany from Europe, common adversity drew the two countries to each other. Unlike Czechoslovakia's growing closeness to the Soviet Union, which had been a hindrance to émigré politics, Germany's rapprochement with the Soviet Union facilitated the necessary social and economic contacts for émigré groups to develop culturally.<sup>731</sup> The economic circumstances were especially beneficial to the literary-minded émigrés, as publication was rendered extremely cheap by European standards.<sup>732</sup> This circumstance was a draw to those who wished to publish for the news-hungry émigré market as well as those who wished to continue to publish literary and academic works. Many of the religious philosophers' early musings about the Revolution and emigration were published in Berlin, allowing them to continue their academic work and promote a sense of worth and stability.<sup>733</sup>

Berlin was full of Russians of all political persuasions, including Soviet police and citizens taking advantage of the economic conditions to facilitate their NEP businesses. Eventually Germany normalized the legal status of immigrants and provided unemployment benefits to Russian émigrés, which improved their lives.<sup>734</sup> However, the codification of Germany's renewed diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in the form of the Treaty of

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<sup>729</sup> Glad, 154.

<sup>730</sup> For a detailed investigation of the Russian émigré community in Berlin, see R. C. Williams, *Culture in Exile* (London: 1972).

<sup>731</sup> Andreyev and Savicky, 160.

<sup>732</sup> Glad, 157.

<sup>733</sup> Circumstances surrounding publication played a great role in the career development of these thinkers abroad. Opportunities to support oneself by writing were few and meagre. Producing new material was an end in itself for religious philosophers, but the insular publishing community limited the over-all benefits of publication. The problem of an already small readership for religious-philosophical works was compounded by the limited opportunity for publishing reviews in journals, one of the few means of raising public awareness of new publications. These reviews 'encouraged in-group networks, mutual admiration postures, envy and personal rivalries' (Raeff, 74).

<sup>734</sup> Glad, 156.

Rapallo (1922), combined with renewed economic stability, which raised the cost of living, made Berlin a less appealing city for settlement, especially to those opposed to the new Soviet regime. Berdyaev left Berlin in 1924 exactly for these reasons. Frank remained despite them, only to leave much later, when the rise of the Nazi Party ensured future problematic relations between the German government and the Russian émigrés and reduced the possibility of long-term assimilation.<sup>735</sup>

Within a decade of the Revolution, Paris became the clear destination choice for Russian émigrés, including members of the intelligentsia, even though it was not as academically welcoming as either Prague or Berlin.<sup>736</sup> Paris had been a centre for Russian culture abroad even before the emigration, and the French government needed labour to help with the rehabilitation of the French economy after World War I. It seemed only natural that Russians, many of them formerly agricultural workers, would settle in France. Yet French governmental promotion of immigrants who could contribute to economic recovery was indifferent toward academics who, for the most part, could not. One positive side-effect of this was the unique degree of autonomy émigrés could have while pursuing their studies.<sup>737</sup> This freedom was partially facilitated by the émigré community's persistent place outside of French society. The resistance of the French to integrating Russians into mainstream French society allowed a parallel society of Russians to grow freely alongside their host community.

For the religious philosophers in particular, Paris offered a positive environment. The creation of the St. Sergius Theological Institute provided an institutional centre for these thinkers to work around.<sup>738</sup> After the recovery of the Mark made publication in Berlin less cost-effective, the publishing opportunities provided from 1925 by the Institute's associated YMCA Press, drew the attention of academics who were eager to maintain their working lives.<sup>739</sup> While non-fiction in general was an unpopular subject-matter for publication, the orientation of the

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<sup>735</sup> *Ibid.* 162.

<sup>736</sup> Unlike Prague, which actively recruited academics, or Berlin, where publishing opportunities abounded, academic circles in Paris were relatively closed to Russian immigrants.

<sup>737</sup> Andreyev and Savicky, 172.

<sup>738</sup> Plekon, 204.

<sup>739</sup> Raeff, 78.

YMCA Press meant that it subsidized publication of religious philosophy to a greater extent than other academic disciplines, further increasing the appeal of Paris to thinkers interested in theology and philosophy.<sup>740</sup> However, it should be noted that beyond the Institute, the French university system remained impenetrable to most of the religious philosophers.<sup>741</sup> Demand from the French public to have lectures and publications in French, unlike in Prague and Berlin where use of Russian was acceptable, proved a barrier to these philosophers' integration into French academia. There was a place for religious philosophy in Paris, but it was not on par with the place of religious philosophy in pre-revolutionary Russian society.

In all of these geographical locations émigré communities remained isolated from two important external sources of identity: the Russia in which they had matured, and the European society in which they were now living. In Prague, the focus of the Russian intelligentsia who studied there was to prepare for the outcome of the Revolution, and later to potentially influence or counter that outcome. In Berlin and Paris the likelihood of returning to Russia anytime soon became an ever more abstract hope. Living in dreams, or an internal space, can be a powerfully isolating experience because dreams are so personal to the dreamer. When thrust into this situation of anticipation, the members of the community of 'Russia Abroad' had a unique experience, different from that of earlier émigré movements. Such a large group of people collectively thinking of the abstract future Russia reinforced personal illusions about the political realities of modern Europe. Raeff describes this aspect of the émigré experience as one of dual identity, instead of isolated identity. In his opinion, each individual's membership in 'Russia Abroad' had to co-exist with membership in whatever new society he had settled in.<sup>742</sup> Thus, an émigré would at once have to act as though the new homeland was a positive development in his life and a place demanding investment and interest, while simultaneously thinking that a return to Russia was imminent and that all actions taken in the present should be

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<sup>740</sup> Raeff, 80. For more on the role of YMCA Press in Russian émigré life, see M. L. Miller 'A Hunger for Books: The American YMCA Press and Russian Readers', *Religion, State and Society*, 38/1 (2010) 53-73.

<sup>741</sup> The most convincing outliers are Shestov and Berdyaev.

<sup>742</sup> Raeff, 45.

for the purpose of instigating this return. This dual identity is based on a fundamental conflict that kept émigrés from forming attachments to their new homes.

While émigrés were reluctant to assimilate to the culture of the countries in which they settled, the effect of rapid modernization in the Soviet Union increasingly rendered the homeland they desired a thing of the past, annihilating any hope for return. The émigré experience, then, became one of true statelessness in the sense that there was no existing nation in which the Russian émigré could be at home. Such a unique situation gives émigrés from the post-revolutionary wave of emigration a particular unity of experience.

It can be argued that many Russians within Soviet Russia were experiencing a similar sense of statelessness, raising the question: can the loss of identity suffered by Russians abroad be compared to that of Russians who remained 'at home'? Analysts have used terms like 'double-life' [*dvoinaia zhizn'*] and 'double-consciousness' [*dvoinoe soznanie*] to describe living conditions in Soviet Russia. Soviet citizens were beginning to live public lives that did not reflect their private worlds at the same time that émigrés were attempting to reconcile their own dual allegiances. In many ways both of these situations could be interpreted as the necessary grieving of a citizenship for the passing of an old regime, taking place in two geographical contexts. The Revolution had thus brought about two important separations in twentieth century Russian history: the division of a people from their homeland, and the division of Russian identity in Russians both at home and abroad.

Two additional factors must be considered in order to contextualize Raeff's ideas about the dual identity of Russians abroad and his understanding about the discord between ideal and real Russia in the minds of émigrés. Firstly, the fact that Bolshevik intolerance to large swathes of the population often encouraged, or forced, people who otherwise would have remained within Soviet Russia to leave must be considered. This means that people who were indifferent to the government and might have continued to live happily in Soviet Russia were forced to join the migration, and thus to take on an émigré identity, part of which was a nostalgia for a lost

Russia that they might otherwise have never felt.<sup>743</sup> People who could have been satisfied with Bolshevik Russia were forced into a situation of dissatisfaction with it. We cannot assume that these members of the emigration had deeply conflicting dual personalities, or strong ties to an abstract ideal of Russia.

Secondly, émigré communities had a wide variety of political views. Without an obvious consensus about what Russia ‘should be’, it cannot really be possible to imagine that Russian émigrés were pining for similar ideals of Russia. Unified by experience, but divided in aspiration, the community that constituted ‘Russia Abroad’ was insufficient unto itself for formulating a single identity. The great size and fractured character of the emigration prevents Raeff’s hypothesis from being universally true for all members of the emigration. But, his theory certainly seems true for groups within the emigration, like the intelligentsia, and especially religious philosophers. The community of religious philosophers was small and self-legitimizing. It is important to bear in mind the unifying influence of common experience alongside the potential division that comes from turning inward and evaluating the world in terms of personal visions for the future.

Many parallels exist between the sufferings of Russians at ‘home’, who were subjected to hardships imposed by the Soviet Regime and the sufferings of Russians abroad. The status of Russia as a state was in flux, and Russians within the Soviet state were affected by these changes. Nevertheless, the experiences of exiled Russians, including the intellectual community were different from the experiences of Russians who remained within the early Soviet Union. The high numbers of refugees and émigrés leaving Russia at this time collectively created a single type of experience that, although each individual struggled personally with it, had certain general characteristics that render the Russian émigré experience of the early twentieth century different from that of those who remained in Soviet Union.

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<sup>743</sup> Read 1990, 39-40.

## 5.2 In the Context of Revolution

The collective experience of 'being an émigré' did not mean that individuals and sub-groups in the émigré community did not have their own distinct interpretations of the situation. For most émigrés, interpreting their experience of exile depended heavily on how they understood the events of the Revolution and what outcome they had anticipated. Bulgakov, Berdyaev, Frank and other contemporary religious philosophers experienced revolution accompanied by an emigration, which made the religious-philosophical perspective on both events highly correlated. Yet this meant that each religious philosopher, along with many other members of the intelligentsia, could not consider his individual relocation as a discrete accidental event.<sup>744</sup> The conclusion that there was a special, historically predetermined character to the event of emigration and thus that the émigrés had a meaningful role to play in Russia's future followed logically from the nature of the religious philosophers' interpretation of their collective experience.

As émigrés settled into their new communities, consideration of the Revolution, the ultimate cause of their exodus, took a central place in the formation of these communities. How intellectual communities had considered the Revolution before it took place, discussed in Chapter 3, has a bearing on our understanding of the communities that later formed in Western Europe. For intellectuals, isolation and other peculiar circumstances of emigration provided a venue for reflection on the tremendous upheaval of the previous decade. Without the demands previously put on their time by political activism and teaching, some were able to write significant meditations on their experience soon after it took place. However, the mental image of philosophers in deep repose must be balanced by an understanding of the necessary daily hardships many thinkers faced. 'Russia Abroad' was economically and socially unstable, although less so than post-revolutionary Russia, so meeting the immediate material needs of their families constrained how these thinkers could approach the creation and publication of their work.

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<sup>744</sup> Glad 244, 248.

The early Bolshevik government was an unknown entity. Policies were unpredictable, and the revolutionary government could have been short-lived. In this environment the task of preserving 'Russia' in anticipation of a quick return dominated émigré behaviour and thought in the years that immediately followed exile. An example of the almost irrational desire to preserve 'old-Russia' in all its forms lies in the question of using old or new orthography. Despite the fact that the changes to orthography had been agreed before the Revolution, the émigré community resisted the change because it was implemented by the Soviet authorities. The resistance to new orthography was both personal and institutional, taken on an individual level but supported by cases where Russian schools and presses refused to change or structurally rewarded the choice not to change by making publication and distribution of material in old orthography easier. Widespread resistance illustrates not only the prevalent acceptance of the need to preserve, but also awareness of the connection language has to the project of constructing culture.<sup>745</sup> The orthography question was connected to other changes that were part of the massive cultural movement taking place in the Soviet Union at that time: specifically, the creation of a new Soviet proletarian culture.<sup>746</sup> Émigrés found the rise of proletarian culture a 'degradation' of Russian culture that must be resisted.<sup>747</sup> Antagonism to something as banal as orthography illustrates the degree of threat Soviet culture posed to the identities of those living in 'Russia Abroad'.

Preservation of Russian culture could also be used to legitimize the creation of new culture. The 'ideal' being preserved could easily undergo a metamorphosis into a theoretical ideal. When the desire to preserve transmuted into an impetus to reinvent Russian culture in its best possible version, émigrés were able to create. Creative process in this context is very complicated; it could almost be considered the opposite of the revolutionary creative process described by Frank in his contribution to *Vekhi* because there is no possibility of overt destruction at the beginning of creation. In other words, émigré thinkers did not have the ability

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<sup>745</sup> *Ibid.* 109.

<sup>746</sup> For more on the creation of this 'new Soviet culture', see S. Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front* (London, 1992).

<sup>747</sup> Glad, 245.

to 'wipe the slate clean' as their Soviet counterparts had done. If anything, the influence of pre-revolutionary Russian culture shackled thinkers' creative processes. Many émigré thinkers focused on the theory of language and theories of meaning as a means of creative expression. These theories could push forward an agenda of development of Russian culture while also perpetuating traditional ideals of Russian-ness.

This emphasis on preservation and re-invention in émigré culture can make it appear self-absorbed or myopic. It is true that immediately after the Revolution most Russian émigrés were truly uninterested in contemporary questions that did not focus on Russia. This was for a variety of reasons. One is that the significance of Russian events on Western European politics and society made the nascent Bolshevik state a topic of almost universal interest to people worldwide, Russian or not. Another is that the scale and level of trauma the Revolution and Civil War caused amongst exiles was so great that it overshadowed the circumstances of emigration. A final reason is that through answering the questions of the past the diaspora could begin to decide how to approach its future. No wonder Russian émigrés appeared to be preoccupied with their past and identity. However, this focus is most characteristic of émigrés soon after their relocation; over time, as the permanence of their relocation became clear, this tendency faded somewhat.

In the context of this hyper-concentrated re-evaluation of Russian culture, Orthodoxy emerged as a strong force in the émigré communities. After the episodic violence, humiliation and destruction they had lived through, 'it was only natural that in their new circumstances the refugees would cling with special tenacity to their traditional faith'.<sup>748</sup> Whether Orthodoxy had played a significant role in any given immigrant's life before moving abroad, it could be considered an important feature of pre-revolutionary Russianness and therefore an appealing comfort after the Revolution. Another influence on the prevalence of religious tendencies amongst émigrés was the explicit anti-religious attitude of the Bolsheviks. Émigré thinker Fedor Stepun (1884-1965), who was involved in the *Novyi Grad* movement, describes religious

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<sup>748</sup> Glad, 114.

enthusiasm as a reaction to Bolshevism.<sup>749</sup> Furthermore, the Bolsheviks' antagonism to religion contributed materially to a very spiritual émigré community: they actively drove clergy and the faithful from the country, or at least contributed to their desire to leave. Orthodoxy provided a spiritual means to digest recent events and a functioning manned institution to which émigrés could turn to for support.<sup>750</sup>

However, this 'general renewal of faith' in the émigré community also maintained continuity with pre-revolutionary Russian cultural trends, which saw lay interest in Orthodoxy rise significantly in the Silver Age.<sup>751</sup> The renewal of Orthodox faith amongst many leaders of the intelligentsia before the Revolution is certainly not coincidental to their later reliance on Orthodoxy in the emigration. Especially for religious philosophers, but also for Silver Age artists and poets, Orthodox Christianity had already captured their imaginations and featured heavily in their creative work before the Revolution. The role of religion amongst the Russian émigrés can be considered as more than a simple spiritual guide for a disturbed population; it also played a role in establishing the definition of Russian identity most worth preserving and featured in the creative re-invention of the meaning of Russian identity.

Religious philosophers responded to the transition to émigré status much less consciously than they responded to the Revolution. The fact that the Revolution receives so much scrutiny belies the profound impact emigration had on the daily lives and potential to work of exiled scholars. It is true that the Revolution was the ultimate cause of emigration and in that respect the concentration of thought on the Revolution was warranted, but the absence of philosophical scrutiny of the meaning of exile must still be noted. Much of the behaviour and many publications in emigration can be considered as part of a continued reaction to the

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<sup>749</sup> *The Russian Soul and Revolution*, (London, 1936), 162-163: 'It cannot be doubted that in the abysmal depravity and fantastic enthusiasm of Bolshevism the absoluteness of life became perceptible, turning all those who had ears to hear and eyes to see immediately to God.'

<sup>750</sup> The atheism of Bolsheviks also encouraged Western Christian communities to take a charitable interest in the religion of Russian Émigrés, through such projects as the Russian Church Aid Fund (Zernov, 1979, 7).

<sup>751</sup> Raeff, 119. See Zernov for the resurgence of intellectual interest in Orthodoxy, as well as V. Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution* (Oxford, 2004), for a full account of popular faith at this time. Lampert points out that a weakness of the religious renaissance was its lack of any real social basis (*Nicolas Berdyaev and the New Middle Ages* (London, 1946), 21).

Revolution and not as a reaction to ‘the status of émigré as caused by the Revolution’. For Frank, the question of ‘what attitude must we take to the Revolution?’ was a fundamental starting point for the émigré community.<sup>752</sup>

The project of ‘surveying Russian Culture in broad historical terms’ is an example of how assessment of the Revolution was a necessary component of religious-philosophical consideration of emigration.<sup>753</sup> Berdyaev’s *The Russian Idea* [*Russkaia ideia*] (1946) and Lossky’s *History of Russian Philosophy* are two examples of religious-philosophical contributions to the cultural assessment projects of émigré communities. Both of these books were published late in these men’s careers and were intended for a foreign audience. The distance between the thinkers and the subject of their thought, Russia, had an effect on their approach to that subject. For example, analysis of cause and effect was broadened from a Russian to a European context. In the process of digesting the past, Berdyaev shifts his criticism of the Russian people as a cause of the Revolution to Europe and European civilization as cause.<sup>754</sup>

Distance from Russia had several effects on religious-philosophical scholarship. Most émigrés had to reconcile themselves to a lack of contact with Russia proper.<sup>755</sup> The physical distance separating religious philosophers from the people they believed they served, which according to Burbank, ‘perpetuated their populist abstractions’.<sup>756</sup> In emigration Russians experienced physical correlations to pre-existing intellectual divisions. Religious philosophers were divided from each other and from their audience by the process of fleeing Russia. Intellectual circles and philosophical divisions became geographically represented by distance, which reinforced a predisposition to insularity. Glad remarks, ‘Not only did the émigrés not form anything like a unified community, they seemed to live in different worlds.’<sup>757</sup> Partially, the wide spectrum of political parties in the diaspora contributed to this perception of different

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<sup>752</sup> Schapiro, 71.

<sup>753</sup> Glad, 245.

<sup>754</sup> Burbank, 208.

<sup>755</sup> Glad, 248.

<sup>756</sup> Burbank, 252.

<sup>757</sup> Glad, 112.

worlds. Catherine Andreyev and Ivan Savicky argue that the continuation of political identity was necessary to the maintenance of émigré identity, providing encouragement to maintain political differences.<sup>758</sup>

Another effect of the physical distances of the emigration was distortion of historical cause and effect. Burbank argues that this distance promoted ‘belief that the people would themselves act for the goals set by the intelligentsia’.<sup>759</sup> This misguided belief about the Russian people ‘meant that the opposition intellectuals had not lost the Revolution and what was more, then did not have to fight their own battles’ and were therefore exonerated from guilt over the course the Revolution had taken.<sup>760</sup> Religious philosophers’ distance from the reality of life in the Soviet Union allowed them to continue to hope for the overthrow of the government and to believe that this was possible.

Analysis of the causes and effects of the Revolution was another means of coping with the profound changes religious philosophers had experienced. The Free Spiritual and Philosophical Academy, founded by Berdyaev in Berlin with the help of the YMCA in 1922, provided a venue for resolving these questions and contributed as much to the wellbeing of émigré thinkers as it educated émigré youth.<sup>761</sup> Burbank sees in the creation of this school ‘a pre-meditated act founded on a certain interpretation of the Revolution and its place in the course of human events’.<sup>762</sup> This academy allowed religious philosophers to mentally and physically deal with the challenges of the Revolution.<sup>763</sup> Part of the émigré discussion of cause and effect was directed toward the question of what would come next for this community.

Struve argues against drawing an analogy between the French and Russian revolutions:

The French Revolution, for all its violent nature, in fact achieved the objects which it set out to achieve, and in fact put into practice its main ideas. In contrast, the Bolshevik revolution put into practice from the start the very reverse of what had been its avowed principles—not

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<sup>758</sup> ‘The emigration was a result of political events and despite any desire on the part of émigrés to avoid politics, they could not do as this would cause them to lose their identity as émigrés’ (138).

<sup>759</sup> Burbank, 250.

<sup>760</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>761</sup> Raeff, 60.

<sup>762</sup> Burbank, 206.

