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Introduction

As is so readily acknowledged by even its own offspring, the Russian philosophical tradition extends back only into the nineteenth century, by one reckoning even as late as the 1880s. The reason for this was and is itself the subject of some dispute. Suffice it to say that one prominent participant ascribed it to the lack of appropriate institutions, another to Russia's linguistic isolation and yet another to its autocephalous Orthodox religion. All of these conjectures have some merit, however unconvincing and inconclusive we may ultimately find each to be taken either singly or collectively. What is striking to even the casual observer of this era is that although rigorous secular philosophical argumentation arose in Western Europe already in the first half of the seventeenth century, we find nothing comparable in Russia until the nineteenth century. Philosophy as understood today, in short, took hold in the West during what is commonly dubbed the "Age of Reason," whereas in Russia philosophical reflections emerged in earnest and at the very earliest only with the advent of the Russian Romantic era, a period which is commonly dubbed the Russian "Golden Age." The consequence of this for its further evolution could not be more telling. Whereas philosophy in the West appealed to reason and logic to guide its efforts, philosophy in Russia was dominated by faith and even in some instances by a vaguely defined mystical intuition and only secondarily by reason. Likewise, many of their respective concerns sharply diverged. Although philosophers in the West at the time were riveted by epistemological issues, particularly those arising from the remarkable developmental pace of the natural sciences, philosophers in Russia exhibited less interest in these matters but all the more in the role and significance of their fundamental religious convictions in the face of the secularization of the quest for Truth. Whereas Descartes, Leibniz and Locke had scientific training, Russian philosophers came to philosophy often enough with a theological background.

Another predominant concern among Russian philosophers was the place of their own nation and its way of life among the other nations of the world – a rather odd preoccupation from the Western viewpoint, arguably revealing more about a widespread sense of insecurity among the country's educated elite than a description of reality. To speak of *German* Idealism, *British* Empiricism and *French* Existentialism

is common enough among Western philosophers, but by and large the concerns of these schools of thought were and are not thought to be limited to just their respective peoples. The national designations of these philosophical schools refer to the ethnicities of their chief exponents but not that the respective concerns were limited to that ethnic group. Surely, neither John Locke nor David Hume conceived empiricism as having to do solely with the people of the British Isles and that the French, for example, could not for whatever reason recognize its veracity. Likewise, the French Existentialists did not envision the absurdity of human existence to be limited to the French and some purportedly distinctive French way of life. Save, arguably, for a brief period in its recent history, German philosophers did not concern themselves with whether their nation had a unique destiny in world history, let alone with whether the consumption of beer and sausages while wearing lederhosen would safeguard the *Volk* from the pernicious ways of other peoples. Yet virtually all textbook treatments of Russian philosophy, be they Russian or Western, accept the so-called Slavophile Controversy – whether Russia had a distinctive and unique "spirit" and therefore developmental path – as one of, if not, the major topic in nineteenth century Russian *philosophy*! If the issues bantered about in the Slavophile Controversy were part and parcel of philosophy, Whitehead was certainly wrong in holding that the European philosophical tradition consists of a series of footnotes to Plato. Additionally, and even more astonishingly and inexcusably, all major historians of Russian philosophy, with a single possible exception, fail to ridicule and condemn this identification.

Another odd difference between the emergence of philosophy in the West and in Russia – odd in that it is contrary to what we might expect – is that whereas modern Western secular philosophy emerged outside academia (Descartes, Locke, Leibniz), in Russia, apart from such "philosophical" dilettantes as Herzen and Kirevskij, Chaadaev and Khomjakov, philosophy was institutionalized from the outset with Jurkevich in Moscow and Vladislavlev in St. Petersburg, both of whom were products of insular theological institutions. Much can and often is made in histories of Russian philosophy of the positivism and ethical-nihilistic espousals of several mid-century disgruntled young radicals, Chernyshevskij, Dobroljubov and Pisarev. Yet despite their enthrallment with natural science at the expense of other intellectual activities, none of these was trained as a scientist, and their rejection of absolute moral values was a product of neither extensive anthropological research nor a detailed critique, say, of Kant's practical philosophy. In short, much of secular Russian "philosophy" prior to Solov'ëv was not philosophy, and the rest, with but few exceptions, was theology in disguise.

This is not to say that Russian philosophers were totally at odds with the West in either their interests or their methodologies. As we will see in the pages to follow, the incipient Russian philosophical community, in fact, was certainly not averse to handling much the same problems as in the West. Indeed, one aim of the present work is to show this as well as its limitations in the reflections of its arguably most famous and influential representative. Solov'ëv, in his first major work, for example, sketched a philosophy of the history of philosophy reminiscent of Hegel, albeit with a different intent and in doing so found immanent faults in all of his illustrious

predecessors. This work, in turn, led to a serious exchange with one of his countrymen concerning phenomenalism and the role of the *a priori*. The examples could be multiplied. Arguably, the most significant of these aborted exchanges came in response to Solov'ëv's doctoral dissertation. Unfortunately, despite the harsh but detailed objections from Boris Chicherin, Solov'ëv simply chose to ignore them and thereby the opportunity to explain and refine his own thought was squandered. In short, then, contrary to the impression conveyed by most histories there was in Russia at least during the last quarter of the nineteenth century an eager audience for philosophical debate that would be recognized as such even in Western Europe at the time.

The above concerns and features come together in the subject of the present study, arguably the first Russian philosopher worthy of that designation, certainly its first systematic secular philosopher. Clearly, many historians refer to Solov'ëv as a religious philosopher, and there certainly is a great deal of merit in doing so. However, another, himself a prominent figure within Russian philosophy, at least on one occasion denied Solov'ëv was even a philosopher at all, for he "was much more a theologian and a religious pamphleteer than a philosopher. Systematic theoretical philosophy as such was of comparatively little interest to him."[1] Undoubtedly, Solov'ëv's early works, as we shall see, treat epistemological issues only in a most cursory manner, and S. L. Frank not without grounds observed that towards the end of his life Solov'ëv, realizing the inadequate theoretical grounding of his general position, was engaged in remedying the situation. In reply, though, this need not mean that Solov'ëv was not a philosopher, just as the absence of a traditionally-framed epistemological study in, say, Heidegger and Frege, Nietzsche and Whitehead, makes any of them any the less a philosopher. My position is simply that with Solov'ëv philosophy in Russia became, on the one hand, a secular discipline independent of dogmatic theology – even though it shared many of the latter's concerns – and of politics, on the other, despite his frankly inept posturing. We do not find this in Solov'ëv's predecessors. With Solov'ëv, solutions to at least some traditional philosophical questions were offered to be judged in terms of their own cogency, i.e., were *meant* to be evaluated in a manner that would be recognized as philosophical by other philosophers, and not just theologians or representatives of a political faction. This is certainly not to say that Solov'ëv consistently and without interruption thought and wrote as a philosopher. A mere cursory glance over a list of his publications will reveal to everyone's satisfaction that he labored for a sustained period on issues far removed from the professional concerns of philosophers.

Despite his pursuit of metaphysical and, frankly, religious issues, Solov'ëv did offer treatments, some extensive, some much less so, of problems still germane to the philosophical endeavor today. Additionally, Solov'ëv's treatment initiated a

[1] Frank 1996: 423. This quotation is from an essay "Pamjati L. M. Lopatina" originally published in 1930. At another, later time with a broader understanding of philosophy, Frank remarked of Solov'ëv that he "is in the history of Russian thought the first – and up to now the most distinguished – independent Russian philosopher, the first manifestation of a Russian philosophical genius." Frank 1996: 392. The quotation is from an article entitled "Dukhovnoe nasledie Vladimira Solov'ëva" first published in 1950.

sustained conversation within Russia to which many other voices contributed until forcibly repressed by those who found free and critical inquiry of any sort jeopardized and therefore was dangerous to their political agenda. At no earlier date and with no earlier ethnic Russian do we find philosophical issues treated for their own sake and with such consistency over time as in Solov'ëv. That this was the case at least with regard to Solov'ëv forms another aim of the present work.

Certainly, Solov'ëv did not emerge as a fully formed original philosopher. Like so many before him, he too entered the intellectual arena with preconceptions and interests that he sought to defend chiefly related to his Orthodox faith, and his manifest appeal to an arational faith and intellectual intuition to resolve philosophical dilemmas is surely disquieting. It is this overall religious frame of mind coupled with notable impatience towards epistemological issues not just in Solov'ëv but in Russian philosophy in general that gave and still gives the impression to Western eyes that philosophy in Russia before the Bolshevik Revolution was synonymous with religious philosophy. However, the complexion of Russian philosophy could have been different, and there were missed and squandered opportunities for it to develop along other lines or at least develop more analytically. Of course, the suppression of all critical thought in the aftermath of the Decembrist Uprising in the 1820s was the first of these. Had the seeds planted during the early years of Tsar Alexander I's reign been nurtured by a more caring and tolerant regime than that of Nicholas I, the tentative Russian Enlightenment may have grown and prospered. Such was not to be the case. Suspicions aroused by the events of 1825 were climaxed some two decades later by an overwhelming fear of contagion from the European revolutions of 1848, which saw the effective elimination of philosophical education within Russia's secular institutions of higher education until the accession of Nicholas' son, Tsar Alexander II.

Another even more poignant missed opportunity for Russian philosophy was the Chernyshevskij-Jurkevich dispute over materialism in 1860. The origins of the quarrel actually lie in an essay by Pëtr Lavrov, a philosophical autodidact, dealing with the human individual and to which Chernyshevskij gave a lengthy, albeit polemical, reply. It, in turn, was roundly criticized by Jurkevich, then at the Kiev Theological Academy, who argued against the materialist reduction of psychic phenomena to physical processes. Admittedly, much in Jurkevich's argument was cast in Biblical terms that even to the Western reader at the time would have sounded antiquated. However, Jurkevich did bluntly repeat many of the standard irreductionist's claims that were intelligible to his opponents. He argued, for example, that physicalist renderings of mental occurrences, such as my perception of a color or my sensation of pain, make no headway in explaining my subjective impressions, just as a physiological description sheds no light on the introspective psychology of hearing music or making sense of audible words. The most that the natural sciences could possibly establish is a uniform correlation between nerve impulses and sensations or representations. Although the sciences could conceivably determine that an activity of some particular sort in my brain stands in a one-to-one correlation with certain mental states and sensations, we cannot logically conclude from this alone that the conscious mind must be located "in" the brain, let alone be reducible to it or to its functioning.

Whereas Jurkevich did not deny a certain efficacy to the physicalist model, he held that only a subjectivist model, relying as it does on introspection, can give a faithful account of sensing and thinking. For in general conscious states as such lack both spatial extension and the other properties that make, say, this table and chair before me intersubjectively sensible. Not for a moment does Jurkevich question the absolute privacy of inner states, as Wittgenstein later would. In a curious fashion, the former believes that the qualitative transformation of physical phenomena, say, of vibrations of air into sound, requiring the presence of a sentient being, is an additional argument against materialism. He adds, however, that the transformation occurs not in the subject but in the *relation* between the subject and the object. Thus, according to this conception sound and color are not properties of physical objects in themselves but arise *from* their interaction with us. Furthermore, owing to this interaction there is nothing alarming in saying that our mental representations are conditioned by necessary forms, which are introduced through the activity of our cognitive apparati with its intrinsic constitution. Here lies, in his view, the proper construal of the Kantian thing in itself. To speak of matter, a physical thing, as it is in itself apart from any relation to a cognizant being, is an untenable conceptual abstraction. To Jurkevich, the ancients already discerned that such an abstract thought amounted to nothing. This nascent critique of reductionism and abstraction heavily influenced Solov'ëv.[2]

Extending this irreductionism to the moral sphere, Jurkevich disclaimed what he took to be the modern view that the mind was a faculty devoted purely to the production of representations and had nothing to do with a recognition of duties. In this construal of modernity, the job of moral philosophy is description with the goal being the establishment of abstract laws comparable to those in the natural sciences. Jurkevich responded, however, that such specifications of moral duties and of the moral law do nothing to explain the cause of moral activity. Statements of what is consistent with the moral demands of reason cannot summon us to act.

Jurkevich applauded the materialist rejection of Kant's ethical formalism, which dispensed with human nature in moral deliberations. However, he also rejected on the same basis what he perceived as the materialist espousal of hedonism and egoism: These moral doctrines exclude any consideration of the happiness of others. The error of egoism lies not in its concern with the moral actor's emotions, but with its neglect of the actor's relations to other people. The utilitarianism accepted by other materialists is also to be rejected for going to the other extreme. In holding that the moral good is tied to usefulness, utilitarianism erects yet another abstract standard. It derives human needs from the concept of use instead of realizing that the latter stems from the satisfaction of needs.

Chernyshevskij's reply to Jurkevich barely deserves mention. Its very title "Polemical Gems" is indicative of its nature, for it failed to address any substantive philosophical issues. It fell to his lieutenant at the journal *Sovremennik* (*The Contemporary*) to maintain the assault on idealism. In a series of articles, albeit of

[2] Jurkevich 1861: 105. After Jurkevich's death, Solov'ëv penned a panegyrical essay largely summarizing Jurkevich's works that he knew.

a popular nature, M. A. Antonovich, in effect, lambasted philosophers at his country's religious institutions, calling them "old philosophers" who preached not philosophy but mysticism, as opposed to the "new philosophers" who do not believe in an absolute and do not expound on unconditional, eternal ideals. The old philosophers want to entangle and bind human thought by means of scholastic devices for the benefit of those who are concerned only with themselves.[3] Although Antonovich repeated many of the same theses that Jurkevich opposed and were actually from today's perspective quite moderate, their mere iteration in a politically-charged journal placed them largely beyond the pale of academic discussion. Antonovich continued expressing his views in the decades that followed but received little recognition for his efforts. His clarion call was largely abandoned except for a few revolutionaries who preferred even more explicit utterances.

The fault, such as it was, however, was not limited to just one side. Among the idealists, there was no Russian equivalent of Otto Liebmann or Friedrich Lange in Germany to issue a wake-up call in light of the dismal state of philosophical reflection that would lead to ushering in multifarious epistemological inquiries. In any case, Jurkevich now secure at Moscow University, even though isolated and unpopular with the left-leaning student body, dropped the topic of materialism after having penned two articles devoted to it. Still S. L. Frank in the next century opined that, "In the 1860s Jurkevich was the sole independent and original Russian philosopher."[4] After little more than a decade later, his health declined precipitously leading to a premature death. His fundamental orientation took to heart Hegel's earlier admonition in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that science need not concern itself with asking for the conditions of its possibility: "In order to know it is unnecessary to have knowledge of knowledge itself."[5] Epistemology, above all, must therefore be a meta-physical inquiry into our means of establishing the *veracity* of putative knowledge-claims. No psychological explanation of the forms, principles and structure of human thought per se in isolation from such veracity can illuminate the nature of knowledge. No phenomenological description or account of thought can inform us when to assert or deny something. For this reason, Jurkevich accorded scant attention to the theory of knowledge as conceived in the modern era.

Even if we see this Russian *materialismusstreit* as a scorned opportunity for philosophy to develop outside religious confines, Jurkevich's influence on Solov'ëv extended beyond the circumscribed issues of this dispute. A marked preference for a Platonic direction in philosophy is one that Jurkevich reinforced in his best-known student if such was needed. Unlike in modern philosophy, and in particular Kant, who Jurkevich considered to have launched a new era in philosophy, Plato, in Jurkevich's eyes, sought to uncover the principles that make veridical, and not just valid, knowledge possible. Plato, like Kant, spoke of appearances, though in a different sense. What is empirically given is contrasted not to isolated objects, as in Kant, but to

[3] Antonovich 1861: 364.

[4] Frank 1996: 423. It is unclear on Frank's criteria why he does not accord Jurkevich the rather dubious honor of being the first Russian philosopher.

[5] Jurkevich 1859: 11.

objects given in reason. The former, for Plato, are unclear forms or images of what truly exists. Whereas Kant saw reason divorced from experience as moving into the realm of shadows and dreams, Plato saw experience in much this way. Whereas Kant saw knowledge as a web of intuitions, Plato saw it as a web of ideas. Kant contended that only knowledge of appearances, of objects as they appear to us, is possible, whereas Plato held that knowledge of what truly is is possible, and only such knowledge is knowledge in the proper sense. Kant's vision was to secure useful information; Plato's was to secure truth. Thus, their respective conceptions of science are quite different. Science in the modernist understanding, according to Jurkevich, could not possibly illuminate the world as it truly is. In stark contrast to Kant's vision, the Platonic position glorified natural science as the means by which we uncover the world.

Despite his harsh assessment, Jurkevich was not short on praise for Kant's "critical" philosophy, which recognized that experience, on which we normally rely to provide knowledge, is itself a product of reason. Moreover, it was largely due to Kant's efforts that philosophy triumphed over common-sense realism and that of those sciences which posit sense objects as existing in an independent space and time.[6] Jurkevich praised Kant for recognizing that the forms of cognized objects, which we ascribe to the empirically given, are engendered by our cognitive faculty. To this extent, Solov'ëv believed Jurkevich had revealed the veridical kernel in Kant's idealism, while at the same time reconciling Plato with both Leibniz and Hume.

In Jurkevich's Platonic understanding, "realism," regardless of its form, seeks to know the essences of things, which exist independently of the cognizing subject. Realism recognizes a distinction between a thing's original, independent properties and those properties it has in its interaction with us as cognizing subjects. Idealism, on the other hand, denies the very possibility of such independent things with original properties. It holds that a thing has an essence arising from that thing's rational participation in an idea. Each thing occupies a place in the worldly order as a result of a division of a general concept not dissimilar from Plato's theory of ideas. Contrary to Hegel's position, this participation is not subject to some inner development. Nor, as in Hegel, does an idea come to a dialectical realization of itself and certainly not through some involvement in the phenomenal order. Hegel's position blurs, as it were, two separate realms: that of the ideal and that of the phenomenal or apparent. Rather, the realm of ideal being is quite separate from the realm populated with the empirical objects surrounding us. Had Jurkevich been aware of the burgeoning debate over psychologism in Western Europe, he certainly would have weighed in against it. Ideas, or essences, are not mind-dependent; they are neither created by nor strictly correlative to the human psyche. In grasping, or intuiting, the idea of a thing, we thereby intuit its essence, which exists in a realm separate from material objects not unlike Frege's position, although Jurkevich here is even more explicitly a Platonist. Kant was led to confining knowledge to the merely apparent alone on the basis of psychological theories that equated the spirit with consciousness. On the contrary, Jurkevich claimed – not surprisingly given his theological background – that

[6] Jurkevich 1865: 353.

the spirit (*dukh*) is a real, existing substance, possessing more states and activities than those of which we can be conscious. Similarly, the laws of knowledge are neither properties nor the result of cognitive activity.

Notwithstanding his hostility towards so much of modern philosophy, Jurkevich, nevertheless, never unequivocally dismissed any of his predecessors. We have already mentioned his attitude with respect to Kant. Jurkevich saw another philosopher in whom Solov'ëv was particularly interested in his early years, Schelling, as attempting to explain reality through a reconciliation of two different, if not opposed, metaphysical points of view. One of these, belonging to pre-Kantian thought, recognizes being as primordial, whereas the other is concerned with positing the activity of thought as at least methodologically fundamental. Although Jurkevich valued the ambitious nature of Schelling's synthesis, he did not believe the project could be accomplished in a system whose inner development is conceived as logically necessary. Similarly, Jurkevich was critical of Hegel while yet appreciative and indebted – often enough without acknowledgement. Needless to say, Jurkevich, unlike Solov'ëv, did not conceive either the general, broad span of human development or the history of philosophy as progressively developing towards some ultimate finality.

