

VOLUME 54
Nos. 1-2 March 2002

ISSN 0925-9392
CODEN SSVTBD

STUDIES IN EAST EUROPEAN THOUGHT

Formerly Studies in Soviet Thought

Special Issue

Polish Studies on Russian Thought

Guest Editors: Marian Broda

Kluwer Academic Publishers

STUDIES IN EAST EUROPEAN THOUGHT

VOLUME 54 (2002)



KLUWER ACADEMIC PUBLISHERS

DORDRECHT / BOSTON / LONDON

2002

VLADIMIR SOLOV'ĖV'S FUNDAMENTAL PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS

ABSTRACT. I recall that Solov'ëv was Russia's first professional philosopher and present the most important currents and concepts of his many-sided theoretical edifice. Solov'ëv conceived philosophy in a very broad sense of the term, for which reason his thinking comprises metaphysics no less than theology, ecclesiology, history, and sociology. I show how Solov'ëv sought constantly to bring these diverse elements into agreement with one another for the sake of a consistent systematic project, how he attempted to synthesize numerous oppositions (including patriotism and universalism, humanism and theocentrism).

KEY WORDS: all-unity, ecumenism, evil, Godmanhood, messianism, Russia-Europe, Solov'ëv, Sophia, theocracy

ALL-UNITY

It is right to say that Vladimir Solov'ëv was the first professional Russian philosopher, the first in Russia to give philosophy its distinctive place among other human activities. All the same, for Solov'ëv philosophy is but one among the ways men come to know and transform reality. Solov'ëv singled out philosophy from other human activities by virtue of its method as regards its aims philosophy, according to him, did not differ from other forms of theory (the empirical sciences and theology), nor from the arts and the forms of social organization. In studying Solov'ëv one has constantly to remember that for him history had a broader meaning than for other thinkers, for he included philosophy as a part of history.

Solov'ëv's most embracing salient idea is all-unity, an idea which is at once metaphysical and historical (in the sense that it denotes the cause and the aim of history). However, it would be vain to seek in Solov'ëv's work an answer to the question, what is all-unity (often called by him positive all-unity). What we find rather are statements as to what it is not and how it manifests itself.



Solov'ëv distinguishes between that which is all-one (*vsjėedinoe*) and all-unity (*vsėedinstvo*). The former, God [II 190¹], includes the latter. In other words, *vsėedinoe* is the subject of *vsėedinstvo* [II 316]. In history all-unity is man's connection to God: "If in the moral realm (for the will) all-unity is the absolute Good, if in the cognitional realm (for reason) it is absolute truth, then the realization of all-unity in external reality, its realization or embodiment in the realm of material being given to the senses, is absolute beauty" [II 354–355].

God's being as the all-one is the cause of man's existence and freedom [III 190–191]. God's Goodness as Love is the cause of the diversity within being [III 138]: "In the realm of the absolute, that is, in the mystical world, the absolute union of everything in absolute love reigns supreme. But were this everything without distinction, then love would have nothing on and in which to become manifest: unity would be empty and dead indifference. Within the absolute order difference should exist, for although each carries and expresses in itself one and the same absolute idea (all-unity), each nevertheless does this in its own manner, in a specific way (...) For were all to realize and express the absolute idea in the same way, then the many would be unnecessary, the one would be sufficient. Nor in that case would there be all-unity, there would be no absolute idea but merely an empty indifference, that is, pure nothingness" [II 175].

In other passages Solov'ëv described all-unity as the goal of man's life [II 172], who possesses it for the while only potentially [II 160], as the image in himself of God [VIII 175]. It specifies then the general destiny of the world.

All-unity and the all-one were concepts drawn from the Greek philosophical tradition, even though Solov'ëv considered that he had introduced the terms into Russian thought [L II 621²]. He never ceased to aspire to a synthesis of the Absolute of the Greeks and the Judeo-Christian God in history. In a text concerning Spinoza written at the end of his life, Solov'ëv objected to Spinoza's metaphysical rather than historical treatment of God. The concept of God does not exhaust the concept of absolute substance: "God cannot be only the God of geometry and physics. He must also unconditionally be the God of history (...) Recognizing in Divinity the absolute fullness of

life, we tie ourselves to it or set it into a correlation with the cosmic and historical process, we find in Divinity the ultimate foundation for humanity's collective history as well as for the individual history of each human soul" [IX 24–25].

Solov'ëv was fully aware that had he criticised the Amsterdam master's doctrine more severely he would have proceeded ahistorically. The idea of a historical God emerged in European philosophy some one hundred years after Spinoza, in Hegel's historiosophical pantheism.

Solov'ëv tried to concretize the abstract idea of all-unity in the concept of Godmanhood. The starting point was the basic Christian dogma formulated by the council of Chalcedon about the two natures – divine and human – of Christ.³ This idea was directly historical thanks to the person of Christ: "He is the perfect man or Godman who does not depart this world for Nirvana and does not disappear into the kingdom of ideas, but rather comes into the world to save and transform it into the Kingdom of God, so that the perfect person may be completed by the perfect society" [VIII 273].

In another passage we read: "Jesus' historical existence, no less than the truthfulness of his character as preserved in the Gospels, is beyond any doubt (...) Reason forces us to accept this testimony, for the historical manifestation of the Godman is inextricably linked to the cosmic process. Whoever denies this denies as well the meaning and purposefulness of the entire world" [VIII 216].

Christ's appearance constituted the fundamental node in universal history [IV 31]. According to Solov'ëv, Christ was not the last word in the human order, but the first universal word in the Kingdom of God. He appeared in the middle, not at the end of history, which is to say that He alone could not fulfill history. History's first half, prior to Christ, prepared the ground for His individual embodiment; the second half is to prepare the ground for the Kingdom of God [VIII 224].

