

Traces of mysticism and philosophical personalism in Vladimir S. Solovyov, Nikolai Lossky and Pavel A. Florensky

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Abstract

Our paper analyzes the intellectual heritage of three great figures of the Russian (Eastern) theological and philosophical thought, identifying, comparing, and critically appraising the selected traces of mysticism and philosophical personalism in their works. We begin by analyzing the concrete historical background relevant to the intellectual development of each of the three authors. Next, we identify both common and divergent themes and emphases in their works and attempt to understand them in the context of the then-existing discourses that had influenced their thinking. This includes the discourse on Sophiology as well as questions related to Mariological and Trinitarian doctrines debated in the Orthodox Church and beyond. Lossky's intellectual/spiritual legacy is depicted as one with the highest holistic and integrative potential, which arises from his philosophical personalism that can legitimately be construed as "spiritual personalism."

Key words: Vladimir Solovyov, Pavel Florensky, Nikolai Lossky, philosophical personalism, mysticism, Russian Orthodoxy, Sophiology

1 Introduction

Vladimir Sergeevich Solovyov (1853-1900), Nikolai Onufriyevich Lossky (1870-1965), and Pavel Alexandrovich Florensky (1882-1943) belong among the most famous and significant Russian authors of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Their contribution to literature, philosophy, theology, and even ethics within both the Russian and the European cultural milieu should not be understated. On the one hand, their thinking reflects the state of the Russian culture and mindset at the dawn of the 20th century – a mix of traditional, religious, even mystical thinking with new strands of rationalism and materialism, penetrating the Russian intellectual space from the West; on the other hand, each one of them was a unique contributor, a creative genius representing the rich, diverse cultural heritage of his nation.

What follows below is a philosophical-religious analysis of three great figures of the Russian (Eastern) theological and philosophical thought. We set out to identify, analyze, compare, and critically appraise what we have come to identify as traces of mysticism and philosophical personalism in their respective works. We begin by analyzing the concrete historical background relevant to the intellectual development of each of the three authors. Next, we identify both common and divergent themes and emphases in their works and attempt to understand them in the context of the then-existing discourses that had influenced their thinking. This includes the discourse on Sophiology as well as questions related to Mariological and Trinitarian doctrines debated in the Orthodox Church and beyond. From among the three authors, Lossky's intellectual/spiritual legacy is depicted as one with the highest holistic and integrative potential, which arises from his philosophical personalism that can legitimately be construed as "spiritual personalism."

2 Vladimir Sergeevich Solovyov

Vladimir Solovyov grew up in a stimulating intellectual environment. Raised as the son of highly educated parents, Solovyov was predisposed to excel in school and

develop a sharp, curious mind that would critically examine everything that it came into contact with. His mother, Polyxena Solovyova, was of Polish heritage but had lived in Russia all her life. Besides being a caring mother, Polyxena was also a noteworthy female poet, which was rare in her time. Sergey Michaylovich Solovyov, the father of the family, was a historian. Vladimir Solovyov thus received many valuable impulses that helped him grow intellectually from early on in his childhood. It was not just literature, poetry, and general critical intellectual attitude that young Vladimir grew up with, however. His parents made it a point to raise him in the traditional values and beliefs of their community, which included the local religious traditions and views. His primary education took place in the ecclesial Orthodox school of his hometown, giving him the basics in classical and modern languages, history, and philosophy. Young Solovyov, however, did not stay satisfied within his primary 'traditional' bubble for long. Having a rebellious spirit, Solovyov (at the age of 13) rebelled against what he had been taught and turned instead to the philosophy of positivism, where the ruling method of scientific investigation was the empirical method. His newly found outlook, or vision of life, so to speak, was closer to Nihilism than to Orthodoxy or anything else. (Lovric, 2011)

This stage in his life, however, did not last long. His views began to change during his studies at Moscow Imperial University. His original choice was to study of natural history and biology at the university. Early on in his studies, Solovyov switched his university major to history and philosophy. Solovyov owed his new outlook on philosophy and life in general mostly to prof. Pampfil Yurkevich, his philosophy professor at the university. Originally of Ukrainian descent, Yurkevich was a gifted philosopher of idealism and a staunch opponent of the creeping westernization of Russia by means of Empiricism and Positivism. (Solovyov, 1996) Solovyov took much inspiration from Yurkevich but did not go so far as to completely reject the advances and contributions of positivistic science. He understood that in the realm of natural sciences, the empirical method of positivistically oriented scientists could provide a better understanding of how our physical world of visible phenomena operated (at least on some level). What he took issue with, however, was the 'totalistic' claims of this method by which it purported to explain all reality. Solovyov considered this claim to be based on a reductionist view of reality that could not be reconciled with the human experience, let alone the human culture in general. (Бессчетнова, 2021)

