

# ROLE AND RELATION OF FAITH AND MIND IN RUSSIAN PHILOSOPHY

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UDK 215:1(47)

## *Introduction*

Those unfamiliar with Russian philosophy will ask why the encyclical quotes Orthodox Christian philosophers, and what is the intention of directly mentioning some of the representatives of their philosophizing. However, it is known to the connoisseurs of Russian philosophical thought that they are on a specific terrain, different from the western tradition, especially by its wish for synthesis and a comprehensive worldview. Consequently, they treat the questions of reason differently in relation to the whole area, less rationally and more comprehensively, we would say. That is why we are going to present the philosophical views of the named philosophers, and try to put it in the context of the encyclical, viewing the mutual width of these spiritual realities. They form an integral cognitive whole in the dynamic of the whole man, and they reach far out of the rationalist circle to the mystical depths. On this cognitive journey, according to them, a mutual activity of faith and mind which are complimentary should be sought.

## *Russian Philosophers in the Encyclical*

The revelation of God fused with the word and the culture of the times it encountered in its expansion. The fact is that Christianity (except for the Jewish region) first encountered Greek culture and philosophy. However the apostles, on Pentecost Day, preached to different people, and they accepted the word of God. However, there are older cultures in the East that have valuable collections of truths that should be injected with Revelation — respecting the existent mentality. These are the cultures of Japan, China and India. On the other hand, in the Middle East and Europe where Christianity developed there are also multiple forms of living the Revelation and truth — built upon the foundations of local tradition. In Russia, which is a large Christian country, they exist in special way.

1. PYOTR Yakovlyevich CHAADAYEV (1794–1856). We know of his *Philosophical Letters* that made him fall into disfavor with Czar Nicholai I, and was consequently proclaimed mentally ill (went mad), put under psychiatric control, and the journal that published it was banned. Later, he wrote *An Apology of the one that went mad*, but it was published after his dead. As an adherent to the western worldview, he emphasized a positive role of the Catholic Church and the Pope in uniting the Europe of the Middle Ages, while his Russian Christianity did not manage to influence the social situation, and did not put any lasting effort in it, e. g., Russia, as a Christian country established and supported serfdom, while the West abolished slavery. Faith must be the constituent element of life; Russia must assume its historical role, she must realize a religious society, and not a victory of a secular humanism. He does not think that the Kingdom of God can be completely realized, but he criticizes the ulterior understanding of religion. Again, he praises Catholicism for its cultural and social role as opposed to his Orthodox Church, which was not capable of changing the sphere of science, or to introduce an idea to the mass of world ideas, but he envisions the realization of a unified Christian society in which religion will be the basis of the moral and social constitution. God planted moral ideas into us, we only need to revive them and clarify them. They speak as a universal mind, which is nothing else but a collection of ideas which live in man's memory as a spiritual reality, and are transmitted by tradition. It is not clear what exactly Chaadayev has in mind under "universal mind," but it seems that it is the center of all universal ideas, including those belonging to the natural sciences. He generally believes in ideas that precede any experimental knowledge. Therefore, he speaks of Plato's archetype ideas, about Descartes' inherited ideas, about Kant's theory of the a priori as the seed of mind. He believed that a human being could not successfully comprehend the moral and spiritual truth, or act by it, if the Almighty does not open his mind.

Chaadayev was under the influence of the French traditionalism: Joseph de Maistre, than De Bonald and Lamennais. In Europe, he personally met Schelling, he corresponded with him. In one *Letter* he emphasizes that the goal of advancement is a complete fusion of our nature with the nature of the whole world, the great fusion of our being with the universal.<sup>1</sup> This is undoubtedly inspired by the German Idealism, especially by Schelling's philosophy of the identity of objective and subjective sphere. Entering that grand fusion, or comprehensive unity, he identifies with entering heaven. And our freedom is the image of God in us, our similarity with him.

1 Cf. FR. KOPLSTON, *Filozofija u Rusiji (Philosophy in Russia)*, Beograd 1992, p. 52

The difficulty is that Chaadayev writes impressionistically, without precise and systematic thought. It seems that the moral knowledge is transmitted and maintained thanks to the society. Does it mean that the voice of society has to be the voice of conscience and God? People are born with a blurred instinct for the moral good. Does such an instinct enable enough the distinction between good and evil, does it enable them to discover the moral law and moral values? What does society contribute here? Chaadayev determines progress as a closing to the religious ideal, the united Christian community where religious presuppositions are realized. There is no progress independently from God's action and providence. He adopts a religious vision of the world and history.