The Godman is Christ the individual; Godmanhood (Divino-humanity) is collective human society transformed in the image of the Godman. Godmanhood, as others have noted correctly, is not only the final goal of history, it is likewise the entelechy of life, the principle according to which humanity acts.⁴ In order better to understand Solov'ëv's idea (as an attempt to reconcile humanism

and Christianity) [cf. III 26], let me add that Solov'ëv regarded perfected Godmanhood as the union of the finite, material human element and the infinite God through Christ in the Church [V 28]. The fullest presentation of the difference between the infinite God and Godmanhood is found in Solov'ëv's article on Judaism: "The Godman, or the union of Divinity and human nature in one individual person, is the nucleus, the necessary foundation, and the centre. The end and fulfillment is divino-humanity (more exactly, humanity rendered divine), that is, the union with God through the Godman of the entire human race and, through it, of matter in its entirety" [IV 158].

Here is not the place to examine two further salient ideas of Solov'ëv, the world soul and Sophia. They are often regarded as Solov'ëv's key concepts. But so far no interpreter who claims that Sophia is Solov'ëv's basic idea has succeeded in showing how all of Solov'ëv's other concepts follow from his metaphysical idea of Sophia. Suffice it to say that even at the end of his life he attempted to reconcile the Old Testament origins of Sophia with the faith of the Russian people. The proof of this was to be the Novgorod icon which, in the philosopher's opinion, represents the personified idea of Divine Wisdom as humanity's primeval image [cf IX 187–188]. The idea (the person) of Sophia, in comparison with the idea of Godmanhood has a more active character.

Regarding Sophia Solov'ëv wrote: "It is we with God, just as Christ is God with us (...) God with us means that He is active, and we are passive. We with God means, on the contrary, that here He is passive and we are will, spirit."⁵ God for man has no other reality than through the Godman. Christ, who has descended from the center of eternity into the center of history [III 163], cannot remain for man a mere historical recollection [III 302–303].

For Solov'ëv society was a living and developing organism, not in the manner of vegetal and animal organisms, but a structure developing according to an idea and in a conscious manner. "To a certain degree society is the product of its own conscious activity, which is something that cannot be said of other organisms. In this sense society can be termed a free organism, and it can be set off from all others which are natural only" [II 118].

Moreover, a natural organism is exhaustively accounted for by the concept of fact, from its conception to the decaying corpse. On the contrary, the unfolding social organism is not only a fact, but likewise an idea which has yet to be fulfilled. In Solov'ëv's words, "For that reason, if despite everything we want a science of society, if we want to look at society and study it as a whole, as a developing organism, then we cannot restrict ourselves exclusively to the domain of historical experience, but along with the facts of the past and present we should include ideas of the future. For it is only in these ideas that human society uncovers its identity and fulfillment of which it is deprived in its actual reality" [II 119].

HISTORY

In paring off from Solov'ëv's many works the fragments which concern his fundamental metaphysical concepts – all-unity, Godmanhood, Sophia, and organism – we continually run across the concept of history. Even when it does not manifest itself explicitly, it is evident that the metaphysical concepts gain in clarity as soon as they are brought into touch with human history considered as a process. Here Solov'ëv borrowed much from Hegel (which is clear from the outset and which Solov'ëv acknowledged). In an article from the beginning of the 1890s, Solov'ëv wrote that "To Hegel belongs the merit of laying down in science and in the popular mind authentic and fruitful concepts of process, development, and history as the consistent realization of ideal meaning. In the real world, everything is subject to process: there exist no absolute boundaries among the distinct spheres of being, there is nothing separate which is not connected with everything" [X 318].

Solov'ëv made use of Hegel most consistently, while attempting at the same time to go beyond him, in his *Philosophical Foundations of Integral Knowledge*, in creating the law of historical development. However, in all of his other works (with the exception perhaps of the *Three Dialogues*) we come across this quite specific Solov'ëvian Hegelianism.

In his opinion, the historical process is a long and difficult passage of humanity from animal manhood to Godmanhood. This passage itself, the middle ground, consists in the conscious

collaboration of man with God. Thousands of years of human history are necessary before man gradually but actively begins to respond to divine grace [cf. VIII 200].

The creature's return to God began well before the human being appeared. Its beginning is to be found in the depths of the cosmological process.

Along with the concept of the historical process Solov'ëv also introduced the concept of universal history which got underway, in his opinion, with the Babylonian confusion of languages and will come to an end in the perfect harmony of the New Jerusalem [XI 241]. It is worth noting that Solov'ëv tied the beginning of history to the biblical account, which is testimony of humanity's dispersion, and which indirectly addresses the emergence of distinct nations (through the differentiation of languages). Humanity will return to God without giving up three elements out of which it is made: the individual, the nation, and that which is universal. "Every historical creativity is rooted in the forces and capabilities of the individual, is subject to the influence of the national milieu, and issues in results of all-human significance" [XII 607].

In this way we arrive at the distinction between national and universal history. The first is the basis of the unity of the nation, the second of the unity of humanity. The first cannot be separated from the second. Taking Russia as his example, Solov'ëv was eager to show that Russia's history is a fragment of a greater whole. Should someone succeed in demonstrating (on the basis of an intellectual slight of hand) that the Russian nation-state is not of Scandinavian origin, then he would nevertheless have to acknowledge the fact of Russia's baptism. "... Russia's baptism by the Greeks brought our nation into the sphere of universal, supra-national life." Christianity is supra-national not only by virtue of its metaphysical truths; from a strictly historical point of view it is hard to separate within it the Judaic element from the Chaldean, Iranian, Egyptian, Phenicéan, Greek, and Roman elements [VIII 467].