Although V. D. Kudrjavcev, who taught at the Moscow Theological Academy and was a contemporary of Jurkevich, played a virtually insignificant role in the public dispute over materialism, a brief overview of his overall position is germane here.[7] For one thing, Solov'ëv attended his lectures, albeit only for a brief time, while auditing classes at the Academy. Additionally, Kudrjavcev is generally hailed as the founder of Russian religious philosophy, a designation often also accorded to Solov'ëv. Indeed, a comparison of their specific positions shows notable similarities and dislikes.[8] Unlike Jurkevich, who concentrated on specific issues, Kudrjavcev did not hesitate to present his opinions on a broad range of philosophical issues, even though he conveyed most of them in elementary, and hence cursory and unoriginal, textbook fashion. Like Jurkevich, but unlike Solov'ëv, Kudrjavcev devoted considerably less attention to philosophical ethics. However, he did present criticisms of the leading secular moral systems.[9] Nevertheless, there can be no mistake in categorizing Kudrjavcev as a religious philosopher, if the designation "philosopher" is even appropriate. We must exercise caution, however, in any discussion of influence, since most of the tenets of Kudrjavcev's philosophical positions appeared in print – today our only reliable source – only years after Solov'ëv's attendance in

[7] See Kudrjavcev 1877. Kudrjavcev, in this article, his principal contribution to the "*materialismusstreit*," argues that the teleology evident in nature cannot be accounted for in a materialist scheme. Another relevant and interesting, if not amusing, contribution is his 1880 essay "Materialisticheskij atomizm," in which he rejects nineteenth century atomistic theories. See Kudrjavcev-Platonov 1894. Since this piece originally appeared as a supplement in a multi-volume Russian collection of the writings of the Church Fathers, it could hardly have reached a large audience.

[8] Particularly intriguing is the fact that in October 1874 Kudrjavcev gave a public speech on Comte and positivism, which would form one of the central concerns of Solov'ëv's *magister*'s thesis. See Kudrjavcev 1875.

[9] In this regard, see in particular Kudrjavcev 1893: 419–441.

his classes.[10] Certainly, it is possible that Solov'ëv heard Kudrjavcev's ideas being espoused while they were, so to speak, incubating. It is also just as possible that he heard no such thing and that the influence was, in fact, in the opposite direction.[11]

Kudrjavcev called his position "transcendental monism," though "transcendental" should not be understood in either the Kantian or the Husserlian sense.[12] Kant himself was a subjective idealist in Kudrjavcev's eyes. The appellation "monism" is more appropriate in that he viewed all things as interconnected under God, Who served as the guarantor of this unity. The existence of God is ultimately not subject to philosophical, or rational, proof, for logic cannot proceed from the conditioned to the unconditioned. This is not to say that philosophical proofs are valueless. They provide corroboration for faith and divine revelation. Indeed, the central concern running through all of Kudrjavcev's philosophical publications is asserting a role for philosophy with respect to religion with its Divine revelations and contemporary natural science with its ostensive applicability.

A similar train of thought lies behind Kudrjavcev's criticism of Descartes, whose methodology is faulted for its application to the entire cognitive sphere. What Descartes failed to recognize is that reason is not the sole avenue to truth. Besides the verities proffered by religion, empirical truths are supported by facts, i.e., by an agreement with reality. However, the validity of a factual statement cannot be determined by reason alone. This does not mean that the natural sciences are above critical reproach and should remain sacrosanct. Each contains operative concepts accepted on faith but whose fundamental significance stands in need of rational investigation. It is here that philosophy can serve a useful role. Additionally, important questions remain largely unanswered and even unaddressed by the sciences. Without necessarily transgressing into the religious sphere, we see that science cannot answer such problems as the origin of space, time and matter, let alone the goal of the ordered universe. Here again philosophy performs a vital task. The ultimate goal of science is neither merely the accumulation of isolated facts nor even of natural laws governing these facts and their connections. Rather, it lies in an understanding of their sense, the discovery of their inner principles and the clarification of how scientific facts emerge from these principles.

Kudrjavcev conceded the primacy of epistemology in the construction of a philosophical system, and in this he certainly differed with the early Solov'ëv. Even though he rejected Kant's stance, Kudrjavcev did not deny that a subjective element

[10] This is not to say that Kudrjavcev remained unpublished into the mid-1870s. Despite their number, his publications at this point were largely confined to religious matters. His most significant work in this regard was his doctoral dissertation in theology *Religija, eja sushchnost' i proiskhozhdenie* [*Religion, Its Essence and Origin*], which originally appeared serially in the journal *Pravoslavnoe obozrenie*. See Kudrjavcev 1874.

[11] Zenkovsky categorically denies any influence of Solov'ëv on the scholars at the theological institutions. Zenkovsky 1953: 532. Yet we should recall that Solov'ëv's first publications appeared in the same journal in which Kudrjavcev published, a journal that Dahm called "notorious as the pugnacious propaganda instrument for mysticism and religion." Dahm 1975: 223.

[12] Kudrjavcev 1893: 72.

enters into our representations of external objects, but this does not prevent us from acquiring valid cognitions of them. Kant was wrong in thinking that our external sensations and even the necessary and universal forms of space and time are merely subjective. The subjective element in cognition can always be isolated from the objective, thereby allowing us access to objects as they are in themselves. The very fact of science and that of scientific investigations testify to such knowledge. However, such claims, we should add, reveal the depth, or rather lack thereof, of Kudrjavcev's penetration into Kant's transcendental idealism. Kudrjavcev likens space and time, as subjective forms of sense cognition, to color and sound, all of which do not exist as such in things but arise in their relation to us. Nevertheless, even though our cognitive faculty applies space and time to objects, this does not mean that space and time are purely subjective. What is important to note here is that Kudrjavcev does not logically argue for his positions but merely offers them as obvious truths.

Whereas colors, tastes and smells can be abstracted from empirical objects, such cognitive objects as God, truth and the good cannot be. That they do not arise in any way from sense intuition or experience is clear from the fact that they do not have empirical characteristics. Taking his cue from Hume when it serves his own purposes, Kudrjavcev alleges, albeit without proof, that these qualities are universal and categorical and as such cannot be derived from experience. Moreover, since they cannot be obtained from experience nor by means of abstraction from experience, we human beings must have another faculty whose object is just these ideal beings. We will see in the following chapters that Solov'ëv too follows this path. However, Kudrjavcev believes, unlike Solov'ëv, that reason is just this faculty.[13] It is here that Kudrjavcev's Platonism becomes most pronounced. All scientific knowledge presupposes another, a higher, knowledge, a knowledge of ideas or essences. This is philosophical knowledge.[14] These ideas do not lie in a distinct sphere separate from our phenomenal world. Essences, rather, are present in every rational thing around us. There is no sharp border cleaving the empirical from the ideal. For this reason, philosophy, true to its own essence, cannot restrict its concern merely to essences, which are what an object ideally should be. In practice, then, philosophy is concerned with truth, namely, the agreement of the apparent state of affairs with the ideal, and thus the principles and goals of existence.

Kudrjavcev recognizes that philosophy is concerned with the ultimate questions. Its instrument is reason. Applied to the human being, this means that philosophy deals with what we ideally should be, that is, with our moral perfection. Life, however, cannot wait for philosophy, or science for that matter, to provide answers. It is here that religion steps in.

The most disconcerting feature of Kudrjavcev's reflections are not his answers to difficult questions and certainly not his ultimate resignation in favor of religious belief. Rather, it is his abandonment of rational inquiry in the face of difficulties. We find this time and again in his treatment of specific issues, and we will find this

[13] Kudrjavcev 1893: 118.

[14] Kudrjavcev 1901: 22.

repeatedly in Solov'ëv. Objecting to the materialism preached by many of his contemporaries, he abandoned a rational and scientifically-based analysis of their arguments. Much the same can be said of his treatments of a whole host of other philosophical problems. Kant's treatment of space as Kudrjavcev understood it, for example, could not possibly be correct even though the reasoning involved is flawless. "Thus, we must seek the weakness of Kant's theory of space and time not in his fundamental theses or premises, but in the conclusions he inferred from these premises."[15] Kudrjavcev may not have been the originator of this procedure, but it surely did get passed on either directly or indirectly to Solov'ëv.

No sketch, however brief, of the formative philosophical influences on Solov'ëv can avoid mentioning the early Russian Slavophiles, particularly Kireevskij and Khomjakov. We need not dwell excessively on this or attempt to add to or, arguably, subtract from what has already been written. In fact, the overwhelming consensus attributes much of Solov'ëv's early philosophy to his absorption of Slavophile doctrine. Konstantin Mochul'skij, to cite just one example, summarily opined that,

> Solov'ëv absorbed entirely Kireevskij's world-view. His dissertation bears the character of a disciple: its fundamental thesis, the synthesis of philosophy and religion, its view of Western philosophy as the development of rationalism, the idea of the integrity of life, of metaphysical cognition, of the necessity of combining Western thought with Eastern speculation were all expressed by Kireevskij. He even inspired Solov'ëv's plan of investigation: a critique of the Scholastics, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Schelling and Hegel.[16]

In opposition to Mochul'skij's slavish subordination of Solov'ëv to the early Slavophiles, we could adduce a veritable litany of differences between them. Walicki in his panoramic study of Slavophilism lists a number of important points of departure.[17] A. F. Losev, himself a noted Russian philosopher in the tradition of Solov'ëv, pointed out that in addition to their doctrinal disagreements, there was a difference in temperament between Solov'ëv and the Slavophiles. Whereas the former remained a nineteenth century philosopher who thought in terms of systematic categories, this could not be said of any of the latter. In terms of their philosophical outlook, Solov'ëv always maintained that Spinoza was his first love.[18] Moreover, his debt, as we shall see, to Kant, Schopenhauer and von Hartmann is something we could never so much as imagine of the early Slavophiles, with whom he was allegedly so enthralled.[19] Solov'ëv himself once commented on this subject in a reply to a lengthy article by Pavel Miljukov, a historian and later prominent politician, that even though its abstract merits supported tendencies that were not only incorrect but even pernicious for Russia early Slavophilism contained "the germ of the true

[15] Kudrjavcev-Platonov 1893: 236.

[16] Mochul'skij 1936: 54.

[17] Walicki 1989: 563.

[18] Losev 2000: 255.

[19] Sutton has also recognized that whereas Solov'ëv "found much in Slavophilism that was congenial to him," he "did not belong to their 'camp', nor indeed to any camp." Sutton. Vladimir Solov'ëv. 2000: 3.

understanding of Christianity, albeit hidden and crushed by other hostile tenets."[20] Perhaps most judiciously, Aleksandr Nikol'skij, in a pioneering study from 1902, already concluded that given the number of similarities between Solov'ëv and the Slavophiles one could not simply dismiss the idea that he belonged to the Slavophile camp. Yet for all that, they were just one source among others.[21]

The massive literature on Slavophilism in general and, to a lesser, though still considerable, degree, on Solov'ëv's relationship to that "camp" makes it arguably unnecessary and unwise for a philosophical study to dwell at length on those topics. Such an undertaking would require in any case a detailed exposition of Slavophilism, no representative of which wrote a substantial philosophical work comparable in length and depth to Solov'ëv's.[22] Moreover, our concern here is foremost with the latter and the veracity and cogency of the ideas expressed in his writings. While a study of the influences on the formation of an individual's thought can help illuminate what that individual intended and on occasion to whom an argument was addressed, the responsibility for the veracity and coherence of one's ideas rests with the individual expressing them. Regardless of whether Solov'ëv's position on a particular topic was influenced by some other individual or by some other work, we have to presume that he personally accepted the argument or thesis advanced under his own name lest we entirely forego individual culpability. Solov'ëv surely was a resolute opponent of positivism and all forms of reductionism. In this, he certainly was both a product and reflection of his era and locale. Seeking to combat these vociferous "isms," which dismissed metaphysics as a relic of a superseded stage in human thought, Solov'ëv sought to show their impotence in resolving a host of problems and our absolute need to embrace metaphysics in any search for truth. The title of the present study reflects the present author's view that Solov'ëv sought to reinstate a quest for metaphysics, however we may view its success and viability, and in doing so eradicate the threat posed by positivism. The spread of this "ism" in nineteenth century Russia, the study of which as one scholar has remarked has been notably neglected, is the subject of an appendix to this volume.[23]

Quite unabashedly the scope of the present study, being Solov'ëv's early philosophy, is restricted both thematically and chronologically. It was during the years from 1874 to 1881 that Solov'ëv was overtly interested in pursuing a career as a philosophy professor and with this aspiration penned most of his narrowly focused philosophical works. Abandoning hope for the desired professorship, Solov'ëv turned his attention more or less through the remaining years of the 1880s towards the role of the Russian state and people in Western Civilization, and his writings expressed open support for ecumenicalism and a reunification of the Christian churches. These are hardly topics for philosophical discussion despite the fact that

[20] Solov'ëv 1893: 154. This is in response to Miljukov 1893. For Miljukov's brief reply to Solov'ëv see Miljukov 1903.

[21] Nikol'skij 1902: 417.

[22] For a quite interesting and informative study of Solov'ëv's attitude towards Slavophilism, particularly its interpretation of Russian history, see Schrooyen. 2000.

[23] de Courten. 2004: 194.

they have garnished so much attention in the secondary literature. Owing to their topical irrelevance, they do not play a role in the present work. The reader will also find barely a mention of Solov'ëv's numerous poems and other occasional pieces that would later prove a valuable source of income for the cash-strapped philosopher. Those who seek information on such concerns and issues had best look elsewhere. They will find no shortage of source material – some good, some mediocre at best. The literature on Solov'ëv has grown dramatically in recent years, and has ballooned enormously in Russia since the end of the Communist era. I have purposely omitted a full discussion of these topics not because I seek to downplay their significance in Solov'ëv's life, and thereby create a ludicrously false portrayal, but because they have no place in philosophy as presently – and quite properly – conceived. Too long have studies in Russian philosophy, both in Russia itself as well as in the West, treated the topics of Russia's place in the world and religious questions as germane and endemic to Russian thought. They, thereby, disseminated the now widespread, though somewhat false, impression among Western students of philosophy that Russian thinkers never grappled with the same issues they have. Too long have studies, in fact, shied away from Solov'ëv's purely philosophical concerns and writings, leaving the study of his ideas, and Russian philosophy in general, in the hands of chauvinistic nationalists, religious zealots and outright mystics. No wonder, then, that Western students of philosophy have virtually no inkling of, for example, Solov'ëv's later proto-phenomenological rejection of Cartesianism, his defense of free will or his virtue ethics. However, in the interest of thematic unity and brevity I have also largely refrained from dealing with the philosophical publications stemming from the last decade or so of his life. While these are of great interest owing to their being pregnant with challenging ideas and directly confront many of the positions Solov'ëv's upheld in his early years, they stand in need of a separate and thorough investigation. In this sense, the situation with Solov'ëv is not too dissimilar from the way in which studies of Wittgenstein rarely deal in a single treatise with both his early and late philosophical reflections.

Nor will the reader find in the following pages an extended discussion of such well-known Solov'ëvian ideas as Sophia, the Eternal Feminine and even of his *religious* philosophy on the whole, understanding the latter as a perspective that accords primacy to non-secular concepts and categories even though these can be found in writings from Solov'ëv's early period.[24] The present writer could not possibly hope to depict Solov'ëv's position in these matters with the least bit of objectivity, let alone the compassion, understanding and impartiality that any serious study requires. The reader will also find that the only examination of Solov'ëv's belletristic writings herein is in the service of illuminating his philosophical thought and his philosophical biography. Although such an omission can be rationalized, the simple fact is that his ample excursions into poetry are of little interest per se to this writer and only rarely illuminates his philosophical stand. Although a competent psychobiographer might possibly find considerable raw material in the many poetic compositions that illuminate Solov'ëv's thought and personality, this avenue is

[24] For a complete definition of "religious philosophy," see Sutton. The Problematic Status. 2000: 538.

arguably best left to competent medical professionals. In any case, they again hardly fit into the scheme of rational argumentation.

There can be no question that religious concerns played a large role in Solov'ëv's formulations as well as in those of his predecessors and successors. One could conceivably argue that just as Kant's epistemology presupposed the veracity of Newtonian physics, so too did Solov'ëv's philosophical reflections presuppose the truth of Christianity. Notwithstanding Hume's pointed assaults on the certainty of many epistemic claims, Kant accepted modern Newtonian physics as an established fact and saw no need to argue specifically for it. In a similar fashion, Solov'ëv saw no need to argue specifically for the existence of God and for the basic tenets of the Christian faith. For him, they were as palpably true as the tenets of the scientific revolution were for Kant. During his adult years, Solov'ëv maintained a resolute conviction in the veracity of his religious beliefs, in the baseless nature of metaphysical skepticism and in a religious interpretation of world history. That from his viewpoint so many others within Europe shared his basic stance only solidified his position. However, Solov'ëv's solution to philosophical problems related to religious and metaphysical cognition bears little resemblance to what we find in either Kant or in the emergent European neo-Kantian traditions. Simply put, Solov'ëv located an untenable abstraction at the heart of transcendental idealism that, as we shall see, formed the focus of the major work from his early years.

Despite his obvious familiarity with the writings of Hegel, Schopenhauer and those of the latter's now largely forgotten disciple Eduard von Hartmann, there is no indication that Solov'ëv kept abreast of philosophical developments in Western Europe. Although he had a sufficient facility in reading German to prepare a highly competent Russian translation of Kant's *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, we would look in vain for even the slightest hint of a recognition of the contemporaneous neo-Kantian movement, which certainly was well underway during most of the period of Solov'ëv's philosophical creativity.[25] Although we are told he devoured philosophical texts already in his teen years, there is no clearly discernable indication that he had a more thorough grounding in the history of modern philosophy than what could be provided by survey textbooks. We would search in vain for evidence to lend credence to the secondary claim that he "possessed a wide knowledge of the development of western philosophy," if by "wide" we understand the in-depth knowledge expected of Western doctoral students.[26]

Whereas we can be rest assured that Solov'ëv had a quite reasonable competence in the French and English languages, his published works notably lack the scholarly apparatus that we normally associate with an intellectual of the first order. To his benefit (!),

[25] F. A. Lange's *History of Materialism* originally appeared in 1866 with several subsequent editions, thus well within Solov'ëv's lifetime. Additionally, a Russian translation appeared in 1881–1883. Hermann Cohen's works, *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung* and *Kants Begründung der Ethik*, which effectively launched the neo-Kantian movement, appeared in 1871 and 1877 respectively. Solov'ëv does not appear to have so much as noticed the publication of either or even the ballooning argument between Trendelenburg and Fischer that initiated Cohen's works.

[26] Copleston 1986: 212.

though, this may simply be a reflection of a certain laziness on his part rather than a reflection of any incompetence.[27] Even in his relatively late ethical opus, *The Justification of the Good*, he cites a German-language translation of Darwin's *The Descent of Man*, though Solov'ëv certainly knew English well enough to read Darwin in the original. In any case, there were already at least three Russian translations of it at the time, two under the editorship of the noted neurophysiologist I. M. Sechenov. In short, Solov'ëv simply did not go out of his way to insure scholarly accuracy of what he must have regarded as a secondary concern to the elaboration of his own views. As for French, he had a sufficient command of the language to write fluidly in it even though he requested others for whom it was a first language to edit as needed his writings in that language. What is inexcusable is the silence in the secondary literature to observe Solov'ëv's casual attitude towards scholarly standards.