2. VLADIMIR Sergejevitch SOLOVYEV (1853–1900). Probably the most complex personality of Russian philosophy, very dynamic and versatile. Poet, philosopher, lay theologian, mystic, philosopher of history, deeply sensitive and desolate — in spite his connections around the world.<sup>2</sup> His personality shows in different ways, but a complete is inexhaustible. As a boy he experienced a mystical reality and super-reality, almost intuitive God's shadowing of the world.. The whole of his religious philosophical work grows out of the root of a mystical intuition: arcane sciences about all-unity, about embodiment of Wisdom (Sophia), about God-humanity, about free theocracy, about unity of Churches. Not until the end of his short life, purified with numerous temptations, he became a winner.

With his complex philosophical approach on the Slavophile line he accepts and develops philosophy in spiritual academies (banned by the universities) under the influence of Schelling, Hegel and Baader. This philosophy is principally free on the ways of cognition, however, a spiritual experience lies in its basis, actually faith. For a Russian religious philosopher, revelation presented a spiritual experience and spiritual fact, not authority. Therefore, his method is intuitive. Russian religious philosophy that Solovyev promotes and develops, presupposes the fusion of theoretical and practical mind, reaching the fullness of cognition. This is the cognition through all of the spiritual forces, not only through mind. This philosophy insists that the philosophical

2 Cf. D. STRÉMOUKHOFF, *Vladimir Soloviev et son messianique*, Paris 1935, p. 8. "L'activisme, plus encore que le mysticisme, oblige historien de la pensée de Soloviev à s'arrêter à sa vie. En effet, la vie de Vladimir Soloviev et son oeuvre messianique un tout inséparable. C'est s'ailleurs la vie de Soloviev qui nous permet de comprendre le rythme que suit sa pensée." Also, cf. J. Oslić, *Utemeljenje etike kod Vladimir Solovjev (Basing of Ethics in Vladimir Solovjev)*, Zagreb 1994, pp. 11, 19. Also cf. my article, S PLATZ, *Solovjev i Strossmayer o sjedinjenju Crkava. Prilog u povodu stogodišnjice boravka Solovjava u Đakovu (Solovyev and Strossmayer on Uniting Churches. A contribution upon the centenary of Stolovyev's visit to Đakovo)*, in *Crkav u svijetu*, 21 (1986), pp. 316–327.

cognition is a knowledge through the *whole spirit*, where reason fuses with feelings and will. In that cognition there is no rationalist two division. That is why a criticism of Rationalism is the first task of that philosophy. For that philosophy and Solovyev, rationalism is the first sin of the Western thought. A special peculiarity of this philosophy is that it should be considered its totalitarian character, its aspiration towards searching for the wholeness. Philosophy and religion are inseparable.<sup>3</sup> Solovyev views the role of faith and reason in this context.

Solovyev had an extraordinary capability of pondering secrets. Unlike Positivism, he does not consider the senses important or the information they provide, because the perception through organs can be full of illusions. The cognition based on the senses pertains to the material, evident, outer, fractured world. Although it pertains to such an obvious object, it is nevertheless shadowed, blurred, fractured. That is why the senses are very limited, deficient organs, going between the knowledge of another one, incomparably higher object than the evident reality. This reality is not perceived indirectly through the senses, but directly — spiritually. In this original, complete reality there is no fragmentation of shadow, it is a whole to the one that reaches it, alive and concrete, even incomparably more concrete than the material reality. That is where the concept “spiritual life” comes from in his philosophy — as in the philosophy of all-unity — not an abstract term, but something concrete and deeply rooted.