He articulated some of his critical views regarding Western Positivism in his Doctoral Thesis entitled "The Crisis of Western Philosophy: Against the Positivists [1874]." In his Doctoral Thesis, Solovyov set out to analyze the strength and applicability of Positivistic arguments. He admitted that the empirical method was viable in the study of what we would call today the 'hard sciences,' but warned against considering this method a panacea to all problems of human knowledge. Becoming a proponent of philosophical realism, Solovyov argued in favor of Aristotle's essentialist approach. (Bouteneff, 2021: 58-9) The main thesis of his doctoral work rested exactly in his claim that Positivism could not uproot or disprove an 'essentialistically-based' philosophical realism. Human consciousness, according to Solovyov, cannot be reduced to empirically observed phenomena. Instead, there are layers of reality, namely (for example) in human consciousness, which can only be experienced existentially and intuitively, thus falling outside the scope of rationalist-empirical observations and assessments. In addition, the outside phenomenon of an object, examined by the empirical method, does not automatically convey the essence of the object, which can be reached only by intuition. Reason and logic, of course, play a significant role in human consciousness but the human experience would be incomplete if we disregarded the aspect of intuition understood in non-dualist terms. Intuition, thus, in Solovyov's view, serves as a bridge between the human subject and the external object, whereby the typical dualism of German idealism (developed from

Kant's idealism and later Romanticism) is overcome (albeit tentatively). Hence, Solovyov's approach can be labeled 'intuitive idealism' or 'intuitive personalism.'

It is important to note that Solovyov did not attempt to negate the contributions of sciences and critical, rational thinking. Instead, he desired to establish a bridge between the hard and soft sciences, including philosophy, ethics, and theology. He believed in the fundamental unity of our world – a unity that informs our epistemic endeavors and helps us penetrate deeper into the mysteries of this world. Solovyov was convinced that if humans wish to learn how to thrive in this world without destroying it (on the socio-political but also environmental levels), they must first be able to perceive and appreciate this unity, to work towards it and let themselves, their inner vision, be shaped by it. Science, philosophy, and ethics/religion thus constitute a necessary whole without which human experience as such will remain misunderstood and misrepresented.

Solovyov's organic view of reality was reflected in his philosophical thinking. He felt the urge to go beyond abstract reasoning, or empirical inductive reasoning, both of which attempt to 'solve' the perceived or existing problems of reality. Instead, he advocated for an organic embracement of tensions and conflicting pieces of knowledge in an organic process facilitated by human consciousness. He saw himself as someone who walks in the same direction as Benedict Baruch Spinoza and George Friedrich Hegel before him in understanding reality as an organic, evolving, ongoing process, almost a 'live organism'. (Kara-Murza, 2021)

Solovyov understood that he was confronted by an immeasurable task as he attempted for a synthesis of these three aspects/approaches to reality. In his search for a viable context wherein such synthesis could take place, Solovyov arrived at an idea that was rare at his time. The Russian thinker came to believe that only the universal, ecumenical Christianity with its robust spirituality, comprehensive tradition, and supreme ethical axioms could constitute such a context. Unlike his close friend, Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky (1821-1881), Solovyov believed in the future unity of the Eastern and Western Church. In addition, he became convinced that not only Christians but also the Jews were to play a role in establishing this 'ecumenical, universal *koinonia*' of faith. In fact, Solovyov was one of the very few Russian intellectuals of his time who actively advocated in favor of the Jews and their rights. In Solovyov's case, he made it a point to learn Hebrew to better understand the Jewish tradition; he learned about their plight in Russia and beyond (i.e. elsewhere in Europe); and he communicated directly with a British newspaper – The London Times – in his attempt to spread the awareness of the ongoing injustices against the Jews. On the other hand, Solovyov's dream of a 'East-West' ecumenical alliance revealed an ever-increasing bias against the Asian cultures, namely the Chinese and the Japanese. His vision of ecumenism and 'sobornost' excluded these cultures, regarded as inferior or even dangerous by Solovyov. (Tonkovidova & Boyko, 2021)

