

## Durham E-Theses

---

*Russian Sophiology and the Philosophers of Will: The  
Theanthropic Theology of Solovyov and Bulgakov and  
their Critical Appropriation of German Voluntarism.*

CHARLES ANDREW GOTTSBALL

### How to cite:

---

GOTTSBALL, CHARLES ANDREW (2024) Russian Sophiology and the Philosophers of Will: The Theanthropic Theology of Solovyov and Bulgakov and their Critical Appropriation of German Voluntarism. Doctoral thesis, Durham University.

### Use policy

---

The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties in any format or medium, without prior permission or charge, for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- a full bibliographic reference is made to the original source
- a <https://etheses.durham.ac.uk/id/eprint/15314/> is made to the metadata record in Durham E-Theses
- the full-text is not changed in any way

The full-text must not be sold in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

Please consult the [full Durham E-Theses policy](#) for further details.

Russian Sophiology and the Philosophers of Will: The Theanthropic Theology of Solovyov  
and Bulgakov and their Critical Appropriation of German Voluntarism

By

Charles Andrew Gottshall

Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Durham University

Department of Theology and Religion

2023

## Abstract

### Russian Sophiology and the Philosophers of Will

Charles Andrew Gottshall

This thesis explores potential theological contributions of Russian Sophiology. Its argument is twofold. First, it is argued that the Russian theologians' development of the idea of God as eternal, divine-humanity in relation to Sophia enabled them to address both longstanding and contemporary theological problematics in bold and original ways. Second, it is argued that among the vastly diverse sources upon which Russian Sophiology drew, its critical reappropriation of elements of the German voluntarist tradition stands behind some of Sophiology's most creative and controversial theological proposals. In order to demonstrate this twofold claim, this work is organized around the major systematic themes that form the Christian narrative of reality: Trinity-Christology, creation, fall, and eschatology. To limit our focus, the thought of Vladimir Solovyov and Sergius Bulgakov will be considered in relation to each of these themes, and the particular issues that attend them. It is argued that the theanthropic theology of divine-humanity is at work not only in their Christocentric redefinition of the Trinity, but also plays a critical role in the other theological *loci* surveyed. Furthermore, it will be argued that in each of these areas there is a critical appropriation of the voluntarist tradition, not only the sophiological theosophy of Jacob Boehme, but also the 19<sup>th</sup> century philosophers of Will: Friedrich Schelling, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Eduard von Hartmann. It is argued that the Russian theologians utilize this voluntarist legacy, particularly the metaphysical principle of an unconscious, impersonal, corporeal Will, not only in their development of the idea of God's eternal divine-humanity, but also to explore the ultimate origins of matter and becoming, the nature of the fall and its connection to the evolutionary process, and the eschatological spiritualization of matter.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

Table of Contents

Statement of Copyright

### **Introduction**

1. Background and Argument

2. Outline

### **Chapter 1: Theanthropic Theology: The Divine-Human Organism**

Introduction

I. God as Eternal Divine-Human Organism: Russian Sophiology

Introduction

A. Solovyov

B. Bulgakov

II. God as Achieving Divine-Humanity in Time: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Protestant theology

A. Moltmann

B. Jenson

III. The Alternative of Russian Sophiology

### **Chapter 2: Sophia in Creation: The Divine Ground of Matter and Creaturely Becoming**

Introduction

I. Boehme: Divine Will and its Essential Manifestation: The Voluntarist Sophiology of Jacob Boehme

II. Solovyov: The Various Faces of Sophia: Incorporeal and Eternal, Corporeal and Becoming

III. Bulgakov: The Corporeality of Sophia and its Unconscious Becoming

### **Chapter 3: The Supratemporal Fall and Evolution**

## Introduction

### I. Original Sin, East and West: Divergent Trends

### II. The Supratemporal Fall and Evolution in Friedrich Schelling and Russian Sophiology

A. Schelling: Setting the Potencies in Tension: The Transcendental Misdeed

B. Solovyov: The Pre-cosmic Disintegration of the Divine-Human Organism

C. Bulgakov: Supratemporal and Temporal Dimensions of Adam's Fall

## **Chapter 4: Eschata: The Spiritualization of Matter**

### Introduction

### I. The Return into Divine Mind: Idealist Eschatology in Johannes Scottus Eriugena

### II. The Descent of Divinity into Matter: Incarnationalist Eschatology in Russian Sophiology

A. Solovyov: From the Dematerialization of Spirits to the Spiritualization of Matter

B. Bulgakov: Spiritual Bodies: The Transfiguration of the World and Resurrection

## **Conclusion**

## **Bibliography**

## STATEMENT OF COPYRIGHT

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without the author's prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

## Introduction

### *1. Background and Argument*

This work explores potential contributions of Russian Sophiology to the contemporary theological landscape. Russian Sophiology arguably constitutes one of the most creative and fertile epochs in theological history. To the mind of one of the most formidable theological figures of our times, John Milbank, “it increasingly appears that perhaps the most significant theology of the two preceding centuries has been that of the Russian Sophiological tradition.”<sup>1</sup> Milbank maintains that three main contributions of Russian Sophiology are that of, first, a recognition that orthodoxy remains an “unfinished task,”<sup>2</sup> which was encapsulated in Sophiology’s reflection on the nature of the elusive figure of divine wisdom in Scripture and its transformations in various sources in order to address longstanding and contemporary theological *aporias*; secondly, the construction of a dynamic ontology that takes into account process in nature and in history, and concomitantly addresses the question of theodicy evoked by our modern sense of evil latent within evolutionary processes; thirdly, the development of a paradoxical account of mediation where the latter is at once inadmissible yet indispensable, particularly as expressed in the work of Sergius Bulgakov—between the persons of the Trinity, between God and creation, between the two natures of Christ, and, in pneumatology, between the Holy Spirit and the Church.<sup>3</sup> Milbank’s essay focuses primarily on this third point of mediation. Complementary to Milbank’s exploration of Sophiological mediation, this work concentrates on the first two areas of contribution that he identifies in connection with the all-important sophiological theme of divine-humanity. A twofold thesis brings together all the complex thematics and divergent lines of thought explored in this work. First, the Russian theologians’ development of the idea of an eternal of divine-humanity in relation to Sophia enabled them to address both longstanding and contemporary theological problematics in bold and original ways. Secondly, among the vastly diverse sources of inspiration of Russian Sophiology, it is argued that the critical reappropriation of elements of the German voluntarist tradition stands behind some of their most the creative and controversial theological proposals. We can consider each of these aspects in turn.

---

<sup>1</sup> John Milbank, “Sophiology and Theurgy: The New Theological Horizon” in eds., Christoph Schneider and Adrian Pabst, *Encounter Between Eastern Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Milbank, “Sophiology and Theurgy,” p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> Milbank also observes that these contributions were, in part, made possible due to the fact that the nature-grace problematic so prominent in 20<sup>th</sup> Catholic thought was largely absent in Orthodoxy which never “posited such a gulf,” and also because the appropriation of German idealism was deeper in Russian Sophiology, especially with regards to Schelling (see pp. 45-46).

If a key aspect of the significance of the Russian sophiological tradition lies in their perception of orthodoxy—with Blondel,<sup>4</sup> Newman, and de Lubac<sup>5</sup>—as an always “unfinished task,” and in their ambitious attempt to continue the task of theology in a dynamic mode and with an eye to unresolved, as well new, problematics presented to ecclesial consciousness, this, in my view, has in large part to do with the unprecedented way in which the Russian theologians ventured to think Divinity and humanity together. In this sense, Russian Sophiology can be understood, in part, as an ambitious attempt to (re)think to the uttermost the whole dogmatic edifice on Chalcedonian principles, not merely with its negations, but more fundamentally the unstated positive correlation of the divine and the human.<sup>6</sup> Within its intellectual strivings is a palpable desire to propel theology into a new era, to extend and fulfill the latent theandric potential in the Chalcedonian formulas. “One would like to think that it is precisely our epoch, in its striving for theological synthesis, that it is called to be the Chalcedonian epoch, that is called to a new religious and theological disclosure and assimilation of this gift of the Church.”<sup>7</sup> Consequently, this monumental, omni-Christological task required, in the minds of the Russian theologians, a radical rethinking of the very concept of God *in se*, and of all the major doctrinal *loci* around this axis. At the center of Sophiology’s theandric revolution is a new conception of God, understood no longer as pure intelligence, but as a divine-human Organism. Around this star the theological system(s) of Sophiology orbits. This theanthropological insight also provides an interpretive key to the multivalent nature of Sophia. At the center of Russian Sophiology and its creative developments is the enigmatic but biblical figure of Sophia, propounded by Vladimir Solovyov, legitimized by Pavel Florensky, and developed into a full-fledged sophiological system by Sergius Bulgakov. Diversely conceived as the divine nature, a divine body or quasi-corporeality in God, a divine world of human entities, the intra-divine self-revelation of God as eternal divine-humanity, the prototype of creation and deified humanity, as well as the world soul in its unconscious yearning to reflect to Divine Wisdom, the various faces of Sophia in Russian Sophiology nevertheless reveal a driving impulse: to unfold the

---

<sup>4</sup> See Maurice Blondel, “History and Dogma” by Maurice Blondel in, *Letter on Apologetics and History and Dogma*, trans. Alexander Dru and Illtyd Trethowan (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995).

<sup>5</sup> On Newman and de Lubac on the development or process of doctrinal development see Nicholas J. Healy, “Henri de Lubac on the Development of Doctrine,” *Communio: International Catholic Review*, 2017 (44), pp. 667-689.

<sup>6</sup> See Sergius Bulgakov, trans. Thompson, Clarke, Braikevitc, *Sophia: The Wisdom of God: An Outline of Sophiology* (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1993), pp. 13-21.

<sup>7</sup> Sergius Bulgakov, trans. Boris Jakim, *The Lamb of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), p. 62.

inseparable connection of Divinity and humanity, of God and the world. The theanthropic is irreducibly the theological.

This fundamental divine-human linkage, and the sophiological synthesis which arises out of it, is the concern of all that follows. Like Ariadne's string, an underlying question will serve as our guide on our journey through the perplexing and, some would say, perilous, labyrinth of Russian Sophiology. How does Russian theandrist alter the theological landscape? Or, posed differently, what might the architectonic construction of this theanthropic-sophianic theology bring to the tradition? The primary thesis at the heart of this work is that the reconception of God as a divine-human Organism, through sustained reflection on and development of the Sophia tradition, in both its biblical and subsequent religious aspects, enabled the Russian theologians to propose radically novel solutions both to longstanding and contemporary theological problematics. The systematic development of a theanthropic theology, which forms a central core of Russian Sophiology, is at the forefront of its bold attempts to resolve, in a new sophiological key, a broad range of ancient and current theological questions. In order to demonstrate this claim, this work is organized around the major systematic themes that form the Christian narrative of reality: Trinity-Christology, creation, fall, and eschatology. To limit our focus, the thought of Vladimir Solovyov and Sergius Bulgakov will be considered in relation to each of these themes, and the particular issues that attend them, as well as in relation to significant theological and philosophical currents, which will serve to throw into relief some of the original solutions of Russian Sophiology. By considering how, on the basis of their theology of divine-humanity, the Russian theologians come to terms with pressing theological queries—such as how to connect the Trinity and Christology, how to conceive the fall in light of evolution, what is the metaphysical origin of materiality and its evolutionary becoming—it will be demonstrated that the Sophiologists traverse familiar theological territories in new, even if seemingly unusual, ways.

Alongside this fundamental thesis is developed an ancillary argument: the theanthropic axiom, as well as the constellation of sophiological themes that swirl around it, are informed by a complex intellectual genealogy that stands in the background not simply as influence, but as the site of critical engagement through which the Russian theologians sought to utilize what it found advantageous in order to push theology further than it had gone in previous eras, indeed even to supplement and thereby, in a sense, surpass the tradition of the Fathers and ecumenical councils. It is this creative daring, as well as its

utilization and development of sources perceived to be heterodox, that is the progenitor of both of the ire and intrigue that Sophiology has inspired. Perhaps one of the great ironies of Russian Sophiology is precisely this utilization of non-traditional sources in the service of orthodoxy. Solovyov saw himself as simultaneously in a line of theosophy extending from Neoplatonism and the Kabbalah, through Boehme and Swedenborg and to Schelling,<sup>8</sup> and yet also as a bulwark of (O)orthodoxy, seeking by means of this legacy to resolve theological *aporias* and thereby bring to fuller, logical expression the universal truth of Christianity. And though Bulgakov tried to distance himself from the alleged overtures and spurious influences of his predecessor's thought, it is increasingly clear that Bulgakov himself availed himself of a vast range of non-canonical sources that he attempted to integrate into his sophiological system whilst purging them of perceived excesses. This is seen to be the case in his utilization of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* and identity philosophy in his *Philosophy of Economy*, of Fichte's *Ich-Philosophie* in his linguistic ontology of the Trinity, as well as the Boehmean-Schellingian idea of an impersonal, quasi-corporeal ground in God to explain both the divine nature and finite nature in terms of Uncreated and created Sophia.

Of particular importance in this genealogical connection is the context of German voluntarism, which has its beginning in the theosophy of Jacob Boehme, and which was developed into a philosophy first by Friedrich Schelling, as well as by the later pessimist philosophers of Will, Arthur Schopenhauer and Eduard von Hartmann. At various junctions in this work it will be suggested that the critical infusion of German voluntarism into the thought of the Russian theologians stands behind some of their most creative insights and theological revisions. In their efforts to make sense of the divine nature as well as multiplicity in God, of matter and process in nature, of the impersonal dimension of all life, as well as the unconscious production of nature or the world soul, the Russian theologians exercise recourse to the theosophical and philosophical tradition of German voluntarism. Excavating the affinities of the Russian Sophiologists with some of their more exotic sources, as well as their transformations, is imperative because of the way they conceived of the relation between philosophy and theology. The history of philosophy, perhaps best expressed in Solovyov's *Crisis of Western Philosophy*, and Bulgakov's *The Tragedy of Philosophy*, is interpreted by the Russian Sophiologists as a fatal and persistent tendency to one-sidedness,

---

<sup>8</sup> See the Fragment from "Theological Principles" in Judith Deutsch Kornblatt, *Divine Sophia: The Wisdom Writings of Vladimir Solovyov* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), pp. 171-172.

and in this sense to heresy (*haeresis*, with the connotation of choice).<sup>9</sup> Yet within the tragic character of all philosophy lies also its unmistakable greatness, for it is both the blessed nature and baneful curse of reason that it “cannot not fly” and yet in its very flight it is destined, like Icarus’s waxen wings in the heat of the sun, ultimately to fail its godlike task and fall back to earth.<sup>10</sup> Philosophy is, however, for all its tragedy, necessary and indispensable both in itself as the ineluctable exercise of reason to comprehend itself and ultimately as the handmaiden of theology in the way that it poses the essential problems of existence and in that it possesses incontrovertible insights, which can be critically integrated into theological thought. If, for the Russian theologians, all of philosophy can be regarded, in some sense, as a series of Christian heresies, it is seen then as a necessary part of the perennial quest for truth, “for there must be heresies among you (1 Cor. 11:19).” In the context of these new “heresies,” the Russian Sophiologists saw themselves, in the spirit of the church fathers, as attending to the particular problems and needs of modernity, as using critical discernment to develop philosophical insights which, in their one-sidedness, fell into heresy, but which belonged, in their integrity, principally to Christian theology. In their deep engagement with the best of modern philosophy, German Idealism and voluntarism, as well as neglected biblical data and theosophical sources, the Russian theologians were some of the most forward thinking in that, instead of ignoring, or, even worse, dismissing this tradition, they perceived the need to critically transform this legacy in service of Christian theology. Echoing Paul Valliere’s work, the Russian theologians can be seen to mark a critical and creative engagement with modernity, and the specific problems raised in contemporary consciousness.<sup>11</sup> The double argument of this work then is that, by means of various, and, to some minds, spurious, sources, of which German voluntarism will seize our attention, the Russian theologians developed a unique divine-human theology of Sophia, which in turn enabled them to propose profound resolutions to longstanding and contemporary theological problematics. Having considered the central argument of this work, we can survey its chapters, which develop this twofold thesis.

### *Chapter 1: Theanthropic Theology: The Divine-Human Organism*

One of the fundamental impulses of 20<sup>th</sup> century theology was an ardent drive to more closely connect Christology and theology proper, and thereby to overcome a perceived gap

---

<sup>9</sup> See the translator’s, Stephen Churchyard, introduction to Sergius Bulgakov, *The Tragedy of Philosophy: Philosophy and Dogma* (Brooklyn, NY: Angelico Press, 2022), pp. xlvi-xlix.

<sup>10</sup> Bulgakov, *The Tragedy of Philosophy*, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology: Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov: Orthodox Theology in a New Key* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001).

between the immanent and economic Trinity, between God in himself and God as revealed in Christ. In this intellectual context it will be argued that Russian Sophiology not only contributes to this problematic, but also anticipates it insofar as the theology of eternal divine-humanity, a central feature of Russian Sophiology, was first developed by Vladimir Solovyov in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and extended by Bulgakov in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup>. Insofar as this is the case, the underlying motive of this chapter is to explore the way in which the Russian theologians construct a concept of the Trinity Christologically, as an eternal divine-human Organism, through negotiation with the enigmatic biblical figure of Sophia and its reflexes in various philosophical and theosophical sources, and also to suggest that, while producing issues of their own, the particular Christocentrism of the Russian theologians avoids some of the thorny problems that plagued other 20<sup>th</sup> century attempts to redefine divine being around Christ.

This radical theology, for which the theanthropic is the original theological idiom, poses certain questions that accompany its novelty. Two particular questions will guide our expedition into the labyrinth of Russian theandricism. First, in what sense is God understood as a divine-human Organism? And, second, how is the notion of divine-humanity to be understood with respect to the divine hypostases of the Trinity? This chapter will consider each of these questions in relation to Vladimir Solovyov and Sergius Bulgakov, as well as difficulties and ambiguities that attend their theandric constructions. Having explored the way in which the Russian theologians develop a Christological concept of God as eternal divine-humanity, as well as the problems that attend its construction, this chapter will place Russian theandricism in the context of 20<sup>th</sup> century theological thought. The Christological impulse of the Russian theologians, as well as certain problematics which arise in their theandric constructions, particularly in relation to freedom and pantheism, can be insightfully clarified by the way in which the Christocentric project was carried out by theologians that succeeded them. Accordingly, in order to bring into relief the potential, critical contribution of Russian Sophiological thought to the Christological impetus of 20<sup>th</sup> century theology, the former will be brought into conversation with the Lutheran process thought of Moltmann and Jenson. Although it is argued that significant difficulties attend the attempt to temporalize or dramatize Divinity, the intention here is not to utilize Moltmann and Jenson as a foil, but to illumine the divergent ways in which both sides sought to reconceive the theological project Christologically on the basis of shared problematics and sources, particularly that of German Idealism. Finally, it is argued that despite the problems which plague the Russian theandric

constructions of the divine-human Organism, the remarkable novelty of this theology is the way in which Christ becomes the eternal center of divine being. In its postulation of an eternal divine-humanity Sophiology brings Christology into the deepest heart of theology enabling it to forge its own Christological path. And it is this radical theandricism that lies at the basis of its rethinking of the major theological themes, which will concern the chapters that follow.

*Chapter 2: Sophia in Creation: The Divine Ground of Matter and Creaturely Becoming*

If the problematic of Christology in its connection with theology was answered by recourse to the notion of eternal *theanthropos*, the Russian theologians approach questions concerning creation in accordance with their theandric-sophianic logic. In order to limit the focus of this chapter, we will consider two fundamental and interrelated problems regarding creation, one ancient but enduring and one (relatively) modern: What is the ground of 1) matter, and of 2) the instinctive, dynamic nature of corporeality as an evolving process? The second chapter argues that the problems of matter and its mutable, instinctive dynamism are given an attempted resolution by the Russian Sophiologists within the context of their concept of God as a divine-human Organism, particularly by recourse to Sophia, and through creative engagement with Neoplatonism and German voluntarism. In their differing ways the Russian theologians address this double problem by suggesting that there is a principle within God, Sophia, that is analogous to matter and to the impersonal and unconscious (Bulgakov and late Solovyov), or at least which can take on these properties as a negation of the inward unity of the divine-human world of Sophia (early Solovyov). The Russian theologians were perceptively aware that if theology is not to fall prey to dualism there must be within God a principle that is alike to corporeality. Furthermore, in order to account for becoming over against changeless divine eternity, they insisted that there must be in God a principle akin to unconscious instinct, a volitional principle, which in itself is not rational, but a vital impulse that forms the essential ground of spirit. It is in this double positing of primal matter and a latent basis of unconscious becoming in Sophia that the Russian theologians forge novel paths in the doctrine of creation.

However, it is also shown that their accounts stand within an identifiable intellectual tradition, which they creatively transformed. In their own differing ways, Solovyov and Bulgakov grounded the material order and its dynamism in Sophia in creative engagement with Neoplatonism, particularly Plotinus' concept of intelligible matter, as well as Germanic voluntarism with its ideas of a primal will and its essential manifestation. Concerning the

latter tradition, this chapter will explore the thought of Jacob Boehme, the father of modern Sophiology and German voluntarism, as the important intellectual backdrop of the Russian Sophiological tradition. It will be argued that, in different ways and with differing consequences, the voluntarist concept of an unconscious, impersonal, corporeal Will enters into the sophiologies of Solovyov and Bulgakov in connection with our two themes. Whereas in the early Solovyov, it will be seen that the external, evolving material order comes about as a fall away from internal, incorporeal unity of primordial Sophia, in Bulgakov it will be shown that the corporeal and the unconscious are elevated into the eternal Godhead as Divine Sophia, which in turn forms the foundation of the unfolding created order. Accordingly, it will be argued that in relation to previous theological tradition the critical insight of Russian Sophiology here consists in its attempt to resolve, with the assistance of Neoplatonism and German voluntarism, the lacuna of the ultimate basis of matter, as well as its synthetic initiative to integrate universal evolution into the theology of creation. Finally, this chapter will also register potential limitations and pitfalls of Russian Sophiology's attempted resolutions. In this connection, we will consider tendencies towards idealist monism and dualism, on the part of Solovyov, as well as freedom and determinism in relation to an eternal world of sophianic forms.

### *Chapter 3: The Supratemporal Fall and Evolution*

If concerning the problematics of the intersection between Christology and theology the Russian theologians had recourse to an eternal, primal God-Man, and if, likewise, the double problem of the positive grounding of matter and of evolutionary process was placed in the supratemporal context of Sophia, so also the supratemporal aspect of Russian Sophiology is at the forefront of its speculative solutions to original sin. Chapter 3 argues that the supratemporal dimension of humanity, and its failure to remain within the unity of the Divine-human Organism, is the intellectual matrix of Russian Sophiology's attempted resolution to a range of theological questions surrounding *peccatum originale*. What is the ontological connection between human agency and the disintegrated state of nature? How can the fall be correlated with the evolutionary process? What is the nature of the primal human who fell short of the glory of God? And, finally, how is the agency and guilt of primal humanity to be conceived in relation to its universal and individual aspects?

Furthermore, in attempting answers to longstanding and contemporary questions concerning original sin, it is argued that the Russian theologians traverse this difficult terrain via a complex engagement with various theological and philosophical sources. In

conversation with the Western legacy of original sin in Augustine, as well as the circle of Eastern fathers who suggest the mysterious coincidence of creation and fall as occurring at the liminal boundary of the divine-creative act, it is contended that the Russian Sophiologists attempt to account for the Augustinian stress on the universality of original sin and guilt, through the postulation of a universal pan-human, as well as through reference to the Eastern suggestion that such a primal misdeed takes place supratemporally, beyond the bounds of space and time. Another interlocutor of importance is, not unexpectedly, Friedrich Schelling. In locating the primordial transgression in a universal individual—Sophia in the case of Solovyov and Adam in that of Bulgakov—at the liminal non-moment of the creative act, it is argued that the Russian theologians show great affinity with Schelling, whose various accounts—in their situation within an organic metaphysics, their stress on a non-temporal fall, and the postulation of a primal, universal human—have their reflexes and reinterpretations in the Russian theologians. Furthermore, building upon this Eastern/Eriugenic and voluntarist context, it is argued that this transcendental or supratemporal aspect of the fall enables the Sophiologists to negotiate in a novel way the complex problem of how to square the idea of original sin and evolution. Finally, it is suggested that while developing the doctrine of original sin in a highly original fashion there are nevertheless various difficulties that arise in the respective accounts of Solovyov and Bulgakov, which are highlighted by Teilhard de Chardin, whose perspective on original sin is briefly registered in order to suggest a possible alternative to the Russian Sophiologists' accounts.

#### *Chapter 4: Eschata: The Spiritualization of Matter*

If a sophianic, theandric logic underlies the Russian theologians' theological reconstructions of the doctrines of creation and transgression, so it also extends to redemption. The fourth and final chapter has as its central theme the ontological possibility of the eschatological spiritualization of matter. How can matter be transfigured? Is it merely an act of divine will, or, is there some ground in God for the *apakatastasis ton panton*? What is the ontological basis for the transfiguration of the world and the resurrected spiritual body? The argument of this chapter is that via a creative engagement with voluntarist ideas, Sophiology's concept of God as a divine-human Organism enables it to find a more determinate ground in Sophia for eschatological speculation than other theological alternatives. In order to demonstrate this claim, this chapter begins by looking at the idealist eschatology of Eriugena who posits the return of all things into divine Mind. By contrast, it is argued that although Russian

Sophiology always preserved an idealist element and is highly Platonic, the tradition of Germanic voluntarism enabled the Russian theologians to speculate in a new philosophical context and thereby to develop an incarnationist eschatology, which posits the spiritualization of matter. Interestingly, in this connection, it seems as if the ideas of the visionary writings of Swedenborg and their development in Schelling's speculative thanatology/eschatology set out most clearly in *Clara* are largely ignored, even if the underlying ontology of the spiritual body is in some ways important for them. Instead, it is Hartmann's *Philosophy of the Unconscious* that is of importance for the development of Solovyov's eschatology, as well as Platonism. We will trace Solovyov's development from an idealist version of eschatology that envisaged a dematerialization of spirits, or a return to Sophia's incorporeality, to his later, incarnationist eschatology of the spiritualization of matter, in which he posits in Sophia a primal material substrate which is to be progressively spiritualized. Bulgakov's appropriation of German voluntarism is more subtle yet more thoroughgoing, in that his eschatology of the spiritualization of matter is developed out of the idea of the eternal unity of Spirit and nature/Sophia in God, which is destined to have its created image in the spiritualized cosmos, in the transfigured world and resurrected body. This idea has its roots, as will be argued in various places throughout this work, in the Boehmean-Schellingian notion of the ground in God, an essential corporeality which is spiritualized. Furthermore, it will be argued that this voluntarist metaphysics perhaps offers an important corrective to Platonism and Aristotelianism. By bringing Bulgakov's Sophiology into conversation with the accounts of resurrection in Aquinas and Scotus, it will be argued that the voluntarist tradition was productive for the Russian Sophiologists in provisioning a more ultimate ground of the resurrected body than Aristotle's hylomorphism or Plato's dualism.

## Chapter 1: Theanthropic Theology: Russian Sophiology and the Divine-Human Organism

### Introduction

A driving impulse in modern 20<sup>th</sup> century theology was the attempt to answer the question: how are the Trinity and Christology connected? Underlying this effort to connect the eternal, triune being of God and God as revealed in Christ, was a perceived chasm between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity. If God truly reveals himself in the God-man, what must God eternally be? Further, it was asked if the very idea of God as eternal and immutable in himself apart from creation and revelation is inimical to a Christocentric redefinition of divine being. In answer to these questions, leading theologians, following the Christological impulse, developed their revisionary metaphysics of divine being along different lines. One line of thought so refused the distinction between God *in se* and God *ad extra*, that God was identified with his temporal, divine-human revelation. Two representatives of this tendency, Jürgen Moltmann and Robert Jenson, will be the subject of consideration in the second part of this chapter. In this line of thinking God cannot be thought to exist above and beyond the event of his disclosure. In order to Christologize divinity, the identity of God must be forged in the fires of history, in his dynamic relation with the world process, which passes through Israel and which culminates in Christ, whereby God comes to be the divine-human God. By contrast, the line of thought represented by Russian Sophiology elected instead to trace the revelation of divine-humanity back into eternity, thereby positing an original theandricism, an eternal divine-human Organism. According to the Russian theologians there is an eternal inseparability of the divine and the human; the theanthropic is as old as God. In what follows it will be argued that Russian Sophiology's postulation of an eternal divine-human existence not only connects Trinitology and Christology in a unique manner, but also arguably circumvents some of the problems raised by the tendency to dramatize and temporalize divine being. Furthermore, it will also be intimated here, though more fully in later chapters, that a complex range of sources stand behind the theandric constructions of the Russian theologians. In the course of exploration of Russian theandricism, it will be argued that the Russian theologians, in differing ways, critically appropriate the German voluntarist tradition of Sophia in their concept of God as a divine-human Organism.

This radically Christocentric theology, for which the theanthropic is the original theological idiom, poses certain questions that accompany its novelty. Two overarching

questions will guide our exploration of Russian theandrist. First, what do the Russian theologians intend to signify with their concept of God as a divine-human Organism? And, second, how is the notion of divine-humanity to be understood with respect to the divine hypostases of the Trinity? The first part of this chapter will consider each of these questions in relation to Vladimir Solovyov and Sergius Bulgakov, as well as difficulties and ambiguities that attend their theandric constructions. Throughout our discussion fundamental differences, but also similarities, will be highlighted. Concerning the first question, it is argued that for Solovyov God is a divine-human Organism in that he eternally creates a divine world of human entities (Sophia), whose active, unifying center is the Logos, the eternal Christ. Sophia in itself is an *anthropological* principle identified with eternal humankind; it is a mystical body, the Church. Concerning Bulgakov, it is argued that God is a divine-human Organism in that he possesses in himself an *impersonal*, essential nature (Sophia), which is a divine body or divine world, whose hypostatic center is Christ, the eternal God-Man. For Bulgakov the concept of Sophia is not anthropological but *anatomical*, so to speak; it concerns the relation between spirit and body, for in itself Sophia is an impersonal essence akin to the human body in which the spirit lives. Though Solovyov and Bulgakov develop the idea of God as a divine-human Organism in divergent and even incompatible directions, it will be argued that a crucial point of commonality is that both see the immanent Trinity in terms of Christology: from all eternity Christ is the divine-human center of the Trinity. Concerning the question of the relation of the divine hypostases to Sophia or divine-humanity, it is argued that a fully Trinitarian account of divine-humanity is left largely unexplored by Solovyov. By contrast, divine-humanity is developed by Bulgakov systematically in relation to each of the divine hypostases. The Father is considered the transcendent source of the revelation of divine-humanity in eternity, while the divine Dyad of Son and Spirit, are seen respectively as the hypostatic center and accomplishing agency of the divine-humanity.

The second and third parts of this chapter will explore Sophiology's radical Christocentric metaphysics of the Trinity in the context of other leading 20<sup>th</sup> century theologians who also sought to redefine divine being around Christ, specifically the process theologians Jürgen Moltmann and Robert Jenson. Although it is argued that significant difficulties attend Moltmann's, and especially Jenson's, attempt to temporalize or dramatize Divinity, the intention here is not to utilize process theology as a foil, but to illumine the divergent ways in which both sides sought to reconceive the theological project

Christologically on the basis of shared problematics and sources, particularly that of German Idealism. Particularly, it will be argued that Russian Sophiology's novelty lies in the way in which it sought to reconceive divine being Christologically in relation to Sophia whilst upholding a firm distinction between the immanent and economic Trinities. Whereas other 20<sup>th</sup> century theologians sought to define God Christologically by absorbing the divine being into history, the Russian theologians instead sought to trace the mystery of the Incarnation back into eternity by understanding Sophia as constituting God's eternal Humanity. Instead of God achieving Christological being through becoming, in and through history, Sophiology instead posited that God is, from eternity, a Divine-Human Organism. In so doing, it is argued that the Russian theologians perhaps circumvent certain problems that plague the process theologians, namely the double problem which arises out of the divine necessity of creation: the endangerment of the world's freedom and being (a problem that is also present, however, in a different manner in Solovyov), as well the Arian and adoptionistic tendencies of Jenson.

## **I. Christocentric metaphysics in Sophiology: God as Divine-Human Organism<sup>12</sup>**

### *A. Vladimir Solovyov*

Arguably, one of the most striking ways Russian Sophiology developed the preceding sophiological tradition was to take it in a radically Christocentric direction. This began with Vladimir Solovyov and was developed into a fully worked out system by Sergius Bulgakov. The concern of this section is to indicate the contours of Solovyov's theandristic. Particularly, we will explore how the father of Russian Sophiology redefines the idea of God Christologically through his development of the concept of a divine-human Organism. First,

---

<sup>12</sup> Throughout this work, and in our discussion of Sophia in this chapter in its relation to the divine-human Organism, I have restricted my focus to Solovyov and Bulgakov and left out Pavel Florensky, who was an important part of the Russian Sophiological movement. This is due in part to the transitional and relatively unsystematic nature of his doctrine of Sophia. In his chapter on Sophia, Letter 10 of his seminal work *The Pillar and Ground of Truth*, Florensky sets forth a somewhat bewildering and highly meandering collection of ideas on Sophia, in what can be referred to as a sort of ascetical synthesis or exegesis of patristic and iconographical sources. Though there are insightful ontological ideas scattered throughout his discussion they remain undeveloped in the systematic fashion of Solovyov and Bulgakov. The importance of his letter on Sophia, however, was to establish the indisputable connection of Sophia to the living tradition of Orthodoxy, and consequently the necessity of determining its ontological referent and status. And it was this task that was carried forth most completely by Florensky's friend, Sergius Bulgakov. As Richard F. Gustafson remarks: "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." Pavel Florensky, *The Pillar and Ground of Truth*, trans. Boris Jakim (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), p.xxi. Further, on Florensky and Sophia see V.V. Zenkovsky, trans. George L. Kline, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, Vol. 2, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), pp. 883-890; see also Robert Slesinski, *Pavel Florensky: A Metaphysics of Love* (Crestwood, NY: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), ch. 7; and Marcus Plested, *Wisdom in Christian Tradition* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 28-35.

we will look at Solovyov's general concept of an organism as well as the way he applies it to God. Next, we will consider how the concept of God as an Organism is developed in a divine-human direction. According to Solovyov, the divine-human Organism is made up of Christ and Sophia, the latter being an eternal world of human entities over which Christ presides as head in relation to his mystical body. In our consideration of his concept of God as a divine-human Organism, we will explore the way in which Solovyov develops an anthropological account of Sophia, as opposed to the essential, corporeal concept of Sophia developed by Bulgakov. Finally, we will consider potential difficulties of Solovyov's particular iteration of theandricism, namely the charge that his account of the necessary creation of an eternal world of human entities entails pantheism, as well as the lack of a Trinitarian development of his concept of the divine-human Organism.

In our discussion of his theandric metaphysics, we will focus on Solovyov's *Lectures on Divine-Humanity*, since it is there that he develops his Christology most fully and systematically.<sup>13</sup> In that work Solovyov places Christ at the center of his theology of God as an absolute Organism. In order to see how Solovyov arrives at this revolutionary understanding of divine being, as divine-humanity (*bogochelovechestvo*), it is first important to present his concept of an organism. At the most fundamental level, Solovyov understands an organism to be characterized by two principles or "two unities" that together constitute a living system.

Every organism necessarily includes two unities: on the one hand, the unity of an active principle that reduces the multiplicity of elements to itself as one; on the other hand, that multiplicity reduced to unity, as a determinate form of this principle. There is the unity that produces and the unity that is produced.<sup>14</sup>

Solovyov also sees these principles of unity and multiplicity, the producing unity and produced unity, in terms of soul and body.

In a particular organism of the natural world we distinguish the active unity (the principle that produces and maintains its organic integrity, the principle that constitutes the living and

---

<sup>13</sup> Methodologically, Kojève states that: "The *Lectures* should be regarded as the principal source" of Solovyov's metaphysics. Trans. Illya Merlin and Mikhail Pozdniakov, *The Religious Metaphysics of Vladimir Solovyov* (Switzerland: Palgrave Pivot, 2018), pp. 17-18. Solovyov's Christology in, trans. Donald Attwater, *God, Man and the Church: The Spiritual Foundations of Life* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., LTD, 1937), merely repeats, at times verbatim, his account of the *Lectures* and offers nothing substantially new. For an extended and excellent treatment of the Christological focus of this work and of Solovyov's sophiology generally see Brandon Gallaher, "The Christological Focus of Vladimir Solov'ev's Sophiology." *Modern Theology*, 2009, 25 (4), pp. 617-646. Oliver Smith also sees Sophia in the context of Solovyov's Christology, as complimentary not competitive, and in this sense central. See his *Vladimir Soloviev and the Spiritualization of Matter* (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2010), p. 9, fn. 24. In line with Gallaher and Smith, I think Robert F. Slesinski is wrong to pit Sophia against Christology in Solovyov. See *The Theology of Sergius Bulgakov* (Yonkers, NY: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2017), ch. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Vladimir Solovyov, *Lectures on Divine Humanity* (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1995), p. 107.

active *soul* of this organism) from the unity of that which is produced, or actualized, by this soul, the unity of the organic *body*.<sup>15</sup>

According to Solovyov, then, organisms are characterized by the principles of multiplicity and unity, by a multiplicity of contents or elements that form a body, and by an individual, integrating agent, or soul, which actively unites its content into a living, organized system. And by such logic, Solovyov extends the concept of an organism to God. “Multiplicity reduced to unity is wholeness. Real wholes are living organisms. God as an existent that has actualized its content, as a one that contains multiplicity, is a living organism.”<sup>16</sup> Further, he argues that God is the quintessential organism, an absolute organism, because in his being he unites the greatest multiplicity within the greatest unity, the utmost universality within the highest individuality.

Since every relation and every *combination* is, at the same time, necessarily a *distinction*, the more elements there are in a given organism, the more distinctions it will have in its unity, and the more *distinct* it will be from all others. In other words, the larger the multiplicity of elements that the organism’s principle of unity reduces to itself, the more this same principle of unity will assert itself. Consequently, the more individual the organism will be. Thus, we arrive, from this point of view as well, at the proposition already stated, namely, that the universality of an entity stands in direct relation to its individuality: the more universal it is, the more individual it will be. Therefore, the absolutely universal entity will be an absolutely individual entity.<sup>17</sup>

In order to understand how Solovyov places Christ, or divine-humanity, at the center of the absolute divine organism, we now only need to identify the nature of the dual principles of unity and multiplicity, or of soul and body, in the absolute organism. Just as in the divine anatomy, so to speak, the producing unity is ontologically prior to the produced unity or multiplicity, so we will first discuss the principle of active unity, though it will be necessary to adumbrate the principle of multiplicity before considering it in more depth. In other terms, we will move from the head of the divine-human Organism, who is Christ, to his body.<sup>18</sup>

In Solovyov’s theandric, divine-human Organism, the principle of producing or active unity is the Absolute who is “expressed in the Logos,” or Christ.<sup>19</sup> It is he, the head, who eternally unifies the produced principle of multiplicity, which, according to Solovyov

---

<sup>15</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 113.

<sup>16</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 106.

<sup>17</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 107. Solovyov here broadly follows the German Idealist concept of the Absolute which must contain all in itself, and in this sense depends on the world of multiplicity for its actuality. On the unity and multiplicity of the Absolute in Solovyov see Smith, *Vladimir Soloviev and the Spiritualization of Matter*, pp. 50-54.

<sup>18</sup> Though the connection is implicitly, Solovyov does not, as far I am aware, speak of Christ as the soul of his body Sophia. Perhaps, this is because he refers to Sophia as the world soul such that to refer to Christ as soul would introduce confusion.

<sup>19</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 108.

represents the Absolute's "content," and which is "expressed in Sophia," his body.<sup>20</sup> "Sophia is God's body, the matter of Divinity, permeated with the principle of divine unity."<sup>21</sup> According to Solovyov then, the divine-human Organism is comprised of God as subject, expressed in Christ, and his body, Sophia. Christ is the active principle and center of this multiplicity of contents that constitutes Sophia. And this sophianic principle of multiplicity, or produced unity, over which Christ presides as head and which forms his body, is understood by Solovyov to be a "human principle."

The second, the produced unity, to which we have given the mystical name Sophia, is the principal of humanity, the ideal or normal human being, And Christ, who partakes, within this unity, of the human principle, is a human being, the second Adam (to use the scriptural expression). Thus, Sophia is ideal or perfect humanity, eternally contained in the integral divine being.<sup>22</sup>

Now it can be seen that Christ, by virtue of his active unification of Sophia as universal humanity, is the theandric, divine-human center of the divine-human Organism. According to Solovyov, the mystery of divine-humanity is an *eternal* reality; from all eternity, Christ is the head of Sophia, his body, which is contained in him.

Why did Solovyov consider it necessary to posit the eternity of the divine world of human entities? In answer to this question, one can sense several influences in the background. There is first the pessimistic vein of German voluntarism with its acosmism, associated with Schopenhauer and Hartmann, that undoubtedly had its influence upon the early Solovyov's metaphysics. As we will see in other chapters throughout this work, the early Solovyov is antagonistic to the phenomenal world, which he considers a falling away from eternity. The temporal world is a manifestation of egoism, a perverted will that brings about materiality and its divisions of space and time. In this can also be seen overtones of Platonism with its the dualism of eternal and temporal worlds, as well as Gnosticism insofar as Solovyov traces the phenomenal world to the fall of Sophia. Solovyov himself, however, answers that the eternity of the divine-human world inexorably follows from his organic logic. It is important to bear in mind that Christ, as the productive, active principle in the divine Organism, cannot be thought without the produced principle of multiplicity, for

---

<sup>20</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 108. Brandon Gallaher insightfully argues that Solovyov's distinction between the idealist Absolute and its content is a philosophical interpretation of the "Patristic hypostasis/*ousia* distinction." "The Christological Focus of Vladimir Solov'ev's Sophiology," p. 623. I think this is correct. However, one should be careful not to read Bulgakov's understanding of *ousia* into Solovyov's *Lectures*. The *ousia*, content, or nature of the Absolute is understood as an eternal multiplicity of created human entities, not God's essential nature considered apart from creation. Indeed, the *Lectures* consider humanity as an indispensable part of the eternal divine-human Organism.

<sup>21</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 108.

<sup>22</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 113.

according to Solovyov, every organism contains *both* an active principle of unity and a principle of multiplicity. Therefore, he posits the eternal and necessary existence of a divine world of human entities that have their unity in the divine Word.

For God to exist eternally as Logos, or as active divinity, it is necessary to assume the eternal existence of real elements that receive the divine action. It is necessary to assume the existence of a world that is patient of divine action, that makes room in itself for the divine unity. The specific, produced unity of that world—the center of the world and periphery of Divinity—is humanity. Every actuality presupposes an act, and every act presupposes a real object of that act—a subject that receives it. Consequently, God’s actuality, based upon God’s activity, presupposes a subject that receives this activity, namely humanity, and presupposes it *eternally*, since God’s activity is eternal.<sup>23</sup>

We will further consider the nature of Sophia, or the divine world of human entities, in a moment, but first it is important to observe the manner in which the mystery of Christ and his mystical body is eternalized and understood to characterize divine existence in itself. According to Solovyov, God’s existence is from eternity a theandric, or divine-human existence.<sup>24</sup> “The dynamism in Soloviev’s conception of God derives from his inability to think the divine without the human.”<sup>25</sup> In his radically theandric concept of God as a divine-human Organism Solovyov has gone beyond Boehme and Schelling. God is not, for the Father of Russian Sophiology, an Organism in the sense that He arises out of a dark ground, out of opposing, unconscious drives. Although there can be observed a marked affinity with Boehme and Schelling in that Sophia is connected with the ideal vision and creation of humanity, the essential or corporeal element of Sophia as God’s own eternal nature apart from the world is lacking in Solovyov.<sup>26</sup> A crucial difference between Solovyov and his predecessors is that for the latter, Sophia or the eternal nature, is first the divine body, the living essence of God, which is formed in the divine drive towards self-manifestation; Sophia is, in its highest and complete state, the essence or ground into which the *Ungrund* introduces itself, the becoming something of the Will that in its incipience had willed nothing. This organic, impersonal element of the German voluntarist tradition is not found in Solovyov’s

---

<sup>23</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 114.

<sup>24</sup> As Brandon Gallaher writes: “God’s being is always already enacted in Christ as the divine organism (Logos and Sophia).” “The Christological Focus of Vladimir Solov’ev’s Sophiology,” p. 628. Paul Valliere also states: “Christ/Sophia is the ‘world’ which God experiences from all eternity.” See his *Modern Russian Theology*, p. 159.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, *Vladimir Soloviev*, p. 93.

<sup>26</sup> Boehme’s thought will be considered in far more detail in the following chapter. However, on the impersonal and anthropological elements of Boehme’s thought in relation to Sophia see, Nicolai Berdyaev, trans. S. Janos with Michael Knetchen, “Studies Concerning Jacob Boehme. Etude I. The Teaching about the Ungrund and Freedom.” *Journal Put’*, 1930, No. 20, pp. 47-79. Nicolai Berdyaev, trans. S. Janos with Michael Knetchen “Studies Concerning Jacob Boehme. Etude II. The Teaching about Sophia and the Androgyne: J. Boehme and the Russian Sophiological Current.” *Journal Put’*, 1930, No. 21, pp. 34-62.

concept of God,<sup>27</sup> which appears exclusively anthropological (only accidentally is Sophia reduced to the blind, impersonal world soul through its fall). The organic aspect of Solovyov's thought has a different character, which is driven by Solovyov's radical Christocentrism. God is not an Organism in the sense of natural organisms which contain corporeal essentiality, but in the broad sense that in God there is a multiplicity of elements reduced to unity, the multiplicity being not organic members or drives of a corporeal body, but of a spiritual body. Sophia is understood exclusively in the mystical sense of the body of Christ, the Church or eternal humanity. Perhaps then, it can be said that whereas Boehme (and also Schelling) understand Sophia, or the eternal nature of God, to be first God's own ground, as well as the ground in which the future created world is beheld by God and out which God creates, for the early Solovyov there is an absolute conflation of creation and God's eternal nature. In other words, Sophia for Solovyov, as the quasi-mythical mediator between God and the world, is always turned towards the world, and lacks the essential, corporeal aspect of being first God's own objective essence.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, Solovyov can be said to have developed the anthropological side of Boehme's sophianic vision; from eternity Sophia is the ideal humankind that God sees and loves from eternity and which moves him to create. And it is this anthropological emphasis in Solovyov's vision of Sophia that enables him to take the idea of God as an Organism in a deeper Christological direction.<sup>29</sup> According to Solovyov, God is a *divine-human* Organism, for Sophia, the divine body, comprises a divine world of human entities at the heart of which is Christ. At the center of Sophia is the divine, actualizing principle of unity, Christ or the Logos. He is the head of Sophia, of universal humankind, which is his body. "Insofar as it receives the divine Logos into itself and is determined by the divine Logos, the world soul is humanity, the divine humanity of

---

<sup>27</sup> It does appear, however, that in a later work, trans. Herbert Rees, *Russia and the Universal Church* (London: Centenary Press, 1948), that Solovyov shifts his idea of Sophia from an anthropological to an impersonal, unconscious principle, at least in its initial, primal state. However, I have refrained from bringing this work into consideration for two reasons: 1) Solovyov's description of Sophia as "objective essence or absolute substance" (p. 151), and as "irrational principle" (p. 152), remains quite undeveloped into a fully worked out system in the manner of Bulgakov. 2) If there is indeed a shift in his understanding of Sophia from an anthropological to an impersonal, unconscious principle, then this has the consequence of annulling his early concept of God as an *eternal* (as opposed to eschatological) divine-human Organism, which is the principle concern here. Indeed, in that work, Christ does not appear in his reflections on the Trinity and the divine essence or substance, and only emerges in his discussion on creation.

<sup>28</sup> Solovyov later corrects this in *Russia and the Universal Church*, as will be seen in the final chapter.

<sup>29</sup> According to Berdyaev, Solovyov's sophiology, in contrast with Boehme's anthropological Sophia, is "totally and exclusively cosmic." Berdyaev, "Studies Concerning Jacob Boehme. Etude II. Certainly there are cosmic elements in Solovyov's Sophia. Nevertheless, Berdyaev's characterization misses the almost totalizing anthropological character of Sophia in Solovyov's *Lectures*. In another of his essays Berdyaev acknowledges the anthropological character of Sophia for Solovyov: "Sophia first of all for him is the ideal, perfected humankind." Nicolai Berdyaev, trans. S. Janos, "The Idea of God-manhood in Vl. Solov'ev." *Perezvon*, 1925. No. 7/8, p. 180-182 & No. 9, p. 240.

Christ, the body of Christ.”<sup>30</sup> What Solovyov has done is to place Christ at the very center of his organic ontology. God, in himself, is a divine-human being, expressed in the eternal Christ, who eternally contains universal humanity, as an actual (not merely ideal) living entity, within himself.

Having recounted the way in which Christ constitutes the head of the divine human Organism, we must now further consider Solovyov’s understanding of Christ’s body, Sophia. Just as Christ is eternal, so also is his mystical body, for “God’s actuality” is, as we have seen, predicated on the reality of human subjects to receive the divine action of Christ.<sup>31</sup> Solovyov underscores the reality of the divine world of human entities by recounting a three-fold process, logical not temporal, by which they come to be in eternity, or in the “eternal, prenatal world.”<sup>32</sup> According to Solovyov, the multiplicity of human entities that receive their actuality and unity in the Logos form a three-fold divine world. “In this primordial unity with Divinity, all entities form a single divine world in three principal spheres.”<sup>33</sup> Although Solovyov’s description of the three spheres of the divine world could suggest the idea of differing orders or angelic hierarchies of spiritual beings, it seems clear that he is describing human entities that participate in all three spheres, and that he is recounting their mode of being in relation to each hypostasis of the Trinity.<sup>34</sup> Solovyov’s theandristic is largely centered on the Son, such that the account of the divine world’s eternal emergence appears to be one of the few hints in the *Lectures* of how he thought of the connection of divine-humanity and the Trinity. In the first sphere, the entities of the divine world are referred to as “pure spirits” who reside “in the bosom of the Father.”<sup>35</sup> They abide in immediate union with Divinity and possess only potential individuality, for in this mode the will of each entity has not been separated out from the “all-one will of God.”<sup>36</sup> In the second sphere, entities are determined not by divine will but by intellection and are thus nominated as intellects, or

---

<sup>30</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 132.

<sup>31</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 113.

<sup>32</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 126.

<sup>33</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 127.

<sup>34</sup> Tikhon Vasilyev takes Solovyov’s ternary division of the divine world to describe a threefold angelic hierarchy, but it seems that he is instead describing only a threefold movement of the creation of human entities in eternity. See “Aspects of Schelling’s Influence on Sergius Bulgakov and Other Thinkers of the Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century.” *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, 2019, Vol.80 (1-2), pp. 143-159. This can be contrasted, however, with Solovyov’s deduction of angelic orders of being in *Russia and the Universal Church* (see pp. 160-161), wherein Solovyov indeed posits the production of pure intelligences and pure spirits qua angels in the reaction, respectively, of the Word and Spirit to Chaos, a principle of “anarchic plurality” (p. 151), that, inside the Godhead, is the divine substance eternally reduced to unity, and, outside the Godhead, is the metaphysical basis of the created order.

<sup>35</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 128.

<sup>36</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 128.

“minds,” who take their place in “the domain of the divine Word (Logos).”<sup>37</sup> In this mode of being entities enter into ideal unity with Divinity and possess only “ideal individuality.”<sup>38</sup> The goal, however, of the divine world is that it possess real agency and relative autonomy in relation to Divinity, in order that the latter may determine itself and achieve actuality. “If, in general, the actuality of the divine world consists in the interaction between the one and the all, between the divine principle itself and the multiplicity of beings that it contains, the divine world cannot have its full actuality in these first two spheres in themselves, for there is no real interaction here.”<sup>39</sup> The actuality of the divine world and of Divinity then is only achieved in the third sphere wherein all entities become “sensuous” beings, or “souls.”<sup>40</sup> In this third sphere the Spirit separates each entity out of its immediate and ideal unity with Divinity thereby enabling each “to act upon the divine principle,” and thus achieve “real being”.<sup>41</sup> “This act... is, strictly speaking, the act of divine creation.”<sup>42</sup> Here at last the entities of the divine world become autonomous agents, enter into real unity with Divinity and are granted real individuality. “Entities that substantially rest in the bosom of God the Father, that are ideally contemplated and contemplating in the light of the divine Logos, receive, by the power of the quickening Spirit, their own real being and action.”<sup>43</sup> This last sphere thus completes the divine world, for in it all entities pass from ideality into reality and become the living body of Christ. In the divine-human Organism, the multiplicity of elements, “the all,” that are eternally unified in Christ are not simply ideas, a world of intelligibles, which only represents Solovyov’s second sphere. Far from positing a Platonist world of ideal forms, from which the phenomenon of individuation represents a fall, Solovyov’s divine world, which achieves actuality in third sphere,<sup>44</sup> is populated by real, individual agents who together form the eternal, mystical body of Christ.

Nevertheless, the body of Christ is, according to Solovyov, not merely an aggregate of disparate human entities. This is where Sophia comes on the stage. Solovyov not only posits a conglomerate multiplicity of human entities, but also their concrete unity in an individual, not only in Christ, but also in Sophia. “Divine forces constitute the single,

---

<sup>37</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 128.

<sup>38</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 129.

<sup>39</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 128.

<sup>40</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, pp. 127, 131.

<sup>41</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 129.

<sup>42</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 129.

<sup>43</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 131.

<sup>44</sup> *Pace* Zenkovsky, this third sphere, where creation achieves actuality as the eternal divine world of human multiplicity, should not be equated with the natural, phenomenal world, which Solovyov regards as a falling away from the divine world. See Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, Vol. 2, pp. 499-500.

integral, absolutely universal individual organism of the living Logos. Similarly, all human elements constitute a similarly integral organism, one both universal and individual, which is the necessary actualization and receptacle of the organism of the living Logos.<sup>45</sup> Together then, the individual human entities of the divine world form a universal human individual, Sophia. This organism of Sophia, at once individual and universal, is analogous to the divine Organism of Christ, and differs only in its creaturely mode of existence. According to Solovyov the divine Organism expressed in Christ is an active, or “producing” unity, while the organism of Sophia is a “produced unity,”<sup>46</sup> which, though it contains the all, does not possess the all from itself as God does.<sup>47</sup>

The second, produced, unity—in contrast to the primordial unity of the divine Logos—is, as we know, the world soul, or ideal humanity (Sophia), which contains within itself and unites with itself all particular living entities, or souls. As the realization of the divine principle, its image and likeness, archetypal humankind, or the world soul, is both one and all.<sup>48</sup>

It must be stressed that for Solovyov, Sophia, or the universal human organism, is not merely a metaphor for the ideal unity of humankind. Sophia is a universal-individual that possesses real agency and volition, whereby it mediates between God and the multiplicity of human entities that comprise the divine world.

As the living focus, or soul, of all creatures and the real form of Divinity, the existent subject of creaturely being and the existent object of divine action, partaking of the unity of God and at the same time embracing the whole multiplicity of living souls, the all-one humankind, or the world soul, is a dual being. Containing within itself both the divine principle and creaturely being, the world soul is not determined by either one or the other, and it therefore remains free.<sup>49</sup>

We will see in the third chapter how Solovyov’s ascription of autonomy and agency to Sophia creates difficulties for him in his account of the fall, but for now it is important to merely highlight the way in which the agency of Sophia relates to his ontology of God as a divine-human Organism. If we recall that for Solovyov God is actualized through the real interaction of the “one and the all,”<sup>50</sup> there is a real sense in which God is actualized as a divine-human Organism to the extent that Sophia inwardly unites itself with Divinity. Free from determination by God or by the multiplicity of human entities, Sophia has a choice either to “assert itself outside of God,”<sup>51</sup> whereby “the particular elements of the universal organism lose their common bond in the world soul and, left to themselves, are doomed to

---

<sup>45</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 118.

<sup>46</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 113.

<sup>47</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 133.

<sup>48</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 131.

<sup>49</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, pp. 131-132.

<sup>50</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 128.

<sup>51</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 133.

discordant, egoistic existence,”<sup>52</sup> or to subordinate itself to Divinity and thereby “communicate the divine all-unity to all of creation.”<sup>53</sup> The latter is the norm of Sophia whereby its equilibrium and unity is maintained through its subordination to the determination of the Logos. In such a state, Sophia actualizes the divine-humanity of God by preserving the unity of the divine world as a universal human organism, for apart from such unity the “universal organism is transformed into a mechanical aggregate of atoms.”<sup>54</sup> “Insofar as it receives the divine Logos into itself and is determined by the divine Logos, the world soul is humanity, the divine humanity of Christ, the body of Christ, Sophia.”<sup>55</sup> Only if Sophia elects by its universal-individual will to remain within divine unity is God fully actualized as a divine-human Organism. Although God’s own eternal unity in itself is not harmed by the fall and disintegration of Sophia,<sup>56</sup> there is a definite sense in which God’s divine-humanity remains in potential and depends upon the free decision of Sophia, or the world soul.<sup>57</sup> “Receiving the one divine principle and uniting with this unity the whole multiplicity of entities, the world soul thereby gives the divine principle complete actual realization in the all.”<sup>58</sup>

In sum, Solovyov’s sophiological vision is one of a divine-human Organism expressed in Christ, who contains Sophia, universal humankind, in himself. “Sophia is ideal or perfect humanity, eternally contained in the integral divine being, or Christ.”<sup>59</sup> Sophia is eternal humankind, which is at once particularized in a multiplicity of human entities and also universalized in Sophia as a universal-individual that possesses real agency and volition in relation to God and the multiplicity of human entities it contains. From eternity God in Christ actualizes himself in the creation of the divine world of Sophia, and is a divine-human Organism insofar as Sophia remains subordinate to the action of the Logos, who is its principle of divine unity.

---

<sup>52</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 134.

<sup>53</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 132.

<sup>54</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 133.

<sup>55</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 132.

<sup>56</sup> See Solovyov, *Lectures*, pp. 136-137.

<sup>57</sup> As Kojève succinctly states: God is only inasmuch as Man is free (*The Religious Metaphysics of Vladimir Solovyov*, p. 38). Furthermore, Kojève insightfully discusses the antinomy of the actuality of God’s divine-humanity from eternity as well as its restoration through the temporal process (pp. 51-54). Gallaher also suggests that there is something of a Gnostic retrieval of divine glory that has fallen away in the primordial disintegration, such that history in some sense becomes a self-realization of God. See “Graced Creatureliness: Ontological Tension in the Uncreated/Created Distinction in the Sophiologies of Solov’ev, Bulgakov and Milbank.” *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 2006, Vol.47 (1-2), p. 181.

<sup>58</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 132.

<sup>59</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 113.

In conclusion to this section, some remarks can be made on the contributions and potential limitations of Solovyov's system built around the concept of a divine-human Organism. The central contribution which Solovyov makes to the sphere of theology proper is the way in which he has developed the notion of God as an Organism into a radically Christocentric concept of God. In his thought Christology cannot be relegated to an afterthought for the concept of God.<sup>60</sup> Christology or divine-humanity is the essence of Divinity, for the Logos, as the personal manifestation of Divinity, eternally unites within itself a world of human entities. Christ and his body are the principle subject matter of theology, not a post-lapsarian reality of the economic Trinity that must then be connected to the immanent Trinity. The deepest essence of Divinity is eternal divine-humanity. This radical Christocentrism was effected by Solovyov's particular conception of the divine body or Sophia. His sophiology represents a bold development of that seen in Boehme and Schelling. God is not an Organism by virtue of arising out of unconscious, opposed drives. Indeed, the unconscious drives of Boehme and Schelling in the divine Will are displaced from Divinity and are instead associated with Sophia as the world soul, which in its fallenness, becomes an unconscious will or striving to unite with Divinity.<sup>61</sup> "Like a blind force the world soul strives to attain all-unity unconsciously; it strives toward it as toward something other."<sup>62</sup> The essential, corporeal element of the divine nature as God's objective essence, through which he manifests himself, is lacking in the early Solovyov. Instead, he develops the anthropological side of Boehme's vision of Sophia. For Solovyov, Sophia, or the divine nature, possesses an exclusively anthropological, mystical character. Sophia is not to be understood as an unconscious, corporeal essence, but as a mystical body. It is, in its primordial state, a divine world of human entities who find their unity in the eternal Christ. In relation to the absolute Spirit, Sophia is neither unconscious nor impersonal, but, as always already turned toward the world, an eternal sphere of human entities endowed with spirit, mind, and soul. Accordingly, because of the exclusively anthropological character of Sophia, it cannot be referred to a body in the sense that Boehme, Schelling, and Bulgakov conceive

---

<sup>60</sup> Alexandre Kojève rightly states: "The idea of Divine Humanity is, before all else, the culmination and crown of Solovyov's metaphysical theology," as well as "the center of gravity of his entire philosophical system in general: it is the guiding idea of all his thought." *The Religious Metaphysics of Vladimir Solovyov*, p. 31.

<sup>61</sup> Piama Gaidenko also sees Solovyov as influenced by Schelling's theory of divine development, which is applied to Sophia as the Absolute in its becoming and emergence through unconscious striving. "Russian Philosophy in the Context of European Thinking: The Case of Vladimir Solovyov." *Diogenes*, 2009, Vol.56(2-3), pp. 34-35. A caveat should be made, however, that in Solovyov's *Lectures* the unconscious, developing character of the world soul is unnatural, the result of the fall of Sophia from eternity into time. Thus, process is not fundamental to his early ontology in the *Lectures*.

<sup>62</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 139.

God as possessing a corporeal, unconscious principle. Furthermore, the human entities which comprise Sophia seem themselves to be purely incorporeal, intelligences. “Full actuality is possessed by ideal entities, which are not given in immediate external experience and are neither material elements existing in space...”<sup>63</sup> “Human beings... are not just phenomena, but are also eternal, intelligible essences.”<sup>64</sup> It is more apt then to conceive of Solovyov’s divine-human Organism as a nesting doll of minds or intelligences: in the outermost sphere there is the multiplicity of ideal, human intelligences; in the middle, between multiple humanity and Divinity, is Sophia, the universal-individual human organism produced by the activity of a still greater Intelligence; finally, in the innermost sphere is Divinity, personally manifested in the Logos, as the absolute, producing unity containing within itself both the multiplicity of human intelligences and Sophia, as the universal-individual human intelligence. With this intelligible understanding of the divine-human Organism, Solovyov is perhaps removed from the idea of natural organisms with their corporeal, essentiality. However, it should be recalled that Solovyov applies the idea of organism to God in the broad sense of the reduction of multiplicity of elements to unity. Later on, it will be seen that it is this purely intelligible, incorporeal concept of the divine-human Organism that is rejected by Bulgakov in favor of the idea of a divine Organism containing a natural, essential principle alike to an organic body. In any case, the critical point here is that Solovyov’s originality and novelty lies in his construction of the concept of the divine-human Organism. In so doing he marks out a revolutionary Christocentric tendency. There are few theological predecessors who so thoroughly permeated the concept of Divinity with humanity as Solovyov. Perhaps one of the most striking examples comes outside the domain of ecumenically orthodox theology. In the sphere of theosophy there is Emmanuel Swedenborg who put divine-humanity into the center of his concept of God.<sup>65</sup> As an avid reader of Swedenborg, there is perhaps influence here.<sup>66</sup> In any case, Solovyov’s divine-humanity is perhaps best appreciated in the light of the Christological trend which carried on after him, in

---

<sup>63</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 117.

<sup>64</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 119.

<sup>65</sup> On the idea of eternal divine-humanity in Swedenborg see the discussion later on in this chapter in the section of Bulgakov.

<sup>66</sup> In a letter to countess Tolstoy in 1877, Solovyov notes the importance of Swedenborg as one of the great theosophers in the development of sophiology, along with Paracelsus and Boehme. This letter can be found in Pavel Florensky, *The Pillar and Ground of Truth*, p. 240. Judith Kornblatt’s discusses this letter in *Divine Sophia: The Wisdom Writings of Vladimir Solovyov*, pp. 74-75. Furthermore, in a fragment Solovyov places himself in a succession of theosophical system extending through world ages conceived as three testaments. The Old Testament corresponds with Neoplatonism and Kabbalah, the New Testament with Boehme and Swedenborg, and, finally, the Eternal Testament with Schelling and Solovyov himself. See Kornblatt, *Wisdom Writings*, pp. 171-172.

Bulgakov and in other leading 20<sup>th</sup> century theologians. But before we turn to Bulgakov and beyond, it is important to highlight some limitations and difficulties which enter into Solovyov's system.

There are a number of criticisms that one could raise against Solovyov's ontology of the divine. To begin with, it can be observed that Solovyov hardly develops his notion of divine-humanity in a Trinitarian sense.<sup>67</sup> We have seen that each hypostasis of the Trinity is connected with a different sphere or logical moment in the creation of Sophia, the divine world of human entities. The Father is connected with the creation of Sophia as potential, the Son, forming the unitive center of Sophia, is connected with its creation as ideal, and the Spirit with its creation as real and actualized.<sup>68</sup> This could perhaps anticipate Bulgakov's development of a more Trinitarian concept of divine-humanity, which, as we will see, posits the Father as the source of divine-humanity, the Son as its hypostatic center, and the Spirit as the actualization of the revelation of divine-humanity. However, for Bulgakov Sophia is divine-humanity not in the sense of the *creation* of an eternal world of human entities, but rather God's own essential *revelation* of his own nature. Outside its connection with divine-humanity Solovyov does develop a fuller Trinitarian theology, and we can briefly highlight one fundamental aspect of it, its Hegelianism, since this will also feature in our criticism of his divine-human ontology as verging on pantheism. In his *Lectures* and in *Russia and the Universal Church*, Solovyov refers to the three divine hypostases as "subjects," and in an incoherently applied Hegelianism of the Absolute Subject, he claims that these three divine subjects each possess one mode or positing of Hegel's *Geist*.<sup>69</sup> The Father is subjectivity, is purely in Himself; the Son is objectivity, is purely for Himself; and the Spirit, as an actualizing return, is purely with himself. Arguably, Hegel's triadic schema, when applied not to a single Absolute Subject, but to three subjects, produces a wildly unintelligible deity. Clearly, these mutually exclusive modes of being, rather than uniting the divine subjects, could serve only to absolutely isolate each of them from the other, producing a strange tri-theism. How could a subject that is purely "in" itself possibly relate to a subject exclusively "for" or "with" itself? In any case, since we are dealing with Solovyov's theology of the divine-human Organism, we will move on to our criticism concerning this topic, which again relates to Hegel's influence on Solovyov.