<sup>763</sup> *Ibid.*

socialism but inequity; not freedom, but dictatorship; not a militia, but an army; not nationalized land, but private peasant holdings.<sup>764</sup>

Although Struve uses the French Revolution as an example in this quote, his point is that without the French Revolution as a theoretical model or starting point the Russian Revolution can be seen as more violent and meaningless. For Struve, the Russian Revolution should be considered on its own terms, and seen not as the heir of romantic notions of social change but judged for its true nature as a degrading political change.

Finally, an effect of emigration was that the religious philosophers could no longer find national definition in continuity. In Glad's opinion, Russian writers who sought to be assimilated into the modern literary process had to leave behind 'preservationist goals'.<sup>765</sup> Religious philosophers were faced with the option of assimilating into Western philosophical discourses and abandoning their identity as Russians in dialogue with the West, or focusing only on the topics associated with their émigré identity. For many it was psychologically necessary to cling to continuity in the topics of their thought. The St. Sergius Theological Institute in Paris facilitated the preservation of Russian Orthodox spiritual culture, and provided a 'home' for theologians in the midst of discontinuity.<sup>766</sup> Ideas that had been formative to religious philosophy often remained the subject of their work even though this compounded the geographically isolating tendencies of emigration.

Yet modernization and developments prevented the Russia from which the religious philosophers had fled from ever being a true destination to which they could return. For example, a return to the old order was inconceivable to Frank because of the physical destruction of 'the very social and political material out of which it had been constructed'.<sup>767</sup> Reacting to these changes increasingly brought religious philosophers closer to their Western counterparts. As the long duration of their exile became more apparent, Russian religious philosophers made more connections with religious thinkers in Europe. Doing so was

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<sup>764</sup> Quoted in Schapiro, 73.

<sup>765</sup> This is because 'Western culture has moved on from measuring itself by past achievements to frantically pursuing innovation and novelty' (483).

<sup>766</sup> Raeff, 65.

<sup>767</sup> Schapiro, 75.

facilitated by commonalities shared amongst people of faith across Europe and the increasing popularity of ecumenical movements in the face of atheistic, dictatorial states that characterized the interwar years. For example because both Protestant and Catholic theology responded to industrialization as Orthodox thinkers had, communications between these groups naturally evolved.<sup>768</sup> The drive for ecumenism in the 1920s and '30s allowed religious philosophers to meet and interact with their Western counterparts on equal footing.<sup>769</sup> Collaborative projects shared between Orthodox and Western, especially Catholic, scholars characterize this period.<sup>770</sup> Russia may have been changing beyond the recognition of émigré thinkers, but these thinkers were also growing away from their native ideas.

Burbank describes the intelligentsia abroad as divided and ineffective: 'The outstanding feature of the intelligentsia in 1922 was how little it had changed. Not only had individual intellectuals remained true to their pre-revolutionary ideals, they had collectively, with their paper politics, re-constituted a divided opposition.'<sup>771</sup> From her analysis it seems as though no changes took place in émigré thinking, but the content of religious-philosophical work, as well as the style and tone of religious-philosophical writing did change in this period. Over the course of emigration the religious-philosophical discourse was exposed to new themes and had to address these themes within existing discursive structures. Some religious philosophers, notably Shestov, Berdyaev, and Bulgakov, wrote for a Western audience.<sup>772</sup> In terms of writing style, religious philosophy tended to be presented in a more traditional philosophical style after

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<sup>768</sup> Raeff, 141.

<sup>769</sup> Raeff, 143.

<sup>770</sup> Louth, 193.

<sup>771</sup> Burbank, 249.

<sup>772</sup> The question of the intended audience of religious philosophy is complicated. Many monographs published in emigration were published in Russian and in the old orthography, suggesting that the intended readership was other members of the émigré community. However, towards the end of the period in question some religious philosophers published significant works first in translation, indicating an intention to share these works with Western readers. This is the case with Bulgakov's *The Wisdom of God: A Brief Summary of Sophiology [Premudrost' Bozhiiia]* (1937), originally published in its English translation (London, 1937). It is also the case with Berdyaev's *The Divine and The Human*, originally published in French [*Dialectique existentielle du divin et de l'humain*] (Paris, 1947), then in English (London, 1949) and then in Russian [*Ekzistentsial'naia dialektika bozhestvennogo i chelovechestveskogo*] (Paris, [1952]). Finally Frank's *The Unknowable [Nepostizhimoe]* (completed 1935, published in Paris 1939) was originally written in German (Boobbyer, 162).

emigration, whereas before, in the revolutionary period, religious philosophers could just as easily be found writing in more literary or political styles.<sup>773</sup>

However, the greatest evidence of this type of change is the development of a new internal dialogue within the Russian émigré circles, a dialogue between religious philosophy and ‘neo-patristic’ theology. Valliere describes the ‘changing historical context of Orthodox theology in the 1930s’ as ‘the most important factor’ in the development of neo-patristic thought.<sup>774</sup> The emergence of ‘neo-patristic’ theology can also be seen as the major response of Russian religious philosophy to emigration. A tradition of interest in the works of the Holy Fathers can be seen as part of the founding impulses of religious philosophy, especially in the thought of the Slavophiles and Solov’ev.<sup>775</sup> The ‘Russian Religious Renaissance’ associated with the Silver Age also relied upon renewed interest in the historical Church.<sup>776</sup> How this interest was continued by the philosophers and theologians of the Russian emigration demonstrates a change of emphasis from creative manipulation of tradition to an attempt to follow the traditions seen in these ancient texts. This critical shift in Russian religious philosophy took place at the St Sergius Theological Institute in Paris.<sup>777</sup>

Kristina Stoeckl’s perspective on the origins of neo-patristic theology suggests that it was a movement in response to external impetus, and that the reaction was provoked by circumstance.<sup>778</sup> This is not to say the neo-patristic school should only be considered

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<sup>773</sup> A more literary style can be seen in the revolutionary writings of Florensky, Karsavin, and Bulgakov (as discussed in Chapter 1) early in the period. Likewise, the writing of Frank, Bulgakov and Berdyaev had political overtones; see their short contributions to journals like *Polar Star* [*Poliarniia Zvezda*] (1905-1906), *Liberation* [*Osvobozhdenie*] (1902-1905).

<sup>774</sup> Valliere, 374.

<sup>775</sup> The ‘Orthodoxy’ of Solov’ev’s theology must be qualified. Although he rejoined the Orthodox faith, he maintained an eccentric belief about *Sophia* and a significant impulse toward ecumenism in his writings.

<sup>776</sup> A point raised by Louth he emphasizes the continuity of the neo-patristic synthesis with earlier developments in Orthodox thought.

<sup>777</sup> One reason this emergent dialogue is significant is its demonstration that the vibrant intellectual core of religious philosophy had become fundamentally theological, see below 274.

<sup>778</sup> ‘The Lesson of the Revolution in Russian Émigré Theology and Contemporary Orthodox Thought’, *Religion State and Society*, 35/4 (Dec. 2007), 287. She emphasizes the word ‘response’ because it indicates an active seeking to resolve. Stoeckl’s belief that this theological tradition was mostly a response to the vague condition of modernity, as opposed to being a response to the specific experiences of revolution and emigration, is misplaced, at least in the case of the members of the movement soon

‘reactionary’ or ‘conservative’. As Fr. Hilarion Alfeyev explains, neo-patristic work is not, and does not need to be, stagnant and historical.<sup>779</sup> The convenient dichotomy of viewing the previous, vibrant work of Russian intellectuals in opposition to neo-patristic work and casting this type of thought as somehow less exciting neglects the many connections in origin the two ‘schools’ share. The need for a renewal of the Orthodox Church, a re-examination of Western influence on it, and a commitment to engage with the world were common to pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary theological schools.<sup>780</sup>

The shift in emphasis by émigré intellectual circles toward neo-patristic approaches to their spiritual identity can be directly linked to the changes in their personal circumstances brought about by exile.<sup>781</sup> The instigation of the neo-patristic school can be linked to factors particular to the Russian emigration, among which the most prominent were: increased funding for ecumenism; increased exposure to new and different editions of patristic texts; *ressourcement*; and the desire to re-evaluate the legitimacy of the Russian national experience. Increased funding is best represented by the American YMCA and the Church of England’s support for émigré theologians, unavailable to émigré philosophers.<sup>782</sup> Louth writes of wider availability of patristic work that enabled both Western and émigré theologians ‘to read Fathers

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after the Revolution. Reaction to ‘modernity’ in general can be detected in religious-philosophy, as this thesis discusses, but the overwhelming pattern of documented reaction suggests that the immediate influences of violence and disruption caused broader reflection later on. Furthermore, the initial subjects of consideration are more personal, and specific to the Russian case; it was only later after some time in emigration that the wider European experiences of modernity and suffering due to war and dictatorship joined the subject of Russian suffering due to the Revolution. This trend in religious philosophy, which can be seen in all four of the ideas discussed in this work, could be inferred to have taken place in most émigré schools of thought.

<sup>779</sup> ‘The Patristic Heritage and Modernity’, *The Ecumenical Review*, 54/1 (Jan.-Apr. 2002).

<sup>780</sup> Stoeckl, 287, and Louth, 188.

<sup>781</sup> There is support for this assertion in the fact that the 1930s was the time and Paris the location for these developments in religious philosophy. Valliere’s conclusion that the historical context was highly influential on developments in Orthodox theology in the 1930s can be extended to the religious aspects of Russian religious philosophy (374). Louth points out that the bulk of Florovsky’s Neo-Patristic output was from the 1930s while he was at the St. Sergius Institute (194). Questioning ecclesiology is a good example of the type of unique theological topics raised by the experience of revolution, where the atheistic Bolshevik state had presented a challenge to earlier interpretations of the relationship between Church and state (Louth, 199).

<sup>782</sup> Plekon, 204.

whose works had been hitherto either inaccessible, or accessible in unsatisfactory ways.<sup>783</sup> *Ressourcement*, the return to earlier sources, traditions and symbols of the Church, can be seen in both the ‘neo-patristic synthesis’ and tied to the ‘Religious Renaissance’ in philosophy.<sup>784</sup> Valliere emphasizes that the different perspectives of two generations of Russian émigrés inspired a reevaluation of Russian experience. He identifies a conflict between the older generation, with its ties to Imperial Russia and nostalgia for the vibrancy of the Silver Age, and the younger generation, more firmly situated in the West and with fewer positive memories of ‘Old Russia’.<sup>785</sup> Clearly that this shift in circumstances was not only influential on theologians.

The common foundations that informed pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary approaches to the Church could not ensure continuity of approach to this topic throughout the period because the changing circumstances of emigration. The true closeness of religious philosophy to the neo-patristic school is hinted at in Valliere’s assessment of the younger-generation’s motivation for turning to patristic thought. He writes, ‘It offered opportunity for dialogue, while at the same time licencing claims to a specific Orthodox identity. The combination of cosmopolitanism and particularism was irresistible for young Orthodox theologians who saw that their future lay in the West.’<sup>786</sup> What was true for the younger generation of émigré thinkers had been so for religious philosophers before the revolution, who strove to create thought that was both authentically Russian and connected to Western philosophical traditions. Valliere’s suggestion that the ‘Russian Religious Renaissance’ had become a ‘formula for isolation’ in emigration, perfectly expresses the change that emigration represented for all of Russian religious philosophy—what had been a vibrant, experimental, Westward looking school of thought in revolutionary times had been consigned by circumstances to be obscurantist, nationalist, and old-fashioned.<sup>787</sup>

Perhaps due to this shift, Russian religious philosophy discussed revolution more directly and more philosophically than emigration both before and after the Russian Revolution.

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<sup>783</sup> Louth, 197.

<sup>784</sup> *Ibid.* 186, and Plekon, 204.

<sup>785</sup> Valliere, 375.

<sup>786</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>787</sup> *Ibid.*

Although emigration as a topic was less self-consciously present in religious-philosophical work, as an event it had an important influence on religious philosophers. The relationship of religious philosophy to Western philosophy and the role of the émigré academic community in the lives of religious philosophers was especially influential on the ideas of all-unity and *Sophia*. The historical context in which developments in religious philosophy took place influenced the philosophy itself and must be borne in mind in the following chapter, which looks more closely at the internal changes in Russian religious philosophy in the emigration.

## Chapter 6: Religious Philosophy and Emigration

Religious philosophy in the emigration period is dominated by points of continuity with the revolutionary period. Attention to the discursive structures of all-unity, *Sophia*, *sobornost'* and Godmanhood highlights the relevant aspects of religious philosophy that carried on. For example, concern about evil, as examined in the context of all-unity, and explanations of the useful figure of *Sophia* continue. Use of *sobornost'* to address topics related to socialism and Godmanhood in relation to creativity and morality, which had started to develop during the revolutionary period, also continue afterwards.

In the emigration period reaction to the Russian Revolution dominated other discussions about identity, nationality, and Russian culture. It is possible to see these changes when looking into religious philosophy, and especially with attention on these discursive structures. Texts based on all-unity metaphysics confronted Western academic culture and also attempted to address Western humanitarian concerns. Living in exile changed how the idea of *Sophia* could be legitimately used. From its inception Godmanhood had been oriented toward practice and action, and in emigration, religious philosophers continued to do so although in a broader context.<sup>788</sup> Finally, the failed paradigm of socialism provoked discussions of 'legitimate' *sobornost'* and more details about how *sobornost'* could be compatible with institutions of society. In the following chapter the ways that these discursive structures changed help demonstrate the ways that religious philosophy as a whole reacted to emigration.

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<sup>788</sup> Copleston 1988, 65.

## 6.1 Evaluations of Revolution

Revolutionary events, both social and political, tested the limits of pre-existing paradigmatic ideals about revolution within religious philosophy. Namely, the ideal vision of the ‘Godman’ and the sobornal society were challenged by lived experience. The Revolution, instead of raising humanity up to a higher state of being, as some had hoped it would, revealed a flawed animalistic version of humanity. According to the religious-philosophical critique of the archetype of a ‘revolutionary’, the inherent power of mankind had been undermined, instead of exalted, by the revolutionary experience. Likewise, if there was any inherent *sobornost’* in Russian society, the state of communal life in Soviet Russia was not considered a legitimate representation of it.

Religious philosophy criticised the revolution and revolutionaries as fundamentally destructive, denying any legitimate creative element in revolutionary activity. As discussed in Chapter 4, Godmanhood helped evaluate creativity. In the émigré period Godmanhood continued to address creativity, and the relative abilities of man and God as creators. In this period creativity is further defined along moral dimensions. Man cannot be said to be recapitulating God’s creativity in the world if he pays no heed to the demands of morality and denies dependence on God.<sup>789</sup> This connection is especially strong in Frank’s émigré writings.<sup>790</sup> In *Reality and Man* (1953) he writes, ‘The creation of new and better forms of social life is the natural purpose of man’s creative will.’<sup>791</sup> This focus is on creativity in a moral and legal, rather than artistic, sense. Berdyaev also highlights this moral element:

When [Berdyaev] referred to a conflict between creative work and the search for moral perfection and between creativeness and humility, he was thinking for example of the way in which the pursuit of an ascetic ideal of moral perfection and selflessness tended to lead people to

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<sup>789</sup> Copleston 1988, 73. This contrasts with Bulgakov’s pre-revolutionary use.

<sup>790</sup> *Ibid.* 74: ‘According to Frank there can be no true creativeness apart from moral earnestness and responsibility.’

<sup>790</sup> *Ibid.* 64.

<sup>791</sup> Frank RC, 188, and Copleston 1988, 72.

renounce the exercise and development of artistic and literary talents as conducive to pride and as smacking of 'worldliness'.<sup>792</sup>

This attention to negative effects of false ideals restates the pre-revolutionary argument from *Ethics of Nihilism* (1909). Denial of God-given talents is an amoral denial of creativity. Man's creativity is divine in origin, as 'the continuation by man of the creation of the world'.<sup>793</sup> Insofar as man is like God due to Godmanhood, his creative acts reflect God's creativity. In *The Meaning of History* (1936), Berdyaev explains that the source of mankind's creativity is in the 'deep, superhuman and divine principle animating his life'.<sup>794</sup> Copleston clarifies this understanding further, saying that religious philosophy views creativity as an acceleration of the process of Godmanhood and a restatement of the premise of Godmanhood by identifying 'true creativeness as participation in God's creative activity'.<sup>795</sup>

Therefore, in emigration legitimate creativity takes on an even more spiritual connotation; creativity connects man's inner being with God to his external life on earth. In *Reality and Man* (1953) Frank discusses the creative process as one of disclosure of the self. He writes that 'in the experience of creative inspiration, in which the superhuman creative principle directly passes into human creative effort and merged with it, man is conscious of himself as creator,' meaning that 'he is aware of his kinship with the creative primary source of life and of his participation in the mysterious metaphysical process of creation'.<sup>796</sup> This ability to be creative is unique to man, and shared by all mankind.<sup>797</sup> By thinking that, 'man is co-partner in God's creativeness', Frank places Godmanhood as an essential part of creativity in mankind.<sup>798</sup>

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<sup>792</sup> Copleston 1988, 75.

<sup>793</sup> *Ibid.* 73. Something like this approach to human creativity can be found to be put forward by many religious philosophers, although it is distinct from Merezhkovsky's interpretation which focused on the creation of an entirely new man and world.

<sup>794</sup> Berdyaev 1936, 154.

<sup>795</sup> Copleston 1988, 75.

<sup>796</sup> Frank RC, 289.

<sup>797</sup> '[Creativity] is an individually human embodiment of the super-human acting in man' (*Ibid.* 283), and everyone shares in this act (*Ibid.* 291).

<sup>798</sup> *Ibid.* 290.

For Berdyaev the extent of this Godmanly connection is such that mankind cannot really exist without it. If humanity were to repudiate this connection of Godmanhood, the category of mankind would no longer exist:

Denial of the highest creative source and purpose, which is essentially superhuman, denies creation itself of both source and object. The living sources of creation, both human and superhuman, dry up; the aim and object of creation, which are also superhuman, disappear; and the result is man's complete disintegration. For when man follows the path of self-affirmation, ceases to respect the higher principle and asserts his self-sufficiency, he exterminates and denies his true self according to the laws of an inexorable inner dialectic. To affirm himself and preserve the source of his creative energy, man must affirm God as well. He must affirm the image of God within him. For he can have no vision of himself if he has none of the higher divine nature.<sup>799</sup>

In this passage Berdyaev extends the characteristic of Creator to creation, and affirms that characteristic as essential to both the nature of creation and the activity of creation. If man wishes to fully be himself by being a creative person, then man must acknowledge his origin in the ultimate Creator. This discussion firmly roots 'creativity' in the divine, using Godmanhood to make it explicit that the correct type of creation is not atheistic. In the context of earlier criticism of the mangod, it is safe to conclude that this type of creation is conservative, not revolutionary. As 'creators' Russians abroad have a spiritual burden to prevent the extermination and disintegration of humanity, visible in interwar politics and early Soviet Russia.

The political upheaval in revolutionary Russia also influenced *sobornost'* and how this structure defined and supported 'Russianness'. The problems *sobornost'* presented to émigré thinkers became even more obvious in the context of socialism. In the interwar years the difference between idealized models and real society was apparent. How, if a special relationship such as *sobornost'* determines human relations, do some social organizations have such disastrous results? For Frank, in his understanding of *sobornost'* in *The Spiritual Foundations of Society* (1930), opposing *sobornost'* to *obshchestvennost'* helps answer this question. He attempts to explain why, if the intrinsic unity of *sobornost'* exists, external social mechanisms are still necessary to enforce social harmony.

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<sup>799</sup> Berdyaev 1936, 154-155. Emphasis my own.

In *The Spiritual Foundations of Society* (1930), Frank explains that society functions much like a machine and that each part of the machine's singularity does not exclude it from its nature as 'part'. For society to be benevolent, in Frank's later work *The Unknowable* (1939), man must be able to connect to society's members and to society as a whole on the higher level of *sobornost'*.<sup>800</sup> *Obshchestvennost'* alone cannot facilitate a good society. For Frank the mechanical is not limiting or negative, it is only another morally neutral form of organization. This explains the persistence and necessity of manufactured social organizations as nothing more than externalised forms of a deeper social reality. Frank writes, 'Everything mechanical, arranged and united from without in human society is only the outer expression of the inner unity and construction of society.'<sup>801</sup> That so much of Khomiakov's original theological concept of *sobornost'* informs Frank use in this later period exposes his idealism.