Our estimation of Solov'ëv's thought need not be seriously diminished by our recognition of his disregard of now-accepted standards of punctiliousness. After all, Wittgenstein's acquaintance with the original texts that constitute the Western philosophical heritage was undoubtedly slight. From all indications, Solov'ëv's general knowledge of the history of philosophy must have been virtually encyclopedic compared to Wittgenstein's, and yet no one seriously challenges Wittgenstein's rank among the greatest twentieth century philosophers as a result.

My attempt, in effect, to sunder Solov'ëv's traditional philosophical concerns from his mysticism and even his religious philosophy in general, to "deconstruct" in van der Zweerde's terminology, is bound to raise eyebrows.[28] It should not and need not. It is not incumbent on the political philosopher to dwell at length on the intricacies of the empiricism of Locke and Mill when discussing their respective political philosophies, although in both cases the respective political theories were intimately connected with their overall philosophical positions. The former's *Two Treatises of Government* and the latter's *On Liberty* can be studied and valued as works in political philosophy without presupposing a detailed knowledge of, on the one hand, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* or, on the other, the *System of Logic*. Nevertheless, if we find Solov'ëv's excursions in epistemology, metaphysics and ethics severely flawed, have we then undermined his treatments of those other "higher" concerns? The present writer believes this is the case and that, as a consequence, those issues must be provided at a minimum with another foundation. Simply stated, his handling of those "higher" concerns rests on Solov'ëv's positions taken in dealing with the "lower-order" concerns, a definite and significant crack in which places the former in dire jeopardy.

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[27] Sutton writes that Solov'ëv was self-taught in philosophy and theology and that he "had a prodigious capacity for learning and hard work." Sutton. Vladimir Solov'ëv. 2000: 4. It is this alleged capacity for hard work that I believe needs to be shown and that I question.

[28] van der Zweerde writes of at least three moves that must be made so that Solov'ëv's philosophical heritage can be appropriated and appreciated within the general philosophical culture: a de-nationalization of his philosophy, a de-russification of the perception of his thought and a de-christianization of his world-view. The present study is, in effect, an intended contribution along this path, albeit from a Western scholar. See Zweerde 2000: 41–42.

The volume before you, while in part itself constituting a study of a chapter in the history of Russian philosophy is also in part philosophical biography. Above all, my concern and aim throughout this study will be two-fold: (1) an analysis of Solov'ëv's philosophical positions and (2) an examination of the disputes in which Solov'ëv actively engaged. Not only are the disputes insufficiently known in the West, but their influence on Solov'ëv's thought and writings are also inadequately recognized. In short, Solov'ëv played a very active role in the intellectual and philosophical life of his time and country. To neglect these disputes, as too often happens in both Western and Russian treatments, is to underestimate the vibrant atmosphere of the Russian philosophical community, numerically small though it was, in the decades preceding the Bolshevik Revolution, a vibrancy that in the succeeding years was completely eradicated in the most brutal fashion. In doing so, I hope to retrieve something for the Western student from Russia's philosophical past, its adolescence, if you will, which like many adolescents exhibited great energy in a number of different directions, but in Russia's case, met an abrupt termination, we could even say an execution, by circumstances out of its control.

The plan of the present work is quite simple. Proceeding chronologically, we will examine each of Solov'ëv's early philosophical works, pausing when appropriate to look at an exchange of views between Solov'ëv and the disputing party or parties. Thus, we will examine sequentially Solov'ëv's first publications – and the reactions to them – most notably his *Crisis of Western Philosophy*, followed in succeeding chapters by his only comparatively recently published manuscript "Sophia," his "Principles of Integral Philosophy," the *Lectures on Divine Humanity* and lastly his major philosophical treatise the *Critique of Abstract Principles*. However, there will also be much said in terms of Solov'ëv's biography. Of few other distinguished philosophers can we more appropriately say that the events in his life shed light on his concerns and approach to them. Understandably, many may object to this claim, seeing it as purely wishful thinking and contentious. I make no claim for its falsifiability. Should anyone adamantly object out of fear of the interjection of a subjective, psychological element into the analyses to follow, maintaining that there is no place in philosophy for biography, it is my sincere belief that all of my criticisms of Solov'ëv's philosophical stances are immanently dictated in terms of the very approach he himself initiated and pursued. Yet, who would deny, for example, that knowing something about Wittgenstein's life makes the *Philosophical Investigations* that much more fascinating even though we do not take his biography into account when examining, say, the private-language argument?

Traditionally, at the end of an author's introductory comments expressions of thanks are in order to those who have assisted in one way or another in preparing the text that follows and in obtaining the research materials used. Even were this neither a tradition nor some Kantian duty to do so, I would want to express my appreciation for the invaluable resources offered foremost by the New York Public Library, the Rutgers University Library and the resources of numerous other university libraries through inter-library loans. A special word of thanks must be extended to the anonymous reviewers who patiently and carefully recognized omissions and flaws in the original manuscript. I hope I have answered many of their concerns to the best of

my ability while remaining faithful to my intentions and outlook. A word of thanks is certainly in order to all the many participants in the various on-line discussion groups that helped me at least to focus my perspective and clarify my thoughts regarding Solov'ëv and his works. I would like to thank in particular two individuals, Kristi Groberg of North Dakota State University and Evert van der Zweerde of Radboud University in Nijmegen for encouragement, comments and materials over the many years this work was coalescing. While they surely would not agree with all, perhaps even many, of the criticisms and opinions expressed in this study, I hope they are not embarrassed by this expression of thanks. I would also like to extend my deep appreciation to the staff of Springer for their generous encouragement and professionalism throughout the publication process, especially Ties Nijssen and Anita van der Linden-Rachmat. Finally but by no means least, a heartfelt thanks to my wife and children who with great forbearance allowed me to devote so much of my free time to the preparation of this work.

It should be noted that all dates are given according to the Julian calendar in effect in Russia in the nineteenth century, which lagged 12 days behind the Gregorian calendar in use in the West. The transliteration of Russian names into English always presents a quandary. The spelling of those names most familiar to readers have been retained: Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky. However, in the case of individuals less familiar to the English-speaking public but who have similar names to those great writers I have rendered their names in a manner consistent with the others, for example, S. A. Tolstaja. In those instances where I reference an English-language translation, I have given the author's name as it appears in the English. For example, Solov'ëv's nephew's name is given throughout as "Sergey Solovyov" in keeping with the spelling preferred by the translator of Solovyov's biography of his uncle. The one exception here is to the spelling of the name of the present volume's subject. For now, there is no consensus how it should be rendered: Soloviev, Solovyov, etc. For this reason and no other – other than habit – I have used Solov'ëv.

Chapter 1
A Voyage of Discovery

Unquestionably, Solov'ëv's public defense of his *magister*'s thesis in November 1874 ushered in a new era in Russian philosophy. Certainly, he himself viewed this early work in prophetic terms, i.e., as signaling the start of post-Western philosophy, which he already characterized at this time as "concrete thought." The sheer number of reviews it evoked – many of them hostile – together with the wide press coverage of the defense shows that Russian intellectual circles recognized the significance and provocative character of the thesis. In order to grasp both Solov'ëv's early work and its author's later intellectual trajectory, we need to understand the historical background of the thesis as well as the train of thought evinced therein. The first of the two parts to this chapter is largely a historical account of the intellectual path Solov'ëv took during his early years that culminated in his *magister*'s thesis, a veritable biography of *The Crisis of Western Philosophy*. The second, much lengthier part, presents a detailed analysis of Solov'ëv's treatment of the history of philosophy, culminating in a brief section dealing with his own systematic views to the degree that they can be gleaned at this time. We will see that besides a sizeable debt to his country's philosophical and religious traditions, Solov'ëv's first foray into philosophy rested heavily on his interpretation of the results of current German thought.

1.1 Genesis of *The Crisis*

In early June 1873 at the age of 20 years, Vladimir Solov'ëv completed the formal requirements for the basic undergraduate degree, the *kandidat*, from the liberal arts faculty of the University of Moscow. Despite his exceptional performance in secondary school, his years at the university were marked with indecision, a good measure of insouciance, and a decided lack of scholarly diligence. Having initially enrolled in 1869 in the liberal arts faculty, he switched while still in his first year of

T. Nemeth, *The Early Solov'ëv and His Quest for Metaphysics*, International Archives of the History of Ideas/Archives internationales d'histoire des idées 212,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-01348-0_1,

study to the science faculty.[1] Regrettably, Solov'ëv never commented on the reason for this change, and consequently there is much room for speculation. Whatever the case, his devotion to his new scientific studies, on the whole, was less than exemplary, and his results were considerably lower than what we would expect, given his earlier academic record in secondary school. Of course, the possibility exists that his youthful enthusiasm for the sciences waned with the passage of time or that his increasing religious fervor may have averted him from the path towards a career in science, presumably biology, which in his day and place meant a naturalistic explanation of the world. Both possibilities, however, must surely sound quite disingenuous. Nevertheless, Solov'ëv did persevere – at least for a time. Although a great deal of uncertainty remains even today as to the specific grades he received during these years, there is no doubt that as the academic year 1872–1873 progressed, Solov'ëv, after "repeated failures with microscopes, plates and test tubes," became more and more discouraged, if he had not already given up all hope of succeeding.[2]

On 18 April 1873, Solov'ëv addressed to the rector of Moscow University a request to sit for final examinations not in the sciences, but in the liberal arts faculty. His academic hopes rested on taking advantage of a university statute that with authorization allowed the waiving of course requirements for a degree upon satisfactory performance on the respective final exams alone. Exactly when the idea of switching back to the liberal arts came to Solov'ëv is unclear. In any case, his request was granted, and during the course of the next month he took a total of 17 examinations, obtaining the highest grade possible in all but ancient history and Greek.

The final degree requirement, which Solov'ëv could not have circumvented, was the submission of a *kandidat*'s dissertation, comparable to what we would call today a senior thesis. Unfortunately, a copy of what he wrote has not survived nor even has definitive information as to the topic. Solov'ëv himself never mentioned what he offered to fulfill this requirement, and the official records reveal nothing other than the formal notation that the work was received and accepted! Had we a copy of the dissertation, even information as to its content or topic, we might have a clearer idea of Solov'ëv's plans for the immediate future as he conceived them at the time. In an early comment, Solov'ëv's nephew, Sergey, concluded that, based, as he later confessed, on what his father, Vladimir's younger brother, had told him, Vladimir's first published article, which appeared in November 1873, was originally submitted as the dissertation.[3] On the other hand, a long-time friend of Vladimir's, Leo Lopatin, who later taught philosophy at Moscow University, wrote: "If my memory is not mistaken, Solov'ëv expounded in a fairly detailed manner the metaphysical principles

[1] In his biography of his uncle, Sergey Solovyov wrote that already Vladimir's "main interest was, of course, philosophy." This seems highly unlikely, particularly in light of the swift change in his field of study. Solovyov 2000: 55.

[2] *Pis'ma*, vol. 3: 67. Already in a letter of 12 October 1871 to his cousin E. V. Romanova, and thus while in his *second* year of studies, Solov'ëv admonished her not to study the natural sciences. Certainly such a deprecation of one's chosen field of study would hardly be conducive to academic excellence. On the other hand, we cannot simply dismiss the possibility that the attitude may have been the *result*, rather than the cause, of his poor results.

[3] Solovyov 2000: 89.

of the later Schelling in his *kandidat*'s dissertation (for which he submitted a preliminary outline of *The Crisis*)."[4] Of course, it is possible that Solov'ëv did submit some sort of draft outline of *The Crisis* that has since been lost. It is also possible that he wrote an exposition of Schelling's later views. If, however, Lopatin is implying that such an exposition was subsequently incorporated in some manner into *The Crisis*, this is simply incorrect. As we shall see shortly, Solov'ëv accords Schelling scant attention in his finished book.

Whatever Solov'ëv's plans were in April–May 1873, there is no basis for doubting that at approximately this time he harbored hopes of pursuing a *magister*'s degree in philosophy. For shortly later in a letter dated 2 June 1873 to his friend Nikolai I. Kareev, he wrote of a surprising change in plans:

> I want to substitute a *magister*'s degree in theology for one in philosophy. To do this I will take the *kandidat*'s exam at the theological academy, which is equal to our *magister*'s. Then I will have to defend a thesis. All of this will take two years.[5]

Of course, in this letter Solov'ëv did not say when he had this change of heart to pursue theology. We can, however, with measured confidence conclude that at the end of his formal undergraduate career Solov'ëv intended to continue studies in philosophy. Thus, whatever his *kandidat*'s dissertation might have been it was philosophical rather than theological in character for the following reasons:

1. Based on Lopatin's testimony, Solov'ëv had begun an intense reading of the chief figures in modern philosophy when he was already 16 years of age. This reading most likely continued until at least the early months of 1873. Since he had to submit a sustained piece of writing in short order, a philosophical treatise would have come more readily and, therefore, more swiftly than one in theology.
2. Although his interest in religion and religious matters was rising dramatically at this time, his concerns in April–May, based admittedly on correspondence from several months earlier, were more of a philosophical than a theological nature.
3. During this period, Solov'ëv developed a particularly close relationship with Pamfil Jurkevich, who held the chair in philosophy at Moscow University. Surely the latter would have tried to influence, if not encourage, him in some manner to submit a paper dealing with the history of philosophy.[6]

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[4] Lopatin 1913: 409f.

[5] *Pis'ma*, vol. 4: 147.

[6] The record is unclear as to what extent Solov'ëv attended Jurkevich's lectures. True, soon after his mentor's death in October 1874, Solov'ëv published a panegyric essay that *mentioned* Jurkevich's classroom presence, but this could have been surmised easily enough from the accounts of others or after attending a few classes at most. Solov'ëv's essay, confining itself to the ideas in Jurkevich's publications, makes no reference to philosophical digressions, departures or amplifications made in class. The few asides Solov'ëv gives in his article were drawn explicitly from personal conversations with his former teacher. I take these as considerations why we must be cautious in accepting Radlov's claim that Solov'ëv heard Jurkevich's lectures, if by that Radlov meant Solov'ëv regularly attended his philosophy classes. All accounts of Solov'ëv's undergraduate years corroborate a lack of enthusiasm for his studies. Moreover, since Radlov makes other factual errors concerning Solov'ëv's biography, there is no reason for us to think that he had any privileged information in this matter. For Solov'ëv's essay on Jurkevich, see PSS, vol. 1: 156–175. For Radlov's statement, see Radlov 1913: X.

On the basis of surviving letters to his cousin, E. V. Romanova, we can confidently conclude that during the subsequent summer months of 1873, Solov'ëv spent many of his days studying works from the history of philosophy. He made no secret of his new intentions, however, which made little sense to his privately religious though thoroughly secular father, a distinguished professor of history at the University. At a time when theological studies were almost exclusively for the sons of priests intent themselves on entering the priesthood, Vladimir's choice could seriously jeopardize any chance for a successful academic career. Even friends from his adolescent years found his decision most bizarre. Well aware of his views from a few years earlier, a period during which he espoused materialism and a religious skepticism, they must have regarded his new plan as a complete flip-flop, bordering on madness. Solov'ëv was aware of his friends' impressions. He wrote to his cousin in August: "I already arouse misunderstanding. Some consider me a nihilist, others a religious fanatic, and a third group simply a lunatic."[7] Nevertheless and most importantly, Solov'ëv now saw for himself a new, virtually messianic, role that would underlie and be embodied in his *magister*'s thesis:

> …the existing order of things (above all, the social and civil order, interpersonal relations, which determine all of human life), that this existing order is not as it *should* be, that it is based, not on reason and justice, but, rather, for the most part, on meaningless fortuity, blind force, egoism and forced submission.[8]

Since the existing order "is not as it *should* be," it can and must be changed. To effect this, Solov'ëv believed we must start by convincing people of the veracity of Christianity and not by a political revolution. Although it is far from clear exactly what Solov'ëv expected the world to be like when the masses accepted his vision of Christianity, it is clear that the present popular version is merely a pseudo-Christianity, a "simple semi-conscious faith" wrapped in an "irrational form" and "encumbered by all sorts of meaningless trash." What needs to be done is usher in the absolutely rational form of Christianity that is appropriate to its "eternal content." To achieve this goal, the new Christian philosopher must master both the sciences and philosophy as a whole. The apparent opposition of science and modern philosophy to religion has actually yielded the possibility of an Hegelian *Aufhebung*, in which the conflict between reason and religious belief will disappear and along with it what served as the obstacle preventing the universal acceptance of Christianity.

Presumably in connection with his goal to pursue theological studies, Solov'ëv, in late July or at the beginning of August, also conceived the idea of writing an article on the history of religion.[9] He believed he already had the assurance of the editor of the theological journal *Pravoslavnoe obozrenie* (*Orthodox Review*) for its publication therein. In a letter to his friend N. I. Kareev dated 6 August, Solov'ëv wrote that he could not turn his attention to an undisclosed review because "all my

[7] *Pis'ma*, vol. 3: 91.

[8] *Pis'ma*, vol. 3: 87.

[9] In his editorial note to the publication of "Mifologicheskij process…" in PSS, B. V. Mezhuev writes, "Solov'ëv definitely began work on the text at the end of July or first days of August." PSS, vol. 1: 255.

time goes into writing an article on the history of religion, which has expanded a lot … and is even now unfinished."[10] Based on the regrettably scanty information available to us, we can surmise that Solov'ëv's plans for the piece expanded, however, as his work progressed. In this new scheme, the original piece would serve as but the first installment of something much larger. He hoped that eventually the entire work, under the provisional title "The History of Religious Consciousness in Antiquity," could be submitted as a thesis.

A detailed discussion of his first published piece, "Mifologicheskij process v drevnem jazychestve" ("The Mythological Process in Ancient Paganism"), is not germane to our task here. We should note, however, the following:

1. Solov'ëv believed that in antiquity the influence of paganism extended to all phases of life. There was no abstract, separate discipline called philosophy, nor was there an abstract juridical principle upon which the social and political order was thought to rest. Ancient pagan religions did not just dominate, but alone conditioned all human intellectual life and all social relations. History, or at least that part of it under study, was seen as a religious process, not as, say, the unfolding of economic relations or the actions of great individuals.[11]
2. Already in this very early work he turned for intellectual support to Schelling and the Slavophile A. S. Khomjakov, whose views on the subject of religion in antiquity Solov'ëv called "quite original but little known."[12] What led Solov'ëv to Khomjakov is unclear. In none of Solov'ëv's surviving letters either before or at this time does Khomjakov's name appear. Unfortunately, Lopatin, who so often is a reliable guide in these matters, has virtually nothing to contribute. Despite adding that among Russian thinkers the Slavophiles played the greatest role in Solov'ëv's intellectual development, he is content to say that the influence of Khomjakov and Kireevskij came through studying their works. We are not informed, however, when this first took place. There is a distinct possibility, particularly in light of the absence of both their names and their ideas, that if Solov'ëv knew much about Slavophilism prior to mid-1873, it did not particularly impress him. Whether Khomjakov influenced Solov'ëv's views concerning the pivotal role of religion in ancient history is unlikely ever to be clarified, but in any case they both shared this belief.

   That Solov'ëv turned to Schelling is more understandable given his interest in German Idealism. Why Vladimir would have turned specifically to Schelling's

[10] *Pis'ma*, vol. 4: 148. Thus, concerning his *kandidat*'s dissertation we see that in early August and the immediately preceding weeks, Solov'ëv was preoccupied with his future article. If he had submitted a paper on religion to the faculty in May or early June 1873 to fulfill the undergraduate requirement, it could not have been the November article, but at most a partial draft. Assuming that this dissertation was not some unknown "third" piece, the greatest likelihood is that it was an early draft of his *magister*'s thesis. Despite his dramatically increasing interest in religion, his concerns in May were still more philosophical than religious.

[11] Maksimov 2001: 43.