Finally, it is interesting to note that while Solovyov never married, he experienced romance and love through his poetry. The most expressive among his poems is arguably the "Tri Svidaniya" [Three Meetings] collection of poems through which Solovyov depicts his three mystical encounters with the Goddess Sophia, who personifies the Wisdom and Love of God. His first mystical encounter took place when Vladimir was only nine years old. Already at this early age, Solovyov was yearning for love, though at this stage, it was a physical and emotional love of a girl that was the goal of his longings. His second mystical encounter with the Goddess of Sophia happened during Solovyov's research stay at the British Museum in London. The second encounter was special in that he only saw Sophia's face from a close distance. This second mystical encounter transformed Solovyov's inner life and instilled a deep longing in his soul to enjoy a more intimate, lasting spiritual fellowship with Sophia. His intuition led him to believe that he would get to know

Sophia more fully and intimately if he heeds her call to meet her in Egypt. Hence his third encounter took place in the Egyptian desert where he met his beloved Sophia at dawn. Here is an excerpt of that meeting:

“I saw all, and all was one —
A single image of womanly beauty...
Pregnant with vastnesses!
Before me, in me -- only You.
Radiant One! You can't fool me:
I saw all of you there in the desert.
Those roses in my soul won't wilt,
Whichever way the day may turn.
Yet but an instant! And the vision veiled.
The sun climbed the sky's height.
Silence, desert silence. And so my soul prayed;
While within: an endless celebration of bells!” (Granger, 2012: 30)

This last vision proved to carry a prophetic quality, as Sophia revealed to him a vision of the future – a future when all things will be transfigured and unified her divine feminine form. Solovyov thus came to believe that it was only through the divine, healing power of Sophia, the Goddess of Wisdom, the Divine Mother, the Goddess of Love – as the deepest expression of the nature of God – that the world can be saved. (Solovyov, 2009: 30-31) To help humanity perceive and receive the mystical unity of all as conferred upon humans by Sophia, Solovyov suggested the art as the potentially the best vehicle of this transformation. (Belov, Karagod, & Petrov, 2021)

But there are other prerequisites for a successful restoration of the world, namely the willingness of humans to recalibrate their thinking, feeling, and even inner being to be in tune with the divine plan for the world. Science can only bring humanity so far; it offers some ‘true’ knowledge of the world but since this knowledge remains fragmentary (and necessarily so!), it fails to be fulfilling and it fails humans in their effort to recapture the world’s underlying unity. Science needs philosophy, ethics, and spirituality in their common effort to transform the reality. What Solovyov calls the ‘unitotality’ of the world (Murasov, 2021: 427-8), however, can only commence and be brought to its completion by divine intervention – to which humans are joined with their intentional choices. (Бессчетнова, 2021) The process has already started, the foundations have been laid, according to Solovyov, in the utmost miracle among all, the miracle of Logos’ incarnation. The movement of Sophia through the world flows out of the underlying unity of the world in Logos.

3 Nikolai Onufriyevich Lossky

Nikolai Lossky, seventeen years junior of Vladimir Sergeyevech Solovyov, was another significant proponent of what we have identified as ‘intuitive epistemology.’ Here lies his definite affinity to Solovyov. Lossky is also counted among Russian idealists, personalists, and libertarians. In fact, Lossky himself named his approach to philosophy as ‘intuitive personalism,’ of ‘hypostatic intuitive personalism.’ While his overlaps with Solovyov are indisputable, he was fonder of Leibnitz’s Neoplatonism and metaphysical libertarianism, which distinguishes him from among our three personages. He was further influenced by George F. Hegel, Wilhelm Windelband, Wilhelm Wundt, and Pavel Florensky. (Balanovskiy, 2021)

Lossky was in what is today the country of Latvia, in a small town called Kraslava (former Vitebsk gubernia of the Russian Empire). However, he lived most of his young adult life in the Russian city of St. Petersburg. After completing an undergraduate degree at the local University, Lossky set out for Germany to complete his Master’s and later Doctoral degree under the tutelage of German professors Wilhelm Wundt, Wilhelm Windelband, and G. E. Müller. His German tutors prompted Lossky to investigate the potential of voluntarism in addressing the existing

theories in psychology. The title of his Doctoral Thesis was “Die Grundlagen der Psychologie vom Standpunkte des Voluntarismus” (Lossky, 1904).