Berdyayev also demonstrates idealistic tendencies in the context of émigré *sobornost'*. As discussed in Chapter 2, both thinkers contrast *sobornost'* community to the state in terms of law. Whereas Frank champions the 'ontological teleological organic laws of social life' in *The Spiritual Foundations of Society* (1930), Berdyayev denounces cold rational law in *Freedom and the Spirit* (1927).<sup>802</sup> Berdyayev explains that 'scientific and juridical obligation' are fundamentally incompatible with a society based on *sobornost'* because it is based on 'love itself and spiritual community itself'.<sup>803</sup> Berdyayev's position on law at this time betrays belief in the recuperative power of *sobornost'*. In *The Realm of the Spirit and the Realm of Caesar* (1949) Berdyayev amends his position, adding that 'freedom is not law but duty,' and implying

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<sup>800</sup> Frank N, 148.

<sup>801</sup> Frank DOO, 104.

<sup>802</sup> *Ibid.* 51-53 and Berdyayev FSD, 164. The nature of man, though saved by Christ, is not so changed that Law itself must change. Frank quotes *Matthew* 5:17 'Think not that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled,' to reinforce the necessity of humans to live by law. Yet, it is not clear in the practical, governmental, sense which laws are of this original nature (53).

<sup>803</sup> Berdyayev FSD, 164.

that the impulse that drives ‘freedom-duty’ is fundamental, a meaning similar to Frank’s organic laws.<sup>804</sup>

Berdyayev elaborates that the truth of freedom is in the spiritual beginnings of the human, not granted by law. He presents an opposition between the internal freedom of the spirit and the external freedom granted by law, elaborating that the error of liberalism is ignorance of this original freedom in God’s perfection. He writes, ‘Materialism ultimately leads to the denial of freedom. The assertion of freedom is rooted in the kingdom of the Spirit and not in the kingdom of Caesar.’<sup>805</sup> Both of these philosophers’ choice to champion *sobornost’* in opposition to legality in the interwar years seems naïve from a modern standpoint. However, *sobornost’* was a fundamental idea in religious philosophy, not easily abandoned. Both of these philosophers’ opposition of *sobornost’* to law could serve to highlight the deficiency of laws they then had real-world evidence of in the Soviet legal system, and in Weimar Germany.

Frank’s model of society has a major failing, in that it allows the entity of society, the ‘we’, to oppose the ‘I’. Frank considered the objectification of the ‘we’ into the ‘they,’—a group from which the person is alienated—to be a grave destruction of *sobornost’*. A society personified as ‘they’ promotes opposition between ‘I’ and ‘they,’ and allows the universal ‘we’ to be ignored. This model cannot fully acknowledge the person as well as the ‘will’ of the ‘we’. Ultimately, the nature of the discursive structure of *sobornost’* thwarts Frank’s model. *Sobornost’* has a power wrought in indefiniteness, and thus cannot be balanced by the definite *obshchestvennost’*. *Sobornost’* cannot truly share space with *obshchestvennost’*, either the ‘we’ of *sobornost’* would overwhelm the secular rule-governed ‘they’ of *obshchestvennost’*, or the ‘we’ would overturn the structure of ‘they’ entirely. Nonetheless, Frank’s *sobornost’* must be commended in comparison with many contemporary models in terms of political applicability because it acknowledges the necessity of compatibility with government. Even though it is compatible to politics, his *sobornost’* continues to favor society over the state. By 1930 Frank still adhered to an earlier understanding of *sobosrnost’* and in his attempt to integrate this

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<sup>804</sup> Berdyayev TDITK, 93.

<sup>805</sup> *Ibid.* 91.

principle with government he did not actually develop a new way of applying *sobornost'* in light of political developments in the Soviet Union.

Arguing that *sobornost'* permitted the avoidance of democracy may have afforded the vulnerable even less protection in 1930 than it did in 1917, however. Frank's inability to recognize this may have been caused by the democratic experience he witnessed in Germany between the wars: the extremely delicate balance between advocating the rights of minorities against democratically expressed will and advocating the need for representative government are ideally illustrated by the contrary evidence Russia and Germany provided during this period.

In Bulgakov's *The Orthodox Church* (1935) he also uses *sobornost'* to examine the relationship of Orthodoxy to democracy in the interwar years: 'Certainly the conciliarity, *sobornost'* of Orthodoxy is not democracy, but the absence of princes of the church and of an ecclesiastical monarch—the pope—makes it of the people, favourable to the spirit of economic democracy.'<sup>806</sup> Rosenthal considers Bulgakov's understanding of individualism to be the least robust of all the religious philosophers': 'Bulgakov's primary concern was not individual rights, but the duties of the individual toward history, the world and humanity.'<sup>807</sup> *Sobornost'* had previously been used to preserve the integrity of the people from the tyranny of capitalistic individualism in Tsarist Russia, but in this later writing Bulgakov has lessened his focus on those evils in favour of turning toward the apparent failings of the new Socialist government. In this observation, 'Dostoevsky said somewhere, "Orthodoxy is our Russian socialism," he meant to say that in Orthodoxy we had the inspiration to love and to social equality, lacking in atheist socialism' Bulgakov uses the religious origins of *sobornost'*, to establish a model of society that counters the Bolshevik government.<sup>808</sup>

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<sup>806</sup> In this work published only slightly later than Frank's observations, Bulgakov continues to tread the fine line between socialism, capitalism and spiritual freedom that characterizes his earlier philosophy (Bulgakov 1935, 198).

<sup>807</sup> Rosenthal 1993, 189.

<sup>808</sup> Bulgakov 1935, 198. Florovsky also refers to this famous statement of Dostoevsky's, with an entirely different interpretation: 'again it was hardly an accident that Dostoevsky, in his "Pushkin Speech" should introduce Orthodoxy precisely as "our Russian socialism." The point was obviously that Christianity alone could solve the problem raised by "socialism," but the problem itself was accepted and in this way the partial "truth of socialism" recognised.' (G. Florovsky, 'Reason and Faith in the

Bulgakov has sensitivity to the implications of *sobornost'* for socialism which can be seen even more clearly in Berdyaev's consideration of *sobornost'* alongside the ideal of the commune. The distinction between the '*sobornyi* community' and the commune emerged as a theme in émigré writing about society. For example, the émigré thinker Stepun, surmised about *sobornost'* that 'A social system ought to be personalistic and conciliar at the same time.'<sup>809</sup> He, like other émigrés, contrasted *sobornost'* to 'impersonal collectivity.' Agadjanian argues that the personalistic element Stepun introduces into his ideas of *sobornost'* is in response to the 'sweeping collective uniformity of Bolshevik Russia'.<sup>810</sup> The most common conclusion of religious philosophy was that special characteristics of *sobornal* communality preserved it from the apparently problematic outcomes of Soviet communality.

For example, Berdyaev attempts to delineate the distinction between collectivism and *sobornost'* by emphasizing the voluntary, free and loving aspects of *sobornost'*. In *The Realm of the Spirit and the Realm of Caesar* (1949) he opposes this model of community to collectivism, 'collectivism has a mechanical-rational character,' and 'collectivism is incompatible with individualism'.<sup>811</sup> The collective masks a true communality for Berdyaev, 'The principle evil of educated collective consciousness and collective conscience is that it is only a metaphorical figurative expression, in which the reality of another word is concealed.'<sup>812</sup> This contrast between an outward reflection and inner reality is similar to Frank's dichotomy between *sobornost'* and *obshchestvennost'*. To Berdyaev *sobornost'* represents a more true and original state of communal being than collectivism does; 'The 'we' in *sobornost'* is not a collective. Collectivism is not *sobornost'* but assemblage [*sbornost'*].'<sup>813</sup> Berdyaev struggles in this passage to make clear the potential for a secular *sobornost'* in the idea of a community that

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Philosophy of Soloviev', in E. J. Simmons, ed., *Continuity and Change in Russian and Soviet Thought* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1955), 289).

<sup>809</sup> F. Stepun '*O svobode*' in *Novyi grad* (Paris, 1938), 13 quoted in A. Agadjanian, 'Breakthrough to Modernity, Apologia for Traditionalism: The Russian Orthodox View of Society and Culture in Comparative Perspective', *Religion, State and Society*, 31/4 (Dec. 2003) n 45.

<sup>810</sup> Agadjanian, 344.

<sup>811</sup> Berdyaev TDITK, 109 and 103.

<sup>812</sup> *Ibid.* 109.

<sup>813</sup> *Ibid.* 109.

has the positive meanings from the Church and does not have the mechanical aspects of collectivism.

A community founded on the basis of *sobornost'* differs from other communities in the important respect of acknowledging freedom. Berdyaev writes, 'Community [*kommiunotarnost'*] and *sobornost'* always recognize freedom and the value of the person.'<sup>814</sup> It is inevitable that Berdyaev's understanding of *sobornost'* would be in relation to freedom, because freedom remains his consistent focus throughout his many and varied philosophical works. But this emphasis and development by Berdyaev is telling of *sobornost's* applicability to the world situation as he saw it by the end of his life. The experience of communism illustrated that it was a personal-freedom-limiting endeavour, yet instead of leaving *sobornost'* with a role in this freedom-limiting condition he unites *sobornost'* to freedom: '*sobornost'* does not conflict with freedom, instead it ensures freedom.'<sup>815</sup> According to this reasoning the limits on freedom in Soviet Russia have nothing to do with *sobornost'*-communiality. In *Dream and Reality* (1950) he also defines *sobornost'* as compatible with freedom: '*Sobornost'* signifies a quality of life which affirms the reality of freedom by widening the scope of freedom and by revealing the transcendental, universal dimension.'<sup>816</sup> Clearly by the end of his career, Berdyaev has adjusted his expectations of *sobornost'* and its potential effects on society:

All the value of the thought of Khomiakov was in that he thought of *sobornost'*, which was his creative discovery, in an imperforated connection to freedom. But, he did not think this idea to its end. Not in any way can *sobornost'* be turned into an external authority. Absolute primacy belongs to freedom. In the case of conflict, of which Khomiakov little thought, conscience chooses freedom.<sup>817</sup>

Here, Berdyaev advocates placing the demands and needs of freedom above the constraints of *sobornost'*.

A distinction between these two forms of community evolves into an understanding of one false *sobornost'* and one elusive ideal; theoretical *sobornost'*. In *Dream and Reality*

<sup>814</sup> Berdyaev 1952, 123, and TDITK, 109.

<sup>815</sup> Berdyaev TDITK, 110.

<sup>816</sup> N. Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality: An Essay in Autobiography*, tr. K. Lampert (London, 1950), 54 and N. Berdyaev, *Samopoznanie: Opyt filosofskoi avtobiografii* (Paris, 1949), 67.

<sup>817</sup> Berdyaev 1950, 53 and SOFA, 66.

[1950], he summarizes, ‘Russian practice was more often than not illustrative of distorted and falsified *sobornost*’.<sup>818</sup> His negative comparison between the communal and the collective is explained by the role of human freedom in these two potential models. Thus, Russian communism is a travesty of *sobornost*’, ‘in as much as it subjects the creative freedom of man to the demands of a collectivised and mechanized society’.<sup>819</sup> With the hindsight he is able to acknowledge that the hope for *sobornost*’ to play a strong role in the organization of revolutionary and post-revolutionary society was ill fated. ‘*Sobornost*’ was realized, but how different from the *sobornost*’ desired and sought by the men of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.’<sup>820</sup> It is clear here that the earlier conception of *sobornost*’ had contained its own functional limitations because it had been an ideal.

Much of these discussions influenced by exposure to the Soviet experiment involve re-examination and redefinition of commonly used terms. The fact that concern over ‘freedom’ focuses on distinguishing *sobornost*’ from types of ‘collectivity’, be they mechanical society, atheistic society or some other false *sobornost*’, demonstrates that one response to the Revolution is developing the definitions of key terms. The situation of unrealized freedom, and unfulfilled creativity provokes discussion of the meanings of *sobornost*’ and Godmanhood, but it does not cause religious philosophy to abandon them as incorrect or useless paradigms. Importantly, Soviet society does not lack the inner potential of *sobornost*’, it lacks the key ingredient of freedom and modern human creativity is missing its Godmanly connection: these discursive structures are integral to the religious-philosophical view, and so they remain in evaluations of the revolution. If evidence suggests the native Russian *sobornost*’ is missing, religious philosophy will look for it, not entertain the idea that it was never there to begin with.

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<sup>818</sup> Berdyaev 1950, 157 and SOFA, 164.

<sup>819</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>820</sup> Berdyaev 1950, 157 and SOFA, 163.

## 6.2 Turning Outward: Émigré Community

As discussed in Chapter 5, emigres had two, not mutually exclusive, options for their daily communal lives: they could connect with each other in a state of heightened awareness of Russian culture, or they could reach out to the West and deny their Russianess. Religious philosophy in this period reflects both of those options and this can be seen by looking at two discursive structures. For one, *sobornost'* which was proving too difficult in reality was very useful in theory. For another, all-unity, which had always been connected to Western thought, provided a means of connecting to the West, in theory.

During the interwar years the abstract qualities of *sobornost'* were far easier to parse than its political ramifications, and it seems therefore that these aspects of this idea soothe the émigré psyche. For example, in *Freedom and the Spirit* (1927) Berdyaev effectively uses *sobornost'* to describe the powerful effect of national history:

‘The past is not recognizable from without, not through external fragments of preserved monuments, subjugated to disintegration by historical criticism, but from within, through sacred memory, through internal encounters, through *sobornuiu* life, overcoming the breaches and externalities.’<sup>821</sup>

The way that he writes about spanning the ages is part of the traditional definition of *sobornost'*. This type of discussion links modern Russians abroad to a common Russian past and identity. Although Russians abroad were increasingly unable to truly see or accurately know the situation of Russians in the Soviet Union, the supra-spiritual connection of *sobornost'* provided a theoretical connection to their homeland.

Throughout Bulgakov’s post-revolutionary referral to *sobornost'*, it is a general concept, used for description of a spiritual state. In *The Orthodox Church* (1935), he writes specifically about the Church, conceiving of it as both the hierarchical structure and the believers united into one. He writes:

*Sobornost'* is not only a passive preservation of the truth, it is also the active possession of that truth, the acceptance of the revelation of the spirit of God. In other words, conciliarity, as fact

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<sup>821</sup> Berdyaev FSD II, 194, and Berdyaev 1935, 331.

implies ‘conciliation’ as act, and this act takes place in time and manifests in part that which belongs to all.<sup>822</sup>

Bulgakov here has developed some of Khomiakov’s original implied meaning of the word (that *sobornost’* implies actions that have *sobornyi* qualities) to reinforce the idea that the fact of *sobornost’* can act to unite and preserve the Russian expatriate community. The ecclesiastical union of Russians abroad into the universality of the church was not only an action that transcends space and time, as emphasized by Berdyaev, but also one that was really happening in everyday life, as highlighted by Bulgakov. This definition identifies how *sobornost’* exists in time without being subject to it.

It seems that this aspect of overcoming the spatial and temporal constraints placed on emigres, isolated from their home, empowers exiled Russians to feel united to their contemporaries in Russia. In *Freedom and the Spirit* (1927), for example, Berdyaev uses *sobornost’* as a mechanism for linking Russians into a national history experience that enables all Russians access to the full experience of Russianness. He writes, ‘Tradition is a supra-personal and *sobornyi* experience, the creative spiritual life transmitted from generation to generation uniting the living and the dead and thereby overcoming death’.<sup>823</sup> In this passage the ontological aspect of *sobornost’* performs a unifying action unlimited by the constraints of time.

He further asserts that:

Our own life and our creation of myth cannot be separated from the life and myth-creation of previous generations of our fathers and uncles. It is, rather, a lasting, unbroken, creative life, at once individual and supra-individual, a *sobornaia* life in which the past and the future, tradition and creation are bound together in eternity.<sup>824</sup>

In these passages, *sobornost’* applies to all of creative human life, not the specific Church life. Berdyaev preserves Khomiakov’s original definition of *sobornost’* overcoming time, but applies his idea far more universally. Bulgakov, on the other hand, applies the ability of *sobornost’* to overcome time to a more religious experience more congruent with Khomiakov’s use. For both thinkers abroad, it was important to be able to theoretically justify extending access to the

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<sup>822</sup> (London, 1935), 81, underlining my own.

<sup>823</sup> N. Berdyaev, *Filosofia svobodnogo dukha*, 2 vols (Paris, [1927]), ii, 194 and N. Berdyaev, *Freedom and the Spirit*, tr. O. Clarke (London, 1935), 331.

<sup>824</sup> Berdyaev 1935, 81 and FSD, i, 126-127.

Russian national community, which was granted to native Russians at birth, to Russians born in émigré communities. This aspect of *sobornost'* connects the émigré community to Russians who remained under Soviet government and implies a potential for the future unity of these separated populations.

The way that all-unity allows contrary or competing ideas to co-exist in a philosophy naturally connects religious philosophy to Western thought. It defuses the conflict between Eastern and Western philosophical traditions, seen to exist in the Slavophil-Westernizer debates and influential on the development of philosophy in Russia, and allows religious philosophers to concurrently maintain contradictory philosophies. Furthermore, the place that unity already had in Western thought was a stabilizing influence on religious philosophy through this troubled time.

As Russian thinkers settled in the West, the academic communities they encountered there inevitably influenced the direction of their work. An interesting example of this influence is Lossky. Early in his career he presented arguments for intuitive epistemology that were based in a metaphysical understanding of all-unity. In *The World as an Organic Whole* (1915) Lossky makes arguments that connect him to other religious-philosophical thinkers, especially Frank. However, unlike the others, Lossky appears to have been much more self-conscious of the connections his work made with Western philosophy, even from this early date.

Western philosophical trends influenced Lossky; his work is clearly connected to French mathematics and philosophy, as well as to the Western scientific world. One example of a connection to the West is how Lossky considers the universe in terms of relations or relationships like the then incredibly famous French mathematician and conventionalist thinker Henri Poincaré (1854-1912).<sup>825</sup> For Lossky, 'Interaction is far from being the mere sum of two actions of which the first follows the second as a response'; instead interaction is a relationship

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<sup>825</sup> Although primarily a mathematician, Poincaré was among the last to be a true universalist, fully contributing to every field of mathematics in his lifetime. This breadth of ability led him to contribute to philosophy and psychology as well. Florensky also refers to the significance of Poincaré's research (SS, 513).

of parts within the whole.<sup>826</sup> During his early career conventionalist philosophy held sway in French scientific and mathematical circles. Conventionalism uses the idea that *a priori* truths are only so due to linguistic or social convention, and not due to reality, in order to explain why people think of the world in certain terms. While at first glance this philosophical school seems incompatible with intuitivism, its assertion of dual understandings of a phenomenon, logical and intuitive (or experiential), creates a means for compatibility between intuitive knowledge and rational, scientific knowledge. Conventionalists describe the epistemological experience of the scientist through this duality; the scientist's 'understanding is linked intimately to the phenomenal world via his intuition, and his understanding of the real phenomenal world.'<sup>827</sup> The similarity between Lossky's work and this group of thinkers', in the context of the other connections he makes, cannot be considered coincidental.

Although he was much anticipated and advertised, Poincaré did not attend the Fourth International Congress of Philosophy in Bologna in 1911. Lossky, who did, may have been disappointed to miss Poincaré, but he was able to see the younger French philosopher Henri Bergson there. The connection between Lossky and Bergson is even more readily established because of both philosophers' shared intuitivism. In similar fashion to his acceptance and interest in conventionalism, Lossky did not adopt Bergson's intuition at the expense of his own, already established, Russian version. Nethercott observes that although Lossky was interested in Bergson's idea of time, he 'opposes his French counterpart with a theory in which he speaks of the ideal attained by reason'.<sup>828</sup> In his work Lossky balances intuition and reason, instead of rejecting reason as some religious philosophers (like Shestov and Florensky) do or placing reason as a secondary form of knowledge (as Frank and Berdyaev do).

In addition to considering two contemporary French thinkers, Lossky's theory also represents two current trends in scientific thought, atomism and evolution. His substantial agents are like atoms and behave as atoms were thought to behave, acting freely and in reaction

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<sup>826</sup> Lossky 1928, 5.

<sup>827</sup> M. J. Nye, 'The Boutroux Circle and Poincaré's Conventionalism', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 40/1 (Jan.-Mar. 1979), 114.

<sup>828</sup> Nethercott, 214.

to forces. Nethercott draws attention to ‘evolution’ in Lossky’s thought: ‘Evolution is one of the key elements of Lossky’s philosophy of the living being.’<sup>829</sup> In his thought Lossky attempts to bridge the current scientific view of the world as atomised and defined by relations between parts with the religious-philosophical emphasis on unity. Lossky is clearly battling with a desire to recognize the emerging scientific mechanisms for understanding the world with his impulse toward intuitivism and unity. Nethercott’s observations that Lossky engaged in a ‘level of discourse which would find a response on a European scale’ identify the scope of Lossky’s philosophical ambition.<sup>830</sup> At the very least it can be concluded that Lossky was conscious of his role as philosopher, émigré and interpreter of the Russian school to Westerners, and that this encouraged a predisposition to include Western ideas and trends in his thought. While self-conscious connection of his theories to other Western theories can be seen in early texts like *The Intuitive Basis of Knowledge* [*Obosnovanie intuitivizma*] (1906), in emigration he continued this process and participated in dialogues of assessment of the Russian philosophical tradition with Western academia, including his *History of Russian Philosophy* (1951).<sup>831</sup> These links affirm the true religious-philosophical basis of Lossky’s ideas; his project can be clearly seen as uniting Russian thought to the West in the parallels he tries to draw.