In this spirit emerges his work *Kritika otvlečennykh načal (Critique of Abstract Principles)* in 1880.<sup>4</sup> He considers that two tendencies in solving the gnoseological problem appear in the history of philosophy: naturalism–empiricism (or even better realism–empiricism), and idealism–rationalism. Empiricism reduces everything to phenomena, to “my” states of consciousness. However, that “I” is nothing but a “state of consciousness.” In that way empiricism is brought to the point of absurd, affirming the states of consciousness that do not have either subject or object, what is against the concept of phenomenon itself. Similarly, Rationalism brings itself to absurdity. The original reality for it is a concept that also does not have either subject or object, finally it is nothing else but pure being, and that is the same as nothing. Therefore, neither empiricism nor rationalism can reach the original values. The first looks for them in the outer world and the other in the cognitive subject. However, there is yet one possibility: the true reality is contained in absolute being, independent from both the outer world and the cognitive sub-

3 Cf. N. BBERĐAJEV, *Ruska ideja (Russian Idea)*, Prosveta Beograd 1987, p. 152 ff. Also, TOMAŠ ŠPIDLIK, *L'idea russa. Un'altra visione dell'uomo*, Lipa ed., Roma, 1995, p. 115 ff.

4 See VL. SOLOVYEV, *Sochineniya*, t. I., Moskva 1988, pp. 581–756.

ject.. The theory of cognition based on this statement makes a third area of philosophy: mysticism. Solovyev determines the character of the absolute as “that what is,” and that must at the same time be everything, *all-unity*. Such a definition of truth is absolutely necessary for building of cognition. We must or must not speak of the truth and relinquish every cognition — or let all-unique Being be the only object of cognition, Being that contains all the truth. We perceive an object (a) if it touches us (as a phenomenon), (b) if we think it, (c) if it is some unconditional being. This conviction about the existence of an object is not conditioned neither by sensations nor concepts; quite to the contrary, it is a necessary presupposition both for sensations and for concepts. Namely, without this conviction, we cannot direct these to some object. This third cognition Solovyev calls *faith*.

But how is this faith possible? In sensation and reasoned cognition the subject and object are in contact outwardly, while faith presupposes that they are inwardly connected by real and internal connections based in being itself. Here Solovyev connects his conceiving of cognition with his understanding of the absolute and all-unique reality. Having accepted such a reality, both subject and object, if they are absolute entities, cannot mutually remain outward. They must have some connection, they must compose some important union that lies deeper than just in consciousness, the union that composed the subject and object previously in cognition of the all-unique reality. This unity is the final principle of the theory of cognition which enables both cognition and reason. “... Theology should be freed from abstract dogmatism, religious truth introduced in the form of free rational thinking and realize it in the given conditions of experiential science, bring theology in the internal connection with philosophy and science, and in that way organize all the realm of the true cognition in the full system of free and scientific theosophy.”<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, Solovyev himself was aware of the insufficiency and weakness of the necessary intellectual activity to embody all-unity and wisdom (Sofia) in the world. Apart from this intellectual activity, the organization of the complete reality is necessary. Here his philosophy leans towards a philosophy of life.

The cognition of God and faith must be integral (*cel'noe znanie*), the synthesis of all human capabilities: mind, will, senses, natural and supernatural abilities. This cognition necessarily includes three strictly related factors: religious experience, faith and thinking (*ratio*). Neither one of the three factors is enough by itself, because thinking is abstract in itself, experience brings the material but without the character of the absolute and without the metaphysical cognition of the object. What composes the character of the absolute,

5 VL. SOLOVYEV, *Kritika otclechennykh nachal*, Sochineniya, t. I., Moskva 1988, p. 742.

and what corresponds to the being of object, according to Solovyev, is faith. By reinforcing the existence of the unconditional, it enables the empirical and rational cognition. Without faith in the unconditional reality of an object, experience would not be separated from purely subjective experiences, as much as could thinking concepts be perceived as objective material. Based on what faith brings us, our mind (with fancy working) climbs towards the idea of object, and experience is realized in the creative process of the same mind. That is how faith becomes some irrational voluntary act which absolutely establishes its object. This is how Solovyev (as some of his Slavophilic predecessors) leaves the bases of objectivity in the questions of God and faith, and ascribes to it some subjective certainty. Thus he, as a fervent opponent of Rationalism, shows a strong trait of Rationalism in his speculation.