Starting with the general concept (idea) of all-unity and continuing through the more concrete idea of Godmanhood, of history treated as a process, we have arrived at Christianity as a universal idea. It is relatively easy, when studying Solov'ëv's work as a whole, to see his ladder of concepts in which God's world is

connected to the smallest fragment of the material world. Human history, in which Jesus was embodied, is the mode of reintegration of these two worlds (often considered by Solov'ëv in terms of Origen's *apokatastasis*).

Moczulskij observed correctly that "Solov'ëv's world view, as it took form in the early 1880s, is entirely historical. The philosopher exists in a dynamically unfolding world and is keenly sensitive to this dynamic. It is difficult to find another Russian thinker who had such a immediate sense of becoming as did Solov'ëv."⁶

To be sure, it is clear that the philosopher did not examine every historical fact; he did not examine history; rather he constructed it. "For him, history is but the way into eschatology. He seeks to read out the mystical meaning of historical symbols."⁷ But the opposite is likewise true: Solov'ëv applied analogies holding for historical reality in his metaphysical investigations. All his metaphysical concepts are explained in the context of the historical process (even God comprises in Himself the potentiality of becoming). It would appear that Solov'ëv attained to his metaphysical theories from his sense of historicity. This is not to say that Solov'ëv sought to bring the divine world down to the world of human history. Quite to the contrary, one might speak about Solov'ëv's supra-historical historicity.

His metaphysical undertaking was supposed to furnish changeless laws (including moral laws) that are binding in human history. However, as Solov'ëv, in his conceptual investigations, all too often applied the analogies that hold for the human world to the world of the absolute, his metaphysics can be described as the servant of human history.

In 1883 Solov'ëv broke irrevocably with the Slavophile camp. The cause of this was the *Great Controversy*, extracts of which were published in the journal *Rus'* whose editor was K. Aksakov. The latter systematically censured Solov'ëv's work, with the result that when its publication drew to a close, Solov'ëv broke his relations with Aksakov in a spectacular way.

I do not intend to go into the question whether, at the end of his life, Solov'ëv did – as some allege – convert to Catholicism. In my opinion, although I would contradict this allegation, it has no significance for an understanding of the Russian philosopher's thought. No

more or less than the alleged fact that Solov'ëv's great predecessor (who nevertheless exerted no direct influence on him), Chaadaev, became a Catholic. All that needs to be noted is that both thinkers saw in the Catholic tradition a salutary current for the Orthodox Church, without however giving up a rather special conception of Russian messianism. I turn now to several of Solov'ëv's ideas presented in years 1883–1889 in four works: *The Great Controversy*, *The History and Future of Theocracy*, *Russia and the Universal Church*, and *The Russian Idea*.

ECCLESIOLOGY

It is characteristic that, during this period, Solov'ëv took interest above all in the practical side of the historical process. Since in Solov'ëv's opinion the Church is the chief institution in this sphere, he made sure to subordinate his doctrine to it. There is no doubt that in this respect he was under the influence of such Western thinkers as Möhler.

In the area of ecclesiology Solov'ëv had no difficulty in admitting the roles of Samarin and Khomiakov. The latter described the Church as the living organism of truth suffused with mutual love, free in union, and united in freedom [IV 252]. Solov'ëv was attracted to this idea, although he considered that it is a vision of the future, not the actual Church. "Had the Church from its very beginning represented the fullness of love, which is necessary for the perfect appropriation and realisation of truth and grace revealed by Christ, then the history of Christian humanity would have long ago drawn to a close" [IV 253].

And as for Khomjakov Solov'ëv objected that he failed to understand that the realization of the universal Church requires of necessity union with Catholicism. The Slavophiles, who asserted that the meaning of the one true Church belongs exclusively to Orthodoxy, repeated the error of the Old Believers, who restricted the whole to the part. Nor were the Slavophiles right when they claimed to see in the reforms of Peter the Great foremostly the destruction of the old order. Peter's reforms were on the contrary solely the outcome of errors committed by earlier heads of state, and the old order was anything but a 'kingdom of love and freedom' [IV 257]. Generally

speaking, the Slavophiles were keen to the sickness of the age, but they proposed the wrong remedy in bidding a return to an imaginary past. In the life of the Church, also called by Solov'ëv *divino-human life*, the fullness of eternity will result from the synthesis of the three mutually reinforcing times. The union of times is the realization of live, their difference, however, is the condition of freedom [IV 259].

In the second part of *Russia and the Universal Church*, Solov'ëv sought to find in the Gospels, and in the tradition that is common to the Orthodox and Catholics, the confirmation of his conception of the Church, namely that it is, on one hand, a developing organism and, on the other, an ecumenical body joining the East and the West. The structure of the earthly Church has three foundation stones:

- 1) in the mystical order (the ideal Kingdom of God as the goal of the earthly Church) the sole foundation is Jesus Christ;
- 2) in the social order the cornerstone is the prince of the Apostles, Peter;
- 3) in the individual order the vital cornerstone of the Church, its constitutive element, is each and every individual member of the community [XI 227].

In this period Solov'ëv was especially interested in the social order, and as his cornerstone in this regard was the apostle Peter, he sought not only – contrary to Protestantism – proofs of his primacy, but also – contrary to Orthodoxy – facts to attest that the Roman Pope is Peter's legitimate heir.