As much as thinkers like Lossky might have tried to connect their work to Western thought, the fact remains that religious philosophy was no longer considered an acceptable type of philosophical speculation, thanks to the verifiability principle and the movement of Western philosophy away from rationalism. Andreyev and Savicky report an illustrative anecdote of the younger generation émigré thinker Sergei Levitsky. While a student in Prague his philosophy teacher,

‘recommended various new books and mentioned Lossky, adding that we should not read him since he used intuition and was a mystic, which had no part in serious philosophy. When I tried

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<sup>829</sup> Nethercott, 217.

<sup>830</sup> *Ibid.* 221.

<sup>831</sup> In the first fifteen pages of the *Intuitive Basis of Knowledge* Lossky draws our attention to nine Western Europeans of import (Goethe, Wagner, Newton, Leibnitz, Hume, Kant, Descarte, Locke, and Spencer) and to no Russian or theological thinkers (London, 1919). It is clear that even though this work is presenting a non-traditional idea, Lossky intends this work to fit in with Western scholarship.

to defend Lossky, Kozak rebuked me and advised me to keep my Russian, reactionary, befuddled, philosophical musings to myself.<sup>832</sup>

In other words, because Western philosophy was largely secular and empiricist, the religious aspects of religious philosophy discredited it in Western circles. What would have previously been considered philosophy were now befuddled musings, forcing émigré philosophers to reassess their work and consider how they could fit into Western academia. *Sobornost'* and all-unity here demonstrate how much of émigré philosopher's 'philosophical' community, theoretical colleagues or compatriots were constructed. For the most part, this time period was one of academic isolation when it came to religious philosophy itself.

### 6.3 Turning Inward: Intellectual Isolation

In the light of the First World War and the Revolution, espousal of all-unity philosophies seems an anachronistic view of the world. One natural reaction to these events was to turn away from obscure theoretical texts to faith-based works with immediate spiritual succour. Bulgakov's first Sophiological Trilogy and Frank's works *The Light in the Darkness* (1949) and *God with Us* (1946) are examples of how religious philosophy often took this path.<sup>833</sup> It should be noted, though, that these changes are in topic instead of underlying philosophical system. Bulgakov's post-revolutionary writings continued the direction that his pre-revolutionary work had begun to take by becoming more and more theologically oriented, but he did not lose his Sophiological system. Frank, too, wrote more openly-religious works toward the end of his career, but maintained his system of epistemology as set out before the Revolution.

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<sup>832</sup> Taken from S. Levitsky, *Vospominaniya o Losskom*, *Novyi Zhurnal*, 126 March 1977. p 174-5, 598. This attitude of Western academia was not always supported from within. In 1953 Sontag wrote, 'the current lack of flexibility regarding basic perspectives would seem to indicate that many today claim to possess wisdom as their exclusive property.' He contrasts this attitude with a more appropriate one in his opinion, seeking wisdom (86).

<sup>833</sup> Bulgakov's first Sophiological Trilogy is made up of *The Burning Bush* [*Kupina neopalimaia*] (1927), *The Friend of the Bridegroom* [*Drug zhenika*] (1927), and *Jacob's Ladder* [*Lestvitsa Iakovlia*] (1929).

Frank's work makes a particularly interesting case study for the effect of external influences on post-revolutionary work because, due to its systematic nature and internal coherence, the premises he set out early in his philosophical career in *The Object of Knowledge* (1915) and *The Human Soul [Dusha cheloveka]* (1917) remain important in his later thought. Frank's quest for unity originated in his search to, as Lossky later described it, 'discover the ontological conditions of the possibility of intention as a direct apprehension of our cognitive acts'.<sup>834</sup> This purpose, to understand and explain his epistemological processes put other philosophical concerns secondary. By the end of his life, since the primary purpose of all-unity in his philosophical system was unchanged, Frank could not and did not retreat from his original assertions, and therefore the changes that he did make are all the more interesting.

All-unity restrains Frank from establishing a coherent view of the modern moral universe. Frank includes ethics in his integrated system by making ethics a part of ontology, or establishing value as inseparable from existence which eliminates the questions of human freedom and the human will to do harm from his system. But, it is his definition of evil as neither a part of the world nor a part of man's conscious being that is most problematic for this project. Zenkovsky is critical of this aspect of Frank's work, pointing out that his metaphysical monism 'always tends to minimize the significance of human freedom and inclines toward ethical positivism'.<sup>835</sup> Frank makes an effort to counteract the tendency of monism to constrain ethics with his theories that focus on human experience and Godmanhood. Yet, Zenkovsky's criticism is accurate because evil unavoidably falls outside the realm of the knowable within Frank's epistemological construct.<sup>836</sup>

These constraints on Frank's philosophical system are internal; a result of the way that Frank has constructed his concept of all-unity, but external events—like the Revolution and the rise of Nazism in interwar Berlin—also put pressure on Frank's system.<sup>837</sup> In *The Light in the Darkness* (1949), Frank provides evidence that he had become uncomfortable with his

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<sup>834</sup> Lossky 1951, 267.

<sup>835</sup> Zenkovsky, 866.

<sup>836</sup> Kantor, 2.

<sup>837</sup> Boobbyer, 148-161.

explanations of these phenomena. In this work, Frank describes the more practical situation of struggling against earthly evil for the benefit of mankind, ‘by his very essence, a Christian must bear the burdens of his brothers, not only material burdens, but moral burdens as well.’<sup>838</sup> In this text he describes a situation where the duties of the Christian person to aim for spiritual perfection on behalf of himself in co-relation to God, are at cross-purposes to the duties that the Christian holds to his fellow man in co-relation to them. The natural human impulse to serve fellow men includes the impulse to take a collective responsibility and in Frank’s philosophy is a product of the situation of all-unity. All-unity causes a conflict of priority because the unity of man and God requires an ethical responsibility to God, and the unity of man to mankind requires the duty to honour other men. In a perfect world such duties would not come into conflict, but in reality they can and do.

Frank’s resolution of this conflict in *The Light in the Darkness* (1949) is to raise the moral value of the duty to fellow men over the duty to God because the duty to God is ultimately self-serving, while the duty to other men is self-deprecating. He concludes,

Thus in the Christian work of protecting our neighbours and the whole world from evil and easing suffering, our moral responsibility for real effectiveness of our aid to our neighbours and the world can always compel us to employ worldly means of struggle, which are inevitably burdened with sin; that is it can always compel us to follow a path that diverges from the path of inner perfection<sup>839</sup>.

Here, it seems clear that movement toward inner perfection is the path of duty from which a good Christian is nobly waylaid in an effort to protect fellow men; even if ‘worldly means of struggle’ force a Christians to bear arms against others.

This adjustment of the priority of obligations framed in the all-unity structure implies an adjustment of Frank’s understanding of all-unity. Had such a change between his original scholarly publications of 1915 and 1918 and his later publications in 1949 taken place? Whereas in his early career all-unity was an uncompromising tautology, by the end of his life, after experiences of world political catastrophe, all-unity is simply a framework. Obolovitch discusses this change in her paper ‘All-unity according to V. Soloviev and S. Frank. A

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<sup>838</sup> Frank SVT, 122.

<sup>839</sup> *Ibid.* 127.

comparative analysis'. Frank's use of unity at the beginning of his career in *The Object of Knowledge* (1915) is, in Obolevitch's opinion, motivated solely by the concern to further his epistemological arguments, but that the problem of the existence of evil in the world presupposed "cracks" in this unity.<sup>840</sup> By 1935, in *The Unknowable* Frank does describe fissures, or abysses, between human cognition of the world and the real, but unknowable, state of the universe.<sup>841</sup> However, he also affirms his reliance upon a 'meta-logical' unity and reminds the reader that 'there cannot be any categorically impenetrable barriers between the final and all-unified reality and total-unity of being and the reality that lies in the human soul'.<sup>842</sup> Clearly, whatever the concessions Frank made toward the potential for real evil in his understanding of unified reality by 1935, they were a minor amendment to his earlier work. Obolevitch believes that during the Second World War Frank made even further amendments: 'Frank leaves the radical monism and makes a difference between Creator and creation' in his journals of the time.<sup>843</sup> This small change in Frank's understanding of a transdefinite reality united in meta-logical all-unity permits the possibility of a dualism to help make distinctions between God and the world in an all-unified reality.<sup>844</sup>

It is apparent in his final publication on this matter, *Reality and Man* [*Realnost' i chelovek*] (1953) published posthumously, that Frank is too personally weary to rise up and meet the challenges his lifetime of experience presented to his philosophical system. It is a testimony to the merits of Frank's philosophical construct that it withstood these external

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<sup>840</sup> Obolevitch, 7: Berdyaev's 1939 review of *The Unknowable* criticizes Frank's discussion of the fissures in the all-unity subject as 'first of all a "crack" in the philosophy of all-unity itself'.

<sup>841</sup> Frank N, 5-6.

<sup>842</sup> *Ibid.* 38.

<sup>843</sup> Obolevitch, 8. She cites Frank in *Mysli v strashnye dni* (1943.02.04): 'The first principle of Absolute is beyond the category of "the one" and "the second", "itself" and "its product". The difference between "the first" and "the second" is involved for the first time in the act of creative embodiment. The first principle by its embodiment makes a distinction into Creator and creation (...). This distinguishes an origin of diversity from unity is, first of all, the self-manifestation of the One in the plurality of "the world of ideas". (...) Besides the diversity, "dramatization" also becomes: the created activity spreads from the One to the plurality, on the "monads". On the one hand, this activity creates the harmonic entirety, the organism. On the other hand, each element becomes free (creative), what involves the possibility and necessity of collision between them (*Neprochitannoe... Stat'i, pis'ma, vospominaniya*, Moscow 2001, p. 351 underlining my own).'

<sup>844</sup> Such a change is like use of *Sophia* as an intermediary concept, but, as it was for Bulgakov, permitting such a dualism cannot completely resolve the problem presented by the existence of evil.

pressures. Despite evidence of mankind's problematic impulses toward evil, most manifest from the time of the Revolution onward, Frank's philosophical system held its integrity and relevance. It must be admitted that part of the resilience of his system is due to the fact that it is so very self-referential at times. Statements such as, 'the more firmly a man is rooted in the transcendent depths of his spirit and the more he listens to its voice the more truly is he a person, a free and creative being' owe their meaning to specific implications of his terminology.<sup>845</sup> Ultimately Frank cannot challenge the all-unity at the base of his philosophical system too far because it is too fully integrated into itself; to pull down one aspect of his philosophy would destroy the comprehensiveness of the whole and invalidate much of his life's work.

The example of Frank's subtly changing understanding of all-unity implies that a stabilizing influence supported all-unity in religious philosophy at this time. Some religious philosophers were concerned about maintaining the integrity of their philosophical model and they worked to uphold it at all costs. To abandon all-unity was difficult because it was a basic idea to religious philosophy, and for those thinkers who relied upon it as a core idea in their work it had to have a strong and continued presence. However, in the presence of real division of the world, such as the separation and loss experienced in Europe in general and the émigré community in particular during the early twentieth century, the comforting view of a harmoniously unified world at least lost its potency.

Frank's commitment to all-unity is mirrored by Bulgakov's commitment to *Sophia*. Sophiologies or sophiological systems of thought, as opposed to the occasional use of the word *Sophia*, are built upon many integrated assumptions of a religious-philosophical nature about the world and, as a philosophical idea, *Sophia* cannot exist without the acceptance of these other ideas.<sup>846</sup> The Sophiological Controversy is so notorious, that it seems a foregone conclusion

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<sup>845</sup> Frank RC, 255.

<sup>846</sup> Zenkovsky further remarks that 'sophiological theories tend to draw these themes [those listed above] together internally,' explaining the integrated effect created by these ideas when discussed together (Zenkovsky, 841, emphasis in the original). Thus, *Sophia* takes its place among these other ideas only when they are all well understood and accepted as a whole; often without explicit reasoning for the interconnected nature of the ideas. Yet, by and large these other religious ideas tend not to be either

that Bulgakov resisted changing his system of thought, but upon closer examination it seems that he, like Frank, struggled to make adjustments as he and religious philosophy transitioned into émigré life.

Immediately after the Revolution, as early as 1925 in the paper ‘Hypostasis and Hypostasisity’ [*Ipostas’ i ipostasnost’*], Bulgakov begins the process of revising his pre-revolutionary thought and constricting the meaning of *Sophia*.<sup>847</sup> Noticeably, he makes a theological retreat from his earlier hypostasis claim to say that *Sophia* has only a ‘hypostatic quality’.<sup>848</sup> This is both an alteration to his writing about *Sophia* in *The Unfading Light* (1917) and a movement away from Florensky’s understanding in *The Pillar and the Ground of The Truth* (1914). Bulgakov’s publication of the first Sophiological Trilogy, completed in 1929, further continues this movement away from pre-revolutionary *Sophia* toward an understanding of *Sophia* which is more compatible with traditional Christian theology.<sup>849</sup> In these books he was concerned with proving that his sophiology is rooted in the Bible, and in Christian tradition.

Bulgakov’s movement away from the more radical ideas and the influence of an adventurous religious-philosophical discourse can be seen within the first decade of emigration. His second Sophiological Trilogy is even more theological and less mystical than the first.<sup>850</sup> Here, Bulgakov focuses on the question of Godmanhood, and uses *Sophia* to facilitate his definition of Godmanhood.<sup>851</sup> Despite these changes, the difficulty implied in all-unity and

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readily accepted foundations for philosophical systems or acceptable in the West. Thinkers who write of *Sophia* do not confine themselves to philosophy. The interconnectedness of *Sophia* with other ideas makes it appealing to those willing to take mystical directions with their philosophical work.

<sup>847</sup> This paper was an explicit addendum to *The Unfading Light* (1917), its full title *Ipostas’ i ipostasnost’*; *Scholia* [sp in Roman script] *k Svetu Nevechernemu*, and so Williams views it as an essential complement to the text (165).

<sup>848</sup> However, Zenkovsky correctly criticizes this distinction as ‘fictive’ [Not fictional, as in ‘entirely fabricated’, but based on a system that does not correspond with reality.] (Zenkovsky, 905). Kyrke-Smith echoes this criticism by also emphasizing the remaining potential for this *Sophia* to hypostasize itself (132).

<sup>849</sup> Kyrke-Smith, 134. See also footnote 833.

<sup>850</sup> Bulgakov’s second Sophiological Trilogy is made up of *The Lamb of God* [*Agnets Bozhii*] (1933), *The Comforter* [*Uteshitel’*] (1936) and *The Bride of the Lamb* [*Nevesta Agntsa*] (1945).

<sup>851</sup> Kostalevsky explains that all of Bulgakov’s religious philosophy is subsequent to his ideas of *Sophia*: to Bulgakov, ‘perfect mankind is the supreme manifestation of *Sophia*’ (Kostalevsky, 110). Bulgakov’s understanding of *Sophia* as a manifestation deviates from that of Solov’ev, for whom Godmanhood is a

carried over to *Sophia*, 'the positioning of an ontological gap between the two *Sophias*, which constitutes the quintessential act of creation,' persists in his later work.<sup>852</sup> His division of *Sophia* into created and uncreated, although it establishes a distinction between dualistic and divided, attempts to avoid the seemingly unavoidable problems of all-unity.<sup>853</sup> At some point the question of where the created and uncreated *Sophia* meet, and what that meeting point should be understood as, had to be resolved.<sup>854</sup>

Sophiology is helpful when discussing evil because it explains in part the deviation creation takes from the Absolute. *Sophia* is a process of creation, differentiation, deviation and reconciliation of the world with the Absolute. Of all the religious philosophers Bulgakov's description of evil works best because he is able to use *Sophia* to personify this cleft.<sup>855</sup> By thinking of evil and sin as part of this process, it can be understood as a part of unified reality despite God's involvement in the world. For Frank, who does not rely upon the sophiological construct, defining evil in the context of all-unity is more problematic because he is unwilling to place the origin of evil in the hearts of men or in the all-unity reality. However, as it is in Bulgakov's thought, evil is specific to humankind for Frank and not a part of his model of the natural world.<sup>856</sup>

In the first Sophiological Trilogy (1927-29) *Sophia* is portrayed more conservatively: Bulgakov connects *Sophia* to the traditional personas of the Church, and to Biblical sources for the meaning of *Sophia*. For example in *Friend of The Bridegroom* (1927), he associates *Sophia*

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product or subset of the condition of *Sophia*. See below 288 and 282 for more of Bulgakov's later use of Godmanhood.

<sup>852</sup> Kyrke-Smith, 154.

<sup>853</sup> *Ibid.* 160.

<sup>854</sup> Kyrke-Smith further criticized his work of this period, writing that the role of *Sophia* in Bulgakov's thought adds problems without offering insights (155).

<sup>855</sup> Zenkovsky believes that Sophiology allows Bulgakov to deal with the problem of evil better than some other religious philosophers do (Bulgakov 'depicts the depth of evil much more strikingly than Frank', 907) Yet, perceptions that Bulgakov has been more able than other religious philosophers to escape the attendant problems of all-unity are false. Bulgakov's use of all-unity is disguised by his sophiology, an idea that encounters a plethora of problems, some more complex than the issues surrounding Pantheism. Sophiology and all-unity are so closely related in Bulgakov's thought that it is impossible to see one clearly without also considering the other.

<sup>856</sup> And yet it is not part of man's conscious being (Frank RC, 300).

closely with both Mary and St. John the Baptist.<sup>857</sup> In *The Burning Bush* (1927) he refers to *Sophia* as in the Old Testament.<sup>858</sup> Furthermore, he reasserts that *Sophia* is not a hypostasis.<sup>859</sup> Ample connections to pre-revolutionary *Sophia* can still be found. *Sophia* here is also still represented as an animating force: Bulgakov discusses what ‘lives and moves by virtue of *Sophia*.’<sup>860</sup> And, it would be hard for any reader not to feel the stylistic legacy of Solov’ev and similarity to Florensky in Bulgakov’s frequent biblical references, exploration of Hebrew, and rich metaphorical language.

Bulgakov’s changing relationship with the religious-philosophical discourse is most starkly demonstrated in the Sophiological Controversy, one of the most prominent recorded dialogues of Russian émigrés on a religious topic. The controversy involved political disputes between the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, The Patriarchal Church led from Moscow, and the Russian Church in Western Europe between 1935 and 1937, as well as the dispute over *Sophia*. For the purpose of clarity, only the part of the controversy directly associated with Bulgakov is discussed here. In 1935 Bulgakov’s work on *Sophia* was described as alien to the Orthodox faith by the Patriarchal Church. The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia formally accused Bulgakov of heresy in 1935. The Russian Church in Western Europe then (1936) set up a commission to investigate Bulgakov, the majority of whom believed Bulgakov was not guilty of heresy. However, it was not until a Bishops’ Council in 1937 deemed Bulgakov’s theology was flawed, but not heretical, that the matter was resolved.

The Sophiological Controversy represents a marked turning point in the place *Sophia* had in the religious-philosophical discourse. Whereas before the controversy *Sophia* was a dwindling discursive structure with a hold on Bulgakov and few others, by the end of the controversy *Sophia*’s power had been reaffirmed and the word—now infamous rather than famous—once again drew attention at the centre of a religious-philosophical dialogue (albeit an antagonistic rather than productive one).

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<sup>857</sup> He describes the mother of God as ‘the creaturely manifestation of Sophia’ (2003, 138), but also draws attention to John the Baptist as close to *Sophia* (*Ibid.* 153).

<sup>858</sup> Bulgakov 2009, 131.

<sup>859</sup> *Ibid.* 140.

<sup>860</sup> Bulgakov 2003, 154.