However, some say that his philosophy of all-unity lead to a pantheism (or pantheism). Namely, for him, as for the metaphysics of all-unity, the world is equaled with God, and such claims necessarily lead towards pantheism. There are also objections to his habit of confusing theology with philosophy as an instrument for developing the content of faith. In Solovyev it is submitted to a religious prime source (the ideal of all knowledge), and then again, for the understanding of the faith of the fathers he wants a free rational thinking. This methodological division corresponds to the metaphysical division: namely, on one side, the whole metaphysics of all-unity is actually a modernized pantheism on the Spinoza-Schelling line, on the other side he wants to originally put all-unity in the basis of all principles of Christianity. Some object that he changed faith into a problematical metaphysics in the process of understanding, as well as that some of his theories are difficult to reconcile with Christianity.<sup>7</sup> Multifold nature of things of this world in his philosophy remains unexplained — but it is directed towards pantheism.

PAVEL Alexandrovich FLORENSKIY (1882–1937) Studied natural sciences, mathematics and physics, achieved the level of scientist in that area at the university, and was a professional in these sciences (electricity and thermodynamics). However, he later entered the spiritual academy and in 1911 he became a priest, and concerned himself with theology. He stayed in the Soviet Union, so that, in 1930', he was convicted to ten years of compulsive labor and sent to a labor camp because he would not denounce his priesthood. He died in the camp (probably) in 1937 (the official date is December 15, 1943).

6 Cf. BERNHARDT SCHULTZE, *Das Gottesproblem in der Osttheologie*, Münster 1967, pp 66–67.

7 Cf. FREDERIK Koplston, *Filozofija u Rusiji (Philosophy in Russia)*, BIGZ Beograd 1992, p. 261. Also, NIKOLAY O LOSSKIY, *Istoriya russkoy filosofii*, t. II, d. 1, ed. Ego, Leningrad 1991, pp. 40–41.

For our purposes, we list his important works here: *Stolp i utverždenie istiny* (*Pillar and Fortress of Truth*) in 1913, and *Smysl idealizma* (*Sense of Idealism*), in 1915.

Florenskiy develops his philosophical ideas in the area of religious cognition. He wants to express his faithfulness to the tradition and at the same time express his new ideas. The major philosophical question is about the truth and its detection, and in that way rationalism should be tossed away, the rationalism based on the principle of identity whose importance has been overestimated. The truth, as the absolute reality is a super-rational whole and there is no place for the rational principle of identity in it ( $A=A$ ). This formula symbolizes an immobility similar to death., a static isolation. Reason is the principle that is a completely antinomy and factual reality cannot be expressed with that principle, the reality which is actually given in a live, concrete, and spiritual experience. Static multifold nature of concepts and their dynamic unity are mutually incompatible. However the need for the whole eternal truth resists the antinomy of reason. It must be something so much greater in itself that it contains everything. Here he anticipates his concept of further research which he calls “important all-unity.” He says that this psychological introduction in the mystery of truth is similar to the existentialistic understanding, except that it is more accepting of the exposed with him than the real basis of his thoughts which is finally moved by the need for the comprehensive truth. The comprehensive truth is available thanks to the nevertheless reasonable intuition where he sees a firm basis that binds discursive differentiation ad infinitum with intuitive integration to the point of unity. Here again personal experience confirms the correctness of such a way, “from the area of concepts we must exit into the sphere of live experience”. Therefore he claims that we do not infer important truths, but only show them in the experience. Later, we find out that the organ of perceiving the higher world is the “heart.”

The fragmentation of our knowledge and reason is a repercussion of sin. How is then “rational intuition possible as a perception of the depth of being?” Florenskiy answers this by pointing to “the accomplishment of faith” what gives a firm bases to cognition, making a bridge between the asertoric truths of the world to the apodictic truths of dogmas, on the other side he develops his teaching about reason here (what Kireyevskiy started): “Reason is something movable, it is a dynamic, not a static concept.” In the form of reasoning it is dissolved, falling apart in antinomies, dying in its reasoning essence, but it again flowers and gives off fragrance when it frees itself from the fragmentation in perceiving the unity and through the enlightenment of heart becomes capable of comprehending beyond the fragmentation of the world. “The borderlines of knowledge and faith fuse here” and we learn how to see “eternal

roots of being in God.” This introduces us to the secret of all–unity.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the starting point of cognition is faith (like reliance). That is the basis and a characteristic position of all Russian philosophy. Thus, cognition is not acquiring of some unanimated object by a preying subject, but a moral and live community between persons, of whom each and every are both subject and object. Actually, only the person is cognizable, and that by some person. Pilate asked Jesus–Truth about an truth. He did not get the answer. His question was useless because was not capable of admitting the truth, i. e., have reliance on faith and faith in Jesus who revealed himself then. Consequently in a wider sense, Florenskiy describes the difference between the irrational positivism of *Bergson* and the intuitism of some Russian philosophers that admit the enormous importance of the rational aspect, on the way towards *Credo ut intelligam*. Christian faith discards both of the extremes as opposed both to irrationalism and rationalism.<sup>9</sup>