[12] PSS, vol. 1: 19.

late philosophy of mythology, however, remains obscure. Possibly Khomjakov's own interest in Schelling piqued Solov'ëv's curiosity. In any case, he viewed as absolutely correct Schelling's view that although myths are products of human consciousness, their subject matter is a necessary and unconscious unfolding of a divine apprehension. Nevertheless, Solov'ëv cryptically added that the "material" part of Schelling's views on the matter must be rejected, being fashioned, as they were, on the basis of a metaphysical system riddled with deficiencies. Unfortunately, Solov'ëv did not elaborate on exactly what these deficiencies were.

3. Already at this early date Solov'ëv exhibited a fascination, indeed a fixation, with triadic architectonic schemes. He specifically enumerated the results of his inquiry in terms of three theses, the third of which concerned the path by which mythological processes develop. This path, in turn, is "expressed," as he put it, in three principal phases. This penchant for triadic schemes is one that would persist throughout Solov'ëv's philosophical career.

Solov'ëv moved to Sergiev Posad, the location of the Moscow Theological Academy roughly 75 km north of Moscow, on 8 September 1873. In short order, he developed a somewhat higher opinion of his new peers than he had of those at the university. In an undated letter to his cousin but surely from sometime between September and early November, he remarked that he did not find such "absolute emptiness" there as at Moscow University. Since Vladimir merely audited classes, there is little in the official record about his stay at the Academy. Radlov reports that he "zealously attended lectures at the Moscow Theological Academy, especially those of Kudrjavcev and Jurkevich."[13] Later accounts by others who remembered Solov'ëv in class at this time in the Academy recalled his morose, almost ominous, presence in the lecture room and that he would quietly stand in the back near a window. Clearly, he came to hear about theology and philosophy, but it is unclear how many lectures he actually attended and even less what he learned from them.[14] It is unlikely that Solov'ëv spent much time reading the published writings of either his current teachers at the Moscow Academy or their predecessors. He simply does not mention doing so in his extant letters nor are their works cited or even referenced in his own publications from this period. On the other hand, it is *possible* that he acquired a broad acquaintance with their ideas through lectures or through conversations with other students.

In addition to continuing to study "the Germans," Solov'ëv at this time was reading "the Greek and Latin theologians of the ancient church." Yet most curiously, after no more than 2 months in Sergiev Posad, Solov'ëv's plans radically changed once again. In his sole surviving letter from this period, he informed his cousin that he was "writing an article (also for a journal) on the contemporary crisis of Western

[13] *Pis'ma*, vol. 3: 105.

[14] Radlov 1913: VIII. Solov'ëv's attendance cannot be independently confirmed, however, and in light of Radlov's clear and simple mistake, placing Jurkevich at the Moscow Academy, not University, it is hard to lend much credence to Radlov's claim as a whole.

philosophy, which will then be included in my *magister*'s thesis."[15] What factors led to the abrupt abandonment of his theological plans was left unsaid. Be that as it may, Solov'ëv announced that he:

(1) had decided to pursue a *magister*'s degree in philosophy, not another undergraduate degree in theology; (2) had arrived at a topic for the required *magister*'s thesis; (3) had already started writing the thesis; (4) planned to submit at least a portion of the thesis for publication even before completion of the entire work; and (5) had already completed a sketch of the latter.[16] This change from theology to philosophy did not mean that Solov'ëv simply abandoned his work on paganism. Towards the end of the year, he submitted an article, or an outline for one, on the topic of paganism and Judaism to the journal *Russkij vestnik*. The editor, M. N. Katkov, however, found it "too abstract and with no connection to present-day concerns."[17] On the other hand, we can find many of the themes Solov'ëv would later expand upon in *The Crisis* already adumbrated in a letter to Dostoyevsky from 24 January 1873. There he proposed to the editor of the journal *Grazhdanin* "a short analysis of the negative principles of Western development, viz., external freedom, the exclusivity of the individual and of rational knowledge – liberalism, individualism and rationalism."[18] Thus, the topic and certain themes that he would develop in his *magister*'s thesis were maturing in Solov'ëv's mind since at least the previous winter months.

It is unclear how long Vladimir continued to audit lectures at Sergiev Posad. As his letter from 23 September indicates, he did not spend the entire period in residence at the Theological Academy without ever returning to Moscow. He certainly filled his hours during this period not only reading, but also writing the first chapters of his thesis. The general consensus of opinion is that Solov'ëv left Sergiev Posad behind sometime in the spring of 1874, most likely in March.[19] For reasons we shall see momentarily, he surely remained in contact with Jurkevich concerning his immediate future. In fact, on 18 March Jurkevich submitted a letter to the liberal arts faculty petitioning them to take appropriate measures to "procure" Solov'ëv for Moscow University. In it, Jurkevich lavishly praised Solov'ëv's work, specifically mentioning the article on ancient paganism and the two installments of the eventual

[15] *Pis'ma*, vol. 3: 106. Although undated, this letter certainly was written after Solov'ëv had arrived at Sergiev Posad and had already gathered an impression of the students there. This could not have been earlier than mid-September. On the other hand, Solov'ëv wrote that his article "Mifologicheskij process…" was "already being published in a journal." Thus, at the time of writing this letter the article either had not yet appeared or Solov'ëv was not aware that it had done so. In a letter of 10 November to his mother, Solov'ëv's older brother Vsevolod mentioned the article's appearance. See PSS, vol. 1: 257. For these reasons we can safely give the latest date of Solov'ëv's letter as mid-November.

[16] Naturally, the question arises whether the sketch Solov'ëv mentions in this letter was his *kandidat*'s dissertation, a possibility Sergey Solovyov has already raised. See Solovyov 2000: 71.

[17] Solov'ëv 2000. vol. 2: 626. Unfortunately, this piece was never published nor apparently has it survived.

[18] Quoted in PSS, vol. 1: 252–253.

[19] Luk'janov 1916. vol. 1: 347; PSS, vol. 1: 265.

thesis that had already been published as proof of Solov'ëv's philosophical talent. Jurkevich also mentioned a translation of Kant's *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* that we must presume Vladimir prepared during the later half of 1873, while he was at the Theological Academy. However, Solov'ëv never mentioned working on the translation in any preserved letter during this time nor even of plans concerning it. Nor have any statements surfaced from his later years identifying or even alluding to what his motivation may have been for undertaking it. The translation itself languished in manuscript until 1889, at which time it at last appeared in an expanded and corrected version under the auspices of the recently formed Moscow Psychological Society. Jurkevich's letter, coupled with our knowledge of Solov'ëv's sharp change in career plans in the fourth-quarter of 1873, leads us to conclude that the two men must have come to some understanding at approximately this time. In all probability, Jurkevich discussed with Solov'ëv the idea of pursuing a *magister*'s degree in philosophy with the hope of grooming him for a professorship, quite possibly even as his successor. The death of his wife in 1873 left Jurkevich quite dispirited. His wish to prepare Solov'ëv without delay quite possibly stemmed from an awareness of his own precarious and deteriorating health – but this is merely conjecture. In all likelihood, Jurkevich saw in Solov'ëv a kindred spirit, one who would take up the gauntlet against materialism, positivism, Kantianism and Hegelianism – all in the name of Orthodox Christianity. We should also not forget that Jurkevich's tenure at Moscow University was met with almost ceaseless hostility and ridicule from a sizable segment of the student body that was politically radical and demonstratively anti-religious.

Jurkevich proposed to the faculty that the university send Vladimir abroad for a period of study, a standard Russian practice in that day to acquaint an aspiring student with the latest developments in scholarship. Whatever the reason, Jurkevich was most anxious to have Solov'ëv trained in the least time possible and viewed the latter's publications as proof of his scholarly competence. Most likely, it was not purely coincidental that several days earlier, on 14 March, Solov'ëv had written to N. A. Popov, dean of the liberal arts faculty, concerning the possibility of receiving funds for a trip abroad in connection with his studies. The faculty, however, while expressly valuing Jurkevich's opinions, was in no great hurry to circumvent established procedure. In a report dated 22 March, they wrote that Solov'ëv could not be sent abroad until he had passed the appropriate examinations for the *magister*'s degree and, secondly, there were in any case no scholarship funds available for such a purpose. Instead, the dean proposed retaining Solov'ëv for 2 years without salary until such monies were at hand. The faculty voted to approve this suggestion at a meeting on 13 April.

Soon Jurkevich became seriously ill, a fact the University could not help but recognize. Being granted a leave of absence from May to October 1874 – officially this leave was to conduct research – Jurkevich spent much of the time in Samara on the Volga River. In the meanwhile, Solov'ëv remained in Moscow writing his thesis. When Jurkevich returned at the end of the summer he was in worse condition than when he had left. In a letter of 21 August to a friend, Susanna Lapshin, Solov'ëv

wrote that owing to his poor health Jurkevich had asked Vladimir to take over his philosophy classes at the University.

Realizing the urgent need to complete his thesis and obtain a *magister*'s degree, Solov'ëv poured his energy into writing. Of the eventually completed thesis's five chapters plus a lengthy introduction and one appendix, Solov'ëv had already finished and published by late August the first three in the January, March and May issues respectively of *Pravoslavnoe obozrenie*. A draft of the fourth chapter had been completed in mid-June, most likely for inclusion in the journal's July issue, thereby adhering to a timetable of publishing the chapters on a bimonthly basis.[20] Reconsideration, however, led Solov'ëv to rewrite the intended installment, temporarily leaving aside a discussion of the "logical transition" from Descartes to Kant, focusing instead primarily on Hegel and, though to a lesser extent, on the Young Hegelians. In his August letter, mentioned above, Solov'ëv wrote:

> Within the next ten days, I have to write two articles. Within a month, I will finish my thesis and then send it to you.[21]

Solov'ëv recognized that Jurkevich's poor health made his participation in the examination process and in a thesis defense impossible. For this reason obtaining his degree just then in Moscow had to be excluded. Hoping to defend it in St. Petersburg, he wrote first to Izmail Sreznevskij, dean of the liberal arts faculty, who in turn urged Solov'ëv to write to M. I. Vladislavlev, the philosophy professor, and include his published writings as a personal introduction. This Solov'ëv did on 8 September, and after stating the topic of each chapter of his thesis he wrote:

> I propose to add to the thesis two separate supplements: one on Comte's positivism and another on Schelling's positive philosophy. These supplements are complete in manuscript form as well as the fourth chapter, which is already being printed.[22]

Unfortunately, the manuscript of the intended supplement on Schelling appears to have been lost.[23]

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[20] See Solov'ëv's letter to Certelev of 19 June in *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 221.

[21] *Pis'ma*, vol. 4: 169.

[22] Quoted in PSS, vol. 1: 267. The biographer of Solov'ëv's early years, S. M. Luk'janov, claims that the two articles to which Vladimir referred in the August letter to Susanna Lapshin are the fifth chapter and the appendix on Comte. Luk'janov 1990. vol. 1: 379. These articles were published in the October and November issues respectively of *Pravoslavnoe obozrenie*. Although this conjecture is certainly possible, it is also possible that Solov'ëv had in mind the fourth and fifth chapters. The fourth chapter did not receive the theological censor's approval until 22 September and the fifth chapter until 3 November. However, based on the information in his letter from early-September to Vladislavlev, we see that the fourth chapter was finished already by that time. Therefore, it is possible that Solov'ëv completed at least the fourth chapter in the interval between the letters of 21 August and 8 September. Solov'ëv did not state in his letter from 8 September that the fifth chapter was complete, which is surprising if we accept Luk'janov's conjecture. Whatever the case, the fourth chapter appeared in the September issue no earlier than late September.

[23] The editor of *The Crisis* in PSS, I. V. Borisova, writes that "it probably was not written." Yet this flies in the face of Solov'ëv's own words that it was. See PSS, vol. 1: 267. Although purely conjectural, the possibility looms that this supplement on Schelling was at least in part based on Solov'ëv's *kandidat*'s dissertation.

Solov'ëv did not initially intend to leave Moscow for St. Petersburg until November. Possibly, however, he was able to finish his writing within the time period mentioned in his August letter and then saw no need to linger unnecessarily at home. Vladimir arrived in St. Petersburg on 25 September, set to work almost immediately on the procedural matters and was able to take the appropriate comprehensive examinations during October. To add to the pressure Solov'ëv must have felt, his mentor Jurkevich died on 4 October; there is no record of how Solov'ëv learned of this or of his reaction to the news.[24] The actual thesis defense, as mentioned, took place on 24 November before a large and distinguished audience. Far from being the sedate and tranquil affair that we would expect of such an occasion, the defense actually turned out to include a raucous exchange between Solov'ëv and one of the "unofficial" opponents Sergej V. De-Roberti, who accused the former of among other things ignorance regarding the most recent exponents of positivism, a charge Solov'ëv in a mocking tone did not deny.[25] Nevertheless, the defense was deemed a success to the applause of the large audience and would be remembered for years to come for its heated exchanges as much as for Solov'ëv's defiance and steadfastness.

1.2 From the Scholastics to Kant Via the Rationalists

We have seen that the pages of the "Introduction" were among the last Solov'ëv wrote. Having already written at least the first three chapters, he now had the opportunity to formulate, reflect on and clarify his central position. Not surprisingly, therefore, and fortunately for us, we find in the first lines of the "Introduction" his most well-known and most-often quoted claim:

> This book is based on the conviction that philosophy in the sense of abstract, *exclusively* theoretical cognition has ended its development and passed irretrievably into the world of the past.[26]

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[24] Solov'ëv wrote an article-length obituary of Jurkevich at the suggestion of Vladislavlev. Since it received the censor's approval on 25 October, Solov'ëv must have written the piece in great haste in mid-October while preparing for his comprehensive examinations. See PSS, vol. 1: 156–175.

[25] For additional information on De-Roberti, see Mezhuev 2011: 15–19. Also see PSS, vol. 1: 350–351. The translator of Solovyov 2000, Aleksey Gibson, misidentifies in a footnote De-Roberti as Evgeny de Roberti, the brother of Sergej. See Solovyov 2000: 99f. This misidentification is not to be found in the original Russian edition of the biography. See S. M. Solov'ëv 1997: 78. Sergej held a doctorate in mathematics from Heidelberg, whereas Evgeny was known as an eminent sociologist and positivist, hence the easy mistake.

[26] Solovyov 1996: 11; PSS, vol. 1: 39. Hereafter page references to this English translation of *The Crisis* will be provided along with those to the Russian edition in PSS. I have taken the liberty, however, of modifying the English translation whenever necessary. Following contemporary philosophical practice, the Russian word "*poznanie*" will be rendered throughout as "cognition" and "*znanie*" as "knowledge."

Here at the outset Solov'ëv reveals his departure from previous Russian academic philosophy. Neither of his mentors, V. D. Kudrjavcev, who taught at the Moscow Theological Academy, nor Jurkevich at Moscow University, treated philosophy as a historical unit or activity that is undergoing or has undergone development along with the societies in which they were enunciated. Of course, both Jurkevich and Kudrjavcev dealt with traditional philosophical issues, systems and arguments from the past. Yet their studies were always conducted from an abstract viewpoint. Philosophies were not conceived as embodying, let alone reflecting, the societies in which they arose.

The inspiration for Solov'ëv's approach, if indeed there was one, remains contentious. Certainly, the Slavophiles I. V. Kireevskij and A. S. Khomjakov are likely, if not probable, sources. In his biography of Solov'ëv, K. V. Mochul'skij wrote that *The Crisis* "was written under the powerful influence of Slavophile ideas. Solov'ëv develops and reworks the basic views of Ivan Kireevskij."[27] More recently, Walicki has reaffirmed Mochul'skij's position, adding even more specificity: Solov'ëv's thesis "is basically a development and modification of the main argument of Ivan Kireevskij's dissertation 'On the Necessity and Possibility of New Principles in Philosophy.'"[28] Solov'ëv's silence here is again deafening. In none of his letters either before or during the writing of his thesis did he so much as mention the Slavophiles. Additionally, we know that he did not become personally acquainted with the surviving Slavophiles until the following year. Nonetheless, he remarked in his thesis that "a just, though too general, critique of philosophical rationalism can be found in certain articles of Khomyakov and I. Kireevsky."[29] Indeed, it is hard to ignore the many similarities between Solov'ëv's ideas and those of the early Slavophiles. Like Solov'ëv, Kireevskij writes of the exhaustion of Western European thought: "It [Hegelianism – TN] belongs to the newest, and probably the last, epoch of abstract philosophical thinking."[30]

Other possible sources for Solov'ëv's inspiration are the later Schelling and, of course, Hegel.[31] Whatever the fundamental inspiration, assuming there was one, Solov'ëv indisputably holds that philosophy, qua abstract, theoretical cognition, has, as a matter of fact, now come to an end. This completion was not presently taking place but had already taken place; nor was it merely conceptual or philosophical. No, for Solov'ëv, philosophy in his sense would never historically resurface again. That is, there will be no future re-expressions or repetitions of past philosophical

[27] Mochul'skij 1936: 53.

[28] Walicki 1989: 560.

[29] Solovyov 1996: 172; PSS, vol. 1: 65f.

[30] Kireevski 1852: 177.

[31] Concerning Hegel's influence, Navickas writes: "In so far as Solovyov's historiography is concerned, the most decisive source of influence is to be found in Hegel's philosophy of history." Navickas 1966: 137.

positions.[32] Of course, this alone does not address whether he saw the termination as natural or forced, nor does Solov'ëv clearly indicate in his opening lines whether this termination was abrupt or the result of historically exhausting all logically possible philosophical stances. Lastly, Solov'ëv leaves unclear whether his conviction is the result of a thorough study of the history of philosophy or of some scheme dictated by some ultimately religious or socio-political beliefs. In order to clarify his negative position, Solov'ëv contrasts it with that of "positivism," which also claimed a new historical era had begun.

At the outset of his thesis, Solov'ëv mentions three important and specific distinctions between positivism and his own stance:

1. Unlike positivism, Solov'ëv understands the superseded artifact, viz., philosophy, to include not *merely* its "speculative" or metaphysical direction, but *also* its "empirical" direction (*napravlenie*). Unfortunately, Solov'ëv is far from clear whether these two directions constitute the entirety of modern philosophy. He makes no attempt to prove that these directions are the only ones that have been historically manifested. Additionally, he makes no attempt to determine whether there are any elements in some philosopher's overall position that do not fit this strict dichotomy and as such are capable of further development. Further on in his thesis, Solov'ëv admits that Western philosophy has not been limited exclusively to "rational thought and abstract analysis."[33] These directions, however, "predominate," and the others that can be found display a similar "one-sided limitedness." He makes no attempt either to clarify his notion of "predominate" or to specify these other directions and how they too are one-sided.
2. Unlike positivism, Solov'ëv holds that the now-completed development of philosophy has yielded positive benefits. Abstract, theoretical philosophy has bequeathed to its successor, whatever that may be, certain accomplishments or results that this successor can and will utilize to resolve the very problems that the superseded philosophies were unable to resolve fully. Solov'ëv leaves unclear whether positivism believes the empirical direction in philosophy has handed down to it a beneficial legacy.
3. Unlike positivism, which, recognizing the insolvency of traditional metaphysics, dismisses all the problems dealt with therein, Solov'ëv sees these problems as all-important and resolvable.

[32] Unlike Kireevskij, for whom Hegelianism "probably" marks the last epoch of abstract philosophizing, Khomjakov believes no new principles could even possibly emerge from Western Europe and that philosophy, as such, has no where to go after Hegel. Cf. Khomiakov 1849: 213. The question then arises whether Khomjakov's conviction is based fundamentally on an implicit acceptance of Hegel's own view of his system as the telos of philosophy or some religiously-based apocalyptic view of the end of philosophical rationalism. Of course, that question is beyond the bounds of the present study, but its answer impacts the extent to which we see Solov'ëv as under the direct influence of Khomjakov or merely inspired by his work. Solov'ëv's messianism is, if anything, more explicit, believing that Western philosophy can go neither forward nor even backward.