Solov'ëv found the conclusive proof that Peter was the first among the Apostles in a fragment of Matthew's Gospel (Mt 16, 13–19): alone Simon, son of Jonas, answered that Jesus is the Messiah and for that reason Jesus made him the master of the keys to heaven and the foundation on which the Church will stand [XI 219]. The Church cannot therefore base itself on democracy. Peter is the Church's highest authority as "unifying foundation of the historical, Christian society." He is the third among the elected to whom God has given a new name: Abraham (formerly Abram) represents humanity which believes in the Lord, Israel (formerly Jacob) represents that part of humanity which struggles with God, Peter (formerly Simon) is the spiritual leader of that part of humanity which of its own will is moving toward an encounter with God. "The limitless faith in the Lord which made of Abraham the father of all

believers joined in Peter with the active foundation of human force which distinguished Jacob-Israel; the prince of the Apostles recreated in the earthly mirror of his spirit this harmony of the divine and the human, the absolute perfection of which he saw in his teacher. By this fact, he became the first heir to the Godman, the spiritual father of a new Christian generation, the cornerstone of the universal Church which is the fulfillment and the victory of the religion of Abraham and the theocracy of Israel" [XI 229].

History could not have run its proper course without the coming of Christ. "The true Godman opposed to the false man-god of political monarchy the spiritual power of Church monarchy based on Love and Truth" [XI 244]. There was nothing incidental in the fact that Christ named Peter Head of the Church in the vicinity of Ceasaria Philippi, a city "dedicated by one of the slaves of Ceasar to the genius of his power" [XI 245]. Nor was it chance that Jesus (following his Resurrection) chose, for the sake of ultimately affirming Peter's primacy, a place close to Tiberius, in order "... to consecrate, in view of the monuments proclaiming the current ruler of false Rome, the future power of true Rome, endowing him with the mystical name of the eternal city and the highest principle of the His new Kingdom: Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me more than them?" [XI 245].

Solov'ëv sought confirmation for the primacy of the Roman pope in the oldest of Christian traditions. He cited the testimony of St. Irenaus, who already in the second century wrote of the Roman Church as the center of unity of Christians [XI 254]. However, the most important confirmation in this regard for Solov'ëv was the person of pope Leo the Great, venerated equally by the Orthodox and Catholics. He played a great role in defeating the monophysic heresies, establishing at the Council of Chalcedon the fundamental dogma, for Christianity and humanity alike, of the Godmanhood of Christ [XI 266–276].

It became ever harder for Solov'ëv to publish his views about Rome and the papacy in his own country. The *History and Future of Theocracy* was published in Zagreb; *Russia and the Universal Church* as well as the *Russian Idea* appeared in French in France. In a letter from 1886 to the Croatian bishop, Strossmayer, Solov'ëv

set forth his view of ecumenism both from a doctrinal and a historiosophical point of view.

Doctrinally, no schism separates the Russian Orthodox Church and Rome. The schism exists *de facto*, but not *de iure* [LI 186]. Russia accepted Christianity from Byzantium prior to the final separation of Churches. The ensuing ultimate separation was, according to Solov'ëv, merely a fact without significance and doctrinal sanction. The anathema of pope Leo IX was directed against Cerularius and not against the entire eastern Church. Russia found itself in a situation in which it could never take a position with regard to the fact of separation, since it never convened the Universal Council [XI 183]. Russian anti-catholicism therefore never had a doctrinal character but was a prejudice arising as a result of Greek influence. "The Eastern Church never determined and never recommended to believers, as an obligatory dogma, any doctrine that was contradictory with Catholic doctrine. The dogmatic decisions of the first seven Ecumenical Councils constitute a summa of inviolable Catholic truths, which it is impossible to deny (...). What goes beyond this is precisely the object of controversy, but it can be considered only as a particular doctrine of this or that theological school, this or that individual theologian, more or less respected, but lacking the character of an infallible doctrine" [LI 184].

Russia's misfortune consists in the fact that she accepted the much tarnished Christianity of Byzantium. There are some who want to preserve the patina, for which reason they come out against the new Catholic dogmas, in this way basing Orthodoxy on three denials:

- 1) The Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Son (against the Catholic doctrine of *filioque*);
- 2) The Mother of God was not free of original sin (against the *Immaculate Conception*);
- 3) Rome does not have the primacy of jurisdiction, the pope therefore does not have the authority of a teacher of the universal Church (against *papal infallibility*).

Solov'ëv in his ecumenical doctrine sought the golden mean between two extreme positions: on one hand, the temptation of latinization, on the other, the temptation of rejecting everything Catholic. The second aberration came to expression in the sixteenth-

century theory of the three Romes, the gist of which Solov'ëv parodied as follows. "The authentic representative and bearer of Christianity is Rus'. And what do we care about old, wrinkled Rome if we ourselves are the Rome of the future, the third and final Rome?" [XI 178].

RUSSIAN MESSIANISM

However, Solov'ëv did not give up Russian messianism in the task of bringing about Christian unity. At times he was not free of conceit, for instance when he opposed the great Russian nation to the Eskimos [XI 180]. Nevertheless, Solov'ëv's messianism was a challenge to Russian supernationalists and to this day inspires dislike among Russian chauvinists.

It is characteristic that Solov'ëv proclaimed his views about Russia's mission on the occasion of the nine-hundreth anniversary of Russia's baptism. For that reason he tried to return to the universal idea of St. Vladimir in order to struggle with contemporary champions of the conquest of Constantinople [cf. XI 123–128]. Vladimir's ideal was replaced in Russia, according to Solov'ëv, by the ideal of Nabuchadnezzar [XI 128]. Despite this, Russia has a great mission to fulfill. "Let us search for answers in the eternal plans of religion. For the idea of a nation is not what it thinks about itself in time, but what God thinks about it in eternity" [XI 92].