However, rational intuition exits from the higher to the lower, from the whole to the endless multitude of subordinate parts. Only such a truth is possible only in heaven. The fragmentation of our knowledge is not such an obstacle there, the complete divine truth, going beyond the law of contradiction reconciles A and not–A, otherwise considered as separated truths necessarily antinomic. We have there the divine unity and trinity — in the idea of consubstantiality. The victory over the law of identity, a creative transfer from our own closeness into the sphere of “the other”, a real self–opening in that “other” — that is the basis of truth expressed in the dogma of consubstantiality (homousia). Reason and faith touch each other here. That is why philosophy, as an aid to faith, has its origin in cult. It searches for “the absolute meaning.” And such a sense we cannot find in the thinking spirit, in the thought itself, as Kant believed. Love covers everything above rationalism and the relation of identity. The sense of love: *finis amoris ut duo unum fiant*.

Of course, this kind of nonsystematic philosophizing and an attempt to connect the old and new was criticized, that the spirit of the Florenskiy’s work was Western, strange to the Orthodox worldview, theological and philosophical questions confused without Christology in its foundation.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, Pavel Florenskiy remains an unavoidable personality of this kind of philosophizing and believing in the specific world of the Russian religious worldview.

8 Cf. NIKOLAY O LOSSKIY, op. cit., p. 205 ff. V. V. ZEN’KOVSKIY, op. cit. pp. 188–189

9 TOMAŠ ŠPIDLIK, op. cit. pp. 107–108.

10 See GEORGIY FLOROVSKIY, *Puti russkogo bogosloviya*, Pariz 1937.



4. VLADIMIR Nikolayevich LOSSKIY (1903–1984). He was son of the Russian philosopher Nikolay O. Looskiy. He studied historical and philosophical sciences at The University of St. Petersburg, then, after he was expelled, he continued his studies in Prague and finally ended at Sorbone in Paris where he specialized the Philosophy of the Middle Ages and theology. He was a member of the Russian Theological Institute *Saint Serge* in Paris. His famous study is *Théologie mystique de l'Église d'Orient*, Aubier, Paris, 1944.

In the newer Russian theology, where Vladimir Looskiy made his contribution, the well known cognition through heart is placed in the center of mystics and religion. It is the key concept to their spirituality. Generally, the cognition through heart is a protection against rationalism at the beginning of the century. In contact with the Western World and its intellectual trends, Russian Christians were afraid that they might lose their spirituality, so they considered that cognition through heart is a part of the common sense, lying in the Russian soul and faith. It is not an unsound sentimentalism, but the “transparency” of heart as a gift from the Holy Ghost, the privilege of clear consciousness. That is why clearing of heart is a goal which strengthens faith, develops a live prayer.<sup>11</sup> Of course, the aspiration to synthesis is still obvious here, in person, in cognition, in faith.

Freedom and love, as the constituent parts of a person, cannot be grasped by means of rational categories because “human person cannot be expressed by means of concepts. It eludes any rational definition, eludes even any description, because every property we used to characterize it would be found in other individuals.<sup>12</sup> It can be revealed only in unity with the mystery of Christ, through some direct intuition, or better, through revelation. A person stays permanently as some sign, some symbol, which leads us in an unspeakable abyss, some underground well that constantly throws something on the surface. That person is the vehicle of faith.