Lossky’s international travel was not restricted to Germany. After his expulsion (a forced exile) from Russia in 1922, Lossky held a professor’s chair at the Russian University of Prague for a few years. It is noteworthy that Lossky became an exile after his falling out with the Bolshevik regime in Russia after the revolution. This did not prevent him from meeting other exiles, many of them ex-Marxists, such as Mikhail Gershenzon, Semen Frank, Sergei Bulgakov, or Nikolai Berdyaev. He then moved to New York and accepted a teaching position at St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary. Finally, Lossky spent his four last years as a retiree in Paris, France. Nikolai O. Lossky survived his son, Vladimir Nikolaevich Lossky (1903-58), an equally famous and influential thinker, by two years.

Lossky’s main interest was philosophical, which was exceptional for his time. Most Russian intellectuals of the era were heavily focused on social issues (such as the Marxists). Lossky’s philosophy was not rationalistic, nor empiricist but rather idealists, Neoplatonic. As mentioned before, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz (1646-1716) with his system of monads was the biggest inspiration for Lossky. As a Neoplatonic idealist, Lossky valued individuality and freedom above all else. “The agents’ creative power,” according to Lossky, “is superqualitative and does not therefore predetermine which particular values an agent will select as his final end. That selection is the agent’s free act. Consequently, the temporal order of events is not uniform even in the inorganic nature.” (Lossky, 1952: 261) Events in nature happen within a qualitatively different order. Therefore, as Lossky points out, “it is quite possible that although some two electrons have millions of times repulsed each other, they will not do so the next time. But functional connections between ideal forms conditioning the existence of the world as a system—e.g., mathematical principles and the laws of the hierarchy of values and their significance for conduct, conditioning the presence of meaning in the world—are independent of the agents’ will.” (Lossky, 1952: 261) This is likely why he appreciated the Leibnitzian idea that humans are akin to the monads as ‘substantial agents,’ free to choose their own course of life. The material world, according to Lossky, is intrinsically and inevitably degraded, ‘fallen from grace.’ Only those monads who freely choose righteousness and persevere in it are free from this fallen realm of matter. However, there is a peculiar twist in Lossky’s monadology. Unlike his Western counterparts, Lossky is not convinced that we should perceive monads in the form of human agents as detached and unrelated. There is thus an unavoidable tension in his theory: on the one hand, the monads are free and unique individual substances; on the other hand, they are inherently, almost organically connected and intertwined into a higher unity that defines them. (cf. Kara-Murza, 2021)

The reason behind Lossky’s unique sort of idealistic monadology is most likely his personal spiritual inclination, followed by a dramatic event in his life which prompted him to reevaluate his life. The incident happened while he was still a young teacher in St. Petersburg when he almost died in an elevator accident. Following the accident, Lossky sought counsel with Father Florensky (1882-1937), who helped him find his way back to the Russian Orthodox tradition and the Church. Lossky’s personal spiritual renewal marked his subsequent philosophical and political inclinations and influenced his general outlook on the nature of reality. (Balanovskiy, 2021) In addition to this, there was at least one other important factor in his life that significantly shaped his religious views – the fact that he grew up in an ecumenical household. His mother, Adelajda Przylenicka, was originally a Polish Roman Catholic; his father, Onufry Lossky, was a traditional son of the Russian Orthodox Church. His mature views concerning an organic unity of all reality and the interconnected nature of human agents as ‘monads’ can be partly traced back to his ecumenical upbringing

and (more definitely) to his existential, spiritual renewal following said dramatic event when he came to the brink of death.

