

The mystical philosophy Florensky and Solovyov: a critical appraisal

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Abstract

The article offers new insights into the mystical philosophy of Pavel Alexandrovich Florensky (1882-1943) and Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyov (1853-1900). Our critical analysis consists of examining the main topics of intellectual disputes in the 20th century many of which pertained the place of Sophiology in Russian philosophical thinking. Florensky's and Solovyov's philosophical legacies are considered against the background of their existential experience with 'Sophia', God's personified Wisdom. The mystical dimension of their philosophies stems from specific theological underpinnings of their ideas, relevant above all to topics of the Trinitarian and Mariological discourses in present in the Russian intellectual/religious milieu.

Key words: Pavel A. Florensky, Incarnation, Vladimir S. Solovyov, Russian Mystical Philosophy, Sophiology, Intuition

1 Introduction

Pavel Alexandrovich Florensky [Павел Александрович Флоренский] (1882-1943) and Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyov [Владимир Сергеевич Соловьёв] (1853-1900) represent an important stage in the development of Russian philosophy and mystical/theological thinking. Both authors strived to draw from the rich tradition of Russian Orthodox thinking, while criticizing the typical Western philosophical approaches centered either on positivist experience (the experimental emphasis of natural sciences that spilled over to empiricist philosophies) or abstract intellectual speculations of Idealism in Continental European Philosophy.

Vladimir Solovyov preceded Pavel Florensky by one generation and, to some degree, served as an inspiration to the younger Florensky. He came from an intellectual family background (his father being a historian and his mother being a poet) and used his intellectual potential to study philosophy, history, and languages in a local Orthodox school. Solovyov underwent a rebellious stage in his youth during which he rejected his Orthodox heritage in favor of nihilism. However, his subsequent studies at Moscow University helped him understand the limitations of Empiricism and Positivism, which prompted him to look back and creatively reevaluate his spiritual/intellectual heritage. He defended his doctoral work titled *The Crisis of Western Philosophy: Against the Positivists* (1874), in which he had proved that philosophical realism based on Aristotle's essentialism could not be refuted by the Positivists' arguments. This was mainly due to their shallow assessment of reality limited only to the world of the phenomena, while utterly disregarding the intuitive experience of reality in human consciousness. (Bonadyseva, 2020)

As mentioned above, Solovyov took a critical stance towards European rationalism in philosophy but without disregarding the latest contributions of sciences. In his view, ethics, philosophy, and science must go hand in hand to achieve a better comprehension of this world, the human agent, and his/her place in it. Therefore, Solovyov set out to produce a synthesis of these three and he did it in what he had considered the only viable context for such endeavor – within the framework of a universal Christianity. His ecumenical emphasis proved to be too much for the Orthodox ecclesiastical officials of his era, however, especially after it had become clear that Solovyov was calling for a unification of Western and Eastern Christianity

under the leadership of the Roman pope. Among his noteworthy ecumenical endeavors was also his active membership in the Society for the Promotion of Culture Among the Jews in Russia, through which he strived to bring about reconciliation between the Orthodox Christianity and the Russian Jews. It is also worth mentioning that although Solovyov stayed single throughout his life, he was not divested of romantic, idealized love, as we can clearly see in his love poetry. (Solovyov, 2008) What we find here is an idealized spiritual love that he shares with a woman called 'Sophia' – a revealing reminder of how important the concept of Sophia became in his intellectual/mystical reflections. (Sineokaya, 2019)

With his family roots in what is today Western Azerbaijan, Pavel Alexandrovich Florensky was even more intimately tied with the Russian Orthodox Tradition and the Church than Solovyov. His father was an Orthodox priest, while his mother came from an Armenian noble family. Florensky's early academic career resembled that of his counterpart as Florensky, too, studied at Moscow University. Along with physics, Florensky was interested in mathematics. However, his ultimate allegiance belonged to theology, which he studied between 1905 and 1908 at the Moscow Theological Academy. His formal tie with the Church reached its apex in Florensky's ordination to priesthood. After a short period of exile (1917-1919), Florensky returned to his homeland to serve the people of his Church. As can be expected, his public ministry was frowned upon by the Communist state officials, which led to Florensky's imprisonment and a forced relocation to a Siberian gulag. He was most likely martyred by Stalin's henchmen from the NKVD sometimes between 1937-1943 (his exact place and time of death remains uncertain) (Kardis, 2019: 168).