Florovsky coordinated the opposing arguments. The key to his attack on sophiology was in his critique of its origins. In his dissection of the idea, Florovsky divides Bulgakov's concept of *Sophia* into two parts. He attributes one to patristic writings (legitimate) and the other to the heritage of Boehme, Valentinus and the Kaballah (illegitimate).<sup>861</sup> Florovsky is correct in parsing the idea of *Sophia* (as it had manifested in religious-philosophy) into many sources. However, his presumption that only patristic texts provide a legitimate foundation for Orthodox thought denies Western Romantic philosophy, which also had a patristic and mystical tradition, a means of legitimate influence.<sup>862</sup> Florovsky's conviction that sophiology's non-Orthodox roots posed a threat leads his critique.<sup>863</sup>

From the outset the Sophiological Controversy used the 'origin' of the idea as a central factor. By focusing on the origin of *Sophia*, the debate moved away from how *Sophia* addressed philosophical problems and towards how to fit Bulgakov's thoughts on *Sophia* into a historically Orthodox context. The fact that Solov'ev was a great influence on Bulgakov's thought benefits *Sophia* in the context of the history of Russian religious-philosophy because Solov'ev was an undeniable leader. But, Solov'ev's ambiguous relationship to the Orthodox Church prevented his legacy from holding a similar amount of Orthodox legitimacy. Florovsky could not abide by Solov'ev's *Sophia* on theological grounds, despite the fact that Solov'ev did not produce his ideas with purely theological aims. Florovsky's criticism that 'Soloviev is "extrinsic" to the spirit of the Church,' is true only within a paradigm where the most important guarantor of 'truth' is the Church.<sup>864</sup> His comment only serves to further locate Solov'ev as a participant in religious-philosophy and particularly to establish the legacy of a religious-philosophical quirk: relating to Orthodoxy without maintaining good relations with the Church.

Florovsky also amassed historical evidence to contradict Bulgakov's claims about the originality of the role of *Sophia* within the Russian Christian context. He proposed that in Byzantine and early Russian practice, "'*Sophia* the wisdom of God" was in the overwhelming

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<sup>861</sup> Klimoff, 74.

<sup>862</sup> David, 43-45.

<sup>863</sup> Klimoff, 76.

<sup>864</sup> *Ibid.* 73.

majority of cases identified with Christ,' as Newman has successfully argued was the case in Western Europe.<sup>865</sup> In this light, Bulgakov's focus on *Sophia's* unique personality and role in the Russian Orthodox religious experience seems unfounded. Florovsky also argued that moreover, the 'existent iconographic images of a feminine *Sophia*,' so much discussed in Florensky and Bulgakov's careful argumentation, were almost certainly the result of Western influences and not uniquely Russian.<sup>866</sup> When connected to the idea that Russian heritage lends greater legitimacy to a practice, this line of logic denied sophiology any historically authentic Orthodox roots.<sup>867</sup> Amongst the new émigré Orthodox thinkers led by Florovsky, sophiology could not be both authentically Orthodox and original to Bulgakov's theology.

The dialogue of the Sophiological Controversy was restricted and protective. Klimoff cites evidence that although Florovsky would speak openly in profound disagreement with Bulgakov, he chose to articulate these disagreements differently in writing.<sup>868</sup> The written approach did not indict Bulgakov, illustrating both Florovsky's beliefs about the nature of his readership and his fidelity to the émigré community. Florovsky was able to air his complaints amongst known and trusted members of his community, but would not commit his stronger opinions to public scrutiny or to posterity. Klimoff speculates that it was especially Bulgakov's persecution by Eurasianists which caused Florovsky to rein in his sophiological criticism.<sup>869</sup> When compared with wider dialogues between émigré circles, the religious-philosophical dialogue between Bulgakov and Florovsky was not as divisive as it could have been; Bulgakov's work was closer to Florovsky's in meaning and intention than other thinkers'. Florovsky demonstrates an ultimate loyalty to the religious-philosophical discourse and his desire to affect the perception of his community by refraining from profoundly divisive actions and choosing to discuss personal disagreements in very professional academic language.

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<sup>865</sup> *Ibid.* 78.

<sup>866</sup> *Ibid.* An argument that can be supported by Newman's research.

<sup>867</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>868</sup> *Ibid.* 75: 'Remarkably however, Florovsky adopted an entirely different strategy of approaching the issue in his printed works.'

<sup>869</sup> According to Klimoff, Florovsky did not wish to be associated with a 'flagrantly dishonest campaign to vilify Bulgakov' initiated by the Eurasianists (80).

From a historian's point of view, one may ask: was the Sophiological Controversy really necessary? In many respects Bulgakov's ideas were merely a scapegoat for factionalism in the émigré Russian community. Attacking him provided outlet for angst about the situation of the Church in Soviet Russia. Stoeckl classifies this event as an instance of the re-examination of the situation of Orthodoxy in émigré society.<sup>870</sup>

Yet, although the controversy is undoubtedly a signifier of émigré social and political change, it is also indicative of the changes taking place within religious philosophy at this time. The seriousness and extent of the debate in the controversy suggests that the shift away from philosophical speculation toward theology destabilized the religious-philosophical discourse, and specifically put stress on the use of the discursive structure of *Sophia*. After the Revolution, modern Western archetypes of what constituted legitimate philosophy greatly influenced the self-identification of religious philosophers. The mixture of religiosity and philosophical enquiry that had existed in Russian scholarly life and had previously been considered natural was no longer acceptable. *Sophia*, previously an idea that comfortably bordered both fields, was now in the trenches.

In the second Sophiological Trilogy (1933-1945), under the pressure of the Sophiological Controversy, it is apparent that Bulgakov's approach to the topic changed. Notably, Bulgakov has become even more concerned with theological terminology and clarity in expressing the relationship between *Sophia* and God. He continues to carefully define *Sophia* as non-hypostatic.<sup>871</sup> He also continues to use the idea of hypostasization, or transition to hypostasis, in that *Sophia* is able to be hypostasized by her self-surrender.<sup>872</sup> In addition to hypostases, Bulgakov considers *Sophia*'s relationship to the *ousia* of God: 'The Divine Sophia is nothing other than God's nature, his *ousia*'.<sup>873</sup> Bulgakov also continues to make an ever more differentiated distinction between divine and creaturely *Sophia*. The Divine *Sophia* takes on a

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<sup>870</sup> Stoeckl, 286.

<sup>871</sup> '*Sophia* can be defined both in relation to the entire holy trinity... an in relation to each of the hypostases... the particular character of each hypostasis is preserved in all of its force...' (Bulgakov 2008 111).

<sup>872</sup> *Ibid.* 106.

<sup>873</sup> *Ibid.* 103.

new name, '*Ousia-Sophia*', is described as not able to have a creaturely life, 'it lives such a profound life that no creaturely life can be compared with it'.<sup>874</sup> Naturally, there are still enough strong connections between the creaturely and divine *Sophias* to cause confusion as to how the two coexist. For example, Bulgakov writes that the two are identical in content, but not identical in being, seeming to suggest a high degree of similarity.<sup>875</sup> Likewise the way that creaturely *Sophia* has 'divine potentiality' is confusing.<sup>876</sup>

Upon closer analysis, many aspects of pre-revolutionary use remain. *Sophia* is still active, especially creaturely *Sophia*, and still associated with progress. *Sophia* has 'self-revealing content' and therefore is fundamentally in flux.<sup>877</sup> The idea also remains a central characteristic of God: *Sophia* is the 'Life of life' and the love of love.<sup>878</sup> Bulgakov also continues to refer to *Sophia*, disarmingly, as a female person, risking confusion in his intended meaning. For example, sentences like 'She loves the tri-hypostatic God' while affirming an acceptable view of the Godhead, is also destabilizing to the unprepared reader.<sup>879</sup>

The changes in Bulgakov's intended meaning of *Sophia* can be considered, alongside other efforts thinkers took to preserve the discourse of religious philosophy, as protective measures. Evtuhov notes the changes wrought in emigration:

Something quite profound happened to the notion of *Sophia*. Earlier *Sophia* had been an integral part of the sophic economy, and any independent meanings the concept might have had remained elusive, placed in a field of shifting meanings suggested by Solov'ev's philosophy.<sup>880</sup>

Bulgakov left the openness of Solov'ev's *Sophia* behind. In his new role as theologian and leader of the émigré community, the ambiguities apparent in earlier writing about *Sophia* needed clarification. Evtuhov describes this change, 'his life in Russia faded. Even his own consciousness, as it became subsumed in his Christian vision'.<sup>881</sup>

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<sup>874</sup> *Ibid.* 104.

<sup>875</sup> *Ibid.* 128.

<sup>876</sup> *Ibid.* 127.

<sup>877</sup> *Ibid.* 103.

<sup>878</sup> *Ibid.* 104.

<sup>879</sup> *Ibid.* 105.

<sup>880</sup> Evtuhov, 239.

<sup>881</sup> *Ibid.* 242.

The process of clarification was not aided by the émigré community, however. Not only did Bulgakov write for a community of ‘initiated’ thinkers more ready to accept his personal terminology, he also wrote at a time where the legitimacy of that terminology was contested and therefore needed to be defined exhaustively. As Kyrke-Smith observes, the first problem any reader of Bulgakov encounters is with his terminology: ‘He uses a whole complex of words derived from *Sophia*, which constitute his own individual lexicon.’<sup>882</sup> Williams also critiques that Bulgakov’s ‘laboured and over-rich idiom undoubtedly encourages some such misunderstanding.’<sup>883</sup> For the uninitiated a sentence like the following could be little more than baffling: ‘The creaturely hypostases are images of the non-creaturely Divine hypostases. These multi-hypostatic images, in their singularity do not reflect God’s trihypostatizedness; they can only reflect its individual hypostases.’<sup>884</sup> Bulgakov is not entirely at fault for a sentence like that, though. He shared control over his word choices with the powers of the religious-philosophical discourse, and the ever-shifting meanings and connotations of an idea like *Sophia* lead him to use his own personal vocabulary to preserve ownership of the idea, attempt to command the discursive structure and control his relationship with his audience.<sup>885</sup> This lack of control is evident in Newman’s contention that Bulgakov’s use of this terminology was a major contributing factor to the accusations of Gnosticism levelled at him.<sup>886</sup> Bulgakov’s desire to reconstruct personal beliefs about *Sophia* and share them with a readership caused him to make elaborate explanations of *Sophia* in order to conform to the predominant opinion of the émigré Orthodox community, and to illustrate the ultimate compatibility of his theology with that community to which he belonged.

When considering *Sophia*’s role as a discursive structure in religious philosophy in emigration the question of whether it can only be considered in religious philosophy or if it has a place in theology arises. With somewhat less panache or notoriety Lossky also continued to use *Sophia* philosophically in emigration. He was careful not to confuse *Sophia* with the World

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<sup>882</sup> Kyrke-Smith, 175.

<sup>883</sup> Williams, 181.

<sup>884</sup> Bulgakov 2008, 139.

<sup>885</sup> Kyrke-Smith, 177: ‘the meanings on these terms are not fixed’.

<sup>886</sup> Newman 1978, 44.

Soul in *God and Cosmic Evil* (1941), explaining that *Sophia* is not related to the material body of the world and is instead a spirit which stands above the world and spiritually infuses it. He does not think of *Sophia* as a hypostasis; he describes her as a created entity, although in his system she occupies a special position within the hierarchy of creation as the only perfect creation.<sup>887</sup> *Sophia*, like unity, in Lossky's work is confined to the world but in *Sophia's* case she is 'perfect,' a characteristic that allows her to be part of the act of uniting creation into a Cosmic whole. He writes that *Sophia* is a substantial agent that coordinates 'every action of every other being' and is 'not isolated from anything in existence' or from the very 'foundations of the world.'<sup>888</sup> Lossky's *Sophia* acts as an important remedy to the possibility that freedom will lead to disorder and acts as the 'founding principle of the creaturely world' in which substantial agents are co-substantial to each other and integrated.<sup>889</sup>

Lossky's use of *Sophia* demonstrates that the idea continued to have philosophical potential. The challenging topics of the Sophiological Controversy were theological though, and did not question the philosophical worth and contributions of an idea like *Sophia*. Therefore, Bulgakov's accusation of heresy could also be related to the change of the focus of his investigation from *Sophia* as a means, to investigating the essential nature of *Sophia*, corresponding to the change of his occupation from philosopher to theologian.

In emigration the Sophiological Controversy contests *Sophia* in only the Christian theological domain, whereas it had previously been considered both philosophically and theologically. Sophiology is not pure speculation about God himself apart from the world, but about God's relationship with creation. *Sophia* as a 'religious-philosophical' concept is successful at rendering life meaningful in a supra-Christian wider discourse of religious philosophy.

By the time Bulgakov wrote *The Wisdom of God* (1935), he had not entirely lost touch with the forceful *Sophia* that had originally inspired him and caused his earlier infatuation. To Bulgakov, understanding *Sophia* was ever a means of understanding human history. In the

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<sup>887</sup> Sergeev, 1999, 1 and N. O. Lossky, *Bog i mirovoe zlo* (Moscow, 1994), 335

<sup>888</sup> Lossky *BIMZ*, 301

<sup>889</sup> Sergeev, 1999, 6.

introduction to this book he writes, ‘We can find a spring of living water by which to renew our faith in the sophianic or theandric meaning of the historical process.’<sup>890</sup> We must ask: why should the precocious economist and political thinker feel drawn to and bound by the strictures and specific concerns of the Church, when they so limited his capacity to continue this line of enquiry? The answer must lie partially in Bulgakov’s life experience and partially in the overall social pressures on members of his scholarly community.

Bulgakov contended that God created the world in order to apply his love, and held to the fundamental tenet of sophiology, that *Sophia* acts as a link between God and the world.<sup>891</sup> New aspects of sophiology needed to be developed in order for Bulgakov to make his belief in *Sophia* compatible with the transition his life had taken, from late-imperial Russian academic and political to émigré theological institutions. That Bulgakov’s life was moving into a spiritual vocation was obvious before the mammoth events of the twentieth century, but the subsequent experience of living through great trials within such a close community must have reinforced this change. As a person committed to the Church, and exiled from his homeland, he had a reduced desire to take philosophical risks, persist with iconoclastic lines of thought, or engage in speculation that would threaten his community abroad. Acceptance by fellow émigrés and the support of the Church (one of the only strong institutions in the émigré community) influenced Bulgakov’s pursuit and justification for *Sophia*.

Confounded by the minutiae of theological argument, *Sophia* loses its usefulness as a concept that could help explain the modern world, in the way Bulgakov’s *Philosophy of Economy* (1912) had done. But, this change of focus challenged the purpose of sophiology as it had been in religious philosophy. Sophiology was never intended to clarify our understanding of God or Christianity, but was meant to help explain the human condition. Bulgakov persisted with his theological enquiry into *Sophia*, despite its hurdles, but from the evidence in his publications alone it is quite obvious that he altered the direction of his research while in emigration to find solutions to the conflict that his belief in *Sophia* presented to his community.

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<sup>890</sup> Bulgakov 1935, 39.

<sup>891</sup> Klimoff, 77.

Despite the very narrow theological path down which Bulgakov was led by sophiology, he was always able to see the original potential of 1912 and continued to be compelled by the power this concept held for him. Bulgakov saw the renewal of the Church as connected to the active engagement of the Church with the world and *Sophia* as a means to that end.<sup>892</sup> Had Bulgakov been able to continue to speculate in an un-threatened environment, to a Church community that was strong and safe, he might have been able to continue to develop sophiology as an interesting line of theological conjecture that was perceived to add to, rather than imperil, Russian Orthodox spirituality.

In 1905 the possibility that the then widely popular *Sophia* would conclude its role in religious-philosophy as an invalidated theology could not have been anticipated. Florensky's work attempted to establish a link between contemporary Russian sophiology and patristic texts. This connection is part of an effort to deny Western influences in Solov'ev's thought about *Sophia* and promote the purely Russian heritage of his thought. In contrast, the work of Florovsky attempts almost the opposite: to illustrate the Western origin of sophiology, especially in Bulgakov's conception of *Sophia*, in order to discredit it in the Russian Orthodox community abroad, and especially the Church. The origins of the idea of *Sophia* played a strong role in how it was perceived to be a part of the Russian tradition. The idea could be called into disrepute due to assertions that its origins were ultimately not from Russian or Orthodox thought. The practice of sourcing legitimacy of ideas in their heritage distracted religious philosophers from a deep analysis of *Sophia* and how it could continue to be an inspirationally creative idea in émigré communities. Furthermore, the fact that the community within which these debates takes place is ever-shrinking affected attitudes to *Sophia*.

*Sophia* suffers diminishing importance in the émigré community as well as reduced popular appeal. Russian religious philosophers often attempted to determine the meaning of and control the use of the ideas that constituted the religious-philosophical discourse. In his thought Bulgakov faced a challenge inherent within the idea of *Sophia*; along with being an

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<sup>892</sup> Stoeckl, 287.

idea, *Sophia* is also an *image*.<sup>893</sup> *Sophia* cannot be pinned down and defined easily. In *Assessments of the Recent Russian Sophiological Tradition* Jonathan Seiling identifies this characteristic in the legacy of the Silver Age *Sophia*, ‘She is defined in so many various and differing ways that it is impossible to settle any adequate conceptual understanding of what is meant by the term *Sophia*.’<sup>894</sup> The challenge of making *Sophia*, in its diversity, conform to the discipline of philosophy was beyond Bulgakov.

Part of the mission to shift the locus of valid Orthodox experience from specifically Russian sources to the more universal sources of the Church Fathers influenced how *sobornost*’ could be used as well.<sup>895</sup> In this context the religious and universal, not atheistic or Russian, implications of the idea gain emphasis as a divergence from the other ‘Khomiakovian’ meanings for the word. One thinker who strictly uses *sobornost*’ in this sense is Florovsky. It is important that his use be included in this analysis, because although it is self-consciously out of the Slavophil tradition, it shares important hallmarks and consistencies with the meaning *sobornost*’ had for religious philosophy in emigration. In a brief article in the journal *Put*’ in 1929, Florovsky writes about the revelation of the ‘secret of *sobornost*’ in the secret of the Church.<sup>896</sup> He completely links experienced *sobornost*’ with the Church experience: ‘The living and breathing Eucharistic name signifies the confirmation of each individuality in one; in the *sobornyi* body of the Church.’<sup>897</sup> In *Ways of Russian Theology* Florovsky clarifies this approach to *sobornost*’. He writes, ‘truthfully, the Church is “ideal community” because the

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<sup>893</sup> Williams considers this to be the fundamental problem with *Sophia* as a term, ‘the commonest and easiest misunderstanding of Bulgakov’s language is precisely to take him as talking about a kind of heavenly individual rather than divine action and created process’ (181).

<sup>894</sup> J. Seiling, ‘Assessments of the Recent Russian Sophiological Tradition’, *Landshaft* [online journal], 2 (July 2008). <<http://www.pitt.edu/~lands>>, 6.

<sup>895</sup> As already discussed the relocation of legitimate antecedents for Russian theology was a result of a number of things: émigré theologians’ exposure to the West; their desire to cultivate theology compatible with Western theology (Plekon, 203 and Louth, 192); the disrepute the Russian philosophical heritage suffered in the light of the emerging Soviet system; and a desire for greater stability of philosophical heritage for a less stable community. The questions of complicity with the Soviet regime and potential heresy of more adventurous Russian theologians had the potential to undermine the social institution of Orthodoxy, a corner stone of émigré life and identity. The relationship between proponents of neo-patristic theology and proponents of what Paul Valliere has termed the ‘Russian School’ is beyond the remit of this thesis.

<sup>896</sup> Florovsky, Geroges ‘*Evkharistia i sobornost*’, *Put*’, 19 (Nov. 1929), 4.

<sup>897</sup> Florovsky EIS, 12.

mutual insurmountable tension of personal self-will is only fully allowed in the Church.<sup>898</sup> His understanding of the social harmony of the church is very much oriented toward the basic questions of the relationship of the individual to the community. In writing so, he creates the image that his is a mission of a more universal nature, with spiritual relevance to non-Russians as well as Russians.

By choosing to interpret the meaning of *sobornost'* as free from Khomiakov's influence Florovsky is able to dispute the Slavophil contribution to understanding society via a philosophy of the Church, and instead promotes the social teachings in their philosophy of history.<sup>899</sup> In this way Florovsky can be seen to be indirectly disputing the legitimacy of Khomiakov's terminology. He writes that the Slavophil perception of an organic, Russian national *sobornost'* that originated out of the Church is particularly misguided: 'in their view the very life of the people was a certain natural *sobornost'* and the commune or *mir* was precisely an embryonic church.'<sup>900</sup> The negative consequence of this view is the fact that 'we could only return to the church through the people,' or in other words it appeared to the atheistic intelligentsia that had evolved separately from the peasantry, that it would be impossible to regain orthodoxy without Russian nationalism.<sup>901</sup> Florovsky's view critiques the intelligentsia's concern that the divide between the peasantry and the intelligentsia would prevent the possibility of actualizing *sobornost'* as misguided. It is a criticism of the intelligentsia's false division of theology from popular piety. Both divisions (the divide between the intelligentsia and 'the people' and the division between theology and everyday religious practice) ultimately hurt the Russian nation and the Orthodox Church. For Florovsky it was not necessary or possible to partake in a mythologised rustic Russian peasant life (a life equally inaccessible to émigré communities and Russians in Russia because it was the product of intellectual fantasy) in order to realize the orthodox ideal of *sobornost'*. That the meaning of *sobornost'* had come to contain an element of this nationalist fantasy made the word less theologically useful.