There is a peculiar evolutionary flavor in Lossky's reflections on the nature of reality. The world, human society, and human species as such evolve as intellectual development merges with ethical evolution and is finally realized in spiritual evolution. Such an evolution is, among other things, perhaps the best 'proof' (or 'indication') of God's existence, according to Lossky. (Fatic, 2021) Hence Lossky's notion of 'spiritual personalism.' Science is necessarily limited. It is not able to capture the true essence of the world of phenomena, let alone the inner world of human consciousness. Science needs philosophy and religion to paint a complementary picture that would ultimately make sense when these three are integrated into one common whole. Knowledge has many facets and should not be reduced to empirical observation or mathematical deductions and modeling. Like Solovyov, Lossky turns to intuition and employs what we can call 'intuitive epistemology' when he assesses the world and the nature and purpose of humankind. The best context to explore the intricacies of intuitive epistemology is the realm of human personhood, according to Lossky. To understand the Russian soul, one must not ignore the need to see the wealth of literature, language, philosophy, ethical reflections, and moral principles (etc.) through the lenses of the religious experience of the Russian folk. (Королева, 2021) Moreover, it is especially in the context of the Russian-Orthodox worship that one comes to a fuller realization of the true values of the Russian culture. Without the necessary openness to religious experience, one cannot fully comprehend the organic unity between politics, science, arts, philosophy, and religious/mystical experience, according to Lossky. (Lossky, 1939)

Lossky's later works reveal that he owed many of his ideas to Solovyov. However, before he became familiar with Solovyov's masterpieces, Lossky drew inspiration from Ivan V. Kireevsky and Aleksey S. Khomyakov, two Russian mystics who mediated a mystical version of the Orthodox Tradition of the Church fathers. This influence explains why Lossky elevated instinct and intuition (as part of a direct experience of the human subject) over and above empirical induction and rational reflection. His is a Christian Neoplatonic, neoidealist system that finds its utmost unity in the personal context of a mystical communal union, which Lossky called 'sobornost.' (Tonkovidova & Boyko, 2021) Lossky's foundational presupposition is that direct intuitive knowledge is possible, even preferable to a necessarily incomplete, mediated knowledge by means of the senses and rational reflection. After all, according to Lossky, the world around us is far from rational and predictable – it is rather irrational, unpredictable, even chaotic. Human agents must instead rely on aggregated assemblages of human experience, connected consciously through memory into a meaningful whole. Intuition and contemplation are better tools of true, deep understanding than logic and empirical measurements. The so-called 'Russian turn towards ontology' finds a ready proponent in Lossky. (Tremblay, 2021)

4 Pavel Alexandrovich Florensky

Pavel A. Florensky was the youngest of the three thinkers whom we analyzed in our paper. His family context provided a mix of a typical Russian Orthodox 'priestly' culture (as his father, Aleksandr Florensky, came from an Orthodox 'priestly line') and that of the Armenian nobility (as his mother, Olga Sapharashvili, had her roots in an Armenian noble family residing in Georgia). Florensky was the only one of our three thinkers who died a martyr's death at the hands of the Soviet Bolsheviks during the Stalinist purges.

Florensky was a rather versatile thinker. Besides being a Russian Orthodox priest and theologian, he was also a scientist, mathematician, and philosopher. In fact, Mathematics was his first choice of study at Moscow State University. It was only after he had graduated with two distinctive science degrees – in physics and