Florensky was acquainted with Solovyov during his theological studies. Solovyov's ideas were both inspiring and disruptive for young Florensky. His infatuation with Solovyov's ideas of sobornost and related hopes for moral and social changes of the Russian society radicalized the young student of theology. To implement his newly-found ideals, Florensky founded a student association called *Union of Christian Struggle*. Though this 'radical' period was quickly over, the more mature Florensky continued to cherish Solovyov's ideas. Among them, Solovyov's doctrine of the divine wisdom, Sophia, made the most profound impression on Florensky. He continued to explore and develop Solovyov's Sophiology, eventually joining forces with Sergei Bulgakov (1871-1944), another Orthodox priest and admirer of Solovyov. The critical analysis offered in this article consists of examining the main topics of intellectual disputes in the 20th century pertaining to foundational epistemological presuppositions and the place of Sophiology in Russian philosophical thinking. Florensky's and Solovyov's philosophical legacies are considered against the background of their existential experience with 'Sophia', God's personified Wisdom. The mystical dimension of their philosophies stems from specific theological underpinnings of their ideas, relevant above all to topics of the Trinitarian and Mariological discourses in present in the Russian intellectual/religious milieu. While there is not enough space to cover the breadth of these discourses in the present study, we will analyze the constitutiveness of Incarnation for Solovyov's and Florensky's Sophiology and the eschatological unity of the world with the Divine.

2 Introductory Epistemological Considerations

Solovyov, Florensky, and many other Russian Orthodox intellectuals from the 19th and 20th centuries struggled to find their place in the larger intellectual arena of their milieu. While some looked to Western Europe for inspiration, most had remained unsatisfied with the typical Western solutions on matters of epistemology, noetic but also philosophy of life in general, including ethics. (Tremblay, 2020: 2-3) They looked inside their own, Eastern Tradition for alternative solutions. The roots of some of these ideas reached deep into distant past, as exemplified by the great Eastern mystical theologian, Archbishop of Thessalonica, Gregory Palamas (1296-1359).

Striving to save “the Orthodox tradition from the split between theology and spirituality that became the hallmark of medieval Western theology after the fifteenth century,” Palamas “argued for the realism of divine–human communion (*theosis*) against a Byzantine humanist tradition that was suspicious of any talk of union with God.” (Papanikolaou, 2013: 539) This emphasis became arguably the most visible hallmark of Russian Orthodox philosophical/mystical and theological reflections in the subsequent centuries. The emphasis on Incarnation and *theosis* – as foundational for the real divine-human communion – finds its most potent implication in the Russian Orthodox concept of *sobornost*. (Efremenko – Evseeva, 2012: 355-356) We are speaking here about the “Orthodox experience of the Church as *sobornost*, which is usually translated as catholicity but which attempts to convey a fullness of the experience of God in the Church that manifests itself as a unity or communion of persons.” (Papanikolaou, 2013: 539) Papanikolaou (2013: 538) rightly argues in this regard that Western “failure to develop the essence–energies distinction” led subsequently “to its denial of *theosis* and ultimately to the nihilism of Nietzsche.”