In Solov'ëv's postulated theocracy the prophetic, the clerical, and the monarchic were to interact with one another in perfect unison. The last named had been deformed in Byzantium: Constantinople had done everything "to upset Jesus' historical deed" [XI 165]. The mission of creating a christian nation was then transmitted to the Romano-Germanic West [XI 165–166]. Solov'ëv asked whether there is a force in Europe which in view of secularization (the apogee of which was the French Revolution) would be apt to carry forward the sacred mission of Constantine and Charles the Great? His response took the following form: "The deeply religious and monarchic character of the Russian nation, certain prophetic facts from its past, the enormous and concentrated mass of its empire, the great hidden strength of the national spirit in stark contrast to the poverty and emptiness of its actual existence – all this shows clearly

that fate has ascribed to Russia the role of the political power in the universal Church. Russia needs this power to save and revive Europe and the world" [XI 169]. Russia need not however act against other nations, but with and for them, for truth is the form of the good and knows no envy [XI 118].

"Lately, it has been objected to me, he wrote in 1891, that I have as it were passed from the slavophile to the westernizing camp, joining in union with the liberals (. . .)" [V 386]. Solov'ëv remained ever critical of the slavophile tradition. In the course of time his criticisms only grew stronger. Their high point came in the group of texts, published in 1883–1891, mostly in the liberal journal *Vestnik evropy*, under the title *The National Problem in Russia*.

These texts had an exclusively polemical character. Solov'ëv showed himself to be a sharp-minded publicist and polemicist, not always fair to a particular thought or idea, but consistent in his opposition to every manifestation of Russian xenophobia. No aspect of Slavophilism escaped his attention. He perceived the sources of the then contemporary zoological patriotism of Danilevskij [cf. V 194] in the writings of the fathers of Slavophilism, Khomjakov, Kireevskij, and K. Aksakov.

As the texts were published in a liberal journal, and in Russia to boot, Solov'ëv could not include in them his views about free theocracy. In general, the fifteen texts can be divided according to their subjects into five groups:

- 1) the difference between nationality and nationalism
- 2) a defence of Peter the Great against the Slavophiles
- 3) polemics with the old Slavophiles
- 4) combatting Danilevskij
- 5) criticism of the myth of the people and anti-democratism (in defense of culture).

Even when he had been close to the Slavophiles Solov'ëv condoned the reforms of Peter. In 1888, in response to the attacks on the Tsar's person and works, he wrote "A Few Words in Defense of Peter the Great," in which he defended Peter and tried to find links between his reforms and the period of Kievan Russia. "In accordance with its general essence and direction, the reform of Peter the Great was not something altogether new, it renewed and continued the tradition of Kievan Russia, interrupted by the Mongol invasion and the common

task in favor of national union. Whatever may have been Peter's personal traits, in his historical action he directed Russia down the Christian path on which it found itself for the first time under the reign of Vladimir the Great" [V 161].

In Russia, the formal religiosity acquired from Byzantium could be tied either to sincere devoutness or to mere knavery. The former was represented by St. Sergej of Radonezh, the latter by Ivan IV, the Terrible. The latter, as Solov'ëv maintained, was a believer, but his faith was in the manner of the demons. This was the kind of faith that became the official religiosity of Moscow period. Authentic Christians like Nil Sorskij and St. Sergej had to retreat to the desert. Social life was governed by monsters in the style of Ivan the Terrible [V 164-1-65]. In accordance with the law of historical development Solov'ëv considered the Moscow period as an inevitable developmental sickness. It was a sickness, he averred, which reached its critical state in the middle of the seventeenth century during the reign of Tsar Aleksij Mikhajlovich. (The reference is of course to the schism within the Russian Orthodox church.) Fortunately for Peter's future reforms none of the extreme positions in this controversy over the shape of the Church carried the day, neither the dogmatic traditionalism of the old believers nor the 'inquisition' of Nikon [V 172]. The great reformer replaced the Moscow Patriarchy with the Holy Synod. For Solov'ëv, this was "... necessary not only in the given moment, but likewise exceedingly useful for Russia's future" [V 174]. It made it possible for her to assimilate the school of European education.

Peter the Great completed the task that neither Avvakum nor Nikon managed to carry out. He did so not deliberately but intuitively, sensing that Russia's move in the direction of Europe was, in that historical moment, a necessity [V 177]. Peter's reforms gave Russia the chance for gradual improvement. Post-Petrine Russia witnessed the development of civic rights as well as a culture flowering. As examples Solov'ëv named Kantemir, Lomonossov, Novikov, Fonvizin, Gribojedov, Gogol, and Saltykov [V 179];⁸ he noted the curtailment of the death penalty under Elisabeth, the move away from torture under Catherine,⁹ as well as the revocation of land stewardship under Alexander II.

Peter's period prepared Russia for the practical realization of the Christian idea. Whoever therefore identifies the Tsar with the Anti-christ wishes for an impossible return to prepetrine paganism [V 180].

It was this paganism that the Slavophiles celebrated. Solov'ëv regarded 1853 as the critical year in the history of the Slavophile doctrine, the year in which Khomjakov began to publish his polemical, anti-catholic tracts in the West. For Solov'ëv, Khomjakov's creativity came down in the end to his dishonest contrast between the *real* Catholic Church and the *ideal* Orthodox Church: "Western Christians are condemned for living in their constricting, poorly constructed, and in part destroyed temples, they are offered a huge and magnificent palace, the single fault of which is that it exists only in the imagination" [V 188–189].