---

<sup>67</sup> For a discussion of the Trinity in the *Lectures* see Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology*, pp. 155-157.

<sup>68</sup> See Solovyov, *Lectures*, pp. 128-131.

<sup>69</sup> Alexandre Kojève is right to point out that Solovyov's Trinity is in essence Hegelian and not Schellingian. See *The Religious Metaphysics of Vladimir Solovyov*, pp. 28-29.

It is possible to bring the charge of pantheism against Solovyov, or, perhaps, better yet, theopanism, for his is a system which seems logically to entail, not the reduction of God to the world, but of the world to God. In his ontology of the theandric Organism,<sup>70</sup> the eternal actuality of the triune, divine-human Organism depends upon the multiplicity of discrete subjects who receive the unifying and vivifying action of the Logos and the Spirit. Apart from the divine world of human entities, or Sophia, there is no Absolute Subject, for, according to Solovyov, the former requires an object in which to actualize and determine itself, an object that Solovyov protests cannot itself be God. “The objection that an eternal object for God’s activity is already presented in the Logos is not valid, for the Logos is God made manifest. This manifestation presupposes that other for which, or with respect to which, God manifests Himself, that is, it presupposes humanity.”<sup>71</sup> If the world is necessary to God, it stands to reason, that creation cannot truly be free, cannot possess genuine being, for it is always already eternally required in order that God be God. Eternal divine self-determination is forever fatefully bound to an equally eternal determination to create. What emerges then in Solovyov’s sophiological vision is, again, the spectre of a quasi-Hegelian *Geist*, an Absolute whose actualization is absolutely contingent upon the finite. Although for Solovyov the actualization of divine being does not require a temporal process, we will see how he anticipates other 20<sup>th</sup> century theologians who present a more stridently Hegelian Christocentrism wherein God achieves Christological being in and through history. In Solovyov’s sophiological iteration, however, stands the eternal Christ whose actuality is eternally achieved in his active unification of Sophia, the multiplicity of human entities who make up his eternal body. Solovyov’s God, in order to actualize his being, needs the world of eternal human entities to be a divine-human Organism. Despite the element of pantheist, or theopanist, necessity present in Solovyov’s system, his is arguably one of the most radically Christocentric ontologies ever composed, and would be a major catalyst for the construction of Bulgakov’s equally Christocentric sophiological vision, and it is to his system of divine-humanity that we will now turn.

### *B. Sergius Bulgakov*

---

<sup>70</sup> William Desmond sees Solovyov’s idea of divine-humanity in German Idealist terms of the pantheistic reconciliation of opposites in a totalizing unity. Further, he observes the logical result of this is his view of original sin in the *Lectures* as individualism, the self-assertion of the individual over against the whole. See his *Is There a Sabbath for Thought? Between Religion and Philosophy* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2005), pp. 178, 196.

<sup>71</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 114.

Sergius Bulgakov's work, in many ways, represents a self-conscious, systematic development of Solovyov's understanding of God as a theandric, divine-human Organism.<sup>72</sup> In fact, his major trilogy is named *On Divine Humanity*,<sup>73</sup> which recalls Solovyov's *Lectures on Divine Humanity*.<sup>74</sup> However, although Solovyov is the point of departure for Bulgakov's doctrine of divine-humanity, and although there are some similarities in their respective sophiologies, the latter developed the concept of divine-humanity in his own unique, idiosyncratic manner. Bulgakov's doctrine of divine humanity represents both a development of and a divergence from Solovyov's. In what follows, it will be argued that Bulgakov's doctrine of divine-humanity possesses two fundamental aspects, or dimensions. The first is that God is a theandric, divine-human Organism by virtue of the ontological structure of divine being as containing personal and natural principles: tri-personal Spirit and impersonal Sophia. Instead of Sophia being conceived as a mystical body composed of eternal humanity, it is an impersonal, essential principle. This represents, as we will see, a return to and development of the idea of divine essentiality or corporeality in Boehme and Schelling (and perhaps in Solovyov's later thought). The second is that Bulgakov's version of divine-humanity is elucidated in relation to each divine hypostasis, and, as such, possesses a more thoroughly Trinitarian dimension than does Solovyov's. Divine-humanity, for Bulgakov, represents a Trinitarian, intra-divine revelation, which has its source in the Father, its hypostatic center in the Son, and its accomplished actualization in the Spirit. Finally, we will see that Bulgakov's version of Divine-Humanity, although it creates its own difficulties, is able to overcome the pantheism or theopanism of Solovyov's, and, as we will see in the chapter on creation, allows him to posit a positive ontological basis for the physical order in divine Sophia.

At the outset it is important to highlight the fact that Bulgakov understood his sophiological conception of God as a divine-human Organism as a self-conscious development of the doctrine of the divine nature, which had, in contrast to the theology of the three hypostases, hitherto remained "a sealed book."<sup>75</sup> "The doctrine of the consubstantiality

---

<sup>72</sup> See Sergius Bulgakov, trans. Boris Jakim, *The Lamb of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), p. 114, fn. 18.

<sup>73</sup> On the structure of this work, as well as the manner in which Bulgakov perceived himself as a theologian, see Andrew Louth, "Sergii Bulgakov and the Task of Theology." *The Irish Theological Quarterly*, 2009, Vol.74 (3), pp. 243-257.

<sup>74</sup> This point is also made by Paul Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology: Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov: Orthodox Theology in a New Key* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), pp. 291-292.

<sup>75</sup> Bulgakov, trans. Patrick Thompson, O. Fielding Clarke, Xenia Braikevitch, *Sophia: The Wisdom of God: An Outline of Sophiology* (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1993), p. 25. For a discussion of Sophia as a theology of

of the Holy Trinity, as well as the actual conception of substance or nature, has been far less developed and, apparently, almost overlooked.”<sup>76</sup> Bulgakov’s sophiological concept of God as a divine-human Organism revolves around this fundamental relation between the triune Spirit and his nature. In equating Sophia with the divine nature, Bulgakov’s doctrine of divine humanity, of God as a theandric, divine-human Organism, is, like Solovyov’s, developed in relation to Sophia. And, like Solovyov, Bulgakov understands the relation between God and Sophia (in its divine modality) as that between a subjective agent and its objective body. However, we will see that Bulgakov’s conception of Sophia, the divine body, is developed in a different direction and is not conceived as a mystical body, an eternal world of human entities over which Christ presides as their active unity. Instead, God is considered to be a divine-human Organism by virtue of possessing a dual ontological structure: in God there are both personal and natural principles, a triune Spirit and its impersonal, essential ground. But before considering the divine-human aspect, it is necessary to first address Bulgakov’s understanding of God as an Organism more generally, which is also based in the twofold divine anatomy comprised of personal and natural principles.

As with Solovyov, Bulgakov’s concept of God as an Organism concerns the relation between God as a Subject and its objective contents, between divine Spirit and its body (Sophia). Nevertheless, there is a significant difference between the two thinkers concerning the nature of this divine body. As we have seen, Solovyov’s concept of God as an Organism in the *Lectures* never actually leaves the realm of incorporeality and intelligence, for Sophia is defined as a divine world of human entities or intelligences. By contrast, Bulgakov returns concreteness, the idea of essential corporeality, into Sophia, shifting it from the anthropological to the impersonal or natural. “God is Spirit. As such, He has a personal consciousness of self (“hypostasis”) and a nature (“ousia”); and this inseparable union of nature and hypostasis is the life of Divinity in itself, a life that is both personally conscious and naturally concrete.”<sup>77</sup> Bulgakov’s organic concept of Sophia is not mystical (humanity as the body of God), but vital and essential: there is within God a living ground and revelation of the divine Spirit. “The body, as a living organism, manifests within itself the life of its spirit, and is the spirit’s revelation.”<sup>78</sup> Similarly, Sophia “can be compared to an absolute,

---

the divine nature see Aidan Nichols “Wisdom from Above? The Sophiology of Father Sergius Bulgakov.” *New Blackfriars*, 2004, Vol.85 (1000), pp. 606-609.

<sup>76</sup> Bulgakov, *Sophia*, p. 24.

<sup>77</sup> Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, p. 94.

<sup>78</sup> Bulgakov, *Sophia*, p. 56.

heavenly, spiritual body in all the fullness of its self-revelation.”<sup>79</sup> Sophia, as the body of God, is what characterizes the divine life as an Organism, as a living system in which the absolute multiplicity of contents, or members, of the divine nature are united and organized into a “Divine world,” a “pan-organism of ideas.”<sup>80</sup> “This organism is a certain living essence, a living spiritual, although nonhypostatic entity, the Divinity of God.”<sup>81</sup> The conception of God espoused by Bulgakov is far from abstract or ideal. There is within God a vital, organic ground, identified with the divine nature, or, in sophiological terms, Divine Sophia. “The *Divine Sophia* is nothing other than *God’s nature*.”<sup>82</sup> With his development of the doctrine of the divine nature in his own sophiological direction, Bulgakov lays the intellectual groundwork by which to conceive God as a divine-human Organism.

Now that it has been established that Bulgakov conceives of God as an Organism, we must now consider how he further posits that God is, in himself, from all eternity, a divine-human Organism. If God is to be understood as an Organism insofar as he possesses a natural principle in addition to a hypostatic principle, this two-fold ontology of the divine anatomy is also the basis for the notion that God is a theandric, divine-human Organism. According to Bulgakov, this two-fold ontology is precisely the metaphysical structure of humanity,<sup>83</sup> who is fashioned in the divine image.

There is something in man that must be directly correlated with God’s being, and this something is not some individual feature but man’s very *humanity*, which is the image of God. Man, as a creaturely spirit, has personality (hypostasis) and his own nature, just as God has personality (trihypostatic) and His nature, Divinity, the Divine Sophia.<sup>84</sup>

According to Bulgakov, God is the original Archetype of anthropic existence; as a derivative from the Ur-human, creaturely humanity is the ectypal repetition in time of the eternal divine-human Being—of the divine Spirit in the creaturely spirit, and of the divine nature in human nature. Bulgakov thus arrives at a different conception of divine-humanity than Solovyov. Whereas in Solovyov God is a divine-human Organism due to the fact that God,

---

<sup>79</sup> Bulgakov, *Sophia*, p. 59.

<sup>80</sup> Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, p. 112. Paul Gavriilyuk concurs: “When it comes to envisioning the realm of the divine forms or the prototypes of all things, Bulgakov most often deploys metaphors taken from biology, describing this realm as a cosmic organism or panorganism.” See Paul Gavriilyuk, “Bulgakov’s Account of Creation: Neglected Aspects, Critics and Contemporary Relevance.” *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 2015, 17(4), pp. 461-462.

<sup>81</sup> Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, p. 112.

<sup>82</sup> Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, p. 102.

<sup>83</sup> Bulgakov considers the bi-partite and tri-partite positions to be compatible, and he utilizes both schemas in his thought. See Sergius Bulgakov, trans. Thomas Allan Smith, *The Burning Bush: On the Orthodox Veneration of the Mother of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), pp. 57-61; and Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, p. 137.

<sup>84</sup> Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, p. 113.

expressed in the Logos or Christ, eternally creates and unites a world of human entities in himself, in Bulgakov God is a divine-human Organism by virtue of the fact that God is comprised of personal and natural principles, has a theandric anatomy. If in the early Solovyov Sophia is a mystical, incorporeal body,<sup>85</sup> in Bulgakov Sophia is an impersonal, essential body analogous to the corporeal body of humanity. In Bulgakov then can be observed a reinfusion of the voluntarism of Boehme and Schelling, the introduction into God of an impersonal, essential principle, a divine ground or body.<sup>86</sup> Nonetheless, Bulgakov's ventures further than his Germanic, voluntarist predecessors. On the one hand, it can be said that Bulgakov carries forth Solovyov's Christocentric insight of eternal divine-humanity, yet on the other, that he does so, broadly speaking, within the voluntarist, ontological framework of Boehme and Schelling.

We have established that God, for Bulgakov, is a theandric, divine-human Organism by virtue of the fact that there is a metaphysical duality of hypostasis and nature in God, with the result that there is an ontological similitude between God and humanity. God is a Spirit who actualizes himself in a nature, Sophia, the divine world or body, just as the human body is the "revelation of the spirit, of its likeness and of its life."<sup>87</sup> In other words, we have seen how Sophia relates to the divine Spirit in general, as its nature, in the divine-human

---

<sup>85</sup> In *Russia and the Universal Church* Sophia is referred to as God's "objective essence or absolute substance" (p. 150), as well as "multiplicity... reduced to absolute unity" (p. 151). We have seen these characteristics of Sophia in Solovyov's *Lectures* in which they refer to eternal humanity as Christ's mystical body. In themselves, then, they need not imply a shift in thought. However, Solovyov does not seem to explicitly identify eternal Wisdom with humanity as in the *Lectures*. Indeed, humanity seems no longer to be considered eternal in this work. Furthermore, the divine substance is also referred to as "potential Chaos," and as such an "irrational principle" (p. 152). Solovyov's later thought then appears to have shifted, as there now seems to be an irrational, unconscious principle in God which is eternally suppressed, illumined and transformed into the unity of Divine Wisdom (see pp. 151-153). It is possible then that Bulgakov developed his notion of Sophia as impersonal and unconscious on the basis of this work. Whatever the exact stimulus of his thought might have been, it is clear that Bulgakov is influenced, in general, by the idea of the unconscious, essential ground in God that runs from Boehme through Schelling, and into Solovyov. One more thing should be mentioned. If Solovyov's idea of Sophia has shifted from an anthropological to an impersonal principle, it remains quite undeveloped in his thought, and would also have the effect of canceling out his concept of God as an eternal divine-human Organism. Christ seems nowhere to feature in Solovyov's account of the Trinity and its substance, or nature, in *Russia and the Universal Church*. Hence, this later work was largely left out of our previous discussion on Solovyov.

<sup>86</sup> Notably missing from Tikhon Vasilyev excellent article on the influence of Schelling on Bulgakov is a discussion of the voluntarist, impersonalist dimension of Sophia in Bulgakov, which is taken over from Boehme and Schelling. He does however discuss this theme in relation to Berdyaev. See "Aspects of Schelling's Influence on Sergius Bulgakov and Other Thinkers of the Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century," pp. 143-159. Vasilyev's study is important in addressing the widely acknowledged but understudied influence of Schelling on Bulgakov. He discusses links between the two thinkers such as: the ideal ground of creation in Sophia, antinomy, heresy as a necessary moment in theological development, criticism of Hegel's panlogism and impersonalism, and angeology. I have tried in various places throughout this work to suggest further links between Schelling and Bulgakov, as well as Solovyov, particularly the voluntarist, unconscious nature of Sophia in relation to the grounding of corporeality in God, evolution, the supratemporality of the fall, and to eschatological themes.

<sup>87</sup> Bulgakov, *Sophia*, p. 56.

Organism, but now it must be shown how Sophia relates to each particular hypostasis of the triune Spirit. In so doing, we will see not only how each person of the Trinity relates to the eternal Divine-Humanity, but also how the Logos, or Christ, forms the eternal, hypostatic center of Sophia in the divine-human Organism.

Before we turn to the Trinity and divine-humanity, it is first important to briefly remark on two questions: divine simplicity and the supposed quaternization of the Trinity in Sophia. The first arises naturally out of our previous discussion, and the second can serve as a transition to our discussion of the Trinity. We will consider each in turn. The question of divine simplicity arises from the fact that Bulgakov's concept of the divine-human Organism is built upon an anatomical analogy. Or, more accurately stated, human anatomy is said to derive from the divine anatomy. In comparing Divine Sophia to the human body, Bulgakov invokes the words of the Emerald Tablet: "that which is above is also below;" that is, taking divinity as the point of departure, we can understand man as the cryptogram of Divinity." This hermetic maxim is axiomatic for Bulgakov's thought, for it was one of his principle objectives to establish a divine foundation for corporeality, to trace matter below to its heavenly counterpart above in Sophia. In this he follows the presupposition of Plotinus: "Admitting that there is an Intelligible Realm beyond, of which this world is an image, then, since this world-compound is based on Matter, there must be Matter there also."<sup>88</sup> Yet this quest involves Bulgakov in a formidable difficulty, one which perhaps prevented prior minds from entertaining the idea of a divine body, preferring instead to see spirit as its antithesis. If the divine Spirit possesses a vital, natural principle that forms the metaphysical foundation for the human body, and for corporeality generally, is complexity and composition thereby introduced into Divinity? Despite the exotic features of Bulgakov's sophiology, he does, on the whole, strive to remain within a classical metaphysical framework of divine being. Ontological axioms such as divine eternity, simplicity, immutability, impassibility are determinative for his sophiological speculations (though with von Balthasar he stretches analogical language to its limits, and probably to its breaking point). It is not surprising then that Bulgakov seeks to justify his admission of bodily categories into Divinity, as well to free his concept of Sophia, as an impersonal, essential ground alike to the body, from misunderstanding.

---

<sup>88</sup> Plotinus, trans. Stephen MacKenna, *The Enneads* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), II.4.4.

The simplicity of God's spiritual essence is not mere uniformity any more than the divine unity excludes multiplicity.<sup>89</sup>

With reference to the Divine-Humanity one must exclude all the properties connected with the natural and material existence of creaturely humanity... However, this does not mean that, in God, the Divine-Humanity, as a revelation of Divinity, cannot also be understood as the *body* of Divinity, a body that is absolutely spiritual and in *this* sense incorporeal, but that also accomplishes what is proper to a body as such: to be the revelation of the spirit that lives in it and that even lives by it in a certain sense.<sup>90</sup>

Whether or not the notion of incorporeal body is a sophological square circle, a *contradictio in terminis*, one should nevertheless appreciate the delicate balancing act that Bulgakov attempts: to firmly establish a positive foundation for corporeality in God, in a natural, essential principle, while affirming this principle "as something entirely simple."<sup>91</sup> He was convinced, on the one hand, of the superiority of a concept of God as an Organism over against a lifeless, bodiless intelligence, yet, on the other hand, found himself constrained, by the logic of divine simplicity, to desist from finitizing God by admitting complexity into Divinity (and therefore, spatio-temporality, passibility, mutability, mortality, etc.). In this Bulgakov shrinks back from the developing God of Schelling, for whom divine personhood arises out of the impersonal, dark ground, a sort of *Urstoff*, in which Spirit comes to conscious realization. Whatever one makes of the success or failure of Bulgakov's effort to trace corporeality back into Divinity, he nevertheless highlights a gaping lacuna in the history of theological thought which he sought to resolve.

We can now address the topic of quaternity, which is in fact related to our discussion of the impersonal, essentiality of Sophia. We have been highlighting the fact that according to Bulgakov's construction of his concept of the divine-human Organism there are two inseparable and inconfusable principles in God. There is the triune or tri-hypostatic Spirit and its nature, divine personhood and impersonal, divine essentiality. In Bulgakov's mature thought there can be no question of Sophia being enumerated among the divine persons as a fourth hypostasis.<sup>92</sup> This is because Sophia is impersonal, a principle that is *in itself*

---

<sup>89</sup> Bulgakov, *Sophia*, p. 59.

<sup>90</sup> Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, p. 116-117.

<sup>91</sup> Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, p. 101. This same problematic, which Bulgakov inherited, was first introduced by Plotinus in his postulation of intelligible matter in *Nous*. Bulgakov also echoes his solution. "No doubt that Realm [the intelligible realm] is, in the strict fact, utterly without parts, but in some sense there is part there too (Enneads, II.4.4)."

<sup>92</sup> In an earlier work, trans. Thomas Allan Smith, *Unfading Light: Contemplation and Speculations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012), Bulgakov does indeed refer to Sophia as an uncreated "fourth hypostasis," though his statement should be understood in context in which Bulgakov suggests that Sophia stands between divine and human personhood. "Sophia possesses personhood and countenance, is a subject, a person or, let us say it with theological terminology, a hypostasis; of course *different* from the Hypostases of the Holy Trinity, and is a special hypostasis of a different order, a fourth hypostasis. She does not participate in the inner-divine life, *she is not God*, and that is why she does not convert the trihypostaseity into a

unconscious (though in its relation to divine personhood it is “permeated with rays of consciousness”<sup>93</sup>), which Bulgakov likens to a divine body or divine world.<sup>94</sup> It is the vital medium or objective revelation of God, without which God would be an abstract entity rather than a living Organism. As such Sophia, in its impersonal essentiality, belongs on the side of the divine nature rather than the divine hypostases. “The divine nature cannot “quaternize” the trine Divinity, for the nature cannot be categorically juxtaposed or “counted” with the hypostases: it is an autonomous principle and different from the hypostases.”<sup>95</sup> The charge of quaternization, therefore, rests on a fundamental misjudgment, a failure to grasp Bulgakov’s clear distinction between personal and impersonal principles in God.<sup>96</sup> We can now move on to consider the divine-human relationship of the three divine hypostases to its singular nature, Sophia.

It has already been mentioned that, in contrast to Solovyov, Bulgakov develops the concept of divine-humanity in a more thoroughly Trinitarian fashion.<sup>97</sup> Accordingly, we will see that in Bulgakov’s thought each hypostasis of the Trinitarian godhead relates to divine-humanity in a specific way. This is perhaps similar to Solovyov’s idea that the Father is connected with the creation of Sophia as potential, the Son, as the unifying center of Sophia, with its creation as ideal, and the Spirit with its creation as real. However, for Bulgakov

---

tetrahypostaseity, the trinity into a quaternity. But she is the beginning of a new, creaturely hypostaseity, for after her follow many hypostases... (217).” At this stage, Bulgakov’s sophiological ideas were still developing and there are irresolvable tensions and contradictions in this impressionistic account. Most significantly, although Sophia is said to be a person, he combines impersonal and unconscious elements in his description of Sophia. In his later thought Sophia is strictly impersonal, as we have seen. In any case, in the section on Bulgakov’s theology of creation more will be said about Bulgakov’s early concept of Sophia.

<sup>93</sup> Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, p. 101.

<sup>94</sup> Walter N. Sisto is imprecise in characterizing Sophia as “the quasi-personal nature of God.” “The Beginning of the End: Bulgakov and the Ascension.” *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 2018, Vol.83(2), p. 165. Bulgakov, in his mature thought, is adamant that Sophia is strictly impersonal, for it was partly the quasi-personality of Sophia as a fourth hypostasis in his earlier work that brought him into controversy.

<sup>95</sup> Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, p. 97.

<sup>96</sup> See further the essay of Bulgakov written to clarify his provocative statements from *The Unfading Light*: trans. Anastassy Brandon Gallaher and Irina Kukota “Protopresbyter Sergii Bulgakov: Hypostasis and Hypostacity: Scholia to *The Unfading Light*.” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, 2005, Vol.49(1-2), pp. 5-46.

<sup>97</sup> A very rich study of Trinitarian theology in Russian theology is Michael Aksionov Meerson, *The Trinity of Love in Modern Russian Theology: The Love Paradigm and the Retrieval of Western Medieval Love Mysticism in Modern Russian Trinitarian Thought (from Soloyvov to Bulgakov)* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1998) For an incredibly lucid and comprehensive overview of the many facets of Bulgakov’s theology of the Trinity, see Aidan Nichols, O.P., *Wisdom from Above: A Primer in the Theology of Father Sergei Bulgakov* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2005), ch. 2. See also Katy Leamy, *The Holy Trinity: Hans Urs von Balthasar and His Sources* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015), ch. 1. Leamy insightfully brings together the trinitarian theologies of Bulgakov, Aquinas and von Balthasar. On the multifaceted appropriation of Russian Sophiology by Balthasar see the important work of Jennifer Newsome Martin, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Critical Appropriation of Russian Religious Thought* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015).

Sophia, in its relation to the Trinity, *is not a creation, but a revelation.*<sup>98</sup> Sophia is not a created divine world of human entities, but the essential, natural manifestation of God, his own self-revelation of himself in his body. And it is important to establish at the outset that divine-humanity is, for Bulgakov, not merely a static fact concerning the ontological anatomy of the divine being, but a dynamic act of the “self-revelation of the Godhead.”<sup>99</sup> In what follows, we will see how each hypostasis participates in this intra-divine self-revelation of divine-humanity.

In order to understand Bulgakov’s account of the intra-divine self-revelation of divine-humanity, it is perhaps necessary to first underscore the way in which each divine hypostasis relates to the divine nature. Although the divine nature is God’s divine-humanity, his divine-human nature, Bulgakov’s elucidation of how each hypostasis relates to the divine nature under a unique mode will clarify the way in which each hypostasis possesses or relates to divine-humanity. According to Bulgakov, dynamic possession or hypostasization of the non-hypostatic divine nature is determined by the hypostatic mode or signature of each hypostasis. And in relation to each hypostatic mode, the divine nature is designated under a different term, which Bulgakov acquires from Scripture. Following biblical usage, Bulgakov understands the nature or Ousia of God to be clarified by the non-hypostatic manifestations of God in the Old Testament and the Deuterocanon: Sophia or Wisdom (Hokmah), which God eternally possesses and through which God made the world (Prov. 8; Wis. of Sol. 7; Sirach 1 and 24), and Doxa or Glory (Shekinah), which is the manifestation of God in the cloud at the Exodus, as well as in the Tabernacle and Temple, and the vision of God to Moses, Elijah, and Ezekiel.<sup>100</sup> These latter two expressions of the divine nature in Scripture, Hokmah (Sophia) and Shekinah (Doxa), possess two different shades of meaning: Hokmah is Divinity or Ousia as “content,” while Shekinah is Ousia as “manifestation.”<sup>101</sup> For Bulgakov Ousia, Sophia, and Doxa all correspond to the same reality, the same non-hypostatic nature of God, which He eternally possesses as His everlasting self-revelation to Himself. And as God’s self-revelation integrally expresses the divine life, Bulgakov held that these scriptural attestations of the divine nature relate to the way in which the divine nature is possessed by

---

<sup>98</sup> Although Divine Sophia for Bulgakov is the eternal, archetypal foundation for creation, in itself Divine Sophia does not concern the God-world relation, the Absolute as relative or God, but is the intra-divine self-revelation of the divine persons. Walter Sisto, in my view, is thus incorrect to state: “God in desiring to create in some sense becomes God as the divine Sophia.” “The Beginning of the End: Bulgakov and the Ascension,” p. 166.

<sup>99</sup> Bulgakov, *Sophia*, p. 50.

<sup>100</sup> Bulgakov, *Sophia*, pp. 26-30.

<sup>101</sup> Bulgakov, *Sophia*, p. 31.

each of the divine persons in the immanent Trinity; each of the divine persons hypostasize Divinity according to their personal distinctions.

In Bulgakov's articulation, the Father, the *Arche* of the divine life, possesses Sophia as Ousia, "as a *source* of revelation, as the mystery and depth of his hypostatic being."<sup>102</sup> In order to understand the hypostatic character of the Father as hypostatic revealer, it is important here to recognize that Bulgakov believes there to be a pole of transcendence and immanence in the Trinity. Although such an idea could appear to introduce a priority of the impersonal in the manner of Eckhardt's *Gottheit*, or the *Ungrund* of Boehme, Schelling and Berdyaev, it should be observed that the revelatory movement or manifestation from transcendence to immanence is interpersonal and begins with the Father. The principle of transcendence corresponds to the Father as source of the intra-divine self-revelation, and that of immanence to the revelation of the Father in the Son by the Spirit.<sup>103</sup> "Sophia belongs to the Father, for he is her initial and ultimate subject. She represents the disclosure of his transcendence, of the silence and mystery of the Godhead; she is the Father manifesting himself through the Son and the Holy Spirit."<sup>104</sup> The notion of transcendence and immanence in God should not be misunderstood to mean either that there is temporal process in God, or that there is a surfeit of unrevealed content in the Father that is eternally mysterious to the Son and Spirit; rather, this is an eternal act, in which the revealing hypostases of Son and Spirit are the infinitely adequate and perfect revelation of the Father.<sup>105</sup> Accordingly, Ousia, or the Father in his sophianic aspect, is revealed in Sophia-Doxa, the dyad of the Son and Spirit who reveal the divine life or nature as Wisdom and Glory.

The Son and Spirit are the pole of immanence in the Trinity, the revelatory hypostases of the divine tri-Hypostasis. The Son, eternally begotten of the Father, hypostatically possesses the divine life or nature as Sophia, the ideal content or eternal truth of Divinity, the *Logos*. Bulgakov recognizes that this hypostatic character of the Son contains the rationale

---

<sup>102</sup> Bulgakov, *Sophia*, p. 40.

<sup>103</sup> Bulgakov, trans. Boris Jakim, *The Comforter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), pp. 364-365. Joshua Heath insightfully links the transcendence-immanence polarity in God in Bulgakov's mature work to his earlier Trinitarian thought in its linguistic and propositional ontology (subject-predicate-copula): the Father occupies the place of the subject, the monarchical and apophatic source of the divine self-revelation in the Trinity, carried forth by the kataphatic dyad of the Word-Predicate and Spirit-Copula. Heath sees, however, in the epilogue of *The Comforter*, which is dedicated to patrology, divine fatherhood, a danger of subordinationism in posting an almost quasi self-actuality of the Father prior to generation and spiration, which is also, according to Heath, a contradiction of Bulgakov's relational, propositional ontology of the Trinity for which there is nothing prior to personhood, a lurking *Urgottheit*. See "Sergii Bulgakov's Linguistic Trinity." *Modern Theology*, 2021, Vol.37 (4), pp. 907-912.

<sup>104</sup> Bulgakov, *Sophia*, p. 51.

<sup>105</sup> See Bulgakov, *Sophia*, p. 40.

for ecclesial tradition's identification of the *Logos* with divine Wisdom. But Bulgakov makes an important distinction, arguing that all of the hypostases possess divine Wisdom or Sophia, the non-hypostatic divine nature. Accordingly, he argues that the Son cannot be conflated with divine Wisdom because the divine nature is not a hypostasis. Nevertheless, he contends that the *Logos* is especially associated with Sophia since the Son reveals the *content* of the divine life, hypostasizes it.<sup>106</sup> In the Trinitarian *taxis* the Son is the second hypostatic term, but the first as regards the dyadic self-revelation of the paternal hypostasis. If the Son reveals the content of Divinity, the Spirit, as completing the dyadic self-revelation, reveals the being and content of the divine life as Glory, as life in all its fullness and reality. As the Son and Spirit dyadically reveal the Father, the Spirit, who proceeds from the Father through the Son, hypostatically possesses the divine Ousia as Doxa, the glory, splendor, beauty, or feeling of the divine life suffusing it with the vitality of an integral organism. The Spirit is the hypostatic consummation of the divine life, revealing Divinity not only as substance and wisdom, but also as glory, thereby completing and transfiguring Divinity into eternal life. "In the divine self-revelation, in the Ousia-Sophia, the "Spirit of Wisdom," the Holy Spirit, represents the principle of reality. He transforms the world of ideas into a living and real essence, into a self-sufficient creation of God, the *ens realissimum*, into a world existing within the life of God."<sup>107</sup> As the immanent and revealing pole of Divinity, Son and Spirit consummate the divine life as an integral and eternal self-revelation. God is, according to Bulgakov, an eternal revelation to God; He everlastingly beholds before Himself his own theophany, his own divine world, in which the infinite depths of the triune life are disclosed. Triadically—inseparably and inconfusibly—the divine nature, or Sophia, is eternally possessed by the three divine hypostases: monadically possessed by the Father and dyadically revealed in the Son and Spirit, thus disclosing and closing the integral and blessed circle of eternal life in the Holy Trinity.

Having seen the way in which each of the three divine hypostases possess the divine nature as Ousia-Sophia-Doxa, we can now relate this to the divine nature understood as divine-humanity. If Ousia-Sophia-Doxa is an eternal, intra-divine self-revelation of divine-humanity, each hypostasis relates to the revelation of divine-humanity according to its hypostatic character. In accordance with his postulate of a pole of transcendence and immanence in the immanent Trinity, Bulgakov considers the bi-hypostatic dyad of Son and Spirit to comprise the revelation of Divine-Humanity, while the Father is Divine-Humanity

---

<sup>106</sup> See Bulgakov, *Sophia*, pp. 43-45.

<sup>107</sup> Bulgakov, *Sophia*, p. 49.

unmanifest. Beginning with the hypostatic Monad, the Father is divine-humanity as its transcendent source. “The Father *is* the Divine-Humanity in the same sense that the subject is the predicate, but He *is not* the Divine-Humanity—in the very same sense. The subject is revealed in the predicate but is necessarily different from it, is not identified with it, transcends it.”<sup>108</sup> And as the divine Monad is revealed in the divine Dyad, divine-humanity has its immanent revelation in the Son and Spirit.

Concerning the Son, the first hypostatic term of the divine Dyad, it is said that the Logos is the immediate subject of divine-humanity and forms its “hypostatic center.”<sup>109</sup>

The Logos is the pre-eternal God-Man as the Proto-Image of creaturely man. The Logos is the demiurgic hypostasis whose face is imprinted in the Divine world, as in the Divine Sophia, by the self-revelation of Divinity through the Logos. The hypostasis of the Logos is *directly* connected with Sophia. In this sense, the Logos *is* Sophia as the self-revelation of Divinity; He is her direct (although not sole) hypostasis... Inasmuch as she is eternally hypostasized in the Logos, she is His pre-eternal Divine-Humanity.<sup>110</sup>

Although the Son comprises the “hypostatic center” of Heavenly Humanity, Bulgakov also considers the Spirit, as a revealing hypostasis and as the second term in the divine Dyad, to be Divine-Humanity alongside the Son. “The Son and the Holy Spirit together constitute Divine-Humanity, as the revelation of the Father in the Holy Trinity.”<sup>111</sup> Nevertheless, the Spirit is not considered to be the center of Divine-Humanity, but rather the hypostasis who actualizes and reveals Divine-Humanity for the Son and the Father.

The relation of the Third Hypostasis to the eternal Divine-Humanity is therefore expressed, *not* in the fact that this hypostasis is the hypostatic center for the Divine-Humanity, but in the fact that it actualizes and reveals for the Son, and thereby for the Father as well, the Divine-Humanity as a divine reality.<sup>112</sup>

If the Father is the source of divine-humanity, and the Son is its content and hypostatic center, the Spirit accomplishes the actualization of divine-humanity in eternity. The eternal manifestation of divine-humanity has its transcendent inauguration in the Father and its immanent revelation in the divine Dyad, the Son and Spirit, who are its representation and realization.

As a thoroughly Trinitarian account of Divine-Humanity, Bulgakov’s iteration represents a definitive development of Solovyov’s. If Solovyov established the Son, or Christ, as the hypostatic center of divine-humanity, then Bulgakov clarified the relation of the Father and Spirit to divine-humanity. A further upshot of Bulgakov’s version of divine-

---

<sup>108</sup> Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, p. 116.

<sup>109</sup> Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, p. 114.

<sup>110</sup> Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, p. 187.

<sup>111</sup> Bulgakov, *Sophia*, p. 80.

<sup>112</sup> Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, p. 114.

humanity is that it avoids the implicit pantheism, or theopanism, of Solovyov's. Whereas in Solovyov God's divine-humanity is predicated upon the eternal creation and unification of world of human entities, in Bulgakov God is divine-human by virtue of possessing both hypostatic and natural principles. Although the twofold divine ontology is the prototypical basis of humanity's bipartite metaphysical structure, God's divine-humanity is not dependent upon created human entities. As with Boehme and Schelling, although Sophia, or the divine nature, is the ground in which God eternally sees and loves the future creation, it is first the essential nature of God, his own objective world.

There are however, difficulties with Bulgakov's portrait of divine-humanity. Having developed a fully Trinitarian elucidation of divine-humanity, one wonders what sort of deity Bulgakov has conjured up. Such a concern arises due to the fact that Bulgakov understands human ontology to be a repetition of divine ontology, with one key difference: humanity is uni-hypostatic whereas God is tri-hypostatic. "The creaturely hypostases are images of the noncreaturely Divine hypostases. These multihypostatic images, in their singularity, do not reflect God's trihypostasizedness; they can only reflect its individual hypostases."<sup>113</sup> If a human is a singular hypostasis, or spirit, revealed in its nature or body, how are we to envisage the divine-human, in which only one of the divine hypostases is the God-Man, the divine Logos, whose hypostasis alone is directly revealed in the divine body, Sophia? Bulgakov states that: "The Logos is the pre-eternal God-Man as the Proto-Image of creaturely man. The Logos is the demiurgic hypostasis whose face is imprinted in the Divine world, as in the Divine Sophia."<sup>114</sup> In the tri-hypostaticity of God the analogy between Divinity and humanity breaks down. If the hypostasis of the Son alone is directly revealed in the divine nature, or world-body, are the Father and Spirit to be imagined like parts of Plotinus' undescended soul? Or, is there a latent tri-theism here wherein the Father and Spirit are un-"incarnate" subjects?

A possible way forward is proposed by John Milbank, who carries the incarnational register of Russian Sophiology further in his suggestion, concerning the economic Trinity, that "the Father and the Spirit must in some fashion be also incarnated, since the Son simply

---

<sup>113</sup> Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, p. 139. According to Bulgakov, male hypostases instantiate the Son, whereas females instantiate the Spirit. See also, *The Lamb of God*, p. 140; trans. Boris Jakim, *The Bride of the Lamb* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001) pp. 90-91; and *Sophia*, p. 80.

<sup>114</sup> Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, p. 187.

is his relation to the other two hypostases.”<sup>115</sup> He proposes that the Father is ‘incarnated’ as the “memory of Israel,” since the latter serves in time as the “Paternal source” through which the Son comes into the world,<sup>116</sup> and, following Bulgakov, that the Spirit is incarnate through Mary and the Church. What of the immanent Trinity, however? How is it possible to avoid tritheism while suggesting that only the Son is hypostatically revealed or “incarnate” in Divine Sophia? Admittedly, this is a difficult question, one which is further complicated by Bulgakov’s understanding of the divine hypostases. On the one hand, in *The Tragedy of Philosophy* and his “Chapters on Trinitarity,” Bulgakov develops a linguistic theology of the Trinity in which God as Absolute Subject is also his own Predicate and Copula, the three linguistic moments of a proposition, which correspond to Father, Son, and Spirit. “Substance is a living proposition consisting of a subject, predicate, and a copula.”<sup>117</sup> In possessing all three moments in itself whilst yet remaining itself, the infinite I is also simultaneously a “you” and “we.” The grammatical structure of reality, according to Bulgakov, points to the Absolute in which all three points of the proposition are co-positing and irreducible to one another, and therefore points to the Absolute’s trihypostatic existence, over against human mono-hypostatic existence for which otherness is forever outside the self, so that humanity forms a species of countless hypostases. In this linguistic or propositional ontology, the divine hypostases are one Subject or Person (“The trihypostatic Divinity is *one* Person.”),<sup>118</sup> because the Absolute I is always already its own other, as well a collective we, and yet in this infinite alterity remains itself. While in his grammatical ontology Bulgakov maintains that God is a single, though triadic, personhood, on the other hand, he also appears to refer to the divine hypostases as if they are disparate centers of consciousness, or three personal subjects in other parts of his theological system. In fact, it is difficult to understand Bulgakov’s theory of *Urkenosis* without resorting to some form of social Trinitarianism, and thus tri-theism, for Bulgakov anthropomorphically describes the godhead to be one of mutual self-giving or self-sacrifice.<sup>119</sup> The Trinity as kenotic love is characterized by the self-giving of the Father, the self-receiving of the Son and the self-effacing of the Spirit as bond or *vinculum* of paternal and filial hypostases, turning their mutual sacrifice into infinite joy so that the tragic shadow

---

<sup>115</sup> John Milbank, eds. Andrian Pabst and Christoph Schneider, “Sophiology and Theurgy: The New Theological Horizon” In *Encounter Between Eastern Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy: Transfiguring the World through the Word* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), p. 81.

<sup>116</sup> Milbank, *Sophiology and Theurgy*, p. 82.

<sup>117</sup> Bulgakov, trans. Stephen Churchyard, *The Tragedy of Philosophy* (Brooklyn, NY: Angelico Press, 2020), p. 236.

<sup>118</sup> Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, p. 95.

<sup>119</sup> See for example, *Lamb of God*, pp. 98-100.

of suffering never actually occurs. If one tries to connect the linguistic and the kenotic poles in Bulgakov's Trinitarian theology it becomes difficult to reconcile them (which are nonetheless often fused), since the latter appears, as with Balthasar who developed the *Urkenosis* theme, to tend towards tri-theism. So in answer to our question: on the linguistic-propositional model, if the Trinity is one Person, it would seem logically impossible and overly anthropomorphic to conclude that only the second hypostasis is personally identified with the divine-humanity, for there is no divine Personhood apart from the Father and Spirit. This would seem to divide the unity in the Trinity. In relation to the kenotic model, where the divine persons appear to possess their own autonomy as loving agents, perhaps the divine-humanity could be related solely to the Son as its hypostatic center, though here the divine persons appear as mono-hypostatic subjects in the direction of tritheism. There seems then to be an irresolvable tension in Bulgakov's theandrisms. A simpler, though heterodox, solution would be to say with Swedenborg, for whom the divine and the human are inseparable, that the triadic divine Person is eternal divine-humanity, which also appears in time as Christ. Though he has, wrongly in my view, often been charged with modalism, because he denies three divine persons in favor of one person,<sup>120</sup> and because he states that the Trinity came into existence in time,<sup>121</sup> Swedenborg nevertheless recognizes a triadic structure of Divinity in eternity.<sup>122</sup> Considered on analogy with the human essence, Swedenborg likens God to the unity of soul, body, and its action.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, this human form or divine-humanity is repeatedly said to exist from eternity,<sup>124</sup> which is the basis not only of created humanity, but of the descent of the divine-human form in time in order to rescue wayward humankind. In this case, it is not one hypostasis but the whole triadic divine-humanity or triune Person that descends in the Incarnation. Of course, such a solution, though it preserves the incarnational idea of triadic divine I as divine-humanity in both its immanent and economic registers, would hardly satisfy Bulgakov. In any case, in light of these residual difficulties in his sophiology of divine-humanity, Bulgakov's conception of the divine-human Organism can

---

<sup>120</sup> Emmanuel Swedenborg, trans. George F. Dole, *The Lord* (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2014), §§55-61. See also Swedenborg, trans. Jonathan S. Rose, *True Christianity* (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2010), §166-169. Before dismissing Swedenborg's rejection of the language of distinct persons in the Trinity, it should be emphasized that he follows a traditional anti-tritheistic impulse. Luminaries such as Barth and Rahner favored "modes of being" or *tropos hyparxeos* to persons, so as to avoid the idea three divine I's. And we have seen that Bulgakov prefers to speak of God as a tri-hypostatic I.

<sup>121</sup> Swedenborg, *True Christianity*, § 170-171.

<sup>122</sup> See Andrew M.T. Dibb, *Servetus, Swedenborg and the Nature of God* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005), ch. 10.

<sup>123</sup> Swedenborg, *True Christianity*, §§ 166-168.

<sup>124</sup> Emmanuel Swedenborg, trans. John Clowes, *Arcana Coelestia* (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2009), Vol. 4, §§ 3061, Vol. 8, §§6280, Vol. 9, §§6880, Vol.12, §§10579.

appear quite perplexing and possibly even bizarre. Has Bulgakov constructed a divine-human monstrosity? Is his system some sort of metaphysically profound Trinitarian Feuerbachianism? Despite the residual ambiguities that surround Bulgakov's theandric, divine-human Organism, it certainly represents one of the most radical theological attempts to redefine divine being around Christology. In a moment we will consider Russian Sophiology within the broader Christocentric trend of 20<sup>th</sup> century theology, but first we will discuss one further problem: the connection of freedom and Organism, with particular reference to Russian Sophiology's priority of consciousness and personhood.

Another criticism that could be raised against both Bulgakov's and Solovyov's eternalization of Christ in the divine-human Organism relates to freedom. Because there is a quasi-corporeality in the divine-human Organism, is divine freedom to be construed in terms of human organisms, as containing potency which must be reduced to act? For both Russian theologians, however, the organic concept of God is disassociated from potency. In his eternity, immobile and unchanging, God cannot be said to be a developing life in the manner of natural organisms. The temporal reality of living process cannot be predicated of God, even if the Russian thinkers do speak of the divine-human Organism as a dynamic act of eternal, self-revelation. God does not achieve actuality and consciousness by overcoming a dark ground; even though in Bulgakov, and perhaps in the later Solovyov, there is an impersonal dimension in God, this is not taken to mean that God wins personhood into himself through the activity of an unconscious will, which, in turning in on itself, finds itself as conscious, reflexive spirit. Neither does God realize himself through a ground outside himself, by positing an object world whereby, through the diversity and ascending complexity of forms, the Absolute achieves universality and conscious realization as Spirit.<sup>125</sup> In the thought of the Russian Sophiologists, God can never be otherwise than a divine-human Organism. Divine-humanity is not a possibility which can be elected and achieved through an act of free self-determination over a prior, abyssal indeterminacy, but is eternally enacted.<sup>126</sup> There lies nothing primordially deeper than the infinite actuality of God's divine-humanity. There can be no choice here, no spontaneous Schellingian discrimination between alternative possibilities. For a metaphysics of eternal perfection, choice would already represent the loss of freedom as infinitely actualized being. This is not

---

<sup>125</sup> There is, as we have seen, a caveat with Solovyov. God's actuality is dependent upon the creation of eternal world of human entities. However, as this is an eternal act, it is different from the idea in German Idealism of the Absolute's realization via history.

<sup>126</sup> For example, in *The Bride of the Lamb*, p. 139, Bulgakov states: "The category of possibility... is completely inapplicable to the Divine Sophia."

the case for the optimistic vein of German voluntarism (over against Schopenhauer and Hartmann), which forms an important philosophical context for Russian Sophiology. In one of the greatest meditations on freedom, Friedrich Schelling, in his unfinished masterpiece *Ages of the World*, arrives at perhaps one of the most consequential conclusions that sought to upend the ontology of necessary being in its eternal actuality, consciousness, and ideal perfection. In his exhilarating and even unsettling mediation, Schelling, in the spirit of Boehme, searches out the ultimate beginning of things, tracing everything, even God, back to a primordial deed, a decision which arises before a Will in the spontaneous process of its coming to self-awareness. Before there was reason, before divine personhood, before consciousness and an ideal world, there is an unconscious, dormant, irrational Will. The stabilities of a perfect eternal order, a luminous ideal kingdom, is at once overthrown, and are determined to be the result of a radical act of freedom, of a Will born in darkness. So radical is this voluntarism that Schelling proclaims of this beginning in the Will that, at the moment of its coming to consciousness, it is free to remain in its concealment, in non-existence, or to bring forth from itself the ordered, rational world of existence, to be as nothing or to be as God. “Free will is just this ability to be something along with the ability to not-be it... The Highest can exist, and it can also not-exist.”<sup>127</sup> Schelling’s God is an Organism in perhaps the highest and most literal sense, for even God must develop out of dark, mute beginnings the way nature evolves through a laborious, unfolding process. Russian Sophiology was not prepared to accept such a radical voluntarism, even as it integrated aspects of voluntarism into its concept of Sophia. Yet in its endeavor to construct a concept of God as a divine-human Organism, did Russian Sophiology, instead, install in its place a rationalist, foundationalist, idealism? It can hardly be denied that this is true to the extent that Sophiology gives ontological priority to eternal divine reason and conscious personhood, and admits of no development in God. Furthermore, it is open to question if this priority can be coherently combined with an insistence on God as an Organism (just as it remains open to question whether or not the notion of a divine body can, without logical contradiction, be combined with divine incorporeality).<sup>128</sup> Is Russian Sophiology’s eternalist idealism the death knell of the divine-human Organism? If—and here the reader can decide—the notion of a divine Organism cannot be combined with stasis, an eternal realization of infinite

---

<sup>127</sup> Schelling, trans. Judith Norman, *The Abyss of Freedom: Ages of the World* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997), p. 132.

<sup>128</sup> In the case of Solovyov, however, it should be remembered that he applies the idea of organism to God in a very broad sense to mean the reduction to unity of a multiplicity of elements, whereas Bulgakov does apply to God the idea of a human organism containing personal and natural elements.

consciousness, the alternative is process theology: a changing, emerging, evolving God. Arguably, Schelling, with roots in Boehme, marks the inauguration of process theology and his, perhaps, remains unmatched in its ontological sophistication, scope and sheer profundity. Although we will not delve into Schelling's late philosophy of religion, the positive philosophy, his notion of a developing, dramatic idea of God is revived in some of his German theological predecessors. In considering how these figures sought to define God Christologically within a process theological framework, we can bring into relief some of the potential contributions and problematics of Russian Sophiology's Christocentric concept of God as a divine-human Organism.

## **II. God as Achieving Divine-Humanity in Time: Christocentric metaphysics in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Protestant Theology**

It is important to place Russian Sophiology's theology of God as a divine-human Organism in the context of 20<sup>th</sup> century Protestant theology in order to better understand its contribution. Some of the leading theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century sought to redefine the concept of God Christologically, to close the perceived gap between the immanent and economic Trinity, or even to dispose of the distinction altogether, and it will be instructive to bring Sophiology into dialogue with this broader Christocentric trend. We will briefly delve into the theologies of Jürgen Moltmann and Robert Jenson, in order to underscore the different attempts to redefine the concept of God around Christ. Although Moltmann and Jenson did not directly speak of God as an Organism, they did strive to characterize God as a living being, as a developing life that was defined in and through its relationship and experience in history. Particularly, God is for these process theologians paradigmatically defined in and through the life of Christ. The Triune God can thus be characterized in their thought as a divine-human life. However, we will see that the divine-humanity of God is achieved in and through history and does not characterize Divinity from eternity as it does for the Russian Sophiologists. We will explore this idea and its potential problems in relation to Russian Sophiology, particularly, the problems of freedom and pantheism, as well as Christological problems that arise with Jenson's system.

In order to understand the thought of Moltmann and Jenson, it is perhaps important first to mention that there are at least two controlling ideas that are perceptible in their fundamental concept of God. The first is that Moltmann and Jenson belong to a trend, which has its beginnings in Swiss theologian Karl Barth, in which the concept of God came to be redefined around and even identified with the economic Trinity. Although Barth recognized

divine reality beyond its revelation, his distrust of all natural theology and of the *analogia entis*,<sup>129</sup> led him to define God solely from the standpoint of the *deus revelatus*. Methodologically, instead of moving from a concept of *de Deo uno* achieved by natural theology to *de Deo trino*, he worked backward from revelation to God in himself, thereby effecting a Christologization of Trinitarian thought: God eternally elects to be the God revealed in Jesus Christ. Barth's driving impetus is thus Christological, that Christ not be relegated to a theological afterthought. This Christocentric impetus to define God by reference to the economic Trinity leads, as we shall see, to a tendency to dissolve the immanent Trinity in the economic Trinity.

The second controlling idea is that of process or development in God, which has its roots in Boehme and the German Idealist tradition which sprung from him. Although Boehme understood the divine process in God to be eternal and thus to "precede" the world, for the German Idealists the world is the object of the divine Subject, the sphere in which it constitutes itself, such that, in the minds of Moltmann and Jenson, the divine-humanity of God, as with the late Schelling's *Philosophy of Revelation*, is a product of history. God is a developing life who achieves personality and divine-humanity in his dynamic engagement with history. Divine-humanity is not traced back into eternity, but instead follows from the dynamic movement which the divine life is. What can be observed then is, on the one hand, a shared Christological impetus between the Russian and process theologians, yet on the other hand, there is a different appropriation of a shared philosophical context.

### *Moltmann*

We will first begin with Jürgen Moltmann. His system attempts to reconstitute the concept of God around the crucified Christ: "How can the 'death of Jesus' be a *statement about God*? Does that not amount to a revolution in the concept of God."<sup>130</sup> Instead of considering the Incarnation and crucifixion within the limited "horizon of soteriology,"<sup>131</sup> Moltmann attempts to bring Christology into the broad domain of fundamental theology, to reorder the Christian theological universe around the specific history of the crucified Christ. "The death

---

<sup>129</sup> See the discussion by Betz in Erich Przywara, trans. John R. Betz and David Bentley Hart, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014), pp. 83-101. On this whole thematic see the collection of essays in ed. Thomas Joseph White, O.P., *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or Wisdom of God?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011).

<sup>130</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden, *The Crucified God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 201.

<sup>131</sup> Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, p. 201

of Jesus on the cross is the centre of all Christian theology.”<sup>132</sup> In so identifying God with the history of Christ, Moltmann, at least in his early work, *The Crucified God*, articulates a species of process theology in his own Lutheran, dialectical idiom. Taking his stance against the alleged metaphysical God of the philosophers, the timeless, changeless, infinite who is ontologically superior to the world, Moltmann constructs, in the language of William James, a “finite” concept of God who is an event, a developing life capable of change, suffering, and even death.<sup>133</sup> According to Moltmann, the God of theism, or metaphysical monotheism, is inert, a remote deity who in his changeless eternity is incapable of involvement with the world, and therefore is incapable of suffering and of love: “A God who cannot suffer is poorer than any man. For a God who is incapable of suffering is a being who cannot be involved.”<sup>134</sup> Similarly, he states: “But the one who cannot suffer cannot love either... The ‘unmoved Mover’ is a ‘loveless Beloved.’”<sup>135</sup>

In antithesis to this “closed circle of perfect being in heaven,” Moltmann’s Trinity is a “dialectical event.”<sup>136</sup> And the event that constitutes the Triune divine being, is the living history of persons revealed in the cross. “The unity of the dialectical history of Father and Son and Spirit in the cross on Golgotha, full of tension as it is, can be described so to speak retrospectively as ‘God.’”<sup>137</sup> The Triune God is a becoming life, one not simply revealed, but constituted in the lived history of Christ in relation to the Father and Spirit. God “constitutes his existence in the event of his love. He exists as love in the event of the cross.”<sup>138</sup> For the early Moltmann there is not a God beyond the “dialectical history” of Father, Son, and Spirit in their living, changing, dynamic relationship. God is thus for Moltmann, a divine-human life, but not from eternity as for the Sophiologists. Instead, God’s divine-humanity is achieved through the dialectical history of Father, Son, and Spirit in their dynamic interaction with the world. God’s being is in becoming, and thus his divine-humanity is a product of the lived history of the Son in relation to the Father and Spirit. A double problem arises in

---

<sup>132</sup> Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, p. 204.

<sup>133</sup> William James, *A Pluralistic Universe* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909), p. 311. For a clear statement and balanced critique of Moltmann’s rejection of divine immutability and impassibility in *The Crucified God* see Christiaan Mostert, “Moltmann’s Crucified God.” *Journal of Reformed Theology*, 2013, Vol.7 (2), pp. 160-180. For an elegant and intellectually rigorous defense of divine impassibility see, David Bentley Hart, “No Shadow of Turning: On Divine Impassibility.” *Pro Ecclesia*, 2002, Vol.22 (2), pp. 284-306. For a sympathetic but not uncritical appropriation of Moltmann’s idea of divine suffering see Paul Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp.136-143

<sup>134</sup> *The Crucified God*, p. 222.

<sup>135</sup> *The Crucified God*, p. 222.

<sup>136</sup> *The Crucified God*, p. 255.

<sup>137</sup> *The Crucified God*, p. 247.

<sup>138</sup> *The Crucified God*, p. 244.

Moltmann's early dramatic theology in which God has been temporalized and in which God needs the world in order to be the God he is. It could be argued that there is, on the one hand, the negation of the world's freedom, and therefore, on the other hand, a disguised pantheism. For if not only God's divine-humanity, but his very being is dependent upon the world, the latter cannot be free, for it is revealed not in its otherness but as the site of God's self-realization. It is only a short step here to Hegel: from history as the necessary preparation for God's crucifixion to Hegel's speculative Good Friday, history as the Golgotha of the Absolute and its sublation. And if the world is needed for God's actualization there can ultimately be no meaningful difference between divine and created being. As with German Idealism—in Hegel's *Geist* which achieves consciousness through the world's becoming, and even in the late Schelling's voluntarist correction of Idealism, in which the dynamic personalities of God come to be through the process of creation and redemption—the tensional necessity involved in the reciprocal constitution of divine and created being inevitably ends with the negation of created freedom and a resultant pantheistic confusion of the Infinite and the finite. A way to overcome these difficulties would be to minimize the absolute conflation of immanent and economic Trinities and to suggest, with the voluntarist line of thought running from Boehme through Schelling and Berdyaev, that freedom lies deeper than God, that if there is to be divine freedom there must be a primal abyss of indeterminacy and potentiality out of which God emerges as a personal Subject and as creator of the world. In this line of thought, the tensional or agonistic relation between God and creation undoubtedly remains, though it is accepted as the price of authentic freedom. From this standpoint, to retort that this results in the fact that the tragedy of history is needed for God's self-discovery, as well as in pantheist conflation of the Infinite and the finite, would be to miss the point that God cannot be otherwise than through a dynamic process, that the radicality of freedom inescapably requires becoming and all that the latter entails. It is not my concern here to adjudicate between these alternatives, but only to observe that there is within the voluntarist tradition a logical *apologia* for the sort of process theology that Moltmann is engaged in. We can now look briefly at Moltmann's later work, which did back away from the totalizing identity of the immanent and economic Trinities through an appeal to a retroactive ontology.

In his later work Moltmann's concept of God has undergone some significant metaphysical revision, which is set forth most fully in *The Trinity and the Kingdom*. His Christocentrism is, however, not thereby muted. "If... the significance of the Son's

incarnation is his true humanity, then the incarnation reveals the true humanity of God. That is not an anthropomorphic way of speaking, which is therefore not in accordance with God's divinity; it is the quintessence of his divinity itself."<sup>139</sup> Instead, Moltmann arrives at the divine-humanity of God in a different manner. Moving away from the more "finite" concept of God, the later Moltmann is willing to acknowledge divine being in eternity beyond the flux of time, even though time still, *necessarily*, possesses constitutive, metaphysical significance for God. Instead of positing God as a pure event, a moving, dialectical history, he instead posits that the eternal God, in his dynamic interaction with history, is retroactively affected, changed; eternity is not immutable in relation to temporality, but assimilates and absorbs what transpires in time.<sup>140</sup> It is by such retroactive transformation that the eternal, immanent Trinity takes into itself the dynamic movement of the economic Trinity in time. "The economic Trinity not only reveals the immanent Trinity; it also has a retroactive effect on it."<sup>141</sup> With this concept of "retroactive effect" Moltmann opens up a space for a Christocentric redefinition of divine being. For if the economic Trinity has effect on the immanent Trinity, the Incarnation, divine-humanity, is taken up into the heart of divine existence. God's divine humanity is something achieved, not something eternal in *stricto sensu*. "He becomes *the human God*."<sup>142</sup> Nonetheless, God's divine-humanity becomes, by retroactive effect, a constitutive feature of the immanent Trinity, for the Incarnation which transpires in time is, *ex post facto*, subsumed into eternity. "The Incarnation of the Son is not something transitional. It is and remains to all eternity. There is no God other than the incarnate, human God."<sup>143</sup> God's eternal existence is thus a divine-human existence, yet this divine-humanity could only appear in eternity in its dynamic engagement with time. Divine-humanity does not exist apart from the world in the absolute eternity of God, but only by what the contingency of time delivers into it. Yet it is not as if this condescension of the Son in time and the ascension of divine-humanity to eternity is adventitious, for, echoing Bulgakov and Balthasar, the temporal kenotic descent reveals the primordially kenotic and perichoretic unity of God in eternity, the self-giving love by which the hypostases live and form a *volitional* unity, a "community of will" (there is no *substantial* divine unity in

---

<sup>139</sup> Moltmann, trans. Margaret Kohl, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 118.

<sup>140</sup> On this theme in Moltmann's theology see Roger Olson, "Trinity and Eschatology: The Historical Being of God in Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg." *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 1983, Vol.36 (2), pp. 217-222.

<sup>141</sup> Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, p. 160.

<sup>142</sup> Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, p. 118.

<sup>143</sup> Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, p. 119.

Moltmann).<sup>144</sup> In the Incarnation, or the divine-humanity, the primordial divine love goes out of itself and encompasses creation in the dynamic, inter-hypostatic love of the Triune persons. The divine-humanity of God is thus both rooted in transcendent eternity as much as it is a product of time; it is part of God's developing life, which enriches itself through time by returning time into the eternal depths of the divine life.

Against his early work, the later Moltmann retains a semblance, but only a semblance, of a more traditional metaphysical perspective of divine being, even as he revolts against it. He wants to posit at once the eternal divine being which stands above time, as well as a version of process theology by which time effects the eternal being of God. By this mediation he can Christocentrically redefine divine being so that divine-humanity becomes constitutive of the eternal divine existence without annulling the world's freedom. In other words, the later Moltmann does not absolutely dissolve the eternal immanent Trinity into the economic Trinity. Nonetheless, the latter is not merely a revelation of the former, for what transpires in the economic acts of the Trinity retroactively affects the eternal being of the immanent Trinity. If it were not so, the divine-humanity of God would be an accidental feature of divinity, not its quintessentiality. "Not only does he enter into this state of being man; he accepts and adopts it himself, making it part of his own, eternal life. He becomes *the human God*."<sup>145</sup> In both phases of Moltmann the concept of God is redefined around Christ, around divine-humanity, which is, in both phases, achieved in time. The difference is that in Moltmann's latter phase he posits that there must be an eternal ground of the *ad extra* acts of the Trinity, even if these acts are nonetheless metaphysically constitutive, retroactively, for the immanent Trinity. If Moltmann recoiled from his early position, Robert Jenson sought to bring it to its logical conclusion, a conclusion which perhaps was unsettling for Moltmann, for the early system would seem to entail irresolvable difficulties. We can bring these into focus by setting forth Jenson's thought, which will in turn throw into relief the theological alternative of Russian Sophiology.

### *Jenson*

Robert Jenson's thought is still more radical than Moltmann's, and arguably this is the source of its undoing. In his late theology Moltmann retained some notion that God transcends his acts in the world, that the economic Trinity reveals the immanent Trinity, even if God is susceptible, retroactively, to the effects of the world. In Jenson, however, there is an absolute

---

<sup>144</sup> Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, p. 82.

<sup>145</sup> Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, p. 118.

refusal to separate God from his acts. God *is* the event of his revelation.<sup>146</sup> Jenson's methodological point of departure is therefore, as with Moltmann, the dynamic engagement of God in history, principally its culmination in Christ, which Jenson believes is at odds with the normative metaphysical concept of God. And in common with Moltmann, Jenson posits that the shortcomings of the history of the doctrine of the Trinity and the accompanying Christological problems are, in large part, due to its uncritical acceptance of Hellenic metaphysical principles, namely divine timelessness and impassibility, which conflict with God's narrated identity in Scripture.

Since the biblical God can truly be identified by narrative, his hypostatic being, his self-identity, is constituted in *dramatic coherence*. Aristotle himself regarded liability to historical contingency as an ontological deficit and therefore drew no metaphysical profit from his observation. But since God himself is identified by contingencies, Aristotle's prejudice need not hinder us. Why should commitment in a history not be instead an ontological *perfection*. We are free to say that even—or, rather, especially God is one with himself just by the dramatic coherence of his eventful actuality.<sup>147</sup>

For Jenson there is an absolute identity between God in himself and God in his acts, between immanent and economic Trinity. God is a “dramatic” Trinity. The God herein posited is thus, in some respects, akin to Hegel's *Geist*. The world is the sphere of God's self-development, and history the arena of the odyssey of his self-discovery. God is who God is in that his being is defined by temporal, conditioned events, a set of historical eventualities that, as contingent, need not have been (though for Hegel such a history is necessary insofar as it represents the logical, dialectical development by which the Absolute comes to consciousness). God is who God is through this, and no other, set of historical occurrences; the divine life is inseparable and unabstractable from the particular contours that unfold in the world. God's being is thus “dramatic”; God is not *ipsum esse subsistens*, but a being whose identity is dependent upon time's vicissitudes. “The one God is an event; history occurs not only in him but as his being.”<sup>148</sup> This proposition, however, is ultimately problematic for Jenson, for he desires to maintain at once that God can only be this God whose identity is determined and forged in the fires of history, and yet he wants to impossibly maintain that had this history not eventuated God would still somehow be the same. “God might have been the God he is without this world to happen to. But, again, we can know only the counterfactual; how God would have described his own being had he been without the world, we cannot even

---

<sup>146</sup> For a thorough and critical discussion see David Bentley Hart, “The Lively God of Robert Jenson.” *First Things*, 2005, V.156, pp. 28-34.

<sup>147</sup> Robert Jenson, *Systematic Theology: V. 1* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 64.

<sup>148</sup> Jenson, *Systematic Theology: V. 1*, p. 221.

inquire.”<sup>149</sup> This claim is manifestly self-contradictory.<sup>150</sup> If God’s identity is inextricably tied to a particular history, without such a history God would be otherwise. Jenson ultimately shrinks back from the force of the inexorable logic of his thought; for, at the point in which it must be concluded that God, if he is dynamically defined and actualized in the world’s becoming, could always have been otherwise, he instead resigns from all logic and clings to the very opposite to which his thought leads. Jenson has here absolutized the relative.