[33] Solovyov 1996: 94; PSS, vol. 1, p. 99.

In his "Introduction," Solov'ëv also alludes to yet another difference with positivism, one, however, which he never directly specified *as* the fourth difference. Nevertheless, in the course of his discussion of Comte's position it becomes evident that this is the central and thus most important difference, namely, a rejection of absolutes and the corollary dismissal of any absolute standpoint including, for Solov'ëv, any meaningful notion of truth. Left unclear both here and throughout his thesis is precisely what Solov'ëv means by "positivism." Based on the distinctions above, we can confidently conclude he has a specific viewpoint in mind, a viewpoint that these distinctions, nevertheless, do not exhaustively characterize. Although there is no reason to doubt that he has Comte's position primarily in mind, he additionally mentions John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer as "true representatives of positivism" – this despite the fact that their views were by no means identical either to each other or to those of Comte.[34] To add further to the confusion, Solov'ëv claims that positivism takes as a basic tenet that "*independent reality cannot be given in external experience*" and, moreover, "that in inner experience, just as in external experience, we cognize only *phenomena*, not the entity in itself."[35] Although Mill, Spencer and Comte would surely assent to these two claims in *some* understanding of them, these claims more accurately characterize the stance known as "phenomenalism" than positivism. Other philosophers, of whom the best known is Kant and who were by no means "positivists," – at least as that term is usually understood today – espoused the position that experience yields cognition of things merely as they appear, not as they are as such or "in themselves." In other words, contrary to Solov'ëv's understanding, phenomenalism is not equivalent to positivism.

Were we to concede to Solov'ëv that philosophy, at least in a particular sense, has now ended its development, a question immediately looms: When did philosophy *in this sense* arise? Unfortunately, our efforts to glean Solov'ëv's answer are hindered by the fact that he qualifies the term "philosophy" in various ways throughout the text. The very title of his thesis speaks of "Western philosophy," not philosophy in general. Seldom does he write "philosophy" without some qualification, and when he does, it is never clear that the omitted adjective "Western" is to be taken as understood. Thus, the question remains whether we are meant to equate philosophy conceived as abstract cognition with Western philosophy. In his "Introduction" alone, Solov'ëv speaks also of "scholastic philosophy," "medieval philosophy," "modern philosophy" and "philosophy as a certain *rational* (reflective) cognition." Granted "medieval" refers to a historical era, but was all or even the bulk of philosophy during the Middle Ages "abstract" or "theoretical cognition"? And what does Solov'ëv make of ancient philosophy? Are we not the heirs of Plato and Aristotle? Do not Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Metaphysics* belong to the canon of Western philosophy? Finally, if there is more than one legitimate sense of the term "philosophy,"

[34] Solovyov 1996: 57; PSS, vol. 1, p. 73. In the "Appendix" Solov'ëv again calls Mill a positivist. See Solovyov 1996: 159; PSS, vol. 1, p. 145.

[35] Solovyov 1996: 58; PSS, vol. 1, p. 74.

is it not reasonable for us to expect that the heir of "Western philosophy," philosophy as abstract cognition, could also properly be designated as "philosophy"?

Except for the briefest mention of Plato and Aristotle in a non-thematic manner, Solov'ëv is silent in *The Crisis* on ancient philosophy and particularly on how it differs from philosophy in the modern era. He does provide, however, some clarification of his notion of "Western philosophy." It is marked, he writes, by the "one-sided dominance of rational analysis, which affirms abstract concepts in their separateness and therefore necessarily hypostasizes them."[36] His intended clarification of this declaration also reveals that what is being superseded, what has reached the end of its development, is "Western philosophy," philosophy that embodies a tendency towards abstraction and hypostatization. This tendency had its start in medieval philosophy with its "scholastic approach" to a split between faith and rational cognition, a textbook or contemplative approach to an issue of paramount importance rather than one based in religious practice. According to Solov'ëv, medieval philosophy employed *nothing* other than the scholastic approach, and for this reason he identifies it in *The Crisis* with scholasticism.[37] We must add that Solov'ëv's description of scholasticism here is considerably muddled. In short, since he never specifies just what the "scholastic" approach is, we have to appeal to our own independent notion of "scholasticism" and its way of treating issues in order to try to fathom his comments. Relying exclusively on his own statements we come up short. For example, referring to Descartes Solov'ëv writes that in the former "the essential character of the scholastic world-view was fully preserved."[38] Yet, based on the passage in which these words appear Solov'ëv could be referring to Descartes' recognition of: (a) the existence of an independent reality, (b) the existence of thinking substances as well as extended substances, or (c) the authority of rational thought. None of these tenets either singly or in combination are unique to any historical era. Furthermore, if Solov'ëv has in mind the last-mentioned possibility, he has confused the concept of scholasticism with his broader one of "Western philosophy."

Thus far we have established that Solov'ëv conceived Western philosophy not *solely* in geographical terms, not merely as an amalgam of all philosophies that arose in the West but, rather, as a ubiquitous philosophical direction, a direction, moreover, that has by or at least in 1874 come to an end. Nevertheless, by denoting it with an unabashedly geographical designation he has invited a number of fundamental queries. Can "Western philosophy" be found elsewhere? If it is unique to a particular geographical region, what is unique about that region that on its soil a particular intellectual direction arose? What unique conditions at least fostered its growth, if not caused its emergence? Was Western philosophy the product of extra-philosophical factors, such as unique Western economic and/or social conditions, or was it a purely contingent phenomenon and thus rationally inexplicable? Regrettably, Solov'ëv does not directly address these questions here in his *magister*'s thesis.

[36] Solovyov 1996: 103; PSS, vol. 1, p. 106.

[37] Solovyov 1996: 114; PSS, vol. 1, p. 113.

[38] Solovyov 1996: 95, PSS, vol. 1, p. 100.

However, we can gain a better understanding of his overall position and thereby come to an informed decision as to his probable replies, by looking closer at the questions and the answers that he does provide. Foremost among these is how "Western philosophy" originated and with whom. As a brash, enthusiastic young philosopher Solov'ëv, of course, has a quick and easy answer.

Whereas for Hegel Scotus Erigena was too unattached to Church dogma, too much a philosopher, to be the first scholastic – and thus "scholasticism" cannot be identified with rationalism – it is precisely this quality that commends him to Solov'ëv. Scotus Erigena elevated reason above the authority of the Church with its propagation of an exclusively religious world-view.[39] Since philosophy is by its very nature always a personal activity, an individual creative process effected through the faculty of reason, philosophy cannot arise when all individuals relinquish their reason to a societal form of consciousness, viz., religion. At least here in *The Crisis*, Solov'ëv is remarkably silent on whether the hegemony of Christianity in the West was a positive development over the situation in antiquity. Nevertheless, Western philosophy could arise only if and when individuals questioned Church teachings. Intellectually, the Middle Ages were the period in human history when reason fought authority for supremacy. Only at its end did reason emerge triumphant over the external, opposing authority of the Church. Along the way reason first subordinated itself to authority before rising first as its equal, then as its conqueror. Ockham's nominalism rejected a rational resolution of metaphysical issues, placing them in the hands of a non-rational, and thus undermined, faith.

Flush from its victory, reason next turned to what is immediately at hand, its lone remaining contender for recognition as *the* source of cognition.[40] Here we stand at the birth of *modern philosophy*. It is unclear from Solov'ëv's presentation whether philosophy *had* to take the next step, i.e., whether through some unspecified necessity, metaphysical or otherwise, it *had* to set something against itself. If, however, it *had* to see or posit itself in opposition to something – and there is certainly no hint in the text as to the nature of this compulsion – its only possible opposition, as Solov'ëv sees it, was the external world or nature. The essence of modern philosophy consisted in just this conflict between reason and the external world, just as medieval philosophy was characterized by a conflict between reason and authority. In reason's struggle to assert its independence and power, Solov'ëv finds Descartes, the first modern philosopher, emerging with the same attitude vis-à-vis reason's opponent as did Scotus Erigena. Both were willing to recognize reason's respective combatant only if reason could demonstrate or confirm its supremacy over it. In the one case, reason recognized the authority, the Church, as having authority only

[39] Although certainly a possibility, it is most unlikely that both Solov'ëv and Kireevskij merely coincidentally date the start of scholasticism with Scotus Erigena. Cf. Kireevski 1852: 189.

[40] The reader can hardly fail to note Solov'ëv's peculiar, almost comical, anthropomorphizing of reason throughout his text. Behind this terminological usage (or abusage) lies Solov'ëv's "conspiratorial" view of Western philosophy, treating it as if it were an individual endowed with intentions, schemes and enemies all equally anthropomorphized. On the other hand, we must not overlook the fact that Kant too often speaks of reason in just the same way. To be fair to Kant, though, he, unlike Solov'ëv, does not fault philosophy for its hypostasizing of abstract concepts.

because reason proclaimed it as having some; in the other, the external world is truly external to reason, i.e., has an independent existence, only if reason can show it to be external.

Just as many in the Middle Ages rejected the claims of reason in favor of authority, viz., the authority of the Church, so in the modern era a whole school of philosophy sprang from a similar subordination of reason to the external world in the form of empirical or purely a posteriori experience. Unlike its medieval counterpart, however, the empiricists' reign was short-lived. Nevertheless, just as Church authority at the end of the medieval period was already beginning to be seen as itself irrational, so at the end of modern philosophy, reason's antipode, the external world, stood as meaningless. Just as reason's final vanquishing of authority in the Middle Ages entailed the denouement of scholasticism, so reason's ultimate subjugation of externality in modern philosophy marked that philosophy's culmination and thereby the end of Western philosophy. Having exhausted all of its options and proved victorious over all of its opponents, reason has now no further summits to conquer.

In a sense, Solov'ëv could have ended his treatise on this point, just a few pages into his "Introduction." Instead, proceeding as he did with scholasticism, he presents a more detailed summary of the history of modern philosophy with an emphasis on the transition from one major philosopher's central idea to that of another. In order to make his case, i.e., to speak of "Western philosophy" as a single unit that has undergone development and has now culminated, Solov'ëv must be able to show at a minimum that: (1) regarding its method Western philosophy, in all its constituent manifestations, primarily employed abstraction and hypostatization; (2) regarding its content modern philosophy in the final analysis in all instances opposed reason to externality; (3) reason ultimately emerged as the sole authority; and (4) no further options remain for philosophy. To do all this within the bounds of a single work, a *magister*'s thesis no less, would indeed be a considerable accomplishment of historic proportions.

There can be little doubt that Solov'ëv, unlike Jurkevich, sees Descartes, not Kant, as the initiator of the paradigm shift of modern philosophy. Unlike most historians of philosophy, however, Solov'ëv is uninterested in the details, concentrating instead on the broad strokes that he believes characterize epochal phenomena. What is most striking is what Solov'ëv finds of particular interest in Descartes. Considering him a revolutionary in philosophy, Solov'ëv is unconcerned with Descartes' relations to Augustinianism and scholasticism or with his efforts to steer clear of religious heresy.[41] He expresses no concern for the latter's methodology, which we now label "Cartesian doubt." Descartes is neither lambasted nor praised for his foundationalism. Likewise, Descartes is not conceived as the initiator of the supposedly heinous sin of subjectivism. The alleged primacy of self-consciousness, which would play so large a role in German philosophy from Kant to Husserl, is absent from this account. Indeed, the term "self-consciousness" does not even appear in the presentation of Descartes' thought. Of course, Solov'ëv discerns a continuous line leading to the worst excesses of Fichte, but this line demonstrates

[41] On many of these matters in Descartes see Gaukroger 1995: 354–364.

not so much the errors of the subjectivist turn per se as the consequences of an unbridled rationalism. Descartes is neither an epistemologist nor a philosopher searching for an answer as to how mathematical physics is possible, let alone a natural scientist, who as an aside ventured into the metaphysical legitimization of his work. No, Descartes is an ontologist and, in terms of his approach to these concerns, the founder of rationalism.

As with the other historical figures he discusses in *The Crisis*, Solov'ëv is uninterested in an abstract, ahistorical analysis of Descartes' ideas. His concern is merely to show: (1) that according to Descartes unaided reason can truly ascertain what exists, and (2) that Descartes' principles, logically developed, lead directly to Spinozism. Solov'ëv is quite unclear whether, if Spinoza had never lived, philosophy would have had to invent him. In any case, if, like Descartes, we view the universe as populated with two and only two types of substances and all individuation is as a result of attributes and modifications, the next conceptual move is to view thinking and extension simply as attributes. The consequence of such a position is that there is but one substance, not two, and we thereby come to Spinoza's central idea.

Solov'ëv, like Hegel, sees Spinoza as Descartes' heir and as, in Hegel's words, the "one who carried on the Cartesian principle to its furthest logical conclusions."[42] Whereas he shows great sympathy for Spinoza's definition of substance, going so far as to claim that all philosophical schools, including positivism, accept it, Solov'ëv accuses Spinoza of failing to elucidate why the one infinite substance produced the finite world. Spinoza's claim that an infinite number of finite existences necessarily follows from the very concept of substance explains nothing, because it is asserted dogmatically, presupposing the very existence of finite beings that are to be demonstrated. In fact, given Spinoza's principle there should be no finite things at all. Already herein lies the transition to Leibniz. Again Solov'ëv's talk of a contradiction within one system leading in turn to a new system brings Hegel to mind. What is more, both speak of the "one-sidedness" of Spinoza's construction, and both locate the transition to Leibniz in the principle of individuality effected through his concept of a monad. Leibniz's advance over his rationalist predecessors lies in his synthesis of the concepts of body and soul through the concept of a monad. Each monad, being completely independent, produces all of its representations out of itself. To insure that the monad's representations accurately correspond to the actual world, Leibniz appealed to an unproven notion of "pre-established harmony."

Solov'ëv ends his longest discussion of the three traditional figures of rationalism with a sketchy presentation of Leibniz's monadology. In his view this "metaphysical" or "speculative direction" of modern philosophy culminates in two points: (1) a positive, "idealistic" affirmation (*utverzhdenie*) "of the exclusive independence and primordiality of psychic, or subjective, being"; and (2) a negative, skeptical irresolution of whether cognition genuinely exists, i.e., of whether we individually cognize what actually exists, or whether our cognition is merely an expression of

[42] Hegel 1983: vol. 3, p. 252.

subjective representations.[43] Had this been Solov'ëv's final word on rationalism in *The Crisis* it would be difficult to see how Leibniz's thoughts represent a further development over those of Descartes, let alone how they fit into Solov'ëv's broader picture featuring the exhaustion of philosophical options. However, in the final chapter of *The Crisis*, summarizing and further elucidating his entire presentation, Solov'ëv tells us that the trio of Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, whom he now calls the main representatives of "dogmatic metaphysics," form but one phase or Hegelian moment of the rationalist direction,[44] not its entirety. Without remarking on Descartes' discovery of subjectivity, Solov'ëv finds the historically most important epistemological tenet of dogmatic metaphysics to be its view that an independently existing reality corresponds perfectly to the innate, general ideas we have of it. With this tenet, the first rationalists believed we can acquire *a priori* cognition of this reality simply by examining what is originally within our own minds. These rationalists never questioned their presuppositions; they never asked how the cognizing subject can know an independently existing reality. The straightforward acceptance of the possibility of metaphysical cognition that Kant termed "dogmatic" Solov'ëv calls an "implicit (*bezotchetnyj*) identification of thought with actual being."[45] A questioning of this identification would open a veritable Pandora's box in philosophy. One philosopher was willing and able to do it, and he addressed many of the issues that then arise. His thought marks in Solov'ëv's scheme the second moment of philosophical rationalism.

1.3 From Kant to Hegel

The general lines of Solov'ëv's treatment of German Idealism, which he sees as a further development of rationalism, are in other respects surprisingly conventional. Not surprisingly, these pages in *The Crisis* are among the first Solov'ëv wrote. Although Kant aroused or revivified rationalism, his philosophy contained lingering vestiges of dogmatism, vestiges which Fichte keenly observed and sought to remove. Unfortunately, despite Fichte's efforts to resolve the outstanding issues in a systematic manner, they proved to be one-sidedly subjectivistic. Schelling attempted to complete Fichte's reformulation of idealism by recognizing the other, neglected side or aspect of the absolute, namely, nature. However, he, in turn, failed to realize that the absolute appears only at the end of a cosmic developmental process and as

[43] Solovyov 1996: 28; PSS, vol. 1, p. 51.

[44] In the English translation of *The Crisis*, the Russian word "*napravlenie*" is rendered variously as "direction" and also misleadingly as "tendency." For an instance of the latter see Solovyov 1996: 129; cf. PSS, vol. 1, p. 123.

[45] Solovyov 1996: 129; PSS, vol. 1, pp. 123–124. The English translation renders "*bezotchetnyj*" as "unconscious." It is unlikely that Solov'ëv meant that the identification took place in some largely inaccessible region of the mind that we today call the unconscious. Rather, Solov'ëv means that the identification took place without philosophical questioning.

such exists at present only conceptually, not in actuality. In this way, Hegel completed the development of rationalist philosophy by constructing an absolute system. Solov'ëv, in *The Crisis*, views the importance of each individual figure in German Idealism solely as way-stations on the road to Hegel's "absolute rationalism."[46] There is no discussion of Fichte's successive reformulations of the *Wissenschaftslehre* nor, more strikingly, is there *any* account of Schelling's later philosophy. In fact, Solov'ëv affords it *no logically demonstrable place in his account*. Accepting an essentially historicist view of philosophy, Solov'ëv tacitly assumes that temporal development coincides with the gradual conceptual disclosure of a *telos*. Furthermore, he makes no attempt to criticize the individual doctrines of the respective figures but wholly accepts, for example, Fichte's own contention that he successfully removed the untenable elements of Kantian philosophy. Nevertheless, in order to follow Solov'ëv's extended thesis in *The Crisis* and to assess what he sees as the outcome of Western philosophy, we must look at his interpretation of German Idealism more closely.

Solov'ëv views Kant as having sought to demonstrate that the cognitive faculty has *a priori* forms, which, being *a priori*, thereby have absolute validity and universal significance within cognition. Contrary to the dogmatists' presupposition, however, these forms say nothing about the real world as it is apart from the cognizing subject. The known world, the world as we know it and therefore through our cognitive forms, is only a phenomenal world, not the world as it is in itself. On the basis of this exceedingly terse summary Solov'ëv maintains that for Kant we genuinely know "only *phenomena* in our *subjective* consciousness, determined by its general forms." Solov'ëv calls this the result of Kant's critique of reason and labels it the second of the three moments comprising rationalism, the first, as we saw, being dogmatism.[47] Oddly enough despite its importance in accounting for the development of post-Kantian philosophy, Solov'ëv refrains from using this phenomenalist interpretation in a syllogistic "deduction" of Hegelian rationalism appearing in Chap. 5. In seeking to demonstrate the "mutual relation" of the three phases of rationalism, Solov'ëv utilizes *not* this so-called result of Kant's critique of reason, which speaks of cognition in general, but a far more cautious claim: "…in *a priori* cognition, only the forms of our thought are cognized." Regrettably, Solov'ëv makes no mention of the relation between this limited claim concerning *a priori* cognition and the general result that all our cognitions are merely of the phenomenal world. Based on Solov'ëv's succinct conceptual deduction of Hegelianism, Kant did not

[46] Solov'ëv probably acquired this characterization of Hegel's system from an article by N[ikita] G[iljarov-Platono]v that he, Solov'ëv, himself mentions in a note. See Solovyov 1996: 172; PSS, vol. 1, p. 65 f. For example, N. G-v wrote: "Absolute rationalism, or, as Hegel himself designates his system, absolute idealism, recognizes neither the subject nor the object as real. Both subject and object are as conceptual as concepts in the proper sense." G[iljarov-Platono]v 1859: 38. The sole treatment of Giljarov-Platonov's possible influence on Solov'ëv's view of German Idealism is Mezhuev 2000. Giljarov's interest in Hegel is also evidenced by his article "Ontologija Gegelja" based on notes written in 1846 but only published in 1891. See Giljarov-Platonov 1891. Thus, it is quite unlikely that Solov'ëv knew of this piece when writing *The Crisis*.