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<sup>898</sup> Florovsky PRB, 290.

<sup>899</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>900</sup> Florovsky 1987, 291.

<sup>901</sup> *Ibid.*

Florovsky also does not have a secular meaning for the word. When he writes ‘sociality [*obshchestvennost*’] and ecclesiality [*tserkovnost*’] taking into account the likeness between these two orders, they are not commensurable between themselves,’ he makes a clear distinction between sociality inside and outside of the Church, and eschews *sobornost*’ as a word to define sociality because it cannot illustrate this distinction.<sup>902</sup> Florovsky instead uses *sobornost*’ in connection with the Russian people as a means to affirm the grounding of Russian faith in the heritage of the Church. His statement, ‘In its inner thoughts on God, its rule of prayer, and its spiritual exploits the Russian soul preserved an ancient and strict patristic style and lives in the full, unpolluted, and indivisible plenitude of *sobornost*’,’ maintains traditional uses of the idea.<sup>903</sup> His approach to understanding the relationship between *sobornost*’ and the Russian soul, or even his choice to identify a relationship, is very Romantic and does connect to the pattern of religious-philosophical conceptions of *sobornost*’ as specifically linked to Russianness. However, he also connects *sobornost*’ and Russianness to more ancient Christian traditions. It is obvious that although Florovsky has a different definition of *sobornost*’ in mind, he is influenced by discourse with religious philosophy to the extent that he adopts the terms and traditions of the body of thought.<sup>904</sup> Florovsky’s approach to discussing community is concerned with the ownership, control and connotations of terminology.<sup>905</sup> Neo-patristic focus on early Christian scholarship is a means of differentiating access to the use and understanding of *sobornost*’.

What is so striking about these examples is the intellectual isolation and the atmosphere of struggle that characterizes the émigré period. In the revolutionary period productivity and diversity signified a certain air of hopefulness in religious philosophy. In this later period, although the YMCA Press facilitated publication, the increase in full length work seems a

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<sup>902</sup> Florovsky PRB, 290.

<sup>903</sup> Florovsky 1987, 293.

<sup>904</sup> Plekon comes to similar conclusions to my own, pointing out that despite his resistance to aspects of their thought, Florovsky ‘none the less concurred with colleagues at the St. Sergius Intitute’, notably Bulgakov, about the sobornal nature of the church (213).

<sup>905</sup> As he does when he disputes the existence of a divine *Sophia*, see below 270-271, Florovsky attempts to relocate the source of legitimacy for the idea of *sobornost*’ to Patristic theology and thus maintain his control over its meaning in his scholarship.

frantic productivity. This, when combined with a turn to other worldly topics, gives an image of philosophers trapped with their thoughts, scurrying to produce an escape. It is one of the most unpleasant sensations émigré religious philosophy can engender, but not all religious philosophy is so.

#### **6.4 Modernity and the Sanctity of the Individual**

Contemporary events also drew the attention of religious philosophers to a fresh subject: modernity. One reason that modernity was a more contested topic in émigré life than during the revolutionary period was because modernity was a pan-European experience and engaging with it was a way to make religious philosophy relevant outside of émigré communities. Another reason that it became more popular to critique modernity in later religious philosophy is that twentieth century experience provided concrete examples of how modernity could be unpleasant. While some thinkers might have been enthusiastic about changes during the revolutionary period because of their opposition to the tsarist government, the overwhelming evidence of the twentieth century thus far had been that change was not always for the better.

In post-revolutionary religious philosophy it was the idea of Godmanhood that was most often used in relation to these explorations of modernity. Over subsequent decades of exile these thinkers increasingly viewed the Revolution as part of a larger change toward modernity taking place in the wider European context. In light of the challenges presented by modernity, Godmanhood moved beyond its opposition to manhood to address and help define the modern subject. The violence that accompanied emigration and the jeopardized status of the individual in Western Europe encouraged religious philosophers to seek further applications of Godmanhood to everyday human existence.<sup>906</sup> This development is hardly without basis; it is foreshadowed by Solov'ev's attention to modernity in his *Lectures* (1881).<sup>907</sup>

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<sup>906</sup> Gottlieb concludes that it is not surprising that the religious philosophers should pursue an 'anthropocentric and idealist' line of thought in reaction to the Revolution because the events provoked

Bulgakov describes modern life in almost apocalyptic terms in *'Social Teaching in Modern Russian Orthodox Theology'* (1934). He writes, 'We are now standing before and participating in the great tragedy of history, the struggle of the Antichrist, of anti-Christian forces against Christ.'<sup>908</sup> In this sermon he continues his early contrasts between Godmanhood and mangodhood by contrasting atheistic humanism to Christian humanism. He associates atheistic humanism with 'materialistic socialism and particularly communism', a concrete example unlike the theoretical evidence Bulgakov had for mangodhood, and bemoans the facts the Christian humanism is not 'a reality in contemporary Christianity'.<sup>909</sup> Berdyaev makes the same criticism in more philosophical, rather than theological, terms in *Slavery and Freedom* (1939): '...the objectification of Godmanhood in society and in the course of history is a source of falsehood and slavery.'<sup>910</sup> Both of these thinkers have used Godmanhood to express their dissatisfaction with the course of current events.

For Frank, this isolation and fracture is partially a result of modernity which, like Bulgakov's idea of history, is a temporal condition in which sin can be better found and more easily understood than in all-unity. Frank (and Florensky, but in the revolutionary period see above), is concerned that the natural order of things, or the way that things should be, is undermined or disrupted by sin. After the revolution Frank cannot attribute sin to man's will, and his discussion of human interactions within unity both support this interpretation.<sup>911</sup>

Frank uses creative definition of free will to remove the potential for evil from human consciousness. Frank distinguishes between an act of free will and an act of choice, describing

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a concern with human beings, not impersonal social forces (74). Indeed, the association of Western thought with individualism in opposition to communality might have sparked this attention to the person.

<sup>907</sup> Using Godmanhood when contemplating modernity was implicit in Solov'ev's initial discussion of the subject.

<sup>908</sup> S. Bulgakov, *'Social Teaching in Modern Russian Orthodox Theology'* (Evanston, IL 1934), 22.

<sup>909</sup> *Ibid.* 285.

<sup>910</sup> Berdyaev 1944, 47.

<sup>911</sup> Frank describes all of human consciousness and knowledge as taking place in the context of unity. Self knowledge and freedom, somewhat paradoxically, come from all-unity: 'in losing its ultimate ground, in and through which it is securely rooted in reality, the self loses its own reality and as it were helplessly hangs in the air, becoming a play thing of impersonal strivings—and as it does so acquires an increasingly secretive sense of freedom, independence, selfgroundedness' (Frank RC, 325).

free will as originating much deeper in the soul than choice. With this distinction Frank is able to exonerate man from willing sin. Due to irrationality in 'desire itself there is no "conscious" choice', only an 'indefiniteness of the dynamic process of attraction, creativeness and becoming.'<sup>912</sup> Free choice involves deliberation and objective consciousness, but free will exists within consciousness itself. Therefore, Frank concludes that faulty volition is the result not of 'weaknesses in senses [*mysli*], but weakness in the essence of will.'<sup>913</sup> Frank's construction uses the semantic distinction between choice and will to establish that although will might be the source of evil, it is not the cause of it. This distinction between choice and will redefines man's relationship to sin. Sin in the external sphere of man's life is 'wrong action', 'wrong conduct' or 'wrong attitude'.<sup>914</sup> These external manifestations materialize from the first state of sin, a wrong state of inner spiritual life that denies or rejects the will of the soul. Frank explains how this state comes about inadvertently: 'there is a difference between "I desire" [*ia khochu*] and "I myself desire" [*ia sam khochu*], I am not the source or creator of my desire, but on the contrary my desire possesses me.'<sup>915</sup> This idea that sensations and desires are as much a product of the people and things that surround the conscious self as they are a product of the self is a consequence of an ontology based on all-unity.

Barth Landor criticises this aspect of Frank's work, writing that his failure to address the dynamic of sin flaws the otherwise anthropocentric ontology.<sup>916</sup> In these explanations, it is unclear why a human being would will evil. Their discussions of both will and evil present both subjects in such abstract ways that it seems impossible to truly identify an original source of evil will in the world. Landor interprets Frank's work to imply that sin is 'being cut off from reality, the source of all man's meaning.'<sup>917</sup> Frank describes true desire for sin on the part of the person as impossible, 'we do not desire sin, but we are drawn [*vlechimsia*] to it, it "possesses"

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<sup>912</sup> Frank RC, 306.

<sup>913</sup> *Ibid.* 310.

<sup>914</sup> *Ibid.* 300.

<sup>915</sup> *Ibid.* 319. The way that Frank describes the desire to sin, in terms of an external force that overwhelms the thinking subject's will, resembles Karsavin's discussion of the sensations of love and hate see footnote 382.

<sup>916</sup> Landor, 131.

<sup>917</sup> *Ibid.* 132.

[*obladi vaet*] us'<sup>918</sup>. Human culpability is removed from Frank's view of sin because humans are duty-bound to realize their full being, and therefore not to sin and disrupt that realization. This calls into question the place of freedom. If sin is not the rule of freedom, but the denial of freedom in unity, then the typical Christian meaning to the fall from grace loses its meaning. Frank explains that the descriptions of the fall as an abuse of man's freedom are wrong: 'as it is usually discussed in studies of The Fall, that man "fell" or "abused" his freedom, it must be recognized that man has not truly made use of the essence of his own freedom.'<sup>919</sup> This view seems obstinate, as though Frank refuses to acknowledge that man might be responsible for some of the bad things in the world.

Yet, Frank's contemplation of Godmanhood in his later work also results from a wider reappraisal of the events of the twentieth century. In this reappraisal 'modernity' in general is as much a culprit for humanity's woes as is the Revolution in particular. A modern view disrupts man's Godmanhood; the basic heresy of modern times according to Frank was the idea that 'human nature itself does not need improvement'.<sup>920</sup> Man's external relationship with a transcendent God can emphasize his disconnect from the divine, but the inherent quality of Godmanhood unites man's potential to God. In *Reality and Man* (1953), Frank decries the severance of ties to God as specifically related to modern life. He writes: 'Man's pride in imagining himself sinless, God by nature and omnipotent is the main error and spiritual disease of the present age.'<sup>921</sup> When man believes himself to be as God, his source of power and ground of existence in God is lost and the meaning of man's life then shifts to external concerns. As Frank explains, the 'desire to turn the human individual wholly into the so-called 'active man,' that is into a cynic, who has lost feeling and taste for inner life and finds his full satisfaction in technical utility' creates a man with no 'individuality in the sense of inner reality'.<sup>922</sup>

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<sup>918</sup> Frank RC, 310.

<sup>919</sup> Frank RC, 312. Zenkovsky criticises Frank: 'he does not understand it [original sin], has no place for it, and as a result to problem of evil has no place in his system' (Zenkovsky, 876).

<sup>920</sup> Boobbyer, 207.

<sup>921</sup> This implies the position of 'mangodhood'. But Frank does not invoke the term. (Frank RC, 235)

<sup>922</sup> Boobbyer, 132.

Berdyaev makes a similar complaint in *The Meaning of History* (1936) where he blames atheistic humanism, mechanization, the French and Russian Revolutions, and the Great War for the decline and crisis of humanity and the bankruptcy of moral life.<sup>923</sup> Here he describes modern man as following a ‘path of self-affirmation and presumption’ that instead of resulting in happiness causes mankind to experience ‘a profound sense isolation and abandonment.’<sup>924</sup> This situation ‘inspires him [man] with a feeling of inexpressible terror for which he [man] seeks refuge’ in communism.<sup>925</sup> This observation is different from the aggressive denunciation of rational experience as ‘incomplete’ or ‘misleading’ that appears in Bulgakov and Frank’s critiques.

Often, these discussions of the effects of modernity on the individual revisit the antinomy between Godmanhood and mangodhood established before the revolution. But Frank contrasts an abstract materialist ‘Western’ individual, instead of a Nietzschean superman, to Godmanhood. Perhaps because he does not focus his analysis on the duality of humanism and Christianity in the same way that Bulgakov does. For Bulgakov, Christian society must participate in the God-man in order to rectify the wrongs of modern society.<sup>926</sup>

Even after witnessing World War II first-hand, Frank neither indicts nor condemns the ‘secular’ part of humanism as strongly as Bulgakov. Instead, in *The Light in the Darkness* (1949), Frank simply views the concept of secular humanism as self-contradictory:

The cult of man, the optimistic faith in his great calling to rule the world, and to affirm the dominance of reason and the good in the world is combined in secular humanism with a theoretical view of man as a being who belongs to the kingdom of nature and is wholly subordinated to its blind forces.<sup>927</sup>

Frank cannot reconcile these two impulses. Either man is a base animal with no higher calling, or man is a noble being with reason, but he cannot be both. Frank identifies the past elevation of secular humanism to a spiritual role with history and ‘with the passage of time’ in *The Light*

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<sup>923</sup> Berdyaev 1936, 166.

<sup>924</sup> *Ibid.* 159 and 160.

<sup>925</sup> *Ibid.* 160.

<sup>926</sup> Bulgakov 1934, 285.

<sup>927</sup> Frank SVT, 22.

*in the Darkness* (1949).<sup>928</sup> In the course of history science undermined the singularity of the person and the apparent capacity of humans to influence the world. Thus, for Frank the massive turmoil of the twentieth century cannot be blamed on secular humanism as a problematic concept. Rather, the loss of this special kernel of truth about the place of man in history that once characterized secular humanism is to blame. It can be considered tantamount to the loss of humanism in general: ‘The collapse of secular humanism has led to the domination of the world by the mind-set and life practice of a gang of criminals, has before our eyes drowned the world in a sea of bloodshed and tears.’<sup>929</sup> Frank recognizes the similarities between humanism and Godmanhood and opposes these shared values to the valuelessness of the modern era.

This somewhat conciliatory approach is also evident in the treatment of Nietzsche’s character, which in the post-revolutionary period becomes even more sympathetic in the context of modernity. In *The Meaning of History* (1936), Berdyaev describes Nietzsche as ‘both the incarnation of humanism and also the victim of its sins.’<sup>930</sup> In *The Light in the Darkness* (1949) Frank sums up this attitude: ‘Despite Nietzsche’s anti-religious and anti-Christian pathos, his refusal to worship man in man’s empirical, natural ordinary being reveals a genuine religious striving of Nietzsche’s spirit and contains a recollection of a forgotten fundamental truth.’<sup>931</sup> The belief in a higher calling for man and a nobility of character, shared by Godmanhood and mangodhood, contrast with the twentieth century events that, according to religious philosophy, deny any special place for humanity in the natural world. In the émigré context the similarities shared by the man-god/God-man antinomy overwhelm the differences between them.<sup>932</sup>

Furthermore, for Frank in *The Light in the Darkness* (1949), knowledge and rationality (under earlier circumstances the enemy of religious philosophy), in addition to spirituality

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<sup>928</sup> *Ibid.* 23.

<sup>929</sup> *Ibid.* 27.

<sup>930</sup> Berdyaev 1936, 156.

<sup>931</sup> Frank SVT, 125.

<sup>932</sup> This eventual resolution of the conflict is also foreshadowed in Solov’ev’s original use; the ambiguity and half-hearted nature of religious-philosophical opposition to Comte and Nietzsche from the beginning suggests that these two approaches to humanism have a strong shared foundation. In fact the true antagonist to the religious-philosophical approach to humanity in the idea of Godmanhood is really empiricism, or a philosophy that allows for no supernatural potential whatsoever.

(religious philosophy's ally), help to overcome the problem presented by the end of secular humanism. He writes,

It is not enough that man has turned out to be an ape-like being; from now on he is recognized to be a lump of living flesh, all of whose psychic life and ideas are determined by the blind mechanism of sexual desire; not rational consciousness, not spirit and conscience, blind chaotic, subconscious-forces rule human life.<sup>933</sup>

Here consciousness and conscience combine in what Elena Karpenko describes and an 'entelechy of culture'. In this instance it is the idealized higher faculties of humanity that re-establish the central place of the human.<sup>934</sup> Frank deplores a situation that is a conflation of Nietzschean and Marxist effects on the world. To Frank, even the old humanism that misinterpreted the source of man's exceptional nature is a better philosophy than the modern view of the materialist Superman dominating the earth.

It may appear from these attacks on modernity that religious philosophy after the revolution was 'conservative' in that it did not welcome change. Berdyaev's contribution to this discussion helps show that the Christian humanism of Godmanhood was, in fact, a very active concept. In his conclusion to *Slavery and Freedom* (1939), Berdyaev discusses the role of Godmanhood in bringing about the end of time, in a positive way.<sup>935</sup> Whereas those who quietly await the apocalypse must take an attitude of fear, Berdyaev believes that those who actively work to bring about the second coming of Christ can look upon this event with anticipation.

The need to describe and defend humanity became of greater concern in the context of apparent threats to the individual person embodied in communism and fascism. The connection between God and man implied by Godmanhood was a useful source of support for a philosophy of the individual in religious philosophy because the Godmanhood aspect of each person is unique to him, representing his free will and his personal relationship with God.

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<sup>933</sup> *Ibid.* 23.

<sup>934</sup> E. Karpenko, 'S L Frank: *Filosofskia antropologiia i entelekhiiia kulturi*', paper presented at Philosophical Heritage of Semion Frank in the Context of European Culture conference, Moscow, 19-23 Sept. 2007.

<sup>935</sup> Berdyaev 1944, 268: 'Everything will enter into the authentic reality of subjectivity and spirituality, into the divine, or rather the divine-human [Godmanhood] life.'

In his author's note at the beginning of *The Lamb of God* (1933), Bulgakov draws attention to the special need to look at Godmanhood more closely at this time because of the importance of the individual. He writes:

What can I say about Christ's Divine-Humanity [Godmanhood] and about our Divine-humanity [Godmanhood]? The salvation effected by Christ is accomplished in the individual soul, which is more precious than the world. And the path of the individual soul consists in the feat of the struggle against sin, against the tragic rupture in the soul of fallen man.<sup>936</sup>

Bulgakov is persuaded that Godmanhood needs addressing because of the importance of this process to the soul, and in his Second Sophiological Trilogy he provides ample theological foundation for his inclination to explore Godmanhood.

In *Slavery and Freedom* (1939), Berdyaev voices the idea that what is essentially human is wrapped up in the 'enigma' of Godmanhood. He writes, 'Personality is only human personality when it is divine human [Godmanly] personality. The freedom and independence of human personality from the world of objects is its divine humanity [Godmanhood].'<sup>937</sup> Likewise for Frank, in *Reality and Man* (1953), Godmanhood is a condition of humanity, a part of every person's experience of being human: 'The bi-unity of Godmanhood is logically prior to the understanding of God and of the human.'<sup>938</sup> Frank actively defends the sanctity of the individual based on this connection between man and God: Godmanhood supports a special place for man and defines his personal character as a sacred, unique thing.

These various views of the individual are a departure from thinking of Godmanhood only in terms of Christ personally, as was common in earlier use.<sup>939</sup> Whereas originally Godmanhood was linked directly to Christ, his person and his life, it can be seen that throughout this period Godmanhood has gradually become a quality essential to defining human nature. The ramifications of Godmanhood for the individual person are implicit in work that focuses on Christ, but this attention becomes ever more explicit in the post-revolutionary period.

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<sup>936</sup> Here, Bulgakov alludes to his earlier concern with manhood (the 'fallen man') and Dostoevsky (the 'soul more precious than the world' is reminiscent of the 'tear of a child' in the Grand Inquisitor). Despite this attention to these ideas in his author's note, Bulgakov devotes the rest of the book to Godmanhood in terms of Christology instead of in terms of modern man (Bulgakov 2008, xiii).

<sup>937</sup> Berdyaev 1944, 44-45.

<sup>938</sup> Frank RC, 249.

<sup>939</sup> See above 207.

With Godmanhood, Frank reserved a special place for man apart from the world, validating humanity, and preserving respect for the individual's place in a wider system. The epistemological implications of all-unity in religious philosophy, as elaborated on by Karsavin, Frank and Trubetskoi, seem to remove the locus of epistemological enquiry from the human mind. Of all these thinkers, Frank emphasized the contribution of the individual, the directedness of the cognitive gaze at the unknown object, as a condition that makes knowledge possible. He writes about this in *The Unknowable* (1939), 'However far knowledge finally goes, this initial directedness of "view" as such, cannot vanish, cannot be abandoned or overcome, because it is the fundamental setting for what we call knowledge.'<sup>940</sup> Berdyaev echoes Frank and restates this idea in more general terms, in *Slavery and Freedom* (1939), writing that personality is formulated by 'subjectivity, in which is hidden the power of the image of God'.<sup>941</sup> In this post-revolutionary work, the primacy of the self as a point of reference has now become important.