Another, more sinister, consequence arises. If God is a dialectical, dynamic event of dramatic constitution yet, mysteriously, cannot be otherwise, there is not only a metaphysics of tragic dependency of the Infinite on the finite (for without the latter God simply cannot be the God that he is), but also an underlying determinism that requires the negation of freedom in history. The exact course of the world process with all its evils are necessary for God, even death itself which has come, according to Moltmann and Jenson, to define the very being of God’s existence in the death and resurrection of Christ. In such a system the Incarnation cannot represent the *free* union of the Infinite and the finite, but a *necessity* without which God cannot be the divine-human God. There is thus a tragic necessity in postulating divine-humanity as a product of time, at least in the manner that the early Moltmann and Jenson have construed it. The contingent particularities of Christ’s existence, principally the manner of his emergence out of Israel’s history and the manner of his death, crucifixion, become inexorable necessities apart from which God cannot be thought.

There are yet further problems. Jenson’s identification of the immanent and economic Trinity entails that God is identified with his revelation in the world. So absolute is this identity for Jenson that the divine Son simply is the human Jesus Christ, *tout court*. There is no eternal *Logos asarkos* above time. This, however, entails inevitable consequences that Jenson labors in vain to surmount. The first is how to account for the pre-existence of Christ. With this question is raised Jenson’s theory of divine temporality, without which he cannot formulate some sort of answer.

In Jenson’s thought Divine eternity as transcendent of time is abolished and replaced with a pattern of movement. He describes divine time as temporal but not successive, yet something like past, present, and future must subsist in it, the Father forming the origin or

---

<sup>149</sup> Jenson, *Systematic Theology: V. 1*, p. 221. In a later article Jenson states that the question of how God would maintain his identity is meaningless. This conclusion, however, implies a sort of determinism, which elevates the contingent to the level of absoluteness. See Robert Jenson, “Once More the Logos Asarkos.” *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 2011, Vol.13 (2), p. 131.

<sup>150</sup> This is argued cogently by David Bentley Hart in *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), pp. 162-163.

whence of the divine life, the Son comprising its present, and the Spirit the future and so whither of the divine life. Furthermore, God is said to be primarily future to himself, and only in this futurity possesses past and present. His theory of divine temporality is notoriously ambiguous, and arguably quite incoherent.<sup>151</sup> If Jenson merely meant that time is teleologically oriented, fewer difficulties would arise, but this is not his meaning. He means instead that the future, as the truly real tense, is determinative of the *content* of past and present, for somehow it already contains and causes it. “[God] is temporally infinite because ‘source and goal’ are present and asymmetrical in him, because he is primarily future to himself and only thereupon past and present to himself.”<sup>152</sup> Perhaps the only way to ascribe futurity as constitutive of the contents of past and present is a form of determinism, which also shares its time-negating characteristic. Jenson’s revisionary metaphysics of eternity, as a quasi-temporality in which past and present are determined by a temporal divine future, would seem to erode time of its reality, of its freedom and contingency. His theory of divine temporality thus seems to be at odds with the dynamic, dramatic concept of God he toils to construct. In any case, Jenson deploys his counterintuitive, idiosyncratic notion of temporal eternity to the question of Christ’s pre-existence. Because he gives not only ontological priority to the future, but a sort of absolute causal determinacy to it by which the past and present arise, Jenson asserts that there is no *Logos asarkos*, the fleshless Word of God in eternity. Instead, Jenson conflates, categorically, in view of the primacy of futurity, the eternal birth of the Son with the birth of Christ in time. “Christ’s birth from God is the divine future of his birth from the seed of David.”<sup>153</sup> Or, more fully expressed:

In the full narrative of Scripture, we see how the Son indeed precedes his human birth without being simply unincarnate: the Son appears as a narrative pattern of Israel’s created human story before he can appear as an individual Israelite within that story. Precisely because it is the actual person of the biblical narrative that is his own presupposition in eternity, this antecedence must be taken as itself eternally actual.<sup>154</sup>

To state that the Son’s future existence is his pre-existence is simply meaningless, a vacuous confusion of tenses that is transformed into an ontology. Consequently, Jenson advances no actual foundation for the Incarnation, for there is no true sense in which there is a pre-existent Son in Jenson’s thought. If the futurity of Christ’s birth is not an ontological reality that can

---

<sup>151</sup> See Oliver Crisp, “Robert Jenson on the Pre-existence of Christ.” *Modern Theology*, 2007, Vol.23 (1), pp. 27-45. See also Simon Gathercole, “Pre-existence, and the Freedom of the Son in Creation and Redemption: An Exposition in Dialogue with Robert Jenson.” *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 2005, Vol.7 (1), pp. 38-51.

<sup>152</sup> Jenson, *Systematic Theology: V.I*, p. 217.

<sup>153</sup> Jenson, *Systematic Theology: V.I*, p. 143.

<sup>154</sup> Jenson, *Systematic Theology: V.I*, p. 141.

become incarnate, neither is the still more elusive antiquity of Christ as a “pattern of movement” an ontological hypostasis which can incarnate itself; just as the unrealized future coming of Christ cannot give rise to Christ, neither can a past which never endured, for *ex nihilo nihil fit*.<sup>155</sup> Nor, finally, does Jenson’s later determination of Christ’s pre-existence in the Paternal relation as source provide any ontological ground, for a relation that does not yet subsist is not a relation; again, from nothing nothing arises.<sup>156</sup> When Jenson claims that the Father’s “relation to Jesus is the condition of the possibility of Jesus’ relation to him,”<sup>157</sup> he again derives existence—an actual relation from a possible relation—from a future which has yet to transpire. And if it is the case that “God the Son was himself conceived when Mary became pregnant,”<sup>158</sup> Jenson’s insistence that the Father, who is the source of the Son, does not subsist apart from the Son, leads him into further problems and seemingly deeper incoherence. “Yet the Father himself does not subsist otherwise than as a relation to the Son.”<sup>159</sup> By this logic either one must, it would seem, admit of a *Logos asarkos*, or else the Father, too, only comes to be when the Son is conceived of Mary. In any event, it is the case for Jenson that the human Christ just is the divine Son; his deity is therefore, arguably, nominal such that Jenson inevitably draws down upon himself the charge of Arianism and adoptionism as some commentators have done.<sup>160</sup> Jenson’s resolute unwillingness to acknowledge any genuine sense in which the Son transcends or precedes the historical man Jesus is the root of all the Christological problems which arise out of his system. His dramatic theology thus seems to end in a host of insurmountable *aporias*.

It can be concluded that Jenson carries the early Moltmann’s event ontology of divinity to its logical extremity. So totalizing is Jenson’s insistence on the dramatic constitution of divinity that he is willing to go so far as deny the *logos asarkos*. In this instance, the realization of divine-human existence is tantamount to the apotheosis of a created human being, not a divine hypostasis. In so absolutely dissolving the immanent

---

<sup>155</sup> Jenson himself later admitted that the description of the Son’s pre-existence as a “pattern of movement” in his *Systematic Theology*, is “hopelessly vague.” “Once More the Logos Asarkos,” p. 132. The pre-existence of the Spirit is similarly problematic for Jenson as Jenson inextricably ties the Spirit’s existence with Israel and the church; see Jenson, *Systematic Theology: V.1*, p. 148. The only remote approximation to Jenson’s thought here is perhaps Schelling’s divine potencies, which become divine personalities in their dynamic involvement in the world process. Nonetheless, Schelling’s process theology is far more developed and metaphysically sophisticated.

<sup>156</sup> Jenson, “Once More on the Logos Asarkos,” p. 133.

<sup>157</sup> Jenson, “Once More on the Logos Asarkos,” p. 133.

<sup>158</sup> Jenson, “Once More on the Logos Asarkos,” p. 130.

<sup>159</sup> Jenson, “Once More on the Logos Asarkos,” p. 133.

<sup>160</sup> See especially George Hunsinger’s extended critique, “Robert Jenson’s Systematic Theology: A Review Essay.” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 2002, Vol.55(2), pp. 161-200.

Trinity into the economic, or, dramatic, Trinity, there is a question if Christology, divine-humanity, is actually possible, for it appears that Christ's divinity has been engulfed by his humanity. Furthermore, in the desire to absolutize the contingent, dramatic history of the divine, an underlying determinism is at work which threatens to undermine and dissolve the fundamental, dynamic principle of Jenson's system. Unmoored from an eternal foundation, it would seem that the dynamic, theandric principle of Jenson's system carries within it its own destruction, for the more he resolves to assert the dramatic constitution of the Trinity, and particularly of divine-humanity, the more his system appears to break down.

### **III. The Alternative of Russian Sophiology**

At the intersection of Christology and theology proper, the Russian theologians wager, over against process theologies, that God be thought of Christocentrically, not through an agonistic association with time that threatens to drag down the immutable, immanent Trinity into the mutable order of finitude, but by positing an eternal, original *theanthropos*. The Russian Sophiologists part ways from the process theology of Moltmann and Jenson in their refusal to disperse the immanent Trinity into time. The economic Trinity is a revelation of the immanent Trinity; God is not constituted by the event of his revelation. The latter serves to reveal what God is in depth, what he is outside of the contingencies of time, which cannot encroach upon eternity. This leads to a different appropriation of German Idealism. Instead of conceiving God as a developing life, as achieving self-realization and, consequently, divine-humanity, in and through dynamic interaction in history, God is instead conceived as a process of *eternal* revelation or manifestation, which has as its central focus, the eternal divine-humanity of God. As Kojève remarks of Solovyov, but which applies equally to Bulgakov: "God does not become God-Man: He is God-Man for all eternity."<sup>161</sup> Moltmann's and Jenson's Christocentric redefinitions of divine being are thus radically different from that attempted by the Russian Sophiologists. Whereas the Russian theologians, in their differing ways, eternalized the Incarnation by positing an eternal Divine-Human Organism, our Lutheran pair of theologians sought to conceive of God in Christocentric terms by temporalizing, to differing degrees, divine being, by identifying God with the specific lived history of Father, Son, and Spirit. For (early) Moltmann and Jenson, God is a process, an event, a pattern of movement. God is a divine-human life not from eternity, but a divine-human life achieved in time, in the living history of Father, Son, and Spirit. Although for (later) Moltmann God is susceptible to time, and achieves a divine-human existence through

---

<sup>161</sup> Kojève, *The Religious Metaphysics of Vladimir Solovyov*, p. 37.

his involvement in time, he can still speak of the Son's eternal existence outside of the incarnation. By contrast, Jenson takes process theology to its logical extreme and posits that there is no Son apart from Christ, no *logos asarkos* in eternity. There is no eternal filial hypostasis, only the man Christ. The divine being is thus absolutely drawn into history, the divine economy constituting divine being. We have seen the potential problems that result from temporalizing Divinity: an unwitting absolutization of the relativity of a divine identity defined by the specific, contingent contours of historical existence, the tragedy of necessity which ties God's self-identity, particularly his divine-humanity, to the evils latent in the historical process, and finally, in Jenson, to Arianism and adoptionism. This is not to cast judgment on process theology *tout court*, but only to indicate some perhaps insurmountable problems involved in these specific iterations, for as we have seen with Russian Sophiology there arises, among others, the profound problems of freedom and corporeality in relation to the concept of God as an eternal, simple, divine-human Organism, as well as the spectre of pantheism and acosmism in the early Solovyov.

Be that as it may, the alternative of Russian Sophiology is that Christocentrism need not entail the dependence of Divinity upon time. With their concept of the eternal divine-human Organism, the Russian Sophiologists arguably circumvent the particular problems that attend a Christocentrism that temporalizes Divinity. The divine-human Organism does not emerge as a process of God's self-realization, but is from eternity the manifested reality of Divinity. There is a caveat, however, with the early Solovyov. Whereas for Bulgakov, God is a divine-human Organism by virtue of a dual ontological constitution, (hypostatic and natural), and is thus entirely independent of created being, Solovyov's divine-human Organism is only actualized by the eternal creation of the multiplicity of human entities that make up the divine world. In a sense then, for Solovyov, God's Christological, divine-human, being is, in a real sense, dependent upon Sophia, and its will. After its eternal fall, the divine-human organism of Sophia must be reconstituted in time. Thus, his system is perhaps an interesting mediation between process theology and Bulgakov's more classical but Christocentric metaphysics of divine being, for while the unity of God's being is eternal and immutable, the full actuality of God's divine-human being is dependent upon Sophia and its election to remain within the unity of the divine-human Organism, or to elect a disintegrated existence outside of divine unity. Nonetheless, in its primordial unity the divine-human Organism is not constituted by time. The enduring significance then of the Russian Sophiologists is that they constructed a Christocentric system that posited the eternity of

divine-humanity. As such, they mark a significant advancement to prior theological tradition—in which there was felt to be a split between the Trinity and Christology, the latter which was often effectively relegated to soteriology—as well an anticipation to that strand of proceeding 20<sup>th</sup> century theology which sought to bring Christology within the sphere of Trinitarian theology by temporalizing Divinity. Despite the problems which afflict the Russian theandric constructions of the divine-human Organism, the remarkable novelty of this theology is the way in which Christ becomes the eternal center of divine being. In its postulation of an eternal divine-humanity, Sophiology brings Christology into the deepest heart of theology enabling it to forge its own Christological path. And it this radical theandricism that lies at the basis of its rethinking of the major theological themes. In the chapters that follow we will explore how Russian Sophiology's theandric logic is determinative for its novel theological vision of creation and redemption.

## Chapter 2: Sophia in Creation: The Divine Ground of Matter and Creaturely Becoming

### Introduction

The implications of Russian Sophiology's concept of God as a divine-human Organism are far reaching, extending over the entire sphere of its theological thought. The divine-humanity of God is the fundamental principle of the Russian Sophiological systems; all theological *loci* orbit around this center, and find their intelligibility in its gravity. In its effort to unfold this principle, Russian Sophiology sought to generate a novel understanding of the Christian narrative of creation and redemption. Having seen the differing ways this principle was expounded in relation to the doctrine of God, we must now turn to consider its impact on the doctrine of creation.

If the problematic of Christology in its connection with theology was answered by recourse to the notion of eternal *theanthropos*, the Russian theologians approach questions concerning creation in a similar fashion. In order to limit the focus of this chapter, we will consider two fundamental and interrelated problems regarding creation, one ancient but enduring and one (relatively) modern: What is the ground of 1) matter, and of 2) the instinctive, dynamic nature of corporeality as an evolving process? While the first was problem posed in antiquity, though according to Sophiology not adequately solved, the second pertains more to modern thought. Both of these issues arise out of an underlying idealism, an ontological priority of mind, prevalent within the history of Christian thought. If God has been almost universally understood to be an incorporeal Intelligence, corporeality and its unconscious, instinctive character have to be explained. Concerning the former, if, as Origen conjectures that, "life without a body is found in the Trinity alone,"<sup>162</sup> and if all existence outside God is corporeal, what then is the ground of the physical order? How does the corporeal creation arise out of divine incorporeality? Is matter to be regarded, with Nyssa and Eriugena, as ultimately immaterial, as comprised of intelligible properties or accidents that only in their concurrence generate corporeality?<sup>163</sup> Is matter, in a more Aristotelian register, merely a principle of individuation whereby universal form is individualized through a receptive substrate (*hyle*)? Even if matter is regarded with Aristotle as an individuating

---

<sup>162</sup> Origen, trans. G.W. Buttersworth, *On First Principles* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2013) II.II.2.

<sup>163</sup> See Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, 24.1-2. in eds. Henry Wace and Philip Schaff, *A Selected Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951), vol. V. Johannes Scottus Eriugena, trans. I.P. Sheldon-Williams, *Periphyseon (The Division of Nature)* (Washington, D.C.: Bellarmin/Dumbarton Oaks, 1987), I. 502B, 479C.

principle, what is the metaphysical basis of this principle? The existence outside God of an eternal, primal matter in the manner of Aristotle's *hypokemenon* or Plato's *me on* would amount to dualism, an autonomous *apeiron* that God merely appropriates but does not create. Yet, on the other hand, if like produces like, is the material creation to be considered a fall from a more original state of intelligibility and incorporeality, as has been ascribed to Origen,<sup>164</sup> and which resurfaces in Eriugena and the early Solovyov? Furthermore, if matter cannot be adequately explained on the basis of Divinity as pure, incorporeal Intelligence, neither can the latter entirely explain the vital, dynamic impulse operative within material nature. What is the ground of the universal inclination that underlies biological operations and which drives speciation? Is it simply divine mind? But every living form shows itself as driven by unconscious instinct, a sort of furtive wisdom unaware of itself, yet carrying out with seeming infallibly an ineffable range of functions and processes that not only cannot be thought, but which precede thought and are incapable of being the product of thought. Were the mind responsible to command the vital processes of life, life would soon be extinct. Logic cannot bring being to life; the impulses that sustain life are not logical, but bio-logical, supra-logical. How then are matter, and its unconscious, instinctive properties to be explained? Is God to be transformed into the unconscious Will of Schopenhauer and Hartmann, which has its manifestation in the material, phenomenal world, or is there another possibility? Is there within God a principle that is analogous to the material and unconscious?

In answer to this whole complex, this chapter will seek to show that the problems of matter and its mutable, instinctive dynamism are given an attempted resolution by the Russian Sophiologists within the context of their concept of God as a divine-human Organism, particularly by recourse to Sophia. Both Solovyov and Bulgakov, in differing ways and in creative engagement with Neoplatonism and German voluntarism, address this double problem by suggesting that there is a principle within God, Sophia, that is analogous to matter and to the impersonal and unconscious (Bulgakov and late Solovyov), or at least which can take on these properties as a negation of the inward unity of the divine-human world of Sophia (early Solovyov). The proposed resolutions to these problematics will be

---

<sup>164</sup> See for example Aquinas in, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, *The Summa Theologica of Saint Thomas Aquinas* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1920), I, q. 65, a. 2. However, it can be noted that in the text previously cited, *De Principis II.II*, Origen raises the question of whether creation was originally rational and incorporeal, yet appears to assert that all existence outside God is corporeal to one degree or another. Whether or not this is due to a redaction of Rufinus, Origen's translator, can be left to the side. An illuminating alternative to the viewpoint that Origen perceived the original creation to be incorporeal is put forth by Daniel Heide, who sees Origen in terms of Aristotelian hylomorphism. See Heide, "The Fate of Bodies in Origen and Eriugena." *Dionysius*, 2018, Vol. XXXVI, pp. 53-65.

explored in the thought of Solovyov and Bulgakov in the second and third sections of this chapter. In order to set these issues of matter and natural process in a broader context, the first section will explore the complex sophiological voluntarism of Jacob Boehme.

The thought of Jacob Boehme, the father of Sophiology, was an important intellectual catalyst not only in the esoteric world of theosophy; it was also the fountainhead for the profound philosophical revolution of German Idealism and voluntarism. It is not without reason that Hegel accorded him the accolade of “the first German philosopher.” Russian Sophiology was both directly and indirectly influenced by Boehme, and as much as the Sophiologists may in some respects seek to distance themselves from his thought (and, in Bulgakov’s case, Berdyaev’s enthusiastic reappropriation of Boehme), his ideas remain the hidden dynamic behind some of their most creative insights and developments. We will devote our attention to Boehme’s voluntarist concept of God as a Will. Particularly, we will look at three aspects of the Will in turn: its primal, impersonal state as the Nothing or *Ungrund*, the Will’s triadic self-begetting, and finally its essential, corporeal manifestation in Sophia. Although, Boehme’s voluntarist, organic concept of God as a theogonic process could have been introduced in the first chapter, it can be seen to form a bridge between it and the second chapter, because of the way in which Boehme’s concept of God introduces a quasi-corporeality and temporality into God which forms the basis of the material, becoming order of creation. This excursion into Boehme’s voluntarism will serve not only to strengthen our argument of the genetic connection between Russian Sophiology and German voluntarism, but also to introduce a thinker whose thought has often been marginalized, and his influence on modern theology and philosophy minimized.

After exploring the Germanic, sophiological voluntarism of Boehme, the second and third sections focus on our two problematics in Russian Sophiology. Concerning the first question, it will be argued that the problem of the ontological ground of matter was posed in antiquity, most clearly and powerfully by Plotinus, and which is taken up by the Russian Sophiologists in earnest (particularly Bulgakov). The corporeal element of creation is of fundamental importance to the Russian theologians, which has been stressed by Oliver Smith’s important study *Vladimir Soloviev and the Spiritualization of Matter*. I intend to further his work in suggesting that this is not only an important theme for Solovyov, but that Bulgakov, more definitively and systematically than Solovyov, explored the nature of materiality through an engagement with Neoplatonism and other sources. Along these lines, it will also be argued that a voluntarist legacy stands behind the Russian reflection on

materiality. Importantly, this critical appropriation of German voluntarism enables Solovyov and Bulgakov to account for matter by reference to a quasi-corporeal principle within the divine-human Organism, Sophia. Regarding Solovyov, it will be argued that in his early period matter has its ground in Sophia, though negatively, as a falling away from inward unity into externalization and disintegration. It will be seen that underlying this is his equation of Sophia, in its eternal, primal state with the anthropological and incorporeal, with the consequence that Solovyov's understanding of the body of God and divine world were mystical rather than corporeal and cosmic. By contrast, it is argued that it is Bulgakov who, more adequately than his predecessor, takes up the question of the ground of matter and attempts to answer it more positively and systematically by conceiving Sophia, the body of God or divine world as archetypal corporeality, or as the impersonal and vital principle within divine being.

This leads to this chapter's second argument: Sophiology's preoccupation with matter and positing of matter in divine Wisdom and in the world soul (created Sophia) also enables the Russian theologians to integrate evolutionary biology into a sophiological synthesis of the creation and redemption of the cosmos. If matter has its ultimate metaphysical reference in a kind of divine materiality (or, in Solovyov's case, loss of incorporeality), so also, again, in addressing the mutable character of the created order as an evolving process, the Russian theologians have recourse to a supratemporal ground in Sophia. Furthermore, it is argued that in connection with the voluntarist and philosophers of Will, the Russian theologians see the evolutionary process as carried forth by means of the preconscious or subconscious instinct of Sophia, or the world soul, and thereby find a determinate place for this voluntarist principle in their thought. Regarding the early Solovyov, it is argued that although eternal stasis is the norm of created being over against temporal process, with his vast syncretic abilities he nevertheless integrates evolutionary process into his sophiological account by positing that the cosmic process has its immediate catalyst in a pre-cosmic fall of Sophia from divine-unity. Evolution then becomes the means of reintegrating exiled and discordant Sophia (now a voluntarist, unconscious principle, the world soul in its blind desire for unity). With its acosmism, however, there are Platonic-Gnostic, as well as pessimistic voluntarist currents, evident in Solovyov's early evolutionary accounts, which Bulgakov sought to overcome. Again it is argued that Bulgakov is more successful than his predecessor. Because for Bulgakov Divine Sophia is fundamentally impersonal and corporeal, rather than

anthropological, it is argued that there is a more affirmative basis for the process of nature, creaturely Sophia, unfolding unconsciously.

Finally, if the infusion of voluntarism into theology is of importance for the way in which it allows the Russian theologians to articulate a theology of matter as a dynamic, evolving corporeality, it must be questioned if the Sophiological reference to supratemporal Sophia, in its idealist aspect as an eternal world of forms which are progressively mirrored in matter, does justice to evolution, particularly to creaturely freedom. Regarding this matter, it will be argued that the underlying voluntarist current of Sophiology must not be overlooked. In its dark, unconscious yearning the generative world-soul strives for form, moves by its hunger to incarnate divine prototypes, which is the creative and relatively free element in the evolutionary process. With its mediating idealist-voluntarist theory of evolution the Russian theologians seek to strike a delicate balance between freedom and necessity, which would then avoid evolution as either a sort of Heracliteanism, or else a lifeless mechanism, for which form is, reductively, either the stability we mentally impose upon the movable flux, or else artificial assemblage.

### **I. Boehme: Divine Will and its Essential Manifestation: The Voluntarist Sophiology of Jacob Boehme**

Just as in some translations of Proverbs 8:30 Sophia is the “architect” of creation, so Jacob Boehme is the architect of modern Sophiology.<sup>165</sup> Accordingly, some of the fundamental elements of Russian Sophiology have their source in Boehme’s profound yet confounding theosophy. In relation to our themes of the divine ground of corporeality and its dynamic becoming, it will be the aim of what follows to bring out the central novelty of Boehme’s radical, sophiological reordering of the concept of divine being: instead of a static, incorporeal Intelligence, Boehme’s God is an Organism, a living, dynamic system of opposing, productive drives that arise out of a primal, self-arising Will. These drives form themselves into a differentiated, divine essence, Sophia, which is the manifestation or body of God. Boehme’s doctrine of God is thus that of a self-engendering Will and its

---

<sup>165</sup> One of the clearest presentations of Boehme’s thought is an older work by Hans Martensen, trans. T. Rhys Evans, *Jacob Boehme: His Life and Teaching, or, Studies in Theosophy* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1885). Influential as well for the following discussion of Boehme is Nikolai Berdyaev, trans. S. Janos with Michael Knetchen, “Studies Concerning Jacob Boehme. Etude I. The Teaching about the Ungrund and Freedom.” *Journal Put*, 1930, No. 20, pp. 47-79. Further, for a very succinct and lucid overview of Boehme’s theosophical system of thought see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, “Jacob Bohme and Christian Theosophy,” in ed. Christopher Partridge, *The Occult World* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), pp. 119-127. On Boehme’s influence in Russia see V. David Zdenek, “The Influence of Jacob Boehme on Russian Religious Thought.” *Slavic Review*, 1962, Vol. 21(1), pp. 43-64.

manifestation. The Will is threefold in its generation, and the manifestation of the Will is its Wisdom, Sophia. “He is the will of the wisdom; the wisdom is his manifestation.”<sup>166</sup> In what follows, we will consider three aspects of Boehme’s voluntarist sophiology: the Will as primal Nothing, the threefold generation of the Will, and the Will’s manifestation in its eternal essence, Sophia. Because Boehme conceives God as a dynamic movement towards manifestation, as a developing spiritual-corporal Organism, his ideas form an important backdrop to this chapter’s central themes. Accordingly, this venture into the *arcanum* of Boehme’s sophiological voluntarism will shed light on the way that Russian Sophiology creatively transformed this voluntarist legacy in its own quest to come to terms with the ontological foundations of matter and natural process.

In Boehme theology has its prius in theogony. Boehme’s theosophy begins not with God, but with the Nothing. “Without nature God is a mystery, understand in the nothing, for without nature is the nothing.”<sup>167</sup> Like the Neoplatonic One or Kabbalistic *Ein Sof*, the Nothing is outside of all manifestation. It is God outside and “before” his Godness, a state in which God is unknown even to himself. In the Nothing no divine subject has stepped forth; there is only an “Abyss,” the “*Ungrund*,” a formless, undifferentiated void in which understanding has not arisen, a darkness which has yet to comprehend the light. Because there is no perception in the *Ungrund*, it is unaware of itself, has yet to feel itself. It is as if it did not exist, since for itself it is as nothing. Of it nothing can be uttered.

If I would say what God is in his depth, then I must say, he is outside of all nature and properties, namely an understanding and original of all essences. The essences are his manifestation, and thereof alone we have the ability to write; and not of the unmanifested God, who, without his manifestation, also were not known to himself.<sup>168</sup>

Motionless and unmanifest to itself, the Nothing lies quiescent before itself and before all thought, for as yet its revealing Word has not sounded forth. It dwells in unencroachable darkness, in the trackless infinite depths which reason cannot penetrate. The *Ungrund*, the Nothing, is the abyss and boundary of reason. In its final effort to illuminate the foundation of all things, thought trembles and is immolated before “the eye of the abyss, the eternal chaos,” into which the light of reason disappears.<sup>169</sup> The *Ungrund* is at once the antinomy and precondition of thought; it is itself unthinkable, an ontological surd, and yet it is the very

---

<sup>166</sup> Jacob Boehme, trans. John Sparrow, *Mysterium Magnum: An Exposition of the First Book of Moses Called Genesis* (San Rafael, CA: Hermetica, 2007), V.1, 1.2.

<sup>167</sup> Boehme, trans. John Elliston, *The Signature of All Things* (CreateSpace Publishing, 2013), 3.2.

<sup>168</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 5.10.

<sup>169</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 1.8.

ground of thinking. “The darkness is the greatest enmity of the light, and yet it is the cause that the light is manifest.”<sup>170</sup>

For Boehme everything begins in darkness, even God. The Abyss is as a dark ground, a non-ground, a primordial womb, out of which the divine life must grow. God is not for him necessary being, for God is that which must be explained. How from the Nothing does God arise? How does divine light shine forth from out of the primal darkness? How does an ordered divine essence and consciousness arise out of undifferentiated chaos and unconsciousness? These are Boehme’s fundamental questions, which arose from his spirit which sought to quench its anguish concerning the origins of evil. Boehme’s answer to theodicy was theogony, the birth of God out of an unnameable, unthinkable Abyss. Our concern here, however, is not with Boehme’s theodicy, but with his novel concept of God and the Nothing from which God arises. Nonetheless, the intractable, tantalizing question of evil led him into uncharted theological depths. He saw within God a dark, irrational principle that is prior to God himself. In antithesis to the dominant Medieval theological ontology, which saw God as pure act, Boehme begins with potency. In contrast to eternal stasis, Boehme posits eternal movement. And in the place of eternal personhood and intellect, there is impersonal, irrational Will. Will is primal in Boehme, the final depth. “The whole of Boehme is saturated with the magic of will, which at its primal-basis is still dark and irrational.”<sup>171</sup>

If in Boehme there lies primordially deeper than God an Abyss in which there is neither perception nor comprehension, he begins not with Intelligence, but with the Abyss as Will. In its titanic aspirations thought wishes to be all, to generate all from itself, but for Boehme, as for Schelling, there lies something primordially deeper than reason and which ultimately eludes its grasp—Will. There can only be a system of reason if there has first been a Will to existence. Only then can reason enter to comprehend what the Will has brought into being. In his momentous upending of idealism, the Will, the Nothing, is for Boehme the first. “For without nature is the nothing, which is an eye of eternity, an abyssal eye, that stands or sees in the nothing, for it is the abyss; and this same eye is a will.”<sup>172</sup> In his incipience, in his genesis, he is not as God, but a dormant, inactive Will. “The *Ungrund* thus is the Nothing, the groundless eye of eternity, yet together with this it is will, without foundation, unfathomable

---

<sup>170</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 5.7.

<sup>171</sup> Berdyaev, “Etude I. The Teaching about the Ungrund and Freedom.”

<sup>172</sup> Boehme, *Signature*, 3.2.

and indeterminate will.”<sup>173</sup> Here in the Abyss, the beginning of all beginnings, there is not God, but a dark, unmoving Will. In the formless and monochromatic void, the Will is blind and indeterminate, a Will that wills nothing. In the Nothing it is not yet an active Will, and knows not that it is a will. In it there is only “eternal stillness and rest.”<sup>174</sup> If the Will is to feel and find itself, and so step forth as God, a desire or hunger must enter into it. For the Will is barren and infertile until desire arises in it, until it determines itself. “And yet no perceivancy could arise in the free spiritual lubet [longing or will], if it brought not itself into a desire, like a hunger. For the nothing hungereth after the something.”<sup>175</sup> Yet having no object outside itself, the Will, in its hunger after something, can only seek itself. “But now there is nothing before the will, where it might find something.”<sup>176</sup> In its going forth, it thus turns into itself. The will “hungereth” after itself, “draweth itself into itself, and comprehends itself, and bringeth itself from abyss into byss.”<sup>177</sup> The Will thus finds its beginning in itself; in its instinctive longing for itself the impassible and insensate Will is brought into motion. Here in this darkful movement within the boundless Abyss there stirs the first seeds of life.

Though in much theological tradition desire is a privation, a lack which cannot be ascribed to a perfect God, for Boehme desire is the very essence of Divinity. “The primal-basis of being is a ravenous and hungry will.”<sup>178</sup> Apart from divine eros or longing there is only the Nothing, the Abyss, a Will that wills nothing. “For in the nothing the will would not be manifest to itself, wherefore we know that the will seeks itself, and finds itself in itself, and its seeking is a desire, and its finding is the essence of desire.”<sup>179</sup> Desire is the essence of life; it is what sets the divine theogony in motion; it is what drives God out of eternal indolence, and time out of eternity. Unlike the Neoplatonic One beyond which all manifestation and motion is as a decline, for Boehme the Abyss, in its occultation and inhibition, represents a state of imperfection and privation of “eternal life,... which cannot be in the stillness.”<sup>180</sup> To enter into motion and manifestation there must arise a hunger, a longing, which is the “cure” of the deadly inhibition that subsists in “the still eternity.”<sup>181</sup> In the arousing of the divine will God emerges out of the nothingness, out of the restful silence of the eternal Mystery. “We understand that an eternal will arises in the nothing, to introduce

---

<sup>173</sup> Berdyaev, “Etude I. The Teaching about the Ungrund and Freedom.”

<sup>174</sup> Boehme, *Signature*, 2.8.

<sup>175</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 3.4-5.

<sup>176</sup> Boehme, *Signature*, 3.2.

<sup>177</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 3.5.

<sup>178</sup> Berdyaev, “Etude I. The Teaching about the Ungrund and Freedom.”

<sup>179</sup> Boehme, *Signature*, 2.9.

<sup>180</sup> Boehme, *Signature*, 2.18.

<sup>181</sup> Boehme, *Signature*, 2.18.

the nothing into something, that the will might find, feel, and behold itself. For in the nothing the will would not be manifest to itself.”<sup>182</sup> With the introduction of a voluntarist principle into Divinity, and eternal process along with it, Boehme’s transforms the concept of God from that of an incorporeal Intelligence into that of an Organism. This will become clearer as we now turn to consider the Will as Trinity, or Subject, as well its manifestation in its corporeal essence or body, Sophia.

If Boehme fundamentally thinks of God as a self-engendering Will, his doctrine of the Trinity recounts the birth of God as a threefold self-generation, or manifestation, of the Will. “In this eternal generation we are to understand three things, namely, 1. An eternal will. 2. An eternal mind of the will. 3. The egress from the will and mind, which is a spirit of the will and mind.”<sup>183</sup> Boehme’s voluntarism must be stressed here. His Trinitarian doctrine is that of a threefold Will, not of three divine persons. “Here we cannot say with any ground that God is three Persons, but he is threefold in his eternal generation.”<sup>184</sup> His concept of the three hypostases is neither that of opposed relations, nor of causal emanations or originations. He was unconcerned with the pressing medieval trinitarian question of the preceding centuries: of how to preserve and conceive personal distinction within essential identity. Nor, as with certain strands of modern theology, are the hypostases subjects or agencies. He does not depict a Trinity of persons who share a life a kenotic self-giving as in von Balthasar, or in Bulgakov’s sophiology; further less will one find anything like a social Trinity in him. The idea of subjective personhood, in Boehme’s concept of God, applies only to the dynamic, triadic generation of the Will as a Subject or Spirit. Boehme, the proto German Idealist, understands the Trinity to describe God’s triadic self-emergence as a conscious Will. God is for Boehme fundamentally a Will, or Spirit, that generates and manifests itself. The primal Will itself is what Boehme terms the Father. “The Father is first the will of the abyss: He is outside of all nature or beginnings.”<sup>185</sup> The Son, as “the first eternal beginning in the will,” is the Will in its power of self-conception, its Mind.<sup>186</sup> “And the lubet [longing] is the conceived power of the will, or of the Father, and it is his Son.”<sup>187</sup> Finally, Boehme describes the Spirit: “the egress of the will and mind is the power and spirit;”<sup>188</sup> or, in other words, the Spirit is Will-Mind in its operation or act of manifestation. Ostensibly, Boehme’s account of

---

<sup>182</sup> Boehme, *Signature*, 2.8-9.

<sup>183</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 1.3.

<sup>184</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 7.11.

<sup>185</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 7.6.

<sup>186</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 7.7.

<sup>187</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 7.7.

<sup>188</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 1.4.

the Trinity cannot be pressed into prior concepts. Though his thought can be seen as a variant on psychological models of the Trinity, which have their roots in Augustine, Boehme's concept of the Trinity introduces something revolutionary and novel, namely non-rational volition and process. His account does not assume divine consciousness, for the Will of the Abyss is unconscious; he begins with a blind, volitional principle, a primal will dark and irrational. He does not merely seek to illumine the triune structures of Divinity, but to unearth how those very structures came to be. Here we have not static, impassible Intelligence, but a dynamic process of emergent consciousness and agency. In other words, his concept of Divinity is that of an Organism in its coming to be, of a primal drive or Will in its dynamic, triadic process of unfolding itself as Mind and Spirit. Boehme's account proceeds still further. He does not only recount how the Will generates itself and finds itself as Mind and Spirit, but also how it generates itself into a formed essence or nature. For God is not only subjective Will, but also an objective essence, which manifests Will. The divine Organism is not only Spirit but also nature, a corporeal body out of which or in which Spirit arises and manifests itself.<sup>189</sup>

Having considered the divine Spirit as a triune, self-begetting Will, we must now consider the essential manifestation of the Spirit, its nature or body. "The Trinity is first rightly understood in his eternal manifestation; where he manifesteth himself through the eternal nature."<sup>190</sup> If, according to Boehme, God is a triadic Will, which manifests itself to itself, there is a distinction between the subjective Will and its objective manifestation, between the agent of manifesting and that which is manifested. Boehme calls the manifested divine nature Wisdom, or Sophia. "Wisdom is his manifestation."<sup>191</sup> Although the esoteric cobbler develops his concept of Sophia anthropologically, as the future human world which God sees and loves from eternity which moves him to create, we are here only focused on Sophia's theological aspect as the essential manifestation of the triune Will. According to Boehme the sophianic divine essence is, in relation to the triune Will or Spirit, considered as a body.

---

<sup>189</sup> Along these lines Martensen says: "It is Boehme's intention to reconcile idealism and realism in the conception of God, to apprehend in God at the same time an ideal and a real side, an aspect of spirit and an aspect of Nature, an inward and an outward. For inasmuch as it holds true for every being that this dualism is found within it, must not this also apply in the most eminent degree to the Being of Beings, to God?" Hans Martensen, *Jacob Boehme*, p. 42.

<sup>190</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 7.12.

<sup>191</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 1.2.

God is a spirit, and as subtle as a thought or will, and nature is his corporeal essence, understand the eternal nature.”<sup>192</sup>

The manifested powers of God do form themselves into an external degree, namely, into an essence or corporeality; to speak in reference to the spirit, whereas we must understand only a spiritual essence, but yet corporeal or essential in reference to the spirit of the powers.<sup>193</sup>

As the soul is in the body and reveals itself in the flesh’s essence... Gods Wisdom is the outspoken being by which the power and Spirit of God... reveals itself in form.<sup>194</sup>

Wisdom is God’s revelation and the Holy Spirit’s corporeality; the body of the Holy Trinity.<sup>195</sup>

Given that Boehme’s thought is thoroughly dynamic he was not only concerned to unearth how the structures of the triune Will came to be but also its essence, Sophia. If Boehme describes the process of the Will’s emergence as incorporeal Spirit, there is also the corporeal development, wherein the undifferentiated essence becomes a formed body possessing sensitive and intellective faculties. However, these should not be thought of as two separate processes. Just as it can be said of a human being that its body and mind are inextricably woven together in their development, so also the incorporeal Will or Spirit does not arise without its corporeal nature, Sophia. In the formation of the one lies the formation of the other. Boehme’s thought is concrete. The Will as Mind and Spirit cannot exist without a corporeal medium whereby it might manifest itself. In fact, the corporeal essence can be said to be ontologically prior to the emergence of Spirit, for in Boehme the darkness precedes the light. Before there is God as Spirit, there is the Abyss out of which it must hover. The divine essence is the ground of the Will’s emergence into perception and intellection. The Will, as it flies from itself towards something, comes to itself, finds itself, in the essence. But how did the formed essence come to be?

Everything for Boehme is set in motion by a dark Will or blind longing, which desires to set aside its nothingness to become something, to achieve form and determinacy. Since the primal Will is outside of nature, and is as nothing, its initial transcendental act is to become a Will to something, to essentialize itself. “The will doth therefore introduce itself into substance and essence that it might be manifest to itself.”<sup>196</sup> The divine essence is said to be composed of powers, properties, or forms, which in their dynamic interaction bring order and form into the undifferentiated essence. According to Boehme there are precisely seven properties of the divine essence, and he recounts them in laborious and—due to their

---

<sup>192</sup> Boehme, *Signature*, 3.4.

<sup>193</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 6.4

<sup>194</sup> Quotation of Boehme from Judith Deutsch Kornblatt, *Divine Sophia: The Wisdom Writings of Vladimir Solovyov* (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), p. 72.

<sup>195</sup> Quotation of Boehme from Kornblatt, *Divine Sophia*, p. 72.

<sup>196</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 4.9.

alchemical ancestry—often bewildering detail. What is important to note is that the “seven forms,” which, “are altogether only the manifestations of God,” are described as the process of the eternal emergence of God from the Abyss.<sup>197</sup> As the manifestation of God, Sophia mirrors forth what is eternally concealed in the undifferentiated Abyss. Through an eternal, heptadic movement in which opposing drives of dark and light principles combat, all that sleeps in the Will of the Abyss is brought forth into living manifestation. Within the play of the seven powers the incorporeal Will finds and beholds itself in the corporeal essence that it has formed, Sophia. We can briefly recount this sevenfold formation of the divine Organism, of the Will’s emergence into perception and intellection in Sophia, which serves as the body or organ of the Will, its medium by which it manifests itself.<sup>198</sup>

The Will’s triadic generation in the heptadic formation of the essence, begins with darkness. The first three principles are of darkness and compose a “dark world” within Divinity, in which the Will is not yet as Mind and Spirit. The initial principle is one of harshness or wrathfulness, “the great darkness of the abyss.”<sup>199</sup> It is a power which contracts the essence into an indomitable hardness. As such it is the cause of “substance and weight.”<sup>200</sup> The second power, which strives against the first, is bitterness or compunction; in its enmity against the first it contrives to break up the harshness with its compunction. It is this power which “is the beginning of motion, stirring and life.”<sup>201</sup> “For the nothing is still without motion, but the perturbation makes the nothing active.”<sup>202</sup> These powers are as opposed wills which fly in antithetical directions, so that the essence is as a kingdom of darkness locked in on itself, whirling in eternal antipathy and madness. From these dark powers, in their separation from the powers of light, derive the devils, who made these powers their center. These powers would remain in eternal deadlock if their turbulence did not produce a third power. “These both mutually circulate in themselves and out of themselves, and yet cannot go any whither.”<sup>203</sup> Yet in the antinomy that arises in the Abyss, a third power, anguish, is born. It too is of the dark world, for its essence is to feel the enmity

---

<sup>197</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 6.22.

<sup>198</sup> “All essence is nothing else but the manifested God.” Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, 6.7. For an excellent, extended treatment on the sevenfold development or evolution of the eternal nature see Howard H. Brinton, *The Mystic Will: Based on a Study of the Philosophy of Jacob Boehme* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930), ch. V.

<sup>199</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 3.9.

<sup>200</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 3.16.

<sup>201</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 3.10.

<sup>202</sup> Boehme, *Signature*, 2.21.

<sup>203</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 3.16.

of the opposed wills: “the one will into itself, and the other will out of itself.”<sup>204</sup> Here the essence, or the Will of the essence, begins to perceive itself. “It is the origin of distinction, or differentiation whereby the powers are, each in itself, mutually manifest; also the origin of the senses and of the mind.”<sup>205</sup> The beginning of distinction and sensation is here one of infernal hellishness, for as yet the powers are locked in themselves, in the anguishing rage that is born of their enmity. “And it is the greatest unquietness in itself, like a raging madness: and is itself a horrible anguish.”<sup>206</sup>

The movement continues on, for the divine life is a “kingdom of joy,” though its roots are sunk deep in the dark world, from which it has sprung. “The wrathfulness and painful source is the root of joy, and the joy is root of the enmity of the dark wrathfulness: so that there is a contrarium.”<sup>207</sup> The divine life is one of balance, an equilibrium of forces that sustain and mutually reinforce each other. Like an alchemist who tries to lay hold of the highest essence from the lowest, that which is light in God first arises out of darkness, “for the eternal is magical.”<sup>208</sup> Therefore, in God the darkness always remains, though its properties are made spiritual. This begins with the fourth power, which introduces the Will into the light world made up of the last three powers. The fourth power stands between the dark and light worlds, and from it the outward world is born. But in the inward world of God, the kingdom of dark powers is transformed into a kingdom of light through the emergence of the fourth power, fire. In the fire the harshness and wrath of the dark world is quenched and mollified so that the longing or will becomes meek. “The will hath here re-conceived itself to go again out of the anguish into the liberty.”<sup>209</sup> Here spiritual life begins. “The fire, in its devoration, changeth the grossness of the first amassed essence into a spirit.”<sup>210</sup> “The true life is first manifest in the fourth form.”<sup>211</sup> It is here that God is first truly “sensitive and intellective.”<sup>212</sup> And it is here then that the Will conceives itself as Mind and as Spirit. The essence is further spiritualized in the fifth form of love, the beginning of the light world, wherein all powers or properties are said to enter into one another and brought into intimate unity. “And there when one tasteth, smelleth, feeleth, heareth and seeth the other in the essence, they do embrace each other in their holy conjunction, wherein then the real divine

---

<sup>204</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 3.15.

<sup>205</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 3.11.

<sup>206</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 3.16.

<sup>207</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 4.19.

<sup>208</sup> Boehme, *Signature*, 2.20.

<sup>209</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 3.24.

<sup>210</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 5.17.

<sup>211</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 3.19.

<sup>212</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 3.18.

kingdom of joy consisteth.”<sup>213</sup> Whereas in the beginning of the dark world the longing was blind and the essence indistinct, here, in the light world, there is comprehension and differentiation. The essence is transmuted still higher in the sixth power of sound by which the powers know each other still more deeply. The sixth power, wherein all powers are contained” is “the audible word of all powers.”<sup>214</sup> Here all powers are said to “penetrate each other,... mutually awaken and know each other.”<sup>215</sup> It is a “conceived... life-sound, or understanding of all differentiation.”<sup>216</sup> Finally, the seventh power is one of spiritual corporeality wherein all powers are brought together into a formed essence. “The seventh is the formed essence of the powers, namely a manifestation of the powers: what the first six are in the spirit, that the seven is in a comprehensible essence, as a mansion and house of all the rest, or as a body of the spirit wherein the spirit worketh, and playeth with itself.”<sup>217</sup> In the final apotheosis of all powers they become the spiritual body of God. The once dark, wrathful essence has become a spiritual body of love and joy, the medium and manifestation of the divine Spirit in the light world.

Boehme’s account of the Will’s triune self-generation and its manifestation in Sophia, the divine essence, inaugurates an important development in theological thought. In Boehme Sophia becomes a metaphysical fixture of divine being; it is in Boehme that Sophia becomes dislodged from its strict Christological signification and becomes an ontological principle of divine reality. The dynamic nature of the Will as self-grounding and self-conceiving gives way for the development of the concept of the divine essence, which had largely been left undeveloped in prior thought. Sophia, in Boehme, becomes the site of the divine manifestation or intra-trinitarian revelation of Will. Furthermore, it is conceived as a corporeal manifestation, a body in relation to the triune Spirit. And, as has been seen, the relation between the triadic, hypostatic principle in Divinity and its nature or essence, between the triune Spirit and Sophia, became an all-important feature of Russian Sophiology with its explicitly developed concept of God as a divine-human Organism. Boehme’s sophiology already hints in this direction. Not only is Sophia the image of humanity, which God loves and creates from eternity (temporality is a fall for Boehme); Boehme gestures in the direction of Bulgakov in conceiving Sophia, in its essential, corporeal aspect as the body

---

<sup>213</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 5.4.

<sup>214</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 5.18, 6.19.

<sup>215</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 5.14.

<sup>216</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 5.17. Perhaps there is an echo here of Kabbalistic mysticism in which linguistic and anthropological elements are combined.

<sup>217</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 6.20.

of God. He goes so far as to describe the divine essence or body, albeit in overly anthropomorphic terms, as having pentavalent senses.

The true divine essence, (understand essence, and not the spirit of God), is nothing else but the understanding manifested, or the formation of the powers; and it consists in the desire, that is, in the love-desire, where one power doth experimentally and knowingly taste, smell, feel, see and hear another.<sup>218</sup>

Boehme's thought is, as we have already seen, highly concrete. For him the Will cannot be as Mind and Spirit if it does not have a corporeal medium by which to exercise its faculties of perception and intellection. He thinks of God as an anthropomorphic Organism that comes into being from the Nothing. Instead of a static incorporeal Intelligence, God is for Boehme an Organism, a Will whose essence is dynamically formed by tumultuous and luminous powers into a spiritual corporeality.

The dynamic principle in Boehme's thought led him to a concept of God as an Organism assembling itself, a concrescence of unconscious drives and forces that form into an essence so that the Will comes into perception and comprehension. There is an irreducible dynamism in Boehme's thought. "His understanding of God was to the highest degree dynamic."<sup>219</sup> With the introduction of the notion of God as Will and of its manifestation in Sophia, Boehme constructs a novel concept of divine being as a dynamic, developing life. "The tremendous significance of Boehme is in this, that after the dominance of Greek philosophy and Medieval Scholasticism with their static concept of God, he then introduces a dynamic principle into the understanding of God, i.e. he sees an inner life within God."<sup>220</sup> The revolution of Boehme is that, in contrast to the pervasive and normative theological-philosophical tradition that placed God beyond all potency as the *actus purus*, God is, for Boehme, a dynamic, albeit eternal, process of self-development and self-emergence.<sup>221</sup> He refuses to see God in the impassibility of the Abyss. If God is to be a life, the Will must be

---

<sup>218</sup> Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, V.1, 6.2.

<sup>219</sup> Berdyaev, "Etude I. The Teaching about the Ungrund and Freedom."

<sup>220</sup> Berdyaev, "Etude I. The Teaching about the Ungrund and Freedom."

<sup>221</sup> Although Boehme is adamant that God's birth is eternal, the Abyss is nonetheless a real principle or state out which God ceaselessly comes forth. On the eternal movement of Boehme's theogony see Martensen, *Jacob Boehme*, pp. 53-56. On this theme Berdyaev also states: "But the theogony does not at all signify that God has a beginning, that He arises within time; it does not mean that He comes about to be within the world process, as with Fichte or Hegel; it signifies that inner eternal life of God reveals itself as a dynamic process, as a tragedy within eternity, as a struggle with the darkness of non-being." Berdyaev, "Etude I. The Teaching about the Ungrund and Freedom."

driven out of the still eternity. “Eternal life... cannot be in the stillness.”<sup>222</sup> “An unstirring God, God as pure act, is God as a concept, and not God as life.”<sup>223</sup>

Boehme’s concept of God is momentous in the history of theology and philosophy. His is a revolutionary system in which static idealism is entirely upended in dynamic voluntarism. Instead of an Intelligence that possesses all ideas or forms in ineluctable, logical, and necessary relation, Boehme’s God is an Organism, a living system, in which divine life, feeling and consciousness emerge out of elemental, opposing drives. In Boehme there are no stabilities, no hegemonic, intelligible forms which stand outside and beyond the flux of becoming. Everything has arisen; God and the forms which comprise Sophia, which themselves are the eternal foundation of creation, are derived from a source that is unconscious, a blind Will. The source of reason is unreason. The intelligible descended from the unintelligible, the formed from the formless. It is a system, if it can indeed be called a system, of pure, boundless freedom and potency, and thus it represents the bane of all rationalist, deductive systems, for the primal act of freedom cannot be derived from thought. In terms of ontological priority, the Will precedes consciousness. The transcendental self-engendering of the Will and its election to create is not a deducible system of incontrovertible logic, for everything in Boehme depends upon Will, and the emergence of desire in the Will. God is because there arose in the eternal Nothing a Will to arise out of the abyss. In Boehme God is an eternal theogony, an eternal birth of Will. Before consciousness appears in God there is but a primordially indeterminate, unconscious Will, which eternally conceives itself and thereby emerges into consciousness. The concept of Divinity presented here is not a noetic system of ideas or forms, a *cosmos noetos* of rational and categorical relationships, but a living integration of powers and drives which generates itself as a reflexive Will, a Spirit that goes forth from itself. “Yet a Spirit does nothing but ascend, flow, move, and continually generate itself... For a Spirit is a like a Will, Sense, [or Thought] which rises up, and in its Rising beholds, perfects, and generates itself.”<sup>224</sup>

At the root of Boehme’s dynamic system is a Will to life, a primal, unconscious desire of the divine to manifest itself, whereby the Will achieves perception and intellection through its essence, Sophia. He saw a dark foundation, an Abyss, that lay deeper than God himself. The Will of the *Ungrund* is as a primordial womb out of which Godhood emerges:

---

<sup>222</sup> Boehme, *Signature*, 2.18.

<sup>223</sup> Berdyaev, “Etude I. The Teaching about the Ungrund and Freedom.”

<sup>224</sup> Jacob Boehme, trans. John Sparrow, *The Three Principles of the Divine Essence* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), 1.3.

perception, comprehension, agency, properties and form are generated from the blind, unconscious Will. All that is characteristic of God is emergent; that which is highest arose out of the lowest. Such a radically voluntaristic system had not been attempted before. Consequently, Boehme cannot be fully grasped by that which preceded him, but only by the development which has sprung from his pregnant thought. Though there are precedents for Boehme's thought, such as Kabbalism with its theosophy of the *sefirot* as the emanations of *Ein Sof*, his thought is not reducible to the crucible of intellectual elements from the past. Out of the depths of his extraordinary genius there emerged something fundamentally new. Boehme inaugurated an important development in theology and philosophy. Yet Boehme himself was limited by the novelty of his intuitions and by the conceptual (alchemical) framework with which he expressed his thought. The humble cobbler's ecstatic utterances have an esoteric quality; they possess the character of a private revelation, and thus at times bear an imponderable property. Boehme is an amanuensis of Sophia; he writes what he sees in his mind's enlightened eye. He is a recounter of heavenly Wisdom, a recorder of lofty intuitions that have yet to be assimilated into stringent rational categories. Despite Boehme's attempts to systemize his sophianic thoughts they remain enigmatic and thus esoteric. Nonetheless, Boehme's vast and visionary writings were a trove of inspiration for later thought, especially German thought. "Boehme is perhaps the greatest genius among German thinkers. Together with Eckhart, he represents the secret dynamic of the philosophy of Hegel and Schelling, of F. Baader and the romantics."<sup>225</sup> Boehme's esoteric writings catalyzed a sophianic project, a systematic effort to transport elements of his sophiological theosophy into a rational philosophy. This philosophical project was taken up most notably by Schelling, Berdyaev (one of Boehme's most ardent supporters), and by the Russian Sophiologists. In what follows, it will be argued that in diverse ways the Russian theologians critically infused within their own systems the Boehmean legacy of sophiological voluntarism, mediated through German idealism, especially Schelling, and the later German voluntarists, Schopenhauer and Hartmann, in order to come to grips with the questions of the foundations of corporeality and becoming in the world process.

## **II. Solovyov: The Various Faces of Sophia: Incorporeal and Eternal, Corporeal and Becoming**

---

<sup>225</sup> Sergius Bulgakov, trans. Patrick Thompson, O. Fielding Clarke, Xenia Braikевич, *Sophia: The Wisdom of God: An Outline of Sophiology* (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1993), p. 6. In another work Bulgakov states: his [Boehme's] spirit lives in the metaphysical systems of Schelling and Hegel, Schopenhauer and Hartmann." Sergius Bulgakov, trans. Thomas Allan Smith, *Unfading Light: Contemplations and Speculations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012), pp. 170-171.

If in Boehme the dynamism of life is transported back into God conceived as a theogonic process, an emergent Organism, Russian Sophiology sought to utilize Boehme's voluntarist Sophiology, whilst purging it of the idea of an impersonal Nothing or *Ungrund*, a primal *Urgottheit*, lurking behind or before God. Although there is in the Russian Sophiologists the idea of an eternal intra-divine revelation or self-determination, they are, unlike Boehme, Schelling and Berdyaev, unwilling to ascribe ontological priority to the impersonal, to the indeterminate, dark abyss of meonic freedom.<sup>226</sup> They proceed from the concept of God not as an emergent Organism, but as an eternal, divine-human Organism. The Trinity, in its eternal divine-humanity, is the ultimate depth, the final mystery for Russian Sophiology. Yet this did not preclude the Russian theologians from a critical infusion of Boehme's voluntarist Sophiology in a variety of ways, and an important concern of the remainder of this chapter will be to highlight the divergent ways that Solovyov and Bulgakov incorporate the Germanic, voluntarist tradition into their thought concerning the doctrine of creation.

In the case of Solovyov, we will trace the logic by which he arrives at a concept of Sophia that is not only eternal, but also anthropological and incorporeal. It will be argued that these characteristics of Sophia, in its primordial state, ultimately determine the way in which Solovyov integrates evolutionary process into his account of creation, and also determine his fundamental attitude towards the material order. In fact, it will be seen that evolutionary process and materiality are inextricably bound together as conditions which arise in the fall of Sophia out of the unity of the divine world. If materiality and becoming are perversions of an original, incorporeal stasis, then it is here that the Germanic voluntarist tradition comes to the forefront in Solovyov's early thought as an ally. Cast into the external, material world, Sophia, now the instinctive, unconscious will of the world soul, strives to regain its lost unity and human form through an evolutionary process. Concerning this cosmic process, we will briefly trace how all-unity is regained through a temporal process after the universal human organism of Sophia is ruptured. Finally, we will explore some resulting theological consequences of Solovyov's aversion to spatio-temporality, and by logical extension, to materiality.

Because Solovyov's understanding of creation, in his *Lectures*, is inextricably intertwined with his ontology of God as a divine-human Organism, we have already presented much of his doctrine of creation. In that work creation is fundamentally conceived

---

<sup>226</sup> See for example Sergius Bulgakov, trans. Boris Jakim, *The Comforter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), pp. 59-60, 361; Sergius Bulgakov, trans. Boris Jakim, *The Lamb of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), pp. 96-97.

as a divine world of human entities eternally created and united in Christ, forming an integrated, universal organism—Sophia. The concept of Sophia as eternal and anthropological derives from two major premises or assumptions. First, Solovyov argues that because God is eternal his act of creation must necessarily be eternal. Second, he argues that eternal creation cannot be a passive object, since the actuality of God depends upon a subject that receives God's action. "God's actuality, based upon God's activity, presupposes a subject that receives this activity, namely humanity, and presupposes it *eternally*, since God's activity is eternal."<sup>227</sup> By this logic Solovyov concludes that Sophia is eternal and anthropological.

We have now to discuss another important characteristic of Sophia, its incorporeality. Apart from the indisputable Platonic influence on Solovyov, he appears to arrive at the incorporeality of Sophia in light of his concern with unity and multiplicity in the divine-human Organism. Sophia is said to be an organic, internal unity that contains the universal multiplicity of human entities. In its eternal state the active Logos, or Christ, as the personal expression of the divine-human Organism, communicates all-unity to Sophia, his body. As such, Sophia, or the multiplicity of human entities, is primordially integrated into the all unity of the divine-human Organism. This unity is inward and spiritual rather than external and material. The divine world of Sophia is integrated by an "inner unity and harmony,"<sup>228</sup> in contrast to the disintegration of "the natural, material world" characterized by "external, material separateness."<sup>229</sup> Accordingly, in his discussion of the divine world there is no mention of material entities but only human entities, which are conceived as immaterial intelligences that together form the individual-universal human organism. Thus, regarding visible, material humanity Solovyov speaks of the "illusoriness of its material being"<sup>230</sup> in relation to its true reality as ideal and "intelligible essences."<sup>231</sup>

If the divine world of Sophia is immaterial and exclusively anthropological, how then does the material world and all its gradations arise? And if the divine world is eternal, how does the temporal world come to be? In Solovyov's early thought the primordial unity of creation is predicated on the will of Sophia: it can subordinate itself to the Logos and so subsist within the divine unity, or, it can aspire, in godlike pretension, to subsist from itself

---

<sup>227</sup> Vladimir Solovyov, trans. Peter Zouboff, *Lectures on Divine-Humanity* (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1995), p. 114.

<sup>228</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 124.

<sup>229</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 125.

<sup>230</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 150.

<sup>231</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 119.

and fall outside of eternal all-unity. This transcendental determination of Sophia is where the elements of corporeality and temporality enter into his thought, at least in the *Lectures*. Although the universal organism of human entities eternally orbits Christ, who is its unifying center, it can also fall out of its primordial unity with divinity, “out of the all-one center of divine being,” such that it must recover unity through a temporal, evolutionary process.<sup>232</sup> Whereas, in the absolute, divine-human Organism the multiplicity of human entities of the divine world exist immaculately in a living, organic all-unity, this multiplicity of the universal organism can also exist, outside of divine unity, in disunity. The fall will be the topic of the next chapter, but here it is necessary to foreshadow that fuller discussion. We will focus on two topics: the emergence of the material, natural order in the disintegration of the divine world, and the temporal, cosmic process, which aims to reintegrate the eternal, divine world.

According to Solovyov, the physical, natural world is “something untrue, something that ought not to be.”<sup>233</sup> In contrast to the necessity of the eternal world, the temporal world is not a necessary emanation as, for instance, in Plotinus’ thought though the early Solovyov does share his acosmism, for the realm of corporeality represents in both a regressive movement away from the indivisible unity of eternity. In Solovyov’s thought corporeality comes to be when the unity of the universal human organism breaks apart, when in its egoism Sophia desires “to possess it [the all] *from itself*, like God,” and “assert[s] itself outside God.”<sup>234</sup> In fact, matter is for the early Solovyov, coincident with egoism, a manifestation of perverse will. In the vein of Schopenhauer and especially Hartmann, matter is understood with the voluntarist tradition as will.

According to the usual conception, matter is a complex of atoms characterized by force of attraction and repulsion. But a material atom, as was shown previously and as Hartmann explains in detail, is something completely absurd. Matter is therefore reducible to atomic forces. What for another, from the outside, is force, in itself, from within, is will. And if it is will, then it is also representation.<sup>235</sup>

---

<sup>232</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 133.

<sup>233</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 121. The force of this statement is not diminished by a later one in which Solovyov states: “Before, as the spiritual center of the cosmos, human beings embraced in their souls all of nature, lived one life with it, loved and understood it, and therefore governed it (*Lectures*, p. 143).” This statement is not in contradiction with his overriding dualistic aversion to materiality in the *Lectures*, and must be understood in context. The larger discussion here is the recapitulation of the fall of the world soul by humanity, who fell under the same error and “power of the material principle (*Lectures*, p. 143).” As the principle of consciousness humanity held possession of “the formative principles” of external nature in their “inner unity,” and so was to be the organizer of external nature, leading it back into its original, inward unity.

<sup>234</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 133.

<sup>235</sup> Vladimir Solovyov, trans. Boris Jakim, *The Crisis of Western Philosophy: Against the Positivists* (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1996) 90-91.

Furthermore, over against the positive attitude towards matter in the voluntarism of Boehme and Schelling, the early Solovyov shares—though he categorically rejects their nihilism—the acosmism of the philosophers of pessimism, for nature as materialized egoism or a perverse will represents a falling away. “The external material separateness and particularity that characterize natural life and constitute the natural world in its opposition to the divine world, are, as we know, a direct consequence of internal discord and self-assertion, or egoism.”<sup>236</sup> Matter is the consequence of primal act of egoism, which separates each thing from all else and results in the disintegration and externalization of the divine world. In its falling away, Sophia loses its inward, intelligible character and calcifies into the outward, material world.<sup>237</sup> It becomes a material principle, formless and indeterminate, *prima materia*. The incorporeal, intelligible entity of Sophia is reduced in its fall to a corporeal, impersonal will, the world soul, which, following Schopenhauer’s blind Will and Hartmann’s unconscious Will-Idea, operates as an instinctive drive, an unconscious “blind force.”<sup>238</sup> A voluntarist, corporeal principle arises in the place evacuated by the anthropological organism of Sophia, though its yearning is to be reconstituted through time to what it was in eternity. This principle is, in Boehmean terms, as a hunger, a driving impetus to achieve form and determinacy, as well as conscious agency. The will of the world soul expressed in external corporeality thus functions as the ground of the dynamic process of Sophia’s rebirth. The passive world soul is as matter in relation to the active Logos: “The divine principle constitutes the active, determining force that receives the ideal principle and gives to what is

---

<sup>236</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, pp. 125-126. It is because of dualistic statements such as this in the *Lectures* that I believe Gallaher is incorrect to see in Solovyov’s *Lectures* a positive attitude towards corporeality. This, I think, is to read Solovyov’s later thought concerning the spiritualization of matter into his earlier thought. See Brandon Gallaher, “The Christological Focus of Vladimir Solov’ev’s Sophiology.” *Modern Theology*, 2009, Vol.25 (4), pp. 631-632. Oliver Smith observes a development in Solovyov’s attitude towards matter between *La Sophia*, which sees the eschatological “destruction of matter and the re-communication of humanity with the spiritual realm,” and the *Critique of Abstract Principles*, which posits the transformation or spiritualization of matter. *Vladimir Solovyov and the Spiritualization of Matter* (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2011), p. 35. Sergei Soloviev, Vladimir’s nephew, also corroborates this transition from a “negative attitude to factual reality” in the 1870’s in which “he considered the task of philosophy and theurgy to be the dematerialization of the material world,” to a positive attitude in the 1880’s which posited the spiritualization of matter. Quoted in Smith, *Vladimir Solovyov and the Spiritualization of Matter*, p. 35, fn. 53.

<sup>237</sup> Teresa Obolovitch notes in passing in *Faith and Science in Russian Religious Thought* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 82, that the fall of Sophia in Solovyov’s *Lectures* is conceived as its materialization. Gallaher sees Sophia in the *Lectures* as an “Ur-matter,” though he recognizes that Solovyov sees the body of God “in non-sensuous terms.” “The Christological Focus of Vladimir Solov’ev’s Sophiology,” p. 631-632. In my view, it is precisely the anthropological, incorporeal character of Sophia that precludes Sophia from being in any sense a *positive* foundation for matter. Materiality is a fall in the *Lectures*; it is Sophia reversed and externalized as the loss of its internal, integral unity.