Solovyov’s Contribution

Both Solovyov and Florensky took a critical stance against the typical Western epistemological presuppositions and emphases, whether these stemmed from idealist or empiricist philosophical outlooks. Abstract reasoning and partial insights cannot constitute a safe ground for human knowledge, according to Solovyov. Instead, humans should perceive life as it flows, organically in a dialectical process. In place of compartmentalizing and abstracting knowledge and human experience, one should rather acknowledge it fully, including its intrinsic tensions that define and mold the ongoing dialectic tensions. These tensions are not necessarily somethings philosophers should get rid of; instead, they are necessary constituents of reality and of the process of knowing. The tensions between reality and knowledge are thus to be creatively embraced and critically reflected upon, following the examples of Hegel (1770-1831) and Spinoza (1632-1677), whom Solovyov considered fitting precursors to dynamic, organic philosophical thinking.

To be sure, there is a conflicting multiplicity in the created realm which must be taken into account. This multiplicity has been a potential source of ignorance, strive, weakness, tensions, misunderstanding, suffering or other forms of what humans perceive as evil in its countless expressions. Hence the Russian philosopher’s emphasis on dealing with the world’s multiplicity. (Trubetskoy, 1910) On the opposite spectrum of being is God’s ultimate and absolute unity. This absolute unity of the divine Being – an omnipotent, eternal God – is constitutive, creative force behind existence of the world, permeating its evolving being marked by multiplicity, with the intention to reintegrate it back into the original unity with the Absolute. Philosophically speaking, this is how Solovyov imagined the process of world’s restoration and regeneration. It is noteworthy to consider that, for Solovyov, attaining true knowledge is directly correlated with recognizing thusly conceived process of world’s restoration and regeneration and participating intentionally in aligning the world with the Divine plan and bringing it to unity with God. Failure to do so will result in fragmentary, conflicting knowledge pieces that will lead to ethical and scientific dead-ends, as humanity has witness thus far in the example of most of the Western philosophy.

According the Solovyov, the initiative in the grand unifying process rests in the hand of the Absolute Being. The Christian monotheistic metanarrative provides thus far the best account of how the process can and has taken place. The human agent as a personal moral subject is uniquely capable of recognizing the divine plan of ultimate ‘total unity,’ or ‘*unitotality*.’ In spite of the reigning chaos of multiplicity permeating the created realm and experienced individually and collectively by humans, human

agents are still called to recognize and express through their lives the divine plan of unity. The process of knowing is thus intimately, constitutively linked to experiencing life through the metaphysical lenses of the Christian metanarrative. The event of the Incarnation of Logos provides ground for this process to continue to its fulfillment and hope for humans as they face the multiplicity of the world.

Florensky's Contribution

Florensky continued in and developed further Solovyov's important philosophical legacy in the field of epistemology as well as in selected theological topics. One thing that differentiated Florensky, however, was his strong inclination towards science. By striving to utilize scientific knowledge "as a tool with which to fashion a new philosophical and spiritual consciousness," Florensky (2006: 35) opened a new venue into understanding the depth of Russian Orthodox ritualistic practice. The Russian philosopher believed that "the real meaning of phenomena lay beyond phenomena themselves and that the correlation of physics and metaphysics (or, rather, metaphysics and physics) was intimate and profound." (Florensky, 2006: 38) This can be seen on the example of the chromatic scale, which, according to Florensky, "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: 38) He continues developing the idea of linking the physiological brain activity with psychological process in humans, while identifying the limitations of the psycho-physiological perception by alluding to the "third eye of wisdom" present in mysticism: "The epiphysis and the hypophysis—two glands in the brain, above and below the brain. In mysticism we have the third eye of wisdom, the hole of Brahma in Hindu sages: the mystical going out of oneself through it. In animals (lizards) it receives thermal rays. In man the epiphysis closes only gradually and has a single function: the internal secretion gland produces a special hormone; there is a connection with the manifestation of *spiritual life*." (Florensky, 2014: 39)