[47] Solovyov 1996: 130; PSS, vol. 1, p. 124.

have to treat issues bearing directly on a posteriori cognition. Yet in Solov'ëv's more detailed presentation in this chapter, it is precisely Kant's flawed treatment of those and connected issues, such as the role of the thing in itself, that led in fact to the further development of German Idealism. Thus, that Kant went to considerable lengths to argue for a broader claim than he logically needed to do was purely contingent. Consequently, in this respect Solov'ëv would have to admit that the emergence of Hegel's absolute rationalism was itself a fortuitous event.

Although Solov'ëv's presentation of Kant's views is regrettably brief and general, it is not without difficulties. We should notice, above all, that Solov'ëv has Kant arguing *from* the *a priori* character of the forms of cognition *to* the fact that they are the universal and necessary forms or conditions of *human* cognition.[48] Solov'ëv simply does not deal with how Kant attempts to prove that "the forms of cognition" are *a priori*. Clearly, Solov'ëv does not regard being *a priori* as tautologous with displaying universality and necessity, for otherwise Kant would have had no need to offer an argument. Just as clearly, Kant rejects the dogmatic-rationalist position that the forms of cognition describe the true nature of the world as it exists independently of our cognition. What is unclear is whether Solov'ëv regards this claim as independent of Kant's rejoinders to Hume and the dogmatists. *Prima facie*, there is no reason to think that *a priori* forms of cognition cannot describe things as they are in themselves as well as things as they appear to us. Solov'ëv's silence ultimately remains a lacuna in his summary. In any case, from his rejection of the dogmatist's position he concludes that for Kant transcendent cognition, i.e., cognition of things in themselves, is illusory. To add to the confusion, Solov'ëv reverses his view of Kant's procedure saying: "Clearly, these forms and categories cannot be obtained by us from experience, from external reality, for, since they are a necessary condition of all experience, they precede all experience."[49] In other words, Solov'ëv now has Kant arguing in the reverse manner *from* the fact that the forms and categories are necessary conditions of experience *to* the apriority of these forms and conditions.

Solov'ëv's confusion over Kant's procedure by itself is not unusual in the history of philosophy. In Solov'ëv's case, the confusion stems from a conception of the Kantian *a priori* that is highly indebted to, if not exclusively determined by, contemporary naturalistic theories. Whereas Kant adamantly rejected comparing the subjectivity of secondary qualities, such as taste and color, to that of the *a priori* forms and categories, Solov'ëv, acknowledging his debt to Schopenhauer et al., sees the existence of *a priori* elements in perception empirically proven by psychophysiological investigation. Because of this, Solov'ëv fails to recognize Kant's fundamental distinction between the empirically and the transcendentally ideal. Since all the reasons for holding the properties of an object to be subjective, and therefore *a priori*, are the same, Solov'ëv concludes that the uncognizability of things in themselves is logically independent of the discovery of the fundamental nature of space and time. For this reason Solov'ëv holds that other means and considerations can be equally

[48] Solovyov 1996: 36; PSS, vol. 1, p. 58.

[49] Solovyov 1996: 37; PSS, vol. 1, p. 59.

expeditious in attaining what he takes to be the *same* goal as Kant concerning the subjectivity of cognition. However, by failing, for whatever reason, to distinguish the transcendental from the empirical, to take into account the necessary role of space and time in support of idealism, Solov'ëv reveals that for him cognition, as he conceives it, *must* be of things as they are in themselves. Yet unlike Kant, who argues poignantly and at length in support of his transcendental idealism, Solov'ëv makes no attempt in *The Crisis* to argue for his own conception of what constitutes genuine cognition. Therefore, not only is his presentation thus far philosophically anemic, but in fundamentally misconstruing the nature of Kant's idealism Solov'ëv cannot be certain that Western philosophy has exhausted all philosophical options and, thereby, that it has completed its development.

In seeking to demonstrate the inexorable progression of rationalism, Solov'ëv conveniently borrows Hegel's own depiction of the supposed evolution of German Idealism that culminated in Hegel's system. Solov'ëv repeats the claim of Kant's first disciples that Kant left the transcendental turn incomplete, that his idealism harbored ill-considered elements incompatible with the overall transcendental-idealist perspective. The thing in itself, in particular, is a wholly untenable concept, for Kant ostensibly arrived at it through invoking the category of causality and affirmed it through the category of existence. Seeking to develop, systematize and purify Kant's ideas, Fichte created a "system of pure subjective idealism," in which the Self in a creative act not only posits itself but the not-Self as well. The objective world exists only in relation to the Self, which alone has reality proper and which obviously cannot be the empirical, individual human consciousness.

Solov'ëv reasons that *if* one accepts the basic thrust of Kant's epistemology, one must accept Fichte's proposed modifications in order to render it more consistent. On the other hand, to accept *Fichte's* epistemology one must realize that the Self is an absolute subject whose act of positing is itself absolute and precedes human consciousness. The absolute subject posits both the Self and the not-Self equally and absolutely. Nature and human consciousness, or spirit, are to equal degrees a manifestation of the absolute. Pursuing such a line of reasoning, we pass to Schelling's advance over Fichte. Although Solov'ëv notes that the absolute manifests itself in nature in a gradual, temporal process, he never asks of Schelling, as he does of Spinoza, why the absolute needs to manifest itself at all, and gradually at that. Nevertheless, the culmination of this developmental process is human consciousness and, presumably, in particular, the Romantic image of the human being as philosophically aware of one's own freedom.

Solov'ëv presents the transition to Hegel no less compactly than his previous treatments. Since the revelation of the absolute is gradual and is not yet actual, it exists at this time only conceptually. Epistemologically, Hegel's advance over Fichte and Schelling lies in his rejection not only of the unknowable object, the Kantian thing in itself, but also of the unknowable subject, leaving the pure act of thought as that which alone is. Having no content, this pure act is purely formal. In Solov'ëv's interpretation, Hegel differs from Berkeley only in that the latter retained an untenable notion of the subject as substance. Since Hegel's philosophy removes the subjective character from cognition, cognition becomes a universal or,

more accurately, an absolute identity with itself. Solov'ëv called this elimination of the original opposition between the subjectivity of thought and the objectivity of being in Hegel's philosophy the third and final moment of rationalism. He succinctly expressed this in the formulation "that which is, is a concept."[50]

1.4 The Empirical Direction

Despite devoting little attention in *The Crisis* to British empiricism, Solov'ëv believes it followed a similar developmental path and ultimately reached the same conclusion as did rationalism. Notwithstanding the poverty of Bacon's philosophical thought, Solov'ëv designates him the founder of empiricism. Unlike in his presentation of Descartes, Solov'ëv surprisingly makes no attempt to demonstrate any link between Bacon and those preceding him. Thus, it is quite unclear in what way and why Solov'ëv sees Bacon as receiving the baton of "Western philosophy" from the scholastics. It is also certainly far from clear how the issue of faith versus reason or its direct successor, reason versus the givenness of externality, played a factor in Bacon's intellectual development. If, as Solov'ëv writes, all we can say is that Bacon rejected "the barren formalism of scholasticism," one could make the case that Bacon's thought constitutes the start of a quite original, non-"Western" philosophy![51] Moreover, since Bacon explicitly appealed to concrete experience, not reason, as the final adjudicator of disputed knowledge-claims, his views contrast sharply with those of the nascent rationalist movement. Bacon's "vulgar" or "objective realism" took it for granted that the world of our representations is absolutely real. This, the first stage in the development of empiricism, simply assumed that experience provides genuine cognition, i.e., cognition of external things as they are in themselves. In his syllogistic formulation in Chap. 5 of the "development" of empiricism, which parallels that of rationalism, Solov'ëv expresses this first moment as: "That which truly is, is cognized in our actual experience."[52]

The early empiricists construed experience as based on external sense perception and inner reflection on our own selves. If experience accounts for all cognition, there are no innate ideas. Following this train of thought, we quickly pass to Locke's standpoint, and from there it is but another short step to the recognition that perception and reflection are subjective states. If we sever the direct connection between what is given in experience and an ontological independence of the epistemic object, our cognitions are not of anything in itself, but only of sensations and reflection. In short, we have attained Berkeley's subjective idealism, which forms the second moment of empiricism.

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[50] Solovyov 1996: 131; PSS, vol. 1, p. 124. Again there is a distinct similarity to N. G-v's statement of Hegel's position: "If we now look at the world as Hegel's philosophy understood it, i.e., as a system of thought, we see that the content of this world consists neither of the subject-object nor of intuitions, but of concepts. Not concepts of something, but concepts simpliciter, for themselves." G[iljarov-Platono]v 1859: 38.

[51] Solovyov 1996: 29; PSS, vol. 1, p. 52.

[52] Solovyov 1996: 132; PSS, vol. 1, p. 125.

Although there is no mention of Berkeley's "spirits" in his formalization of the second moment or "stage" of empiricism in Chap. 5, Solov'ëv does introduce the notion in the "Introduction" to *The Crisis*, where his exposition of the transition to Hume and Mill is more detailed. For Berkeley, each of us as individuals, i.e., as individual spirits, does not *produce* those representations that we take to be *external* objects. Rather, these things are *evoked* in us through the actions of another spirit, a spirit that we conclude is absolute because of the regularity, determinateness, clarity and force of our representations. In this way, Berkeley posited a causal connection between the absolute spirit and our representations. Hume's subsequent sundering of the causal connection resulted in turning the regularity of representations into a "random sequence." As a result, Berkeley's recognition of an absolute spirit as the source of representations became untenable. Indeed, we cannot know whether representations have a source. According to Hume, therefore, if there are things that truly exist in themselves, we have no cognition of them. The source of cognition is limited to sensations or the products of our imagination and thought. Thus, if we cognize only "different empirical states of consciousness," the objects of such cognitions, viz., subjective conscious states, are the only reality. Here is the third and final moment of empiricism, comparable in its import to the third moment of rationalism: "Ergo, the different empirical states of consciousness are that which truly is."[53]

Solov'ëv's presentation here is not without problems. For one thing, he makes no distinction between Hume and Mill. Moreover, in this formulation of the "third stage" late in Chap. 5 Solov'ëv emphasizes the subjective idealism of these late empiricists. Yet in his "Introduction" he writes that for Hume: "…that which truly is was recognized as the absolutely unknown, as the pure X."[54] Regardless of how we ourselves interpret Hume's position, Solov'ëv's later formulation is more in accord with his overall architectonic, for Solov'ëv wants to argue that both rationalism and empiricism came to the same conclusion. Nevertheless, the earlier formulation is more consistent with another of Solov'ëv's theses, namely, that modern philosophy concludes with the rejection of all metaphysical cognition and leads to positivism. The connection between these two formulations, one emphasizing Hume's subjectivist ontology and the other his epistemological agnosticism, lies in Solov'ëv's distinctly non-Kantian conception of cognition, according to which cognition *must* have an existent, something that truly exists in itself as its direct object.

1.5 The Culmination of Western Philosophy in Schopenhauer and E. von Hartmann

Although he has laid the basis for the transition from British empiricism to positivism, to achieve his objective, to show that Western philosophy as a whole has completed its development, Solov'ëv has to establish *additionally* the logical basis for

[53] Solovyov 1996: 132; PSS, vol. 1, p. 125.

[54] Solovyov 1996: 32; PSS, vol. 1, p. 54.

the transitions leading from Hegel's supposed rationalism to nineteenth century positivism and beyond. In other words, Solov'ëv has to demonstrate, among other things, the basis in Hegel's "absolutely antiempirical system" for the movement that ultimately "led to the necessity of [natural-scientific-TN] empiricism in philosophy," together with what he takes to be its ontological concomitant, viz., vulgar materialism.[55] Unfortunately, in the very formulation of his task Solov'ëv rendered its fulfillment well-nigh impossible, for he states that Hegelianism "cannot be rejected *partially*, i.e., developed."[56] Thus, with such an understanding of Hegel's philosophy he cannot, in principle, account immanently for the emergence of post-Hegelian philosophy as he has tried to do for other, earlier philosophical systems. Yet Solov'ëv attempts more than once to provide both non-immanent *and* immanent accounts and in doing so demonstrates in practice a rejection of his own assertion that Hegelianism cannot be developed.

In his first account of the transition from Hegelianism to post-Hegelian philosophies, found already in this chapter, Solov'ëv starts with Feuerbach's transformation of the first Hegelian moment, the concept in itself, from an abstract, logical concept into an actuality. As actual, it must have an actual human being to conceive it. On the other hand, externality conditions a human being. In this way, nature or the environment, independent of the cognizing subject, rather than the human being, is the absolute principle. Genuine or true cognition, then, is given in experience, and the only acceptable epistemology is inductive empiricism. Whether because of perceived lacunas in his presentation or because of its immanency within Hegelianism, Solov'ëv must have almost immediately felt some dissatisfaction with both the details and the ultimate outcome of his sketch. In another account, for example, he returns to a recognition that Hegel's philosophy as a theoretical system can*not* be developed further. For Solov'ëv, to hold that "the logical idea is *actualized* in nature and the human spirit," contradicts that system's basic principle that logical concepts are abstract and, therefore, *non*-actualized.[57] The left-Hegelians had already recognized this inherent "self-negation" of Hegel's philosophy, a contradiction between the first volume of the *Encyclopedia* and the second and third volumes. Seen in this fashion, Feuerbach's anthropologism represents a reaction to the propensity of Western philosophy, and of Hegel's system in particular, towards "logical abstractness" in favor of the concrete or non-ideal.

In *The Crisis*, Solov'ëv presents two different historico-philosophical reconstructions of the path leading from Hegel to Schopenhauer. In the first of these two depictions, Solov'ëv refers neither to Feuerbach by name nor to the arguably most famous aspect of Feuerbach's philosophy, his anthropology.[58] The transition to Schopenhauer is achieved briefly and inadequately as proceeding via a detour

[55] Solovyov 1996: 51; PSS, vol. 1, p. 69.

[56] Solovyov 1996: 50; PSS, vol. 1, p. 68.

[57] Solovyov 1996: 110; PSS, vol. 1, p. 110.

[58] Unfortunately, Solov'ëv fails to mention what we are to make of forsaken directions, or even if there are any, opting instead to present Western philosophy as a chronologically and logically continuous, in the mathematical sense, endeavor.

through materialism. Unlike in his treatment of the road from Hegel to Feuerbach, however, Solov'ëv now makes no attempt to depict the reaction as based on a recognition of Hegel's proliferation of abstractions. Here it is *not* a matter of an immanent development of Hegel's philosophy. Rather, the first step consists simply of abandoning Hegelianism outright owing to its supposed one-sidedness. Nevertheless, this one-sided reaction, for Solov'ëv, was itself historically necessary. Unfortunately, he does not specify what sort of necessity he sees involved here. Of course, it certainly cannot be a logical necessity, for no contradiction arises from supposing that no reaction was provoked. Nor obviously can it be a matter of physical necessity, for there is no question of physical constraint. The only remaining possibility is psychological: We must suppose that the philosophical community *felt* it had no other choice but reject Hegelianism. Thus, Solov'ëv returns to his original position that Hegel's system cannot be developed further, but he does so at the cost of introducing what ultimately must be a contingency into the history of philosophy. Although the philosophical community felt one way, another, different community could have "felt" something else.

Elsewhere in *The Crisis*, Solov'ëv makes clear that the post-Hegelian reaction sought a system based not on an abstract concept, but one whose principle was concrete, independent reality. They immediately found this principle embodied in materialism. Although these modern materialists regarded the ultimate constituents of all material things to be indivisible atoms, further inquiry into the nature of the atom branched off in two divergent directions. That atoms possess qualities, e.g., extension and density, as they must if they constitute our qualitatively-rich universe, means for Solov'ëv that they stand in some external relation to an observer and, therefore, are, by definition, phenomena. Such an interpretation of atoms transforms atomistic materialism into a phenomenalism, which, as we saw earlier, Solov'ëv specifically equates with positivism. In this way Solov'ëv achieves another transition from Hegelianism to positivism.

Solov'ëv's second line of inquiry into atomism concerns itself solely with the interactive effects of atoms. He maintains that certain materialists viewed the atom not so much as irreducible extended *material* particles as irreducible forces pure and simple. From this position Solov'ëv believes it is but one small, though quite logical, step to Schopenhauer's recognition of will as the first principle, "as the unique really existent *Ding an Sich*."[59] What to someone being acted upon appears as a force opposing his own action is really, i.e., in itself, an impersonal, indeterminate "will"!

The second of Solov'ëv's two historical reconstructions of the path – actually paths – from Hegel to Schopenhauer incorporates the route to Feuerbach that he previously sketched in this chapter. Having arrived at Feuerbach's principle that humanity is of absolute significance, Western philosophy found itself faced with two possible though divergent interpretations of this result: Either we understand "humanity" as a general and *abstract* term designating all human beings as a whole or we take it instead as referring to each individual human being. In other words, we

[59] Solovyov 1996: 97; PSS, vol. 1, p. 101.

would expect Solov'ëv to portray Western philosophy as faced with a dilemma between Cartesian methodological individualism and some sort of epistemological sociologism. Inexplicably, however, Solov'ëv now shifts his concern to ethics. He focuses, in particular, on the now quaint opposition between ethical socialism and individualism. Solov'ëv interprets his own overly simplistic historical reconstruction as the definitive rejection by Western philosophy of "objective principles of morality" much as rationalism had already "rejected all objective reality in *theory*."[60] Specifically who is rejecting "objective principles of morality" is unclear. The only name Solov'ëv mentions in this regard is Max Stirner, a figure who hardly speaks for all of Western philosophy. If, however, Solov'ëv had Hegel in mind as the destroyer of "objective reality in *theory*," then, assuming a correlation between the various philosophical sub-disciplines, he importantly leaves unexplained why there is a time lag between morality and ontology. If the assumption is incorrect and Solov'ëv still wishes to uphold his thesis that Western philosophical development has culminated, he would have to trace painstakingly the developmental paths of each philosophical sub-discipline, demonstrating how each has exhausted its options. This Solov'ëv certainly has not accomplished here in *The Crisis*. Lastly, Solov'ëv is being disingenuous, if he is not himself confused, in juxtaposing what he conceives to be Hegel's "achievement" with Stirner's. If Hegel's conception that *all* reality is conceptual is equivalent to a rejection of reality, then Stirner's parallel accomplishment should have been a demonstration that all objective morality is conceptual or totally abstract. If, on the other hand, Solov'ëv correctly depicts Stirner's accomplishment, viz., that all objective moral principles must be rejected, then Hegel should have rejected all objective principles in epistemology, i.e., have accepted a Humean skepticism!