<sup>238</sup> “Like a blind force the world soul strives to attain all-unity unconsciously; it strives toward it as toward something other.” *Lectures*, p. 139.

received matter for its development, a shell for its complete manifestation.”<sup>239</sup> Accordingly, the ontological dislocation and disintegration of Sophia into the coarseness and density of the external world is the catalyst for a cosmic process of universal evolution, which serves, through the gravity of the Logos, to reintegrate the dispersed elements of the universal organism into the divine unity from which it fell.<sup>240</sup> Having been reduced to potential, the cosmic process represents the progressive recovery and realization of divine unity in the discordant, natural order. “In the natural order, this organism is actually disintegrated but retains its ideal unity as a hidden potency and tendency. The gradual actualization of this tendency, the gradual realization of ideal all-unity, is the meaning and goal of the cosmic process.”<sup>241</sup> The gradations of the material world represent so many attempts and stages of the world soul retrieve its primordial unity, to “be reborn in the form of an absolute organism.”<sup>242</sup> Flung outside the divine orbit, the universal organism is cast into outer darkness, into anarchic disunity. From the “all-one center” of divine unity it is exiled to the periphery of temporality wherein it must progressively draw down into itself the form and unity of eternity. Solovyov tersely traces the cosmogonic process through stellar, chemical, organic (telluric), and anthropic epochs. Each stage represents a higher form of unity in the world soul’s striving to attain perfect all-unity, which is a pan-human unity. Whereas the sub-human cosmic and biological forms represent differing degrees of external “unifications” between the world soul and the Logos, the appearance of the human form, as the “pure form of all-unity,” at the end of the cosmic process represents their inward unification.<sup>243</sup> And as

---

<sup>239</sup> Solovyov seems *generally* to use the term world soul, at least in the *Lectures* and in *Russia and the Universal Church* (London: The Centenary Press, 1948) to refer to Sophia in its disintegrated state, as an unconscious, instinctive principle. See for instance, *Lectures*, pp. 136-141. This terminological interpretation is supported by Obolevitch in *Faith and Science in Russian Religious Thought*, p. 81, as well as Eero Tarasti, *Sein Und Schein: Explorations in Existential Semiotics* (Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2015) pp. 354-366. See also Brandon Gallaher, “The Christological Focus of Vladimir Solov’ev’s Sophiology.” *Modern Theology*, 2009, Vol.25 (4), p. 623, though Gallaher also states that “Solov’ev has Sophia fulfilling far too many conceptual roles (p. 630).” It is, however, contested by Judith Kornblatt, *Divine Sophia*, pp. 47-48. Kornblatt critiques the evolutionary view of Kochetkova, who sees Sophia as the transcendent ideal from which the world soul is fallen and to which it returns through the process of evolution. Unfortunately, I have not had access to Kochetkova’s doctoral work *Solov’jov’s Theory of Divine Humanity*. Particularly convincing is the explanation of Solovyov’s terminology of Sophia and the world soul by Maria Carlson, who suggests the influence of Gnosticism’s two Sophia, an upper and lower, or divine and fallen aspects. See “Gnostic Elements in the Cosmogony of Vladimir Soloviev” in *Russian Religious Thought* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), pp. 58-60.

<sup>240</sup> For a discussion on Solovyov and Evolution see Obolevitch, *Faith and Science in Russian Religious Thought*, pp. 80-85. On evolutionary teleology as well as immanent and transcendental aspects of evolution in Solovyov see Smith, *Vladimir Soloviev and the Spiritualization of Matter*, pp. 96-104.

<sup>241</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, pp. 135-136.

<sup>242</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 139.

<sup>243</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, pp. 139, 141. Acknowledging the anthropological character of Sophia, Kojève describes the appearance of humanity in the evolutionary process as the recovery of its primal humanity: “The Soul thus recovers its proper form, the human form.” Alexandre Kojève, trans. Ilya Merlin, Mikhail Poszniakov, *The Religious Metaphysics of Vladimir Solovyov* (Switzerland: Palgrave Pivot, 2018), p. 62.

instantiating the form of all-unity in its consciousness, humanity represents both the pinnacle of creation and the point of its return to divine all-unity. “Receiving and bearing in consciousness the eternal, divine idea and inseparably connected with the nature of the external world by his factual origin and existence, the human being is the natural mediator between God and material being, the conductor of the all-uniting divine principle into elemental multiplicity, the orderer and organizer of the universe.”<sup>244</sup>

Nevertheless, creation is not instantaneously transfigured into the eternal, universal organism in the emergence of humanity in the cosmic process. Humanity must itself progressively actualize the inward unity between itself, as the soul of the world, and the Logos through a succession of religious forms or states. The cosmic process thus leaves off where the religious process begins, yet possesses the selfsame aim of reintegrating the natural, material order into the divine unity from which it fell away. Thus, corresponding to the external, evolutionary process which gathered the elements of the world into ever higher forms of unity, the internal, religious process gathers together the fractured consciousness of humanity through a historical series of religious forms that actualize the inward unity of the world soul and the Logos.<sup>245</sup> The religious process thus represents the remnants of the stages or forms through which human consciousness has passed in its aspiration towards divine unity. Just as “in the physical world, a long series of imperfect, yet organic, living forms preceded the appearance of the perfect human organism,” so, “in the same manner, a series of incomplete, yet living, personal revelations of the divine principle to the human soul preceded the birth of the perfect spiritual human being.”<sup>246</sup> Furthermore, as Sophia, or universal humanity, is the body of the eternal Logos, or Christ, the Incarnation represents the culmination of the religious process, the realization of the union between Christ and his body. The goal then of the cosmic and religious processes then is the Incarnation of Christ in order that humanity and all creation be reintegrated into the unity of the divine-human Organism. “All nature strove and gravitated toward humanity, while the whole history of humankind was moving toward Divine humanity.”<sup>247</sup> Christ, as the head of Sophia in eternity, becomes in time the head of fallen humanity, which having been dispersed into disparate elements is gathered back into divine unity. With the incarnation of Christ, the personal expression of the

---

<sup>244</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 141.

<sup>245</sup> Solovyov’s account of the religious process follows Schelling’s. On the link between Schelling and Solovyov’s philosophy of religion, see Paul Valliere, “Solov’ëv and Schelling’s Philosophy of Revelation,” in, eds. Wil van den Bercken, Manon de Courten and Evert van der Zweerde, *Vladimir Solov’ëv: Reconciler and Polemicist* (Leuven, Paris, Sterling, Virginia: Peters, 2000), pp. 119-129.

<sup>246</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 151.

<sup>247</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 157.

divine-human Organism, the reintegration of the universal Organism is proleptically achieved.

Undoubtedly Solovyov's sophianic perspective of creation is highly original, though the roots of his thought are sunk deep in identifiable predecessors. His conception of corporeal, temporal creation in the *Lectures* as a falling away and process of return represents a dynamic, teleological Platonism that is reminiscent of Eriugena's *De Divisione Naturae*, Schelling's early religious philosophy represented in his *Philosophy and Religion* (though here Solovyov has seamlessly integrated universal evolution into this metaphysical schema of *exitus* and *reditus*), as well as Hartmann's dynamic, teleological voluntarism, with its pessimism regarding the phenomenal world. As for his sophiology, several influences stand out, though none are determinative for Solovyov who combined his sources in his own idiosyncratic genius.<sup>248</sup> Solovyov assiduously studied Jewish Kabbalah and his anthropological vision of Sophia, in particular, is reminiscent of Adam Kadmon and the feminine aspect of Divinity, as well as the broader Kabbalistic connection of the divine and the human.<sup>249</sup> However, one scarcely finds in Solovyov much that resembles the ten sefirot that comprise Adam Kadmon, or the body of God. Furthermore, there is a difference of ontology: the eternal divine-human organism neither comprises nor reside within a series of sefirotic emanations that connect the Absolute and conditioned world. Nevertheless, there is a broad sense in which the sefirotic tree of life, or figure of the primal man, in which God and the world are integrally related, echoes Solovyov's sophianic concept of all-unity (*vseedinstvo*). One can also observe the dynamic element of this divine-human relation of God and the world in Solovyov's thought, for the actualization of the ideal of Adam Kadmon is dependent on human action and cooperation with God. Thus, Solovyov referred to Malkhut, the final, transitional sefirah beyond which lies the created order, as representing the realization of the kingdom of God in the world.<sup>250</sup> Having fallen out of its primordial unity with Divinity, the divine-human unity of Sophia or Adam Kadmon is the ideal to be

---

<sup>248</sup> For a thorough investigation of Solovyov's sophianic sources of influence see Kornblatt, *Divine Sophia*, pp. 34-82.

<sup>249</sup> Solovyov's writings on Judaism, including an encyclopedia article on Kabbalah and a foreword to a book on Kabbalah, are collected in Vladimir Solovyov, *The Burning Bush: Writings on Jews and Judaism* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016). On the connection of Solovyov and Kabbalah see Aleksandr Gaisin, who highlights theurgical and erotic elements in Solovyov's thought that appear to have a Kabbalistic heritage. "Solovyov's Metaphysics between Gnosis and Theurgy." *Religions*, 2018, Vol.9 (11), p. 354ff. See also Judith Kornblatt, "Solov'ev's Androgynous Sophia and the Jewish Kabbalah." *Slavic Review*, 1991, Vol.50 (3), pp. 487-496. For an excellent introduction to Kabbalah see Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946) as well as *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah* (New York: Schocken Books, 1991).

<sup>250</sup> See Solovyov, *Russia and the Universal Church*, pp. 159-160.

realized in the world. Solovyov, however, takes the idea divine-human unity further, in that God is conceived eternally as a divine-human Organism. The anthropological significance of Sophia as the body of God, and Christ as its eternal divine-human center, is not metaphorical or allegorical, but literal, even if incorporeally understood. This anthropological conception of Sophia is of importance. And here in the backdrop one can sense August Comte's feminine Great Being, *Le grande Être*, whose positivist philosophy Solovyov had reactively negatively against early on in *The Crisis of Western Philosophy*, but which he returned to with great admiration at the end of his career acknowledging the implicit sophiology of Comte's postulate of Humanity, the whole which integrates all particulars and their branches—the family, society, nations, and races—in one integral super-Person.<sup>251</sup> There is, of course, a deeper tradition upon which Solovyov draws, that of the theosophy of Swedenborg with his concept of the eternal divine-human form, as well as Jacob Boehme who is both the father of Sophiology par excellence, as well as the idealist and voluntarist philosophical traditions, which sprung, like God out of the *Ungrund*, out of his ever-pregnant, intuitive genius. In this connection, it must be inquired how Solovyov's anthropological concept of Sophia relates specifically to Boehme's Germanic voluntarism. There is a critical, double edge here, for, like the mythical Janus, Sophia has two faces in Boehme, one turned towards God and the other towards the world. Turned towards the world Sophia is connected with Boehme's doctrine of humanity, of the original androgyny and unity of the human essence, whereby Sophia takes on an anthropological character, and here there is a marked affinity with Solovyov: Sophia as integral, universal humanity in union with God. However, there is a deeper aspect of Sophia that goes beyond the anthropological and is connected with the essential and impersonal, with the idea of God as a self-generating Will, which in its voracious hunger passes over from Nothing into something, from pure freedom into a sophianic, spiritual-material essence. In this context, a critical difference between Boehme before him and Bulgakov after him is that Sophia, for the early Solovyov, represents a divine world of human entities, incorporeal intelligences, instead of a corporeal, unconscious principle within Divinity. It is true Solovyov identifies Sophia as "God's body, the matter of Divinity,"<sup>252</sup> but this body is explicitly identified by Solovyov as eternal humanity. "They constitute a universally human organism as the eternal body of God and the eternal soul of the world."<sup>253</sup> And in reference to positing human individuals as eternal

---

<sup>251</sup> Solovyov, "The Idea of Humanity in August Comte," translated by Kornblatt in *Divine Sophia*, pp. 213-229.

<sup>252</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 108.

<sup>253</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 118.

Solovyov presents his underlying metaphysical axiom: “In God, as the eternal reality, the idea of the world is not to be regarded as anything abstract, but must necessarily be considered eternally real.”<sup>254</sup> In opposition to Platonism, divine ideas are not purely ideal, they are real, subjective intelligences. Solovyov’s Sophia is thus essentially anthropological. Voluntarism, or the notion of an essential, quasi-corporeal Will, is not a *positive* feature of Solovyov’s early metaphysics as it is for Boehme or Schelling. In the *Lectures* the world soul as an unconscious, corporeal principle is *negative* and introduced *accidentally* in the fragmentation of Sophia, though in *Russia and the Universal Church* the unconscious principle of the world soul is introduced as a primal-material Chaos, blind and indeterminate, out of which is eventually born the image of eternal Divine Wisdom, which has its highest delight in humankind. Nevertheless, even in his early thought of the *Lectures* the syncretic mastery of Solovyov integrated voluntarism into his vastly diverse system: while the unconscious is not a primal will, an *Ungrund*, a corporeal principle within Divinity, it has an ontological basis in Sophia. It is Sophia in an anarchic and disintegrated state as the world soul. The unconscious (or superconscious), instinctive drive of the world soul is further reminiscent of Schopenhauer and Hartmann, whose philosophies of Will were of great importance in the turn of Solovyov towards religious metaphysics.<sup>255</sup> Solovyov’s world soul is much like Hartmann’s Unconscious Will-Idea: the unconscious world soul, which itself is the result of the false activation of the Will (egoism), labors instinctively through its connection with the Logos, to guide the evolutionary process towards its teleological end beyond the phenomenal world. Summarily, Solovyov’s Sophia thus has identifiable precedent, and yet the particulars of his anthropological concept of Sophia result from his own original reflection. What seems to drive Solovyov’s anthropological concept of Sophia, its central nerve, is his radical Christocentrism. Nevertheless, it is a Christocentrism that is markedly influenced, in its early phase, by Platonic and Gnostic overtones in his insistence on eternal, incorporeal stasis as the norm of created being, and yet also by Germanic voluntarism in his understanding of the world soul, in its falling away, as a instinctive, corporeal principle. We can highlight here two consequences of his insistence on eternal, incorporeal stasis before turning to Bulgakov.

First, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, Solovyov understands creation in its original state to be eternal. What is witnessed here is a reemergence of Platonic (and Hartmannian) stasis as opposed to Boehmean-Schellingian dynamism. Time and process

---

<sup>254</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 119, fn. 2.

<sup>255</sup> See Vladimir Solovyov, *Crisis*, ch. 5.

appear to be accidental to his system, accretions that arise in a fallen order, and not an axiom of his sophiology as such. This represents a departure from theological tradition, which views created being as temporal, even if its final state is to a sort of created eternity or aeveternity, a midpoint between the *nunc fluens* of time and the *nunc stans* of divine eternity. And, as we have seen, an undesirable theological consequence seems inevitably to follow: the eternal necessity of creation to divine actuality leads to the charge of pantheism or theopanism. If creation is equally as eternal as God, and time is only a fallen condition or state, it becomes difficult to clearly distinguish between divine and created being. Solovyov's penchant to reduce multiplicity to unity, of which the reduction of time's manifold moments to singular eternity is a significant instance, could further lead to a sort of monism.<sup>256</sup>

This brings us to a second, related point. If, on the one hand, Solovyov's conception of creation as eternal leads to forms of theopanism or monism, it also leads, on the other, to a negative attitude towards spatio-temporality, reminiscent of Schopenhauer's and Hartmann's pessimistic voluntarism, the result of which is a Platonic-Gnostic tendency towards dualism that denigrates the material.<sup>257</sup> If the original creation is one of integral connection of all things in an internal, organic unity, the fallen state of creation is one of external, mechanical discordance. According to Solovyov, the external, material world originated in the catastrophic disintegration of the divine world; when the spiritual, intelligible world broke apart, the physical, phenomenal world came to be. In contrast to the ideal and eternal, divine world, the natural world is phenomenal and ephemeral, and serves as a means for humanity to recover its eternal being within the unity of the divine-human Organism. Consequently, the realm of corporeality is not grounded in a positive divine principle, but represents only the loss of the integrity of an incorporeal realm, which has become externalized, and which must at the end of time revert to its original state. Solovyov identifies three principles of externality which arise in disintegration of the universal organism. "All actuality is reduced to a chaos of external, natural phenomena, which arise for consciousness in the external order of space, time, and mechanical causality, but without any internal unity or connection."<sup>258</sup> In

---

<sup>256</sup> Another related instance is the reduction of the multiplicity of human entities to Sophia, which as we have previously seen, is an autonomous agent over against the multiplicity of human individuals. In any case, this penchant to reduce multiplicity to unity appears to lead, despite his intention, not to organic balance of multiplicity within unity, but to a negation of multiplicity. The result would seem to be that his system tends towards a form of monism, in which real multiplicity is evacuated.

<sup>257</sup> For the influence of Gnostic ideas on Solovyov's cosmological thought see Maria Carlson, "Gnostic Elements in the Cosmogony of Vladimir Soloviev," in *Russian Religious Thought*, ch. 2. Solovyov's Gnostic denigration of the material world is repeatedly stressed by Aleksandr Gaisin in "Solovyov's Metaphysics Between Gnosis and Theurgy."

<sup>258</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 144.

the *Lectures*, Solovyov only elaborates upon the first of these principles. “Real space, or externality, necessarily results from the disintegration and mutual alienation of all that exists, by virtue of which every entity finds in all other entities a permanent and coercive limit to its own actions.”<sup>259</sup> However, Solovyov develops his understanding of these principles systematically in a later work, *Russia and the Universal Church*.

In this work Solovyov does not appear to posit an eternal creation. Process is thus no longer accidental, but it nevertheless does appear to be strictly instrumental. Cosmic development, which is carried out in space-time, aims to transcend space-time altogether. Thus, as with the *Lectures*, space and time are not positive principles, but negative conditions that represent the disintegrated state of the universal organism. This is evident in the manner that Solovyov derives the principles or laws of the originary discordant, chaotic condition of creation from the unity of divine being as its opposite or “transposition.”

Unless we repudiate the very notion of Godhead, we cannot admit outside of God any existence in itself, real and positive. What is outside Godhead can therefore only be the Divine transposed or reversed. And this is what we primarily see in the specific forms of finite existence which separate our world from God. This world is, in fact, constituted outside God by the forms of extension, time and mechanical causality. But these three conditions have nothing real and positive about them; they are simply a negation and transposition of divine existence in its principal categories.<sup>260</sup>

These three forms or conditions of the world are derived by Solovyov from the divine characteristics of “absolute objectivity,” “absolute subjectivity,” and “the absence of any external factor,” which together are the threefold form of divine autonomy.<sup>261</sup> To these three forms of divine autonomy correspond the three conditions of the world and its laws. The objective unity of God is transposed as material separation in space or as the objective “law of division.”<sup>262</sup> “If the objective and substantial expression of the divine autonomy is “all in unity,” *omnia simul in uno*, the heteronomy of extension, consists, on the contrary in the fact that every part of the world outside the Godhead is separate from all the others.”<sup>263</sup> The subjective “equal actuality” of the three divine hypostases that subsist without succession is transposed as a series of mutually exclusive moments, or, the law of subjective “disjunction,” which is the basis of time.<sup>264</sup> Lastly, the “creative liberty of God” is transposed as “mechanical causality,” or, the phenomenal law of external relation.<sup>265</sup> “As the creative

---

<sup>259</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 135.

<sup>260</sup> Solovyov, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 155.

<sup>261</sup> Solovyov, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 155.

<sup>262</sup> Solovyov, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 156.

<sup>263</sup> Solovyov, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 155.

<sup>264</sup> Solovyov, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 156.

<sup>265</sup> Solovyov, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 156.

liberty of God is the final expression of His autonomy, so the heteronomy of the world outside God is completely manifested in mechanical causality, in virtue of which the outward action of a given being is never the direct effect of its inward act, but must be determined by a chain of material causes or conditions independent of the agent itself.”<sup>266</sup>

The forms or conditions of the natural world, then, represent a false state of being, in which multiplicity is not in unity. If the organic all-unity of God is expressed in the unity of God’s objective essence, his subjective existence, and his creative liberty, by contrast, the relative world is a disintegrated organism that conforms to three laws, which are disintegrating forces that, like roiling ocean waves, thrash against divine unity. Relative creation in its discordant condition represents loss of essential unity, of subjective unity, and of freedom, for these are replaced by disunifying principles of essential division in space, subjective disjunction in time, and by external or mechanical causation between phenomena. “It is easy to see that these three principles or laws express but one general urge, tending to disintegrate and dissolve the body of the universe and deprive it of all inner coherence and of all solidarity between its various parts. This urge or tendency is the very basis of Chaos, that is, of Natures outside the Godhead.”<sup>267</sup> In opposition to this disintegrating “urge or tendency,” the cosmic process represents the aspiration of the world soul to overcome anarchic heteronomy and attain divine unity.

It is clear from Solovyov’s systematic discussion of the principles or laws of the discordant, chaotic state of creation that space and time represent negative categories for his thought. If the forms or conditions of the natural world, especially space-time, are in essence false states, Solovyov’s conception of the true state of creation is one that lies outside of space-time. And carried to its logical end, this would seem to entail the negation of the physical order itself, for, apart from space and time, it is difficult to conceive of the reality of a physical order. Accordingly, Solovyov’s negative estimation of spatio-temporality would seem logically to result in a purely ideal, incorporeal creation as a system of intelligences set out in the *Lectures*, rather than the perfected, spiritual-material unity the Solovyov posits not only in a number of later works, but also in *Russia and the Universal Church*. Indeed, as will be argued in the last chapter, it is in the latter work that Solovyov appears to reconceive Sophia as the divine nature containing within it a primal, material substrate, which at the end of time will become the image of divine Wisdom. Nevertheless, laboring under the dark spell

---

<sup>266</sup> Solovyov, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 156.

<sup>267</sup> Solovyov, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 156.

of Schopenhauer's and Hartmann's rejection of the phenomenal world as the manifestation of an evil Will, he appears to harbor in his early sophiological system a latent Gnostic-Platonic dualism that denigrates the spatio-temporal, and—by logical extension—the material. Solovyov's Platonism and pessimistic voluntarism is at war with the positive side of the German voluntarist tradition that will win out in his later thought. One principle strives to flee all that is real, and in its flight to free the ideal into an ethereal realm of ideal incorporeality; the other to establish the real as the ineliminable ground of being in which the ideal is realized. Like two wills caught in deadlock between heaven and earth, these opposing, contradictory principles stand unreconciled in the forceful tensions of his colossal, syncretic system, and threaten to tear the whole edifice down if only one principle would break free. At the root of this tension is the fact that, in contrast to Boehme and Schelling before him, and Bulgakov after him, there is not a *positive* material principle in his early thought. Sophia seems to function for him not so much as the metaphysical foundation of matter, though it does play this role in the cosmic process, but more fundamentally as a multiplicity of intelligences that, though they appear within the space-time order and its process of development, have their destiny beyond it in the unity and incorporeal simplicity of eternity. In the absence of a *positive* foundation for matter in his early metaphysics, every effort to ground the ideal in the real is countered by a dualistic impulse which would untether the ideal from all that is earthly. As such Solovyov's system cannot come to the rest which it seeks, for it knows not whither to fly. It was thus left to his later thought, and especially his successors, to cut this Gordian knot of sophiological thought. And in the next section on Bulgakov, we will see how the latter sophiologist sought to improve upon Solovyov by returning sophiology, in some respects, to its Boehmean source.

### **III. Bulgakov: The Corporeality of Sophia and its Unconscious Becoming**

Bulgakov's account of creation is also shaped by his own particular view of God as a divine-human Organism. Previously, we saw that Bulgakov understands God as an organic, theandric Organism not because there is an eternal multiplicity of human entities who find their unity in Christ; rather, God is divine-human by virtue of a dual ontological structure: God is a tri-hypostatic Spirit who possesses a non-hypostatic nature, which is as a divine world or body. Sophia is not *in itself* a personal, anthropological principle, but, in the voluntarist spirit of Boehme and Schelling, an impersonal, corporeal principle which serves as the essential self-revelation of divine personhood. This has important consequences for Bulgakov's theology of creation, which is conceived as a gratuitous repetition of the divine-

human Organism rather than a constitutive component of it. Particularly, we will see the way in which this more thoroughgoing reinfusion of Boehmean-Schellingian voluntarism into Bulgakov's concept of Sophia enables him simultaneously to overcome Solovyov's implicit pantheism by dislocating created humanity from Divine Sophia, and allows him, with the aid of Plotinus' concept of intelligible matter, to establish more definitively a positive, divine foundation for matter. Instead of eternalizing creation, Bulgakov seeks an eternal ground for creation in Divine Sophia, understood not as an eternal multiplicity of human entities, but as an impersonal principle, which serves as the foundation for corporeality. Further, we will see that if Sophia, in its created aspect, is neither eternal nor anthropological, then the norm of creation is not eternal, incorporeal stasis, but dynamic, temporal corporeality, with the upshot that materiality, and all its gradations, as well as process, are neither accidental nor instrumental, but fundamental features of creation as such. Consequently, it will be argued that the upshot of Bulgakov's sophiological theology of creation as a finite repetition of the divine-human Organism is that it enables him to address more adequately the perennial problem of positively grounding matter in God, as well as to address, in a more compelling way, contemporary questions surrounding evolutionary development within creation. Finally, we must in the end ask if Bulgakov, in seeking an eternal ground of matter and of material forms in Sophia, does so at a significant cost.

In Solovyov's concept of the divine-human Organism, the eternal existence of humanity is required for God's actuality, the logical end of which is pantheism. By contrast, Bulgakov advocates "panentheism,"<sup>268</sup> by which he means that while creation is a free act and not a constitutive component of the divine-human Organism, it nevertheless proceeds out of God and is divine in its content.

There is no such ontological necessity for the world that would constrain God himself to create it for the sake of his own development or fulfillment; such an idea would indeed be pure pantheism.<sup>269</sup>

The All in the Divine world, in the Divine Sophia, and the All in the creaturely world, in the creaturely Sophia, are one and are identical in content (although not in being). *One and the same Sophia is revealed in God and in creation...* The positive content of the world's being is just as divine as its foundation in God, for there is no other principle for it.<sup>270</sup>

---

<sup>268</sup> Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, p. 121, and Bulgakov, *Sophia*, p. 72. For an excellent discussion of Bulgakov's panentheism in distinction from other types, see Paul Gavriluk, "Bulgakov's Account of Creation: Neglected Aspects, Critics and Contemporary Relevance." *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 2015, Vol.17(4), pp. 461-462. See also Paul Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology: Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov: Orthodox Theology in a New Key* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), pp. 334-336.

<sup>269</sup> Bulgakov, *Sophia*, p. 72. See also, *Lamb of God*, p. 119.

<sup>270</sup> Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, p. 126.

If Solovyov reduced the world to God in ascribing necessity to creation (eternal humanity as Sophia), Bulgakov sought to surmount pantheism by panentheism.<sup>271</sup> In the manner of Eriugena and Cusa with their notion of *creatio ex Deo*, he elevates the creature by equating its content with God without absorbing the creature into Divinity. Humanity is no longer necessary to the divine-human Organism, such that Sophia is dislodged from created humankind, even as it is its eternal, ideal image. In what follows we will see that the critical result of this is that Sophia is transformed from an anthropological principle into an impersonal, corporeal principle. Furthermore, it will be argued that Bulgakov's sophiology marks, in some respects, a return to Boehme's and Schelling's voluntarism, though we will also mark significant differences.

Because Bulgakov dislocates humanity from the actuality of the divine-human Organism, he adopts a more traditional understanding of creation as actualizing eternal, divine forms in temporality. Creation is not eternal, but participates in divine eternity, is eternal in its foundation. Over against prevailing theological tradition, however, Bulgakov conceives of God not as an incorporeal intelligence, but as a divine-human Organism. Sophia in God is as divine corporeality with the result that creation is grounded not merely in divine ideas, but in Sophia as an embodied world of divine forms. In Bulgakov's panentheistic, sophiological system, the created order is fashioned in the image of the divine-human Organism and shares its ontological duality. Just as God is a tri-hypostatic Spirit who abides in his own nature, Divine Sophia, so also the created world is an organism composed of nature, or creaturely Sophia, and the multi-hypostatic human race (as well as angelic hypostases) incarnate in creaturely Sophia. "The creation of the world... consists of two acts and necessarily has two sides: the creation of creaturely nature as the creaturely Sophia and the creation of new, creaturely persons, capable of hypostasizing this nature, of being the subjects of the creaturely Sophia."<sup>272</sup> Not only does creation have two sides, each respective side, the hypostatic and the non-hypostatic, is created out of the hypostatic and non-

---

<sup>271</sup> Brandon Gallaher argues that Bulgakov does not quite surmount Solovyov's pantheism, but that Bulgakov also possesses resources in his thought to overcome it. See "Antinomism, *Trinity and the Challenge of Solov'ëvan Pantheism in the Theology of Sergij Bulgakov*." *Studies in East European Thought*, 2012, Vol.64 (3/4), pp. 205-225. According to Gallaher the antinomical, modal (eternal/temporal) difference between Divine and creaturely Sophia in Bulgakov's thought is insufficient with the result that the world is conflated with divine nature. In my view, Gallaher is more on the mark when he suggests that Bulgakov's sophiology has a determinist undercurrent. See p. 217. And perhaps in this sense there is a latent pantheism, for if the world is predetermined to realize in its becoming an eternal sophiological content, there is little room for creaturely freedom and novelty such that the world is a sort of becoming God. At the end of this chapter we will return to the theme of freedom.

<sup>272</sup> Bulgakov, trans. Boris Jakim, *The Bride of the Lamb* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), p. 84.

hypostatic principles of God. “In the creation of the world, God repeats His own being in Sophia, as it were. He repeats His nature, the Divine Sophia, in the creaturely Sophia, or in the world. In the creation of persons, hypostatic spirits, human and angelic, God repeats Himself, as it were, creates *co-I’s* for Himself in his hypostatic image.”<sup>273</sup> The created order, then, as a twofold repetition of divine Sophia and the divine Spirit, bears the imprint of the divine-human Organism. We will consider each side of created being, moving, like the evolving order of nature, from the non-hypostatic to the hypostatic.

Concerning the natural, impersonal pole of the created organism, creaturely Sophia is patterned after Divine Sophia, and represents the non-hypostatic realm of created being. In Solovyov Sophia is not only a personal, anthropological principle it is also, in the *Lectures*, an *incorporeal* principle in its primal, original state. In Bulgakov we find the reverse: Sophia is in its essence impersonal and corporeal. We will consider each aspect in turn. While the corporeality of Sophia is a constant throughout Bulgakov’s long intellectual career, the impersonal aspect of Sophia marks an important development in Bulgakov’s mature thought.<sup>274</sup> In an earlier work, *Unfading Light*,<sup>275</sup> Bulgakov’s concept of Sophia had not taken on its final form and is, in no uncertain terms, conceived as personal. “Sophia possesses personhood and countenance, is a subject, a person, let us say it with theological terminology, a hypostasis.”<sup>276</sup> In this stage of Bulgakov’s intellectual development his concept of Sophia bears, in its personal aspect, a marked resemblance to Solovyov’s universal human organism outlined in his *Lectures on Divine-Humanity*. In the early thought of Bulgakov and Solovyov, Sophia, in its personal being, appears as an autonomous agent that stands between God and the multiplicity of human agents.<sup>277</sup> Sophia is a mediator, a universal subject who in Solovyov is, through its egoistic will, responsible for the disintegration of the eternal, divine

---

<sup>273</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 87.

<sup>274</sup> For a discussion of the development of Sophia in Bulgakov’s works see Richard May, “Between God and the World: A Critical Appraisal of the Sophiology of Sergius Bulgakov. *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 74(1), pp. 67-84. See also Rowan Williams, *Sergii Bulgakov: Towards a Russian Political Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1999), pp. 113-131, who gives a succinct presentation of the development of Sophia from Solovyov, through Florensky, to Bulgakov’s earlier constructions of Sophia. On Bulgakov’s earlier concept of Sophia in his philosophical works see also Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, Vol. 2, pp. 901-905.

<sup>275</sup> For a discussion of this work see Marcus Plested, *Wisdom in Christian Tradition: The Patristic Roots of Modern Russian Sophiology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 41-46.

<sup>276</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 217.

<sup>277</sup> This is to agree with Marcus Plested, who observes in *Wisdom in Christian Tradition*, p. 40, the essentially Solovyovan character of Sophia in Bulgakov’s *Philosophy of Economy*. For an extended discussion of this work see Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology*, pp. 253-278. See also Robert F. Slesinski, *The Theology of Sergius Bulgakov* (Yonkers, NY: Saint Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2017), ch. 2.

world.<sup>278</sup> In Solovyov, Sophia is a more definite character, a universal agency and subjectivity. The personal agency of Sophia in Bulgakov's thought, however, is unclear and he appears to combine personal and impersonal elements in Sophia: on the one hand, Sophia is said to be a personal subject, a hypostatic "love of Love," as well as "the beginning of a new, creaturely multi-hypostaseity,"<sup>279</sup> and, yet, on the other hand, Sophia is also described impersonally as an embodied world of ideas and as the "unconscious" soul of the world.<sup>280</sup> So it is that Thomas Allan Smith concludes that, "what or who Sophia is remains only impressionistically defined in this book."<sup>281</sup> In this admixture of personal and impersonal elements the subjectivity of Sophia is obscured. In relation to God Sophia is personal, hypostatic love, yet in relation to the world impersonal concepts take over. In her cosmic role, she is the "unconscious... *anima mundi*,"<sup>282</sup> an instinctive principle through which the conditioned world proceeds towards the realization of sophianic ideals. Her agency is lawful, not the result of ratiocinative process. "The world soul operates as the external regularity of cosmic life with the compulsoriness of a law of physics."<sup>283</sup> She is a mediator through which God creates the world, but one that is interpreted in the impersonal terms of the "natural philosophy of Schelling," "the theory of the unconscious in Hartmann," "the philosophy of Vladimir Soloviev" and others.<sup>284</sup> Though it is unclear in what specific sense Sophia is a personal, autonomous agent, Sophia nonetheless is understood to stand between divine and human personhood. Unlike Solovyov, in Bulgakov's early thought Sophia, though she is also eternal (or, to be more precise, "supratemporal"),<sup>285</sup> is not classified as a creature.<sup>286</sup> Here, there is as yet no distinction between divine and creaturely Sophia, such that Sophia is understood to hover impossibly between God and creation, being neither. She is neither a divine nor a creaturely hypostasis.

---

<sup>278</sup> We will see in the next chapter how this leads to problems concerning human agency in the fall, and how Bulgakov's conception of Adam as a universal agent responsible for a transcendental fall is reminiscent of Solovyov account of the fall of Sophia in the divine world.

<sup>279</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 217. Similarly, in Solovyov's *Lectures*, Sophia, as the universal human organism, is said to contain the entire multiplicity of individual human entities.

<sup>280</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 229.

<sup>281</sup> From the translator's (Thomas Allan Smith) introduction of *Unfading Light*, xxxiv. Further, see Pledsted, *Wisdom in Christian Tradition*, pp. 45-46, who notes the plasticity or ambiguity of Sophia in Bulgakov's *Unfading Light*.

<sup>282</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 229.

<sup>283</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 229.

<sup>284</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 229. Bulgakov is correct to underscore the unconscious nature of the world in Solovyov. However, we have seen that Solovyov's concept of the world soul as unconscious is an accidental state introduced by the fall of Sophia. Sophia is originally a conscious, volitional agent.

<sup>285</sup> On the relation of Sophia to time and eternity see Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 219-220.

<sup>286</sup> In Solovyov, Sophia, as "produced unity," is a creature, albeit an eternal one (*Lectures*, p. 108).

She is different from the Hypostases of the Holy Trinity, and is a special hypostasis, of a different order, a fourth hypostasis. She does not participate in the inner-divine life, *she is not God*.<sup>287</sup>

What then is this Eternal Feminine in its metaphysical essence? Is it a creature? No, it is not a creature, for it is not created.<sup>288</sup>

If Sophia is neither God nor a creature, then she must stand at the metaphysical borderland between them, the liminal middle ground which is as a bridge between the Absolute and the relative.<sup>289</sup> As Kartashov wrote of Solovyov, so it is also true of the early Bulgakov that Sophia is “the mystical horse... which... flies over the formidable abyss that exists between God and the world.”<sup>290</sup> “Occupying the place between God and the world, Sophia abides between being and super-being; she is neither the one nor the other, or appears as both at once.”<sup>291</sup> “And so, the metaphysical nature of Sophia is not covered at all by the usual philosophical categories: absolute and relative, eternal and temporal, divine and creaturely.”<sup>292</sup> An aura of metaphysical obscurity surrounds Sophia and it is quite easy to see how Bulgakov’s early conception of Sophia as an uncreated “fourth hypostasis” drew down controversy and condemnation upon him.<sup>293</sup> What was left unclear was how this “special hypostasis” relates to the persons of the Trinity, and, further, in what sense Sophia is a subject, an autonomous, personal agent. And perhaps it was this ambiguity which stimulated a reversal in his concept of Sophia, a transition from the personal to the impersonal, as well as from the interstitial “between” to the more paradoxical above and below. This reversal also seems to have led to important developments in Bulgakov’s theology of creation, for non-divine Sophia seemed almost to usurp the cosmos-creating role of God. Sophia, with its faced turned towards the world as its ideal form and generative force, functions much like Plotinus’s Intellect and Soul, while the Absolute, turned in on itself atop the icy peak of

---

<sup>287</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 217.

<sup>288</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 219

<sup>289</sup> Gallaher interprets this understanding of Sophia as between or as neither/nor as negative, as opposed to Sophia conceived in his later work positively as above and below, both/and. See *Freedom and Necessity in Modern Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 52-53

<sup>290</sup> Quoted in Michael Martin, *The Submerged Reality: Sophiology and the Turn to a Poetic Metaphysics* (Kettering, OH: Angelico Press, 2015), p. 148.

<sup>291</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 215.

<sup>292</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 221.

<sup>293</sup> On the “Sophia Affair” see the concise overview by Paul Valliere in *Modern Russian Theology: Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov*, pp. 287-289. For an extensive treatment see Roberto J. De La Noval, *Sophiology in Suspension: The Theological Condemnations of Fr. Sergius Bulgakov* (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2020).

being, stands at so absolute a remove from creation that the abyss is traversable only by a lower sophianic mediator.<sup>294</sup>

Bulgakov's later work constitutes a move away from the personal, anthropological conception of Sophia found in Solovyov, to the impersonal and essential aspect of Sophia in Boehme and Schelling.<sup>295</sup> The impersonal element of Bulgakov's early concept of Sophia comes to the forefront and Sophia is no longer considered to be a personal agent and is no longer seen as a quasi-subordinationist, intermediary "between" God and creation, but, more paradoxically, as occupying both poles at once.<sup>296</sup> Abiding both above and below "Sophia rests in the Godhead and in the pond."<sup>297</sup> "Remaining one, Sophia exists in two modes, eternal and temporal, divine and creaturely."<sup>298</sup> Bulgakov thus arrives at his critical distinction between divine and creaturely Sophia, which is an all-important theme in his major trilogy on Divine Humanity. In these later works, Sophia, in both divine and creaturely modes, is strictly non-hypostatic. "The nature of God (which is in fact Sophia) is a living and, therefore loving substance, ground and "principle"... This principle in itself is non-hypostatic."<sup>299</sup> "Sophia is not a hypostasis; and neither is the world soul."<sup>300</sup> Bulgakov thus elevates the impersonal into the divine realm, which becomes the basis of the impersonal being of the natural world. Sophia is no longer an anthropological principle but a natural, cosmic one, though it remains inseparably connected with humanity and divine-humanity. Sophia is not human, but is the impersonal, essential ground of the divine-human Organism, its *cosmos divina*, so to speak, and of created humanity, which through its body is connected with the natural, cosmic being of the world. A critical distance is thus opened up from his early, personal conception of Sophia and that found in Solovyov's *Lectures*. However,

---

<sup>294</sup> We are speaking here only of the *logical consequence* of Sophia as a non-divine mediator, which runs counter to the spirit of his thought. For, in actual fact, Bulgakov's Absolute, though it stands at an "absolute and insurmountable distance," is also held to be through its free disclosure "absolutely immanent (Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, pp. 22, 23)."

<sup>295</sup> Robert F. Slesinski too easily characterizes Bulgakov's ontology as personalist, and obscures the impersonal dimension of Sophia when he sets up an antithesis between human person and the world soul (Sophia), which he thinks threatens individuality and freedom. For Bulgakov, in the identity tradition of Schelling, there is a necessary coincidence of person and nature. Furthermore, the spirit is the seat of freedom in Bulgakov's anthropology not the soul. See *The Theology of Sergius Bulgakov*, ch. 3, and 10. For Bulgakov's location of freedom in the spirit see *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 133. Valliere rightly recognizes the polarity of personalist and impersonal dimensions in Bulgakov's ontology. See *Modern Russian Theology*, p. 333.

<sup>296</sup> Although Bulgakov alludes to this idea in *Unfading Light* (p. 215), it is clear that on the whole Sophia appears more as an intermediary between God and creation rather than appearing "as both at once (p. 215)."

<sup>297</sup> John Milbank, "Sophiology and Theurgy: The New Theological Horizon" in eds. Christoph Schneider and Adrian Pabst, *Encounter Between Eastern Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), p. 85.

<sup>298</sup> Bulgakov, *Sophia*, p. 74.

<sup>299</sup> Bulgakov, *Sophia*, p. 35.

<sup>300</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 80. For Bulgakov the world soul and creaturely Sophia are synonymous terms.

Bulgakov's creaturely Sophia is very similar to Solovyov's Sophia in its state as the world soul—fallen Sophia as a blind principle that instinctively strives to regain the divine unity from which it fell. In this intermediate state Sophia, as the world soul, does not appear to refer to hypostatic, personal being, but to its falling away from anthropic into cosmic, impersonal being. In this sense it is pre-personal, a preliminary, but accidental, state in which Sophia is imprisoned, and from which it must be delivered. The impersonal is that which should not be, a *katabole*, an “overthrow” of the bright, anthropological kingdom on which the dark shadows of the not-I have lamentably fallen. The crucial difference between (early) Solovyov and Bulgakov is that for the former, the impersonal represents a declension from the divine-human Organism, while for Bulgakov the impersonal is a fundamental metaphysical reality that exists primordially in the divine-human Organism as “Ousia-Sophia,”<sup>301</sup> and, by extension, in created Sophia.

In God there is not only a Person (and Persons) but also Divinity, which is *not* a personality, although it belongs to a Person (and Persons) and is totally hypostasized. Divinity is therefore both personal and impersonal... If we consider Ousia only in the aspect of *personal* being, we effectively abolish it. Ousia possesses both personal being (in relation to a Person) and impersonal being (by itself): at no moment of its being does it merge with personality, for otherwise the personality too would lose itself, become deprived of nature, be transformed into an empty abstract I, and would not be a vital spirit, living in its own nature.<sup>302</sup>

As we have seen with Boehme there is an impersonal principle in God, an essence or ground that is irreducibly distinct from the divine Spirit. Although there is not an ontological priority of the impersonal in Bulgakov whereby divine personhood arises out of a primal dark ground, there is nonetheless an ostensible affirmation of the impersonal, non-hypostatic element in God, the divine nature. It is this connection of the impersonal and the divine nature in Boehme that can be said to have been developed by Bulgakov in his own unique manner. “The impersonal character of Boehme’s theology is laid bare even more clearly in his doctrine of “nature in God,” or “eternal nature,” which represents undoubtedly the most original and characteristic part of his doctrine of God.”<sup>303</sup> By developing the doctrine of the divine nature in the impersonalist terms of Boehme, Bulgakov finds a metaphysical basis for the impersonal element of the created world. Sophia is the impersonal nature of God, which is repeated in creaturely Sophia. As such, Bulgakov, unlike Solovyov, refuses to conflate Sophia with human personhood. “The creaturely Sophia as the world soul is extrahypostatic or non-hypostatic.”<sup>304</sup> As the impersonal principle of natural being, its soul, creaturely Sophia

---

<sup>301</sup> Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, p. 103.

<sup>302</sup> Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, p. 103.

<sup>303</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 176.

<sup>304</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 82.

is distinct from the human spirit. She is the abyss and underground of spirit, lying beyond the edge of personal being and irresolvable into it. “Between personal and impersonal being, between I and not-I... lies an abyss that is wholly insuperable for thought.”<sup>305</sup> If the natural, phenomenal world is not to be reduced to a lengthening shadow of the Fichtean I, an act of I’s self-positing in which the not-I comes to be as a limit of the ego, or else to an egoistic self-positing of Solovyov’s Sophia, which generates a fallen-away world wherein the luminous, intelligible I sinks down into the dark night of the not-I, then the impersonal must possess its own metaphysical depth. It is the beyond of spirit, which neither thinking nor the I’s transcendental self-positing can bring into being. Sophia establishes the real, the visible-corporeal world born not of thought, but of its own elemental, precognitive urge, a driving impulse to be, a life-creating “*Sturm und Drang*.” Sophia, the not-I, is the ground of being, that by which and in which I lives, and apart from which the I is nothing but an idealist abstraction, or else a deranged apparition locked in on itself like Boehme’s wheel of anguish, in which the will which has yet to find itself and win personhood into itself in its triumph over the dark ground. In any case, Bulgakov’s creaturely Sophia is, with Boehme and the succeeding voluntarist tradition, as a dark, elemental ground, which is also an impersonal will to life, a creative impulse that forms itself into an essence, giving rise to a plurality of forms. In its impersonality, Sophia, the not-I, is an unconscious, world-constructing force that strives for form and determinacy. Hence, she is variously described as the world’s “formative energy,”<sup>306</sup> “the world soul,”<sup>307</sup> a “universal creative potency,” the “proto-mother and proto-source of creatures, with her different species,”<sup>308</sup> or as nature with its autopoietic power as “*natura naturans*.”<sup>309</sup> If Sophia, the not-I, is the formative ground of nature distinct from spirit, from I, its impersonality is also connected to its corporeality.

Although in his early philosophical work Bulgakov did not consider Sophia to be impersonal, he did conceive Sophia as corporeal. The fundamental corporeality of Sophia remains a constant throughout Bulgakov’s corpus. The main tenets of the corporeality of Sophia were set down most thoroughly in *Unfading Light*,<sup>310</sup> and from this general perspective Bulgakov did not waver. Important for his development of the idea of the corporeality of Sophia in that work is Plotinus’s concept of intelligible matter, and it is

---

<sup>305</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 86.

<sup>306</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 80.

<sup>307</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 65.

<sup>308</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 67.

<sup>309</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 66.

<sup>310</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, pp. 239-266.

Plotinus who set down the question of the foundation of matter most clearly and formidably, seeing matter not only in its divided, fragmentary state into which souls fall, but also as a principle which must have a positive archetype in the intelligible realm.<sup>311</sup> In seeking out the ultimate ground of corporeality, Bulgakov is led to follow Plotinus' postulation of a higher corporeality which is the basis of earthly corporeality. "Admitting that there is an Intelligible Realm beyond, of which this world is an image, then, since this world-compound is based on Matter, there must be Matter there also."<sup>312</sup> It is this fundamental axiom which is the driver of so much of Bulgakov's sophiology, for in it he sees the metaphysical vindication of the Christian worldview. "In it [Christianity] the body is granted a positive and unconditional significance."<sup>313</sup> In contrast to the early Solovyov's idealistic tendency to denigrate the physical order, Bulgakov sees in Sophia the glorification and apotheosis of corporeality. In the strongest terms Bulgakov turns his back on empty forms of idealism for which the real, the corporeal, is set in opposition to spirit.

For some it is a sinful, carnal captivity of the spirit, something in any case that is subject to overcoming; for others it is a foul though irremovable admixture by which the purity of transcendental and logical schema become soiled, a necessary springboard for thinking, or the irresolvable sediment that remains at the bottom of a gnoseological retort and is not evaporated from any idealistic reagents. Oh, how easily idealist philosophies would breathe if it were in fact possible to somehow "unthink" and remove blind *Empfindung*, lying like dead ballast in the hold of the *Critique of Pure Reason*! How rounded Fichtean cosmogony would become, which is accomplished by way of reflection of the I in the mirror of the *not-I*, if it were possible to make do with logical impulses alone and if that vexatious "external push" of the coarse world were not needed!... However, for all their brilliance, logical schemata, capable of containing the whole world cannot really give rise to a single speck of dust. The *res, being*, is established precisely by corporeality or sensuality, and although idealism does not know what to do with it except to remove it with disgust from its bright kingdom, dark Ahriman who controls the key to reality while remaining a logical ignoramus, laughs exultantly.<sup>314</sup>

The corporeal is the ineliminable burden and bane of idealism, an irreducible remainder that obstinately endures when thought has left off. It stands inscrutably before thought as its eternal other, as unthought, an ontic density inassimilable into the rarified air of reason. However much idealism may strive to flee the irreducible facticity and corporeality of the real, it is ultimately unable to escape its gravity. When the dialectical stream of pure thought has come to its end, there always remains the alluvial sediment of being; no matter how mighty its current, beneath the waves is the ground which carries thought. And thus, throughout its history, idealist philosophy has been fated to strive with its enduring and

---

<sup>311</sup> See Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, pp. 242-243.

<sup>312</sup> Plotinus, trans. Stephan MacKenna, *Plotinus: The Enneads* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), II.4.4.

<sup>313</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 254.

<sup>314</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 256.

indomitable enemy. Corporeality is neither a contamination of the spirit in accordance with the Platonist fantasy for which the soul seeks to ascend from the prison of the body to float forever free in the unadulterated realm of pure form, nor, as in various iterations of Indian philosophy, a land of ignorance and illusion, which serves to veil the true self, Atman, and deprive the soul of its deepest reality, nor yet is it, as in the purest idealism, a Berkeleyan collection of lawful ideas masquerading as matter, a sort of dream world divinely superimposed upon the mental substance of the immaterial ego,<sup>315</sup> nor, finally, as in German Idealism, merely a medium or vehicle of transcendental schema that obscures to the limited reason the true nature of things in themselves (Kant), or else a world of objects instrumentally produced by an absolute Subject in the process of its moral formation (Fichte), or conscious realization (Hegel). In his attempt to free corporeality from the longstanding idealistic tendency to reduce matter to spirit, to treat it as an obstacle, or a mere objective instrument of the subject, or else to exile it outside the iron gates of spirit altogether, Bulgakov posited corporeality, Sophia, as the living materialization of spirit, as that without which spirit falls into lifeless abstraction. In the manner of Schelling's subject-object identity philosophy,<sup>316</sup> actual existence is impossible outside of these two indissoluble sides of being. Neither are reducible to the other, nor capable of being produced by the other. Sophia, impersonal and corporeal, is irresolvable into spirit, though it is inextricably the latter's material context. In the manner of Solovyov's later thought, which so stressed the incarnation of the ideal in matter, Bulgakov's sophiology seeks to reconcile the ideal and the real, the spiritual and the corporeal, in Sophia. Sophia is "not only a unifying, "logical" principle... It is also the life-giving principle."<sup>317</sup> Sophia constructs the real world of flesh and blood, not a lifeless image of it, an idealist world of noetic forms which subsist in merely logical connection. She is not only ideal form; she is also the "interpenetration of form and matter, of idea and body."<sup>318</sup> The sophianic world of ideas are themselves clothed in "*intelligible matter*, which forms the basis of corporeality in Sophia herself... It is that matter thanks to which Sophia becomes *ens realissimum, ontos on*, and not an idealist phantom."<sup>319</sup> "The

---

<sup>315</sup> "Berkeley in his idealism destroyed the world, converting it into ideas." Sergius Bulgakov, trans. Stephen Churchyard, *The Tragedy of Philosophy: Philosophy and Dogma* (Brooklyn, NY: Angelico Press, 2020), p. 27.

<sup>316</sup> On Bulgakov's utilization of Schelling's identity philosophy see Sergius Bulgakov, trans. Catherine Evtuhov, *Philosophy of Economy: The World as Household* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014) pp. 85-94.

<sup>317</sup> Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, p. 81.

<sup>318</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 261.

<sup>319</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 258. The idea of "intelligible matter" derives from Plotinus, and Bulgakov's notion of the corporeality of Sophia is a conscious development of his thought, though he distances himself from Plotinus' antipathy towards the body and the world. "Ideal matter is, in our opinion, nothing other than

bodiless existence of ideas is a fiction and abstraction: *nulla idea sine corpora*.<sup>320</sup> There is here no dualistic split between an incorporeal world of ideas and the physical world, which only clouds on earth one's contemplative vision of the pure, Platonic heaven.<sup>321</sup> "The world and Sophia do not at all form two principles or worlds...; it is one and the same world... She exists not somewhere outside the world but is its basic essence."<sup>322</sup> There is, however, a *temporal* dualism between Sophia, as the fullness of the world actualized, and the world's present state of potentiality. "One has to simultaneously affirm that the world *is* Sophia in its foundation and *is not* Sophia in its condition."<sup>323</sup> Sophia as "spiritual corporeality" is the basis of "earthly, fleshly corporeality,"<sup>324</sup> which strives to become sophianic, to overcome the coarseness, limitedness and mortality of matter and thereby to reveal "from the dark block the faces of roses."<sup>325</sup>

In reconciling the ideal and the real, the spiritual and the corporeal, as well as in conceiving matter as an impersonal dynamic principle, not as a collection of disparate atoms or mechanical forces, but as a will or world soul, Bulgakov stands within the tradition of German voluntarism. It was with the Germanic, voluntaristic philosophies, particularly Boehme and Schelling, that a novel and more positive foundation of matter was introduced into philosophy. As we have seen in the theosophy of Boehme, God was posited as an emergent Organism, a life that arises out of a primal Will and its drives, which is as an essential, divine corporeality that is transfigured into a spiritual body. This corporealization of divine being in Boehme's thought was recognized by Bulgakov, which he terms "the physics of God."<sup>326</sup> And although, in his characterization of Boehme's thought Bulgakov wrongly accuses Boehme of hostility towards the body,<sup>327</sup> there is discernible a Boehmean

---

Sophia (*Unfading Light*, p. 242). Bulgakov's interaction with Plotinian corporeality in this work can be found on pp. 241-243, and pp. 252-253.

<sup>320</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 265. Again Bulgakov alludes to Plotinus. "Body without shape has never existed (Plotinus, *Enneads*, II.4.5)."

<sup>321</sup> Yet perhaps Bulgakov does, in a sense, in *Unfading Light*, split the ideal-corporeal world of Sophia from the becoming world. If in Sophia ideas are realized and embodied as "spiritual corporeality," why is there a becoming world in which Sophia is mixed with non-being, potentiality, from which arises "earthly corporeality?" (*Unfading Light*, p. 264.) It would seem in his early work that if there is to be a creaturely world, there must be this split precisely because Sophia is neither divine nor creaturely. In his later work, Sophia exists in both modes at once. Sophia is embodied as the divine world and as the created world, rather than as a middling, supratemporal, supra-spatial world over against the conditioned world.

<sup>322</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 228.

<sup>323</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 229.

<sup>324</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 264.

<sup>325</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 265.

<sup>326</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 177.

<sup>327</sup> In great bewilderment Bulgakov exclaims that Boehme's "repugnance for the flesh" is... "so unexpected and apparently incomprehensible in a mysticism of nature and an investigator of a physics of God." *Unfading Light*,

logic at work in Bulgakov's own divine "physics." In relation to Sophia God is conceived as a spiritual-material unity, as possessing an eternal nature which is the eternal exemplar of the human body. Bulgakov's "physics of God" also find their echo in Schelling.

Schelling expressed one of the fundamental truths of Christianity in the philosophical language of his time. For Christianity is equally far from materialism and subjective idealism; it removes the contradiction between flesh and spirit in its teaching of man as *spirit incarnate*, the living unity of both. In this sense, Christianity is also a philosophy of identity.<sup>328</sup>

Schelling's early nature and identity philosophy, though admittedly monist or pantheist, began with the identity of Spirit and Nature. He conceived nature, as "invisible spirit," as a process or evolution in which spirit is realized in nature, the subject in the object. The subjective will of nature requires its objective, material counterpart, which can neither be reduced to the subject nor to its self-positing. The unalterable condition of life is the original identity of ideal and real, a spiritual-material unity. Moving away from monism or pantheism, in Schelling's *Ages of the World*, God is conceived, with Boehme, as an emergent Organism arising out of opposing drives, which are a sort of primal, material substrate out of which the indeterminate Will, through the enactment of its freedom, comes to be as a determinate Will, as the living God and Creator of the world. God is a process of the spiritualization of his primordial-material nature, a process repeated in the world whereby the inner and outer, the spiritual and the material achieve at the end of time the most perfect union and highest interpenetration. Bulgakov's corporealization of Sophia, of divine being, thus has identifiable precedent in German voluntarism, not only in the positive philosophers of Will, but also in the pessimists.

Boehme's and Schelling's optimistic philosophies of nature were upended by those who came after. The primal Will that constructs the world of representation is vilified, along with the material order, in the pessimistic systems set forth by Schopenhauer and Hartmann. In Schopenhauer, the Kantian *Ding an Sich*, conceived as an unconscious Will which constructs the world of representation, is evil insofar as it wills something instead of nothing. The emergence of desire, the will to life, is the disease which brings the world into being, and is that which must be negated if the individual is to gain release from the realm of representation. Schopenhauer's system was perfected by his successor, Eduard von Hartmann. According to Hartmann, matter is not comprised of inert units of extension, but is

---

p. 179. In my view Bulgakov misrepresents or misunderstands Boehme's conception of transfigured corporeality.

<sup>328</sup> Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy*, pp. 87-88.

living force, or, more properly in his voluntarist terms, materialized Will and Idea.<sup>329</sup> Though he posits a voluntarist foundation for matter, he regards the transition of the Unconscious Will-Idea into materiality as a fall, which is subsequently overcome through the cosmic process of evolution. It is Hartmann that identified the lack of a principle of process and reason (Idea) in Schopenhauer's philosophy, which he attempted to overcome by positing a teleological, voluntarist idealism.<sup>330</sup> By infusing Hegel's dialectical idealism into Schopenhauerian voluntarism, the system was reborn as a dynamic process in which the universal Will to life had its ultimate end in annihilation. Idea, which at the commencement of the world process "sacrifices its maiden innocence" to the Will "for the sake of its final redemption," is the instrument of the Unconscious which labors to produce a form which would return the Will to its state of non-willing.<sup>331</sup> At the summit of the universal process, human consciousness, as Idea incarnate, becomes the means by which the still, unconscious eternity can again prevail over all that time has built. Through a collective conscious will to negate every determinate form, to annul the Will to life itself, there is the possibility, the categorical imperative, to return the end into the beginning. Here is witnessed in philosophy the introduction of a universal teleology into monistic idealism, a voluntarist means to bring to an end the endlessness of the false order of materialized forms, which must at long last be washed away by the cathartic waves of the tranquilized Will. Yet Hartmann's dialectical, monist-voluntarist idealism also proves to be a lethal weapon for ending the hegemony of dialectical idealism; it represents an expropriation of idealism which serves for the ultimate destruction of the logical development of the Idea through the world process. The bright Platonic heaven of ideal forms, which emerged into being in the birth of the Will's desire, is destined to sink back into the abyss of "pure possibility" (a merely "formal-logical" principle), once the world-conquering ends of Idea have been accomplished.<sup>332</sup> Idea, finally

---

<sup>329</sup> Eduard von Hartmann, trans. William Chatterton Coupland, *Philosophy of the Unconscious: Speculative Results According to the Inductive Method of Physical Science* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co., 1893), Vol. II, p. pp. 154-185.

<sup>330</sup> For an introduction to Hartmann's philosophy see Frederick C. Beiser, *Weltschmerz: Pessimism in German Philosophy, 1860-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), Ch. 7. See also Sebastian Gardner, "Eduard von Hartmann's Philosophy of the Unconscious," in *Thinking the Unconscious*, eds. Angus Nicholls and Martin Liebscher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Ch. 7. However, Gardner wrongly sees an original dualism of Will and Idea in Hartmann's philosophy, though Hartmann is repeatedly clear that his is a monistic philosophy. On Hartmann's philosophy of history as well his metaphysics of the Unconscious, see Anthony K. Jensen, "The Unconscious in History: Eduard von Hartmann among Schopenhauer, Schelling, and Hegel." *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, 2022, Vol.16(3), pp. 271-293.

<sup>331</sup> Eduard von Hartmann, trans. William Chatterton Coupland, *Philosophy of the Unconscious: Speculative Results According to the Inductive Method of Physical Science* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co., 1890), Vol. III, p. 169.

<sup>332</sup> Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, Vol. III, p. 184. The hypostasization the abstract Will that wills nothing and the Idea without concrete content is criticized by Solovyov in *Crisis*, pp. 101-103.

severed from the *active* Will, is thereby delivered from real being and confined to its purely logical sphere.<sup>333</sup> In the end only the Unconscious Will that wills nothing remains, taciturn and still in its solitude, beyond the dissolved world of matter and form, which, in all probability, is never to arise again.<sup>334</sup> In Hartmann philosophy attained the most totalizing acosmism and pessimism, and also brought to its logical fulfillment the philosophical tendency towards monism, which by its perfect completion achieves its own refutation. In so doing, he also turned voluntarist philosophy back towards the positive. Having declared with utter darkness his NO to the world, Hartmann illumines Boehme's YES. For Boehme, the static, immoveable eternity of the abyss is that which is lowest, the Nothing. Life cannot be found here but only its dark and mute beginnings. Life, for Boehme, is creative tension, opposing drives brought to unity, but never arrested in their dynamic interplay; it is the Will gone over into manifestation or materialization. Hartmann's philosophy begins where Boehme's does, with an unconscious Will.<sup>335</sup> Yet his *Philosophy of the Unconscious* prioritizes what Boehme considered the lowest. He made Boehme's beginning the end. Hartmann represents the total inversion of the inaugurator of German voluntarism, since for him the highest is the inertness of the Will in the Unconscious, a Will that wills nothing. The transition of the Nothing into something, into the manifested, corporeal essence is categorically rejected, for theogony brings the birth of theodicy, of evil. The greatest freedom therefore belongs to the indeterminate Will that is able to be or not to be, to the Will that slumbers in potentiality. "Only potentiality before the act is free,"<sup>336</sup> for at the moment the Will is excited there arises the birth of initiative, or hunger, the Will's infinite motion and infinite insatiability through which the world of suffering and unblessedness comes to be. The highest freedom and greatest blessedness of the Will is then to refrain from the vital impetus towards actuality, to remain as Nothing. Such an abstract Will, a dormant Will that retires from all representation, is the antithesis of Boehme and Schelling, for life is in the essential manifestation of the Will, in the election of the self-begetting Will to go out of itself towards alterity. Such was Solovyov's critique of Hartmann in *The Crisis of Western*

---

<sup>333</sup> This is not to suggest an eschatological dualism. Will and Idea are the eternal attributes of the Unconscious. It is meant that Idea is delivered from the world process, from the activity of the Will which in the end becomes pure potential, just as Idea is reduced back to the purely possible or logical.

<sup>334</sup> On the possibility of the Will's repetition of its fall from eternity see Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, Vol. III, pp. 171-173.

<sup>335</sup> Bulgakov points this out in *Unfading Light*, p. 175. For a suggestive connection of Boehme and Hartmann see Brinton, *The Mystic Will*, pp. 197-198. He observes a similar starting point of Boehme and Hartmann, insightfully indicating that for both thinkers their absolute principle is the unity of Will and Idea.

<sup>336</sup> Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, Vol. III, p. 172.

*Philosophy*,<sup>337</sup> though he uncritically adopted Hartmann's understanding of matter as a fallen, egoistic manifestation of an originally immaterial realm, with the result that the Will's final manifestation, according to Solovyov, is in an ideal realm, a kingdom of pure spirits. Here one abstract version of idealist voluntarism was exchanged for another. It is again the triumph of incorporeal stasis. In Bulgakov this negative connection of spirit and material nature, in both Solovyov and Hartmann, is overcome. The ideal and the real, the triadic divine Will and its sophianic essence, lies at the basis of the spiritual-material unity which the will of the world soul strives to incarnate and reflect.

What is witnessed in then Russian Sophiology, and more authentically in Bulgakov (and the later Solovyov), is a return to the positive cosmic voluntarism of Boehme and Schelling, and the overturning of pessimistic voluntarism. In Bulgakov Russian Sophiology finds a more positive and definitive foundation for corporeality. The physical cosmos is not, as for the early Solovyov, a fall from an intelligible cosmos. However, in Bulgakov's early work, Sophia is neither divine nor creaturely but stands between God and creation. It is on account of this that he formerly excluded corporeality from God. "To speak about corporeality in relation to the transcendent Absolute, no matter what degree of refinement and spiritualization, would be both blasphemy and inability to think things through."<sup>338</sup> In this Bulgakov exactly repeats Plotinus' restriction of corporeality to the intelligible realm, which is the beginning of movement and differentiation, a loss of the infinite unity of the One beyond all motion and difference.<sup>339</sup> There is thus, despite his protests against the acosmic spirit of Plotinus' thought,<sup>340</sup> a trace of emanationist Plotinianism in Bulgakov's early thought in which the highest, the Absolute, is uncorrupted by even the most spiritual corporeality, which only exists in the lower realms, in uncreated Sophia as "spiritual corporeality," and in the created world as "earthly corporeality." As God stands at an absolute remove from corporeality, the latter can only be, by default, some sort of metaphysical deterioration, a cortication which forms when the untrammelled unity of eternity emanates into lower spheres. In his mature thought, when Sophia is no longer considered to hover impossibly in the interstice between the Creator and the creature, but, like a Colossus

---

<sup>337</sup> See Solovyov, *Crisis*, pp. 145-149.

<sup>338</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 259.