To connect the secretion of a hormone with the manifestation of spiritual was novelty, and not just in the Russian environment. In general, Florensky saw a great value in his scientific endeavors as they helped him better understand the working of the created world, including the processes associated with the inner life of human beings. Nevertheless, Florensky was no 'natural theologian,' let alone a Deist. He was convinced of the unique character and indispensable nature of the holy revelation. He professed that "Religion in general and the Holy Books in particular are infinitely precious, not because of their moral significance, but as the source of all wisdom." (Florensky, 2014: 96) His biggest contribution likely rested in the epistemological concepts that he introduced in his major work *The Pillar and the Ground of Truth: An Essay in Orthodox Theodicy in Twelve Letters* (originally published in 1914). Following in the footsteps of Solovyov and anticipating the same emphasis in Lossky, Florensky underscored intuitive experience as the bridge to encountering the higher reality of God's Kingdom and Truth. Along with Solovyov, Florensky detested the shallow, one-sided approach to reality by British Empiricism (and the later Positivism) as well as continental Idealism. As a scientist, he saw a limited value of this epistemological approach to knowing the truth about outside reality, of course, but he kept on pushing the question of human knowledge further. This was undoubtedly predicated upon his metanarrative presuppositions about the reality of the created order of the world. To be able to delve deeper into understanding the essence and ultimate purposes of reality, one must align his being with the created order. This can only happen through intuitive experience. According to Florensky, there can be no deep understanding of God's truth without actually encountering God as He lets himself be known through the created order. The peak of this this encounter is in the incarnated Logos – the unique embodiment of divine Wisdom, Sophia – where the

transcendent meets the immanent, the eternal joins with the temporal. The human agent is thus enabled and invited to become consubstantial with nature as nature (the created order) finds its fulfillment in the incarnated Logos. This oneness/unity with creation is both a gift and a task. It prompts human agents to consider creation as an integral part of a whole which finds its purpose and unified fulfillment in God. Nature/creation must never be treated as an object at the disposal of the proud human reason. Thus, rationalism is rejected by Florensky and others not only as an inadequate approach to reality but, on a certain level, as a blasphemous attempt by humans to subdue creation by objectifying it rationally.

3 Sophiology

Sophiology has not always been a welcomed subject within the Russian Orthodox Tradition. In fact, Florensky omitted his text on Sophia from the first edition of his *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth* published in 1908. The Church authorities did not like this passage and made him remove it. Florensky's emphasis on the Divine Feminine with relation to Divine Sophia may have been the point of contention here. Solovyov's Sophiology was evaluated even harsher than that of Florensky. Moscow Orthodox Patriarchate labeled his teachings as unorthodox and heretical.

The reason why the topic of the relationship between humans and the Divine Wisdom, impersonated as Sophia, became so prominent among people like Solovyov and Florensky is simple: they felt like the typical philosophical approach to knowledge and subsequently to moral, social and political deliberations, was fundamentally flawed. Its failure has been tied to contemplating the nature of reality and humans' place in it either purely within an immanent frame (i.e., discounting transcendence) or purely through rational human capacities. Also, there has been a fateful gap between the process of *knowing* and reality of *being* in the sense of an *intentional participation*. This gap arose on the presupposition of their being a qualitative disconnect between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, which manifested itself (among other places) in Cartesian dichotomy between reason/soul and body. The importance of participation in, communion, and unity with all things and ultimately with God was overlooked.

The importance of a viable 'human-divine and divine-human' communion, originally presented and defended by Gregory Palama, became one of the hallmarks of 20th-century Russian Orthodox theological tradition. No other theologian of the late 19th century played a more significant part in recovering Palama's emphasis on the 'divine-human' communion than Vladimir Solovyov. The way to achieve this led through a careful reconceptualization of selected metaphysical ideas.

Solovyov's contribution in the area of Christian metaphysical speculation deserves a closer analysis. The foundational idea of his metaphysical system, i.e., the core metaphysical presupposition of his system, is the concept of 'the humanity of God' (the 'God-Humanness' of the Supreme Being). Essential implications are necessarily derived from this core concept for the whole history of salvation on the cosmic scale. The finite creation is imbued with a fundamental teleological axiom – its original purpose is to finally be united with its Creator. The union of creation with God is thus no second thought, nor is it a backup plan in the complex history of salvation, but is rather its fundamental, original purpose. The uncreated Being, the one and only almighty God, has chosen to always be known as He who creates and who remains in a constitutive relationship with His creation. There seems to be an unrecognized allusion to the *analogia entis* understood in general terms to relate to the existence of the created realm as being indirectly ontologically grounded in divine ontology. In any case, according to Solovyov, God should never be conceived of in abstract terms as a being on His own accord without any relation to creation. In all eternity, God is always the One who creates (or intends to create).