Solov'ëv's irony in his summary of Khomjakov's doctrine is evident. "In its historical development Catholicism brought about the unity of the Church at the cost of individual freedom; Protestantism developed individual freedom, but at the price of unity; does it not follow from these opposing extremes that the true solution to the question of Church unity consists in the synthesis of unity and freedom?"

Khomjakov considered, as is well known, that this free union (*sobornost'*) had been achieved in the Russian orthodox Church.¹⁰ In his response Solov'ëv complained, once again ironically, about the Catholics' and Protestants' 'ignorance'. "It only remains to express astonishment at the stupidity of these poor Europeans who even with the help of Hegelian philosophy were unable grasp this simple truth" [V 189].

The Slavophiles considered Orthodoxy to be the true religion because it was the faith of the Russian people, proof of which was the story of Kireevskij's conversion.¹¹ In this connection Solov'ëv subjected K. Aksakov's brochure, "Notes on the Internal State of Russia," to a withering critique. Kireevskij, in Solov'ëv's view, prepared just the right ground for the later theory of the all-powerful state put forward by Katkov. The people has only to be humble and internally free; to the state belongs unlimited political power [V 204–205].

For Solov'ëv the Slavophiles found their nemesis in Katkov's ideology, whom he called a musulman. For just as Islam proclaimed man's entire subjection to God and the renunciation of all freedom, Katkov proclaimed man's subordination to the state [V 216].

The development of Slavophilism took place, according to Solov'ëv, in three successive phases:

- 1) the idealization of the people (Kireevskij; Aksakov)
- 2) deferral to the forces of the people-nation (Katkov)
- 3) deferral to the people's primitiveness (as championed by the publicists, today forgotten, of the journal *Russkij Vestnik*)

In Solov'ëv's opinion the death of Slavophilism would be a boon for Russia. "Were we to believe the Slavophiles and accept their words about the Russian nation as the very expression of this nation, then we would have to imagine the said nation in the manner of a pharisee who in his own eyes is just, praises his own virtues in the name of humility, hates and judges his neighbor in the name of brotherly love, and is ready to wipe him off the face of the earth for the complete triumph of his humble and peace-enamored love. And were Katkov's cult of the people's force really to express the essence of the Russian national spirit, then our nation would take on for us the semblance of a stupid athlete who, instead of speaking, gestures at his broad arms and thick muscles" [V 242–243].

Danilevskij's book *Russia and Europe* provoked Solov'ëv's heated opposition.¹² Today Danilevskij, along with I. Aksakov, is regarded as the ideologist of panslavism. He created the so-called theory of cultural types, asserting that universal history does not exist, and that the concept of humanity is a fiction. Solov'ëv called Danilevskij's a crawling theory as distinct from winged social theories (an example of which is the Platonist theory) [V 83].

The national idea called forth Solov'ëv's sympathy only when it was a proof of self-defense on the part of small and oppressed nations. "Every nation has the right to live and freely to develop its forces, so long as it does not violate the same rights of other nationalities" [V 85]. The aggressive nationalism of large and powerful nations is expressed as follows: "Our nation is the best of all and for that reason it is destined to subordinate to itself all other nations or at least it should take the first and highest place among them." For

Solov'ëv, a formula of this kind justifies coercion, violence, and all that is bad in human history [V 85].

Danilevskij distinguished ten cultural-historical types: 1) Egyptian, 2) Chinese, 3) Assyrian-Babylonian-Phoenician, 4) Indian, 5) Iranian, 6) Hebraic, 7) Greek, 8) Roman, 9) Neo-Semite or Arab, and 10) the Germano-Roman, or European.¹³ Each of these types is originary; according to a law formulated by Danilevskij, each type develops in isolation from the others. For Solov'ëv, this law is anti-historical, since man's history shows the constant exchange of ideas, be they of the highest or merely of secondary importance. Danilevskij overlooked universal systems of values rising above national limitations, such as Buddhism, Judaism, Hellenism, Islam, in particular Christianity [V 119–123]. According to Solov'ëv, neither science nor philosophy came about within national confines. Danilevskij had to accomplish any number of intellectual leaps in order to certify the 'value' of some given idea. How, for instance, was one to establish the national character of astronomy? Solov'ëv summarized Danilevskij's underlying idea as follows. "The Slavic peoples¹⁴ ought to replace the in part already extinct, in part dying (European) types; the Slavic world is a sea into which all the rivers of history should flow (. . .) [V 269].

In Solov'ëv's opinion, since the times of the Apostle Paul it has been clear that Christianity cannot be restricted to one nation (or type), for it is the union of mankind in Christ [V 129].¹⁵ "In recognizing the complete realization of justice and love as the ultimate aim of history, wrote Solov'ëv, that is to say, the free solidarity of all positive forces and elements of the cosmos, we consider that the development of culture is the universal and necessary means to this end. Culture in its gradual progress breaks down all barriers and hostilities, it aims to unify all natural and social groups into one structurally diversified and morally solidary family" [V 380]. This statement from 1891, occurring in *Idols and Ideals*, the last text to enter into *The National Problem in Russia*, can be regarded as the beginning of Solov'ëv's serious polemic with Tolstoj.

Solov'ëv, who included the common people in the solidary human family, polemicized with two extreme conceptions of the people: the effete, lordly perspective and the mythologization of the people in the manner of K. Aksakov.

According to the first, the Russian people, left to itself, is condemned to civic, economic, and cultural immaturity. "To sustain their thesis our proponents of lordship must, whether or not they mean to do so, represent the people, no less than the owners, in a false light: on one hand, there are evil-doers and drunkards, on the other, Pozharsky who run to Russia's aid . . ." [V 370].