However, Losskiy thinks that the concept of person is especially connected to the concept of truth. If truth is felt as a personal reality, then the mode of cognition will be an encounter with another person, the person of Christ, the truth itself, in its fullness. “Looking at somebody face to face is really existential unity with Christ, where everybody finds his own fullness by knowing God personally and being personally known and loved from God.”<sup>13</sup> Certainly, this is a synthesis of philosophy and theology with Vladimir Looskiy as well, thinking about person and truth. Not only that phi-

11 Cf. TOMAŠ ŠPIDLIK, *Russische Spiritualität*, Pustet Verlag, Regensburg 1994, pp. 16–18

12 VLADIMIR LOSSKIY, *A l'image et à la ressemblance de Dieu*, Paris 1967, p. 118

13 VLADIMIR LOSSKIY, *Vision de Dieu*, Neuchâtel 1962, p. 140.

osophy is inseparable from religious questions, but, for Russians, it cannot be abstracted from the Christian religion.

The Eastern theology, is especially obvious with Vladimir Losskiy, proves to be soteriological. It is directed to the problem of the unity with God, forming no alliance with philosophy, as Scholastics did. However, man is connected with the world by his nature. If Adam managed to keep his love towards God, and surrendered himself to God, he would unify the world and bring it to God. But he did not fulfill his task. The Eastern theological thought has always been interested in the world as a unity, which is obvious from the liturgical poetry and iconography. Losskiy quotes the Greek Fathers very much, and according to them, the responsibility for the world is the cleansing of the world from all evil powers, from sin. Russians have a personal relation towards the land and that is why they are afraid of the feeling that might hurt it with sin.

In order to start and develop a spiritual life, we are obliged to direct our will towards God, renounce the world and reach the harmony between reason and heart. Without reason, heart is blind, and without heart — the center of all activity — reason is helpless. The understanding by means of reason and comprehending is a necessary condition of the ascetic life. Soul cannot heal, if man does not direct his will towards God with impeccable faith in prayer that presents a personal encounter with God and teaches us love. This prayer must be uninterrupted. That is why their spirituality does not observe the world only from the outside to admire it, they observe it from the inside and bless it. It is difficult to think of a man without interaction with the world. Anyway, their sophiology is based on it. Man unites all beings, without disposing with anything in the unity with God, he avoids sin in love, in order to keep the world holy. That is why a man is not a micro-cosmos, but a macro-cosmos, the person that globally communicates mercy to the world.

Considering the cognition of God, Vladimir Losskiy stands for an apophatic, negative theology of the Eastern Church which fights for the perfect fullness of being, goes from concepts to observation and transforms dogmas in experiences of unspeakable God's secrets. However he is a monk-theologian who fuses faith and reason in one reality of a divine experience.

### *Conclusion*

Russian philosophers-theologians mentioned in the encyclical show idiosyncratic, personal way of understanding the relation between faith and mind in the religious sphere. It seems that the encyclical wants to say that such a way is rich, acceptable, and that it leads to God. For a better understanding of such a way, it would be better if the encyclical left out Pyotr Chaadayev, and in-

cluded Homyakov and Paul Evdokimov (along with Vladimir Losskiy), a newer theologian of the Parisian school (his well known study is *La connaissance de Dieu selon la tradition orientale*, Xavier Mappus, Lyon 1967).

Generally, these philosophers–theologians in the Western philosophy, and especially in the Hegelian rationalism, observed a product of deterioration that, according to them, was the result of the process of secularization which went from Catholicism to Protestantism. Contrary to the outer cognition of reason they searched for the internal understanding of truth. This ideal of comprehensive knowledge, not abstract, but concrete, includes all human capabilities: reason and will, heart and sensation. They strove towards the universal synthesis of faith and knowledge — in all areas: social and private, speculative and earthly, artistic and moral.

Almost all contemporary Russian philosophers–theologians teach, leaning on the Holy Fathers, that the basis of religion should be sought in human nature, in case it is a faithful image of God; apart from that they think that no religion would be possible without some other additional acting of God on human spirit. Man directly perceives God’s acting, without making conclusions. However, this is not about perceiving God as He is Himself, nor is it about a momentary clear understanding of the idea of God, or about some innate idea of God. We perceive God in accordance with our life experience, based on some special religious feeling, affect, based on religious experience or the religious instinct, or — as we have seen above — we understand God in heart and it is based on heart. Heart here often denotes not only the religious inside of man, but a compound of all cognitive forces, trials and possibilities. This science they often called *mystic realism*. It denotes and covers three areas: metaphysics, supernatural, and the immediate experience of God and — similar to that in relation to professional disciplines — it means: philosophy, theology and mystique.