The intimate relation of God and creation is embodied conceptually in the concept of Sophia and materially in the person of Jesus Christ. (Gallaher, 2009) Solovyov's principal teaching of 'Godmanhood' ('Bohochelovechenstvo') revolves around this complex concept of Incarnation as the embodiment of Sophia in the person of Jesus Christ. (In Solovyov's view, 'Sophia' denotes "the being of God as the all-unity, which, as the content of God as all-unity, is the fulfillment of created existence. Sophia, as the content of God's being, is embodied in the person of Jesus Christ." (Papanikolaou, 2013: 540)

This mystical language approaches what many might call 'borderlines' of Christian orthodoxy but they arguably be interpreted in a theological orthodox fashion. More problematic is Solovyov's conception of Sophia as a feminine wisdom of God with a mercy-conferring, unifying function. This emphasis resembles to some extent various pagan traditions that lift up their own goddesses of wisdom and mercy. It also contains an echo of Neo-Platonic mystical philosophy merged with Valentinian-Gnostic speculations. This resulted in Solovyov being accused of unwarranted syncretism, fueled by his own, subjective mystical experience.

Regardless of whether or not one deems Solovyov's Sophiology theological orthodox, we wish to stress that these are not self-serving mystical speculations but rather an intellectual endeavor open to transcendence geared towards a viable program of individual and social reform and regeneration. In Solovyov's own words:

"Recognizing the final goal of history as the full realization of the Christian ideal in life by all humanity... we understand the all-sided development of culture as a general and necessary means for reaching that goal, for this culture in its gradual progress destroys all those hostile partitions and exclusive isolations between various parts of humanity and the world and tries to unify all natural and social groups in a family that is infinitely diverse in make-up but characterized by moral solidarity." (Solovyov, 1989: 617-618)

The extent to which a human moral agent contributes to the integration of the surrounding world in its totality with the divine plan determines the human agent's moral fitness. The best exposition of this principle can be found in Solovyov's *The Meaning of Love* (Solovyov, 1985) which he wrote only six years before his death.

In Florensky's view, Sophia constitutes the core of God's good creation. The humankind should aspire "to live and feel together with all creation, not with the creator that man has corrupted but with the creation that came out of the hands of its Creator; to see in this creation another, higher nature; [and] through the crust of sin, to feel the pure core of God's creation." (Florensky, 2004: 192) The human agent should never think of himself/herself as a disconnected monad, an autonomous individual with a self-referential approach to reality. Instead, one should recognize his fundamental contingency, one's dependence on others, one's participation in the grand, organic scheme of things. According to Florensky, there are "two principles of culture: that which is in flesh and that which is becoming incarnate, the Hypostatic Sophia and the Divine Sophia." (Florensky, 2014: 108)

Florensky argued that there has been a historical development of the concept of Sophia throughout the history of Christianity, with Russian Orthodoxy embodying the pinnacle of this evolution. In Orthodox theology, Sophia is more than a mere object of contemplation or image of spiritual perfection; it represents "the unity of all creation, the mystical church." (Florensky, 2004: 282). The Russian Orthodox intellectual environment is ready to facilitate a fusion of mystical faith and scientific thinking, substituting thereby the old and vastly inadequate mechanistic worldview. (Obolovitch, 2020: 460) Our view of reality necessitates a new understanding of the essence of life as 'life in the spirit.' (Florensky, 2014: 68) Florensky is quick to add that this new epoch will not be accused of the opposite extreme, namely of

disregarding scientific knowledge for the sake of some mystical experience. Rather, the fusion of mysticism and science will produce a wholesome, complex experience of reality, which will include careful scientific scrutiny while placing science in a proper context. A revitalized world will thus be brought forth through a revitalized Christianity, that is, Christianity composed of a mixture of scientific inquiry and mysticism.