The second point of view, the mythology of the people, held that the peasant is the bearer of absolute truth, in contrast with the degenerate Enlightenment crust of society. Here Solov'ëv distinguished two varieties:

- 1) the first required union with the people in its faith;
- 2) the second, in its mode of life [V 373].

"The simplicity of the people's lifestyle, just as the simplicity of the people's faith, by no means reveal an interior spiritual perfection; the simplest forms of life and the most profound natural beliefs can and do tie in with intellectual as well as moral primitiveness. Neither the one nor the other kind of simplicity liberates the mass of people from the 'image of the savage' about which Danilevskij spoke and which L. Tolstoj presented so vividly in his play, *The Power of Darkness*. If the simple, no less than the complex life can be both good and bad, if the people can produce brutes and the educated classes paragons of justice, then why are the concepts of moral good and evil replaced by the morally indifferent concepts of simplicity and complexity?" [V 375].

In the heat of his polemic with the Populists Solov'ëv oversimplified one important point, as Moczulskij noted. "Solov'ëv was certainly correct in unmasking the epigoni of Slavophilism; thanks to his polemic, their pagan nationalism, hidden underneath official nationalism and obscurantism, behind official Orthodoxy, were unmasked and marked for all to see. He was no less correct in seeing in early Slavophilism the contradiction in mixing up universal Christianity with national pride. But he was quite unjust in equating Khomjakov with Stakhov, I. Kireevskij with Astaf'ev. Solov'ëv damned Slavophilism on the basis of the policies pursued by Katkov and Pobedonoscev and did not want to see the great significance of this school [of thought] in the history of Russian consciousness."¹⁶

THE QUESTION OF EVIL

In 1900, a few months before his death, in the introduction to the *Three Conversations*, Solov'ëv wrote the following. "Is evil merely a natural privation, an imperfection, which disappears as the good begins to increase, or is it a real force, which with the help of temptation governs our world, such that an effective struggle waged against it requires support in another order of being?" [X 83].

Earlier, Solov'ëv would not have raised such a question; now, at the end of his life, it became for him the basic metaphysical dilemma. For a philosopher whose basic aim was the transformation of the human condition, the practical ineffectiveness of his intellectual efforts had certainly to be an immeasurable tragedy. Not only his overall vision, but his profound ecumenical idea had come to nothing. No one in his time treated them seriously: neither in the East nor in the West, neither the Russian Tsar nor the Roman Pope. The philosopher came to recognize the power of evil precisely in the resistance of matter which brought forth the national xenophobia evident in the struggles of one group of Christians against another.

In the fragment cited above Solov'ëv wrote the following, somewhat puzzling words. "Some two years a certain change in my state of mind, about which nothing more needs to be said, called forth in me a powerful and constant desire to illuminate, in a clear and accessible way, the main issues in the question of evil, which should be of interest to all" [X 83]. The said change occurred during a voyage to the thinker's beloved land, Egypt. Solov'ëv's nephew, and the author of a book about him, described this event in the manner of the *Golden Legend*. Solov'ëv is supposed to have come face to face with Satan.¹⁷ Another commentator, Wieliczko, likewise asserts that Solov'ëv encountered the devil. Moczulskij rightly came out against this kind of 'realism', though he did consider that during his voyage it was given to the philosopher "really to experience dark forces."¹⁸

Solov'ëv himself saw no need to linger over the event, referring jokingly only here and there in his poems to his adventures with dark forces. All the same, in 1956 the New York paper *Novoje Russkoe Slovo* published a text which referred to further 'dark experiences' on the part of the Russian thinker. In 1970 J. Terapiano

wrote that “in the summer of 1900, Solov’ëv resided in the estate of Prince S. Trubeckij, where he was soon to die. Solov’ëv, virtually to the last day, sent his brother sealed envelopes for safekeeping. After Solov’ëv’s death, M. Solov’ëv opened the envelopes and was stunned by their content: V. Solov’ëv let it be known that, day after day, he was tempted by the devil. The devil steps on his feet and laughs; at night he lies next to his bed and carries on long and bitter disputes with him. Solov’ëv included in his notes a close description of the devil as well as a minute account of everything the devil said to him.

According to Ellis, M.S. Solov’ëv and wife decided to burn these notes, telling no one that they existed or what they contained. However, not long before his death in 1903 M.S. Solov’ëv recounted everything to Ellis and the latter greatly regretted that such a remarkable testimony had disappeared.”¹⁹

One might well say that Solov’ëv’s experiences in his last days were brought on by the sickly imagination of a man in agony. All the same, however, we need to return to Solov’ëv’s remarks about his mysterious experience in 1898. In this context, the sometimes fantastical accounts of Solov’ëv’s ‘demonic’ visions acquire their partial truth. There are two reasons for this.

- 1) Solov’ëv decided to refer to this event in his philosophical dialogue, the *Three Conversations*;
- 2) His fundamental work from this years, *A Tale of the Antichrist*, was in some measure the result of these experiences.

As against many scholars who did not know Solov’ëv’s texts well, I want to hold that just as it is possible to understand his metaphysics without going down the bottomless abyss of his Sophia experiences, so it is difficult to grasp his thinking of the last period if the truth of his vision of 1898 is rejected. It was under the impress of these experiences that Solov’ëv was able to articulate thoughts which would not have come to his mind in the seventies and the eighties, not even in the first half of the nineties. History now became for him God’s tribunal (*Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht*) [X 87]. Evil, on the other hand, which is neither the absence of the good, nor something which runs its course in violence, coercion, wars, the state, and so forth (this in contrast to Tolstoj), receives from Solov’ëv the following classification:

- 1) individual evil, when man's lower animal nature takes the upper hand;
- 2) social evil, when the human mass, which comprises persons who give in to individual evil, opposes and defeats the positive efforts of particular individuals;
- 3) physical evil, which destroys "the beautiful form of the human organism," that is to say, the most potent evil, death [X 183].