<sup>339</sup> In *Enneads*, II.4.5 Plotinus, considering the "eternal derivation" of ideas and intelligible matter, states: "This motion, this cleavage, away from The First is indetermination (=Matter)." Concerning the lack of intelligible matter in Plotinus' One Bulgakov states: "Correct also is another idea of Plotinus that is relevant here, namely that intelligible matter belongs to the realm of *nous*, but not to the One, i.e., not to the transcendent Absolute (*Unfading Light*, 259)."

<sup>340</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, pp. 241-243, 252-253.

straddling being and super-being, stands firmly on both sides, Sophia, in its divine aspect, is said to possess quasi-a corporeality and to be the uncreated archetype of the body.

The essential Wisdom and Glory in God possesses an ontological reality analogous to that of a body informed by a reasonable soul in its relation to the spirit incarnate in it. And accordingly it can be compared to an absolute, heavenly, spiritual body belonging to the divine Spirit in all the fullness of its self-revelation.<sup>341</sup>

The Absolute is no longer here at a yawning, Plotinian distance from the corporeality of the created world, but is its eternal basis. Divine Sophia is transposed into creaturely Sophia. Implanted into the world of becoming, the intelligible matter of Sophia, the divine body, becomes “proto-matter”,<sup>342</sup> a potency of the multiplicity of material forms which fill the world. “We know the earth as the universal mother, bringing forth from its womb vegetation, animals, and finally the flesh of humankind. The earth is the common matter of diverse types of flesh.”<sup>343</sup> On the basis of Divine Sophia creaturely Sophia brings forth the material multiplicity of creation into actuality. She is the universal soul that animates the organic bodies of the world, and echoing Schelling, even the elemental bodies which only appear to lack such a principle. “What we consider dead, or rather nonorganic, contains the principle of life, even if only at the lowest levels, in its dark state.”<sup>344</sup> Sophia contains within herself the entire spectrum of being, the whole hierarchy of corporeal creation from the elemental to the anthropological.

Having seen the way in which Sophia as an impersonal, corporeal force, functions as the formative principle of the multiplicity of species in the great chain of being, we must now briefly consider the dynamic process by which this formation eventuates. As with Soloyvov, Bulgakov integrates universal evolution into his dynamic sophiological system. In common with Solovyov’s account of the cosmic process in *Russia and The Universal Church*, Bulgakov does not posit a perfect, original state from which creation falls away; instead, the nascent creation is born in imperfection and immaturity and only proceeds, step by step, towards fullness and sophianic realization.<sup>345</sup> Because creaturely Sophia stands midway between actuality and potentiality, its realization is not eternally given as it is in its eternal mode in the Divine Sophia. It is thus in a state of becoming.

The fundamental mark of the created world is becoming, emergence, development, fulfillment... The creaturely Sophia, which is the foundation of the being of the world, its

---

<sup>341</sup> Bulgakov, *Sophia*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>342</sup> Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, p. 66.

<sup>343</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 264.

<sup>344</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 81.

<sup>345</sup> This is, of course, in contrast to Solovyov’s *Lectures* in which the cosmic process of evolution is the result of the primordial fall of Sophia.

entelechy, *entelecheia* (in Aristotelian language), is at present in a state of potentiality, *dynamis*, while at the same time it is the principle of actualization and finality.<sup>346</sup>

If in the divine Organism ideal forms are eternally realized and embodied in Divine Sophia, in the relative organism of creation, creaturely Sophia represents a potency or tendency that actualizes sophianic forms and realizes divine unity within itself through the unfolding process of time. It is this temporal, discursive character of creaturely Sophia, (though in another sense it is supratemporal as the foundation of the world<sup>347</sup>) which is the basis of becoming and development, of evolution. Creation is not a static fact that issues from a *deus ex machina*, but an organic process of emergence, an unfolding which actualizes, through the flow of time, the divine contents of its being. “This development represents the germination of the divine seeds of being in the soil of non-being, the actualization of divine prototypes, of the divine Sophia in the creaturely.”<sup>348</sup> There is a crucial point here. The multiplicity of living, material forms which comprise the grades of being that arise in the evolutionary process are not, as it appears at least in the early Solovyov, simply instruments out of which humanity is to be reborn and ultimately reascend into the eternity and incorporeality of the divine-human Organism.<sup>349</sup> Furthermore, they are not stochastic forms that come to be accidentally through “natural selection;” nor are they Bergsonian forms, for which the forms of nature are the product of nature’s vital impulse in the free ascent of its self-discovery,<sup>350</sup> for this would introduce novelty to God and thereby “admit change in God.”<sup>351</sup> They are instead the incarnation of Platonic forms in matter, the actualization of the eternal, sophianic contents, or “themes,” of creation.

The modes and forms of being that are actualized in the evolutionary process are not accidents but genuine themes of this being, implanted by God in creation, as the sophianic seeds of being, as its entelechic foundation... The world soul, or the creaturely Sophia, actualizes this sophianic content of creation in gradual and successive stages, or (what is the same thing) through an *evolutionary* process.<sup>352</sup>

In Bulgakov’s dynamic system, creation is a process of sophiological realization, wherein the world unfolds the pleroma of sophianic content through temporal processes. There is for him no antimony between creation and evolution, for in its creatureliness the world is

---

<sup>346</sup> Bulgakov, *Sophia*, p. 75.

<sup>347</sup> On this topic see *Bride of the Lamb*, pp. 64-71.

<sup>348</sup> Bulgakov, *Sophia*, p. 75. See also pages 69-70, and *Bride of the Lamb*, pp. 63-68.

<sup>349</sup> In *Russia and the Universal Church* (pp. 163-166) we find however, a notion much more fully developed by Bulgakov: that the multiplicity of forms and grades of creation are preestablished in Sophia and realized in the evolutionary process.

<sup>350</sup> In his famous work, *Creative Evolution*, Henri Bergson suggests that conceiving evolution as the realization of eternal forms in time is a type of determinism or finalism that robs nature of freedom.

<sup>351</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 65.

<sup>352</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 172

characterized by becoming, is a living, developing organic unity. “Far from contradicting the doctrine of the Six Days of Creation, the idea of evolution... constitutes its unfolding... The sequence of “days” would thus refer not to the chronology but to the hierarchy of being, so to speak. At the same time, it is possible to admit a gradual or evolutionary actualization of all the forms of being.”<sup>353</sup> Because creation is not eternal, but is characterized by temporal development, the hierarchy of being is as a great chain of becoming. In the order of creation the lowest forms—temporally, not ontologically—precede the highest, such that creation is built up through time. The grades of being, preestablished in Sophia unfurl through the ceaseless flux of becoming.

Furthermore, because Sophia, the world soul, is not a hypostatic, rational principle, it executes or actualizes in time the organic forms of nature, not through a discursive, contemplative process, but instinctually, in an unconscious manner.

The world soul moves genera like a dark instinct, the inner law of being in its different forms.<sup>354</sup>

She is that universal soul of the world, instinctively unconscious or super-conscious, the *anima mundi*, which is revealed in the astonishment-eliciting expediency of the structure of organisms, unconscious functions, instincts of the general principle.<sup>355</sup>

We have seen that the unconscious will of nature was one of the great insights of German voluntarist philosophy, which was initiated by Boehme and developed by Schelling, and which became the first principle of the pessimistic systems of Schopenhauer and Hartmann, the latter of whom applied the idea of the unconscious will systematically to the evolutionary process in his dark trilogy on the *Philosophy of the Unconscious*. Significantly, Bulgakov, with his notion of Sophia as non-hypostatic, finds a determinate place in his sophiological system for the impersonal and unconscious principle of German voluntarism. Whereas in Solovyov’s early thought, the unconscious, impersonal character of the world soul represents a falling away from the divine world,<sup>356</sup> in Bulgakov there is an affirmative ontological basis for the unconscious, non-hypostatic character of the world soul: creaturely Sophia is the created echo of non-hypostatic Divine Sophia. The a-logical or non-rational (though not irrational) character of the evolving, material order of nature has its eternal basis in the divine

---

<sup>353</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 173.

<sup>354</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 102.

<sup>355</sup> Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, p. 229.

<sup>356</sup> Though Solovyov speaks of Sophia, or the world soul, as impersonal and unconscious in his later thought, its status is unclear. In *Russia and the Universal Church* (pp. 150-153) Solovyov does speak of Sophia, in its exclusively divine mode, as divine substance, a multiplicity that is a potential chaos eternally reduced to unity. As distinct from divine personhood, the divine nature or substance could seem to imply impersonality and unconsciousness, yet this is left ambiguous and undeveloped by Solovyov.

nature. Because of the totally realized nature of Divine Sophia, according to its eternal mode, it is not an instinctual, teleological principle as is creaturely Sophia.<sup>357</sup> It is, however, in its non-hypostatic character, non-rational, and though it is permeated by the divine consciousness, it is not itself a principle of consciousness. Sophia is irreducible to the reflexivity of conscious intelligence. It is irrevocably a real, corporeal principle, a divine world or body, alike to the primal impulse which composes creaturely organisms and their vital functions. Accordingly, it is the basis of instinctual drive in creaturely Sophia, which, as the soul or living body of creation, realizes through time what is archetypally contained in eternal Divine Sophia. “The creaturely Sophia is becoming the image and likeness of Divine Sophia... The likeness is the becoming of the image, through which the image is realized in the creaturely world, ascending from potentiality to actuality.”<sup>358</sup> As such the body of creation actualizes within itself the likeness of Divine Sophia, the divine body or divine world. However, creation cannot attain this divine likeness apart from humanity, who is the spiritual, unifying center of the created world, just as the divine Spirit is the hypostatic center of the divine world. There is not only impersonal unconsciousness, but also conscious personhood. Just as the impersonal element of Sophia is only one pole of the divine-human Organism, so also creaturely Sophia is only one side of created being.

We must now move from the non-hypostatic to the hypostatic, from the not-I to the I. As creation is fashioned after the divine-human Organism, the world possesses not only an instinctive soul, an impersonal-corporeal principle, but also contains a hypostatic element, the principle of humanity or personhood. Just as the divine nature is hypostasized by the divine tri-Hypostasis, nature, or creaturely Sophia, has its spiritual and unifying center in the human hypostasis. In humanity, the created order receives an anthropic character.

The creaturely Sophia, who is only a hypostasizedness, not a hypostasis, is hypostasized just like the Divine Sophia. The creaturely Sophia, though, is hypostasized by the human person, whereas the Divine Sophia is hypostasized by the Divine Person from all eternity. In this sense, the creaturely world is cosmo-anthropic, or man is a microcosm. The humanness of the world is revelation’s fundamental and generalizing truth about creation.<sup>359</sup>

---

<sup>357</sup> The instinctive character of created Sophia is, however, to be transcended when Sophia becomes hominized, rendered transparent and obedient to the human spirit. “Applied to the world soul, this idea [the transfiguration of the world] means that this soul, as the substance of the world, loses its instinctive and psychical character, and acquires spirituality through man (*Bride of the Lamb*, p. 424).”

<sup>358</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 82. “The creaturely Sophia, which is the foundation of the being of the world, its entelechy, *entelecheia* (in Aristotelian language), is at present in a state of potentiality, *dynamis*, while at the same time it is the principle of its actualization and finality (*Sophia*, p. 75).” On the development of the distinction between image and likeness see Olga Nesmiyanova, “Russian Theology” in, ed. David Fergusson, *The Blackwell Companion to Nineteenth-Century Theology* (Malden-Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 220.

<sup>359</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 85.

According to Bulgakov, the “humanness” of the world, or its hominization, is realized in the evolutionary process of creation. It is not as such in the beginning; hominization arrives only at the end (*telos*) as the completion of the cosmic process. Creation is anthropologically oriented and becomes the image and likeness of the divine-human Organism through the unfurling process of time in which creation proceeds from the non-hypostatic to the hypostatic, and so becomes “humanized.” “Man comes into the world last, on the sixth day. Prior to and without man, the world evolves toward him... As long as the sophianic instinctiveness of the world soul reigns in creation, the latter remains unfinished, for it is incompletely humanized.”<sup>360</sup> With the arrival of humanity in the world, creation attains an ontological similitude to the divine-human Organism, for humanity is the living synthesis of spirit and nature, just as God is an eternal, organic synthesis of tri-hypostatic Spirit and nature. In humanity, nature gains personhood, is opened to spirit, for with the incarnation or enhypostasization of humanity in creaturely Sophia, nature is spiritualized as the body of humankind. Just as God is a divine-human Organism by virtue of the fact that God is a Spirit who possesses his own nature, a divine world or divine body, so also in the created organism, creaturely Sophia, or nature, is the body of creaturely humanity. Creation is an organism composed of the multi-hypostatic human race as well as nature, or creaturely Sophia, which is both the local body of individual human agents as well as their “peripheral” body. “This body of ours is not isolated from the world. Rather, it is connected with it, for the world is the peripheral body of man.”<sup>361</sup> In this sense humanity is, in itself, a repetition of the divine-human Organism, for it is universal spirit, which possesses nature as its body. By virtue of its ontological duality humanity is fashioned in the divine image,<sup>362</sup> and is a “creaturely god.”<sup>363</sup> God is thus the inner plan of the creaturely organism, which is consummated and has its summit in humanity. In sum, Bulgakov’s ontology of God as a Divine-Human Organism, is the basis of his account of creation; in its twofold-ness creation bears the imprint of the divine-human Organism. The ontological structure of creation is a repetition in the finite, of the divine, ontological duality. Just as God is a divine-human Organism, a Spirit who indwells or incarnates itself, so to speak, in Divine Sophia, so also creation is an organism in

---

<sup>360</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 173.

<sup>361</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 425.

<sup>362</sup> See Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, pp. 136-140; and *Bride of the Lamb*, 79-103. According to Bulgakov, angels, although they must be considered a co-hypostasis of creaturely nature alongside humanity, lack their own nature and, in this sense, do not possess the image of God in the fullness that humanity does. See Bulgakov’s book on angels, trans. Thomas Allan Smith, *Jacob’s Ladder: On Angels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

<sup>363</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 85.

which the human spirit is incarnate in created Sophia. In Sophia, Divinity and humanity take on flesh.

In our evaluation, Bulgakov's version of divine-humanity, or theandrist, arguably possesses a distinct advantage over Solovyov's. Because Sophia for Bulgakov is strictly non-hypostatic, he is able to decisively separate the divine world or divine Sophia from created humankind. As such, created humanity is not necessary to the actuality of the divine-human Organism, a necessity that can still be found in Solovyov's *Russia and the Universal Church* insofar as God requires creation in order to demonstrate his absoluteness.<sup>364</sup> Instead, God is divine-human by virtue of being hypostatic Spirit that possesses an eternal, impersonal, non-hypostatic divine world or body, while creation is conceived as the utterly gratuitous repetition and revelation of the divine Organism. With this significant revision, Bulgakov is not only able to overcome the implicit pantheism or theopanism of Solovyov, he is also able to circumvent the latter's latent dualism. If Solovyov's sophiology, in its early and even middle phases, because of its aversion to space and time, is threatened by dualism in regards to the material order, Bulgakov succeeds in fortifying his system beyond dualism by positing a positive, divine foundation for matter in divine being. As an impersonal, non-hypostatic divine nature, Divine Sophia becomes the metaphysical basis for the corporeal order of creation. Because Divine Sophia is, in its very essence, impersonal and a-logical, it cannot be subsumed into the ideality of rational personhood, even if according to Bulgakov the divine nature is eternally permeated by the consciousness and personality of the divine hypostases.<sup>365</sup> Bulgakov thus preserves in his sophiological system a determinate place for the corporeal and the unconscious, or subconscious, reality of nature. Nature is not the product of spirit's self-positing, nor reducible to spirit; it is instead its essential ground that always accompanies spirit as its concrete materialization. Nature just is, as much as spirit is self-subsistent, as much as "I" is the act of its own self-positing. Nature, for Bulgakov, does not arise out of I's self-positing as in Fichte, but rather as in Boehme and Schelling, is always the ever-present object of the subject, the mysterious, dark, non-rational ground of spirit that arises by its own primordial instinct, the unconscious will to life. The upshot of Bulgakov is that if the dark ground, the material, non-hypostatic basis of created order is a permanent, ontological fixture of creation, then spatio-temporality and its irreducibly dynamic nature are

---

<sup>364</sup> Solovyev, *Russia and the Universal Church*, pp. 151-154.

<sup>365</sup> Though for Bulgakov God is not conceived, as in Boehme and Schelling, as arising out of the divine ground. According to Bulgakov, this would be to give priority to the impersonal and unconscious. See *Lamb of God*, pp. 96-97.

as well integral to the finite order as such, rather than mere instruments by which to achieve supra-spatio-temporal being. Highest creaturely being does not involve their negation but their transfiguration. In Bulgakov sophiology uncovers (or recovers from the German voluntarist tradition) a metaphysical ground for the protological creation of matter as well the eschatological spiritualization of matter (an idea towards which Solovyov's later thought strove as its point of culmination, but which itself was left in an undeveloped state<sup>366</sup>). Having its archetype in the Godhead as Sophia the destiny of corporeality is always already anticipated from eternity. What is from eternity is what shall be at the end of time's ages. The end is not Gnostic reascent, a flight from corporeality, but the spiritualization of matter. Bulgakov's theologoumenon of God as a divine-human Organism, as a tri-hypostatic Spirit who possess in Sophia a divine world or body, is productive in decisively establishing a divine foundation for matter, where prior theological tradition had failed to provision one. Yet does this positing of an eternal foundation of matter in Sophia come at a significant cost? If the evolving order, or what is becoming, only realizes what eternally is, does this do justice to evolutionary processes, and is created freedom thereby annulled?

Beginning with the evolutionary question first, it can be argued that the Russian theologians take up a unique mediating position on the theme of evolution, one that can perhaps be called an idealist-voluntarism. Idealist because, on the one hand, Solovyov and Bulgakov fundamentally see the evolutionary process as the incarnation of eternal Platonic forms in matter. Though the early Solovyov's *Lectures*, as well as *Russia and the Universal Church*, seem almost predominantly anthropological such that the biological forms that anticipate the human form of all-unity appear almost purely instrumental, it is nonetheless clear in his later works, especially *Justification of the Good*,<sup>367</sup> that the evolutionary forms and grades of nature which appear in time have their ultimate reality in eternity, which communicates them to the world soul. For Bulgakov too, the eternity of the divine forms of creation is conceived as a sort of "determinism" concerning to its content.<sup>368</sup> There is here an explicit effort to protect Divinity from the introduction of novelty, which would simultaneously imply God's learning and deny divine immutability and absoluteness.<sup>369</sup> This is, however, only one side of the Russian Sophiological account of evolution. In addition to the idealist, Platonic element there is also, on the other hand, the voluntarist element. The

---

<sup>366</sup> This point will be developed in the final chapter.

<sup>367</sup> See Vladimir Solovyov, trans. Nathalie A. Duddington, *The Justification of the Good: An Essay on Moral Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), p. 164.

<sup>368</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 139.

<sup>369</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 65.

Russian theologians integrate Germanic voluntarism into their perspectives by proposing the world soul to be an unconscious principle, a dark will that moves *genera*. Echoing Schelling's *naturephilosophie* as well as Hartmann's unconscious Will (minus his pessimism), the world soul is regarded as prime matter seeking form, an instinctive hunger to incarnate the divine prototypes or the form of divine Wisdom. This idealist-voluntaristic theory of evolution charts a path between a purely materialist Darwinian theory, for which biological speciation represents only the play of mechanistic and material forces that ascend only through mutation and chance, thereby lacking a truly creative element, and Bergsonism, for which evolution represents the creative ascendancy of the *elan vital*, a theory of unceasing novelty and originality within nature, wherein nature, in its existentialism, develops unforceably along the divergent lines which the *élan vital* cuts out in matter.<sup>370</sup> In either case, form is accidental, for it is either merely an artificial assemblage, an aggregate that contains no principle of inner unity, or else that pernicious mental tendency of the intellect, with its "natural geometry," to impose stability on the spontaneous, ever moving flux. Clearly, Russian Sophiology stands far closer to the Bergson insofar as it is stressed that the world soul, in its dynamic potentiality, generates as an unconscious principle, for in this voluntarist modality there can be seen the element of freedom on the part of the creature to develop according to its inner principles and instinctive inclinations, through its dark yearnings for form. On the other hand, insofar as the world soul is conceived in its idealist mode as the supratemporal receptacle of eternal *logoi*, it could be seen to lack a truly creative element. Biological forms are not ultimately the product of time, of creation's own novel self-discovery, but are determined by what eternity delivers into temporality in the process of its unfolding. Freedom then, for the Russian theologians, refers to the mode of created life not to its content. Nonetheless, it can be argued that what emerges within the sophiological tradition is a boldly unique attempt to strike a balance between freedom and necessity, to preserve the former by means of an unconscious will or *anima mundi* which through its desire for unity draws form to itself, and the latter by reference to the determinate prototypes themselves contained in the eternal divine Wisdom. But, to press the question of freedom further, is this sophiological balancing act sufficient?

Though the Russian Sophiologists adopted and developed the impersonal, corporeal element of Boehme's and Schelling's voluntarist sophiology, did they follow their insights far enough? In contrast to their Germanic, sophiological predecessors, Sophia, though it has

---

<sup>370</sup> Henri Bergson, trans. Arthur Mitchell, *Creative Evolution* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1998).

its created aspect, ultimately belongs on the side of eternity and does not arise and achieve form and determinacy through process. What then is the status of time? Can time truly develop out of perfect, immobile eternity as a genuine reality, or, is the evolving world of time, ultimately, in contrast to the perfection of eternity, un-reality? If God is eternal, is the act of creation necessarily eternal as well, with the result that time represents a fallen away reality, a non-real and illusory becoming that is the illegitimate offspring of being? This is precisely the Platonic conclusion the early Solovyov had reached and which Bulgakov had resisted, and it is to their accounts of the fall which we will momentarily turn. First, we must press these questions a bit further. Solovyov's logical consistency is difficult to avoid, yet such a conclusion had been decisively rejected by Bulgakov and by Schelling; by Bulgakov because of the pantheism entailed in an eternal creation conceived as a component of the divine-human Organism; by Schelling because, in his thought eternity is, in its immobility and inertness, an imperfection, a state of being where there is no life, no movement, and as such only represents the dark beginnings of God and of creation. Eternity is a state which must be overcome and actively relegated into the past for that which is highest, spirit, to arise. For spirit is precisely that ability to be or not to be, the radical freedom to posit oneself into form and determinacy over above the boundless abyss where formless indifference had unendingly reigned supreme. In other words, is the birthplace of all things, both of God and creation, one of will, the spirit's ineliminable freedom to be, or of necessity, an eternal, unbegotten order that always was and always will be? Thus, we come to the critical, all-important question which Berdyaev had raised against Bulgakov, and Russian Sophiology generally: is there room for authentic freedom in Bulgakov's Sophiology? Berdyaev's response was negative, and thus he issued a call to return to the springs of Sophiology in Boehme and Schelling, for which radical, ungrounded freedom, the capacity to be everything or to remain as nothing, as an unwilling will, was lifted up as the final standard of ontology. "Freedom is more primordial and deeper than any nature."<sup>371</sup> In the eyes of Berdyaev both Solovyov and Bulgakov fall short of the mark, for Sophia had condensed and calcified into the eternal being of timelessly determined forms to which becoming, in its unfreedom, could add nothing.<sup>372</sup> Genuine novelty, and above all freedom, is opposed to static perfection.<sup>373</sup>

---

<sup>371</sup> Berdyaev, "Etude I. The Teaching about the Ungrund and Freedom." Berdyaev's priority of freedom against Sophiology is noted by Paul L. Gavrilyuk in *Georges Florovsky and the Russian Religious Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 108.

<sup>372</sup> "In its ontological foundation, the creaturely world is wholly determined, from beginning to end. This *determinism* is the Wisdom of God, the Divine Sophia, who reveals herself in the creaturely Sophia." *The Bride of the Lamb*, p. 139. To cut a long story short, in his account of creaturely freedom Bulgakov defines it, in relation to the aspect of sophiological determinism, as the free actualization of the creature's given

From eternal perfection only descent is possible, and not genuine creation. Sophia, in the Russian sophiological systems, represents determinism.<sup>374</sup> If radical ontological freedom is the foundation, one must turn alternatively to the various systems of process philosophy and theology laid down in Schelling, Whitehead, James, Bergson, Hartshorne, and others, or else to what could be called a pluralistic pantheism, which sees nature as a self-creating system, or product, of freedom in its odyssey of self-discovery. In any case, for the Russian Sophiologists, freedom with regard to creation is not the radical ability to determine form, but rather, to exist in accordance with the inner nature of divinely created form, or in Aristotelian terms, to bring to actuality (*entelecheia*) the capacity of a particular essence. And with regard to humanity, the deepest springs of human freedom lay within a transcendental decision to actualize its theandric form in union with the divine-human Organism. And it is to this subject, the supratemporal fall of humanity, to which we will momentarily turn. Having brought certain criticisms raised against Russian Sophiology's theology of creation, we must now offer some remarks on its potential contributions to the twofold problem of the ontological ground of corporeality and its dynamic, evolutionary unfolding.

If we consider Russian Sophiology as a developing tradition, it can be seen that the problems surrounding the ground of corporeality and its evolutionary development underwent refinement. Its contribution to the theology of creation lies in its systematic effort to resolve these issues in a creative synthesis of past and contemporary ideas, some of which we have emphasized in the course of our discussion. Specifically, it was shown that Russian Sophiology's engagement with these issues was inspired, in part, by Plotinus' intelligible matter and by Germanic voluntarism's principle of the unconscious Will. Plotinus's concept of intelligible matter does not feature in Solovyov's theology of Sophia, and it appears that he was more influenced by Boehme and Schelling, as well as Schopenhauer and Hartmann. On

---

sophiological theme, which "must be received and assimilated" with an inner "acceptance of sophianic determination as the goal." *Bride of the Lamb*, p.143. Nikolai Lossky criticized Bulgakov's notion of the eternally determined content of the world in Sophia as antithetical to freedom and novelty. For a brief discussion see Paul Gavriilyuk, "Bulgakov's Account of Creation: Neglected Aspects, Critics and Contemporary Relevance." *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 2015, Vol.17(4), p. 460.

<sup>373</sup> Stratford Caldecott believes Berdyaev's opposition between freedom and being to be a false one. However, he seems to gloss over the significance of the underlying current of Germanic voluntarism in Berdyaev's concept of freedom, the irrational and unconscious basis which is the ground of potentiality, and thus of freedom for Berdyaev. If there is no abyss, no *Ungrund* of meonic freedom, there cannot be true freedom but only a static eternity in which everything is always already determined. In any case, Caldecott posits a Balthasarian view of freedom, which he believes preserves freedom without the opposition of freedom and being. See *The Radiance of Being* (Tacoma, WA, Angelico Press, 2013), pp. 213-217.

<sup>374</sup> Berdyaev highlights an important distinction between Boehme's sophiology and Russian sophiology: "The teaching of Boehme about Sophia... is not a Christian Platonism, as Russian Sophiology tries to conceive of itself, its sense is altogether different." Berdyaev, "Etude I. The Teaching about the Ungrund and Freedom."

the whole his early thought shows a tendency towards Platonic dualism or towards pessimistic voluntarism of Schopenhauer and Hartmann, which rejected the phenomenal world. Though his system is neither pessimistic nor impersonal, in his synthetic ingenuity Solovyov integrated the voluntarist idea of an impersonal, corporeal will into his sophiology. The material world of becoming is seen to have its ontological basis in the world soul, the fallen Sophia, understood as irrational, unconscious principle, which became the matter for the evolutionary process whereby Sophia would be reconstituted. The *Lectures* thus represent somewhat of a negative grounding of corporeality and the cosmic process. In Bulgakov, there is a marked development, a positive grounding. Operating with the Plotinian presupposition of the existence of an intelligible matter, he postulated an eternal foundation for corporeality in Divine Sophia. Corporeality does not emerge with a catastrophic disintegration of Sophia, but characterizes its being as such; in Sophia ideas are incarnated and embodied in a living, organic unity. Furthermore, he creatively developed this Plotinian presupposition through the influence of Germanic voluntarism, whereby he grounded the instinctual, unconscious nature of the world soul and its becoming in the impersonal, unconscious character of the divine nature. Bulgakov insightfully perceived that it was not enough to merely ground the diverse forms of the physical order in the *Logos*, in divine ideas. It was necessary, he argued, to ground them in a divine substratum, the divine essence, which he considered analogically a “divine world” or even more provocatively, the “body of God.”<sup>375</sup> Mirroring the chronic division of subject and object in philosophy, theology had elucidated the divine subject almost to the exclusion of the divine nature, and as a result the objective world lacked an objective ground in God. Instead, only an ideal ground of nature was posited in the eternal *Logos*. Such ideality was mediated through Plato and the Neo-Platonic tradition of ideal forms, which were reinterpreted as eternally subsisting in the mind of God and in which creatures participated. Such an understanding can be seen, for instance, in Maximus the Confessor’s *logoi*.<sup>376</sup> To be sure an ideal grounding of creation in God is necessary for the Sophiologists, but it remains one-sided, for creation must also, according to Bulgakov, have its *real* grounding in God, in Sophia. Furthermore, given the growing modern awareness of the organic development of all creatures and with it the whole universe, a static understanding of divine ideas and their creaturely correlates demanded revision.<sup>377</sup> Hence,

---

<sup>375</sup> See Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 108; see also, Bulgakov, *Sophia*, pp. 56-59.

<sup>376</sup> See Maximus the Confessor, trans. Nicholas Constas, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), V.I, Ambiguum 7, 1077C-1088A.

<sup>377</sup> This demand is, in sense, already intimated in Plato’s dialogue *Parmenides* in which Parmenides points out to the young Socrates many difficulties in his theory of eternal forms.

Divine Sophia, submerged into becoming as unconscious, creaturely Sophia, becomes the fundamental idea to be realized in the progressive unfolding of the world. In positing, along with Boehme and Schelling, a living and dynamic objective pole in the divine being, a transcendent link is forged with creaturely being, binding the dynamism of nature to its positive analogical foundation in God, in which nature is seen to be striving to reflect or to realize the divine content of its being in its finite mode of existence.<sup>378</sup> Sophiology thus establishes a determinate place for the world, and all its discursivity, in the divine-human Organism, and in so doing it opened up new directions in the theology of creation. In the next chapter, we will explore the novelty of Russian Sophiology's ideas concerning the fall of creation.

---

<sup>378</sup> See Bulgakov, *Sophia*, pp. 75-76; see also, Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, pp. 79-103.

### Chapter 3: Russian Sophiology and the Supratemporal Fall

#### Introduction

One of the great difficulties in the history of philosophy and theology is to account for relative, imperfect being in relation to absolute, unconditioned Reality. In certain schools of Greek and Indian philosophy one finds a doctrine of souls falling away from blissful contemplation of an eternal reality, or a world of universals, into the shifting, temporal world of appearances where wayward souls have been imprisoned until they awaken to the falsity of this world and long to reascend to the world of light, or of *jivas* (souls) having through their *avidya* (ignorance) sunken down into the world of *maya* (illusion) only to return, often after countless reincarnations, into that highest reality upon the realization of the identity of Atman (the self) with Brahman. In the dreadful, monistic philosophy of Eduard von Hartmann, who sought to unite Hegelian progress with Schopenhauerian pessimism, finitude was considered evil, a reality which sprung from unconscious desire or longing, the perverse will to live which evolves and perpetuates this false world, and which must ultimately sink into the “painlessness” of the placid, unwilling Unconscious. In certain philosophies there is an ostensible tendency towards acosmism, a world-despising attitude in which the finite and the infinite cannot peacefully co-exist. In such systems the physical world represents a falling away from the supernal reality. Such an acosmic tendency can also be ascertained in differing degrees in certain theological and mystical systems: in early Gnosticism, allegedly in Origen, in Eriugena’s dynamic Neoplatonism, in Eckhardt, in the common medieval scholastic notion that only intellectual beings will subsist in the final state, and is even evident in Solovyov’s *Lectures* as we have seen. However, with its doctrines of free divine creation, the Incarnation, and the eventual restoration of all things (*apakatastasis ton panton*), Christian theology is predisposed, or at least prodded, to view the fallen state of nature not as a metaphysical defect of finitude as such, but as no more than a transitory era in a divine economy that is ordered to beatific ends.

If the idea or doctrine of the fall functions as a theodicy in the Christian world-vision, then a general theological question that underlies the whole doctrine of the fall is: what is the ontological connection between original sin and the fragmented state of creation? Yet significantly, in its diverse accounts of the fall, Christian theology seldom endeavored to put forth a systematic account of the fall that would explain the ontological causes of the disintegrated state of being that extends to the whole of nature. Instead, Christianity tended,

post-Augustine, to center its focus upon the corruption of the will and human nature, and its hereditary transmission to Adam's progeny. Accordingly, it will be argued in this chapter that one of the important features of Russian Sophiology is that it sought to develop, in a more full-blooded way, a causal, ontological connection between original sin and fractured nature. If Russian Sophiology sought to address this general theological lacuna, there are further formidable theological questions concerning the fall that it also sought to address. What is the nature of the primal human who fell short of the glory of God? How is the agency and guilt of primal humanity to be conceived in relation to its universal and individual aspects? And, in light of modern scientific discovery, how can the fall be correlated with the evolutionary process? In their attempted resolutions to these longstanding and contemporary questions concerning original sin, it will be argued that the Russian theologians traverse this difficult terrain via a complex engagement with various theological and philosophical sources.

In order to situate Sophiology's speculative reconstructions of original sin within a recognizable context of theological tradition, this chapter will begin by briefly considering aspects of the Augustinian and Eastern/Eriugenian accounts of the fall that are relevant to Russian Sophiology. Specifically, it will consider the problem of human agency in Augustine's account of the fall, which Sophiology considered to be inadequate. It will be argued that Russian Sophiology attempts a mediating position between Augustinianism and Eastern theology, by articulating an account of the fall that attributes guilt to Adam's offspring by conceiving the fall as the act of a universal, or universally determined, human agent. Furthermore, over against the historicism of Augustinian account of Adam's fall, this universal, original sin will be seen to be supratemporal, or taking place outside of time. In its positing of a supratemporal fall of primordial, universal humanity it will be argued that Sophiology can be seen, broadly speaking, to stand within an Eastern tradition of thought (as well as that of Eriugena), which understood the fall as a non-local event that took place at the moment of creation. However, Eastern and Eriugenian thought left unresolved or underexplored questions relating to the nature of this catastrophic event that occurred in the infancy of the world, such as the nature of primal humanity, as well as the ontological connection between the original transgression of humanity and the fallen state of nature.

After briefly considering aspects of these two theological approaches to original sin, we will turn to Friedrich Schelling's account of the fall, which exhibits ostensible links with Russian Sophiology. The Russian theologians sought to come to terms with the idea of original sin in a similar spirit of metaphysical inquiry. Schelling's account of the fall is both

voluntarist and supratemporal, envisaging original sin as the primordial act of a universal human that lies above time, and is also explicitly linked to an understanding of God as a divine Organism. In these respects, Schelling's account bears striking similarity to those put forth by Solovyov and Bulgakov.

Having explored Schelling's account of the fall, we will consider the accounts of the Russian Sophiologists themselves, which, in the context of their organic, theandric metaphysics, sought not only to resolve the perceived inadequacies of Augustinianism, and the residual ambiguities in the Eastern/Erigenian account by reference to its supratemporal account of the fall, but also to address contemporary scientific concerns regarding evolution. Concerning the former, it will be argued that the novelty of Russian Sophiology is that, in contrast to a broadly Augustinian approach which sees the fall as located in a historical act of a historical individual, it attempted to arrive at a metaphysical explanation of the fall as supra-temporal act of a supra-historical, universal human that caused (early Solovyov) or perpetuated (Bulgakov) the disorganized state of creation. In so doing, Sophiology stands within the Eastern/Erigenian tradition, and also builds upon Schelling's voluntarism. Nonetheless, it went much further by developing an account of the nature of primal humanity, the agency involved in its primordial, transgressive deed, as well as in articulating a mediating position between Augustinianism and Eastern theology concerning the question of original guilt. Concerning Sophiology's attempt to square original sin with evolution, it will be shown that Solovyov and Bulgakov do so in divergent ways. In the case of the early Solovyov, there is proposed a precosmic lapse of Sophia (the universal human organism), an egoistic deed that fractures the unity of Sophia into anarchic multiplicity and which is the direct catalyst of the cosmic process of evolution whereby the manifold human entities, which comprise Sophia, can through time be reintegrated into the eternal unity out of which they fell. Bulgakov develops his own account of original sin in a different direction. Retaining the idealist-voluntarist notion of a transcendental decision, Bulgakov nonetheless attempts to forge a more paradoxical account of the fall that incorporates temporal and supratemporal aspects. This double dimension, it is argued, allows Bulgakov to correlate the fall and evolution in a different and original manner. If for Solovyov the evolutionary process is accidental, for Bulgakov the evolution of the world refers to a state of imperfection that must be transcended, but which could not be avoided. At the culmination of the evolutionary process, Adam encounters the world, as an individual in time and as universal humanity in a supratemporal manner, wherein the fate of humanity in relation to the evolutionary process is

decided. Humanity is then at once the pinnacle of the evolutionary process, transcending it, though also capable of falling into it, if its spiritual task was forfeited.

Finally, this chapter seeks to demonstrate that, while developing the doctrine of original sin in a highly original fashion, there are nevertheless various difficulties that arise in the respective accounts of Solovyov and Bulgakov, principally how to correlate the freedom of the individual in relation to the universal (Sophia or Adam), and also, in the case of Bulgakov, how to integrate the temporal and supratemporal aspects of Adam's fall—since, for Bulgakov, Adam's fall is not pre-cosmic as with Solovyov, but pre-natal, occurring upon the entrance of individuals into the world. In conclusion, the perspective of Teilhard de Chardin on original sin is briefly registered in order to suggest a possible alternative to the Russian Sophiologists' accounts.

### **I. Original Sin, East and West: Divergent Trends**

Before considering the contribution of Russian Sophiology to theological speculation concerning the fall, it is important to briefly highlight two trends in earlier, patristic and medieval theology, which Sophiology responded to and sought to develop. First, we will discuss the Augustinian tradition of original sin and guilt, which understood the universal tendency to evil as the result of an empirical, transgressive event carried out in space and time by a historical individual. Second, we will look at the Eastern and Eriugenian tradition, which saw the fall as a non-local event that occurred at the moment of creation. Sophiology attempts to take up aspects of both of these distant theological traditions and seeks to improve upon them in the light of modern cosmology. We will see that it does so through a creative engagement with German Idealism and through its conception of God as an Organism.

Christianity has always been cosmic in its scope, a story of all creation corrupted by transgression and of its ultimate redemption. Nevertheless, the doctrine of the fall has come into conflict with modern cosmology ever since the emergence of an evolutionary world-vision. It is felt that our greater scientific knowledge of the universal process makes belief in a fall of humanity a more difficult if not irresolvable problem for theology. Consequently, the emergence of evolutionary cosmology has prompted different theories of the fall to arise, and has also contributed to the rejection or demythologization of the doctrine of the fall. Having long understood the world as having sunken down into a fallen state, modern theology is confronted with the fact that nature has instead risen up. How is the idea of original, primal sin to be squared with this cosmological revolution? How can humanity have fallen if there

was never a moment in the history of the universe where all was pristine, innocent, in a word, paradisaic? Furthermore, long before humanity arrived there was death in the world, of which, it seems, we could not have been the cause.<sup>379</sup> This sentiment arises from an empiricist understanding of the fall, which is essentially Augustinian.<sup>380</sup> The Augustinian account of the fall or original sin prevailed in the West for over a millennium, and it is predominantly this version of the fall, which is historical in character, that is seen to conflict with the rise of evolutionary cosmology and biology.

As with so many aspects of theology, the towering Bishop of Hippo, with his systematic expansiveness, shaped centuries of theological discourse concerning the doctrine of the fall. The Augustinian tradition of original sin viewed the primal transgression as a historical event, one theoretically traceable within the empirical chain of history.<sup>381</sup> According to Augustine, the original righteousness of humanity was lost in the original sin (*originale peccatum*) of a historical individual, Adam. He was concerned, within the context of his polemic with Pelagianism, to comprehend the biblical and experiential premise that all are “born in sin,” or with a determinate tendency to evil, which Augustine observed even in infants.<sup>382</sup> According to Augustine’s theory,<sup>383</sup> Adam transmits his defective nature to his future progeny, through concupiscence, which he considers accidental to the sexual act of generation. Furthermore, Augustine held that Adam was not merely the material and efficient cause of a corrupted nature; in addition, because “all were in Adam,” because they seminally

---

<sup>379</sup> C.S. Lewis, for example, in *The Problem of Pain* (Quebec: Samizdat University Press, 2016), p. 86, states: “The origin of animal suffering could be traced, by earlier generations, to the Fall of man—the whole world was infected by the uncreating rebellion of Adam. This is now impossible, for we have good reason to believe that animals existed long before men. Carnivorousness, with all that it entails, is older than humanity.” Similarly, John Polkinghorne confidently claims, “Of course, physical death did not originate with our hominid ancestors.” Eds. John Polkinghorne and Michael Welker, *The End of the World and the Ends of God: Science and Theology on Eschatology* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), p. 41. See also John Polkinghorne, *Reason and Reality: The Relationship Between Science and Theology* (London: SPCK, 1991), ch. 8.

<sup>380</sup> It is for this reason that some have turned to Irenaeus over against Augustine, seeing in the former an idea of the progressive development of humanity from a state of immaturity. See for example Gregory R. Peterson, “Falling Up: Evolution and Original Sin,” in, ed. Michael Ruse, *Philosophy after Darwin* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), pp. 539-548, and Connor Cunningham, *Darwin’s Pious Idea: Why the Ultra-Darwinists and Creationists Both Get it Wrong* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010), pp. 379, 396. Daniel Pederson argues against this Irenaean *ressourcement* and believes Scheiermacher to be a better ally for this supposedly Irenaean idea. See “‘Irenaean’ or ‘Scheiermacherian’?: An Evolutionarily Plausible Account of the Origins of Sin.” *Theology and Science*, 2016, Vol.14 (2), pp. 190-201.

<sup>381</sup> It is true that Augustine had once interpreted the fall narrative in an allegorical fashion, but he soon abandoned this for a literal (though not in the modern sense), historical viewpoint. See John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 105, and N.P. Williams, *The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin* (London: Longman, Green and Co., 1929), p. 360.

<sup>382</sup> Augustine, *Saint Augustine: Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), Book I, vi-vii.

<sup>383</sup> Some important works on Augustine’s theory of original sin include: *Merits and Remission of Sin, On Marriage and Concupiscence*, and *On Original Sin*. They are collected in, ed. Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887), Vol. 5.

subsisted in the primordial patriarch, they were deemed, according to the (il)logic of Augustine, personally guilty and justly delivered up as *massa damnata* to the infernal penalty of eternal retribution. It is in this manner that Augustine explains not only the universality of original sin, but also of original guilt. By reference to the historical transgression of Adam, and the resulting corruption of human nature, Augustine sought to explain how the entire race was implicated in sin and guilt.

Arguably, the major problem of Augustine's attempt to account for the universal tendency to evil is that he does not attribute any agency or self-determination to Adam's progeny; rather, a corrupt will, ineluctably bent towards evil and *incurvatus in se*, and the guilt of Adam's sin, are passed on through heredity, namely through the unavoidable concupiscence attached to the act of generation after Adam's fall. Augustine's account suffers from the fact that the human race is held culpable for Adam's sin without having committed transgression. The wills of all do not, by their own act, align themselves against God's. Yet the damnable lot of those poor souls not elected by God's inscrutable will to inherit the kingdom is his endless enmity. We will see how Sophiology attempts to overcome the absence of agency on the part of humanity in Augustine's account of the fall with reference to transcendental or supra-temporal self-determination. Another problem, one already raised earlier, is that Augustine's historicist account of the fall as a temporal, local event is difficult to square with modern scientific understanding of the world as an evolutionary process in which humanity arrived last in the world after ages of countless biological forms ascended the hierarchy of being. Again, we will see that Sophiology sought to address evolution in its account of the fall and to overcome the Augustinian dilemma by its supratemporal account, which is developed in the context of its organic metaphysics of Divinity.

Alongside the Latin or Western tradition of Augustine, which tended to take a more historical approach to the account of the fall in Genesis, the Greek tradition—of Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor, and the Irish theologian Johannes Scotus Eriugena—inaugurated another path, which interpreted the Eden narrative more figurally or allegorically. In contrast with Augustine's voluminous exploration of original sin, the figural account of the fall in the Easter fathers and in Eriugena consists only in hints and sketches. Yet from our modern vantage point, the upshot of the Greek tradition, which culminates in Eriugena, is that it viewed the fall in a non-local and thus, implicitly, non-historical manner. Origen memorably asks in his major systematic work, *On First Principles*:

And who is so silly as to believe that God, after the manner of a farmer, “planted a paradise eastward in Eden,” and set in it a visible and palpable “tree of life,” of such a sort that anyone who tasted its fruit with his bodily teeth would gain life; and again that one could partake of “good and evil” by masticating the fruit from the tree of that name? (cf. Gen. 2:8-9). And when God is said to “walk in the paradise in the cool of the day” and Adam to hide himself behind a tree, I do not think anyone will doubt that these are figurative expressions which indicate certain mysteries through a semblance of history and not through actual events (cf. Gen. 3:8).<sup>384</sup>

Origen’s view of the fall is, of course, connected with his condemned theory of the fall of pre-existent souls into carnal bodies.<sup>385</sup> Still, there were other ways of developing the Origenian idea of a non-local fall. Although Maximus denies Origen’s idea of the soul’s pre-existence, he nevertheless moves in this non-local, non-historical direction when he attests that humanity fell at the very moment of creation.<sup>386</sup> Maximus, however, does not venture beyond this suggestive allusion. This coincidence of the act of divine creation with the primal transgression recurs also in Eriugena.<sup>387</sup> Nevertheless, Eriugena, in Book IV of *Periphyseon*, also perfected the folly of the Greek tradition, which understood the fall as the occasion for the bifurcation of the race into two sexes. Gender is regarded as something divinely superimposed (in voluntarist fashion) in order to provision a means of reproduction so that the human race would not extinguish itself in its fall.<sup>388</sup> While the lapsarian origin of the gender duplex was lamentably expounded *ad nauseum* in Eriugena, the nature of the fall as a supra-historical event, its ontological connection to the condition of the created order, and the nature of Adam or primordial humanity remained largely unexplored. We must now turn to see how these lingering *aporias*, as well as those present in the Augustinian tradition, were taken up by Russian Sophiology. First, however, we will consider Friedrich Schelling’s theory of the fall, not only because Schelling exercised considerable influence on Russian Sophiology, but also because of the ostensible affinities between their accounts.

## II. The Supratemporal Fall and Evolution in Friedrich Schelling and Russian Sophiology

---

<sup>384</sup> Quoted from the Greek translation of, Origen, trans. G.W. Butterworth, *On First Principles* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2013), Book IV, 3.1.

<sup>385</sup> Origen, *On First Principles*, Book III, 5.4-5.

<sup>386</sup> Maximus, trans. Nicholas Constas *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), V.2, Ambiguum 42, 1321B. Origen’s view of the fall of pre-existent souls must be distinguished from a supra-temporal fall, which is postulated by Sophiology. Regarding this see, Sergius Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), p. 184.

<sup>387</sup> Eriugena, tr. I.P. Sheldon-Williams, *Periphyseon (The Division of Nature)* (Washington, D.C.: Bellarmin/Dumbarton Oaks, 1987), Book IV, 838B.

<sup>388</sup> See Gregory of Nyssa, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Volume 5: Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, Etc.* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), *On the Making of Humanity*, XVI-XVII; see also, Maximus, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers*, V.2, Ambiguum 41, 1309A-1309B.

*A. Schelling: Setting the Potencies in Tension: The Transcendental Misdeed*

If the nature of a catastrophic fall of primal humanity occurring at the moment of creation, as well as a metaphysical link between the fall of primal humanity and the lapsed state of nature, were left ambiguous in Eastern theology (and in Augustine), these issues were further explored in German voluntarism, first by Jacob Boehme, whose anguish before the mystery of evil led him to postulate in God a dark principle enkindled first in Lucifer, in nature which had fallen into chaos through the rebellion of the angelic hosts, and finally in Adam.<sup>389</sup> The problem of evil was also one of the central concerns of the voluntarist philosophers, of Schelling as well as the pessimistic philosophers of Will, Schopenhauer and Hartmann. The latter in their torment over the evils of the natural world, went so far as to reject the phenomenal world as the manifestation of an evil Will and even, in the case of Hartmann, to posit its annihilation. However, our concern here is only with Friedrich Schelling. Although Schelling left ambiguous the nature of primal humanity and, therefore, also the question of agency on the part of individuals in relation to Adam, “*the one Man who lives on in all of us,*”<sup>390</sup> Schelling’s account of the fall sought to unfold the nature of the fall as a supratemporal event with universal effects, and did so within the context of his voluntarist, organic metaphysics of Divinity. In what follows it will be argued that Schelling’s later account of the fall is directly influenced and even modeled on his conception of God as a divine Organism. Further, it will also be shown that Fichte’s notion of transcendental self-positing is creatively utilized in Schelling’s understanding of the fall as a supratemporal event. Finally, we will discuss the relevance of Schelling’s supratemporal account of the fall to evolution, which has posed new questions for theology on this topic. All of this will provide an important intellectual matrix for understanding the supratemporal accounts of the fall put forth by the Russian Sophiologists.

Although Schelling’s views, much like Solovyov’s, can be difficult to pin down because of his penchant for continuous philosophical revision, his ideas concerning the fall underwent a clear shift from his middle to his later works. In his *Philosophy and Religion*,<sup>391</sup>

---

<sup>389</sup> On Boehme’s understanding of the fall see Hans Martensen, trans. T. Rhys Evans, *Jacob Boehme: His Life and Teaching, or, Studies in Theosophy* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1885), pp. 204-233.

<sup>390</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, trans. Klaus Ottmann, *Philosophy of Revelation (1841-1842) and Related Texts* (Putnam, CT: Spring Publications, 2020), p. 179.

<sup>391</sup> For a discussion of the fall in this work see Piama Gaidenko, “Russian Philosophy in the Context of European Thinking: The Case of Vladimir Solovyov.” *Diogenes*, 2009, Vol.56 (2-3), pp. 28-30. Interestingly, Gaidenko connects Schelling’s view of the fall in this work to the Gnostic myth of the fall of Sophia as well as to Boehme’s sophiology, though the author rightly notes that Boehme’s influence is more apparent in Schelling’s 1809 essay on human freedom. See also the excellent discussion by Robert F. Brown, “The

Schelling sets forth a very different perspective than one finds in his later works. In that text, Schelling appears as Plato *redivivus* wherein he unites his own idealist philosophy with a profusely Platonic perspective. His vision is one of a “falling-away” of souls into the phenomenal world of coarse materiality, which undergo a series of purgative reincarnations, and which finally escape the prison of flesh and finitude in order to return into the “intelligible world.”<sup>392</sup> In contradistinction to the intelligible world, the phenomenal world is one of appearance, *maya*; it is illusory, it is not ultimately real, and is not the result of a positive, divinely creative act. “The absolute is the only actual; the finite world, by contrast, is not real. Its cause, therefore, cannot lie in an *impartation* of reality from the Absolute to the finite world or its substrate; it can only lie in a *remove*, in a *falling-away* from the Absolute.”<sup>393</sup> Schelling even goes so far as to develop, in a way that Platonism and Indian philosophy did not, a cosmic teleology wherein the whole universe, having fallen away true reality, would eventually return to the Absolute in a universal *apokatastasis*. “The ultimate goal of the universe and its history is nothing other than the complete reconciliation with and re-absorption into the Absolute.”<sup>394</sup> Schelling’s early account of the fall, in which matter and even individuality itself are considered categorically evil, is situated within this metaphysics of diremption and reconciliation.

If the material world and its history are a result of a falling away of from the Absolute, how did it take place? Despite the stark acosmism presented in this work, which prefigures the more sinister pessimism of Schopenhauer and Hartmann, what is of interest in Schelling’s account of the fall is that it is considered to be a voluntarist, supratemporal act. To take the voluntarist element first, it is critical to observe that against his early idealism, here there is the first turn towards voluntarism, which marks a radical break with idealism. The transition from the Absolute to the real cannot be logically deduced. It is not a rational process. It is instead an act of will, a spontaneous decision of ideas-souls, which separate themselves from the Absolute through their development of conscious will. Concerning the

---

Transcendental Fall in Kant and Schelling.” *Idealistic Studies*, 1984, Vol.14 (1), pp. 58-61. Brown traces the development of Schelling’s idea of the transcendental fall from *Philosophy and Religion*, through his Freedom Essay of 1809, as well as the *Ages of the World*. See also Dale E. Snow, *Schelling and the End of Idealism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 185-192.

<sup>392</sup> F.W. J. Schelling, Trans. Klaus Ottmann, *Philosophy and Revelation* (Putnam, CT: Spring Publications, 2010), p. 49.

<sup>393</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy and Revelation*, p. 26.

<sup>394</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy and Revelation*, p. 31. Hartmann’s acosmic pessimism in which all things must be eschatologically reabsorbed into the Unconscious is reminiscent of Schelling’s early teleological monism. See Eduard von Hartmann, trans. William Chatterton Coupland, *Philosophy of the Unconscious: Speculative Results According to the Inductive Method of Physical Science* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co., 1890), V. III, ch. XIV.

supratemporal element, Schelling declares that this transition to the finite world occurs beyond the bounds to time. “This falling-away is as eternal (outside of time) as the Absolute and the world of ideas.”<sup>395</sup> The fall is thus not a historical but a metaphysical event. To explain the phenomenal world and its historical processes, Schelling posits a metaphysical basis of finite reality in a transcendental act of individuation, a spontaneous leap (*Sprung*) or falling away (*Abfall*) from the Absolute. According to Schelling, individuation is not positive and is not caused by a divine, creative act; rather, individuation is the negative result of the falling away of ideas or souls. This falling away is the result of the dark birth of selfhood and consciousness in the ideas or souls, which become aware of themselves and en flesh themselves by their “I-ness.”<sup>396</sup> “I-ness is the general principle of finitude.”<sup>397</sup> Further, Schelling interprets the Platonic fall of souls in light of Fichte’s idealist (already proto-voluntarist) principle of the original, transcendental act of the ego whereby consciousness is borne and the experience of a conditioned world. “Fichte says that the I-ness is *its own deed*, its own action; it is *nothing* apart from this activity, and it is merely *for-itself*, not *in-itself*. That the cause of all finite things is merely residing in finitude and not in the Absolute could not have been expressed in clearer words.”<sup>398</sup> The fall is thus posited as a metaphysical, supratemporal event that lies above the time of this world in the abyss of the soul which plunges into the “fallen-away world,”<sup>399</sup> where universals are sunk into matter as “relics of the divine or absolute world.”<sup>400</sup> For its transcendental transgression, the “penalty”<sup>401</sup> of finitude and corporeality is borne by the soul who, though it desires to attain absoluteness, is bound to produce “particular and finite things.”<sup>402</sup> If it wishes to regain its absoluteness and reascend into the intelligible world, the soul must renounce its selfhood and all that binds it to the material world. “Just as a planet in its orbit no sooner reaches its farthest distance from the center than it returns to its closest proximity, so the point of the farthest distance from God, the I-ness, is also the moment of its return to the Absolute, of the re-absorption into the ideal.”<sup>403</sup>

---

<sup>395</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy and Revelation*, p. 29.

<sup>396</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy and Revelation*, p. 30.

<sup>397</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy and Revelation*, p. 30. This principle, of course, also bears striking resemblance to Advaita Vendanta in which *maya*, the world of birth, death, and rebirth, is the result of selfhood, the emergence of the ego as a distinct entity from Brahman. I’ness, and thus all reflexive consciousness, must melt away if one is to escape the cycle of reincarnation and attain absolute oneness with highest reality.

<sup>398</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy and Revelation*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>399</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy and Revelation*, p. 36.

<sup>400</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy and Revelation*, p. 37.

<sup>401</sup> Schelling *Philosophy and Revelation*, p. 48.

<sup>402</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy and Revelation*, p. 32.

<sup>403</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy and Revelation*, p. 30.

Although Schelling's account of the fall as presented in *Philosophy and Religion* presents a monistic acosmism that is adverse to Sophiology, it nevertheless is of interest in its positing of the fall as a voluntarist, supratemporal act of the idea-soul in its contraction of egoism, in the birth of the will which constructs the ego.<sup>404</sup> The cause of this imperfect fallen world cannot be traced to an act within the empirical chain of causation, but lies above the empirical world in act of volition that is the foundation of the world. It is this idea that will be developed by Sophiology. However, the accounts of the fall in Russian Sophiology are far more akin to Schelling's later account of the fall developed in his *Philosophy of Revelation*.

Schelling's later account of the fall, developed in his *Philosophy of Revelation*, is situated within a far more positive metaphysical valuation of individuation and material creation,<sup>405</sup> and, as we will see, is overtly connected to his organic conception of Divinity. There, he posits a voluntarist, supra-temporal account of the fall that is explicitly linked to God's act of organizing the potencies of his being into a dynamic, divine life. Just as God arises out of a dark, material state and organizes the potencies into an organized, spiritual unity, so humanity, is to maintain the unity of the potencies into which it is begotten, thereby preserving the internal, spiritual unity of creation and preventing it from falling away into externality. But before, considering the organic metaphysics underlying Schelling's theory of the fall, we will first look at the way Schelling's later account positively reconceives consciousness and individuation.

By way of contrast between Schelling's early and late accounts of the fall, it can be observed that the late Schelling positively reconceived the connection between consciousness and being, or nature. Instead of materiality being antithetical to the Absolute or to the world of universals, it is later posited as the external manifestation of internal spirit. This latter day transvaluation of the material has its roots in Schelling's early identity philosophy, his transcendental idealist system, wherein he conceived of nature and spirit as an identity, as two aspects of reality. Spirit, in Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* and his identity philosophy, was understood as the process of nature returning to itself in consciousness, such that nature in all its diverse forms formed the revelation of Absolute Spirit in its odyssey of self-realization. The antithesis of the Absolute and nature in Schelling's *Philosophy and Religion* is entirely adverse to his earlier identity and nature philosophy. For the romantic German

---

<sup>404</sup> Whereas the birth of the person, the I, as a center of volition, is seen negatively in Schelling's *Philosophy and Religion*, in his works from the 1809 Freedom Essay onwards the will becomes the very centerpiece of Schelling's positive philosophy with its affirmation of the will as the ground of the birth of God and of creation.

<sup>405</sup> On this point see Brown, "The Transcendental Fall in Kant and Schelling," pp. 59-60.

idealist, such a radical rejection of nature could not long endure in the philosopher of nature so amorously absorbed with the natural world. Having gone over into acosmic monism in his renunciation of nature, Schelling dialectically passed, through the influence of Christian theology,<sup>406</sup> into a philosophy of cosmic teleology in which nature would ultimately become an external manifestation of internal spirit. This is the great theme of *Clara*, Schelling's speculative eschatology which propounds a coming age in which the external and internal become united in highest union. In this Schelling arrives philosophically at the theosophical vision of Swedenborg in which reality is ultimately an external revelation of the community of human spirits.<sup>407</sup> The present age of fallen externality is only a temporal interval in a system of dialectical ages whereby the physical universe will become redeemed and spiritualized.

But why did creation have to pass through this age in which a one-sided externality or materiality suppresses creation's internal, spiritual aspect? According to the late Schelling, the present state of external reality is tethered to human consciousness which has fallen outside of divine unity. In the earlier Schelling of *Philosophy and Religion*, the physical order was viewed as a manifestation of egoism, of individuated conscious selfhood; the supra-historical act of the Ego whereby it intuits itself and becomes conscious is that which causes the soul's *degringolade*, its falling away from the intelligible world into the phenomenal world of materiality. By contrast, in Schelling's final phase, that of the *Philosophy of Revelation*, the external world, though fallen, is eventually to become a manifestation of the internal. "After an extra-divine world is bettered in Christ, the goal can only be to represent and make externally visible the internal world, as it was originally intended to be."<sup>408</sup> Given

---

<sup>406</sup> On the Christian influences of Schelling, see Friedemann Horn, trans. George F. Dole, *Schelling and Swedenborg: Mysticism and German Idealism* (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 1997); Robert Brown, *The Later Philosophy of Schelling: The Influence of Boehme on the Works of 1809-1815* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1977); Edward Allen Beach, *The Potencies of God: Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), ch. 5. On Schelling's positive philosophy and its relation to idealist philosophy and Christian theology see especially the nuanced work of S.J. McGrath, *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling: The Turn to the Positive* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021). McGrath's work is far more circumspect than John Laughland's *Schelling verse Hegel: From German Idealism to Christian Metaphysics* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007). In his interpretation of Schelling's transition from negative to positive philosophy, Laughland is wide of the mark in painting the late Schelling as a conservative theologian.

<sup>407</sup> Schelling however considers the spirit world experienced by Swedenborg as a one-sidedly internal, or spiritual, state of existence in which spirit overshadows materiality. The final state, according to Schelling, is one in which spirit and body interpenetrate in the highest union. See F.W.J. Schelling, trans. Fiona Steinkamp, *Clara: Or, On Nature's Connection to the Spirit World* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 76-77.

<sup>408</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy of Revelation*, p. 304. Much of *Clara*, one of Schelling's philosophical dialogues, is bound up with this theme, and is perhaps one of the greatest philosophical treatises on eschatology ever composed.

Schelling's more positive valuation of nature and its ultimate beatitude, he accordingly posits a different view of the fall. In his later thought, the fall is still very much bound up with consciousness, though conscious selfhood and individuation are recast in the positive light of Christianity's account of free, divine creation, and is even considered the very rationale of finitude. "For *all of creation was about consciousness*; the Creator is indifferent to all else."<sup>409</sup> If creation itself is not a falling away, not the result of an aberration whereby it declines from the Absolute through the transcendental deed of conscious individuation, but is instead "about consciousness," the disorder of finitude is seen to lie in the *disunity* of human consciousness. "The true meaning of every thing lies in the unity of human consciousness. But *instead of all that has been created entering into an eternal consciousness*, it fell victim to the untrue Being, as we now perceive it."<sup>410</sup>

If the fall represents for the later Schelling, not the emergence of conscious selfhood as a tearing away of the soul from the Absolute, but a division of consciousness from God, we must still consider how this falling away of the world through human consciousness is possible. Schelling finds it necessary to establish a basis of the fallen, imperfect world, a rationale by which its existence can be understood. "This external world cannot be explained without breaking apart the divine unity, something that could not possibly have originated from God. Where did Man get this power?"<sup>411</sup> In order to answer this question, Schelling turns to his doctrine of the potencies. Accordingly, it will be shown that his supra-historical account of the fall in the *Philosophy of Revelation* is directly related to his voluntarist, organic conception of Divinity.

Schelling's theory of potencies lies at the foundation of his philosophy, in all its phases, and he deploys this theory in *Philosophy of Revelation* to explain the history of religion as a process that had its beginnings in the falling away of consciousness from God. In order to demonstrate the connection between Schelling's account of the fall and his voluntarist, organic conception of Divinity, it is important to recount the way in which God sets the potencies of his being in tension in order to arrive at consciousness and to create the world. According to Schelling God is a self-developing life comprised of three potencies. He recounts in *Ages of the World* and in his *Philosophy of Revelation* how God arrives at himself as God and becomes Lord of the potencies. For Schelling God possesses a past, an

---

<sup>409</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy of Revelation*, p. 186.

<sup>410</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy of Revelation*, p. 179.

<sup>411</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy of Revelation*, p. 176.

unbeginning eternity in which God is in mere potential,<sup>412</sup> shut up in darkness and unconsciousness, for there in the primordial state the powers or potencies were at rest. Schelling explains that God, as Lord of the potencies and future creator of the world, arises out of the conflict and contradiction of the potencies. To set the potencies into tension is for Schelling the divine possibility of other being, of arriving at Godhood, as well as the possibility of creation. This divine setting into motion of the potencies is a transcendental self-determination, a free, supratemporal decision that grounds the process of divine life and of creation. The first potency, being, is a power of negation or contraction, a will to remain in oneself, while the second potency, what-is, which strives against it is a force of expansion, a will to expand out of the self. The first potency is a sort of lack or poverty, while the second potency is bounteous possessing everything within itself. In the mutual longing of these potencies arises spirit, or the union of the potencies, which is also the beginning of consciousness. In and through the conflict of the potencies God grasps himself, and in a vanishing moment of decision, freely steps forth from his primal darkness into the light of consciousness and becomes Lord of the potencies that were once at rest. In this state, the second potency, or what-is, mirrors forth in the first potency, or being, which is as a receptive prime matter, all that can become if God decides to create the world. Having realized the possibility of other being in this vision (Sophia), God having become Lord of the potencies, can determine to set the potencies into conflict to become the Creator. In order to create the world God must again set the potencies in tension while remaining Lord over them; in so doing creation is immanent with God and stands within the divine unity. The life of God is an organic unity, a harmonization of three potencies, and it is into this unity that creation is begotten, and from which it could fall away.

Now that it is established that God, as an Organism, sets the potencies into being in a transcendental decision whereby he achieves Godhood and becomes the Creator, the link between divine self-determination and human self-determination in the supratemporal fall can be established. Just as God, in a metaphysical, supratemporal act of setting the potencies in tension, inaugurated the process of arriving at Godhood and the immanent creation, so, according to Schelling, there is a supra-historical act on the part of humanity that originated the external world and the process of mythology in human consciousness. According to Schelling God is conceived of as a voluntarist organism, a free self-developing life, that

---

<sup>412</sup> In relation to personal Godhood that arises out of unforeshadowable being, this primordial state is potentiality, but in itself Schelling refers to it as *actus purus*, eternal being into which possibility has not entered. See Schelling, *Philosophy of Revelation*, pp. 124-144.

arises out of dark, beginningless eternity in order to realize the possibility of other being as God and as Creator. As Lord of the potencies God sets them into tension and preponderates over them in order to inaugurate a process of arriving at Godhood and at creation. Furthermore, it is this same divine power of setting the potencies into tension that, according to Schelling, humanity attempted to usurp in order to establish another being for itself. In so doing creation fell out of the divine unity into which it was begotten.