Numerous critical voices from the West as well as from the Eastern Orthodox tradition have been raised against Florensky's intuition-based epistemology and against his Sophiology. For example, Father Georges Florovsky (1893-1979) criticizes Florensky's lack of appreciation of the intimate connection between Sophiology and Incarnation. There seems to be, according to Florovsky, a willful neglect of the relevant Christological considerations. (Florovsky, 1987: 278). This is somewhat surprising given the fact that Florensky does reflect on the Incarnation and he does this while mentioning Sophia.

Nevertheless, Solovyov's and Florensky's conceptions of Sophia prompted their followers to conceptualize Sophia as "the privileged image of God's original vision of Creation, which, although now fallen, is to be restored as the universal church. The doctrine of salvation as deification is redirected from the individual to the cosmos. Thus conceived by Solovyov and legitimized by Florensky, Sophia entered Russian religious philosophy, spawned a whole school of sophiology, and culminated in the systematic theology of Sergei Bulgakov (1871-1944), the most complete and suggestive expression of Russian sophiological theology." (Florensky, 2004: xxi) If the humankind wishes to achieve rejuvenation with the hope of a final eschatological rebirth and consummation, the only path to this is through universal love as based on the holy Wisdom, Sophia. (Slesinski, 1984) Science and spirituality have their common basis in this divine Wisdom, though this reality only becomes apparent upon a mystical contemplation of the world grounded in intuitive knowledge. We can observe this emphasis on universal love and intuitive knowledge in Florensky (2004), Solovyov (1985), and Lossky (1919; 1930; 1952), to name but few notable Russian intellectuals of this era.

What we see in both authors is their intentional inclination towards the principle of 'sobornost' as a prerequisite of the individual's and societal change. Sobornost is more than a group of people gathered around a common interest, more than friendship or even fraternity. All of these concepts often promoted by Western individualism have the benefit of the individual as their primary target. In contrast, sobornost is oriented towards what benefits the community, the closely-knit fellowship of human interdependent persons. (Besschetnova, 2019) This community is 'glued together' with a bond stronger than a normal human love or affection; the mystical bond here is *kenotic love* (agape) – love, which empties itself of itself (of its desires and entitlements) and exists solely for the other. (cf.: Tchikine, 2019) Such love can only exist as one that is infused by God. The organic bond of God loving the human agent and the human agent responding ecstatically in loving God enables the human agent to enter into a kenotic loving relationship with others for the sake of others and of God. This is seems to be the true prerequisite to sobornost and the eschatological unity of the creation and the Creator that both Solovyov and Florensky are calling for.

Human temporal community that best reflects the reality of sobornost is the Church, an organic body of believers animated by what Solovyov calls 'a living faith':

"The Church, in the narrower sense, represented by the hierarchy, reunites mankind to God by the profession of the true faith and the grace of the sacraments. But if the faith communicated by the Church to Christian humanity is a living faith, and if the grace of the sacraments is an effectual grace, the resultant union of the divine and the human cannot be limited to the special domain of religion, but

must extend to all Man's common relationships and must regenerate and transform his social and political life. Here opens up a field of action which is man's own proper sphere. The divine-human action is no longer an accomplished fact, as in the priestly Church, but a task awaiting fulfilment, the task of making the divine Truth a reality in human society, of putting Truth into practice; and Truth, expressed in practice, is called Justice." (Solovyov, 1948: 10)