In addition, Solov'ëv's presentation of what he calls the "inner connection between practical individualism and theoretical materialism" is, at best, obscure. Nevertheless, his argument proceeds along the line that the pursuit of individual happiness is constantly hindered by an objectivity that, despite Hegel's theoretical idealism, proves in practice all too real. Here, Solov'ëv has again confused realism with materialism. In Solov'ëv's reconstruction of history, Schopenhauer, as the spearhead of Western philosophy, accomplished the leap from materialism to the realization that the world is a manifestation of the "will" again not immanently, not dialectically, but through the purely contingent "affirmation that matter is only a phenomenon."[61] We should note that Solov'ëv provides no immanent nor otherwise compelling reasons for rejecting either materialism in theory or individualism in practice. His opposition to them rests on: (a) an unelaborated personal conviction that they are unacceptable, and (b) the continuance of "abstract" philosophy in the West.

Solov'ëv's final outline of the philosophical path from Hegel to Schopenhauer makes no pretense to represent an immanent development of Hegelianism and does not attempt to snare intermediate philosophies in its account. Nor does its argument invoke the questionable, if not specious, notion of historical necessity or completeness. Although the argument cannot buttress Solov'ëv's chief claim in

[60] Solovyov 1996: 120; PSS, vol. 1, p. 117.

[61] Solovyov 1996: 121; PSS, vol. 1, p. 118.

The Crisis concerning the final termination of abstract philosophy, it contains *in nuce* his general philosophical outlook at this time and one which he would hold and elaborate in the immediately subsequent years. For this reason it is his most important. This argument is also the one most clearly written under the influence of Jurkevich and Solov'ëv's other Russian predecessors. As we have already seen, for Solov'ëv both the rationalist and the empiricist directions of modern philosophy concluded that what truly is, is mental or "abstract." For Solov'ëv, the significance of this is that epistemology as an abstract, philosophical discipline annihilates itself, for both directions ultimately affirm that cognition, cognition of what truly is, is unattainable. Therefore since both directions hold that genuine cognition is a chimera, it is nonsensical to inquire into its conditions. Regardless of which approach the modern epistemologist takes, the very nature of his endeavor, viz., the isolation of conditions of cognition, leads to the manifestly untenable annihilation of the independence of both the subject and the object of the investigation. In seeking conditions, the epistemologist accords primacy to the structure of the act of cognition. Truth, whether of the object known or of the knower, is thus dependent on these conditions. Although this argument will receive its full statement only a few years later, already in *The Crisis* Solov'ëv believes that Western philosophy has failed to recognize the necessity for *both* empirical and logical, or rational, elements in cognition, a failure which has resulted in what he calls "*abstract formalism*."[62]

Schopenhauer's achievement, in Solov'ëv's eyes, lies in the realization that both logical and empirical elements are necessary for cognition. Schopenhauer failed, however, to recognize their proper relationship. Like his disciple, von Hartmann, Schopenhauer recognized the one-sidedness of earlier Western philosophy, but the latter, in particular, was unable to utilize this awareness to forge an "integral inner synthesis."[63] True, to some extent both Schopenhauer and von Hartmann recognized the need for this synthesis in metaphysics and both even applied it in what Solov'ëv calls the "synthetic method of philosophy."[64] However, because of their inadequate grasp of this method, both shifted the focus of cognition to subjective representation. Therefore their incomplete integration of opposite principles yielded their respective metaphysics, which suffered from contradictions and absurdities. In brief, Schopenhauer's "will" is merely another abstraction directly comparable to Hegel's "absolute idea" and, like the latter, lacks content.

For Solov'ëv, Schopenhauer's intellectual salvage efforts among the ruins of post-Hegelian philosophy led not only to the restoration of metaphysics but of ethics as well.[65] Solov'ëv faults Schopenhauer for viewing everything as the manifestation of a never-satisfied will and desire. The goal of all activity, i.e., the supreme

[62] Solovyov 1996: 133; PSS, vol. 1, p. 126.

[63] Solovyov 1996: 141; PSS, vol. 1, p. 132.

[64] Solovyov 1996: 138; PSS, vol. 1, p. 129.

[65] Schopenhauer's positing of the feeling of sympathy as the natural and ultimate foundation of morality is one that many years later would continue to influence Solov'ëv's own thought. Additionally, in Chap. 5 Solov'ëv acknowledges Schopenhauer's grounding of ethics on metaphysics, a position he too would subsequently adopt and develop but would in later years abandon.

good, is made to be a state of affairs that is, in principle, unattainable. Thus, although Schopenhauer believes the foundation of morality lies naturalistically in the feeling of sympathy common to all individuals, he contradicts himself in finding the reality of the individual to be illusory and the will's goal the "annihilation of being." E. von Hartmann's advance on Schopenhauer lies in noticing this contradiction and resolving it through a recognition that the entire universe as a whole, not just separate individuals, can attain the ultimate goal, the annihilation of the world! Nevertheless, von Hartmann's move only introduces yet another contradiction, this one results from coupling this recognition, interpreted as a cosmic annihilation in time, with his belief in an absolute spirit that is outside of time. The resolution of von Hartmann's contradiction consists in realizing that the annihilation is not a genuine existential one taking place in time, but, rather, the annihilation of reality in its separateness, i.e., a recognition of the "all-embracing spirit" that encompasses everything.

With these ruminations on the philosophies of Schopenhauer and von Hartmann, Solov'ëv concludes his survey of modern philosophy, declaring, but not demonstrating, that it has exhausted all its options and therefore has no path still to follow except Solov'ëv's. Given his stated thesis, we would expect him to present an enumeration of *all logically possible* philosophical options. This Solov'ëv has not done. We would expect him to present a detailed list, categorizing all modern philosophies and showing how they have already manifested all possible options. This Solov'ëv has not done. We would expect him to present an argument for why the history of philosophy is undeviating, relentlessly progressive and non-repetitious. This also Solov'ëv has not done. All he has presented is a bald and manifestly quite unsupported declaration that "Hartmann's philosophy is the legitimate and necessary product of this [Western philosophical-TN] development."[66]

1.6 *The Crisis* and Schelling

The influence of the later Schelling on Solov'ëv has long been and continues to remain a contentious issue. Indisputably, Solov'ëv concerned himself in his *magister*'s thesis exclusively with the early Schelling, and even when he does so Schelling figures merely as a transitional figure, a historical "moment," between Fichte and Hegel. Based solely on explicit textual references, if Solov'ëv at this time felt particularly attracted to any of Schelling's later positions, he certainly kept these sympathies close to his chest. On the other hand, the multitude of similarities between their respective stances and even occasionally their terminology make the question of influence virtually impossible to ignore. Viewing Solov'ëv's entire corpus, one contemporary scholar has concluded that "Vladimir Solov'ëv was the last Russian Schellingian."[67] Others have correctly pointed out the numerous similarities between

[66] Solovyov 1996: 148; PSS, vol. 1, p. 137.

[67] Gulyga 1987: 266.

the terminology, the ideas and even entire passages between their works, making the issue a perennial topic in Solov'ëv-scholarship.[68]

In a letter to A. A. Kireev, Solov'ëv recounted that during his doctoral defense in April 1880 he distinguished Schelling's early "speculative pantheism" from the "theosophical constructions of Schelling's second system (the so-called positive philosophy)" and that he "recognized the affinity between his views and only those of Schelling's later system."[69] Granting, then, that he had a familiarity with Schelling's positive philosophy, the question remains: To what degree was Solov'ëv familiar with it in 1874? Furthermore, if his claim in 1880 could just as well have been expressed in 1874, how do we account for his utter neglect of the later Schelling in *The Crisis*? If Solov'ëv was sympathetic to Schelling already at this early date, how can he avoid the charge of being disingenuous, if not of hypocrisy, in seeing the culmination of Western philosophy not in it but in the philosophies of Schopenhauer and von Hartmann? Is it possible that he undertook a close and more sympathetic study of Schelling only in the years between the two defenses and that his knowledge of the later Schelling was drawn largely from the comments of others, particularly Kireevskij? After all, even though he explicitly referred to Schelling's later philosophy, Khomjakov regarded it to be part and parcel of abstract Western thought, which found its "legitimate" and logical conclusion in Hegel's philosophy.[70] Regardless of whether he had a first-hand acquaintance with Schelling's later writings or merely knew of them through references by Khomjakov and others, Solov'ëv in 1874 interpreted Schelling's ideas through Slavophile eyes. Whether he recognized a dichotomy in Schelling's thought is unimportant, since even if he knew of the "positive philosophy" it was the incomparably weaker division. Hence, there was no need to draw particular attention to it. If the charge of disingenuousness is to be sustained against Solov'ëv, the burden of proof lies on the accusers.

1.7 Solov'ëv's Positive Views

Unlike in his subsequent works, here in *The Crisis* Solov'ëv displays little interest in detailing his own position, his own vision of the philosophical enterprise and what he believes "truly exists." Nevertheless, from his general critique of Western philosophy as well as through scattered remarks but, most importantly, from his concluding paragraphs, we can get a rough outline of his views at this time. In this his first major foray in philosophy, Solov'ëv does not start with ethics, as he will in his later, systematic works. Rather, presenting a case for epistemology as first philosophy, he writes that in a philosophical investigation of the immediately objective

[68] For a recent philosophically informed discussion of Schelling and Solov'ëv, see Gajdenko 2005a, b.

[69] Pis'ma, vol. 2, p. 100. The editor of these letters, E. L. Radlov, places the composition of this one in 1881. Such a date is highly unlikely. Cf. PSS, vol. 3, p. 439f.

[70] Khomyakov 1859: 226. Khomjakov wrote, "Schelling's last period, however, has an even more episodic significance than Kant's philosophy of practical reason and is far inferior in greatness."

world, the world as it is given *in consciousness*, its "general character and forms must precede an investigation of its independent essence."[71] Yet, Solov'ëv decries the subjectivism he believes is inherent in modern epistemologies and which forms the basis of their negative relationship to metaphysics. That the world in general is my representation, as Schopenhauer claimed, does not mean that it is *nothing but* my representation, that it has no existence independent of my consciousness.

Not only does Solov'ëv not deny the possibility, but indeed he affirms, the presence of universal logical forms in experience. Regrettably, unlike Kant, he fails to enumerate these forms, a task that belongs, he says, to metaphysics in general. Nevertheless, like Kant, Solov'ëv holds that since all representations are found in space and time and, additionally, no objects can be represented except as in space and time, we must conclude that they are necessary and general forms of the objective world. In other words, these and other unspecified forms make experience possible, not in the subjective, Kantian sense of unifying representations or the sense-manifold, but in that they are the objectively existing universal forms of the world. Without them there would be no cognition, for they are part of all that is and that can be cognized.

Likewise, the laws and categories of logic, as such, present only empty possibilities. True, our individual thought-processes isolate or abstract these laws and categories from experience, thereby rendering them as abstract concepts. Nonetheless, despite the subjectivity of this procedure, logical laws, categories and forms are not therefore essentially subjective. Experience does consist of a "union" of logical and empirical elements. *Pace* Kant, however, this union is not a product of the cognitive faculty. Rather, it is logically prior to consciousness; indeed, the latter presupposes it. The key to the resolution of epistemological problems lies in deriving from "indisputable empirical data" that which is "logically contained" therein, a procedure Solov'ëv terms the "true philosophical method."[72] Regrettably, this is rather vague, but he does offer two helpful examples. Even such a strict empiricist as Mill acknowledged that causality is constant and necessary. This constancy, according to Solov'ëv, can be accounted for only if "the necessity of another phenomenon is already contained in the *entity* itself (*sushchestvo*) or *concept* of the given phenomenon, i.e., in its *general* properties, abstracted from all external relations."[73] An abstraction derived from specific examples is applicable only to these individual cases. However, on the assumption that there are "general concepts of certain inner phenomena," i.e., concepts obtained through abstraction, the general connection between these concepts

[71] Solovyov 1996: 64, PSS, vol. 1, p. 78. An investigation of the world's independent essence presupposes that it has one. If Solov'ëv means that there is such an essence and that this essence is independent of everything else, then, this, as we will see shortly, contradicts his claim that everything is part of the "all-one spirit" and that the error of dogmatic metaphysics was precisely its assumption of such an independent essence. Quite possibly, Solov'ëv developed his position during the period between writing the first and last chapters of *The Crisis*.

[72] Solovyov 1996: 139; PSS, vol. 1, p. 130.

[73] Solovyov 1996: 126; PSS, vol. 1, p. 121.

holds of necessity independently of any particular experiences.[74] The other example Solov'ëv gives is that of will and representation: If we had neither mental representations nor a will, we would know nothing about them. Having both and the mental wherewithal to reflect on them, particularly the former, and express our reflection conceptually, we can see from the "essence" of the respective concepts the necessary connection between will and representation, viz., that to every instance of the will there corresponds an object, qua something willed.

Surely, we are sorely tempted here to compare Solov'ëv's "true philosophical method" with Husserl's notion of ideation, or eidetic intuition. Decades before Husserl's own work, Solov'ëv admitted that we cannot deduce *a priori* the existence of volition and dispelled any attempt to do so from philosophy.[75] However, if volition exists, it must have a correlative willed object. In this way, we can conclude that there are two spheres of cognition:

1. Empirical or actual[76] cognition, i.e., cognition on the basis of sensations, "objectified and combined according to certain general and necessary laws"[77]; and
2. Logical or *a priori* cognition, i.e., cognition of essences. Such cognition is akin to mathematical laws.

Each of these spheres of cognition has its own correlative and distinct type of objects that exist, though, in different senses.[78] An *object of actual cognition* exists in time, e.g., the sheet of paper before me as well as the headache I may now be experiencing; an *object of a priori cognition*, on the other hand, is an extra-temporal entity such as, in addition to those already mentioned, mathematical laws.

It is at this point that Solov'ëv makes a gigantic leap into speculative metaphysics. That the logical and empirical elements of cognition are united or synthesized prior to and presupposed by consciousness confirms for him that "in our cognition, we are concerned with what exists independently, which also posits the possibility of metaphysics."[79] Solov'ëv hastens to add, though, that when he writes of metaphysics he does not mean pre-Kantian dogmatism. His objection to the latter is that in it metaphysical objects are conceived as existing quite independently of the cognizing subject. Solov'ëv's philosophical scheme, on the other hand, presupposes "an essential identity between metaphysical essence and the knower, i.e., our spirit." This supposed identity and, indeed, the notion of a metaphysical essence or "*all-one*

[74] Solovyov 1996: 127; PSS, vol. 1, p. 122.

[75] The major difference between Husserl and Solov'ëv here concerns the sphere of what is given. Whereas Husserl would limit the given more or less to what it was for the empiricist school, Solov'ëv extends it considerably to include what is generally deemed the concern of metaphysics, e.g., the existence of God.

[76] Unfortunately the English translation of *The Crisis* inconsistently renders the Russian word "*dejstvitel'noe*" by both "actual" and "real." For the former see, for example, Solovyov 1996: 125; PSS, vol. 1, p. 121 and for the latter see Solovyov 1996: 138; PSS, vol. 1, p. 129.

[77] Solovyov 1996: 125; PSS, vol. 1, p. 120.

[78] In this matter, Solov'ëv owes as much to von Hartmann as to Jurkevich.

[79] Solovyov 1996: 138; PSS, vol. 1, p. 130.

spirit, of which our spirit is a particular manifestation or image" is abruptly introduced with little fanfare and without argument. Solov'ëv claims that metaphysics is possible, since we are all part of the "all-one spirit." Knowing ourselves, therefore, is knowing something of this spirit. Yet although Solov'ëv is aware that proof of this identity is necessary, he himself provides none. Since the metaphysical essence or substance – here he uses the terms essence (*sushchnost'*) and substance or entity (*suchchestvo*) interchangeably – is not given immanently in experience, the spiritual nature of the world must be proven indirectly through the essence's uniquely teleological manifestations. This, Solov'ëv believes, von Hartmann has satisfactorily accomplished and apparently feels no need to repeat. Indeed, the latter, indisputably a Western figure, has independently provided not only a key step in Solov'ëv's thesis that Western philosophy has now culminated, but also the pivotal proof, through use of the true philosophical method, that:

(1) "There is an all-one first principle of all that exists.
(2) This all-one first principle presents an indisputably spiritual character in its manifested reality, which we cognize in the domain of our experience.
(3) This spiritual reality belongs to the first principle independently of our consciousness and is prior to it."[80]

Thus, in the final analysis it is von Hartmann, not Jurkevich nor, for that matter, Kireevskij, who accomplishes the fundamental philosophical spadework for Solov'ëv's own religio-philosophical outlook and why Solov'ëv sincerely believes his own position is the next stage in philosophy after its culmination in the West with von Hartmann. Sadly, Solov'ëv, by his own explicit admission, offers no philosophical advance here in *The Crisis* over von Hartmann beyond removing the "obvious absurdities" in his thought. [81]

1.8 *The Crisis* as the Origin of Professional Russian Philosophy

In his *magister*'s thesis, Solov'ëv relies heavily upon the philosophical formulations of others, and his work is largely bereft of the sort of argumentation we expect to find today in a philosophical treatise. There is no mistaking that this is the work of a zealous though as yet largely undisciplined mind. Solov'ëv's explicit borrowings, at least here, are more from von Hartmann and Jurkevich than from Schelling and Kireevskij, even if, as we have seen, there was in all probability a significant indebtedness to their general outlook. This is only to be expected given his intention, on

[80] Solovyov 1996: 140; PSS, vol. 1, p. 131.

[81] Solovyov 1996: 148; PSS, vol. 1, p. 137. The reader must not assume that Solov'ëv's presentation of the philosophies of Schopenhauer and von Hartmann are unproblematic. One of the very first reviewers of *The Crisis* challenged precisely Solov'ëv's reading, contending that he simply got it wrong. Cf. Kozlov 1875.

the one hand, to remonstrate against the poverty of contemporary Western philosophy and, on the other, to prove to himself and to others that he is a worthy successor to Jurkevich. Given his amazing zeal, it is not surprising that Solov'ëv devoted himself in the immediately subsequent years to a systematic exposition of his philosophical position – much as Hegel did with his *System of Logic* – rather than in trying to complete or fill in the gaps. Even in the thesis's last paragraph, Solov'ëv turns away from substantiating his tantalizing claim that von Hartmann's philosophy, shorn of its absurdities, affirms the *same* truths as those of the "great theological teachers of the East."[82] Unfortunately, Solov'ëv leaves it to the reader to determine just who these great teachers were and in what way their respective doctrines correspond with von Hartmann's.

Despite its vague inferences, philosophical anemia and historiographically suspect judgments, Solov'ëv's thesis without doubt makes a number of intriguing claims that later philosophers, particularly in Russia but also elsewhere, would seize upon and use as a starting point in their own critiques of Western thought and of the modern ascendancy of epistemology over ontology. In Russia, the primacy of ontology in philosophical investigations that came to the fore with Solov'ëv quickly gained dominance and exercised a virtual hegemony until at least the Bolshevik Revolution if not beyond. Additionally, already decades before the concerted assault on positivism in the West, Solov'ëv heralded a call for a return to religious and transcendent values in the face of their seemingly rapid deterioration in light of scientific and technological change.

On a personal level, after having defended his *magister*'s thesis with great success and much fanfare Solov'ëv was well positioned to embark on an academic career in philosophy. On 4 December, Solov'ëv finished handling all the formalities connected with obtaining the *magister*'s degree and probably returned to Moscow shortly afterward. The criticism over *The Crisis* that ensued in the press for months to come insured that Solov'ëv's name would not be immediately forgotten even by those resolutely opposed to his metaphysical direction. Despite their many objections to specific points in Solov'ëv's work, virtually all of his detractors concurred that it marked the beginning of a new era in the history of Russian philosophy. Looking back on *The Crisis* after some 15 years, Solov'ëv remarked that while he would not then answer for all its twists and turns, he still regarded its "chief idea" as correct.[83]

[82] Solovyov 1996: 149; PSS, vol. 1, p. 138.