mathematics, that young Florensky decided to pursue a career as an Orthodox priest. Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy, another important Russian thinker of the era, played a big part in Florensky's change of attitude and the ensuing spiritual restlessness. During his visit of Tolstoy in 1899, Florensky was challenged to clearly recognize the inherent limitations of science as it had been constructed by the 19th-century positivists and empiricists. Ever since this fateful visit, Florensky strived to reconcile science and spirituality in his own life as well as in academia. (Buitendag & Puglisi, 2021) Besides Vladimir Solovyov, Sergius Bulgakov (1871-1944) had a profound theological and philosophical impact on his brilliant mind and overall outlook on life. This is to be expected, as Bulgakov, too, was a disciple of Solovyov, though, perhaps, less radical. Florensky enjoyed Solovyov's mysticism as well as his more radical ideas pertaining to the societal changes that could allegedly be brought about through a spiritual revolution. (Павлюченков, 2021) While Florensky eventually grew out of such socially 'radical' ideas, he continued to cherish Solovyov's mystical emphases, including his Sophiology. Florensky's intellectual potential predisposed him to pursue a theological academic career. In spite of his original desire to become a monk, Florensky was urged to reconsider his life's mission to become instead a professor at the Ecclesiastical Academy near Moscow – the same Academy where he had studied. Florensky's theological work first revolved around what we could call 'spiritual epistemology,' as we can see in his Doctoral Thesis title: "About Spiritual Truth," which he defended in 1914. His most important book was published in the same year with the title: "The Pillar and Ground of the Truth: an Essay in Orthodox Theodicy in Twelve Letters." (Florensky, 2004) This book reveals the core of Florensky's theological thinking. He is writing his letters to a friend (sometimes also called a 'brother'); however, the 'friend' actually represents the incarnated Son of God – Christ. This groundbreaking work draws from Florensky's years of research and reflection, not merely in the field of theology but also in his iconological and philosophical contemplations and scientific erudition. Science, however, never gets the upper hand. (Buitendag & Puglisi, 2021) On the contrary, the primacy of divine revelation is obvious in all Florensky's works. The Bible and the Church's Great Tradition are "the source of all wisdom" and can never be replaced by positivistic science. (Florensky, 2014: 96ff) Human intuition is the God-given tool in all human persons who, being created in God's image, are thus able to perceive the metaphysical reality of the Divine Kingdom as it penetrates our physical reality. Florensky believed that the full meaning of external phenomena of nature "lay beyond phenomena themselves and that the correlation of physics and metaphysics (or, rather, metaphysics and physics) was intimate and profound. According to him, the entire chromatic scale is accommodated within the relationship of Sophia to the Creator and it is the metaphysical aspects of colour that determine psychological perception - which becomes, in turn, psycho-physiological perception." (Florensky, 2006: 37-8) Such way of reasoning draws its inner logic from Florensky's conviction that "the correlation [...] between the origins of the physical world possesses their complete correspondence in the correlation between the principles of metaphysical being." (Florensky, 2006: 120)

Influenced by Orthodox notions of Trinitarian theology, which is heavily focused on the event of Logos' incarnation and the subsequent indwelling of the Spirit of Sophia in the world of phenomena, (Williams, 2021) Florensky emphasized the reality of a higher unity of the spiritual and material worlds. Among other things, such an approach draws from and ensues into the ultimate eschatological unity that is guaranteed by the omnipotent Creator. Human encounters with Sophia are of utmost importance in the process of the mystical *theosis* of the world. It is in such encounters where the immanent joins and interpenetrates with the transcendent. Encounters with Sophia are transformative for humans in that such encounters enable the afflicted

human persons to 'commune' with the incarnated Son of God. Perceiving thusly the higher unity of all being (transcendent/eternal with the immanent/temporal), humans become ready agents to fulfill their purpose in God's good creation.

5 Conclusion

Solovyov and many of those who followed in his footsteps became convinced of the essential character and irreplaceability of 'Sophia,' the 'Holy Wisdom,' "as formulated by the Eastern Church as being crucial to the universal love and eschatological rebirth promised by the new millennium." (Florensky 2006: 36) Overall, Florensky's Sophiology appeared to be closer to Orthodoxy than that of Solovyov. Nevertheless, all three of our examined intellectuals based their approach to knowing and constructed their core theses upon the foundational presupposition of the constitutiveness of the communion between God (the divine) and humans. This is arguably Solovyov's greatest contribution to modern Russian orthodox mystical theology and 'spiritual epistemology'. (cf. Belov, Karagod, & Petrov, 2021) It was Solovyov who was among the first modern Russian intellectuals to turn to Gregory Palamas (1296-1357) for inspiration on this subject. (Krocak, 2013) Florensky, Lossky, Bulgakov and others followed his lead and added unique renderings of this theological/mystical insight.

What Solovyov, Lossky, and Florensky attempted to achieve was to overcome the typical Western dichotomy between mind and matter, which so clearly manifests itself in the Western preference for natural sciences and the empirical scientific method. Knowing and being are two distinct and yet interrelated phenomena of one holistic event. One cannot truly 'know' unless one 'participates' so to speak ontologically in the object of his knowing. Such 'participatory' epistemology by means of human intuition, as enabled by the communion of the human agent with Sophia, opens up a new dimension of knowing to humans. One of the implications of this approach is that in order to genuinely 'know' the world phenomena and their relations to the phenomena of the human mind/soul, one must perceive the world (or 'the created order') teleologically – as an intentional process of creation, renewal, and final consummation of all there is by God. The divine ontology is the foundational substrate for the ontology of the world, including human beings. Acting ethically on the side of humans is thus derived from their ability and willingness to participate in the great drama of bringing the world into its unity with the eternal divine plan. (Solovyov, 1985)

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