4. Concluding Reflections on Solovyov and Florensky's Legacy

In retrospect, a look at the work of Pavel A. Florensky and Vladimir S. Solovyov shows their greatness and the extraordinary nature of these characters. They are not only great theologians, mystics, poets, philosophers, popularizers of knowledge, but most of all people of deep faith. Their love for all people and things, the strength and courage with which they defended the truth of the Christian faith inspire many people around the world to this day. Their comprehensive research interests and extraordinary analyses of social life inspire respect and in-depth analyses not only on the side of philosophers and theologians, but also representatives of other scientific disciplines. Admittedly, the philosophical legacy of Florensky and Solovyov is examined against the background of their existential experience with "Sophia," the personification of God's Wisdom. The mystical dimension of their philosophy is derived from the specific theological foundations of their ideas, related primarily to the themes of Trinitarian and Mariological discourses present in the Russian intellectual and religious environment. On this basis of analyses and philosophical and theological considerations, very interesting approaches to social issues arise. Both philosophers were looking for a factor that could express "absolute unity and totality" in the chaotic world of phenomena and things, striving for their ultimate integrity. (Kotkowska, 2016)

Solovyov included his project of social policy mainly in the texts (listed here in their Polish translations): *Wielki spor i chrzescijanska polityka* (1883), *Judaizm i kwestia chrzescijanska* (1884), *Historia i przyszlosc teokracji* (1887), *Rosyjska idea* (1888), *Rosja i Europa* (1888), *Wlodzimierz Swiety i panstwo chrzescijanskie* (1888), *Rosja i Kosciol Powszechny* (1889), *Bizantynizm i Rosja* (1896). His basic ideas revolve around (1) the question of godhood humanity as an axiological foundation; (2) overcoming the dispute between East and West as the basis of civilization conflicts in international politics; (3) the importance of the religious factor in the form of the Eastern and Western Church; and (4) critical analysis of the current policy of states in international relations. Their approximation illustrates the method used by Solovyov, the characteristic feature of which is to search for cultural and spiritual ideas to concretize in the socio-political reality. (Solovyov, 2004) In his work, he presented a very interesting concept of society based on Christian values. It is a specific project of a society in which the desired values are realized. In relation to this, he presented an axionormative system (based on god-humanity and Christian values that make it concrete) and the institutions that guard it (free theocracy, the state), constituting the horizon for the implementation of a specific policy. Thus, by politics, he understands the creation of such social relations that will be a way of implementing the accepted values.

The axiological basis of Solovyov's vision of politics is the concept of god-humanity. Updating this value will be possible only after the abolition of the division between East and West, the axis of which is the dispute between the Western and Eastern Christian churches. A necessary condition for the implementation of Christian policy is the unification of the Eastern (Orthodox) and Western (Catholic) Church in one Universal Church. Its essence is a synthesis of the Eastern and Western elements, i.e., mysticism, a sense of wholeness and contemplation of the deity in the East, and an active factor emphasizing the value of a human's individuality and responsibility in

the West. (Solovyov, 2007a) The sense of unification is not the institutional absorption of one element by another, but a mutual spiritual complement, with simultaneous resignation from particularisms. (Solovyov, 2007b) Hence, Solovyov's ecumenism consisted in an axiological principle, and only secondarily in an institutional one. The synthesis should include Orthodoxy as the guardian of tradition and Catholicism as the guardian of authority, while taking into account the value brought by Protestantism and the Reformation, namely its focus on individual freedom. The basis of the united Universal Church, however, are only two complementary elements: Orthodoxy and Catholicism, which together will form a system of free theocracy, enabling the practical implementation of Christian politics. (Solovyov, 1948; Solovyov, 2007a)