Later, for Frank, in *Reality and Man* (1953), this special relevance of Godmanhood continues: the unity man has with God makes him unconditional and eternal by association.<sup>942</sup> Frank considers historical circumstances to have an impact on the state of man's conditional being, but not on unconditional Godmanhood. The personal relationship between man and God 'takes place only in the inmost depths of my "self,"' writes Frank.<sup>943</sup> Personal relationship with God is conducted in the place that the connection to Godmanhood provides for the soul. Frank elaborates on his point:

That which I lack and which I find only in Him, is in a potential form, the inmost essence of my own self; I can seek and find final satisfaction in my search, only because potentially I from the first possess that which I seek—indeed because I *am* that which I seek.<sup>944</sup>

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<sup>940</sup> Frank N, 23.

<sup>941</sup> Berdyaev 1944, 45.

<sup>942</sup> Frank RC, 214. This terminology is from Solov'ev, who also regards Godmanhood as an unconditional aspect of man, writing, 'don't confuse unconditional being with conditional being in nature' (Solov'ev 1948, 117).

<sup>943</sup> Frank RC, 217.

<sup>944</sup> *Ibid.* 219.

Thus, the immanence of God in the very soul of every man is a foundation of that man's being. Instead of being incorporated into God's nature, Godmanhood explains a relationship between God and man that gives mankind a special quality.

In religious philosophy, the promotion of the individual through Godmanhood is counter-balanced by the emphasis on the importance of communion in the idea of *sobornost'*.<sup>945</sup> Whereas in *sobornost'* many individuals are linked together through a communion that seemingly overwhelms individual distinctiveness, in Godmanhood each person's possession of the quality of Godmanhood is a personal trait. Part of the concept of *sobornost'* in religious philosophy maintains the individual will vis-à-vis the communal will of *sobornyi* community, but is perhaps the least compellingly articulated part of the idea. *Sobornost'* and Godmanhood complement each other. *Sobornost'* explains the community and Godmanhood the individual. This interdependence of the two ideas might explain how both are used in religious philosophy after the revolution to address concerns about the state of the world as it was then—*sobornost'* as an idea to address communism, and Godmanhood as an idea to address modern man.

## 6.5 Conclusions

There is no denying that the émigré period is one of productivity born of adversity in religious philosophy. The relocation of thinkers from Russia to the West by way of trauma put pressure on religious philosophy. However, it has always been difficult to discern what philosophical changes are individual to particular thinkers, and what changes can be considered as part of trends in thought. It is with the help of discursive structures that commonalities in philosophy can be seen. And what of these similarities? Do they merely corroborate what we already knew, that these philosophers had similar outlooks or experiences? In part the answer to this question is yes, but they also help us see religious philosophy anew.

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<sup>945</sup> Copleston 1988, 64: 'Participation by human beings in Godmanhood should not be conceived as involving the disappearance of the distinctions between persons or between them and God.'

That this is the case is most evidenced by *Sophia* and *sobornost*, which despite the fact that aspects of both discursive structures came under scrutiny in this period, proved to have quite different outcomes in each case. For *sobornost*'s redefinition of the idea expanded the term, potentially to one that was no longer unique to religious philosophy. In the case of *Sophia*, the applicability of the idea narrowed as the century wore on. In an effort to preserve the idea as religious philosophers understood it, in particular as Bulgakov understood it, from misunderstanding, *Sophia* came to have a meaning applicable only in a theological context, a context that it was unfortunately considered illegitimate in. Godmanhood's Christian roots proved useful for developing broader themes about humanity, and especially themes about how the human experience is conditioned and can be improved. After the Revolution, it became possible to reflect upon real-life experience and use Godmanhood as a tool to support a Christian humanist position in relation to individuality and modernity. What is most remarkable is points of continuity, like these, amid the overwhelming evidence for change. Even under tremendous pressure discursive structures continued to knit the discourse of religious philosophy into a coherent unit.

Continuity in use despite the radical upheavals Bulgakov, Berdyaev and Frank faced at this time is telling of the durability of all-unity as a religious-philosophical idea. Continuity illustrates how a philosopher's use of an idea can only be influenced by external pressures to the extent that the idea is able to react to those pressures. This could be because all-unity gave the universe a satisfying coherence allowing philosophers who worked with the idea to take shelter in it from the tumult of revolution and exile.

In his assessment, Zenkovsky's summation of all-unity metaphysics treats these systems as failed projects that once attempted to be a panacea for religious-philosophical problems but in fact could not solve them. He addresses the philosophical system of Karsavin: 'this idea which brings "all and nothingness," Absolute and Other being, together in a living connection—was primarily a key for systematic treatment of the problems which agitated him'.<sup>946</sup> This summation treats all-unity as merely a 'solution', or a personal convenience, not a truth that

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<sup>946</sup> Zenkovsky, 851. Underlining my own.

Karsavin had discovered in his work. Similarly, Zenkovsky accuses Florensky's total-unity of being a means of freeing 'himself from philosophical difficulties'.<sup>947</sup> Again, Florensky's use of unity is depicted as a personal choice, not as a philosophical truth.<sup>948</sup> Such indictments punctuate Zenkovsky's writing on this subject. He concludes: 'total-unity may impress one with its harmonious construction and internal coherence, but a false and hasty monism, even if it is veiled beneath the word monodualism [as Frank terms it] does not accord with the mystery of being.'<sup>949</sup> Zenkovsky's criticism is interspersed between passages of praise and respect for religious philosophy, yet he cannot restrain himself on this topic. It is as if he is asking, 'How can these great thinkers cocoon themselves from the great problems of their day?' He implies that maintaining the concept of all-unity also maintains a Russian philosophy of passivity that simultaneously ignores and excuses the atrocities mankind committed in the twentieth century.

This criticism is not entirely justified, as can be seen by surveying the topics raised by these four discursive structures. It is true that all-unity is comforting and at times convenient. It is also true that within this discourse there are signs of philosophical isolation and desperation, and signs of hope. It would be unreasonable to expect religious philosophy to take on a role in society that was radically different from its earlier role, to expect academics to become activists, or to expect ideals that were simultaneously innovative and quixotic to become pragmatic.

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<sup>947</sup> *Ibid.* 890.

<sup>948</sup> See also Zenkovsky's critique of Frank above.

<sup>949</sup> Zenkovsky, 872.

## Conclusion

‘What saves the affairs of mortal men from their inherent futility is nothing but this incessant talk of them.’

—Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*

Part of the initial purpose of this research was to reassess the label ‘Russian religious philosophy’. Although various other labels, such as ‘idealist’ and ‘metaphysical’, have been used to describe this school of thought, ‘Russian religious philosophy’ is best and most appropriate. As this thesis demonstrates all of the words (Russian, religious and philosophy) are apropos. No reservations about describing this thought as philosophy can overcome the evidence that religious-philosophical texts are primarily of a philosophical nature. The religious aspect of this thought is equally obvious; much of it cannot be understood outside of a Christian context, or at least the context of some sort of theistic Absolute. However, as can be seen in the four ideas explored in this thesis, God was only one of the many subjects tackled by religious philosophy. Questions about mankind, modernity, society, politics, love and many more are addressed by Russian religious philosophy in the context of the existence of God, but not always in direct relation to His existence. Furthermore, use of *vseedinstvo*, *sobornost’*, *Sophia* and *bogochelovechestvo* demonstrates the Russian aspect of this school of thought. With terminology like this, Russian religious philosophy will always have a certain inaccessibility or mystique to a non-Russian audience.

Although in so many ways Russian religious philosophy is unmistakably Russian, religious and philosophy there are also ways in which it is not these things. The ideas of this school of thought cross the borders implied by these labels. Even though all-unity, *sobornost’*, *Sophia* and Godmanhood are tied to the Russian cultural context, these ideas also connect to non-Russian origins and purposes. As much as it conforms to these labels, religious philosophy also explores the ambiguities of what it means to be ‘religious’, and to be ‘philosophy’. The changing role of these discursive structures between the 1905 Revolution and the Second World

War offers an insight into how religious philosophy negotiated the challenges presented by its liminal qualities.

By focusing on ideas instead of thinkers, the structure of this research intentionally demonstrates the strong commonalities of thought that constitute religious philosophy in its own right in order to better see how this school of thought as a whole was affected by the events of the twentieth century. The use of certain words in similar ways and within similar conceptual frameworks unites religious-philosophical texts in a common discourse. The use of shared concepts connects religious-philosophical texts to each other more deeply than the geographical and biographical similarities of their authors can account for. The best examples of shared lexicon in this thesis are the words *sobornost'* and *bogochelovechestvo*, which demanded use in the place of other, potentially better, words because of their associations within Russian religious philosophy.

Even though alternatives to *sobornost'* had been considered and sought, this word needed to be addressed, used, defined, and redefined by religious philosophers because it played an important part in constructing the religious-philosophical discourse. Likewise, an alternative to Godmanhood (theandry) would have arguably had more success in Western and primarily theological discourses. But, in the religious-philosophical discourse, Godmanhod had a unique and necessary role that theandry could not fulfil. In the cases of all-unity and *Sophia* it is less the word itself than it is the concept it denotes that establishes the religious-philosophical discourse. All-unity was essential to the religious-philosophical epistemological models and could not be neglected, even by detractors. *Sophia* was a key metaphysical model in religious philosophy, and no matter how problematic it became, it could not be ignored.

Viewing Russian religious philosophy from the perspective of the ideas that composed it also helps demonstrate how it is concentrated in space and time which in turn helps establish religious philosophy as a unique phenomenon. It is apparent that religious philosophy is very much connected to its time and place. The origin of religious philosophy in Russia was facilitated by the mixing of a variety of Western and Eastern influences because of the increased liberalization of Russia's intellectual circles and the generally late occurrence of philosophy as a

discipline in Russian academia. The mixed origins of the ideas explored here (the Christian and Platonic origins of All-unity; the dialogue with Western Christianity that begat *sobornost'*; the mixture of Orthodox iconography and Western Romanticism that helped Solov'ev envision *Sophia*; and dialogue between modern atheistic philosophy and Orthodoxy in which Godmanhood flourished) support the view that Russian religious philosophy came into being as a result of particular circumstances. The contribution that artistic movements in the Silver Age, the political instability of late imperial Russia and the resurgence of intellectual interest in spirituality at the turn of the last century each made to influence a flourishing of religious-philosophical work is clear.

Religious philosophy expounds core Western philosophical assumptions and attempts to integrate itself into the history of Western philosophy, both by drawing on Western philosophical roots, and by engaging in contemporary philosophical trends. Looking at religious philosophy in this time period from the vantage point of these ideas shows the role of Western thought in religious philosophy more clearly than it can be seen when considering one text, or one thinker, alone. Furthermore, this vantage point makes it possible to see how religious philosophy at this time period can be considered a part of Russian participation in Western trends. Religious philosophy helps demonstrate how Russian experience is connected to greater European patterns of philosophical development. Florovsky's remarks that, 'Substitution of "religious philosophy" for theology characterized all Western Romanticism, especially the German variety... In all this [religious-philosophy] was one of the most Western episodes in Russia's development.'<sup>950</sup> These remarks were intended to be criticism, but they draw attention to the fact that by experimenting with the process of accounting for the universe, including the divine elements of it, in a more philosophical than theological mode, religious philosophy was a body of work that had parallels to Western thought.

Creating religious philosophy could even be considered a part of Russia's participation in a Western development model: as society modernized and secularised, religious-philosophy fulfilled a need to continue thinking about God's place in this new society. Arendt observes

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<sup>950</sup> Florovsky 1987, 275.

Western secular development as problematic and potentially the cause of absolutist political systems. She writes:

The numerous difficulties and perplexities, theoretical and practical, that have beset the public political realm ever since the rise of the secular, the very fact that secularisation was accompanied by the rise of absolutism and the downfall of absolutism was followed by revolutions whose chief perplexity was where to find an absolute from which to derive authority for law and power, could well be taken to demonstrate that politics and the state need the sanction of religion even more urgently than religion and the churches had ever needed the support of princes.<sup>951</sup>

Examinations of the persistence of various forms of absolutism in modern societies should be accompanied by an investigation into how secularization took place in those societies. Religious philosophy also recognized this idea that humans need an absolute upon which to anchor their beliefs. When we look at it today, religious philosophy provides insights into how spirituality was intellectualized and integrated into Russia's changing cultural landscape, and can contribute to studies of the intellectual response to social change in twentieth century Europe.

Religious philosophy was more than a response to the rise of the secular; it also constituted part of that rise. The works of Khomiakov and, later, Solov'ev are both attempts to provide lay interpretations of religious concepts in order to make them compatible with the current philosophical questions of their day. These trends can especially be seen in religious philosophy in the first half of the twentieth century. The ideas of all-unity, *sobornost'*, *Sophia*, and Godmanhood provided religious philosophy with a space to explore the modernization and secularisation of society and to examine the meaning of the transition from Tsarist to Soviet government and the significance of living in exile. In this respect it could be considered that in this period Russian religious philosophy had finally reached an exhaustion of the topics and role that had originally stimulated the necessity of this school of thought.

However, Florovsky's belief that this episode in the history of Russian thought was entirely due to Western influence cannot be substantiated by this research. The origins of this philosophy had distinctly Russian roots in the form of particularly Russian experiences and the

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<sup>951</sup> Arendt 1990, 161.

particularly Russian perspectives of the thinkers, their use of Russian terminology, and the origin of some key concepts in Russian Orthodox spirituality. Religious philosophy is not ‘only a return to the experience of German Idealism and German mysticism’, as Florovsky concludes it to be.<sup>952</sup> Moreover, the use of certain ideas of Western origin, such as *Sophia*, took on unique dimensions within the internal discourses of religious philosophy. These facts, when joined to the fact of the sheer amount of creative work done during this period, strongly suggests that religious philosophy is not merely a recapitulation of key Western ideas in Russian guise.

It is in studying the discourse structures that interpenetrate the ideas of Russian religious philosophy that the intellectual environment in which they developed takes shape. By reading these philosophers’ words we think them anew, revisit their ideas, partially travel to the place and time of their conception, and share an experience of the past with a person from it. History is crafted by discussing and evaluating the polyphony of voices that call to us from the past.

The ideas that are the subject of this history were once engaged in a contemporary project of creating history by Russian philosophers. Although in this thesis I have chosen to look more closely at the works of religious philosophy than at the personal lives of religious philosophers, it must be remembered that every text considered in this thesis was part of one person’s mental life. It is possible to see that the mental life of one individual connects to a broader landscape of thought by looking at the connections between several texts. Eventually these connections are so overwhelming that it becomes impossible not to think of this thought as universe of issues religious-philosophical thinkers faced. For example, members of the émigré community took meaning from their experiences and added these ideas to the communal act of historicizing the émigré experience. In this way, this thesis is telling of both the history of its subjects (all-unity, *sobornost’*, *Sophia* and Godmanhood) and the authors of religious philosophy (most prominently Berdyaev, Bulgakov and Frank). By looking into religious-philosophical texts we can see the competing rationales of people who witnessed some of the most traumatic events of the twentieth century reflected in the ideas they chose to write about,

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<sup>952</sup> Florovsky 1987, 275.

the words they used to explain themselves, and the meanings they assigned to those words. Therefore, this study has ultimately been of the circumstances of the past and of the processes and practices a group of thinkers used to project their identities into an understanding of their time.

How should we think of the Russian religious philosophers in this period? The difficulty we have deciding who they are and what that means to us now, is a reflection of how uneasily they fit into the narrative of Russian history then. Religious philosophers faced questions about their own identity and place in the schemes of history unfolding around them. Is it more important to be a Russian thinker or a world-wide philosopher? Should Christian ideas be used to develop universal themes for a secular audience or should secular themes be Christianized? Often thinkers like Berdyaev, Bulgakov, and Frank are grouped together and labeled Russian religious philosophers simply because they are the odd ones out of another philosophical school. But this thesis helps define these thinkers by what they are, and how their work fits together, rather than by what they were not and how they do not fit into mainstream Western philosophy. It shows them to be philosophers and believers in equal measure.<sup>953</sup>

To what extent we can attribute the changes in religious philosophy in this period directly to its authors is contentious. The first half of the twentieth century was a time of change for religious philosophy. By the mid-twentieth century the common understanding and use of the four central ideas explored in this thesis had definitely changed from pre-revolutionary understandings. Some of the reasons for change are easily supposed external factors in the lives of religious philosophers: many thinkers died or were prevented from continuing their work, many of them lost their predominant audiences when they emigrated, or lost the academic and intellectual social position that gave them the authority to write. It is also very possible that religious philosophers took a more active role in the changes that took place

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<sup>953</sup> In the case of Frs Bulgakov and Florensky, it can easily be argued that some of their work is theology. While this is true, it is important to note that their writing styles and ideas were often not considered traditional, and that to some extent the spirit that motivated their work was of a more philosophical nature. For example, Florovsky's criticism of Bulgakov's premise in *The Unfading Light* (how is religion possible?) is that such a topic is not appropriate for theology because this question is essentially Kantian (1987, 295).

in religious philosophy. As academic conditions changed these philosophers were protective of their thought, and the status and careers that went with it.

Negotiating Western academia, the new intellectual needs of the émigré intelligentsia, and the newly formed institutions in which they worked undoubtedly influenced how religious philosophers thought. The behaviour of Bulgakov, in terms of defining and protecting his personal understanding of *Sophia*, is perhaps the best example of how the changing situation in emigration could alter the meaning and use of an idea. In this case it is possible to see how a thinker could inadvertently confound his readership and therefore restricted the accessibility of his work in an effort to make sure that his ideas are interpreted correctly. Protecting the special meanings of religious-philosophical ideas by maintaining the exclusivity of these words might have helped preserve a philosopher's sense of identity or helped to preserve the identity of religious philosophy as a school of thought. Yet, these practices were unhelpful for the ultimate longevity of religious-philosophical ideas. By choosing to consider ideas like *sobornost'* and *Sophia* in the context of their Russian origin and their applicability to the world via the vehicle of Russian experience, Russian religious philosophers clung to a philosophy as alien in Western academic settings as they were themselves.

Could the protective practices of its authorship be the reason behind one of the indisputable changes in Russian religious philosophy during this period, its decline in production, popularity and relevance? This contraction of religious philosophy is often viewed alongside the conclusion of the Silver Age and attributed to the destruction of the intelligentsia. However, as can be seen in this thesis the production of religious philosophy was certainly not cut off by the Revolution. If anything it could be argued that the events in 1905 and 1917 provided this school of thought with an impetus and subject matter to reflect upon. The fact that so many religious-philosophical works were written abroad after the Revolution could be chalked up to the coincidence that most the philosophers had only reached a maturity in their chosen field in emigration, and to the greater publishing opportunities and less censorship than in Imperial Russia; but it must also be that the sufferings wrought by the Revolution and

exposure to new societies also drew reflective analysis and new work out of religious philosophers.

The Revolution could not stop the production of religious philosophy, but it did stop reception of religious-philosophical texts by a large part of its intended audience, the Russian people. The potential for sharing and promulgating religious philosophy became limited to a community of émigré Russians similarly anxious about their identity. This circumstance amongst its audience was arguably more influential on the development of religious philosophy as a vigorous and vital school of thought than individual changes in the lifestyles of its authors.

To answer the question of the weak legacy of religious philosophy and its causes it is useful to briefly skip ahead one chapter in the history of Russian thought and look at the philosophical concerns addressed by the next generation of thinkers. Little continuity between the likes of Bulgakov, Berdyaev and Frank and later thinkers abroad or within Russia can be detected. This research mentions Florovsky and Bakhtin as two thinkers who immediately followed the religious philosophers of the period, and in doing so points of continuity and significant difference have already been touched upon.<sup>954</sup> Two other important thinkers, not addressed in this work, Alexei Losev (1893-1988) and Vladimir Lossky (1903-1958), add to the picture of reaction to religious philosophy.<sup>955</sup>

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<sup>954</sup> Bakhtin's ideas have religious leanings, although his association with the underground Orthodox Church in Soviet Russia has not been incontrovertibly proven. 'He was not interested so much in religion as in the philosophy of religion,' and he saw 'no necessary opposition between religion and socialist revolution' (Clark and Holquist, 120, 122). The facts of Bakhtin's life are not entirely known, due to the convoluted nature of the Soviet publishing industry and academic community. For example his first work, *Toward a philosophy of the Act* [*K filosofii postupka*] was written between 1919 and 1921, but was only published in 1986, and then with gaps due to the destruction of parts of his manuscript. The Soviet Government arrested Bakhtin in 1929 due to his association with religious or intellectual circles (*Ibid.* 142). In another example of the intellectual hardship Bakhtin faced, his dissertation, *Rabelais and His World* [*Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable i narodnaia kul'tura srednevekovia*] was published in 1965 long after it had been submitted due to the divided attitude of intellectual circles to the work.