Man has been put into this unity as absolute freedom and mobility and therefore has the possibility to posit himself outside of it. It was therefore necessary for Man to maintain the unity. He had a law that God did not have. God could set the potencies into tension and remain insurmountable even within the tension. He is lord over both actual and possible potencies. With Man, it is different. He possesses B [the first potency] as his ground since the Creation. However, since he only possesses it as part of the Creation, he only possesses it as possibility. This possibility may present itself to Man as the potence of another Being, which is within his power.<sup>413</sup>

There is thus a direct correlation between Schelling's organic conception of Divinity as a harmonization of the potencies, and his account of the fall. Just as the supra-historical act of God to set the potencies in tension grounds the process of divine life and of divine creation, so it also lies within humanity's power to set the potencies into tension in order to posit itself and the world outside of divine unity. According to Schelling, the fall occurred when humanity attempted in its Luciferian pride to be like God, in its desire to be establish another being for itself, to be lord of the potencies the way God is. "*Man wanted to do what God did, set the potencies into tension to rule with them as lord.* But this is not given to him; on the contrary, with the attempt to be like God, the glory of God is lost to him."<sup>414</sup> In its Promethean pride humanity desired to rule over the potencies in order to establish for itself other being in the manner of God; but instead of authoring new being humanity's divine pretensions resulted in the disintegration of divine unity in the world. "Since he could not sublimate the substance of the world, he altered the form of its Being into one that is fragmented and outside of God."<sup>415</sup> Humanity had the power to preserve the world in God, or to posit itself and the world outside of God. Just as God as absolute Spirit is the freedom to posit other being for himself and for creation, so also creaturely spirit is free to determine itself, for spirit is self-determination. "Spirit is not a created thing but pure breath, pure freedom and mobility."<sup>416</sup> Just as God posits himself as God and as Creator, so humanity must freely posit

---

<sup>413</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy of Revelation*, p. 177.

<sup>414</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy of Revelation*, p. 177.

<sup>415</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy of Revelation*, p. 179.

<sup>416</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy of Revelation*, p. 177.

itself too. “Man is free not only in relation to God but also in relation to the world.”<sup>417</sup> And as the spiritual, metaphysical center of the world, its “point of unity,” whether earth ascends to empyrean heights or is plunged into chthonic depths, lies with the freedom of humanity.

It was within the power of Man to keep the world in God. But because he put himself in God’s place, he posits the world for himself but outside of God. This world of Man is divested of its glory; it no longer has a point of unity in itself, which Man was supposed to be. Having failed to maintain that inwardness, the world has been given to externality.<sup>418</sup>

Schelling even goes so far as to declare that: “*Man was the creator of this external world.*”<sup>419</sup> Again he says, “The *one Man who lives on in all of us* can rightly be called the author of this world—a world that searches for its final goal in vain and brings about that wrong time, one that never ends but emerges continuously.”<sup>420</sup>

In contrast with the Augustinian account of the fall as a temporal event carried out by a historical individual, Schelling posits a supratemporal fall of a primordial, universal human. Concerning the nature of this primordial human, Schelling does not elaborate and leaves a resulting ambiguity in his account. In any case, as with his early account in *Philosophy and Religion*, this transcendental act which is described in *Philosophy of Revelation* is also supratemporal rather than historical; it centers upon humanity as the originator of a false state of being and a false time. In Schelling the fall and the creation of the *external* world coincide; the fall is the supratemporal basis of the world that subsists outside of God. As the foundation of the world and the “wrong time” of empirical history, the fall is *de facto* supratemporal. It has to do with a false manner of anthropic self-grounding, of transcendental self-positing that lies outside of historical time and forms the presupposition of history. It is a metaphysical act of self-determination, a transcendental deed whereby humanity “posits” the world “outside of God.” In his *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, which forms part of his ever-evolving *Philosophy of Revelation*, Schelling repeatedly interprets the fall as a pre-historical spiritual crisis, which precipitates the division of humanity into disparate peoples and races. “The primordial being of man is, even according to the assumed concepts [i.e. of revelation]... to be thought only as one still extra-temporal and in essential

---

<sup>417</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy of Revelation*, p. 175.

<sup>418</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy of Revelation*, p. 178.

<sup>419</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy of Revelation*, p. 176.

<sup>420</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy of Revelation*, p. 179.

eternity.”<sup>421</sup> “The time of the calm, still unshaken unity of the human species—this will be the *ultimately pre-historical one*.”<sup>422</sup>

Although Schelling posits the fall of humanity as a supra-historical event that precipitates the emergence of the world in its externality and absence of divine unity, Schelling does not directly link his transcendental account of the fall with the evolutionary process of nature. However, it could seem implicit within his later philosophy if one tries to connect the dots within Schelling’s *Philosophy of Revelation*. Because humanity, by its transcendental fall, is understood to be the originator of a false state of being, it is easy to see how the fall could be understood as the catalyst of the process of universal evolution, a pre-cosmic act which conditioned the being of the world in its becoming. This is the direction taken by the early Solovyov. However, if one tries to connect Schelling’s nature and identity philosophy with his philosophy of religion, Schelling’s theory of the fall could be seen to be incoherent with his overall evolutionary vision. Schelling’s entire worldview was evolutionary, a system of freedom in which there are no stabilities; all things, even God, emerge out of a dark, slumbering ground through dynamic processes, through the productive tension of the potencies. Schelling himself even noted that his *Naturphilosophie*, though it was concerned with nature’s ideal or logical development, was nonetheless consonant with contemporary scientific findings.<sup>423</sup> In Schelling’s vision of an autopoietic universe is there room for a fall? Or, as Schelling has memorably posed the question in *Clara*: “Has the ground that carries us come about by rising up or by sinking back?”<sup>424</sup> It should be emphasized that the middle and late Schelling is a philosopher of freedom; spirit (both divine and human) is free in relation to nature. And there is perhaps in this work, *Clara*, a voluntarist clue to how Schelling conceived the relation between evolution and the fall. In the course of the dialogue, it is asked: “Shouldn’t we suppose that a divine law prescribed that nature should rise up first to man in order to find within him the point at which the two worlds are unified; that afterwards the one should immediately merge with the other through him, the growth of the external world continuing uninterrupted into the inner or spirit world.”<sup>425</sup> Seemingly, in the voice of one of the dialogue’s characters, the doctor, Schelling posits that the course of nature’s evolutionary ascent towards humanity should have resulted

---

<sup>421</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, trans. Mason Richey and Markus Zisselsberger, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008), p. 100.

<sup>422</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy of Mythology*, p. 127. See also pp. 75, 126-130.

<sup>423</sup> F.W.J. von Schelling, trans. Andrew Bowie, *On the History of Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 114-133.

<sup>424</sup> Schelling, *Clara*, p. 24.

<sup>425</sup> Schelling, *Clara*, p. 24.

in nature's transfiguration, but instead its principle of inward, spiritualizing development was arrested by humanity's voluntary sinking down to lay hold of the "external world."<sup>426</sup> If Schelling does have in mind the thwarting of the evolutionary process in its ascent towards a higher, spiritual state, then his account broadly falls within the lines developed by Bulgakov and the later Solovyov.<sup>427</sup> Nevertheless, in relation to evolution, Schelling's account of the fall is certainly amenable to different interpretations, and it does not appear that he developed a systematic connection of his account of the fall to his evolutionary view of nature. By contrast, Sophiology is very clear in this regard, and, as we will see, set its account of the fall in the context of universal evolution.

We have seen that both of Schelling's accounts of the fall are voluntarist and supra-historical; the fall is conceived as a transcendental, suprahistorical act of self-determination that posits the world outside of divine unity. Further, Schelling's later account links this transcendental deed to God's own transcendental self-determination to achieve Godhood and to become the Creator of the world. As an Organism, God sets the potencies of his being into tension, and, in surmounting the tension to achieve unified life, becomes God as well as the Creator. For Schelling God is an integrated, organic unity, a life that arises out of a metaphysical act of self-determination. And just as God freely determines his being, so humanity too, in its freedom, must posit itself in a determinate direction. According to Schelling, humanity fell when it aspired to become lord of the potencies in the manner of God. Instead of positing itself and the world inside of divine unity, it posited the world outside of God whereby all things fell into a one-sided materiality, into externality. Although, it will disagree with Schelling's process theology, this linkage of the voluntarist, supratemporal fall with an organic metaphysics of God who actively unifies the multiplicity of his being is developed by Russian Sophiology. We will also see how, in contrast to Schelling, Russian Sophiology further explored the nature of primordial humanity, and also explicitly addressed itself to modern scientific concerns of evolution, and it is to the Russian Sophiologists which we will now turn.

#### *B. Solovyov: The Pre-cosmic Disintegration of the Divine-Human Organism*

As with Schelling, in the sophiological system of Solovyov the fall is connected to his overtly organic conception of Divinity. However, instead of conceiving God as a self-developing life

---

<sup>426</sup> Schelling, *Clara*, p. 24.

<sup>427</sup> We will see in the next section that Solovyov conceive of evolution and the fall in this manner in a later work, *Russia and the Universal Church*, but his account there is terse and undeveloped.

arising out unconscious drives, Solovyov, as we have seen, takes organic metaphysics in a different, more Christological, direction. Solovyov's concept of God is that of a theandric Organism comprised of a multiplicity of human entities (Sophia, or, the divine world) that are eternally reduced to unity in the eternal Christ.<sup>428</sup> God is the primal Man, Adam Kadmon, who integrates all human particulars of the divine world into himself in the Logos, the God-Man from all eternity. It is within this eternal world of divine-human unity that the fall is said to transpire. The origin of evil is thereby transferred from the empirical plane to a meta-empirical one. In regards to the supratemporal character of the primal transgression, Solovyov stands broadly within the Eastern tradition, which interpreted the fall as a non-local event that occurred on the boundary of the created act. In what follows we will see how Solovyov developed the non-local, supra-historical account of the fall in the context of his organic, theandric metaphysics. Furthermore, it will be seen that Solovyov's supra-temporal, sophianic account of the fall addresses longstanding aporias and ambiguities within theological tradition, as well as modern scientific concerns. In particular, we will see how Solovyov takes up the Augustinian problematic of how to account for the universal tendency to evil, as well as (at least implicitly) universal guilt through his concept of the fall as an act of egoism on the part of primal humanity. We will also see the difficulties Solovyov produces for himself in addressing these problematics, for his account seems to place culpability on both Sophia as a universal-individual, as well as each human entity contained within Sophia. Thus, his venture into the nature of primal humanity and its agency in the supratemporal fall goes beyond Schelling and the Eastern and Eriugenian tradition, yet also leads into a complex set of problems, which were also shared by Bulgakov. Finally, it will also be shown that by conceiving the fall as a breaking apart of the organic, sophianic unity of eternal humankind in the divine world, Solovyov is not only able to forge a link between the fall of humanity and the imperfect state of the natural world, but also to propose that the cosmic process of evolution was set in motion by a supra-historical fall as the means of reintegrating creation into the eternal divine-human Organism. This solution too is not without considerable difficulties, and we will explore the downsides of connecting the fall with the inception of evolution, namely Solovyov's underlying dualistic tendency and, as a result, instrumentalization of the evolutionary process.

In order to understand Solovyov's supra-historical account of the fall as a breaking apart of the universal, theandric Organism, it is necessary to briefly reiterate the nature of this

---

<sup>428</sup> Vladimir Solovyov, trans. Peter Zouboff, *Lectures on Divine Humanity* (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1995), pp. 107-110.

Organism. According to Solovyov, organisms entail a multiplicity of elements brought into unity by an organizing principle. Furthermore, the more elements brought to unity by the organizing agent, the more universal and individual it is. “The universality of an entity stands in direct relation to its individuality: the more universal it is, the more individual it will be.”<sup>429</sup> Solovyov utilizes this axiom to arrive at the thesis that God, expressed in Christ, is the supreme Organism, at once encompassing the greatest universality within the highest individuality. “The universal organism, which expresses the absolute content of the divine principle, is preeminently a particular individual entity. This individual entity, the actualized expression of the absolutely existent God, is Christ.”<sup>430</sup> It is important to reemphasize the stridently Christological character of Solovyov’s conception of the divine Organism. Christ is the divine-human, universal-individual, Organism into which all particulars are integrated. The particulars or multiplicity of elements that comprise the contents of the universal Organism of Christ are human entities in their eternal, ideal essence.

However, Solovyov also views all human entities as participating not only in the divine-human Organism of the Logos, but also the organism of Sophia, the eternal humankind which is also both universal and individual.

All human elements constitute a similarly integral organism, one both universal and individual, which is the necessary actualization and receptacle of the organism of the living Logos. They constitute a universally human organism as the eternal body of God and the eternal soul of the world.<sup>431</sup>

The actuality of this all-one human organism, Sophia, stands at the heart of Solovyov’s theological vision. She is the ideal of the created order in its unity with Divinity, eternal humankind in its oneness and universality, as well as the mystical body of God. “Sophia is ideal or perfect humanity, eternally contained in the integral divine being, or Christ.”<sup>432</sup> “Sophia is God’s body, the matter of Divinity, permeated with the principle of divine unity.”<sup>433</sup> It is important however, not to conflate Sophia and the divine Organism expressed in the Logos. While, in one respect, the organism of Sophia and the divine Organism form an identity,<sup>434</sup> there is also a difference. The difference, Solovyov notes, is that the Organism of the Logos is a productive or producing unity, whereas Sophia is a “unity that is produced.”<sup>435</sup>

---

<sup>429</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 107.

<sup>430</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 107.

<sup>431</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 118.

<sup>432</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 113.

<sup>433</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 108.

<sup>434</sup> “Actualizing in Himself, or bearing, this unity, Christ as the integral divine organism, both universal and individual, is both Logos and Sophia (Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 108).”

<sup>435</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p.107.

Stated in other terms, the Logos and Sophia are identical, the same Organism in *content*, except that they subsist in different modes, one divine the other creaturely (even though Sophia is considered an eternal creation). The divine Organism subsists from itself. Sophia does not. This distinction is important in regards to our theme of the fall. It is not the case that Solovyov envisions a rupture within Divinity as such. God remains forever steadfast and immoveable, his unity unshaken and unperturbed.

We have seen that Solovyov conceives of God as a theandric, divine-human Organism, and that humanity too forms an individual-universal organism, Sophia. Solovyov's supra-historical account of the fall is set in this metaphysical context, and is thereby transferred to the meta-empirical plane. Because the original state of creation is set in the eternal, divine world of Sophia, the fall is of necessity supratemporal, occurring beyond space and time.<sup>436</sup> Although the Eastern Fathers as well as Eriugena did not speak directly of the fall as a supratemporal event, they did conceive it as a non-local event that occurred at the instant of the creative act, at its liminal edge. In this sense, Solovyov stands broadly within this framework in positing a meta-empirical fall, and develops it in his own unique way. According to Solovyov the fall takes place beyond the world of space and time, for spatio-temporality, as we have seen in the previous chapter, comes to be with the fall.<sup>437</sup> Before the fall there is only the immanent world of God, the realm of the divine-human Organism in which Sophia subsists. It is important to recall that Solovyov's *Lectures* possess a tendency towards dualism, an aversion to the physical order of spatio-temporality.<sup>438</sup> Therefore, by default, the primal act of evil could only lie "in the in the domain of the eternal, prenatal world."<sup>439</sup> Furthermore, since the supratemporal fall takes place in the internal, divine world, it can only represent its breaking apart and externalization. Accordingly, Solovyov describes

---

<sup>436</sup> Zenkovsky misinterprets Solovyov when he locates the reality of creation on the side of the phenomenal and natural world, which falsely leads him to think that the evil and disintegrated state of nature is necessary for God's actuality as his creation of the other, the world, with the consequence that evil is said to have its primal source in God. See V.V. Zenkovsky, trans. George L. Kline, *A History of Russian Philosophy, Vol. 2* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953) pp. 501, 505. Instead, the reverse is the case: for Solovyov, the reality of creation is not located in spatio-temporality, the natural, phenomenal world, but in the incorporeal, divine world which is an eternal, necessary creation. Phenomenality is fallen for Solovyov, but it is not necessary in the *Lectures*, which Solovyov makes abundantly clear. With this in mind, God is not the author of evil; instead it is Sophia, the world soul, as well as the multiplicity of souls which comprise it, as will be argued below.

<sup>437</sup> As Alexandre Kojève states: "For Solovyov, the World is nothing other than a "fallen" Sophia, separated from God." Kojève, trans. Ilya Merlin, Mikhail Pozdnyakov, *The Religious Metaphysics of Vladimir Solovyov* (Switzerland, Palgrave Pivot, 2018), p. 51.

<sup>438</sup> Aleksandr Gaisin sees Schelling's *Philosophy and Religion* in the background of this Gnostic idea of the primordial fall of the ideal, incorporeal Sophia into phenomenal materiality. There is certainly a clear affinity between their positions, though Solovyov does not consider individuation as such to be evil, only egoism, a false self-assertion of the individual against the whole. See "Solovyov's Metaphysics Between Gnosis and Theurgy." *Religions*, 2018, Vol.9 (11), p. 5.

<sup>439</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 126.

the fall as the disintegration of the world soul, or, the universal human organism.<sup>440</sup> “When the world soul ceases to unite all with itself, all things lose their common bond and the unity of cosmic creation breaks up into a multitude of separate elements: the universal organism is transformed into a mechanical aggregate of atoms.”<sup>441</sup> We need now to consider how, according to Solovyov, the supratemporal disintegration of Sophia comes about.

In contrast to the Eastern fathers and Eriugena, Solovyov did not leave unturned the nature of primal humanity and of its agency in the act of the fall. Echoing the voluntarist, acosmism of Schelling’s *Philosophy and Religion*, as well as of Schopenhauer and Hartmann, the phenomenal world is for Solovyov a manifestation of a false will. He is not, however, a pessimist. Solovyov does not reject the will to live that brings multiplicity into being, only its perversion and fall into phenomenality and anarchic plurality. Nonetheless, in accordance with the logic of the German voluntarist tradition, Solovyov traces the evil, imperfect state of the natural world back to a pre-historical, metaphysical act of primal humanity, a transcendental deed of egoism.<sup>442</sup> According to Solovyov, the fundamental problem of the world is egoism;<sup>443</sup> it is a trait that is characteristic of all things, the cause of which is a false act of self-positing of all elements of the universal organism in relation to one another.<sup>444</sup> Whereas in its original, primordial state all entities dwelt in divine-human unity, in its fallen state the entities of the universal organism are disintegrated and stand over against one another in an adverse relation. “The improper reality of the natural world is the discordant and *hostile* positing, with respect to one another, of the very same entities that, in their

---

<sup>440</sup> In a somewhat similar fashion N.P. Williams, in his major work, *Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin*, which sprang out of his delivery of the Bampton Lectures in 1924, develops a theory of the fall of the world soul in his eighth and final lecture. However, his ideas remain undeveloped, and, somewhat reminiscent of Solovyov, whose views he seems to have not been familiar with, he replaces the doctrine of the fall of humanity with the world soul’s turning away from God. Nevertheless, the relation of humanity to the world soul is not clarified by Williams, as it is in the father of Russian Sophiology.

<sup>441</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 133.

<sup>442</sup> Although Solovyov’s notion that egoism, or negative selfhood, which is the cause of the rupture in the eternal world whereby the natural, fallen world comes into being, is not so distant from Schelling’s first account of the fall from eternity into time as the transcendental birth of conscious self-hood, there is a crucial difference. It should be observed that Solovyov’s *Lectures* do not consider self-hood as such as evil, but only egoistic self-hood, a luciferian self that, in its desire to be all, is hostile to all else.

<sup>443</sup> Timofej Murasov interestingly points out a difference in the concept of original sin between Solovyov and Lev Shestov. Whereas for the former egoism is the root of evil and is an ontological problem, for the latter it is knowledge and thus a gnoseological issue. See “Correlation Between the Concepts of All-Unity and Self-Will: Vladimir Solovyov and Lev Shestov as Philosophers of Freedom.” *Studies in East European Thought*, 2021, Vol.73 (4), pp. 425-434.

<sup>444</sup> Valliere succinctly puts it thus: “sin is exclusivity, the rebellion of the part against the whole.” *Modern Russian Theology: Bukharev, Soloviev: Orthodox Theology in a New Key* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), p. 161.”

normal relation, namely in their inner unity and harmony, make up the divine world.”<sup>445</sup> The fall thus has to do with the relationship of entities within the universal human organism; they either exist in unity with all else, or else each stands against all—*bellum omnium contra omnes*. As a result of universal egoism all things stand in isolation from one another and in a discordant relationship. Furthermore, Solovyov argues that disintegrated beings find themselves born in this false condition, rather than it having come about in the empirical chain of natural existence. This leads him to posit that universal egoism or evil can neither begin with conditioned, individual entities as such, nor have a physical origin; instead it must have a conditioned and metaphysical origin.

Universal experience shows that every physical entity is born in evil. An evil will attached to egoism appears in each individual entity at the very beginning of its physical existence... Hence, this radical evil is something given, fateful, and involuntary for an entity; by no means is it an entity's free production. Absolute will cannot belong to a physical entity as such, for a physical entity is conditioned by something else and its actions do not originate in its own self. Having no physical origin, evil must therefore have a *metaphysical* origin. The cause of evil may be the individual entity not in its natural, conditioned phenomenon but in its absolute, eternal essence, to which the primordial and immediate will of this entity belongs... The primordial origin of evil can lie only in the domain of the eternal, prenatal world.<sup>446</sup>

If universal egoism is not the result of empirical, physical entities as such, but of human entities in their primordial state in the divine world, we need to consider the agency of the universal human organism, and also the individual entities that comprise it. In so doing, we will see that there are unresolved, and perhaps even irresolvable, tensions in Solovyov's account.

The agency of the supratemporal fall is a tale of two wills. The major difficulty Solovyov produces for himself is that he assigns culpability for the fall both to Sophia as a universal-individual and to the individuals that make up Sophia. We will consider Sophia first. Whereas Augustine, in his account of the fall, attributes agency to a limited historical

---

<sup>445</sup> *Lectures*, p. 124. In quoting this passage Thomas Nemeth is wrong to conclude that evil is ascribed to God, as well as to state that “the world of living things... is logically necessary.” *The Early Solov'ev and His Quest for Metaphysics* (Springer International Publishing, 2013), p. 113. Although it is true that the divine world is indeed necessary according to Solovyov, Nemeth misses the fundamental point that Solovyov is trying to account for the *phenomenal* world, which is an aberration, a falling away from the eternal divine world. Nemeth also falsely states the evil in Solovyov's account is “involuntarily given” and not “freely produced,” and ultimately dismisses Solovyov thought on the fall, because of its location in the divine world, as “beyond argument and rational discussion (p. 114).” Nemeth has here constructed a caricature, which he has then subjected to harsh criticism. On the whole Nemeth's tone is so polemical and deconstructive throughout his discussion of the *Lectures* in chapter 4 that his discussion is ultimately of little value.

<sup>446</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 126. Interestingly, Robert Brown suggests that: “the theologically asserted fact of universality has nothing directly to do with the mode of fallenness.” “The Transcendental Fall in Kant and Schelling,” p. 63. By contrast, Solovyov (and Bulgakov) argue that by conceiving the fall outside of time, in the sphere of the universal entity that contains all particulars (Sophia or Adam), they can account for the universal tendency to evil.

individual resulting in the universal tendency to evil and universal guilt, Solovyov posits that the fall is carried out by a supra-historical, universal-individual, Sophia, which contains all human particulars in itself. With his notion of Sophia as a universal-individual organism Solovyov attempts to attribute agency in the fall to the supra-historical “absolute will,”<sup>447</sup> rather than to the limited will of a historical individual, Adam. It is important to emphasize that Solovyov attributes actual agency to the world soul. Despite its universality, the world soul is not an idealist abstraction, a conceptual unity of all particulars. Rather, it is itself an actual individual, the supreme individual. “Such a being is universal but also individual, an entity that contains all human individual within itself.”<sup>448</sup> Given its actuality as an individual, Solovyov considers the world soul to be in possession of a will whereby it can determine itself towards the object of its desire. “The world soul has in itself the principle of independent action, or will, that is, the capacity to initiate in itself an inner striving. In other words, the world soul can itself choose the object of its life-striving.”<sup>449</sup> As the universal and spiritual center of creation, the fate of the world, its unity or disunity, lies with the free decision of the world soul.<sup>450</sup> As the universal-individual human organism, Sophia or the world soul has a cosmic role in creation to integrate all things into the divine unity. She is the supra-historical, volitional agent that mediates between the multiplicity of human entities which comprise it and Divinity. And with regards to both it is free. “Containing within itself both the divine principle and creaturely being, the world soul is not determined exclusively by either one or the other, and it therefore remains free.”<sup>451</sup> In Sophia lies the freedom to maintain the divine world of human entities in God, or, in its autonomy, to posit all things in itself outside of God. It is by this logic that Solovyov places culpability for the disintegration of the divine world upon Sophia, the world soul. “All of creation is thus made subject to the vanity and bondage of corruption not willingly but by the will of that which has subjugated it: by the will of the world soul, as the one free principle of natural life.”<sup>452</sup> Instead of uniting all things in divine unity, the world soul posited itself outside of God and fractured itself into disparate, hostile elements which have lost the divine principle of unity. By its metaphysical act of autonomous egoism, its transcendental deed of striving to have all and be all in and through itself the way God contains the multiplicity of all being, the universal organism broke apart and inaugurated a process of its reintegration. And we will see that Solovyov

---

<sup>447</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 126.

<sup>448</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 118.

<sup>449</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 133.

<sup>450</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 132-133.

<sup>451</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 132.

<sup>452</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 134.

links the disintegration and process of reintegration of the universal organism to evolution, but first it is necessary to observe the individual dimension of Solovyov's account of the fall, and the resulting ambiguity of his account of agency.

We have seen that Solovyov attributes volitional agency to the world soul and views its free decision as the universal cause of evil. However, Solovyov also clearly attributes agency to each soul of the world soul in the transcendental deed which tore the eternal world out of divine unity.<sup>453</sup> At the root of this is the egoism that he observes in each entity of the natural, discordant world. According to Solovyov, in each essence of the world soul there is a certain tension between the fact that each essence "is not and cannot be immediately in itself the all" though within each there is a desire "to be the all."<sup>454</sup> "If evil, or egoism, is a certain state of tension of an individual will that opposes itself to all else, and if every act of the will, by definition is free, it follows that evil is a free product of individual entities."<sup>455</sup> It is the egoistic desire of each "to be the all," this "endless striving,"<sup>456</sup> which causes each entity of the world soul to posit itself in a hostile, egoistic manner in relation to all else, the result of which is the disintegrated state of existence.

We have then a dilemma of two wills. Is the fall an act of the world soul, which, though it contains "all living entities (souls)... is not exclusively bound to any one among them, is free from all of them,"<sup>457</sup> or an act of individual entities who comprise the world soul and which posit themselves in a hostile manner in relation to all else? Is the disintegration of the divine world the result of the autonomous egoism of the world soul (egoism in regards to God), or of the egoism of each entity of the world soul (egoism of each individual in regards to all others)? Solovyov's answer is an equivocal yes. Ostensibly, there is a significant incongruity in Solovyov's account of original sin. It is not clear how to reconcile these conflicting ideas, which seem to stand in tension and even contradiction with one another. One way to attempt to reconcile Solovyov's claims is to consider another fall that he speaks of later in his *Lectures*. There, he overtly compares the fall of human beings to the fall of the world soul. In this context, he envisions humanity falling away from divine unity upon its

---

<sup>453</sup> Timofej Murasov seems also to recognize two falls in Solovyov's *Lectures*, one of the world soul and one of Adam in "Correlation Between the Concepts of All-Unity and Self-Will," pp. 425-434. However, although the article is concerned with freedom, it does not deal with the relation of freedom between the world soul and each individual soul of the world soul as is discussed here. Neither does Alexandre Kojève, who also discusses the fall of Sophia and of Adam in *The Religious Metaphysics of Vladimir Solovyov*, pp. 63-64.

<sup>454</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 127.

<sup>455</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 125.

<sup>456</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 127.

<sup>457</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 132.

appearance in the world *after* the evolutionary process had taken its course. “They fall away or isolate themselves from God in their consciousness, just as the world soul primordially isolated itself from God in all of its being.”<sup>458</sup> Perhaps, when Solovyov speaks of the hostile positing of individual entities he is referring to this fall, which is not pre-cosmic, but which takes place at the end of the cosmogonic process when humanity emerged within the world. This, however, is far from clear, and even seems unlikely given that the context of his discussion of the hostile positing individual entities is unmistakably the primordial, pre-cosmic fall. Interestingly, in his later account of the fall in *Russia and the Universal Church*, Solovyov no longer speaks of a primordial, pre-cosmic fall of the world soul. Instead the world is created in the condition of chaos and actualizes its potential unity through time.<sup>459</sup> His account of original sin is very brief in this text, but, generally speaking, he appears to have viewed it as an event that took place upon humanity’s emergence in the world after the evolution of the universe had taken its course; thus, it is similar to the second, non-primordial fall recounted in Solovyov’s *Lectures on Divine Humanity*. Perhaps, Solovyov recognized inconsistencies in his earlier work, so that he no longer spoke of the pre-cosmic fall of the world soul. In any case, it is not certain that Solovyov’s two falls can be reconciled even if they are independent of each other, that of the world soul taking place primordially, and that of humanity after the completion of the cosmogonic process (for if all souls fall with the world soul into the natural, phenomenal world, what need is there to posit a second fall?). We can leave this problem aside, however, because we are concerned here only with the former, pre-cosmic supratemporal fall, and we have now only to look at the consequences of locating agency on the side of Sophia and on the side of each individual entity contained within it.

Concerning the former, Solovyov appears to desire to attribute agency to the world soul as an independent, autonomous entity, just as each human entity possesses the principle of free will. However, the consequence of attributing universal agency to the world soul would be determinism: to condemn all particulars to unfreedom and to deliver them over to the fate of the world soul in its free election. As Solovyov himself says: “All of creation is thus made subject to the vanity and bondage of corruption not willingly but by the will of that

---

<sup>458</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 142.

<sup>459</sup> Vladimir Solovyev, trans. Herbert Rees, *Russia and the Universal Church*, (London, UK: Geoffrey Bles, 1948), p. 163; cf. also pp. 154-158, and pp. 163-166. Although Gaidenko construes Solovyov’s later account as also a fall of Sophia or the world soul, in its more carefully delineated creaturely guise, it does not appear that Solovyov actually states in this work that the world soul falls away, though it is indeed said to be subject to evil and egoism. “Russian Philosophy in the Context of European Thinking: The Case of Vladimir Solovyov,” p. 31. More perceptively, Kojève argues that the original chaotic condition of creation in this work is due to the fall of Sophia, though he suggests that Solovyov spoke of this under the guise of creation, “an act of cosmogony by God.” *The Religious Metaphysics of Vladimir Solovyov*, p. 57.

which has subjugated it: by the will of the world soul.”<sup>460</sup> Furthermore, in locating the agency of the primal sin in Sophia, the result would be to forfeit a satisfactory explanation of the universal tendency to evil and universal guilt. It is clear that an explanation of these Augustinian problematics was of some concern to Solovyov. Hence, we have also found in Solovyov the idea that all entities of the world soul, in their eternal, ideal state, are themselves the agents of evil. The universal tendency to evil stems from the egoistic impulse of each in their desire to be the all, and consequently, it could be argued that each can be held to be guilty. On this account Solovyov bypasses the idea that the tendency to sin is inherited and renders one guilty; instead each contracts egoism by the fact of its self-centered I-ness, which arises in the perception of its limitedness in relation to all others. In any event, there remains then an unsettling ambiguity in Solovyov’s account of agency. Though he attempted to uncover the nature of primal humanity, which Eastern theology had left unexplored in its non-local account of the fall, and thereby resolve the Augustinian problematics of universal tendency to evil and universal guilt, Solovyov’s equivocal account of agency contains deep tensions. However one tries to make sense of Solovyov’s views concerning human agency and the fall, it can at least be said that his account appears to contain inconsistencies that he did not himself fully resolve.<sup>461</sup> We must now leave aside this matter and turn to consider the way in which Solovyov’s account of the fall addresses evolution, which plays an important role in Solovyov’s overall vision of attaining all-unity.

We have seen that Solovyov views the primordial fall as a breaking up of the universal organism. This vision of a pre-cosmic lapse of creation into disintegration is understood to initiate a process of evolutionary reintegration.<sup>462</sup> Accordingly, Solovyov is able to not only to forge a link between the fall of humanity and the fractured state of the created order in his supratemporal account of the fall of the world soul, but is also able to deploy it in the context of modern science. The disintegration of the universal human organism represents for Solovyov the beginning of the natural world and its cosmic

---

<sup>460</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 134.

<sup>461</sup> As Zenkovsky states generally of Solovyov’s anthropology: “He never faced the basic problem of the interrelation of the individual and mankind, of individuality and the world-soul. Thus, his profound sense of the absoluteness of the individual is immediately weakened by an impersonalistic dissolving of the individual.” *A History of Russian Philosophy, Vol. 2*, p. 530.

<sup>462</sup> Alexander V. Khramov discusses this theme of a precosmic fall as the catalyst of evolution in “Fitting Evolution into Christian Belief: An Eastern Orthodox Approach.” *International Journal of Orthodox Theology*, 2017, Vol.8 (1), pp. 75-105. Khramov ties this approach to original sin with several Eastern Fathers as well as modern Orthodox theologians, notably Nikolai Berdyaev and Olivier Clément. He does not, however, engage with Solovyov or Bulgakov. Presumably, given his negative judgment of N.P. Williams’s theory of the fall of the world soul as heterodox (pp. 101-102), Khramov would view the Sophiologists, for which the world soul is a central metaphysical fixture of their thought, with a degree of suspicion.

evolution. Because it is a supra-historical volitional agent, the world-soul determines the course of the cosmos. Its action is *ipso facto* supra-temporal and pre-cosmic. The fall of the world soul is a supra-historical, pre-cosmic event that broke apart the spiritual cosmos and inaugurated the natural cosmic process. According to Solovyov, the world soul's egoistic act fractured the unity of the universal organism, and enslaved the world to a laborious path of becoming in order to reestablish the divine unity of creation. "As a result of the world soul's free act, the world that had been united by the soul fell away from Divinity and fell apart internally into a multitude of elements warring among themselves. The elements of that whole rebellious multitude must, by a long series of free acts, be reconciled to one another and to God, and be reborn in the form of an absolute organism."<sup>463</sup> Solovyov describes this "long series of acts" as the "cosmogonic process",<sup>464</sup> whose goal is "the incarnation of the divine idea in the world."<sup>465</sup> He identifies different epochs in this process that gradually unify the world soul with the Logos, and eventually incarnate the divine Logos itself into the world. With his signature brevity Solovyov traces evolution through stellar, chemical, and organic epochs, which finally culminates in the emergence of humanity in the world,<sup>466</sup> whose appearance constitutes the beginning of the religious process wherein all of reality can be reintegrated into its lost, primordial divine-unity. In contrast to Schelling, Solovyov integrated cosmic and religious processes, seeing *both* as the result of supra-historical falling away of the universal human organism into chaotic multiplicity. The significance of Solovyov's early account of the fall as a trans-historical and pre-cosmic transgression is that it refuses to view the evolution of the universe as a natural, unfallen cosmic cycle. Instead, the entire history of the cosmos bears witness to the radical evil inborn in it, which is ultimately due to the deranged, egoistic will of eternal humanity, who as the unifying bond of universal existence, fragmented the entire order of creation, and determined the course of its development. In so doing, Solovyov, in a highly original fashion, was able not only to address contemporary scientific concerns, but also to subsume evolutionary processes into his totalizing account of the fall and rebirth of fractured Sophia.

However, this synthetic act of integration has its price. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the natural, material world constructed in the cosmogonic process is something that should not be. It is important here to recall the predominantly anthropocentric

---

<sup>463</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, pp. 138-139.

<sup>464</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 139.

<sup>465</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 138.

<sup>466</sup> See Solovyov, *Lectures*, pp. 140-141.

character of Solovyov's Sophia. In its original state, Sophia or the divine world is made up of human entities. Furthermore, these entities are considered intelligences in their ideal state over against the material, phenomenal existence. The fall is thus part and parcel of the dualistic tendency of Solovyov's *Lectures*. The disintegration of Sophia, which is the catalyst of the cosmogonic process, marks a transition from the anthropic and incorporeal to the cosmic and material.<sup>467</sup> The difficulty that arises then with a pre-cosmic account of the fall is the temptation towards dualism, an acosmic hostility to the natural world, which certainly characterized the early Solovyov. Another criticism that could be raised against seeing evolution as the result of fall in some higher sphere was pointed out by Teilhard de Chardin. In one of his essays he points out that while such a view of the fall does not contradict a modern scientific viewpoint, it has the disadvantage of introducing "*esse sine necessitate*," or non-necessary being.<sup>468</sup> Evolution then becomes a purely instrumental means to recover the primordial state from which being has fallen. This instrumentalization of evolution is found in Solovyov's *Lectures*, in the world soul's striving, through a series of countless physical forms, to produce humanity and reascend into the incorporeal realm of the divine world. "The world evolving in time is therefore a circle closed in on itself."<sup>469</sup> This is similar to the way in which Hartmann's philosophy instrumentalizes evolution for a far more pessimistic end: he posits that the Will produces ideas or forms by which consciousness comes eventually into being as the peak of evolution, for it is consciousness alone that can negate the will to live and thereby return the universe into the Unconscious. Whereas Hartmann's instrumentalization served his pessimistic voluntarism, Solovyov's served his sophiological voluntarist-idealism. Within a Christian theological framework evolution will inevitably be instrumentalized to one degree or another, since it will be seen to culminate in humanity and in Christ, yet in the case of Solovyov there seems to be a high degree. This, again, is due to the overt dualism that characterizes Solovyov's *Lectures*. However one judges his account of the fall and evolution, one thing is certain: Solovyov's seamless integration of evolution into his totalizing sophiological vision represents a novel and fascinating theological interpretation of the fall within an evolutionary framework.

---

<sup>467</sup> This is rightly recognized by Alexandre Kojève: "Through this fall the Soul lost its proper form, the human form." *The Religious Metaphysics of Vladimir Solovyov*, p. 62. See also Piama Gaidenko who characterizes Solovyov's account of the fall of Sophia, stating: "The world arises not as a result of a free divine act, the act of creation, but of necessity, that is, from the divine nature itself, divided in two and subject to catastrophic separation." "Russian Philosophy in the Context of European Thinking: The Case of Vladimir Solovyov," p. 30.

<sup>468</sup> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, trans. René Hague, *Christianity and Evolution* (London: Collins, 1971), p. 51.

<sup>469</sup> Kojève, *The Religious Metaphysics of Vladimir Solovyov*, p. 71.

We have seen that Solovyov's account, like Schelling's, is integrated within his overall vision of Divinity as an Organism. However, it was shown that Solovyov's organicism is more theandric and Christocentric than Schelling's. He understood God as a divine-human Organism who eternally reduced the multiplicity of human entities to unity. We also saw that this multiplicity of human entities exists for itself as Sophia, a created but universal-individual organism. In the *Lectures*, Sophia or the world-soul takes center stage and is considered the agent of the primordial, supratemporal fall, though Solovyov also seems to ascribe agency for the primordial fall to individual entities in their egoistic, hostile positing in relation to each other. Though his account is not without deep tensions and even contradictions, Solovyov's account of a pre-cosmic fall is significant in its exploration of the nature of primal humanity. In this respect he marks a development beyond the Eastern and Eriugenian tradition, as well as beyond Schelling. Finally, it was shown that in an original fashion Solovyov subsumes evolution into his totalizing account of the primordial disintegration and historical reintegration of the universal human organism. Despite the residual ambiguities that remain in his account of the fall, it arguably stands as one of the most ambitious and original accounts of the fall in theological history. In the next section, we will turn to Bulgakov, whose speculations on this topic are, like Solovyov's, woven into his sophianic vision of existence.

### *C. Bulgakov: Supratemporal and Temporal Dimensions of Adam's Fall*

Following Solovyov, one of the most ambitiously systematic attempts to construct a supratemporal account of original sin belongs to Sergius Bulgakov, whose perspective is most fully espoused in *The Bride of the Lamb*.<sup>470</sup> As with Schelling and Solovyov, his elucidation of this theologeme is situated within an organic conception of God. And like both of these thinkers his general conception of the supratemporal fall is a failure of primal humanity to maintain the organic unity into which it was begotten. The particulars of his account are developed in a divergent direction, the most significant being that Bulgakov's supratemporal idea of the fall is understood not as pre-cosmic (as with the early Solovyov), but as pre-natal, in accordance with theory of Julius Müller.<sup>471</sup> In what follows it will be seen

---

<sup>470</sup> Sergius Bulgakov, trans. Boris Jakim, *The Bride of the Lamb* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), pp. 164-192.

<sup>471</sup> Julius Müller develops his novel ideas of the fall in volume two of his theological hamartiology, trans. William Pulsford, *The Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1853). Bulgakov credits Müller's importance for his own account in *The Bride of the Lamb*, p. 184, fn. 14. It is beyond the scope of this work to bring Bulgakov and Müller into conversation, but on the whole Bulgakov's treatment is quite similar to Müller's, though Bulgakov's work is more theologically integrated and conversant with questions of modern science.

that Bulgakov integrates the notion of a pre-natal fall into his wider sophianic metaphysics in order to resolve longstanding problems in theological tradition surrounding the fall. More explicitly than Solovyov, he attempts to overcome what he sees as the major shortcoming of Augustinianism regarding the issue of agency. And like Solovyov, he does so by recourse to a supratemporal fall of universal humanity. Furthermore, it will be seen that Bulgakov runs into similar problems that Solovyov encountered in attempting to both universalize and individualize agency in the primordial act of transgression. In so doing, he also, with his usual systematic expansiveness, explores the nature of primordial humanity, as well as the connection of the primordial human transgression to the fallen condition of the created order, which were left unexplored in Eastern and Eriugenian theology concerning the fall. Finally, we will explore Bulgakov's connection of the fall to the disintegrated state of the created order; in so doing we will see that, like Solovyov, Bulgakov addresses contemporary scientific concerns in his account of the fall and espouses a perspective that, broadly speaking, accords with Solovyov's later position and so avoids the extreme instrumentalization of the evolutionary process evident in Solovyov's *Lectures*.

More extensively and systematically than Solovyov, Bulgakov deployed his sophiological perspective to address a range of theological questions that he felt had not been adequately answered in the history of theology. Bulgakov's sophiological system is as unified as it is diverse, and it is no surprise that he labored to directly situate his view of the fall within the titanic architecture of his own unique expression of sophiological thought. We can briefly recount here an outline of his theandric sophiology, which forms the theological context of his theory of the fall. According to Bulgakov, God is not to be thought of as an intelligence, but as a divine-human Organism, a Being that is comprised both of three hypostases and a divine nature. And it is the divine nature to which Bulgakov's vast systematic efforts were largely devoted, and which he understood as Sophia. In the thought of Bulgakov, spiritual beings, both Divine and creaturely, possess a dyadic character; they are spiritual-natural or pneuma-corporeal beings, in which the spirit is always revealed in a nature. According to Bulgakov, the divine nature or Sophia, is the exemplar of the created world and of the human body, the positive divine foundation of materiality. His theandric, sophianic view of Divinity centers upon the eternal revelation of the divine hypostases in Sophia, which Bulgakov also terms Divine-Humanity. The Father is the source of Heavenly Humanity, the Son its hypostatic center, and the Spirit is the hypostasis who vivifies and accomplishes the revelation of Divine-Humanity in eternity. As with Solovyov, God, in the

thought of Bulgakov, is eternally Divine-Human. However, whereas Solovyov understood all human individuals as comprising the divine world of the divine-human Organism, a world out of which humanity and all creation fell, Bulgakov did not conceive of God as comprised of a real multiplicity of human entities eternally reduced to unity in the Logos. Instead, all human individuals subsist in God as ideal forms or possibilities which are realized in time.<sup>472</sup> There is then, as we have seen, a greater distinction between God and creation in Bulgakov's thought. In any case, as with Solovyov, Bulgakov's account of the fall is set within this explicitly organic, theandric conception of Divinity.

In contrast to Solovyov's idea of the fall as a disintegration or materialization of an eternal, divine world, the fall, for Bulgakov, fundamentally represents a metaphysical disintegration of the divine *anatomy* of humankind. According to Bulgakov, the created order is a finite replica of the divine order. "The creaturely Sophia... is hypostasized by the human person, whereas the Divine Sophia is hypostasized by the Divine Person from all eternity. In *this* sense, the creaturely world is a cosmo-anthropic world, or man is a microcosm."<sup>473</sup> God is tri-hypostatic Divine Person who eternally actualizes and vivifies the multiplicity of forces and contents of the divine world of Sophia. Sophia, or the divine nature, is the non-hypostatic element in God, which is akin to the body and which forms the self-revelation of the divine Person. Likewise, humanity is the spiritual hypostasis of the created order, whereas the natural world, including the human body, comprise creaturely Sophia or the non-hypostatic world soul. And humanity's cosmic role in creation is analogous to God's eternal organization and integration of divine Sophia into a unified world;<sup>474</sup> humanity's task is to humanize nature, to render it transparent and obedient to spirit such that it subsists in a spiritual or divinized state. "In the Divine Sophia the nature of divinity is perfectly transparent for the divine hypostases and is completely hypostasized by them... In the human being, the nature of the world is *not* completely hypostasized by the human hypostasis; the hypostasized domain is very limited, although it is subject to unlimited expansion and the ceaseless humanization of nature."<sup>475</sup> According to Bulgakov this limited hypostasization of nature is due to a primordial disintegration of the sophiological structure of humankind, the reversal of the ontological priority of spirit in relation to its nature. "Human nature contains

---

<sup>472</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 83.

<sup>473</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 85.

<sup>474</sup> Strictly speaking, the concept of "unification" does not apply to Divine Sophia, for there is no prior state of division, which would imply disintegration. "In the divine integrity, there is no place for unification, for there is no division (Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 80)." Nonetheless, the idea, if understood in an eternal sense, indicates the dynamic unity and integrity that Bulgakov believes characterized Sophia as the divine world.

<sup>475</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 100.

the particular possibility of anthropological error, which is connected with sin, precisely because the proper relation between man's spirit and nature, his soul and body, is not observed."<sup>476</sup> "This loss of equilibrium, of the spirit's domination over nature, is the source of the life of sin."<sup>477</sup> For Bulgakov original sin consists in a subordination of the spirit to the flesh, a "false love of the world,"<sup>478</sup> which disordered the ontological constitution of man and ultimately disintegrates it in death.<sup>479</sup> In contrast with Solovyov's *Lectures*, the fall is not the result of egoism, but a failure to reflect the divine anatomy, a subjection of spirit to its nature. Similar to the way in which for Schelling humanity fell to the power of the potencies which it was to maintain in unity as God does, so for Bulgakov, original sin indicates the fall of humanity under the power of nature. In this sense, as with Schelling and the later Solovyov, original sin represents for Bulgakov a failure of humanity to be the spiritual point of unity in the universe, connecting the created order to the divine source of its unity. Or, in the language of Bulgakov, the fall constitutes a failure of humanity to unite creaturely Sophia with Divine Sophia, to hypostasize nature the way God eternally hypostasizes his divine nature. Bereft of the hypostatic source of its unity, the natural world failed to realize its destined sophianic potential. "All the paths of natural being changed as a result of the fall of Adam, who had been called to be the architect of this being and the organizer of the world according to the image of its sophianicity."<sup>480</sup> Having seen that Bulgakov interprets the fall according to his organic, sophianic metaphysics, we must now explore the supratemporal character of this fall.

Like Solovyov's, Bulgakov's account of the fall can be said to be, broadly speaking, a development of the Eastern and Eriugenan tradition, which understood the biblical account of the fall as recounting, in allegorical or mythical language, an event which transcends ordinary history.<sup>481</sup> However, Bulgakov considered this doctrine of original sin as theologically undeveloped in the East. "In general, we do not find among the Greek fathers a finished doctrine of original sin and its consequences, which in general are characterized

---

<sup>476</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 188.

<sup>477</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 188. In *Russia and the Universal Church* (p. 171) Solovyov sees the fall similarly as an improper subjection of the human spirit to its nature, which connects it with earthly world.

<sup>478</sup> *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 188.

<sup>479</sup> On Bulgakov's view of death as disintegration of the tripartite human essence see T. Allan Smith, "Sergii Bulgakov's 'Sofiolgiiia Smerti.'" *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol.70 (4), pp. 453-454.

<sup>480</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 102. On the cosmic dimensions of the fall see Aidan Nichols, O.P., *Wisdom from Above: A Primer in the Theology of Father Sergei Bulgakov* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2005), pp. 46-50. Nichols also briefly touches on the supratemporal character of the fall (pp. 59-60).

<sup>481</sup> See Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, pp. 167-170.

more mildly than in Augustinianism.”<sup>482</sup> Accordingly, Bulgakov sought to fill this theological lacuna more in the direction of the Eastern tradition by probing into the depths of the creative act and its relation to time. In Solovyov’s *Lectures* the original state of creation is eternal and forms a divine world immanent within the divine-human Organism. Consequently, original sin is necessarily set in this supratemporal plane of being. By contrast, the time of creation is not, for Bulgakov, a fall from perfect eternity. Nonetheless, Bulgakov does consider the act of creation itself to stand between time and eternity in a supra-time. This has to do not only with the fact that for God the creative act is necessarily eternal, but also to do with the dynamic reception of the creative act by the creature. As with Schelling, who utilized Fichte’s notion of an act of transcendental self-positing that grounds all experience, Bulgakov considers that humanity must metaphysically determine its relation to God and the world. Because it possesses authentic reality and true freedom, humanity is involved in the process of its own creation, for “I” is its own act of self-positing.<sup>483</sup> “I is precisely the self-positing I. I’s being is its self-positing, which is the work of freedom, and cannot be accomplished by coercion, even if on the part of God’s omnipotence. In this sense, I’s creation is also a self-creation. Man coparticipates with God in his own creation or, more precisely, God includes this creation in His own act.”<sup>484</sup> Though Bulgakov disallows a prior ground of freedom that lies deeper than God, this voluntarist idea is applied to the human spirit on account of its creatureliness. The creaturely spirit must transcendently determine itself in relation to the divinely creative act. For Bulgakov, the act of divine causality includes creaturely or secondary causality,<sup>485</sup> through which the temporal nature of creation acquires a supra-temporal foundation. The world is established not only by the divine “let there be”, but also by the free creaturely “yes” to existence.<sup>486</sup> “Our consciousness proclaims with certainty that, in the creation of I, I itself was asked to agree to be, and this agreement was I’s self-positing, which resounds in I supratemporally.”<sup>487</sup> This supratemporal deed by which humanity posits itself is super-conscious, and can be considered to be the very ground of consciousness, the birth of the I itself. Once accomplished this deed necessarily disappears

---

<sup>482</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 166.

<sup>483</sup> Paul Gavriluk discusses the self-positing of the human spirit in relation to the divine creative act in “Bulgakov’s Account of Creation: Neglected Aspects, Critics and Contemporary Relevance.” *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 2015, Vol.17(4), pp. 457-458.

<sup>484</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 94.

<sup>485</sup> Although Bulgakov is especially antagonistic to the concept of causality in regards to divine creation, causal terminology is nevertheless helpful in explaining his general idea. On his rejection of the category of causality in relation to divine creation see *Bride of the Lamb*, pp. 33-38.

<sup>486</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 88.

<sup>487</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 88.

back into the trackless depths of the psyche as its primordial and permanent ground; as such it cannot be conjured up and presented before consciousness for it is the very presupposition of consciousness. Schelling presented this idea most eloquently: “That primordial deed which makes a man genuine himself precedes all individual actions; but immediately after it is put into exuberant freedom, this deed sinks into the night of unconsciousness. This is not a deed that could happen once and then stop; it is a permanent deed, and consequently it can never again be brought before consciousness.”<sup>488</sup> This deed, the I’s self-positing, lies above time, even though it is directed towards time. And it is precisely in this super-time, which belongs neither to time nor to eternity, in which the primal sin of all humanity is to be located.<sup>489</sup> We will now turn to the question of agency in original sin, as well as its pre-natal character. Furthermore, we will see that agency and the pre-natal, supra-temporal character of the fall are inseparably related.

We have spoken of the fall as if it is a purely supratemporal event. However, this is not the whole story. Bulgakov’s account is quite complex because he seeks to resolve questions surrounding the agency of original sin, underscored in Augustinianism, by grounding the *supratemporal* fall of universal humanity or Adam’s descendants, in Adam’s *temporal* fall. His fundamental issue with Augustine’s account is that of the agency of the universal human race in relation to Adam’s individual sin, original sin being determined for Adam’s descendants not by their self-determination, but by an inheritance of a sinful nature.

The propagation of original sin is explained by sinful heredity that burdens man from his birth. Original sin is therefore related not to man’s personal self-determination but first of all to the sinfulness of all of human nature. But, at the same time, original sin, according to Augustine, is not only a hereditary disease but also precisely sin as personal guilt. This is the fundamental defect and even contradiction of his doctrine of original sin.<sup>490</sup>

All cannot truly be said to have sinned “in Adam” if there is no true agency, or self-determination, on the part of each individual of the universal human race, since personal

---

<sup>488</sup> F.W.J. von Schelling, trans. Judith Norman, *The Abyss of Freedom: Ages of the World* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997) p. 181.

<sup>489</sup> Zenkovsky and Richard May seems to miss the German Idealist concept of transcendental self-positing that lies behind Bulgakov’s supratemporal theory of the fall. The former, who at times seems incapable of appreciating the profundity of Bulgakov’s ideas, concludes that the idea of humanity’s transcendental self-positing “is devoid of all meaning” (*A History of Russian Philosophy*, Vol. 2, p. 911). The latter, also misunderstanding this concept, leads him to characterize Bulgakov’s theory of original sin as a “fall of God from God,” and a “duplicating of Sophia.” This is perhaps true of Solovyov’s theory of the fall in his *Lectures*, since humanity (Sophia) is eternally actualized in the divine-human Organism, and in its fall is reduced to disintegration of the world soul. For Bulgakov, humanity does not pre-exist in this sense and the fall does not take place within God and his divine eternity. Instead, it occurs in the very act of humanity’s coming to be between time and eternity, in the moment of its self-determination which ushers humanity out of eternity into time. See Richard May, “Between God and the World: A Critical Appraisal of the Sophiology of Sergius Bulgakov.” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 2021, 74(1), p. 80.

<sup>490</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 167.

agency for original sin cannot be attributed to all individuals in the act of a limited, historical individual. Consequently, they cannot be held guilty. If all humanity did not commit original sin in Adam's individual and historical act, only two scenarios are possible:

Either the direct rejection of original sin as such, for a personal sin was committed only by Adam, whereas his descendants undeservedly bear the mark and consequences of this sin even though they are not guilty of it (such a supposition clearly implies a rejection of original sin); or the recognition of the *personal* participation in original sin of each one of us, to which an obscure anamnesis attests.<sup>491</sup>

In response to Augustine's historicist account of the fall, wherein the "event of original sin is viewed as historical, as having taken place at a definite time,"<sup>492</sup> and which attributes all agency to the historical, individual Adam, Bulgakov constructs a supratemporal account of universal humanity, which posits the active agency of every individual in the original sin. As with Solovyov, agency for sin is attributed to individual entities not in their empirical state in the physical world, but in their supra-historical act of self-positing. However, Bulgakov's supratemporal account of the fall is not *pre-cosmic* as with the early Solovyov's, but, in line with Julius Müller's theory, *pre-natal*; original sin occurs at the liminal boundary of time wherein each individual enters into the world at birth. The primal deed of sin is carried out in humanity's self-positing, in its self-determination in relation to the divine creative act.

Such a personal fall, making us participants in Adam's sin, did not take place within the limits of the world. It took place outside this world, or, more correctly, at the threshold of our entry into the world... This idea must be linked with the more general idea that man himself participates, in a certain sense, in his own origin, accepting his being from the Creator.<sup>493</sup>

Rather than occurring in a pre-cosmic state, the fall of humanity takes place for each person upon their entry into the world. "Every person pre-enacts Adam's fall (with differences in mode and intensity). Every person repeats this fall, as it were, by his agreement to enter into a world damaged by Adam's sin."<sup>494</sup> The sin of all humanity is pre-natal and supratemporal. However, there is another dimension, a temporal one, that we have hinted at. The sinful self-determination of all humanity takes place supratemporally by participation in Adam's temporal sin.<sup>495</sup> We have now to consider the nature of Adam in order to see how these dimensions fit together.

---

<sup>491</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 183-84.

<sup>492</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 166.

<sup>493</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 184.

<sup>494</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 184.

<sup>495</sup> Bulgakov derived this notion of two dimensions of the fall, one temporal and the other supratemporal or pre-natal, from Müller, the latter who developed his supratemporal concept of the fall in conversation with range of thinkers, including Origen, Kant, and Schelling. See Müller's, *The Christian Doctrine of Sin*, Vol. II, pp. 82-174, 425-433.

We have seen with Solovyov that he failed to reconcile the absolute, individual will of the world soul with the multiplicity of individual human wills that make up the world soul. Which is ultimately responsible for the tearing away of the created order from divine unity? Solovyov left this unclear. A similar problem arises for Bulgakov. Concerning Adam, there are two aspects that are critical to Bulgakov's theory of universal participation in Adam's original sin: multi-unity and supratemporality. We will explore how both of these aspects lead to deep tensions in his multi-personal, multi-temporal account of the fall. As with Solovyov's concept of Sophia as a universal human organism, Bulgakov similarly views Adam as "the all Adam, bearing in himself all humankind."<sup>496</sup> And like Sophia, Adam possesses agency, for it is Adam who is the author of sin. However, there is a crucial difference between Adam and Sophia as concerns their agency. Whereas for Solovyov Sophia possesses autonomy and freedom over and above the human entities that are contained within its unity, for Bulgakov, Adam does not possess this degree of individuality and autonomy. Adam is not free over against the multiplicity of human entities but acts as a "multi-unity,"<sup>497</sup> for every individual is understood to be coextensive with Adam and has given their "*personal* participation in original sin."<sup>498</sup> "Only in connection with this all-humanity of every man can one understand the idea of original sin as the fall precisely of the all-man, and, in him, the fall of every particular man."<sup>499</sup> In contrast with Solovyov, Bulgakov attempts to mediate the universal and the individual in original sin by conceiving Adam not as an autonomous individual, but as "multipersonal humankind."<sup>500</sup> If Adam represents primal, "multipersonal" humanity, he is also supratemporal, for Adam in his full number has not yet appeared in time.<sup>501</sup> Created supratemporally in Adam, the manifold hypostases that together make up the all-human fullness make their "successive appearance in time."<sup>502</sup> "The integral Adam, humanity in its totality, is supratemporal, but he is also created by God for time."<sup>503</sup> There is crucial difference here from Solovyov's Sophia, which is eternal. In Solovyov's *Lectures*, temporal existence is accidental, fallen being. By contrast, in Bulgakov Adam is created for time and, as we have seen, all must determine themselves supratemporally in relation to the creative act, and, as a result, in relation to the temporal

---

<sup>496</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 183.

<sup>497</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 187.

<sup>498</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 184.

<sup>499</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 110.

<sup>500</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 187.

<sup>501</sup> Because of the supratemporal fullness of Adam, Bulgakov concludes that a finite number of human hypostases comprise Adam. See Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, pp. 121-122.

<sup>502</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 113.

<sup>503</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 113.

world. We have established that Adam is multi-unitary and exists above time. How then are we to understand Bulgakov's assertion that Adam fell in time, and all humanity in him?

We can begin with the temporal dimension. If agency for original sin lies with all human entities in a supra-historical state, why is there a need to postulate the fall of Adam in time, to subsume a supratemporal fall within a temporal one? There seem to be two reasons for this. First, Bulgakov must correlate his theory of the fall with the temporal evolutionary history of the world, for since Adam, the all-man, is created for time, the fall must be connected with his initial appearance in time at the culmination of the evolutionary process which led up to him. It should be said however, that Bulgakov does not believe that Adam's fall is an event traceable within the empirical chain of history. The temporal state into which Adam entered the world was, according to Bulgakov, ontologically discontinuous with our own, such that the traces of Eden and the fall are not to be found in our world. "In history, we know neither Eden nor the state of sinlessness of our progenitors, *in statu naturae purae*. All this belongs to *meta-history*, and one should therefore not seek this in the historical world and time. It belongs to history only as its prologue."<sup>504</sup> In any case, the connection of Adam with the evolutionary process alone does not logically necessitate a temporal fall, for could not have Adam fell in the supratemporal reception of his being, in the manner of his descendants? Accordingly, there is a more important theological reason why Bulgakov must posit a temporal fall. Because Bulgakov finds it necessary to maintain the idea of the sinless, original perfection of Adam, he must posit that Adam lived in time. "Adam was created in a sinless state, which as a result of his determination, turned out to be only pre-sinless."<sup>505</sup> Adam is not an eternal being as is Solovyov's Sophia; his original perfection had to be in a temporal state. Accordingly, Adam, as the first man, could not have sinned supratemporally, for then he would have to reject the idea of an original righteousness of humanity. On the part of Adam then, there is a double determination: one righteous and carried out supratemporally in the receptivity of the creative act, and one sinful and carried out in time.

Adam was created in a sinless state, which as a result of his self-determination turned out to be only pre-sinless. Thus, his determination to being includes *both* states: the original state that accords with God's intention and the fallen state that includes the darkening by sins. Such a division or duality is proper only to the first man, who begins the human race. Our progenitor's state is manifested not only in conclusive self-determination but also in process.<sup>506</sup>

---

<sup>504</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 180.

<sup>505</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 185.

<sup>506</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 185.

The necessity of this sinless state leads Bulgakov to posit a temporal duration wherein Adam falls. We can now consider the multi-personal, supratemporal dimension of Adam's temporal trespass. There seems to be a dubious split here between Adam the historical progenitor and Adam the multi-unitary all-human. We will come to this matter in a moment. What is important to recognize here is that from Bulgakov's perspective, Adam in his anthropological omni-totality, does not yet exist in time. Existing above time, Adam can only determine himself universally, multi-unitarily in a *supratemporal* act. This must be correlated with Adam's temporal fall from the state of his original purity. If Bulgakov is to ascribe agency for original sin to all particulars, he must see the temporal Adam not as a particular individual but as quasi-universal, as all-determinative for every individual which together make up the human *pleroma*. Without universalizing the temporal Adam there can be no universal agency in original sin, for Adam's descendants, who together form the all-man, do not yet exist in time. Therefore, Bulgakov ascribes to the temporal Adam a universal determination of the human race. "But the first man, precisely as the *first*, is self determined not only individually but also universally."<sup>507</sup> With the ability of universal determination granted to Adam, Bulgakov mediates the temporal and supratemporal dimensions of Adam's fall. This universal determination, while carried out in time by Adam, takes place supratemporally for Adam's descendants. "In contrast to the supramundane self-determination of all of Adam's descendants, this self-determination takes place in time (Adam's length of stay in Eden *before* the fall is not revealed to us)."<sup>508</sup> And, conversely, the self-determination of Adam's descendants "takes place not in time, as it did for Adam and Eve, but above time; however, it is directed at time and is, as it were, simultaneous with Adam, is in Adam."<sup>509</sup> The supratemporal and temporal dimensions of Adam enables Bulgakov to hypothesize a participation of universal humanity in the historical fall of the first individual man. The sons and daughters of Adam "bear the iniquity of their father," because, in a real sense they are their father. "The sons and daughters of Adam all bear him in themselves and are, in this sense, Adam himself in his multi-unity."<sup>510</sup> Thus, Adam who sins in time must sin also in super-time; Adam, who sins as an individual must yet sin universally.

By positing a supratemporal and universal fall of humanity in Adam's temporal sin, Bulgakov is able to suggest that it is not merely by nature, but by self-determination that all

---

<sup>507</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 185.

<sup>508</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, pp. 184-85.

<sup>509</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 185.

<sup>510</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 110.

are involved in original sin and liable to its guilt. With this idea of universal, personal participation in Adam's sin, he seeks to overcome Augustine's problematic of agency. Furthermore, it can be seen that his theory also fuses, in a way Solovyov did not, the universal and individual as multi-unitary in its agency; whereas Solovyov left unreconciled the tension of wills, between Sophia and the human entities that comprise it, Bulgakov reconciled universal and individual will in Adam's multi-unity. However, Bulgakov introduces significant, and seemingly insurmountable, difficulties by attempting to ground the universal, supratemporal fall of humanity in Adam's temporal fall, which is a sort of all-one transgression that took place in Adam temporally and for his descendants supratemporally, on the threshold of their emergence into the temporal world. It appears that Bulgakov has created a sort of monstrosity out of Adam, a mythical creature that exists in time as an individual though in a mysteriously universal way, whose mode of life is temporal yet is impossibly the determinant of the supratemporal, transcendental deed of his descendants. There is an extreme equivocity in Bulgakov's language that perhaps verges on contradiction. On the hand Bulgakov views the temporal Adam as the multi-unitary all-man, yet in his temporality he can only be Adam the historical progenitor. By temporalizing Adam Bulgakov has effectively individualized him, is forced to treat him as a limited, historical personage, and yet he wears the universal mask. Adam who lives and falls in time cannot be universal and all-determinative, for Adam is a "supratemporal being,"<sup>511</sup> whose fullness does not yet exist in time. "There is *as yet no* integral humankind in time, for it is still only appearing, but it does exist in supratemporality, which is whence this appearance comes."<sup>512</sup> It is altogether unclear how Adam could universally determine humanity's fate *in time, in a temporal act of self-determination*, if Adam, the all-human, as yet exists only *supratemporally*. This is a contradiction. There is a division between Adam the individual, historical progenitor and Adam the universal that Bulgakov wishes to erase, for only in their conflation is his theory possible. The result is a destruction of the mythical, hybrid Adam, for if, according to Chardin, "It is impossible to universalize the first Adam without destroying his individuality,"<sup>513</sup> then it is equally impossible to individualize the first Adam without destroying his universality.