"Death, wrote Solov'ëv in another text, equalizes everything: in the face of death egoism and altruism are powerless" [X 172]. The only remedy for this evil is the authentic personal resurrection of all. The first to have carried out this deed was the historical Jesus. "Herein lies his truth strength (. . .), is manifest his authentic love for us and ours for Him. All the rest is merely form, a path, a step. Without faith in the real resurrection of the one and without hope in the future resurrection of all, it is possible only to talk about some Kingdom of God which in fact is the kingdom of death" [X 184].

It is Christ's resurrection, about which the young Solov'ëv wrote very little, that was now to become for him a historical fact of profound meaning. It alone is the guarantee of the felicitous accomplishment of human history. For history, and this is Solov'ëv's ultimate considered opinion, has arrived at its final phase, and the sign of the end of history is, paradoxically, progress [X 159].

NOTES

¹ Solov'ëv's works are cited according to, *Sobranije sochinenija Vladimira Sergejevicha Solov'ëva*, t. I–XII, Bruxelles, 1966–1970. The brackets contain the Roman numeral of the given volume and the Arabic number for the page(s) cited.

² Quotations from Solov'ëv's letter as presented in *Sobranije sochinenija, Pis'ma i prilozhenije*, Bruxelles, 1970. The letter 'L' precedes the Roman numeral for the volume.

³ Godmanhood as a practical idea found its best presentation in Solov'ëv's *The Great Dispute and Christian Politics* (1883). Solov'ëv examined the theological side of the Chalcedon dogma in his *The History and Future of Theocracy* (in which he calls it "... the only dogma which contains all the others") [IV 288], whereas its history is presented in *Russia and the Universal Church* [X 272–277].

⁴ Cf. K. Mochulskij, *Vladimir Solov'ëv. Zhizn' i uchenie*, Parizh, 1951, p. 138.

⁵ As cited in S. Solov'ëv, *Zhizn' i tvorcheskaja evolucija V. Solov'ëva*, Bruxells, 1977, p. 311. This is a fragment of letter by Solov'ëv which was not published in the Bruxelles complete edition; it is not known whether the letter survived.

⁶ K. Mochulskij, op. cit., p. 120.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ In another place Solov'ëv compared the significance of Peter's reforms to that of the invitation to the Varangians to rule Russia [V 29]. Without them Russia's history would not have known Pushkin, Glinka, Gogol, Turgen'ev, Dostojevskij and Tolstoj, neither the Westernizers nor the Slavophiles.

⁹ In the heat of the debate Solov'ëv forgot that it was under Catherine that the death sentence was reintroduced. The death penalty was applied in cases of crimes against the state (as well as for failure to comply with regulations concerning quarantine for the plague-stricken). Catherine thus found a way to cut down Mirovich and Pugachev.

¹⁰ In writing about ecclesiastical freedom in Russia and the lack of same in the West, Khomjakov deformed, according to Solov'ëv, the true picture of things. Proof of this lies in the fact that the father of Slavophilism was able to publish his texts directed against the Western Church in the West [V 191].

¹¹ Following Herzen – though without citing him – Solov'ëv recalled that Kireevskij converted to Orthodoxy upon having seen the miraculous icon of the Mother of God surrounded by the people in prayer [V 186].

¹² The first edition appeared in 1869 in the journal edited by Strachov, *Zarja*. Solov'ëv cited Danilevskij's book in the second edition of 1871. A third edition appeared in 1888, though it is the fourth, 1889, that is cited here.

¹³ N. Danilevskij, *Rossija i Evropa*, St.-P., 1889, p. 91.

¹⁴ Solov'ëv noted that Danilevskij failed to include the Poles among the Slavs. In reality, however, Danilevskij wished to see the Catholic Poles come to understand the error of their apostasy and return to the fold of Slavdom, op. cit., pp. 131–133.

¹⁵ It is another matter whether and the degree to which Danilevskij's theory is original. In his Preface to the third edition Stachov mentioned H. Rückert's *Lehrbuch der Weltgeschichte* (Leipzig, 1857), claiming that some of Danilevskij's ideas are to be found in Rückert's work, without however suggesting a direct influence of the latter on the former. Solov'ëv went further. In his eyes, combatting nationalists using their own weapons, that is, showing that their theory is of alien origin, is the most effective method. In his "The German Original and the Russian Copy," Solov'ëv attempted to show that Danilevski had simply cribbed from Rückert, without, however, managing to prove his hypothesis (cf. R.E. MacMaster, "The Question of Heinrich Rückert's Influence on Danilevskij," *The American Slavic and East European Review*, 1955, vol. XIV, p. 66).

¹⁶ K. Mochulskij, op. cit., p. 148.

¹⁷ S. Solov'ëv, op. cit., p. 365.

¹⁸ M. Mochulskij, op. cit., p. 251.

¹⁹ Jurij T'erapiano, "Vladimir Solov'ëv. K s'emidesjatiletiju s dnja sm'erti," *Russkaja mysl'*, Paris, 1970, Nr. 2801, pp. 8–9. The author refers to the cited article which appeared on 26 September, 1956 in *Novoje Russkoje Slovo*, entitled "Ellis o simbolizme i Vladimire Solov'ëvie."

Translated from Polish by E.M. Swiderski

*30-052 Krakow
ul. Lea 30, m. 2
Poland*