The philosopher's appeal for the implementation of Christian ideals in social life precedes the publication of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (Leo XIII, 1940; originally published in 1891), which later contributed significantly to the development of the social teaching of the Catholic Church. The topics of his statements were: criticism of individualist liberalism and Marxist socialism, protest against nationalism and anti-Semitism, the death penalty and the exploitation of workers, defense of religious freedom, human dignity and the rights of nations, the concept of justice as the goal of social order, are issues discussed by the Christian world of the 20th and 21st centuries. Here we would like to point out the astonishing text by Solovyov titled "*Powiesc o antychryscie*," written just before his death, in which he accurately predicted the political, spiritual and civilizational changes that actually took place in the 20th and early 21st centuries. Solovyov described the 20th century as „the era of the last great wars.” The traumatic experiences of the 20th century would hopefully mobilize states to effectively prevent future conflicts by “uniting forces” of all Europeans. (Besschetnova, 2019: 47ff) In the 21st century, Europe is building a union of states – a kind of “united states of Europe.” There is also a civilizational, cultural and anthropological revolution: the theoretical materialism is finally collapsing; but at the same time there is a general rejection of the traditional belief in God. In the West, there is a growing interest in Far Eastern philosophies. In all this there is the Antichrist who appears as a pacifist, seducing humanity with the promise of peace and justice without God, in a new, pluralistic and syncretic religion without faith and dogmas. Only a small group of Christians oppose him: Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants. (Solovyov, 1998)

Solovyov, as a theologian, philosopher and mystic, looks for God in everyday life, in current social and political events. He was a man concerned about the welfare of another human being, both their temporal good and religious, eternal good (Kardis, 2019a: 17). He was a man and an extraordinary intellect, constantly preoccupied with questions of practical justice. He left behind not only his work, but also inspired a number of outstanding thinkers to continue his creative socio-philosophical as well as theological-mystical thought. One of these people was P. A. Florensky. In his youth, he was closely associated with people who continued the thought of Solovyov. In his later philosophical and social considerations, however, he did not follow exactly the vision of the world and the Church represented by his master. In his ecclesiological views, imbued with the idea of unity [единство], (Florensky, 2002: 33-35) he could not accept the rejection, in any form, of the authority of the Church. In the era and in the country where Florensky lived, Church-state relations were dominated and dictated by state power. According to the concept, the so-called self-possession of Orthodox tsars, that is, of their election and coronation to the imperial throne by God himself, is so sacred that, according to the spirit of doctrine and church canons, it, in a sense, reaches the level of a dogma of faith, the violation and rejection of which is punishable by separation from the Church. Such an understanding of the church-state relationship was supported by Pavel Florensky, reflecting on the relations between

these institutions (state-Church) in the Russian Empire. (Florensky, 1984; 2009) It should be noted that Florensky was not only a man of science but also a martyr for the truth of religion. He lived and worked in socio-political conditions unfavorable to Christian-based socio-philosophical views. Despite these ideological impediments, his texts proclaim that in the field of economic relations, Christian politics is opposed to economic slavery and human exploitation. (Efremenko – Evseeva, 2012) He postulates that the state should provide a fair organization of work and the distribution of goods as well as prisons and correctional facilities only for criminals. (Kotkowska, 2016; Florensky, 1996)

Both thinkers, referring to social issues, referred to the social problems of that time and the world of Christian values, on which they constructed a vision of the future society. Based on these values and principles of social life, they communicated their ideas that had an impact on changing the way people think and perceive social reality. Each of them, based on the same principles of axiological life, but choosing slightly different methods of their research explorations, show the place of humans as personal agents in a society that is endowed with the dignity of a human being and possesses inalienable human rights. For many years, these figures and their contribution to the treasury of social science were underestimated. The figure of Solovyov in particular should have been noticed much earlier as a precursor of social ideas contained in the teaching of Pope Leo XIII in *Rerum novarum*. It should be clearly emphasized that Solovyov was not only a theoretician of the social doctrine of the Church, but also one of its initiators (Kardis, 2019b: 172). The topics of his statements – criticism of individualist liberalism and Marxist socialism, protest against nationalism and anti-Semitism, the death penalty and the exploitation of workers, defense of religious freedom, human dignity and the rights of nations, the concept of justice as the goal of social order, are issues discussed by the Christian world of the 20th and 21st centuries and beyond. It would be difficult to write a history of a Christian social movement, or of the European social-democratic movement in general, without mentioning Solovyov as one of its initiators.

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