<sup>955</sup> Alexei Losev studied at Moscow University before the Revolution and took up teaching posts within Soviet Russia after it. His work in the 1920s could be considered directly descended from Silver Age religious philosophy. He was, however, sentenced to the camps as Florensky was, and only returned to academia in the 1930s, at which time he transferred his academic interests to less controversial areas. V N Lossky, son of N O Lossky who receives much more attention in this thesis, left Soviet Russia in 1920 when his father was exiled. He concluded his university education in Prague and Paris, and then went on to be an academic theologian. His book *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* [*Essai*

In the careers of Bakhtin and Losev evidence of Soviet intervention in their creative freedom is clear. The fact that these two men carried on the ideas, traditions and terminology of religious philosophy in the face of discrimination persuasively indicates that there was a legacy of religious philosophy in Soviet thought. Mikhail Bakhtin's reflections on *sobornost'* constitute an interesting continuation of religious-philosophical themes. Bakhtin was found guilty of participating in the philosophical circle known as the Voskresenie Group, a sort of extension of the St. Petersburg Religious-Philosophical Society, formed after the Revolution. Members supported Bolshevism with the exception of its atheistic policies. This group continued themes developed in pre-revolutionary philosophical circles, including consideration of *sobornost'*.<sup>956</sup> Between 1918 and 1928, Christian and Marxist ideologies were experimented with, woven together, and the idea that 'Marxism in Russia could become a revolutionary Judeo-Christian idea, a superior social order,' was considered.<sup>957</sup>

Given the long-standing close relationship between ideas about the inherent communistic nature of Russians and support of political socialism, the fact that *sobornost'* was seen as a factor in the development of socialism in Russia is not surprising. Sapienza describes how, at this time, 'many thinkers developed an idea that Russia should create a *sobornost'* of some kind that would restore the modern person to the spiritual integration and serve as a unique Russian counter idea.'<sup>958</sup> As in emigration *sobornost'* was not considered to be existent within the population, but as potential force to be created. Sapienza's particular use of the indefinite article 'a' to denote the *sobornost'* under discussion at this time implies many possible interpretations of *sobornost'*. To Bakhtin the tension between the individual and a community is like the epistemological tension between the individual and the linguistic community.<sup>959</sup> Each person may produce individual language, but language only truly exists within a community of communicants. Thus, for each individual, single words may have

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*sur la théologie mystique de l'Église d'Orient*](1944) is in part a fine example of the neo-patristic movement in action.

<sup>956</sup> *Ibid.* 129.

<sup>957</sup> Sapienza, 131.

<sup>958</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>959</sup> See S. Cassedy 1991.

unique personal meanings, but only the shared meaning agreed upon within the community constitutes a full language. This metaphor for language that Bakhtin recognizes in *sobornost'* implies a larger philosophical conclusion, that '[Bakhtin] interprets the ancient Russian concern for community not only in terms of Christian love and charity but also as a kind of epistemological mandate.'<sup>960</sup> Bakhtin only understands existence within the context of a dialogue, much the same way as religious philosophers appear to be unable to consider the individual outside of his wider community. For Bakhtin,

To be means to communicate dialogically. When the dialog ends, everything ends. Christ is important not only as an event in the cosmic history of human salvation from sin but also as an event in the development of human consciousness. This consciousness of the self is in relation to the other.<sup>961</sup>

Human existence is dependent upon the existence of the community, divine or otherwise, which completes the context of existence. *Sobornost'*, then, is a metaphor for this need of humans to co-exist. The community of religious philosophers was integral to the continued existence of religious philosophy. After the revolution Bakhtin's rhetoric was able to display 'a mixture of the European, Slavic, and Christian ideals that were in parlance among many Russian theorists in early twentieth century Russia,' a strand of discussion continued in Soviet Russia.<sup>962</sup> As much as émigrés may have wanted to preserve their meaning of *sobornost'*, Russian thinkers in Soviet Russia were as familiar and comfortable with the idea as religious philosophers abroad. Losev continued to add to the body of work on Russian metaphysics of all-unity within the Soviet Union and under state control. He uses the language of religious philosophy, while developing the emotional and mystical connotations of that language.<sup>963</sup> An environment of opposition can be generative, as the rise in production of religious philosophy during the Revolution and the early years of emigration suggest. The fact that Bakhtin and Losev desired to continue to develop religious-philosophical themes, regardless of their actual ability to publish

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<sup>960</sup> Clark and Holquist, 85.

<sup>961</sup> *Ibid.* 85-86.

<sup>962</sup> Sapienza, 124.

<sup>963</sup> Stoeckl, 288.

the product of these desires, suggests that we should not look to the Soviet Regime for the demise of religious philosophy.

The theological work of Florovsky and V N Lossky tells a very different story. Although these men were in many respects closer to the older generation of religious philosophers, and arguably at more liberty to develop religious-philosophical ideas than either their forbearers or Soviet contemporaries, their work represents a more significant departure from religious-philosophical traditions than Losev and Bakhtin do. In this case it seems as though it was not the influence of Soviet suppression that caused the decline of religious philosophy. V N Lossky worked abroad in Prague and Paris definitively within the domain of theology, where he looked at the mystical aspects of the Orthodox faith and participated in the trend of neo-patristic theology within the émigré community. The beginnings of the evolution of religious-philosophical thought toward more theological concerns can be seen in Chapter 6 of this thesis, where the theologically rich ideas of *Sophia* and Godmanhood gain attention and weight in the emigration period. This transition toward theology among Russians abroad can be considered the natural result of several factors: the need for the Russian diasporic community to focus on certainties, such as the rich heritage of Orthodox thought, instead of philosophical experimentation; the inability of religious philosophers to successfully engage with or compete with their philosophical counterparts compared to theologians within the more welcoming ecumenical movements of Western churches; and the importance of developing strong foundations for uniting and maintaining the émigré identity on a more universal foundation, such as the Church, rather than on an obscurantist philosophical school. It is potentially the émigré environment that dealt the greater death blow to a vibrant and dynamic religious philosophy. Williams suggests that, '[V] Lossky and Florovsky and their friends feared for the future of an Orthodoxy bound to a discredited philosophy and a narrow nationalism.'<sup>964</sup>

Émigré philosophers themselves, the Soviet regime, and the circumstances particular to émigré life are all potential culprits for the obsolescence of religious philosophy. Yet, looking at religious philosophy from the perspective of ideas, instead of from an analysis of its authors

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<sup>964</sup> Williams, 180.

and their lives, makes it all the more clear that the decline of religious philosophy cannot be attributed to external changes alone. The ebb of work by religious philosophers and the discontinuation of their subject matter was only partially the result of the intolerance of the Soviet regime to religious beliefs and the over enthusiasm of émigré publishing houses for religious writings.

This research indicates that the longevity of religious philosophy at home and abroad was influenced by the durability of the ideas themselves to stand up to the chaotic revolutionary environment and subsequent philosophical scrutiny. The events of the early twentieth century acted as a catalyst to expose the internal failings at the core of these ideas: failings that demonstrated an internal incoherence, and the degree to which religious philosophy had become divorced from any affinity to the ‘modern’ reality. The discursive structures that constructed the discourse of religious philosophy also contributed to its decline.

The philosophical and theological endurance of all-unity and Godmanhood can be partially attributed to the nature of these ideas. The idea of a unified universe, for example, was both thoroughly embedded in the history of Russian thought, playing a role in other Russian philosophical traditions besides religious philosophy, and had a prominent place in the history of Western philosophy. This rich history of the idea of unity supported all-unity’s place in religious-philosophical thought throughout the tumult of the early twentieth century. Furthermore the meaning of all-unity, that the world is interconnected and ordered, offered hope and solace to the philosophers as they suffered through these times.<sup>965</sup>

All-unity is, for the most part, a more present and less flexible concept in religious philosophy than the other three discursive structures considered in this thesis. It can be seen to have influenced and constrained not only religious philosophers’ subject of thought, but also to have had some control over the extent to which external pressures were able to change its use. It must be said that, in comparison with Western philosophies that address the challenges of modern phenomena to the modern subject (like those of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Heidegger), all-unity seems out of step. All-unity opposes understanding the world in terms of ‘fracture’

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<sup>965</sup> G. Pattison, *The End of Theology—and the Task of Thinking about God* (London, 1998), 45.

and therefore undermines the modern experience of the truth of a ‘fractured’ world. All-unity, remained in religious philosophy and is present in Russian thought even now. However, all signs point toward unity’s continued endurance and philosophical respectability. Kostalevsky speculates that the future of unity is full of potential: ‘the concept of unity may reveal itself as the philosophical foundation of a scientific search or as a source of aesthetic harmony, as a philosophical idea in religious formulations or as a religious truth in philosophical interpretation.’<sup>966</sup> Indeed, soon after the period examined in this thesis, Frederick Sontag had come to the conclusion that science and philosophy should reunite to discuss ‘such classical ontological concepts as unity and time,’ because he believed it was irrational that only scientists were allowed to speculate freely on these subjects.<sup>967</sup> He bemoans the purely empirical focus of Western philosophy and argues in favour of the reunion of these disciplines previously attempted by religious philosophy: ‘science as well as philosophy operates by finding the unity in the plurality and the plurality in the unity.’<sup>968</sup> Kostalevsky’s proposition for a future for unity is also echoed in Epstein’s assessment of post 1989 culture. He believes that post-modernism no longer describes the current cultural climate which is a unified whole. Epstein writes,

One of the major factors that will determine its [the twenty-first century’s] cultural identity is the idea of pluralism, which has gained recognition throughout the world, acquiring particular importance in the former Soviet Union. Paradoxically, the worldwide dissemination of pluralism has served to break down its character as a specifically Western, liberal idea, while also serving revive the value of cultural unity or integrity. We live in a more pluralistic world, but it is a single world.<sup>969</sup>

Epstein believes that the current cultural situation is ripe for building the new cultural paradigm of ‘proto-unity’.

Whether Epstein’s theory is true, his interest in unity illustrates the powerful sway that unity still has with Russian thinkers. In his proposal of ‘proto-unity’ he uses argumentation much like that of the religious philosophy discussed in this thesis. He recalls the A ~A

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<sup>966</sup> Kostalevsky, 177.

<sup>967</sup> ‘Philosophy of Science and the Revival of Classical Ontology’, *The Journal of Philosophy*, 53/20 (27 Sept. 1956), 607.

<sup>968</sup> Sontag, 605.

<sup>969</sup> *After the Future: The Paradoxes of Postmodernism and Contemporary Russian Culture* (Amherst, 1995), 280.

arguments essential to the discursive structure of all-unity at this time, when he states that multiple cultural identities, existent in ‘cultural pluralism’, depend upon one and other for their definition as unique.<sup>970</sup> Furthermore, he advocates a unity framework to illustrate the existent connection between Russian cultural developments (such as post communism) with global, and particularly Western, cultural developments (such as trans-sexuality), which is very similar to how the religious philosophers used their theories of unity to demonstrate the connections between their thought and contemporary scientific and mathematical thought.

The endurance of Godmanhood as a productive paradigm throughout the lifetimes of the religious philosophers cannot be attributed to a long and fruitful history of the idea in philosophy, either in Russia or abroad. The idea, only really articulated amongst the preceding generation of thinkers, had a specific usefulness for understanding the behaviour of humans during these challenging times, and also offered a hopeful outlook on how humanity could overcome the challenges of dictatorship and totalitarianism. Godmanhood remained intriguing and vital to religious philosophy because it offered insights and explanations of humanity not only in relationship to the challenges presented by socialism and Marxism, but also in response to the changing modern conditions of human life.

Moreover, as the twentieth century progressed the need to defend the sanctity of the individual in the face of rising dictatorships in Europe became increasingly apparent. The necessity for some sort of support to help preserve the valuable potential of humanity, be it faith in God or another absolute, encouraged Godmanhood to grow in strength and relevance in the religious philosophy of the later part of this period. The modern view that man can make himself, and the subsequent project of attempting to do so raised the questions of ‘what is man?’ and ‘what is man’s potential?’. Solov’ev’s *Lectures on Godmanhood* (1881) had also raised questions about the nature of humanity. The Revolution became a venue for these projects, and the actual effects of revolution pushed these topics to the forefront of philosophical speculation. After the Revolution, a more reverent attitude toward the divine aspect of humanity developed.

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<sup>970</sup> Epstein 1995, 281: ‘The post-modern principle of difference presupposes, to the extent of its rationalization, a new wholeness beyond variety in styles, genres and cultures. As such new unities are constructed from the sphere of difference itself’.

In the religious-philosophical discourse the structure of Godmanhood actively defended the right of people to exist and to act.

For thinkers interested in Godmanhood today, the idea is able to contribute to the re-opening of the project of understanding and constructing humanity outside of traditional archetypes. All of the sorry conclusions about mankind that result from the experiences of the past century can be re-evaluated in the light of Godmanhood. As Berdyaev put it in 1939, ‘Man is a symbol, for in him is a sign of something different and he is a sign of something different.’<sup>971</sup> Godmanhood, as a word whose meaning is formed by metaphor to a greater extent than other philosophical words, has an inherent potential for greater reach and expanding meaning of the concept it alludes to.

Godmanhood is also mechanism that facilitates dialogue between Russian religious philosophy and Western humanism. Krasicki believes that today Godmanhood contributes to the West’s re-evaluation of humanism, to ‘the Western discussion on “meaning” and “meaningless” of modern humanism.’<sup>972</sup> To him, in the West ‘the very discourse on man has become impossible as man himself has become problematic’, and the traditional category, previously applied by Western thinkers, of *animal rationale* was no longer possible because the concept associated with the word ‘mankind’ had been smothered by a flood of definition.<sup>973</sup>

For Krasicki, Heidegger’s approach—to ask, is there anything like man?—begins to address and parse this mass of definition. The observation that ‘man is like himself’ is meaningless. In religious philosophy the word Godmanhood acted as a metaphorical description of human nature. In this sense Godmanhood also cuts through the problematic concepts associated with ‘mankind’ and helps provide an answer to Heidegger: ‘Yes, man is like God.’ Among competing discourses of the meaning of humanity in the early twentieth century, the idea that man was ‘like God’ served an important purpose for religious philosophers. Most explicitly, the dialogical tension between Godmanhood and mangodhood,

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<sup>971</sup> Berdyaev 1944, 46.

<sup>972</sup> J. Krasicki, ‘Post-Humanism and Russian Religious Thought’, *Studies in East European Thought*, 54/1-2 (Mar. 2002), 127.

<sup>973</sup> Krasicki, 126.

identified in Bulgakov's early criticism of the revolutionary, shows how a metaphor can draw a more detailed definition.<sup>974</sup> Yet, the Godmanhood/mangodhood antinomy is also illustrative of the potential for misreading metaphors: however much a religious philosopher asserts that man is like God, man is not like God in certain important ways. For Florensky, Nietzsche's mistaken comparison of man to God could be overlooked, because in his system mangodhood was not a threat. But, other thinkers were provoked by the powerful model of the revolutionary to clarify their understanding of how man was like God.

Krasicki's idea that the current philosophical horizon is characterized by 'a gradual exhaustion of the idea of humanism,' can also apply to the case of religious philosophers in emigration.<sup>975</sup> The religious philosophers astutely identified the fundamental cause of this; the combination of Nietzsche's idea of the death of God with the destruction of any divine spark from the understanding of mankind. Thus, Godmanhood remains a relevant concept to the project of re-inventing, and re-evaluating humanism in the present. Religious philosophy used this important concept because it provided a means to articulate opposition to the Revolution and the amoral figure of the nihilist revolutionary. But, Godmanhood was not undermined by twentieth century experiences, nor was it prevented from developing by its inherent qualities; it has a continued life in opposition to dehumanising modern trends.

The ideas of *Sophia* and *sobornost*' do not demonstrate the same enduring qualities.<sup>976</sup> The Russian understanding of *Sophia* developed as a means to address the question of what characterized the relationship between the absolute and creation. However, *Sophia* as articulated by religious philosophers proved to be a concept that served more to complicate the relationship of the absolute to creation than to clarify it. *Sophia* retreated from its previously prominent place in religious philosophy because of its inaccessibility of the idea to members of émigré society. The need to theoretically bridge the chasm between earthly and divine

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<sup>974</sup> The idea of beastmanhood, for example, offers an alternative metaphor for understanding man's qualities.

<sup>975</sup> Krasicki, 125.

<sup>976</sup> In *Divine Sophia* Kornblatt suggests that *Sophia* has a strong legacy in Russian thought (4). She does not, however, provide evidence of this in a philosophical context beyond the work of Bulgakov and Florensky.

existence, to delineate the romantic feminine force in the universe and to enact God's wisdom on earth was less pressing for religious philosophy in exile than it had been at the turn of the last century.

The obsolescence of *sobornost'* could be considered an almost opposite journey. The Slavophil concept's entanglement with the idea of socialism in the Russian context created more than one interpretation of *sobornost'*. The religious philosophers could not maintain control over how the word was understood by their readership, and so it only ineffectively communicated a non-communist version of communalism. The ideas of *Sophia* and *sobornost'* can be accused of an emptiness of meaning in current thought, in the sense that a wide and shared understanding of these ideas is no longer a feature of Russian thought. Indeed, although these ideas can still be used as indicators of an adherence to a Russian tradition (as a rejection of the West) because they are part of a specifically Russian lexicon, these ideas cannot invoke a vibrant philosophical meaning or discussion today.<sup>977</sup>

The invalidity of these concepts to modern day people is evident in the speed with which these ideas were dropped after they were re-taken up in the 1990s. These ideas fit well into questions of their time and are thus meaningful for thinkers today who are interested in understanding that time. But, for the most part, religious philosophy will never again be popular in the way it was in the Silver Age. The recent Russian reaction to newfound intellectual freedom provoked an interest in these religious-philosophical authors, mainly because their work had been banned. But the meaningfulness of religious philosophy to post-Soviet society had by then become anachronistic. When we consider the place of religious philosophy among current ideas, it becomes apparent that the socio-cultural paradigm in which religious philosophy came to be no longer exists. And, in so far as opposition to philosophical materialism, Marxism, and eventually Bolshevism constituted the formative drives of this school of thought, its relevance to current social and cultural issues seems questionable. Nullification of communism in all of its failed material manifestations is a foregone conclusion. We no longer need a figure like Berdyaev to critique the Soviet Union for us.

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<sup>977</sup> Stoeckl, 290.

Yet, to consider the phenomenon of religious philosophy as relevant only to the extent that it related to the discourse of communism and its opposition is to ignore the larger discourse that took place in the first half of the twentieth century between the dominant social system of ‘bourgeois democracy’ and its alternatives. The loss of powerful ideological alternatives, such as communism and fascism, leaves a void in the modern imagination of what could be. Furet, very much remaining within the structure of the twentieth century’s atheistic ideological warfare, writes:

Westerners have become accustomed to investing society with unlimited hope, since that promises freedom and equality for everyone. In order for these qualities to assume their full meaning, it might one day be necessary to go beyond the horizon of capitalism, to go beyond the universe of rich and poor. But the end of communism has brought the individual back into the antinomy essential to bourgeois democracy. It has revealed, as if something quite new, the complementary and contradictory terms of the liberal equation—individual rights and the market—thus compromising the very foundation of what has constituted revolutionary messianism for two hundred years. The idea of *another* society has become almost impossible to conceive of, and no one in the world today is offering any advice on the subject or even trying to formulate a new concept. Here we are condemned to live in the world as it is.<sup>978</sup>

Furet’s dramatic reaction to the loss of the hope embodied in some aspects of communist ideology illustrates an important point, that a certain banality of everyday life in capitalist society cries out for redress. The ideas of religious philosophy can provide some insights into the value of human experience that oppose the ‘given’ assumptions of liberal democracy and perhaps inspire a hope that humanity has a higher calling. Truly we are and have always been condemned to live in the world as it is. But, as can be seen in the ideas of all-unity, *sobornost’*, *Sophia*, and Godmanhood, the way we think about the world that has been given to us can expose a wonderful potential of being. There is no shame in, nor any reason against, turning to these thinkers and their ideas for a different approach to the questions of human life.

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<sup>978</sup> Furet, 502.

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### **B3. Unpublished Dissertations, Theses, and Papers**

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