---

<sup>511</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 112.

<sup>512</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 120.

<sup>513</sup> Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, p. 39.

There are yet further problems. Bulgakov defines original sin as “ontological sin” in contrast to “empirical or historical sin.”<sup>514</sup> “The former belongs to man’s pre-temporal ontology, whereas the latter belongs to the empirical realization of this ontology in freedom.”<sup>515</sup> According to Bulgakov’s own logic a temporal, *ontological* fall is impossible. Therefore, it is contradictory to attribute to Adam’s temporal fall, the ontological weight of a transcendental act that grounds personal existence. If supratemporal self-positing possesses the character of a fundamental metaphysical determination towards a certain state of being, it is entirely unclear how Adam’s self-determination *in time* can be ascribed such universality as a permanent deed. Bulgakov’s notion of a twofold act of self-determination on the part of Adam, one supratemporal and the other temporal is unsatisfactory. In fact, the first should be ontologically determinative; the original supratemporal self-determination of Adam towards “God’s original intention” would seem, according to Bulgakov’s own logic, to annul the possibility of humanity’s universal fall, since Adam, the all-man, is universally determined.

These internal contradictions seem to undermine Bulgakov’s desire to attribute agency, over against Augustine, to universal humanity in original sin. Accordingly, because his account effectively conflates Adam as a temporal, limited individual with the supra-temporal universal-individual, the all-man, it can be concluded that he did not entirely overcome the fundamental problem of the Augustinian account. In the terms and categories of his own thought concerning Adam as a “supratemporal being,” it seems superfluous and fundamentally contradictory to posit a temporal fall that somehow contains a supratemporal one. In effect it would seem to cancel out agency on the part of universal humanity if the fall of Adam took place in time, for Adam who lives in time is already a particular, limited individual. Consequently, it is difficult not to conclude that Bulgakov’s contradictory account seems to lead back to the original, Augustinian problem he labored to overcome: the absence of universal agency in Adam’s original sin. Perhaps the most that can be said is that, over against Augustine’s denial of agency to universal humanity in original sin, Bulgakov considered universal human agency central to his account yet did not fully succeed in its execution. Having seen the way in which both Solovyov and Bulgakov sought, and arguably failed, to universalize original sin in a supra-historical all-individual (Sophia or Adam), perhaps it can be concluded that the notion of a universal human agent will always serve to undercut the freedom of the individual. In any case, we will now leave this matter aside and

---

<sup>514</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 188.

<sup>515</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 188.

consider how Bulgakov attempted to address modern scientific concerns in his account of original sin.

According to Bulgakov original sin effected not only humanity, but also the entire natural world whose destiny is ontologically linked to its human hypostatic center. Just as the divine hypostases eternally actualize their nature, Sophia, as a harmonious divine order which is Heavenly Humanity or the divine world, so also humanity's role in the world is to subdue it and integrate it into a living reflection of the divine Organism. But the effect of original sin was to disintegrate the order of creation, which was to reach its perfection in humanity.

It is very important to establish that original sin also has a cosmic significance: In man, who was called to be the king of the universe, the cultivator and protector of the cosmos, but who lost this power of his, all of creation turned out to be deprived of the creaturely logos and submitted itself to "vanity." This means that nature was left to its own powers and to the instinct of the world soul, in its sophianic wisdom but also in its non-hypostatic blindness.<sup>516</sup>

The result of original sin was that the world was left in its imperfect state that endured before humanity emerged in the evolutionary history of the world. As with Solovyov, Bulgakov situates his sophiological theory of the fall in the context of modern evolutionary science. However, unlike the early Solovyov, who views the supratemporal fall of humanity as a *pre-cosmic* event that set in motion the cosmogonic process, Bulgakov, as was mentioned above, views the universal fall of universal humanity in Adam as a *pre-natal* event that takes place in every birth and that is also coterminous with Adam's fall, which took place at a specific moment in the history of the world, at the point of humanity's climactic emergence within the evolutionary process. The fall does not, in his view, precipitate the course of cosmic evolution.<sup>517</sup> Bulgakov explains that prior to the emergence of humanity in life of creation, the world had developed towards humanity, such that the evolution of the world signified a natural and unfallen state of the world, but one which was imperfect and destined to be transformed by humanity, the spiritual and organizing force of the natural world.

Man comes into the world last, on the sixth day. Prior to and without man, the world evolves toward him. All that is called into being by God bears his blessing, the divine "it was good." But this cannot remove the limited character of the world's proper being. This limited character can be transcended only by man. As long as the sophianic instinctiveness of the world soul reigns in creation, the latter remains unfinished, for it is incompletely humanized. Therefore, the evolution of the world within its proper limits also presupposes its relative

---

<sup>516</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 189.

<sup>517</sup> However, in an earlier work, trans. Catherine Evtuhov, *Philosophy of Economy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000) pp. 149-150, Bulgakov does seem to understand the fall with Solovyov as a precosmic catastrophe. At this stage of his intellectual development Bulgakov's sophiology was largely a repetition of Solovyov's as Sophia is considered to be a free, volitional agent, yet combining within itself impersonal elements. We have already seen this with respect to another of his philosophical works, *Unfading Light*.

imperfection, which by no means contradicts the “it was good” of the divine plan, the sophianic content of being.<sup>518</sup>

Bulgakov believed that the wildness and blindness of nature was natural up to a point in the pre-anthropocentric time of the world, but the arrival of humanity signified for him a different age in which the state of the world prior to humanity was to be transcended. Although there was never a time in the history of the world that all existed in a pristine, paradisaical condition, Bulgakov suggests that Adam, the universal patriarch of the human race, entered into the world with an “edenic *perception* of creation.”<sup>519</sup> With the emergence of humanity in the world nature was to be humanized according to the ideal of Eden, that is, the world soul was to be hypostasized thereby elevating and spiritualizing matter. But, instead of achieving this spiritual mastery over nature humanity fell into sin, and was enslaved along with the rest of creation to the preceding evolutionary cycle.

Two possibilities were marked out in the life of creation: (1) the “evolutionary”-instinctive development of creation before man, but one that later, under man’s rule, was to acquire the light of reason and become liberated from the power of nonhypostatic elementalness; and (2) the development of creation *with* man, who was called to become created god, the protector and cultivator of Eden. But instead of humanizing nature, man himself became the slave of nature and a prisoner to its necessity.<sup>520</sup>

Bulgakov does not, like the early Solovyov, subsume cosmic evolution into an account of creation’s primordial disintegration and subsequent, historical reintegration. Instead, he allows, like the later of Solovyov of *Russia and the Universal Church*, that evolution is the natural course of development up until the appearance of humanity in the world, in whom creation is to be raised up into a spiritual state and organized the way God eternally integrates the multiplicity of the divine world (Solovyov) or Divine Sophia (Bulgakov). The upshot of Bulgakov’s perspective is that evolution does not become a mere spatio-temporal instrument to achieve, through the succession of forms that emerge in the cosmic process, a state of existence beyond space and time altogether. The evolutionary grades of being are not introduced accidentally, but as we have seen in the previous chapter, are sophianic themes rooted in Divine Sophia. Of course there remains a level of instrumentality in Bulgakov’s schema insofar as evolution leads to humanity, yet instrumentality is, to some degree, inevitable in an ecosystem that seeks greater internal complexity and consciousness, which can only be built up gradually, i.e. through a succession of forms.

---

<sup>518</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 173.

<sup>519</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 178.

<sup>520</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 179.

Bulgakov's account is nevertheless not immune to further criticisms. First of all, it certainly can appear arbitrary to suggest that humanity could have been excluded from the natural development of organisms, such that, had humanity not fallen it would have emerged as a perfect species, and thus would have been, in its spirit, independent of evolution altogether (we will come back to this point, since Bulgakov insists just this). Yet Bulgakov insists that Adam, in his original, Edenic state possessed a fully developed consciousness.

The human spirit assimilates the evolutionary principle in its unfolding and is therefore subject to history. But this does not mean that, in its origin, the human spirit necessarily was in a dormant, preconscious and unconscious, potential state, which it could leave only by realizing itself evolutionarily. No such dependence of the human spirit on evolution exists. The dormant, unconscious state of the human spirit is not its original state, corresponding to its essence, but a secondary state, connected with its given self-determination. For the human spirit, this unconscious state is only one of the possibilities, issuing from its connection with the world; it is by no means the only possibility, even though in historical reality we know only this defective form of its being: the state of the fallen Adam.<sup>521</sup>

It is hard to escape the unnatural idea of a *deus ex machina* here, a voluntarist miracle that transgresses nature. Furthermore, given that Bulgakov saw Adam, in his pre-fallen, exalted state, as living in the world temporally, before and at the moment of his fall,<sup>522</sup> he must presuppose a very peculiar reality that he left largely implicit, but which is brought out by Chardin:

Adam and Eve began their existence in a sphere of the world different from ours.<sup>523</sup> Through their fall they sank into a lower sphere (now our own); in other words they were embodied as matter in, incarnated in, fitted into, the strictly animal sphere into which we are now born: they were reborn at a lower level than that of their first state. Having therefore followed a byroad until it brought them to the road represented by the terrestrial universe, they lost sight (as we, too, have done) of the place from which they came, and of the road which had led them to their position 'among the beasts.' Like travellers who have turned sharp to the right at a circular clearing in a forest, we no longer realized which path our race has been following; but behind us we can see receding into infinity the zoological series into which we were belatedly incorporated.<sup>524</sup>

The fall of Adam in Eden, lying within yet apart from the world as its ideal possibility, presupposes not only the loss of consciousness of that higher state, but also an accidental, mechanical injection of fallen humanity into the evolutionary process of which it was

---

<sup>521</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 177.

<sup>522</sup> "Adam's length of stay in Eden *before* the fall is not revealed to us (Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, pp. 184-85)."

<sup>523</sup> This idea is found in Bulgakov in several places. "This perfect man issues out of God's hands into the world, into the Garden of Eden that was expressly humanized for him (Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 181)." "In Eden he lived separated from the rest of the world (*The Bride of the Lamb*, p. 179)." "Eden was taken from the world as an unactualized and unactualizable possibility (Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 178)."

<sup>524</sup> Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, pp. 48-49.

originally independent.<sup>525</sup> As Chardin further says: “There is some difficulty in conceiving the animal world, evolving on its own, into which our first parents would have sunk.”<sup>526</sup> This highlights another point of contention. Bulgakov is adamant that “man is not a product of evolution; evolution could have produced only a manlike animal... Between man’s animal nature and his humanity lies an ontological *hiatus*, an abyss that cannot be overcome by any evolution. Man enters as a new and independent factor into the chain of causality.”<sup>527</sup> In Bulgakov’s thought it must be remembered that humanity is a composite being comprised of a hypostasis (spirit) and a nature (the world soul). According to Bulgakov the world soul is non-hypostatic. Consequently, while it can evolve the entire chain of species leading up to humanity, it can never produce humanity; it cannot bring forth spirit, which is a principle superadded to the evolutionary process. “The human spirit is not a product of evolution, for it bears the stamp of eternity.”<sup>528</sup> Bulgakov’s anthropology is undoubtedly dualistic in its suggestion that spirit and body (given by the world soul) can be separated. Yet it is this two substance dualism that allows him to exclude the human spirit from the evolutionary process and to see its entrance as a “new divine creative act that is outside the evolutionary process.”<sup>529</sup> Again, here we have the spectre of voluntarism, a divine superaddition to nature. In the end, it seems that despite all its undoubted originality and incontrovertible brilliance, the further one probes into Bulgakov’s account of original sin, it is beset by contradictions regarding agency and time, and by an accidental association of the human spirit with the evolutionary process, in both its independence as an extraneous ontological principle superadded, and in its consciousness which does not submit to the laws of evolutionary growth and natural development. And it is perhaps due to the immense difficulties surrounding any attempt to correlate the fall with humanity’s emergence in the evolutionary process that Teilhard de Chardin preferred to interpret original sin not as an event, but as a universal state that inevitably arises in the process of organic evolution, as the imperfection that accompanies all things in the odyssey of their development. “Original sin expresses, translates, personifies, in an instantaneous and localized act, the perennial law of imperfection which operates in mankind *in virtue* of its being ‘*in fieri*.’”<sup>530</sup> Despite its

---

<sup>525</sup> Teresa Obolovitch also briefly observes Bulgakov’s exemption of humanity from evolutionary process in *Faith and Science in Russian Religious Thought* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 138, but does not subject this notion to criticism.

<sup>526</sup> Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>527</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 175.

<sup>528</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 175.

<sup>529</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 174.

<sup>530</sup> Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, p. 51. Nathan Halloran, S.J., argues for the superiority of Chardin’s account of original sin over against synthetic attempts to harmonize a historical fall with evolution. See

immense difficulties, Bulgakov's account of the supratemporal fall and its connection to evolution is a feat of genius that stands out for its intellectual intrepidity and intricacy, and certainly takes a privileged place in the constellation of theological speculations on the fall.

In conclusion to this chapter, it can be observed that the Russian Sophiologists mark an important development in theological thought on original sin. Influenced by Schelling's voluntarism, yet going far beyond him in developing the Eastern and Eriugenic non-local account of the fall in an explicitly supra-temporal direction, they sought answers to the nature of primal humanity and its agency, and posed different possibilities for conceiving a supratemporal fall: pre-cosmic (Solovyov) and pre-natal (Bulgakov). Furthermore, the productive context of their revolutionary account of original sin is Sophia. In the case of Solovyov, the fall is a disintegration of the divine world of Sophia that sets in motion the cosmogonic process, whereas for Bulgakov the fall is a disintegration of the divine anatomy of humanity by which it enslaved itself to the evolutionary process of nature, and as a result left nature in its instinctual, disintegrated state. Though they produced new problems in an effort to answer both old and new ones, their proposals remain significant in the way in which these systematizing minds sought to overcome the Augustinian problem of agency in regards to original sin-guilt, and in the way they sought to theologically come to terms with modern cosmology. Having considered the primordial disintegration of the sophianic organism of creation, we can now turn to its eschatological reconstitution.

---

"Evolution and the Nature and Transmission of Original Sin: Rahner, Schoonenberg and Teilhard de Chardin." *Colloquium (Auckland)*, 2012, Vol.44 (2), pp. 177-193. In a later article Halloran changes course and disavows interpreting original sin along Teilhardian lines as the inevitable evils which arise in a contingent order in its process of becoming. Instead, he argues for the necessity of seeing original sin as deriving from freedom and suggests an angelic, primordial fall. See Nathan W. O'Halloran, S.J., "Cosmic Alienation and the Origin of Evil: Rejecting the "Only Way" Option." *Theology and Science*, 2015, Vol.13 (1), pp. 43-63.

## Chapter 4: Eschatology: The Spiritualization of Matter

### Introduction

Having recounted the sophiological vision of the birth and fall of creation, we now arrive at the final theme, which bears in itself the hidden destinies of the world. Just as Sophia in its unconscious strivings seeks to usher in a golden age and to bring about the final transformation whereby matter is spiritualized and passes over into immortality, so at its point of transfiguration theology becomes prophecy, a vision of the far ahead future and ultimate destiny of all things. Yet so difficult it is to foresee beyond what is to what will be. Eschatology is the beyond of theology, that in which theology supersedes itself. So it is that, having reached its end, theology is led back to the beginning, which in itself contains the future of all things. In what follows we will explore the way in which the cosmic eschatology of Russian Sophiology follows from its protology of the primal divine-human Organism: just as God possesses in himself a ground, which is as a divine world and body that dwells in the highest bliss and unity, so the future that creation will enter into is one of the spiritualization of matter. The ultimate ground in God is the ground which carries sophiological thought into the supra-theological sphere of eschatology. In its prophetic divination, the future which Sophiology foresees is of the incarnation of Divinity in the world; from out of the initial, dark ground of the world soul, there emerges Sophia, in the image and likeness of God.

The underlying questions of this chapter are: how can matter be spiritualized? Is there an ontological ground for the final state, or is it the result of omnipotent divine will? Or, in the words of Bulgakov: “How is the “glory” of the world possible? How can it enter the world? And what does this signify?”<sup>531</sup> In what follows it will be argued that the contribution of Sophiology lies in the fact that, through its critical infusion of ideas from the tradition of German voluntarism, it can be seen to have been more able than preceding theological tradition to provide an affirmative, ontological basis for the eschatological spiritualization of matter. This has to do with the fact for both (later) Solovyov and Bulgakov, Sophia, conceived as a quasi-corporeality in God, is understood to be the metaphysical basis for matter and of its ultimate spiritualization. In order to provide a theological context for the cosmic eschatology of Russian Sophiology, which foretells a time when matter will pass into a higher transfigured state, we will explore Johannes Scotus Erigena’s idealist eschatology,

---

<sup>531</sup> Sergius Bulgakov, trans. Boris Jakim, *The Bride of the Lamb* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), p. 402.

which envisages the passing of all things into God, into the invisibility of divine mind beyond space and time. Particularly, it will be argued that Eriugena's eschatology is a logical result of a normative theological tradition, which held God to be a pure intelligence, devoid of any association with matter. If Christian theology envisages the final state as the transformation of the physical order, Eriugena brings to the forefront both the lack of a positive principle by which to ground the final state, as well as an underlying idealist tendency in theology whereby the universal transfiguration is transformed into its opposite—an incorporeal, intellectual destiny that seems to pay only nominal tribute to the *apakatastasis ton panton*.

Just as Eriugena's idealist eschatology follows from his concept of God as an incorporeal Intelligence, so Russian Sophiology's eschatology is grounded in the concept of God as an Organism. Having considered Eriugena's eschatology, which arguably represents a significant, intellectual peak of medieval theology, we will consider how the Russian Sophiologists understand the final state. Just as, in differing ways, Sophia is for Solovyov and Bulgakov the ground of material creation, as well as of the Incarnation, so also is Sophia the foundation for the eschatological transfiguration of the world. Concerning the former, it will be argued that Solovyov's thought shifts from an idealist, Eriugenian depiction of the eschaton, to one that posits the spiritualization of matter. While Solovyov's early eschatology was developed in his engagement with Hartmann's *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, exchanging the latter's pessimistic, voluntaristic nihilism for a voluntarist-idealist, incorporeal kingdom of spirits, his later thought gestures in the more positive voluntarist direction of Boehme, Schelling, and Bulgakov in positing within God a divine foundation for matter and of its ultimate redemption. Sophia, conceived no longer as an eternal, mystical body of human entities, but as an essential, substantial principle contains within it a primordial substrate, which is the basis of the material world. With this transition in his concept of Sophia, the spiritualization of matter receives a definite ontological ground. While in many of his later works Solovyov deepens this more positive eschatological tendency, it is also the case that the idea of the spiritualization of matter, instead of forming a point of departure in its own right, is more an idea that he only arrives at from a number of different viewpoints. In this sense, Solovyov left the idea of the spiritualization of matter in a largely undeveloped state.

Concerning Bulgakov, we will explore the way in which he develops a fuller, systematic treatment of the metaphysical basis of eschatology. Specifically, we will consider the way in which he understands two eschatological themes: the transfiguration of the world,

and the resurrection of the dead, which were treated, along with others, in the final volume of his major trilogy. Concerning the first theme, we will consider the ground of the spiritualization of matter in its connection with the human spirit and the divine Spirit, or humanity and Divine-humanity. In particular, it will be argued that Bulgakov's sophiological ontology, which draws upon Schelling's identity philosophy, develops the idea of the spiritualization of matter by clarifying the connection of spirit and matter. With his sharper distinction between spirit and matter, or personal and impersonal being, Bulgakov provides a fuller explication of the idea of the spiritualization of matter. Concerning the latter theme, I will show how this sophiological ontology of the spiritualization of matter is utilized in his theory of the resurrection. Specifically, it will be argued that Bulgakov's notion of the primal relation of Spirit and Sophia in God as the basis of the union of spirit and matter in humanity is influenced by Schelling's identity philosophy and provides a productive alternative to preceding ontologies for developing a theology of the resurrection. In the course of our discussion of this theme, Bulgakov will be brought into conversation with Aquinas and Duns Scotus, who rely on Aristotelian hylomorphism as well as an implicit Platonic dualism in their theologies of the resurrection. In so doing this will bring into relief our central argument that the Russian Sophiologists, over against a tradition which understands divine being as incorporeal intelligence, grasp in Sophia a direct ontological ground for matter and its eschatological spiritualization. Finally, it will be argued that despite Bulgakov's utilization of Schelling's subject-object, spirit-matter, identity philosophy there remains in his thought a residual dualism, which comes to the fore in his traditionalist concept of the afterlife as a dissolution of the union of spirit and body.

### **I: The Return into Divine Mind: Idealist Eschatology in Johannes Scottus Eriugena**

In the main, patristic and medieval theological tradition uniformly understood God to be a pure intelligence, devoid of all trace of corporeality. This is not so for Sophiology for which God, as we have seen, is a living Organism. The sophiological eschatological vision flows naturally from its understanding of God as an Organism, from its positing of a ground or nature in God, which is the archetypal foundation of matter. Seen against Sophiology's Boehmean-Schellingian metaphysics of the divine, it is arguable that where prior theological tradition harbors a tendency towards acosmism, it precisely because a positive foundation of matter in Divinity was never sufficiently established. This tendency to acosmism is seen most evidently in the thought of Eriugena. It is true that in Aquinas, Bonaventure and others one finds a propensity towards an idealist eschatology, but in Eriugena such a propensity is at its

highest pitch and is brought to its logical conclusion. In order to grasp this, it is necessary to briefly set forth Eriugena's fourfold division of nature, and the way of its return into God.

Eriugena's system, set down in his magnum opus *Periphyseon*, is one of ontological rupture and return to unity; it is a fourfold system of Nature, and betrays a monistic, or at least an acosmic, structure. The first division of nature is that which is Uncreated and creates, namely God; the second division is that which is created and yet creates, namely the divine causes or ideas; the third division is that which is created and does not create, namely all finite creatures; and the fourth and final division is that which is Uncreated and no longer creates, namely God having become "all in all." The very structure of Eriugena's system is eschatological in its orientation, and he was restless until he had driven his thought to the very end of all things, into that state in which the unification of all things in God had been achieved. Arguably, he pushed medieval theology to new speculative heights. In the manner by which he derives his conception of the end from his first principles, his protology, and the way in which he sets it forth in a totalizing, systematic manner, Eriugena represents a logical peak of medieval eschatology. Furthermore, it is also arguable that his eschatology, with its sharp, idealist tendency towards acosmism, is also the most coherent and consistent with the traditional metaphysics of the divine as pure intelligence.

We have seen that, in Solovyov's *Lectures*, incorporeal stasis is held to be the norm of being from which the mutable, physical world represents a falling away. As such the dynamic element of his early system only serves to hasten time back into eternity. A similar impetus lies at the edifice of Eriugena's thought, directing its entire development and eschatological termination. Eriugena's eschatology emanates from his metaphysics of nature as undergoing rupture and returning, eschatologically, to unity within Divinity. An important axiom of his thought is that the beginning of all things is also their end, to which they ever seek to return, "for the end of every movement is in its beginning."<sup>532</sup> And this beginning and end of every creature is God, the Alpha and the Omega. In itself, this is an unproblematic theological principle, one that the Irishman draws from Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Maximus, but the fundamental issue is the way in which Eriugena applies it. Eriugena's eschatology envisions the return of all things into God in a series of steps by which all lower natures are in turn resolved into higher natures. His eschatological spectacle is one in which the divisions of nature fold back into their Source. On the face of it Eriugena's schema

---

<sup>532</sup> Johannes Scottus Eriugena, tr. I.P. Sheldon-Williams, *Periphyseon (The Division of Nature)* (Washington, D.C.: Bellarmin/Dumbarton Oaks, 1987), V. 866C.

appears to present an ontological return of finitude into the Infinite, a passing away of the world into God; however, he adamantly wishes to maintain that creation is nonetheless preserved in its ultimate passage.

The first enfolding is that of all the lower grades of being into human nature. Eriugena argues that the world will be preserved by passing into human nature, the latter of which takes the world with it when it crosses over into God. This preservation is, according to Eriugena, founded upon a metaphysical axiom that that which is lower is contained within and attracted to that which is higher.

If in the universe of sensible things human nature is supreme, and if higher natures always attract lower natures to themselves... is it not a rational supposition that human nature shall in the end of all things gather into herself all things which were first established in her and beneath her so as to produce a single unification?<sup>533</sup>

Eriugena posits that the preservation of creation entails the gathering of what is lower into what is higher. The world will be gathered into human nature, the macrocosm into the microcosm, and in this way will be preserved in its being and essence. And just as the subhuman creation is preserved in its passage into humanity, so humanity is preserved in its passing over into Divinity. In this enfolding, the lower part of humanity must first resolve itself into its higher part. In the return of humanity into God the body must, after having passed through death and brought to life in resurrection, pass into soul. “The substance of the body will pass into the soul, not so that that which it is shall perish, but so that it shall be preserved in the better essence.”<sup>534</sup> Next, the soul must pass into its primordial causes, the divine ideas eternally created in the Word, and finally the last phase and completion of humanity’s return into God comes when the “Causes... [are] absorbed into God as air is absorbed in light. For when there is nothing but God alone, God will be all things in all things.”<sup>535</sup>

The crux of Eriugena’s eschatology is his ontological axiom that because the higher contains the lower it can be said that the latter is preserved and not destroyed. Nevertheless, if one is unprepared to accept his idealist premises, the palpable contradiction and acosmism of his thought is readily apparent. It is simply and self-evidently contradictory to claim at once that the world will pass away into God and will nevertheless retain its proper being. To assert that the world, like all the numbers which are contained in and which revert into the

---

<sup>533</sup> Eriugena, *Periphyseon*, V. 901A-B.

<sup>534</sup> Eriugena, *Periphyseon*, V. 879B.

<sup>535</sup> Eriugena, *Periphyseon*, V. 876B.

Monad,<sup>536</sup> will be preserved when it returns into humanity and thereby into God can only appear to those who do not share Eriugena's ontological priority of the ideal and the mental, to be manifestly false. If the world returns into God, it must, in its independent and objective reality, pass away and be reduced to a divine idea, to ideal existence, so that as a true and living organism it no longer subsists. The same holds true for the resurrected body. According to Eriugena the resurrected body is immaterial and "invisible"<sup>537</sup> abiding in a "supraessential sphere" of Divinity.<sup>538</sup> Such a state that is beyond all time and place, beyond all limitation and finitude, beyond all visibility, is not a bodily state, but a purely intellectual state. Indeed, the eschatological end Eriugena posits for human nature is wholly acosmic and entirely intellectual. "The whole human nature will be resolved into the single Mind so that nothing shall remain save that mind alone by which he shall contemplate his Creator."<sup>539</sup> It is due to statements like this in Eriugena's corpus that he has been charged of pantheism.<sup>540</sup> In his defense, it can be coherently maintained, as in Platonism or even in certain schools of Hindu thought, that the incorporeal spirit can retain its distinction from God in a bodiless state of beatific contemplation, thereby avoiding a pantheistic monism. But if Eriugena avoids pantheism or idealist monism, at best his system can claim that the end of all human nature is to pass over into what can only be described as a disincarnate state to enjoy a bodiless, beatific bliss of contemplation, an ideal existence. Acosmism is the inevitable result of a system that posits an ontological return of the world into divine Mind, into the noumenal, "supraessential sphere" of Divinity. Furthermore, such an eschatological vision is the logical conclusion of a metaphysics in which God is understood as pure intelligence, *noesis noeseos*. If highest reality is intelligible and incorporeal, and if there is ultimately no foundation for the physical order in divine Mind, except for the supposed preservation of the lower

---

<sup>536</sup> Eriugena, *Periphyseon*, V. 881D-882A.

<sup>537</sup> Eriugena, *Periphyseon*, V. 930A. For Eriugena the primal as well as the spiritual, resurrected body is immaterial as opposed to the material body, which was superadded to human nature due to its fall. See *Periphyseon*, IV. 801D-802A, 993D-994A, V. 884D. For an excellent discussion see Daniel Heide "The Fate of Bodies in Origen and Eriugena." *Dionysus*, Vol. XXXVI, 2018, pp. 60-65.

<sup>538</sup> Eriugena, *Periphyseon*, V. 921B.

<sup>539</sup> Eriugena, *Periphyseon*, V. 874B.

<sup>540</sup> Pantheism is, of course, a slippery term. Certainly, Eriugena posits the opposite of Spinoza's more immanentist pantheism, *Deus sive Natura*. I think Daniel Heide is thus more correct to see Eriugena's system "as a kind of dynamic monism," since God is not reduced to the world, but the world is resolved into God, who is conceived in idealist terms as Mind. See "The Fate of Bodies in Origen and Eriugena." *Dionysus*, Vol. XXXVI, 2018, p. 61. On the disputed pantheism of Eriugena see Dermot Moran, "Pantheism from John Scottus Eriugena to Nicholas of Cusa." *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 1990, Vol. LXIV (1), pp. 131-151. Moran, rightly I think, situates Eriugena's thought in idealism, and sees for Eriugena that everything exists preeminently and authentically in divine Mind. See also Stephen Lahey, "Eriugena's Condemnation and His Idealism" in ed. Adrian Guiu, *A Companion to John Scottus Eriugena* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), ch. 17.

corporeal order in the higher incorporeal order, the destiny of the world must be to return into an ideal, intellectual state beyond all objectivity and materiality.

Eriugena may have taken the acosmic tendency of medieval theology to an extreme, but, arguably, his eschatology constitutes the logical and inexorable conclusion of a metaphysics in which Divinity is the antithesis of corporeality. It is arguable that at the end of Eriugena's system one comes up against the limits of Platonic philosophy for Christianity; its overt dualism exercised its influence on Christian eschatological thought and provided little ontological ground for anything beyond an idealist eschatology.<sup>541</sup> It is true that Aristotle's hylomorphism provided some ontological justification for an embodied eschatological state; indeed, it was, for instance, subtly utilized by Aquinas, but hylomorphism nevertheless provisioned him with no ultimate, divine ground for matter as such, given that for Aquinas, too, God is pure intelligence.<sup>542</sup> It was not until Boehme's positing of a living ground in God, a nature comprised of forces which were harmonized in the Divine Spirit, and the development of this idea in Schelling's philosophy, that an alternative ontology was made available to Christian thought. And upon it Sophiology was able to construct an integral eschatology for the material order, for in the Boehmean-Schellingian tradition matter was granted an eternal justification in the divine ground, the nature of God, which is the source and everlasting analogue of matter. Over against the acosmic, medieval eschatology of Eriugena—and in a lesser degree, of others—we must now counterpose the cosmic eschatology of Sophiology.

## II. The Descent of Divinity into Matter: Incarnationalist Eschatology in Russian Sophiology

For Eriugena the being of the sensible world begins with the fall into sin of humankind... This world ought not to have existed; sin created it. As a result of this, humankind acquired a sensible body, the division into sexes, and the particularities of organization bound with this were manifested and the world process commenced. The task of redemption is thus no other than the universal *restoration* of the original condition... Strictly speaking this "apocatastasis" of Eriugena is not at all the Christina resurrection with a body, since corporeality generally speaking is considered as the result of the fall; "the spiritual body" of the resurrection is the same intelligible first-formed body which is covered and annihilated by

---

<sup>541</sup> This is not to deny that there are resources in Neoplatonism for a more positive understanding of corporeality. There is of course Plotinus' "intelligible matter," as we have seen was important for Bulgakov's development of his concept of Sophia as the foundation of corporeality. There is also the theurgy of Iamblichus in which the descent of the soul into matter is not a fall, but a necessary prerequisite by which it establishes, through theurgical rites, contact with the gods and is brought into harmony. See the excellent study of Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (Kettering, OH: Angelico Press, 2014). The introduction to Shaw's book by John Milbank is also important in regards to resources in Neoplatonism for a more positive valuation of materiality.

<sup>542</sup> Aquinas' hylomorphism is addressed in more detail in the section on Bulgakov's eschatology.

the sensible body. In this respect Eriugena is the most decisive spiritualist, and from his point of view it would be more correct to speak not about the resurrection of the body but about our resurrection *from* the body. Therefore the whole world process for Eriugena is a barren mistake, something completely irrational (an opinion that anticipates the philosophies of pessimism: Schopenhauer, Hartmann, A. Drews).<sup>543</sup>

According to Bulgakov's stark condemnation, Eriugena enacted a complete reversal of the Christian doctrine of apocatastasis. The fatal error of Eriugena's eschatology, whose acosmic idealism is compared to the pessimism of the voluntarist philosophers of Will, has its basis in his protology. Beginning from an incorporeal, ideal creation, the end which Eriugena inevitably envisions is the resolution of the material world into the intelligible sphere from which it fell away. If for Eriugena the eschaton represents an idealist dematerialization of spirits, for the Russian theologians, inversely, it indicates the spiritualization of matter. In what follows, we will see how the Russian Sophiologist's constructed their vision of cosmic restoration on the basis of a different protology. Although Solovyov struggled to overcome the idealist tendency of Eriugena, expressed, however, in the acosmic voluntarism of Hartmann which haunted his early theology, both the later Solovyov and Bulgakov exhibit a Boehmean-Schellingian voluntarist logic of spiritual-material unity in their eschatological constructions. The protological ground of creation in Sophia, a quasi-corporeal substrate in God, is for the Russian Sophiologists the eternal prefigurement and principle from which the eschatological spiritualization of matter issues.

#### *A. Solovyov: From the Dematerialization of Spirits to the Spiritualization of Matter*

We have seen in differing parts of this work that there are divergent dispositions in Solovyov's thought concerning the material order, one which sought to return the fallen away material world into the brightness of the ideal, incorporeal kingdom, and another which sought to unify the spiritual and material sides of being, and it is this latter vision that decisively triumphed in the end. Although there is a decided apocalyptic tone in Solovyov's late works, especially in *War, Progress, and the End of History* as well as the *Short Story of the Antichrist*, in which there is thought to mark a decisive shift towards pessimism near the end of his life, there is also a profound sense in which Solovyov's later vision turns positively away from a Platonic-Gnostic propensity to denigrate the material towards an uncompromising conviction of the inherent goodness of corporeality and of its ultimate redemption. Indeed, Sergei Solovyov, Vladimir's nephew, relates that in the period of the 1870's which encompasses Solovyov's early thought that: "At that time he considered task of

---

<sup>543</sup> Sergius Bulgakov, trans. Thomas Allan Smith, *Unfading Light: Contemplations and Speculations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012), p. 167.

philosophy and theurgy to be the dematerialization of the material world, the restoration of the realm of pure spirits.” Alternatively, he remarks that in the mid 1880’s there is a fundamental shift in Solovyov in which “the goal of humanity” is reconceived as “the spiritualization of its corporeality and the triumph over death and decay.”<sup>544</sup> Broadly speaking then, there appear to be two tendencies in Solovyov’s thought with regard to nature; one an idealist, acosmic tendency as seen in his early work, and the other, a cosmic tendency, in his later work, to view nature as a process of the spiritualization of matter. These antithetical tendencies generate conflicting eschatologies. It will be argued that what appears to underlie this shift in Solovyov’s thought is a different conception of Sophia. Instead of corporeality being introduced accidentally in the fall of Sophia, in his later thought Sophia is understood, along the lines of Boehme and Bulgakov, to possess within it a primal, material substrate that is the possibility of created being. This allows for a far more positive valuation of nature, and lays a firmer metaphysical basis for the eschatological spiritualization of matter. However, we will see that this idea is left underdeveloped by Solovyov, and is given a much fuller treatment by his sophiological successor, Sergius Bulgakov.

Like Eriugena’s, the early Solovyov’s metaphysics is one in which the beginning and end stand in isomorphic relation. The essence of the end is a return to the beginning not a going beyond, for the true mode of creation is eternal. The crux of Solovyov’s early eschatology lies in his protology of the all-embracing spirit, or divine-human Organism as incorporeal being. The initial eschatological vision of Solovyov is constructed via a critical engagement with the German voluntarist philosopher Eduard von Hartmann. In *The Crisis of Western Philosophy* Solovyov found in Hartmann, and his predecessor Schopenhauer, a favorable metaphysical principle, the Unconscious as Will and Idea, as well as a corresponding method at once logical and empirical, both *a priori* and *a posteriori*, which signaled the possibility of integrating science, philosophy, and religion. Nonetheless, Hartmann was subjected to criticism because in his *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, its first principle, the Unconscious, was understood as a Will that in its primordially wills nothing, as well as an Idea without determinate content, and as such an abstract hypostasization of potentiality, of nonbeing. This protology, the prioritization of the potential over the actual, governs Hartmann’s radically pessimistic eschatology, which posits the acosmic, cataclysmic transition of the phenomenal world into the Unconscious at the end of history. The material

---

<sup>544</sup> Quoted in Oliver Smith, *Vladimir Soloviev and the Spiritualization of Matter* (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2011), p. 35, fn. 53. On the eschatological theme of the spiritualization of matter in this work see Smith’s final chapter.

world of representation, which came to be through the accidental, irrational arousing of the Will, must in the end sink back into the dark abyss of the unmoving, unwilling Will from whence it issued. Yet for Solovyov, the Unconscious or Superconscious (which is, following Hartmann, both Will and Idea) cannot not have a representation (both determinate existence and universal content), with the result that Hartmann's eschatology undergoes a radical revision. If the world of representation, the all as its determinate content, is the necessary phenomenal manifestation of an absolute all-one Spirit, the final culmination of the world process must serve to restore the representational world to its original, non-material state. Non-material because, following Hartmann, the essence of material atoms is held to be a spiritual principle, reducible to forces understood as will, for which matter is only the egoistic, external manifestation.<sup>545</sup> Thus, in the conclusion of this early work, Solovyov substitutes the annihilation of the world with its dematerialization into a "kingdom of spirits." "At the end of the cosmic process the removal of present actuality is an annihilation not of particular being itself, but only of its *exclusive self-assertion*, its external peculiarity and separateness. This is an annihilation not of the world of phenomena in general, but only of material, mechanical phenomena, of the monstrous phantom of the dead external reality of material separateness."<sup>546</sup> The end then for the early Solovyov represents a sort of idealist voluntarism. The volitions or spirits, which had once manifested themselves by their egoism in material separation, become an incorporeal community of wills in ideal harmony, who in their integral unity constitute the manifestation of the absolute Spirit.

In our chapter on creation, we have seen that a similar conclusion was reached in Solovyov's *Lectures*. As with his *Crisis*, a representational world of wills, the divine world of human entities, is seen as necessary to the actuality of the divine-human Organism, or the "all embracing spirit."<sup>547</sup> In its primordial unity with Divinity, Sophia or the divine world is eternal, changeless, and incorporeal. As a logical result of his conception of an eternal creation, Solovyov harbored an attitude of hostility to the external, material order, as a fall away from the inward unity and eternity of the divine-human Organism. In contrast to the ideal, divine world, the natural "world is something untrue, something that ought not to be."<sup>548</sup> The fundamental evil of the natural world is, as with *The Crisis of Western*

---

<sup>545</sup> See Vladimir Solovyov, trans. Boris Jakim, *The Crisis of Western Philosophy: Against the Positivists* (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1996), p. 90-91.

<sup>546</sup> Solovyov, *Crisis*, p. 148.

<sup>547</sup> Solovyov, *Crisis*, p. 148.

<sup>548</sup> Vladimir Solovyov, trans. Peter Zouboff, *Lectures on Divine-Humanity* (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1995), p. 121.

*Philosophy*, egoism, a false separation of things from “whence arises external, material being.”<sup>549</sup> The eschatology that logically results from this disregard of materiality is, in general, not dissimilar from Eriugena’s, for the rebirth of fallen Sophia “in the form of an absolute organism” signifies a return into the intellectual, incorporeal existence of primordial Sophia, and of Sophia into its unity within God.<sup>550</sup> The end is a return into the beginning, of the natural world into the divine world. At least this is the overwhelming impression of Solovyov’s *Lectures*. A cautionary note, however: towards the end of the *Lectures*, Solovyov does refer in passing to the eschatological integration of nature in the divine-human Organism. “At the end of time, it [the body of the Logos] will encompass all humankind and all nature in one universal divine-human Organism.”<sup>551</sup> However, given his strong aversion to the natural world in this work, this statement should be approached carefully. It can neither be extracted from its immediate context, nor from Solovyov’s general concept of the divine-human Organism. The immediate context is the rebirth of nature as the spiritual, mystical body of the Logos achieved by Christ. “And nature, purified by the death on the cross, loses its material separateness and weight and becomes a direct expression of the Divine Spirit, a true *spiritual* body. It is in this body that Christ rises from the dead and appears to His Church.”<sup>552</sup> The spiritual body, in its remove from “material separateness,” seems to be understood as the antithesis of the physical, corporeal body. Spirit and matter stand in a relation of antimony. Furthermore, as we have seen in previous chapters, the body of the Logos is a not a corporeal principle, but an anthropological one. Sophia, as the body of God, is comprised of the universal multiplicity of human entities, which have Christ as their head. In other words, Sophia is not analogous to a corporeal body as in Boehme and Bulgakov, but is a mystical body, the Church. Keeping these contexts in mind, the integration of nature into the divine-human Organism seems to preserve nature in name only, as a mere *flatus vocis*. The passing of the natural world into the divine world whereby nature loses its “material separateness” can perhaps be understood as analogous to the way in which Eriugena posits the passing of nature into humanity, and of the body into soul. The natural body of the world and of humanity passes over into the spiritual body of the Logos, the incorporeal divine world of Sophia. As the antithesis of the divine world, the living reality of the natural world appears to be lost in an idealist schema. This reading of the eschatology of the *Lectures* represents then a Christocentric extension of his revision of Hartmann’s eschatology in *The*

---

<sup>549</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 123.

<sup>550</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 139.

<sup>551</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 164.

<sup>552</sup> Solovyov, *Lectures*, p. 163.

*Crisis of Western Philosophy*. In the end, Solovyov's early eschatology seems to posit the transformation of nature into something wholly other; as such, nature here cannot truly be said to be regenerated, but uprooted and eradicated. This, however, does not represent Solovyov's last word on eschatology.

In *Russia and the Universal Church*, one can observe a different perspective taking shape. In his later thought eschatology does not constitute a return to the beginning, a passing of creation into the incorporeal unity and eternity of the divine-human Organism from which it fell. Instead, the antinomy of spirit and matter is rejected in favor of their ultimate reconciliation.<sup>553</sup> This shift towards spiritual-material unity is marked by a subtle but significant development in Solovyov's concept of Sophia. Whereas in his early work Sophia is incorporeal, and only becomes a material principle in its disintegration and externalization, in his middle and later works, Sophia is originally and primordially the ground of matter and of its spiritualization. As the beginning or principle (*arche*) of created being, Sophia also contains the end to be realized in the world. Whereas in the *Lectures*, Sophia is an incorporeal, divine world of human entities, in his later thought Sophia is identified with "the objective essence or absolute substance" of God.<sup>554</sup> Wisdom is God's own "immanent manifestation,"<sup>555</sup> a unity enacted by the Father, manifested by the Son, and enjoyed in the Spirit.<sup>556</sup> Only secondarily is Sophia, echoing Boehme and the late Schelling in his *Weltalter* and *Philosophy of Revelation*, the possibility of other being, of a world outside God.<sup>557</sup> "Being the accomplished unity of the whole in God, it [divine Wisdom] becomes also the unity of God and of existence outside the Godhead. It is thus the true rationale and end of creation... While it exists substantially and from all eternity in God, it realizes itself effectively in the world and is successively incarnate therein, in drawing it back to an ever more perfect unity."<sup>558</sup> The divine Wisdom, which forms the essential nature of God, becomes the ground of external nature, is "transposed" into creaturely being as the world

---

<sup>553</sup> This seems also to be the case in an earlier work written between 1882-1884. In Vladimir Solovyev, trans. Donald Attwatter, *God, Man and the Church: The Spiritual Foundations of Life* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., LTD, 1937), Solovyov speaks of the "materialization of spirit and the spiritualization of matter (p. 134)." However, there are also statements which could lend itself to an idealist, Neoplatonic interpretation of this thematic. For example, nature is said to be destined to become "part of his [humanity's] own rational substance, a living organ of the cosmic idea of God (p. 135)."

<sup>554</sup> Vladimir Solovyov, trans. Herbert Rees, *Russia and the Universal Church* (London: The Centenary Press, 1948), p. 150.

<sup>555</sup> Solovyov, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 154.

<sup>556</sup> Solovyov, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 151.

<sup>557</sup> "Possessing it, God possesses all in it; it is the fullness or absolute totality of being, antecedent and superior to all partial existence (*Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 150)."

<sup>558</sup> Solovyov, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 159.

soul,<sup>559</sup> a born chaos that gradually receives the form of divine all-unity in it. “If in His power and truth, God is all, He desires in His love that all should be God. He desires that there should be outside Himself another nature which may progressively become what He is from all eternity—the absolute whole.”<sup>560</sup> And as Sophia is the *arche*, the beginning and source of nature, the world soul is understood to subsist as potential (*dynamis*) within divine Wisdom as “*materia prima*, the substratum of our created world.”<sup>561</sup> “As a creature, it does not exist eternally in itself, but it exists from all eternity in God, in the state of pure potentiality, as the latent basis of the eternal Wisdom.”<sup>562</sup> In bringing the world soul out of potentiality into actuality (*entelecheia*), its destiny is to become spiritualized matter, to realize within it the “complete and concrete incarnation of Godhead.”<sup>563</sup> Just as Wisdom is a total-unity in eternity, so in time the world soul, as Wisdom transposed in creaturely being, is as matter, a receptacle of potentiality for the realization and incarnation of the form of divine unity.

The organism of the divine-human incarnation, having in Jesus Christ a single active and personal center, possesses... one single substantial basis, namely, the corporal nature of the divine Wisdom, as both latent [in eternity] and revealed in the lower world; it is the soul of the world completely converted, purified and identified with Wisdom itself, as matter identifies itself with form in a single concrete and living being. And the perfect realization of this divine-material substance, this *semen mulieris*, is glorified and resurrected humanity, the Temple, Body and Spouse of God.<sup>564</sup>

Instead of positing a primordial divine-human Organism whose internal unity is fractured in the fall of the divine world into the external, natural world, here the divine-human Organism is realized as the eschatological goal of the universal process. Furthermore, in containing a corporeal substratum within it, Sophia functions as the ground and goal of the cosmic process to spiritualize matter and incarnate Divinity within it. Accordingly, the final vision which emerges here is not an eschatological ascent of Sophia from the physical world, but the realization and incarnation of divine Wisdom in nature. The process of creation is oriented towards the regeneration of “nature outside the Godhead until its universal and perfect integration is achieved.”<sup>565</sup> However, as we have seen, there remains in this work an aversion to space and time, and it is unclear how to reconcile this with his emphasis on the spiritualization of matter as the goal of the cosmic process. What is clear is that with his notion that the world soul lies latent from eternity within divine Wisdom as a material

---

<sup>559</sup> Solovyov, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 155.

<sup>560</sup> Solovyov, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 154.

<sup>561</sup> Solovyov, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 156.

<sup>562</sup> Solovyov, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 156.

<sup>563</sup> Solovyov, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 170.

<sup>564</sup> Solovyov, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 170.

<sup>565</sup> Solovyov, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 171.

substrate, as the possibility of the world of creation, Solovyov gestures in the voluntarist direction of Boehme, Schelling and Bulgakov. There is a ground in God, an essential principle, which forms the *positive* metaphysical ground of nature outside God. With this Solovyov has arguably arrived at a metaphysical basis for the eschatological spiritualization of matter. In the eternal beginnings of things, in the primal divine Wisdom, is the archetype of what creation will become at the end of time.

In other works Solovyov deepens the eschatological orientation of his thought towards the spiritualization of matter. In “The Universal Meaning of Art,” and “Beauty in Nature,” Solovyov observes a universal movement towards beauty, which “is the embodiment of Idea,”<sup>566</sup> a tendency which in turn is continued in artistic production whose prophetic task and final term is “the creation of a universal spiritual organism.”<sup>567</sup> Art is the “transition and connecting link between the beauty of nature and the beauty of the life to come.”<sup>568</sup> Solovyov reaches the idea of the spiritualization of matter from still other vantage points. In his profound mediation *The Meaning of Love*, Solovyov traces the reality of sexual love in nature, observing its tendency towards individualization, from which he concludes that the concrete reality of love can neither be “reconciled with the certainty of... destruction,” nor satisfy itself with the merely ideal, “the immortality of the soul.”<sup>569</sup> The reality of love “requires eternal youth and the immortality of this particular human being, of this embodied living spirit in a corporeal organism.”<sup>570</sup> What is important in these works is Solovyov’s identification of the driving impetus of nature, which continues and culminates in humanity, to overcome the limitations and imperfections of matter which hinder spiritual form and obstruct the full incarnation of Sophia in beauty. Furthermore, Solovyov was adamant that the teleological goal of nature as the incarnation of divine Wisdom not be forfeited or counterfeited. In “Plato’s Life Drama” and “The Idea of a Superman,” Solovyov saw in Plato and Nietzsche the approach of the idea of the spiritualization of matter, which nonetheless retreated at the crucial moment in which the idea was raised. In the former, Plato had, according to Solovyov, saw in *Eros*, an intermediary between gods and mortals, a connection between the otherwise estranged and incommensurable realms of the ideal and the real. *Eros*, according to Plato, bestows its gifts on the lower and higher parts of the soul. In

---

<sup>566</sup> V.S. Soloviev, trans. Vladimir Wozniuk, *The Heart of Reality: Essays on Beauty, Love, and Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), p. 38.

<sup>567</sup> Soloviev, *The Heart of Reality*, p. 75.

<sup>568</sup> Soloviev, *The Heart of Reality*, p. 75.

<sup>569</sup> Soloviev, *The Heart of Reality*, p. 108.

<sup>570</sup> Soloviev, *The Heart of Reality*, p. 108.

the former, *Eros* generates as phenomenal reproduction in an endless yet mortal series of material reproductions; in the higher, *Eros* can generate neither in the phenomenal sphere, nor in the noumenal sphere, for which there can be no reproduction, but only at their boundary in beauty. Yet Plato fails to define the nature of this generation or birth in beauty, which for Solovyov represents the eschatological spiritualization of matter. Furthermore, in the German philologist-philosopher Nietzsche, the idea of the Superman, the *Übermensch*, was raised: more negatively in Solovyov's sardonic rebuke in his Sunday Letter "Literature or Truth" as the perverted counterfeit of Christ as well as a prefigurement of the Antichrist, but more positively in "The Idea of a Superman" as a distorted yet true yearning for higher being, which can only be located in "the rebirth of a mortal and suffering man into an immortal and blessed superman."<sup>571</sup> In each case, in Plato and Nietzsche, there is a failure to transition to the task of the spiritualization of nature, to divine-humanity. For his part Plato contented himself to the ideal world leaving the natural world untransformed. "The fateful erotic ruin of the philosopher of love could consist only in the fact that while approaching this task in contemplation, he halted before it, did not resolve to understand and apply it fully, and of course later, in fact, he also rejected it."<sup>572</sup> And for his part Nietzsche, in a more sinister fashion, erected a false substitute for true superman and the divine-human task of the immortalization of humanity.

Generalizing the development of his eschatology, it can be said that, in critical engagement with the pessimist voluntarism of Hartmann, Solovyov was led to construct an idealist eschatology, not unlike Eriugena's, and that following this, echoing the positive voluntarist tradition of Boehme and Schelling, he discovered within divine Wisdom, a material substrate of the future world and of its eschatological spiritualization. Furthermore, in his negotiation with Platonism and Nietzscheism, as well as aesthetic and relational beauty, which demand the objective materialization of natural form and of the beloved, he passed from one-sided idealism to the idea of spiritual-material unity. If then Solovyov overcame a perceived one-sided tendency in his own thought, it is just this diverse tendency to one-sidedness of pessimistic voluntarism, of Platonism, and of the counterfeit superman of Nietzscheism, that, in one of his Sunday Letters, he identifies as the fatal error at the root of all heresies.

---

<sup>571</sup> V.S. Soloviev, trans. Vladimir Wozniuk, *Politics, Law, and Mortality: Essays by V.S. Soloviev* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 262.

<sup>572</sup> Soloviev, *Politics, Law, and Mortality*, p. 245.

What expresses perfected truth? Is it pagan dualism, the hostile opposition of God to the world, heaven to earth, the soul to material existence, or the Christian idea of unity of these oppositions through the incarnation of the Divine in humanity, of the heavenly in the earthly, of the spiritual in the material? The directly linear and unilateral striving toward heaven is a Platonic, Neoplatonic, and gnostic ideal, but in no way Orthodox-Christian. All so called heresies were and are reduced to the abolition of the God-man, the heavenly-earth, and spiritually-material all unity and wholeness.<sup>573</sup>

Having traced the general contours of the development of Solovyov's eschatology, there is an important observation that can be made. If the idea of the spiritualization of matter is, for Solovyov, a conclusion at which Solovyov seems to arrive through a number of different avenues, it never appears to form his point of departure. Thus, in contrast to Swedenborg's voluminous writings on the spirit world and the nature of heaven and hell on the basis of his otherworldly experiences, and Schelling's speculative development of his ideas in *Clara*, Solovyov only approaches the point from which his influential guides began. Consequently, if the general principles of eschatology are the terminus of his thought regarding the final things, his concrete ideas regarding the spiritualization of matter remain largely undeveloped. It is difficult, then, to wrest a glimmer of vision from out of the mists of Solovyov's eschatology. What does the spiritualization of matter signify for Solovyov? His explicit determinations of the idea of the spiritualization of matter are left in a terse and left embryonic state, but it is important to set forth a few of his statements in order to see the way in which his later eschatology is directed towards the spiritualization of matter, and what this might signify.

False spirituality is a denial of the flesh; true spirituality is its regeneration, redemption, and resurrection.<sup>574</sup>

Since the process whereby the universe attains perfection is the process of manifesting God in man, it must also be the process of manifesting God in matter.<sup>575</sup>

The positive connection of the graduated kingdoms shows itself in the fact that each type includes or embraces the lower types within itself—and the higher it is, the more fully it does so. The world-process may thus be said to be the process of *gathering the universe together*, as well as of developing and perfecting it.<sup>576</sup>

The highest end of man as such (pure man) and of the human world is to *gather the universe together in thought*. The end of the God-man and of the Kingdom of God is to gather the universe together *in reality*.<sup>577</sup>

At the end of it [the world-process], the Kingdom of God does not, when it appears, abolish the lower types of existence, but puts them all into their right place, no longer as separate

---

<sup>573</sup> Soloviev, *Politics, Law, and Mortality* p. 90.

<sup>574</sup> Soloviev, *The Heart of Reality*, p. 116.

<sup>575</sup> Vladimir Solovyov, trans. Nathalie A. Duddington, *Justification of the Good: An Essay on Moral Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), p. 158.

<sup>576</sup> Solovyov, *Justification of the Good*, p. 165.

<sup>577</sup> Solovyov, *Justification of the Good*, p. 165.

spheres of existence but as the spiritually-physical organs of a *collected* universe, bound together by an absolute inner unity and interaction.<sup>578</sup>

Our regeneration is indissolubly linked with the regeneration of the universe, with the reorganization of its forms of space and time. A true life of individuality, in its full and unconditional significance, is realized and immortalized only in the corresponding development of universal life, in which we can and must actively participate, but which is not created by us. Our personal concerns, insofar as they are true, are the common concern of the whole world—the realization and individualization of the all-unity Idea and the spiritualization of matter.<sup>579</sup>

We can consider two points from these terse and laconic excerpts. First, in contrast to his early thought, eschatology has to do with the realization of Divinity within corporeality, the spiritualization of matter, not its anti-spiritual rejection. Second, the spiritualization of matter constitutes an ingathering of the discordant elements and grades of the universe together into an absolute unity, into a universal organism that transcends the present divisions of nature. The God-man, who as the Logos is the universal center of creation, is the Archimedean point in which the universe is to be gathered and harmonized. Furthermore, Solovyov is adamant that neither individuality nor the differing grades of existence are abolished in this ingathering, but are rather indispensable for the universal all-unity of the eschatological state.

Beyond these abstract but vatic statements, Solovyov does not venture. His thoughts are pregnant, but he leaves their birth to others. Accordingly, it is difficult to discern the nature of the eschatological state Solovyov envisions when he writes of the manifestation of Divinity in matter and of the ingathering of the universe into an absolute unity. His thought admits of various interpretations due to the brevity and incompleteness of his eschatological speculations. One could interpret his eschatology along Eriugenian lines—the absorption of the lower into the higher—so that the ingathering of the universe into the God-Man does away with *any* notion of spatio-temporality, of distinction and delineation. Indeed, in his *Lectures* and in *Russia and the Universal Church*, Solovyov regards space and time as principles of segregation and disunity, but in his later thought there has been an apparent shift in which he posits the “reorganization of...[the] forms of space and time.” Accordingly, the ingathering of lower types into the higher types is for Solovyov, a gathering of all things into an organic unity, into an organism, and need not be interpreted as an ontological absorption of the lower into the higher in the way it is for Eriugena. Solovyov’s eschatology is explicitly directed towards the spiritualization and transfiguration of matter.<sup>580</sup> This tendency is the

---

<sup>578</sup> Solovyov, *Justification of the Good*, p. 165.

<sup>579</sup> Solovyov, *The Heart of Reality*, p. 126

<sup>580</sup> This interpretation agrees with a central topic of Oliver Smith’s important study, *Vladimir Soloviev and the Spiritualization of Matter*.

very opposite of Eriugena's idealism, and it was just this idealist tendency that Solovyov repudiated in his *Life Drama of Plato*, and, as we have seen, in many of his later works. Nevertheless, because Solovyov left his eschatological thought in a very incomplete state, it is probably a pointless and futile endeavor to attempt to extract a full eschatological vision from his fragmentary statements on the subject. Accordingly, it is perhaps best to regard his scattered and undeveloped ideas as a point of departure for further thought, as raw material and inspiration for a more developed eschatology. This much is certain: Solovyov's thought bears a deeply eschatological orientation, an unstoppable inertia that leaves the reader desirous of a more systematic treatment on his themes of the material substrate in Sophia and of the spiritualization of matter. And it is Sergius Bulgakov, who regarded Solovyov as his guide, who constructed a more developed cosmic eschatology on sophiological principles.

*B. Bulgakov: Spiritual Bodies: The Transfiguration of the World and Resurrection*

Having argued that Solovyov's later concept of Sophia, as the ground and goal of the cosmic process, as both primal-material potential as well as eschatological apotheosis, lays down a positive ontological foundation for eschatology, we must now turn to see how Bulgakov developed a fuller account of the spiritualization of matter on the basis of Sophia. As we have been arguing throughout this work, Bulgakov's sophiological concept of God as a divine-human Organism is at the center of his theological originality. By positing within God—conceived as eternal *theanthropos*—a “corporeal” principle, a divine body or world, Bulgakov was able to address complex theological problems in a profound and novel manner. Just as Sophia is the heavenly foundation for the matter of earth, as well as of the incarnation of Divinity in it, so also is Sophia, in connection with the human spirit and the divine Spirit, the latent basis of the spiritualization of the world. From beginning to end Bulgakov's sophiology is a theology of the body, of embodiment and incarnation, and accordingly his eschatology is deeply rooted in this fundamental outlook. Just as Sophia is the beginning of creation, its protological ground, so also does Sophia contain a premonition of its end, of the eschatological realization of divine wisdom in matter.

Bulgakov's eschatology was set down in the final volume of his major trilogy, *The Bride of the Lamb*. Although he treats several themes of eschatology, we will limit our focus to those which deal directly with the spiritualization of matter: the transformation of the world and the resurrection of the dead.<sup>581</sup> These themes will be treated in turn. In what

---

<sup>581</sup> One of the more important ideas in connection with Bulgakov's elaborate eschatology is that of kenosis, or rather the end of the kenosis of the divine dyad of Word and Spirit, which brings about the consummation of the

follows, it will be argued that Sophia, mediated through the voluntarist tradition, provides Bulgakov an alternative and perhaps even more favorable ontology for Christian eschatology than preceding intellectual frameworks. Concerning the first theme, it will be shown how Bulgakov develops a fuller sophiological basis for eschatological transfiguration of the world, which was left largely undeveloped in Solovyov. Specifically, we will consider the ground of the spiritualization of matter in its connection with the human spirit and the Divine Spirit, or humanity and Divine-humanity. Concerning the latter theme, it will be shown how this sophiological ontology of the spiritualization of matter is applied to the resurrection. Particularly, Bulgakov's sophiology will be brought into conversation with Aquinas and Duns Scotus concerning the topic of the resurrection in order to demonstrate that Bulgakov's privileging the spirit-matter identity philosophy of Schelling provides him with a productive alternative to Platonist and Aristotelian ontologies for exploring the foundation of the spiritualization of matter. However, it will also be argued that Bulgakov departs from Schelling's identity philosophy in significant ways, harboring within his sophiology a residual Platonic dualism and a rejection of Schelling's view of the afterlife for a more traditionalist one.

If for Eriugena the end represents a resolution of the world into the divine Mind, for the Russian Sophiologists it is the realization of divine Wisdom in matter, the *apokatastasis ton panton*. It has been shown that, in his later thought, Solovyov identifies Sophia as the positive foundation of the material order. Within Sophia there is a meonal potentiality, a primal material substrate of the world, which is its protological ground, while Sophia is the eternal content to be realized in it. With this Solovyov's sophiology acquires a positive ontological basis for the eschatological spiritualization of matter. This idea is developed further by Bulgakov, though in his own original way. If in Solovyov the transfiguration of the world represents the realization of divine Wisdom in matter, or the spiritualization of matter,

---

kingdom of God in the world. Although Bulgakov's theory of kenosis in its relation to eschatology is highly original, I have left it out of discussion. Matthew K. Thompson has utilized Bulgakov's kenotic eschatology in his work *Kingdom Come: Revisioning Pentecostal Eschatology* (Blandford Forum, UK: Deo Publishing, 2010), chapters 6-8. On kenosis in Bulgakov in relation to Christ's death see T. Allan Smith, "Sergii Bulgakov's 'Sofologiia smerti.'" *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 2017, Vol.70 (4), pp. 453-457; see also Lilianna Kiejzik, "Sergei Bulgakov's Sophiology of Death." *Studies in East European Thought*, 2010, Vol.62 (1), pp. 55-62. Another intriguing theme that must be left untreated here is Bulgakov's universalism. For a discussion see especially Paul Gavrilyuk, "Universal Salvation in the Eschatology of Sergius Bulgakov." *Journal of Theological Studies*, 2006, Vol. 57 (1), pp. 110-132; see also Robert F. Slesinski, *The Theology of Sergius Bulgakov* (Yonkers, NY: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press: 2017), ch. 16. The most remarkable recent defense of universalism is David Bentley Hart's *That All Shall be Saved* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019.). Though Hart's ideas show a clear affinity with Bulgakov in many respects, his explicit interaction with Bulgakov is limited; see p. 195.

in Bulgakov this idea is given further clarification by his fuller characterization of the relation between spirit and matter. This is because there is a sharper distinction in Bulgakov between the impersonal and the personal, between non-hypostatic Sophia and hypostatic spirit; and it will be seen that the spiritualization of matter concerns its relation both to the human spirit and the divine-human Spirit. We can deal with this theme briefly since we have considered Bulgakov's grounding of corporeality in Sophia in previous chapters, and because Bulgakov deals principally with the ontological ground of the world transfiguration rather than speculating on the eschatological state in itself.

It has been argued throughout this work in connection with various theological themes that Bulgakov's concept of Sophia is not anthropological and incorporeal as in the early Solovyov, but is an impersonal and essential principle alike to a divine body or divine world wherein the divine Spirit manifests itself. Sophia, as a quasi-corporeality in God, is the foundation of the physical order, both its creation and its regeneration: Sophia is an impersonal and corporeal principle which in its unconscious striving evolves the hierarchical chain of being. Furthermore, Sophia, at its natural peak, is both the local body of humanity, as well as its peripheral body (nature), which was to receive its elevation and spiritualization through humanity, who instead fell into the natural, evolutionary cycle. Finally, Sophia is the ground of the Incarnation, of the ontological analogy between divine and human natures whereby Divine and creaturely Sophia are united in the Son. There are two important ideas here: the spiritualization of matter in connection with the human spirit, and in connection with the divine-human Spirit. These ideas require further elaboration because the relation of spirit and nature is foundational to Bulgakov's general sophiological theory and plays an important role in his eschatology. Concerning the former, it will be shown how there is a prefiguration of the spiritualization of nature in eternity. Just as the divine-human Organism eternally actualizes itself in Sophia as its integral life, its divine body and world, so also is humanity to actualize its highest potential by eternalizing itself in nature, creaturely Sophia, thereby raising nature into imperishability. Concerning the latter, it will be shown how the spiritualization of the world achieves its consummation in connection with the Incarnation of divine-human Spirit in it.

In order to understand how Divine Sophia prefigures the eschatological spiritualization of matter, it is important to recall the essential connection between spirit and nature, personal and impersonal being in Bulgakov's thought. In his theandric sophiology, God is comprised of both personal triadic Spirit as well impersonal nature, or Sophia. Sophia

is not self-subsistent, which would amount to materialism, or to an impersonal voluntarism, since Sophia is an impersonal, corporeal principle. Sophia subsists eternally in its connection with divine Spirit. She is the non-hypostatic organ or medium of the tri-hypostatic Spirit's manifestation. Neither can divine Spirit subsist apart from Sophia, its vital nature, which would amount to abstract idealism. The divine Spirit eternally lives in Sophia whereby it dwells in the highest bliss and absolute unity. The divine life is thus a living unity of Spirit and nature, and there is within God what can be analogically considered an original spiritual-corporeal unity. It is important here to reiterate the Boehmian-Schellingian spirit-nature philosophy that stands in the background of Bulgakov's sophiological concept of spiritual-material unity. In Schelling's philosophy, as in Boehme's, God has an eternal ground, a nature in which God as Subject is revealed and which is its objective life. Likewise, for Bulgakov, though he rejects the priority of the impersonal as a primal *Urgottheit*, an unforethinkable abyss out of which God arises,<sup>582</sup> he recognizes within God an impersonal divine nature, or sophianic world, which is eternally actualized by divine Spirit. In his *Philosophy of Economy*, Bulgakov's most enthusiastic appropriation of Schelling, he sees Schelling's spirit-nature identity philosophy as the crucial, intellectual framework for the economic process, with its aim of world transfiguration, as well as for Christian theology generally as it concerns the relation of spirit and nature. Despite the pantheistic monism of Schelling's early identity philosophy, his profound idea consists in the fact that spirit and nature are ontologically continuous, two inseparable sides of reality. In fact for Schelling nature just is arrested spirit and spirit is nature that has returned to itself. Everything in the universe is spiritual-material, and the universal process is for Schelling the spiritualization of nature, the realization of the subjective side of being in the objective.

Schelling expressed one of the fundamental truths of Christianity in the philosophical language of his time. For Christianity is equally far from materialism and subjective idealism; it removes the contradiction between flesh and spirit in its teaching of man as *spirit incarnate*, the living unity of both. In this sense, Christianity is also a philosophy of identity... Neither Platonism nor Neoplatonism, viewing the body as an envelope for the soul or as a dungeon for it, nor the new idealism, which turns flesh into a subjective image, can know the unity of spirit and flesh that Christianity teaches.<sup>583</sup>

---

<sup>582</sup> On Bulgakov's critique of Boehme's theology of the *Ungrund*, see *Unfading Light*, 172-173; *The Lamb of God*, 97, 134. Though Bulgakov is correct to ascribe priority to the impersonal in Boehme, it should nevertheless be cautioned that Boehme's schema of theogonic process is a logical not an actual one, and therefore an eternal process that precludes time and change. On this see Hans Martensen, trans. T. Rhys Evans, *Jacob Boehme, His Life and Teaching, or, Studies in Theosophy* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1885), pp. 74-76.

<sup>583</sup> Sergei Bulgakov, trans. Catherine Evtuhov, *Philosophy of Economy: The World as Household* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 87-88.

Over against a Platonic philosophy for which matter and the body represent an antithesis to spirit, Boehme's sophiological voluntarism mediated through Schelling's identity philosophy provisioned Sophiology with an ontological framework arguably far more favorable to the Christian narrative of the redemption of the physical order (though one through which Platonic exemplarism could be preserved and given a new and dynamic interpretation). This ontology of spirit-matter identity or spiritual-material unity, with its eternal roots sunk in the depths of Divinity, is the ontological foundation of creation's deification.

This living unity of Spirit and nature in God is the dynamic ground of eschatology, for creation in Bulgakov is a finite reduplication of the Infinite. As was seen in the chapter on creation, the human spirit is derived from the divine Spirit, and the world soul or nature is derived from Divine Sophia or the divine nature. Furthermore, it was observed in the chapter on the fall that humanity was to be the spiritual center of nature that it might transcend the evolutionary struggle and be elevated into its eschatological unity with God. Accordingly, Bulgakov underscores the essential role of humanity in the transfiguration of the world. The world is to be hominized, such that creaturely Sophia, which was left without an organizing hypostatic center in the fall, is restored to its proper hypostatic state in the eschaton. Creaturely Sophia, or the world soul, ontologically depends upon humanity for its eschatological transfiguration.

In its causality, the life of the world normally includes not only cosmic and natural elements but also a "spiritual causality" And only the self-blindedness of materialism considers the world to be merely material in nature. In fact, it is spiritually material. This spiritual causality enters into the natural world through the spiritual world (for it is in the guardianship of the holy angels) and through its connection with man. However, man himself, together with the spiritual world, is open to the action of grace, of the divine spirit, who always, although imperceptibly, acts upon the world with a spiritually transfiguring power. Through this link with the spirit the world is saved from its deistic isolation from God, from self-enclosedness and self-sufficiency.<sup>584</sup>

The unity and tranquility of creation lies in its hypostatic center, humanity. The world is in a state of decay and corruptibility insofar as it is cut off from spirit and recalcitrant to it. It is only by becoming spirit-bearing that it can be delivered from its "bondage to corruption." The material creation is redeemed precisely by overcoming the boundary between hypostatic and non-hypostatic being. The instinctive blindness of the world soul is a preliminary state that corresponds with its non-hypostatic condition; the world soul is saved by being spiritualized, by being rendered permeable and transparent to spirit so that creation casts off

---

<sup>584</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, pp. 401-402.

its heavy and recalcitrant character in order to become the organ of spirit and to manifest the life of spirit in fullness.

Applied to the world soul, this idea [the sophianization of the world] means that this soul, as the substance of the world, loses its instinctive and psychical character, and acquires spirituality through man, is humanized in him.<sup>585</sup>

While preserving its reality and its identity, the world soul will stop being closed to the spirit. It will even stop having a certain dominion over the spirit, but instead will become obedient to it, transparent to it. It will conform to the spirit.<sup>586</sup>

The spiritualization or hominization of the natural world, the overcoming of the boundary between spirit and nature, does not suggest the eradication the impersonal element of nature, or the one-sided resolution of nature into spirit. We have seen previously that whereas in Solovyov's *Lectures*, the diversity of biological forms that comprise the grades of nature appear only as evolutionary instruments for the rebirth and acosmic ascent of Sophia as eternal humanity, in Bulgakov (and in the later Solovyov) Sophia contains within itself all the forms that are to be realized in the world. Sophia is both the material foundation of nature, as well its ideal content. Nature is therefore not an instrument for spirit whereby it may ultimately take flight from it, but represents the realization of divine wisdom in matter, of Divine Sophia in creaturely Sophia. For Bulgakov then, the eschaton does not represent an idealist involution of the grades of nature into divine Mind as in Eriugena, or into the incorporeal divine world as in the early Solovyov, but the spiritualization of material nature. The eschaton is not the extinction of the biological forms produced in the evolution of nature; it is not a supercession of nature, but a change in regards to its state.

Not only is the world not abolished as something unnecessary (as it might appear to some), but it even enters into its glory and preserves its original connection with man, who retains his dominant place in the glorified world. The end of the world does not lead to acosmism or anticasmism with the disincarnation of man and his separation from the world. On the contrary, the glory of the resurrection and the power of incorruptibility extend to the world too.<sup>587</sup>

If the spiritualization of matter is grounded in the connection of the human spirit to nature, which is a replica of the integral unity of the divine Spirit and the divine nature, it is also true for Bulgakov that the transfiguration of the world ultimately depends upon its connection to the divine-human Spirit. The creaturely Sophia is not only open to hypostasization by humanity, but by Divine-humanity.

---

<sup>585</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 424.

<sup>586</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 425.

<sup>587</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 519.

After the Incarnation the entire world becomes Christ's receptacle, belongs to His humanity.<sup>588</sup>

In Divine-humanity, through the Incarnation of the Son and the descent of the Holy Spirit, the world and man have received the fullness of sophianization. The Divine Sophia has united with the creaturely Sophia; creation has been completely deified in the union of the two natures in Christ by the Holy Spirit.<sup>589</sup>

The union of Divine and creaturely Sophia is the goal of the created order. Like the union of the divine natures in Christ, the union of God and creation, of Divine and creaturely Sophia, is a union that is without separation or confusion. "The creaturely Sophia will become the perfectly transparent revelation of the Divine Sophia and will become identified with the Divine Sophia... while preserving forever her creatureliness and her proper extradivine being."<sup>590</sup> The world is made to receive God within it and to be united to the divine life; union, however, presupposes the preservation of distinction, apart from which the process of creation would be reduced to no more than a moment in a totalizing pan-monism. Bulgakov's sophiology is neither pantheistic nor acosmic, but a theology of beauty wherein creation does not constitute a tragic declension from the Absolute, but rather a gratuitous, aesthetic expression of God who grants what is other a share in the freedom of divine all-blissfulness. Its destiny then is neither a slow decay into cosmic death as for contemporary science, nor a lethal absorption back into its source, as in the dreadful *Philosophy of the Unconscious* of Eduard von Hartmann. Instead, the outcome for creation is far more glorious. Bulgakov explains that when creation's dross is burned up in the divine fire, the created order itself and all that is good in it will be eternalized and preserved in its proper being.

All the things of the world that are unworthy of being eternalized, all that is illusory and nonsophianic in it, will burn up; and its sophianic image will shine forth in such a way that the creaturely Sophia will become the perfectly transparent revelation of the Divine Sophia and will become identified with the Divine Sophia in this unity of image, while preserving forever her creatureliness and her proper extradivine being. This means that, with reference to the creaturely world, "God will be all in all."<sup>591</sup>

We have seen in this section that Bulgakov develops the idea of the spiritualization of matter in his own unique manner: the transfiguration of the world is founded upon the dynamic relation between spirit and matter or hypostasis and nature. The material order is open to spiritual agency, to hypostasization not only by the human spirit but also to divine Spirit, by humanity and Divine-humanity. With this clarification of the idea of the spiritualization of matter, Bulgakov develops a positive ontological foundation for the

---

<sup>588</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 423.

<sup>589</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 403.

<sup>590</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 424.

<sup>591</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 424.

transfiguration of the world. However, although he posits an eschatological cosmology of the conformity of the outer cosmos to inner spirit, he does not proceed to develop this principle into a speculative, systematic account of the eschatological state in itself. In contrast to Swedenborg, Schelling and the spiritualism movement, Russian Sophiology did not attempt to describe what the higher, spiritual state is like.<sup>592</sup> Nonetheless, we can consider how Bulgakov applies his eschatological ontology to the theme of resurrection, and it is to this topic which we will now turn.

We saw previously that the spiritualization of matter or transfiguration of the world is grounded in the integral relation of spirit and matter, in the human spirit's and divine-human Spirit's ontological capacity to hominize creaturely Sophia. We can now explore how Bulgakov applies this ontology to the resurrection. In what follows it will be argued that Bulgakov's utilization of Schelling's spirit-nature identity philosophy allows him to develop a productive alternative to preceding theologies of the resurrection, which utilized Platonist and Aristotelian ontologies. In order to demonstrate this, Bulgakov will be brought into conversation with Aquinas and Scotus. Nevertheless, it will also be shown that there is a residual dualism in Bulgakov's sophiological ontology of the human anatomy, which comes to the fore in his concept of the afterlife.

If the transfiguration of the world depends upon the connection of spirit and nature, and reflects the eternal unity of Spirit and nature in God, so too the resurrection of humanity is conceived on this eternal basis as a reconstitution of the human essence, a reintegration of its spiritual and natural principles. As we have seen in the chapter on the fall, original sin represents for Bulgakov an ontological upheaval of the human constitution, a false subordination of the human spirit to its nature, which results in the enslavement of the spirit to nature and the eventual separation of spirit and body in death. For Bulgakov death, as an ontological disintegration of the human essence, results from this inordinate reversal in the anthropological essence, for in its fall the spirit lost its capacity to unify the natural forces of its life whereby it might bestow immortality upon it. The immortal body of humanity was thereby exchanged for a carnal and corruptible one. "The psychic body, by contrast, is a darkened and distorted image, and the psychic man is diminished to enslavement by the flesh

---

<sup>592</sup> In the following section we will see that Bulgakov does describe the afterlife state, though, generally speaking, his concept of the state in the afterlife is disconnected from eschatology. The former is for Bulgakov an unnatural state, one lower than earthly life in its disincarnate, bodilessness, instead of a higher state wherein the spiritual side of the body becomes manifest as in Swedenborg and Schelling.

and the loss of his human image.”<sup>593</sup> Resurrection, therefore, represents the reintegration of the spiritual and natural principles of the human essence as well as the restoration of the proper “hierarchy” between them.

According to the Christian faith, resurrection is first of all the quickening of the body and its union with the spirit. It is *bodily* resurrection... In this sense, resurrection is an apocatastasis; a human being is re-created in his original form, consisting of a soul and a body.<sup>594</sup>

The spirituality of the body signifies, first of all, the power of the spirit over its soul and its animated body, the transparency of the body for the spirit and its obedience to the latter. In general, it signifies the adequacy of man to his idea or proto-image... This restores the hierarchy of the human tripartite composition that was disfigured by the fall of man, “corrupted by passions.”<sup>595</sup>

If resurrection represents the reintegration of spirit and body, we must look into the ultimate basis of the incarnation of spirit in matter, of the pneuma-corporeal unity of the human organism in the Divine-human Organism. As we have seen in various places throughout this work, the integration of spirit and body has its ontological foundation in the unity of Spirit and nature in God. It is important here to recall one final time that for Bulgakov, who stands in the tradition of Boehme and Schelling, God is not a pure intelligence, but a living Organism. Sophia is in God a non-hypostatic principle of life, an impersonal and essential principle, which forms the body of Divinity.

It is usual to define spirit in general, and the divine Spirit in particular, by the negative notion of *incorporeality*, as a being without a body. This is to take for granted that the body is simply the principle directly opposed to spirit.<sup>596</sup>

This self-revelation [of the divine Spirit in the sophianic Dyad of Wisdom and Glory]... can with greater truth be compared with or interpreted as the real prototype or exemplar cause of human self-revelation through the body.<sup>597</sup>

Over against Platonic philosophy for which matter and the body represent an antithesis to spirit, Bulgakov posits an original, pneuma-“corporeal” unity in God. It follows from this sophiological ontology that spirit and matter are not opposed principles, but are natural correlatives, each implying the other. Herein lies the ontological foundation of the resurrection of all flesh. Resurrection is grounded in the ontological continuity between spirit and matter, hypostasis and nature. The creation of the human body as hypostasized creaturely Sophia, on the basis of the heavenly corporeality of Divine Sophia, entails its primordial goodness and its eschatological restoration. Just as the body has a divine Source, it also has a divine end in resurrection. Consequently, it is not this carnal, decaying body which is an

---

<sup>593</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 448.

<sup>594</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 435.

<sup>595</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 448.

<sup>596</sup> Bulgakov, trans. Patrick Thompson, O. Fielding Clarke, Xenia Braikevite, *Sophia: The Wisdom of God: An Outline of Sophiology* (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1993), p. 57.

<sup>597</sup> Bulgakov, *Sophia*, p. 57.

integral expression of the divine-human Organism, but the immortal, spiritual body. “The very expression “spiritual body,” far from being a contradiction in terms or a paradox, corresponds to the prime exemplar of the body, which has its prototype in the Wisdom and Glory of God.”<sup>598</sup> In other words, Sophia, as the “exemplar” of the “spiritual body,” contains within itself an ontological prophecy of the resurrection. Sophia is the divine ideal, the glory of God, which the carnal body falls short of and which will be realized in its resurrection as a spiritual body. It is on this basis that there must be a resurrection, an assumption of a spiritual body. “If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body (1 Cor. 15:44).”

Because the resurrected, spiritual body for Bulgakov has its ontological foundation in Sophia, in the ontological continuity of hypostasis and nature in God, their transparency for one another and indissoluble union, it arguably improves on prior theological tradition, which did not have such a firm metaphysical basis for its elucidation of the doctrine of the resurrection. The upshot for Sophiology is that it has an ontological precedent for the resurrection, not simply in the resurrection of Christ, but in the nature of reality itself. Sophiology is not left defenseless to the charge of divine voluntarism. For Bulgakov the spiritual body is the ectype of divine Sophia. Because God is eternally realized in Sophia, the divine body, the spiritual body can be regarded as natural to humanity and the carnal body, which ends in mortal disembodiment, as unnatural. For prior theological tradition, there was not such a strong ontological pedigree for the body or for its resurrection.

We can establish this claim by briefly considering the metaphysical rationale for resurrection according to two major medieval theologians, Aquinas and Duns Scotus. First, we can consider St. Thomas Aquinas’ view of the resurrection. For Thomas, apart from the resurrection of Christ,<sup>599</sup> the ontological foundation for resurrection is the hylomorphic relation to body and soul, the union of matter and form. Aquinas’ ontology of the resurrection is thus grounded in the philosophy of Aristotle. For Aquinas, as for Aristotle, there is a natural disposition or potency of matter to form, of the body to the soul, the latter which constitutes the body’s essential form. The conspicuous consequence however, of defining the soul as the essential form of the body, is that the form must pass away with the body in death. How can something that is the *essential* form of the body persist after the latter’s death? “Prima facie, it is extremely hard to see how something that is essentially the form of a body

---

<sup>598</sup> Bulgakov, *Sophia*, p. 58.

<sup>599</sup> See Aquinas, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, *The Summa Theologica of Saint Thomas Aquinas* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1920), Supplement, q. 76, a. 1, ad 1.

could survive without that body.”<sup>600</sup> Consistent with his own hylomorphic theory, Aristotle appears to have denied immortality to the soul,<sup>601</sup> as the form of the body, the soul cannot subsist apart from it in a disincarnate state. In order to overcome this untenable consequence Aquinas modifies Aristotle’s definition of the soul, which is understood as an “inclination” to be the essential form of the body.<sup>602</sup> This amendment enables Aquinas to detach the soul’s existence from the body. Aquinas thus introduces a Platonic element into the Aristotelian hylomorphic theory whereby the soul, due to its incorporeality, is capable of surviving the death of the body. “Aquinas argues that the soul’s immateriality is sufficient for its immortality.”<sup>603</sup> Nevertheless, Aquinas’ Platonic amendment does not undercut his overriding Aristotelianism. The soul is still inclined to be the form of the body such that the disincarnate state is unnatural, and anything unnatural, according to Aristotle, cannot be perpetual. As soul and body are integrally related; the true prosperity of the soul could only be found in its reunion with the body. In the resurrected state the soul will preside over the over the body in complete dominion so as to render it impassable and immortal, for having become “immutably subject to God,”<sup>604</sup> the soul’s form will hold the body fast to itself and render it incorruptible.<sup>605</sup>

The Angelic Doctor therefore presents a coherent metaphysical basis for the resurrection. Arguably, however, it is not nearly as strong as that posited by Sophiology, for this hylomorphic ontology has no metaphysical foundation in Divinity.<sup>606</sup> In fact Aquinas’ ontology of intelligences would seem to militate against such a divine foundation for resurrection. For Aquinas intelligences, God and the angels, are the loftiest, most supreme, and perfect beings.

More goods are better than fewer goods, provided however that each is of the same order; nevertheless that which has the perfection of its goodness in one, as God does, is far better than that which has its goodness dispersed in different parts; and in keeping with this an angel

---

<sup>600</sup> Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 77.

<sup>601</sup> Ed. Jonathan Barnes, Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle, Vol. 1* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), *On the Soul*, Bk. II, 414.20ff. Another passage in *De Anima*, Bk. III.4-5, suggests that the agent intellect does indeed subsist apart from the body and is immortal and eternal. This passage has been a source of contention because it is not clear whether or not the agent intellect is one in all human souls or multiple. If it is one, such as in the understanding of Averroes, who was a channel of Aristotle to the medieval world, individual immortality is precluded; such a conclusion was obviously untenable for Aquinas and many other medieval theologians. Aquinas addresses this question in *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 76, a. 2; q. 79, a. 5.

<sup>602</sup> See *Summa Theologica*: I, q. 76, a. 1. ad 6.

<sup>603</sup> Cross, *Duns Scotus*, p. 77.

<sup>604</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, q. 82. a. 1. ad 2.

<sup>605</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, q. 82. a. 1. ad 2-3.

<sup>606</sup> There is, however, for Aquinas, a foundation in the soul however. The soul is the “form” and “art” of the body according to Aquinas, and pre-contains in itself all that the body is outwardly. See *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, q. 80. a. 1.

who is pure spirit according to its nature is superior to man who is composed of body and spirit.<sup>607</sup>

If incorporeality is a greater good than corporeality, why should the incorporeal soul have a natural disposition towards matter? Why should its natural telos be union with the body? If incorporeal intelligence, which characterizes the supernal nature of God and the blessed angels,<sup>608</sup> is ontologically a superior mode of being, why are there material bodies in the first place, and why should they be resurrected? In answer to these questions it can be said that in Aquinas' general outlook corporeal creation is necessary for the hierarchical expression of God's goodness which is manifested in the contrast of creatures, spanning the subhuman levels of corporeal creation, humanity, which stands at the interface of the material and spiritual worlds, and the angelic incorporeal realm. Nonetheless, there is arguably a sense in which these questions can have no ultimate answer in Aquinas, for as the material lacks a sufficient basis in God, how is it that the material expresses God who is incorporeal intelligence? And perhaps this is why there exists an idealistic tendency in Aquinas' eschatology. With Bonaventure and others,<sup>609</sup> St. Thomas denies that mineral, vegetal, and animal bodies, precisely because they lack the rational element whereby they can contemplate God, will not partake in the renewal of the world.<sup>610</sup> Arguably, this is the logical conclusion of conceiving ultimate reality as pure intelligence. There is thus a real tension in Aquinas' ontology—an ontology which he inherited and which was widespread in medieval theology—a tension between Platonist idealism and Aristotelian hylomorphism, which remain in creative balance in the Angelic Doctor's immense system. Nevertheless, these ontologies which stress the absolute reality as intelligible, as self-thinking thought, arguably cannot provision a sufficient ontological foundation for embodiment and resurrection.

We can now turn briefly to Duns Scotus whose ontology of the resurrection is arguably far weaker than Aquinas'. Like his Dominican counterpart God is conceived as pure, incorporeal intelligence, such that there is also for him no ultimate, ontological foundation for the creation and redemption of matter. But whereas St. Thomas could have

---

<sup>607</sup> Trans. John and Jean Oesterle, *On Evil: St. Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dam, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), q. 16, a. 1, ad 13. Aquinas does however suggest that humans can attain to the rank of angels by grace. See *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 108, a. 8.

<sup>608</sup> In *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, q. 75 a. 1, ad 4, Aquinas argues that resurrection is preferable to disembodiment, for although God and the angels are incorporeal it is of the nature of the human soul to be embodied.

<sup>609</sup> See trans. Dominic V. Monti, O.F.M., *Works of St. Bonaventure: Volume IX: Breviloquium* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005), 7.4.7, where Bonaventure argues that in the world to come vegetative and sensitive beings will be preserved only *ideally*, "as ideas," but not in reality.

<sup>610</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, q. 91, a. 5.

recourse to an anthropological argument via Aristotle, Scotus is left without such a stronghold. The fundamental weakness of Scotus' ontology, *vis-à-vis* Aquinas, is that he diverges from an Aristotelian hylomorphic ontology and views the body and soul relation in much more Platonic,<sup>611</sup> and thus more dualistic, terms. In Scotus' ontology there is no integral connection of body and soul, but only an accidental one. For Scotus, unlike Aquinas, the soul is not the *essential* form of the body, or at least an inclination to be the body's essential form, because for him the body has its own form in addition to the form of the soul; therefore, the soul is merely an *accidental* form of the body. Accordingly, the soul, for Scotus, is a sufficient and perfect substance unto itself apart from the body.<sup>612</sup> In the thought of the Subtle Doctor "the union of the soul to the body is at best an accidental state of affairs, and hence cannot be an essential perfection of the soul."<sup>613</sup> The repercussion of all of this is that there is no ontological ground for either embodiment or resurrection, and therefore his theology of the resurrection is one that is voluntaristic and probabilistic. Indeed Scotus is clear that no philosophical demonstrations of the resurrection are possible, and puts forth only plausible arguments.<sup>614</sup> For Scotus, the reality of resurrection is then primarily an article of faith and not the conclusion of philosophical reason; it is not grounded in ontology but divine will.

In summation then, Aquinas and Scotus manifest the difficulties theological thought is presented with in attempting to harmonize Christian eschatology with either an Aristotelian or Platonic ontology, both of which, in their own ways, possess a certain innate hostility to the notion of resurrection. In this light, it can be seen that Schelling's identity philosophy proves far more amenable to Christian theology, and particularly to eschatology as is borne out by Bulgakov's grounding of the spiritual body in Divine Sophia. Nevertheless, having seen the way in which Aquinas', and especially Scotus', anthropology leaves them vulnerable to the charge that it cannot sufficiently support the doctrine of resurrection, it should be asked if Bulgakov's anthropology in fact is more successful. In order to address this question we must turn briefly to the differing accounts of Schelling and Bulgakov on death and the afterlife.

It has been argued that Schelling's identity philosophy stands in the intellectual background of Bulgakov's sophiological eschatology. It is important however to draw

---

<sup>611</sup> Cross, *Duns Scotus*, p. 81.

<sup>612</sup> John Duns Scotus, Trans. Peter Simpson, *Ordinatio* (Volume 14 of the Vatican critical edition. Rome, Frati Quaracchi, 2020), 4.43.2. n. 128.

<sup>613</sup> Cross, *Duns Scotus*, p. 79.

<sup>614</sup> Scotus, *Ordinatio*, 4.43.2. n. 137.

attention to a striking inconsistency in his use of Schelling's identity philosophy. Schelling's philosophy of subject-object identity maintains that spirit and matter, hypostasis and nature, are not two substances, but are two inseparable sides of reality. Indeed, for Schelling his three potencies are present in everything in the universe in varying degrees, and are simultaneously spiritual-material. In humanity, the potencies are spiritualized and comprise body, soul, and spirit. Nevertheless, the potencies remain in a sunken, corporealized state in this life so that the spiritual side or power is arrested and yearns to be liberated. This forms the starting point for Schelling's philosophy of the afterlife and of eschatology in his dialogue *Clara*. Schelling posits that in death, the spiritual potency breaks free and becomes the organizing unity of body and soul; the potencies which remain in conflict and under the false dominion of the corporeal principle are through death integrated through the ascension of the spiritual potency to its proper place, which thereby reveals the spiritual side of the body.<sup>615</sup> For Schelling death is not the result of a separation of the principles; it is not a separation of the spirit or soul from the body, but a process of essentification (*reductio ad essentiam*) whereby the potencies or powers are brought into a more harmonious integration and accord.<sup>616</sup> As such the soul or spirit can never have its own independent existence or subsistence apart from the body. Indeed, such a separation of one of the potencies from the others would amount to the ontological annihilation of all three, for only in the dynamic interaction of the potencies can there be existence at all. Because death is not an ontological disintegration of the triadic human essence, his view of the afterlife necessarily stands in opposition to the traditional account of the afterlife as a disincarnate state in which the spirit or soul is separated from the body. Schelling's account stands in the vein of Emmanuel Swedenborg—the Swedish visionary who was just as much a man of heaven as of earth—in which the world of the afterlife this represents a carrying on of this life in a higher and more perfect state. Schelling seems to vacillate on whether or not the immediate state after death is to be correlated with the eschatological resurrection, or if this state is one-sidedly spiritual, such that the

---

<sup>615</sup> Though she discusses the idea of spiritual corporeality in Schelling's view of the afterlife, Martin is profoundly wrong to claim that "Schelling's anthropology is ... (at best) ambivalent about the status of the finite body." Jennifer Newsome Martin, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Critical Appropriation of Russian Religious Thought* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015), p. 127. Martin also wrongly accuses Schelling's eschatology as tending towards monistic dissolution of finitude in the Infinite (p. 124-125, 130). In the vein of Swedenborg, Schelling is overwhelmingly positive in his view of the afterlife as a carrying on of this one, as a transfiguration to a higher, even if one-sidedly spiritual, corporeality that is more authentically real in its greater receptivity to spirit. Martin does, however, acknowledge: "that toward the end of the dialogue nature and the corporeal are afforded greater value (see p. 256, endnote 40)."

<sup>616</sup> On the Swedenborgian concept of death as essentification in Schelling see Friedemann Horn trans. George F. Dole, *Schelling and Swedenborg: Mysticism and German Idealism* (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 1997), pp. 58-59.

resurrection is a truly eschatological event that unites both bodily and spiritual potencies in the highest unity in the soul.<sup>617</sup> In either scenario, Schelling maintains that the anthropological constitution is indissoluble such that the afterlife is either the highest state or a progress to it. As such his ontology stands beyond all criticism of Platonic dualism, and the question can never arise to why the soul is embodied, because it is simply a power that is lifeless without the dynamic interaction of body and spirit.

This is a very different account than what we find in Bulgakov.<sup>618</sup> If for Schelling the afterlife is an essentification of the human constitution whereby the potencies achieve a higher, more spiritual-material unity, for Bulgakov the afterlife is a dissolution of the human constitution, and a resultant disincarnation. Evidently, Bulgakov utilizes, inconsistently, Schelling's ontology to substantiate a more traditional account of death and resurrection.<sup>619</sup> It must be observed that, in contrast to Schelling's identity ontology, Bulgakov's is dualistic, an ontology of the hypostatic and non-hypostatic which comprise separable substances. Sophia, or the world soul, is a non-hypostatic principle that is comprised of soul, or the ideal and vital energy of matter, and body, the principle of corporeality itself. In the sub-anthropocentric world, Sophia, or the world soul is non-hypostatic; it does not contain, in contrast to Schelling for whom nature is "arrested spirit," the principle of spirit, which is a third, hypostatic principle over against the non-hypostatic soul and body.<sup>620</sup> Thus, in the non-human world, Sophia, or the soul-body principle, lives in separation from spirit. By contrast, humanity is comprised of hypostatic spirit and non-hypostatic Sophia; in humanity spirit is joined to the life of nature. In death the spirit is ontologically separated, to a certain extent, from Sophia, though not totally. Death, according to Bulgakov, separates the spirit from the body, but not from the soul,<sup>621</sup> which remains united with it but "paralyzed."<sup>622</sup> He argues

---

<sup>617</sup> On this topic see the excellent discussion by Horn, *Schelling and Swedenborg*, ch. 7.

<sup>618</sup> Martin wrongly sees an affinity between Schelling's view of death and Bulgakov's. "In his explication of the dissolving power of death upon the union of the creaturely principles of soul and body from spirit, Bulgakov does not seem to be terribly far from Schelling's notion of spiritual corporeality at play in *Clara*." Martin, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, p. 128. Even if the afterlife condition of the spirit-world is considered one-sided in the direction of spirit, which must ultimately give way to an eschatological equilibrium in which inner and outer, spiritual and material, reach their highest unity, it is nevertheless the case for Schelling that the afterlife is one of embodiment not disincarnation. His entire doctrine of the afterlife was developed precisely against this idea of death as a division between spirit and body. In other words, Schelling's idea of the intermediate state is essentially Swedenborgian and non-traditional.

<sup>619</sup> On this connection between Schelling's identity philosophy and death as a disintegration of spiritual-material unity, see Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy*, p. 88.

<sup>620</sup> On Bulgakov's synthesis of dichotomous and trichotomous perspectives in theological anthropology see Sergius Bulgakov, trans. Thomas Allan Smith, *The Burning Bush: On the Orthodox Veneration of the Mother of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), pp. 57-61.

<sup>621</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, pp. 354-356.

that a separation of the soul, the ontological energy of matter, from the spirit would amount to a decisive triumph of death, a total decimation of the ontological structure of humanity. Bulgakov's theory of mortality, in which spirit is sundered from Sophia through the death of the body, is in agreement with his soft-dualism between the hypostatic and the non-hypostatic, a dualism that has no place in Schelling's identity philosophy, for in Schelling spirit and nature are not separable substances. Consequently, one can observe in Bulgakov's entire sophiological schema an inconsistency with the identity philosophy he himself acclaims. Bulgakov's soft-dualism was, it appears, quite necessary to developing a traditional theology of the afterlife in which the spirit lies in a disincarnate state, abiding as a shade in an intermediate, spectral half-existence akin to Sheol or Hades. Because the three principles of body, soul, and spirit are inseparable for Schelling, death could only represent the revelation of the spiritual side of the body, which here was here weighed down by the dominance of the corporeal principle. For Schelling then, the eschatological state truly begins in death, which constitutes a transition to a higher state, rather than a sinking down to an unnatural state of disincarnation. By contrast, Bulgakov retains a residual dualism, between spirit and matter, which undergirds his theology of death and of resurrection. Indeed, for Bulgakov a latent dualism is discernible throughout his entire system. Sophia is non-hypostatic and separable from hypostatic spirit. This idea is central to Bulgakov's account of creation-evolution, the fall, of death, the intermediate state, and resurrection. Bulgakov's sophiology is undeniably dualistic, and this extends even to his Christology, where the Logos enhypostasizes creaturely Sophia or human nature. In sum then, Bulgakov's revision of Schelling's ontology in the direction of a more traditional anthropological dualism undergirds his entire theological system, and particularly his understanding of death and resurrection.

Is Bulgakov's anthropology, which allows for a dualistic separation soul and spirit from the body in death, any stronger than Aquinas'? Does the latent Platonic element in Bulgakov's anthropology undercut his immense effort to construct an ontology that does justice to the Christian transvaluation of the body? Does he go far enough, or is it in fact Schelling who constructed a more robust anthropology immune to the deficiencies of Platonism? It could be argued that because Bulgakov's eschatology, and his whole sophiological theology, relies on a soft spirit-matter dualism, it fails to fully surmount the dualistic Platonism it sought to ward off. "Although the Platonic opposition of spirit and

---

<sup>622</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 356. As Aidan Nichols says: "The soul does not so much die as enter into relative depotentialization. Its power to synthesize flesh and spirit is suspended, not annulled." *Wisdom from Above: A Primer in the Theology of Father Sergei Bulgakov* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2005), p.224.

body (which is considered as fetters or a prison for the spirit) often seeps into Christian asceticism, it does not conform to the principles of Christian anthropology.”<sup>623</sup> Furthermore, there seem to be good reasons to develop Schelling’s eschatology, which, it could be argued, stands on a philosophically sounder foundation as well as takes far more seriously purported experiences of the afterlife domain.<sup>624</sup> In any case, whether or not Bulgakov’s soft-dualism deals a mortal blow to his eschatology, and to his sophiological system as a whole, it is at least arguable that a spirit-nature ontology, whether in the form of identity or soft-dualism, represents a revolutionary development in theological ontology, one that presents the metaphysical foundation of the creation and redemption of matter. While it is arguable that Schelling’s is the far sounder path for the development of eschatology, it is indisputable that Bulgakov constructed an eschatology that gives positivity to matter and the entire created order. He presents an eschatological vision that is the antithesis of disincarnate Platonism. Prior theological tradition had struggled with eschatology to the extent that it had only Platonic or Aristotelian accounts of anthropology available to it, which were not so amenable to the doctrine of resurrection and even at times led theology towards an idealist eschatology of disembodied contemplation. In contrast with Eriugena’s Neoplatonic revision of the resurrection doctrine, resurrection for Bulgakov is not a means to an idealist end, a transitional and penultimate moment in the dialectical enfolding of all things into divine Mind, but an end in itself. The upshot of Schelling’s identity philosophy is that it enabled Bulgakov to develop, in his own way, a robust ontology of the created order and of its teleology. In Bulgakov’s sophiology Platonic idealism (Sophia as the eternal ideal of the spiritual body) is productively merged with Schelling’s identity philosophy in a way that attempts to surmount Platonic dualism. In essence then, Bulgakov’s Sophiology takes a mediating position between Schelling’s and Plato’s ontology. Bulgakov’s soft dualism does not quite fully adopt Schelling’s identity philosophy, but it does maintain that spirit and matter are inversely and integrally related as subject and object, as hypostasis and nature.

---

<sup>623</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, p. 447.

<sup>624</sup> Schelling’s identity ontology can accommodate near death experience as well as other more esoteric, mediumistic experiences of the afterlife, in a way that two-substance anthropology, with its disembodied intermediate state, simply cannot. There are an ever-growing number of accounts by those who have briefly died and returned to the world that the spiritual world of the afterlife is one far more real than this one, not a shadowy, spectral state of disembodied half-existence. To cite just a few examples: F.W.H. Myers through Geraldine Cummins, *The Road to Immortality* (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, LTD, 1933); A.D. Mattson through Margaret Flavell Tweddell, *Witness From Beyond* (New York: Hawthorn Books Inc., 1975); Eben Alexander, *Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon’s Journey into the Afterlife* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012); Jeffrey Long and Paul Perry, *Evidence of the Afterlife: The Science of Near-Death Experiences* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2010); Stafford Betty, *The Afterlife Unveiled: What ‘the Dead’ Tell Us About Their World* (Winchester, UK: O-Books, 2011), Michael Tymn, *Afterlife Explorers: The Pioneers of Psychological Research* (Guildford, UK: White Crow Books, 2011).

Neither does Bulgakov fully endorse Plato's dualism, since for Plato the body is the tomb of the soul rather than a positive principle by which the spirit integrally reveals itself. It is this mediating position between Plato and Schelling that enables Bulgakov to forge his own speculative path in the development of a theology of death, the disincarnate state of the afterlife, and resurrection.

## Conclusion

Having reached the end of our exploration of Russian Sophiology, we must now return to its beginnings, to the question that inaugurated it: what does Sophia, mediated through German voluntarism, add to theological tradition? Summing up the results of all that has preceded, it can be observed that the Russian theologians perceived within the sophiological tradition of Boehme, and the voluntarist philosophies that sprung out of it, the possibility of the pursuit of a genuinely novel direction in theology, a means to resolve in a new sophiological key, a plethora of longstanding and contemporary theological problematics. The Russian Sophiologists were among the most philosophically literate theologians of their time. They proved capable not only of responding to major philosophical currents, but also of appropriating them for their own ends. The sophiological theosophy of Jacob Boehme, and its varied legacy in the philosophies of Will, represented for the Russian Sophiologists a momentous development in the history of philosophy. Although they judged this tradition to be one-sided, as falling prey to impersonalism or to pessimism, they nonetheless thoroughly exploited to their theological advantage what they perceived as its enduring insights.

Beginning with the Trinity and Christology, it was argued in the first chapter that the Russian theologians steered prior sophiology in a more deeply divine-human direction. By means of Sophia, Divinity and humanity were brought together in a radical attempt to Christologize the Trinity. According to the early Solovyov, Sophia is a divine world of human entities which God eternally creates and unites in Christ so that, from all eternity, God is conceived as the inseparability of Divinity and humanity, as a divine-human Organism. In the thought of Bulgakov, Sophia is dislodged from the personal, anthropological sphere and is interpreted as the impersonal, quasi-corporeal nature of divine Spirit, as the object of the divine Subject. God is equally theanthropic for Bulgakov, yet his theandricism results not from the eternity of created humankind, but from the fact that God possesses spiritual and natural elements. God is not pure Spirit, an abstract I, but possesses a vital, impersonal element. Sophia is the body of God, the divine world of embodied ideas, which has its source in the Father, its hypostatic center in the Son, and its actualization in the agency of the Spirit. By means of Sophia the theanthropic becomes for the Russian theologians the primary theological idiom. Over against the tradition of process theology which sought to reconceive God Christologically by drawing eternity into temporality, the Sophiologists, in their theandric constructions, sought to eternalize the mystery of the Incarnation outside the sphere

of becoming. In so doing they forged their own unique path in bringing Christology into the heart of theology. In this connection it can be further argued that the emergence onto the theological scene of this new and radical conception of God no longer as pure Intelligence, but as a divine-human Organism is comparable to the way in which the philosophy of Will or the Unconscious entered into Western philosophy in Boehme, Schelling, Schopenhauer, and Hartmann. And, as we have seen, this tradition of philosophy exercised an important influence upon Russian Sophiology. In theology as in philosophy, it was felt that the concept of God could no longer endure in the realm of abstraction, of the ideal and the logical, and it was necessary that, in the visage of Sophia, the reality of living nature, of organic Will, enter into it to revitalize it. A similar sentiment can also be seen to drive the diverse iterations process theologies, which seek a living, moving, dynamic God over against the tradition of timeless, immutable Being.

In the sphere of creation, fall, and eschatology the Russian Sophiologists perceived that theology could no longer proceed without a corrective of Platonism. It was felt that there was a need to do fuller justice to Plato's *me on*, the element of materiality and becoming. This is given new life in German voluntarism, for the rebirth of Platonism in a dynamic, non-dualistic mode. Voluntarism provisioned the Russian Sophiologists with a means to interpret the ultimate foundation of matter, its instinctive, evolutionary dynamics, as well as its eschatological spiritualization.

Beginning with the doctrine of creation, it was argued that the Russian Sophiologists, within the metaphysical framework of German voluntarism, sought out the ultimate, metaphysical origins of creation's materiality as well as its dynamic, instinctive mode of becoming. For the early Solovyov this grounding of matter and its evolution was negative. The material, phenomenal process of nature represented the anthropological, incorporeal organism of Sophia having become, in its fall from eternity, impersonal and cosmic. Though there is here the influence of Platonism in his privileging of incorporeal stasis, it should not be overlooked that Sophia is seen the voluntarist terms of Will and its representation. The origins of matter and its evolutionary development derive from the Will's (Sophia's) egoism. Through its perverted will, Sophia, originally anthropological and incorporeal, falls into phenomenality, into the material, impersonal and cosmic realm. This negative grounding of corporeality and its instinctive becoming is reversed in Bulgakov, who appropriated the voluntarist tradition in a different manner. It was argued that matter and its dynamic evolution were conceived more positively as deriving from the originally corporeal and

impersonal nature of Divine-Sophia. Translated into time Divine Sophia brings into being the material multiplicity of the world, which develops by an unconscious, instinctive means. With Schelling and Hartmann, for Bulgakov the real is never reducible to the ideal, is forever beyond logic. There is a primordial principle that stands outside the grasp of reason, which the conscious I cannot bring into being. Thought is powerless before being (nature), which, just as the I is the act of its self-positing, is the product of its own vital, elemental movement, its unconscious urge or will to life. It is this vital element, the voluntarist will, or unconscious idea (to use Hartmann's term), that for Bulgakov is the basis of the corporeal world and its instinctive, evolutionary realization of its eternal sophianic themes. In his affirmation of the phenomenal, corporeal order and its instinctive processes, Bulgakov (and the later Solovyov) overcame the pessimist philosophers of Will and returned voluntarism to its more positive beginnings in Boehme and Schelling. The transition of the Will to manifestation, or of Divine Sophia to the material creation, is not a falsehood, a fall or perversion, but the free act whereby the created order can through its freedom achieve union with God. With Boehme Sophia can be said for the Russian Sophiologists to be both the divine life, or essence, in its manifestation, as well as creation in its ultimate aspect, the cosmos and humanity united to God as its bride.

Concerning the doctrine of the fall, it was argued that the Russian theologians navigate Augustinian and Eastern/Eriugenian traditions of original sin and their accompanying problematics in a highly original manner. Utilizing the voluntarist-idealist idea of transcendental act of self-positing they interpret the fall as a supratemporal act. Following his theandric logic of the eternal divine-human Organism, Solovyov posits that the fall is universal and eternal, occurring outside of time and occasioning the fall of Sophia (the universal human organism) into the temporal sphere of anarchic plurality. Drawing on German voluntarism the fall of Sophia is interpreted as the result of egoism, and the world is seen as materialized, phenomenalized Will. Falling outside of its original incorporeality and intelligence, Sophia becomes the unconscious, material, and impersonal world soul, which strives to recover its lost unity through the world process. In this manner Solovyov subsumes evolution into his totalizing sophianic narrative, for which evolution is an accidental and instrumental process, perversely initiated by Sophia through its egosim. In Bulgakov's thought the Augustinian problematic of the universal and individual aspects of original sin, is given an attempted resolution by conceiving the fall as both a temporal and supratemporal occurrence. Regarding the supratemporal, non-local dimension he argues, following the

Eastern tradition, as well as the voluntarist-idealist thought of Schelling (and Müller) that the fall occurs in the act of humanity's self-positing, in the dynamic reception of the creative act whereby it determines itself in relation to God and the world. In this supratemporal "moment" of freedom lies the all-important decision. This primordial decision or deed of will, which is the ground of spirit as its groundless freedom, is also the determinative factor of the relation of humanity to the evolutionary process. By means of its immemorial, transcendental freedom, humanity had the ability to direct the course of evolution to its goal of the spiritualization of matter, or of sinking into the stream of evolutionary phenomena. Though we have seen that the constructions of original sin in both Solovyov and Bulgakov are characterized by tensions and contradictions, not least the squaring of the individual and universal aspects of the fall, they nonetheless charted a original path in their utilization of the voluntarist idea of the I's self-positing to address longstanding problematics concerning original sin, as well as the contemporary problem of evolution and its relation to the fall.

Finally, in the sphere of eschatology, the significance of the Russian Sophiologists lies in the way they sought to construct a full-blooded vision of cosmic restoration that overcomes the idealist tendency to posit the return of creation to divine Mind. Reversing this idealist trend, the Russian theologians conceive eschatology in an incarnationalist register, the incarnation of Divinity in matter. Furthermore, it was argued that the development of the idea of the spiritualization of matter relies on theandric and voluntarist premises. In Solovyov's early thought, his eschatology was an attempt to overcome Hartmann's pessimism. Contending that Hartmann's inert Will that wills nothing and that is without determinate content, was a contradiction in terms, Solovyov developed an idealist eschatology of the dematerialization of spirits. Sophia, which had fallen into the phenomenal realm of matter through its egoism, would at the end of time be restored to its original incorporeality as a kingdom of pure spirits. Though he overcame Hartmann's pessimism he nevertheless shared his acosmism. The way beyond idealist-voluntarist eschatology to an incarnationalist eschatology for Solovyov nevertheless came through a voluntarist idea, the Boehmean notion of impersonal-material substrate of the future creation in divine Wisdom. It is this idea that was creatively developed by Bulgakov. Extending his theandric logic of the divine-human Organism in which the divine Spirit in relation to Sophia (the divine nature) form a spiritual material unity, Bulgakov postulated an eternal foundation for the spiritualization of matter, the transfiguration of the world and the resurrection of the dead. Over against Platonist dualism and Aristotelian hylomorphism, the voluntarist-idealist

legacy, for which there is a determinate place for the real and the corporeal, proved a productive path for the development of Sophiology's eschatology of the spiritualization of matter.

Though in each of its novel theological constructions we have pointed out shortcomings, tensions, and contradictions, the significance of the Russian Sophiological project(s) lies in its endeavor to utilize alternative intellectual and philosophical resources for its attempted resolutions to longstanding and contemporary theological problems. The metaphysical principle of Sophia, critically appropriated from the German voluntarist tradition of Will, enabled the Russian Sophiologists to enact a theological revolution, a sophiological revisioning of God, creation, transgression and redemption. By reintroducing into theology, after Boehme and Schelling, the metaphysical principle of Will or Sophia, with its connotations of the impersonal, the corporeal, and the real, the Russian theologians achieved a bold Christocentric synthesis of theology, philosophy, and science. In their sustained reflection on the enigmatic, biblical figure of Sophia and its subsequent religious and philosophical reflexes, the Russian theologians can be seen to mark a critical and creative engagement not only with the past, but also with modernity and the specific problems raised in contemporary theological consciousness.

## Bibliography

Alexander, Eben. *Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon's Journey into the Afterlife*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012.

Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. 2 vols. Ed. Jonathan Barnes. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Augustine, *St. Augustine: Anti-Pelagian Writings*. Ed. Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 5. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887.

—*Saint Augustine: Confessions*. Trans. Henry Chadwick. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Beach, Edward Allen *The Potencies of God: Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994.

Beiser, Frederick C. *Weltschmerz: Pessimism in German Philosophy, 1860-1900*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Berdyaev, Nicolai. "Studies Concerning Jacob Boehme. Etude I. The Teaching about the Ungrund and Freedom." Trans. S. Janos with Michael Knetchen (2002). Originally published as "Iz etuudov o yak. Beme. Etiude i. Uchenie o Ungrunde'e i svobode." *Journal Put'*, 1930, No. 20, pp. 47-79.

—"Studies Concerning Jacob Boehme. Etude II. The Teaching about Sophia and the Androgyne: J. Boehme and the Russian Sophiological Current." Trans. S. Janos with Michael Knetchen (2002). Originally published as "Iz etuudov o yak. Beme. Etiude ii. Uchenie o sophii i androgine." *Journal Put'*, 1930, No. 21, pp. 34-62.

—"The Idea of God-manhood in Vl. Solov'ev." Trans. S. Janos (2000). Originally Published as "Ideya bogochelovechestva y Vl. Solov'eva." *Perezvon*, 1925. No. 7/8, p. 180-182 & No. 9, p. 240.

Bergson, Henri. *Creative Evolution*. Trans. Arthur Mitchell. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1998.

Betty, Stafford. *The Afterlife Unveiled: What 'the Dead' Tell Us About Their World*. Winchester, UK: O-Books, 2011.

Blondel, Maurice. *Letter on Apologetics and History and Dogma*. Trans. Alexander Dru and Illtyd Trethowan. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995.

Boehme, Jacob. *Mysterium Magnum: An Exposition of the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*. Trans. John Sparrow. San Rafael, CA: Hermetica, 2007.

—*The Signature of All Things*. Trans. John Elliston. CreateSpace Publishing, 2013.

—*The Three Principles of the Divine Essence*. Trans. John Sparrow. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016.

Bonaventure. *Works of St. Bonaventure: Volume IX: Breviloquium*. Trans. Dominic V. Monti, O.F.M. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005.

Brinton, Howard H. *The Mystic Will: Based on a Study of the Philosophy of Jacob Boehme*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930.

Brown, Robert F. *The Later Philosophy of Schelling: The Influence of Boehme on the Works of 1809-1815*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1977.

— “The Transcendental Fall in Kant and Schelling.” *Idealistic Studies*, 1984, Vol.14 (1), pp. 49-66.

Bulgakov, Sergius. *Sophia: The Wisdom of God: An Outline of Sophiology*. Trans. Patrick Thompson, O. Fielding Clarke, Xenia Braikevitc. Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1993.

— *The Bride of the Lamb*. Trans. Boris Jakim. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001.

— *The Comforter*. Trans. Boris Jakim. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004.

— “Protopresbyter Sergii Bulgakov: Hypostasis and Hypostacity: Scholia to *The Unfading Light*.” Trans. Anastassy Brandon Gallaher and Irina Kukota. *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, 2005, Vol.49(1-2), pp. 5-46.

—*The Lamb of God*. Trans. Boris Jakim. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008.

—*The Burning Bush: On the Orthodox Veneration of the Mother of God* trans. Thomas Allan Smith. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009.

—*Jacob’s Ladder: On Angels*. Trans. Thomas Allan Smith. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010.

—*Unfading Light: Contemplation and Speculations*. Trans Thomas Allan Smith. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012.

—*Philosophy of Economy: The World as Household*. Trans. Catherine Evtuhov. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014.

—*The Tragedy of Philosophy: Philosophy and Dogma*. Trans. Stephen Churchyard. Brooklyn, NY: Angelico Press, 2022.

Caldecott, Stratford, *The Radiance of Being*. Tacoma, WA, Angelico Press, 2013.

Carlson, Maria. “Gnostic Elements in the Cosmogony of Vladimir Soloviev.” *Russian Religious Thought*. Eds. Judith Deutsch Kornblatt and Richard F. Gustafson. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996.

Chardin, Pierre Teilhard de. *Christianity and Evolution*. Trans. René Hague. London: Collins, 1971.

Crisp, Oliver. "Robert Jenson on the Pre-existence of Christ." *Modern Theology*, 2007, Vol.23 (1), pp. 27-45.

Cross, Richard. *Duns Scotus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Cunningham, Connor. *Darwin's Pious Idea: Why the Ultra-Darwinists and Creationists Both Get it Wrong*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010.

Desmond, William. *Is There a Sabbath for Thought?: Between Religion and Philosophy*. New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2005.

Dibb, Andrew M.T. *Servetus, Swedenborg and the Nature of God*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005.

Fiddes, Paul. *The Creative Suffering of God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Florensky, Pavel. *The Pillar and Ground of Truth*. Trans. Boris Jakim. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997.

Gaidenko, Piama. "Russian Philosophy in the Context of European Thinking: The Case of Vladimir Solovyov." *Diogenes*, 2009, Vol.56(2-3), pp. . 24-36.

Gaisin, Alexandre. "Solovyov's Metaphysics between Gnosis and Theurgy." *Religions*, 2018, Vol.9 (11), p. 354+.

Gallaher, Brandon. "Graced Creatureliness: Ontological Tension in the Uncreated/Created Distinction in the Sophiologies of Solov'ev, Bulgakov and Milbank." *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 2006, Vol.47 (1-2), pp. 163-190.

— "The Christological Focus of Vladimir Solov'ev's Sophiology." *Modern Theology*, 2009, Vol.25 (4), pp. 617-646.

— "Antinomism, Trinity and the Challenge of Solov'evan Pantheism in the Theology of Sergij Bulgakov." *Studies in East European Thought*, 2012, Vol.64 (3/4), pp. 205-225.

— *Freedom and Necessity in Modern Trinitarian Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Gardner, Sebastian. "Eduard von Hartmann's Philosophy of the Unconscious." *Thinking the Unconscious*. Eds. Angus Nicholls and Martin Liebscher. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Gathercole, Simon. "Pre-existence, and the Freedom of the Son in Creation and Redemption: An Exposition in Dialogue with Robert Jenson." *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 2005, Vol.7 (1), pp. 38-51.

Gavrilyuk, Paul L. "Universal Salvation in the Eschatology of Sergius Bulgakov." *Journal of Theological Studies*, 2006, Vol. 57 (1), pp. 110-132.

— *Georges Florovsky and the Russian Religious Renaissance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

—"Bulgakov's Account of Creation: Neglected Aspects, Critics and Contemporary Relevance." *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 2015, Vol.17(4), pp. 450-463.

Gregory of Nyssa, *Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, Etc. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 5*. Eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994.

Halloran, Nathan S.J. "Evolution and the Nature and Transmission of Original Sin: Rahner, Schoonenberg and Teilhard de Chardin." *Colloquium (Auckland)*, 2012, Vol.44 (2), pp. 177-193.

—"Cosmic Alienation and the Origin of Evil: Rejecting the "Only Way" Option." *Theology and Science*, 2015, Vol.13 (1), pp. 43-63.

Hanegraaff, Wouter J. "Jacob Bohme and Christian Theosophy." *The Occult World*. Ed. Christopher Partridge. New York, NY: Routledge, 2015.

Hart, David Bentley. "No Shadow of Turning: On Divine Impassibility." *Pro Ecclesia*, 2002, Vol.22 (2), pp. 284-306.

—*The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004.

—"The Lively God of Robert Jenson." *First Things*, 2005, V.156, pp. 28+.

—*That All Shall be Saved*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019.

Hartmann, Eduard von. *Philosophy of the Unconscious: Speculative Results According to the Inductive Method of Physical Science*. 3 vols. Trans. William Chatterton Coupland. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co., 1884.

Healy, Nicholas J. "Henri de Lubac on the Development of Doctrine." *Communio: International Catholic Review*, 2017 (44), pp. 667-689.

Heath, Joshua. "Sergii Bulgakov's Linguistic Trinity." *Modern Theology*, 2021, Vol.37 (4), pp. 888-912.

Heide, Daniel. "The Fate of Bodies in Origen and Eriugena." *Dionysius*, 2018, Vol. XXXVI, pp. 53-65.

Horn, Friedemann. *Schelling and Swedenborg: Mysticism and German Idealism*. Trans. George F. Dole. West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 1997.

Hunsinger, George. "Robert Jenson's Systematic Theology: A Review Essay." *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 2002, Vol.55(2), pp. 161-200.

James, William. *A Pluralistic Universe*. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909.

Jensen, Anthony K. "The Unconscious in History: Eduard von Hartmann among Schopenhauer, Schelling, and Hegel." *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, 2022, Vol.16(3), pp. 271-293.

Jenson, Robert. *Systematic Theology*. 2 vols. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001.

—"Once More the Logos Asarkos." *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 2011, Vol.13 (2), pp. 130-133.

Johannes Scottus Eriugena, , *Periphyseon: The Division of Nature*. Trans. I.P. Sheldon-Williams. Washington, D.C.: Bellarmin/Dumbarton Oaks, 1987.

John Duns Scotus. *Ordinatio, Book IV*. Volume 14 of the Vatican critical edition. Trans. Peter Simpson. Rome, Frati Quaracchi, 2020.

Khramov, Alexander V. "Fitting Evolution into Christian Belief: An Eastern Orthodox Approach." *International Journal of Orthodox Theology*, 2017, Vol.8 (1), pp. 75-105.

Kiejzik, Lilianna. "Sergei Bulgakov's Sophiology of Death." *Studies in East European Thought*, 2010, Vol.62 (1), pp. 55-62.

Kojève, Alexandre. *The Religious Metaphysics of Vladimir Solovyov*. Trans. Illya Merlin and Mikhail Pozdniakov. Switzerland: Palgrave Pivot, 2018.

Kornblatt, Judith Deutsch. "Solov'ev's Androgynous Sophia and the Jewish Kabbalah." *Slavic Review*, 1991, Vol.50 (3), pp. 487-496.

— *Divine Sophia: The Wisdom Writings of Vladimir Solovyov*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009.

Lahey, Stephen. "Eriugena's Condemnation and His Idealism." *A Companion to John Scottus Eriugena*. Ed. Adrian Guiu. Leiden: Brill, 2019.

Laughland, John *Schelling verse Hegel: From German Idealism to Christian Metaphysics*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007.

Leamy, Katy. *The Holy Trinity: Hans Urs von Balthasar and His Sources*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015.

Lewis, C.S. *The Problem of Pain*. Quebec: Samizdat University Press, 2016.

Long, Jeffrey and Perry, Paul. *Evidence of the Afterlife: The Science of Near-Death Experiences*. New York, NY: HarperOne, 2010.

Louth, Andrew. "Sergii Bulgakov and the Task of Theology." *The Irish Theological Quarterly*, 2009, Vol.74 (3), pp. 243-257.

Martensen, Hans. *Jacob Boehme: His Life and Teaching, or, Studies in Theosophy*. Trans. T. Rhys Evans. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1885.

Martin, Jennifer Newsome. *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Critical Appropriation of Russian Religious Thought*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015.

Martin, Michael. *The Submerged Reality: Sophiology and the Turn to a Poetic Metaphysics*. Kettering, OH: Angelico Press, 2015.

Mattson, A.D. *Witness From Beyond*. New York: Hawthorn Books Inc., 1975.

May, Richard. "Between God and the World: A Critical Appraisal of the Sophiology of Sergius Bulgakov." *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 74(1), pp. 67-84.

Maximus the Confessor. *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*. 2 vols. Trans. Nicholas Constas. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.

McGrath, S.J. *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling: The Turn to the Positive*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021.

Meerson, Michael Aksionov. *The Trinity of Love in Modern Russian Theology: The Love Paradigm and the Retrieval of Western Medieval Love Mysticism in Modern Russian Trinitarian Thought (from Soloyvov to Bulgakov)*. Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1998.

Milbank, John. "Sophiology and Theurgy: The New Theological Horizon." *Encounter Between Eastern Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy*. Eds. Christoph Schneider and Adrian Pabst. New York, NY: Routledge, 2009.

Moltmann, Jürgen. *The Crucified God*. Trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993.

— *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*. Trans. Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993.

Moran, Dermot. "Pantheism from John Scottus Eriugena to Nicholas of Cusa." *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 1990, Vol. LXIV (1), pp. 131-151.

Mostert, Christiaan. "Moltmann's Crucified God." *Journal of Reformed Theology*, 2013, Vol.7 (2), pp. 160-180.

Müller, Julius. *The Christian Doctrine of Sin*. Trans. William Pulsford. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1853.

Murasov, Timofej. "Correlation Between the Concepts of All-Unity and Self-Will: Vladimir Solovyov and Lev Shestov as Philosophers of Freedom." *Studies in East European Thought*, 2021, Vol.73 (4), pp. 425-434.

- Myers, F.W.H. *The Road to Immortality*. London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, LTD, 1933.
- Nemeth, Thomas. *The Early Solov'ëv and His Quest for Metaphysics*. Springer International Publishing, 2013.
- Nesmiyanova, Olga. "Russian Theology." Ed. David Fergusson, *The Blackwell Companion to Nineteenth-Century Theology*. Malden-Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
- Nichols, Aidan. "Wisdom from Above? The Sophiology of Father Sergius Bulgakov." *New Blackfriars*, 2004, Vol.85 (1000), pp. 598-613.
- *Wisdom from Above: A Primer in the Theology of Father Sergei Bulgakov*. Leominster: Gracewing, 2005.
- Noval, Roberto J. De La. *Sophiology in Suspension: The Theological Condemnations of Fr. Sergius Bulgakov*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2020.
- Obolevitch, Teresa. *Faith and Science in Russian Religious Thought*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Olson, Roger. "Trinity and Eschatology: The Historical Being of God in Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg." *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 1983, Vol.36 (2), pp. 213-227.
- Origen. *On First Principles*. Trans. G.W. Buttersworth. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2013.
- Pederson, Daniel. "'Irenaeus' or 'Scheiermcaherian'?: An Evolutionarily Plausible Account of the Origins of Sin." *Theology and Science*, 2016, Vol.14 (2), pp. 190-201.
- Peterson, Gregory R. "Falling Up: Evolution and Original Sin." *Philosophy after Darwin*. Ed. Michael Ruse. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- Plested, Marcus. *Wisdom in Christian Tradition*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2022.
- Plotinus, *The Enneads*. Trans. Stephen MacKenna. London: Penguin Books, 1991.
- Polkinghorne, John. *Reason and Reality: The Relationship Between Science and Theology*. London: SPCK, 1991.
- Polkinghorne, John and Welker, Michael, Eds. *The End of the World and the Ends of God: Science and Theology on Eschatology*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000.
- Przywara, Erich. trans., *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*. John R. Betz and David Bentley Hart. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014.
- Rist, John M. *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Schelling, F.W.J. *On the History of Modern Philosophy*. Trans. Andrew Bowie. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

—*The Abyss of Freedom: Ages of the World*. Trans. Judith Norman. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997.

—*Clara: Or, On Nature's Connection to the Spirit World*. Trans. Fiona Steinkamp. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002.

—*Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*. Trans. Mason Richey and Markus Zisselsberger. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008.

—*Philosophy and Revelatio*. Trans. Klaus Ottmann. Putnam, CT: Spring Publications, 2010.

—*Philosophy of Revelation (1841-1842) and Related Texts*. Trans. Klaus Ottmann. Putnam, CT: Spring Publications, 2020.

Scholem, Gershom. *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. New York: Schocken Books, 1946.

—*On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah*. New York: Schocken Books, 1991.

Shaw, Gregory. *Theurgy and the Soul: the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*. Kettering, OH: Angelico Press, 2014.

Sisto, Walter N. "The Beginning of the End: Bulgakov and the Ascension." *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 2018, Vol.83(2), pp. 164-179.

Slesinski, Robert. *Pavel Florensky: A Metaphysics of Love*. Crestwood, NY: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984.

—*The Theology of Sergius Bulgakov*. Yonkers, NY: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2017.

Smith, Oliver. *Vladimir Soloviev and the Spiritualization of Matter*. Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2010.

Smith, T. Allan. "Sergii Bulgakov's 'Sofiologiia Smerti.'" *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol.70 (4), pp. 453-454.

Snow, Dale E. *Schelling and the End of Idealism*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996.

Solovyov, Vladimir. *God, Man and the Church: The Spiritual Foundations of Life*. Trans. Donald Attwater. Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., LTD, 1937.

—*Russia and the Universal Church*. Trans. Herbert Rees. London: Centenary Press, 1948.

—*Lectures on Divine Humanity*. Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1995.

—*The Crisis of Western Philosophy: Against the Positivists*. Trans. Boris Jakim. Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1996.

—*Politics, Law, and Mortality: Essays by V.S. Soloviev*. Trans. Vladimir Wozniuk. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000.

—*The Heart of Reality: Essays on Beauty, Love, and Ethics*. Trans. Vladimir Wozniuk. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003.

—*The Justification of the Good: An Essay on Moral Philosophy*. Trans. Nathalie A. Duddington. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005.

—*The Burning Bush: Writings on Jews and Judaism*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016.

Swedenborg, Emmanuel. *Arcana Coelestia*. 12 vols. Trans. John Clowes. West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2009.

—*True Christianity*. Trans. Jonathan S. Rose. West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2010.

—*The Lord*. Trans. George F. Dole. West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2014.

Tarasti, Eero. *Sein Und Schein: Explorations in Existential Semiotics*. Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2015.

Thomas Aquinas., *The Summa Theologica of Saint Thomas Aquinas*. Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1920.

—*On Evil: St. Thomas Aquinas*. Trans. John and Jean Oesterle. Notre Dam, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995.

Thompson, Matthew K. *Kingdom Come: Revisioning Pentecostal Eschatology*. Blandford Forum, UK: Deo Publishing, 2010.

Tymn, Michael. *Afterlife Explorers: The Pioneers of Psychological Research*. Guildford, UK: White Crow Books, 2011.

Valliere, Paul. “Solov’ëv and Schelling’s Philosophy of Revelation.” Eds. Wil van den Bercken, Manon de Courten and Evert van der Zweerde, *Vladimir Solov’ëv: Reconciler and Polemicist*. Leuven, Paris, Sterling, Virginia: Peters, 2000.

—*Modern Russian Theology: Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov: Orthodox Theology in a New Key*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001.

Vasilyev, Tikhon. “Aspects of Schelling’s Influence on Sergius Bulgakov and Other Thinkers of the Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century.” *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, 2019, Vol.80 (1-2), pp. 143-159.

White, Thomas Joseph O.P, ed. *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or Wisdom of God?* Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011.

Williams, N.P. *The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin*. London: Longman, Green and Co., 1929.

Williams, Rowan. *Sergii Bulgakov: Towards a Russian Political Theology*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1999.

Zdenek, V. David. "The Influence of Jacob Boehme on Russian Religious Thought." *Slavic Review*, 1962, Vol. 21(1), pp. 43-64.

Zenkovsky, V.V. *A History of Russian Philosophy*. 2 vols. Trans. George L. Kline. New York: Columbia University Press, 1953.