[83] SS, vol. 6, p. 305.

Chapter 2
The Unfinished Sophia

At least until recently, Solov'ëv's philosophical publications in the immediate aftermath of *The Crisis* were largely overlooked in favor of his more systematic, though metaphysical, writings. His *magister*'s thesis, however, did provoke considerable response in the media at the time. Of particular note owing to its narrow philosophical focus is the exchange between Solov'ëv and Konstantin Kavelin, whose criticisms of the former's thesis are the only ones to which Solov'ëv replied. In this chapter, we will critically examine this dialogue between two bulwarks of nineteenth century Russian thought. We will also turn to Solov'ëv's only recently published manuscript "Sophia," which, written during this period, contains an amalgam of observations on human nature, arguments in support of metaphysics and numerous mystical musings, for which the manuscript is chiefly known. First, however, we will look at Solov'ëv's thwarted efforts to secure Jurkevich's professorship and his travels abroad, particularly his stays in England and Egypt, where he supposedly had mystical visions. These in themselves help shed light on Solov'ëv's intentions, his interests and above all his state of mind.

2.1 At the Moscow Higher Women's Courses

Naturally enough, Solov'ëv's immediate concern in the wake of his thesis defense was to secure the vacant professorship in philosophy at the University of Moscow opened up by Jurkevich's death in early October. The news of his mentor's passing hardly came as a surprise to those who had known him at the university, Solov'ëv perhaps least of all. Nevertheless, for whatever reason Jurkevich's colleagues were ill prepared to take up the issue of his successor. Thus, when the matter arose at a meeting of the liberal arts faculty on 14 October 1874 no firm decisions were made. The published writings of the two individuals mentioned for consideration at that meeting, M. M. Troickij and M. I. Karinskij, were unfamiliar to some in attendance, and as a consequence the issue was tabled for 8 weeks to allow time for

T. Nemeth, *The Early Solov'ëv and His Quest for Metaphysics*, International Archives of the History of Ideas/Archives internationales d'histoire des idées 212,
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the faculty members to acquaint themselves with the respective portfolios of the proposed candidates.

At the subsequent meeting of 9 December, the discussion resumed and centered again on the names Troickij and Karinskij. Despite having authored at least one significant philosophical work that could conceivably be taken as the equivalent of a doctoral dissertation, Karinskij, who was at the time teaching at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, formally had only a *magister*'s degree in theology.[1] Offering the chair in philosophy to Karinskij would, it was feared, set a precedent that required all due consideration. To set the record straight, one faculty member pointed out that the theological academies in Russia were allowed by their charter to grant degrees only in theology, not philosophy. However, there remained in any case the legal stipulation that according to the university statute in force at the time a professor had to have a doctorate in his field. These considerations, in effect, doomed Karinskij's candidacy virtually from the outset. At this point in the proceedings, one faculty member, V. I. Ger'e, introduced Solov'ëv's name as a possible candidate for the chair in philosophy, albeit at the rank of docent, which, according to the university regulations, required only a *magister*'s degree in the discipline. Based on our meager evidence, the initial intent here was to introduce Solov'ëv as yet a third candidate for the position, though of necessity at a lower level than that of professor because of his minimal credentials. The dean of the faculty, however, seizing the opportunity, raised the issue whether those present would prefer one or two teachers to occupy the single chair.[2] If the latter would be deemed preferable, the selection process would be greatly simplified.

The entire matter concerning Jurkevich's successor was then forwarded together with a report from the liberal arts faculty to the university council. Apparently in light of the overwhelming support in favor of Solov'ëv over Karinskij for the position of docent, the council resolved to take a formal vote quickly on 19 December. At that meeting, the vote went 30 to 17 in favor of having two positions and two teachers in philosophy. The senior position, that of ordinary professor, was to go to Troickij, who was at the time teaching at the University of Warsaw and already held a doctorate.[3] Solov'ëv was appointed docent. The result of the election was next

[1] Cf. Karinskij 1873. Covering much the same ground as Solov'ëv's thesis, Karinskij's thesis was not just larger but more thorough and scholarly and therefore less accessible and controversial.

[2] A number of questions immediately spring to mind with news of the dean's proposal that, unfortunately, are not addressed in the surviving historical record. For example, did the dean have some assurance that the government would accede to the establishment of an additional teaching post? Did the dean expect a sudden increase in university enrollment that would warrant two teachers in philosophy?

[3] Troickij held a *magister*'s degree in theology from the Kiev Theological Academy. He first submitted his doctoral dissertation in philosophy to Jurkevich at Moscow University. However, after reading it the latter declined to accept it, claiming it did not meet the standards for such a treatise. However, in a letter to Troickij Jurkevich made clear that the real reason behind his rejection was political: Troickij's philosophical position was viewed as too close to that of the young materialists Chernyshevskij and his group. Unwilling to accept Jurkevich's refusal, Troickij submitted his work *Nemetskaja psikhologija v tekushchem stoleliju* (*German Psychology in the Current Century*) to Vladislavlev and F. F. Sidonskij at St. Petersburg University in 1867. Although it met predictably

forwarded on 5 January 1875 to the head of the Moscow educational district, who confirmed it on 7 January. Most likely, Solov'ëv learned of the news on the same day. Owing to his teaching responsibilities in Warsaw, Troickij would not be able to take up the new position in Moscow until the following academic year. This, of course, left Solov'ëv as the sole philosophy teacher at the University during the second semester of the 1874–1875 academic year.

Obviously elated with the turn of events, Solov'ëv wrote the very next day to his friend Certelev, then traveling in Western Europe and who was probably at that time in Paris.

> I hold the chair of the late Pamfil Danilovich [Jurkevich] and will shortly begin lecturing in his spirit and direction despite an essential difference in our characters. This summer I will go to London for a year or a year and a half, leaving the chair to my newly elected colleague Troickij, about whom it seems you have heard.[4]

Solov'ëv's description of himself as holding Jurkevich's chair, while in a sense not quite incorrect, might convey the erroneous impression to someone who did not know better that Solov'ëv had been elected at a professorial rank. Whether Certelev did is not recorded. Additionally, that he planned "leaving" ("*predostavljaja*") the teaching to Troickij while he pursued a research project in London could be taken as indicating an unwarranted level of confidence in his new position. In any case, the chair in philosophy was not his to let. Likewise, the basis for Solov'ëv's confidence in announcing his plans for the near future so soon after receiving his teaching appointment remains a mystery. Possibly, there was a general understanding on the part of the university to grant him a leave in conjunction with pursuing a doctorate. Yet if there was such an arrangement, it did not become part of the official record. True, according to university regulations teaching staff could be allowed to go abroad for up to 2 years with pay. However, only in March, some 2 months later, did the liberal arts faculty start the formal mechanics of petitioning the university council to grant Solov'ëv's request.[5] Nonetheless, that two individuals were appointed to fill the post previously held by only one may be a sign of some accommodation with Solov'ëv. The Russian government, notoriously penurious with educational funds, particularly for such a politically suspect field as philosophy, would hardly have consented so readily to the appointment of two teachers when one could conceivably suffice.

In addition to his university appointment, Solov'ëv was asked by V. I. Ger'e, a history professor and the director of the Moscow Higher Courses for Women – at

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with rather sharp criticism in the press, this did not impede Troickij's academic advancement. Ivanovskij 1900: 205. Shortly before his death in 1900, Solov'ëv would write: "If philosophy, or – to put it more precisely and modestly – philosophical education, in Russia is to have a future, then certainly Matvej M. Troickij's name must always remain in our intellectual history." SS, vol. 8, p. 414. The irony here is that Troickij, who would hold the senior position in philosophy, is unanimously hailed as sympathetic to the very positivism that Solov'ëv sought to combat in his *magister*'s thesis.

[4] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 225. Of course, Solov'ëv was likewise "newly elected."

[5] For additional information on these matters see, in particular, Luk'janov 1990. vol. 3, vyp. I: 64–56.

the time females were excluded from the universities – to present a relatively short lecture course dealing with the history of ancient Greek philosophy that would meet for just one hour per week. Solov'ëv consented and chose as his topic the dialogues of Plato. Exactly when Ger'e approached Solov'ëv concerning such a course is not clear. However, in a letter dated 23 December 1874 Solov'ëv informed Vladislavlev in St. Petersburg of this appointment. In all likelihood, Ger'e approached Solov'ëv with the proposal shortly after the university-council vote in mid-December. This insured Ger'e of maintaining the level of the Higher Courses for Women on a par with the (exclusively male) institutions of higher education. Solov'ëv's first lecture there took place on 14 January 1875. Although Vladimir's notes for the entire course have not survived, we do have those for the first two classes taken down by two students. These reveal, albeit in a sketchy manner, Solov'ëv's concern with a theme raised already by Kant in the "Preface" to the first edition of his *Critique of Pure Reason*, viz., the origin of humanity's ceaseless metaphysical questioning.

Kant claimed that reason is faced with inescapable questions, which are incapable of being answered owing to the limitations of human reason. These questions ultimately concern three topics: freedom of the will, the immortality of the soul and the existence of God. Even if we were able to provide "scientific" or theoretical answers to them, the *utility* of these answers would be largely inconsequential. For example, let us assume we had a logical proof that the will is free. Even then were we to have any hope of understanding human actions we would have to look to natural laws to explain the sequence of events stemming from such actions. Kant stresses that the importance of metaphysics is purely practical despite our irrepressible attraction to metaphysical speculation.[6]

For Solov'ëv, on the other hand, the importance of our metaphysical urge or need lies as much on the existential plane as on the practical. Unlike other denizens of the animal world, human beings are capable of conceiving a different world, a world not as it presently exists but as each of us would like it to be. This discrepancy between the existing world and an ideal world, a world that satisfies our wishes, is the root not only of metaphysics but even of such an ordinary everyday activity as laughter. Drawing once again on Schopenhauer's observations – though curiously without mentioning him by name – Solov'ëv acknowledges that the incongruity of the real object of my attention with its ideal concept provokes the mentioned emotional expression.[7] On the other hand, if the human will always found satisfaction, there would be neither laughter nor intellectual inquiry. Unlike the rest of the animal kingdom, humans are perpetually dissatisfied and keep asking 'Why not?' Natural scientists seek answers, but the scope of their probing remains limited. Metaphysics as a discipline is different, however, from the sciences in that the former seeks ultimate principles, principles that alone yield full intellectual satisfaction.

Nevertheless, even if complete satisfaction of the will, i.e., happiness, were possible, such an emotional state would collapse with an awareness of the inescapability of death. Like Schopenhauer, Solov'ëv realizes that if we thought death were the

[6] Kant 1997: A797/B825-A800/B828

[7] Schopenhauer 1969. vol. I: 59.

final result of life, we would view ourselves as insignificant natural objects. Additionally, the greater our earthly happiness, the harder it is to bear the thought of losing it all. This is why we create metaphysics – we could not bear life otherwise. An awareness of our own mortality propels us towards the metaphysical. Those who are unable to find satisfaction in their own metaphysical constructions can still find it in a ready-made religious system.[8] Based on the scanty surviving testimonies, Solov'ëv concerned himself in the remaining lectures with Plato's ideas after indicating that it represented the first relatively complete metaphysical system in Europe.

2.2 At the University of Moscow

Keeping with a tradition expected of all new professors and docents, Solov'ëv delivered an introductory lecture in late January 1875, his topic being metaphysics considered as the discipline or "science" of what fundamentally exists. This lecture, in turn, was published the following month in the journal *Pravoslavnoe obozrenie*, the standard outlet at this time for his writings. The actual date of the lecture, however, remains uncertain. The published text gives the presentation as having taken place on 27 January, but surviving third-party reports lend support to placing the lecture on the 24th or even possibly the 20th. Of course, for our purposes here this is of little consequence other than to illustrate the paucity of our firm information concerning so much of Solov'ëv's life. The most amazing aspect of this mystery – and therefore indicative of something in his psychological make-up – is that there is no record Solov'ëv tried to correct or clarify these mistakes or omissions if such they were. Even the title of the course he taught at the University, presumably the only one he taught during the ensuing semester, remains in doubt. The sole surviving document directly related to this matter is taken from the minutes of a meeting of the liberal arts faculty on 13 January at which Solov'ëv informed his new colleagues that he intended to provide a historical introduction to metaphysics covering: "(1) Kant's theory of appearances and the *Ding an sich*; (2) Schopenhauer's determination of the will as that which exists in itself; (3) the ideal and the real in Schopenhauer and Hartmann; and (4) the theory of what exists in Schelling's final system."[9] Needless to say, since the course met for only two hours per week, it is quite possible that Solov'ëv needed little advance-preparation time. He had dealt to some extent with all of these topics in his thesis with the notable exception of the last. Thus, we cannot exclude the possibility that he was only at this time, and not before, making an effort to acquaint himself more thoroughly with the later Schelling. In the letter of 8 January already cited to Certelev, he refers to the theme of the course as "a historical introduction to metaphysics," but most likely the official title, as we see from the minutes of the 13 January meeting, was simply "Philosophy."

[8] PSS, vol. 1: 244–245; Cf. Schopenhauer 1969. vol. II: 161.

[9] PSS, vol. 1: 340.

As for the introductory lecture, by tradition it was to contain a broad statement of the new professor's immediate research plans in the context of some pressing issue of the day as well as an appreciation for the work of his immediate predecessor. Naturally having just completed his thesis, the early stages of which were certainly known to Jurkevich, this task should have posed no difficulty. Solov'ëv chose a frontal attack on Comtean positivism, developing a theme only hinted at in his *magister*'s thesis. Unlike there, where the emphasis was on the history of philosophy, here in his introductory lecture Solov'ëv presents a largely thematic critique. Expanding on the basic idea contained at roughly the same time in his first lectures at the Higher Women's Courses, Solov'ëv charges that all attempts to constrain human thought, to establish inviolable limits to it, as Comte sought to do, have been unsuccessful. Thought, like all other human activity, strives to be unrestrained. Such a quest lies behind the innate and unceasing human need for metaphysical inquiry. It also underlies the scientific quest for ultimate explanations and answers. Quite correctly, positivism recognizes that the immediate object of science is the empirical world. However, the natural sciences do not stop there. They do not cease their inquiries after having established relations of, for example, coexistence and succession among observable phenomena. Rather, they seek general laws even if those laws should require the positing of entities that are not directly given, not directly observable, such as atoms. In seeking, for example, to explain such a basic phenomenon as light, physicists do not hesitate to appeal to oscillations in an omnipresent, though itself quite unobserved, ether. In doing so, we see that not only does natural science "not consider the world of observable phenomena to be the sole reality, but it firmly rejects this world as an illusion, as a vain guise of what exists."[10]

If the natural sciences were interested only in the real world, the pre-theoretical world as given to us, all scientific questioning would be needless. What truly exists would be what is given to our immediate observation, but the sciences seek what is "behind" the given, i.e., the basis for what we observe. Taking again the example above, the sciences admit that light, as a phenomenon, is something subjective; what we accept as light is the effect of something on our visual organ. Nevertheless, this "something" that corresponds to our sensation exists outside and apart from that sensation. Our understanding is led to it in order to explain our empirical reality, and as such this "something" is a product of thought.

An obvious question now arises: If there is a reasonable basis for doubting the ultimate veracity of our subjective sensations, why should we accept the products of our understanding as something objective? The positivist has a simple answer: Since all that is given to us in sensation has merely a phenomenal existence, there must be a completely unknowable world "behind" the world of appearances. Moreover, since that world, as it is in itself, is completely inaccessible, the metaphysical quest must be set aside. The positivist, in other words, simply denies that the fruits of the understanding *are* objectively true.

Up to this point Solov'ëv's reflections on the science of his day resemble, in broad strokes, certain contemporary discussions today concerning the status of

[10] PSS, vol. 1: 177.

scientific theories and the entities some such theories apparently postulate as existing. Unlike in these contemporary discussions, however, Solov'ëv abandons the genuinely philosophical issue raised by a guarded skepticism. Instead of dealing with the *merits* of treating, say, the atomic theory as an explanatory hypothesis, Solov'ëv directs his attention to its then *current inability* to account for the various empirical properties of matter. From the fact that the natural sciences in his day could not explain how a "mechanical sum of homogeneous atoms" can give rise to the actual variegated world around us, Solov'ëv concludes it is impossible to do so. Consequently, in his eyes, the postulation of atoms as the bedrock of empirical matter has to be abandoned.

> Atomism can only resolve the real world into atoms, but no one can yet compose it from them. As to how and why homogeneous atoms in motion can give rise precisely to these apparent forms, atomism has no answer. Atomism in antiquity candidly appealed to contingency, i.e., *asylum ignorantia*; the simple, scanty being of homogeneous atoms is powerless and meek in the face of the infinite variety of real being.[11]

Just as in *The Crisis*, where Solov'ëv was willing to agree with the basic thrust of contemporary philosophy, so too does he believe here in his introductory lecture that science rightly seeks the ultimate explanation of how and why things are. Furthermore, just as in his thesis he made a sudden and unexplained leap from a recognition of the need for a synthesis of cognitive elements to speculative metaphysics, so too does he now make an equally sudden and unexplained leap from the scientific quest.

> Once physical science seeks and provides explanations, then obviously these explanations can only make sense if they are reduced to a principle that demands no further explanation, i.e., that contains its truth and validity, to an unconditionally necessary, or absolute, principle. … And since an unconditional principle lies outside the sphere of physical science, as a particular or relative science, it must obtain an awareness of this principle from another source. This other science – the science of what genuinely exists or the unconditional – is metaphysics.[12]

In other words, the basic explanatory impulse of physical science can only be satisfied by a quest that leads ultimately to a single, absolutely necessary principle. Yet, such an endeavor lies beyond the scope of the sciences, concerned as they are with the contingent, and belongs to metaphysics.

Solov'ëv, next, adds that the social sciences, the sciences of the human world, also rest ultimately on a first, absolute principle. Matter-of-factly and without argument, he states that all social sciences "can be seen as separate parts and aspects of one science – the general history of humanity." In the latter, the goal is the understanding of the sense of human life as manifested over time. To recognize sense in history is to see it as having an integral development and that in turn implies having a goal. Moreover, just as physics divorced from metaphysical principles is merely a group of isolated facts or observations, so must history obtain its principles from metaphysics if it is not to be merely an accumulation of given facts. Solov'ëv

[11] PSS, vol. 1: 179.

[12] PSS, vol. 1: 180.

concludes his talk with the claim, which he does not even attempt to substantiate, that metaphysics has gone through three independent phases, first in India, then in Greece and most recently in Germany.[13] In the results of all three, he claims, we observe one and the same true intention reworked and developed. Unfortunately, Solov'ëv concludes without further delineation of just what this "intention" was or how all three phases have manifested it. We can confidently surmise, however, based on what he has said and from his later statements, that he did devote his succeeding lectures in the course to recent German metaphysics, viz., Schopenhauer, Hartmann and perhaps Schelling.

During the first months of 1875, an unusually large stream of reviews of Solov'ëv's thesis began to appear in the Russian press in the form of articles and brochures. Some of these were of a polemical nature, particularly those authored by individuals critical of metaphysics in general; others, such as that by Vladislavlev, while critical of particular presentations of historical figures in *The Crisis*, were broadly sympathetic with Solov'ëv's general aim. In Vladislavlev's case, his review was largely a further elaboration of many of the points he had already enunciated during the thesis defense. Clearly, however, among these reviews that by Konstantin D. Kavelin, a former law professor at St. Petersburg University and the author in 1872 of a pioneering tract in psychology, *Zadachi psikhologija*, was the most philosophically noteworthy.[14] It alone attracted an engaged philosophical reply from Solov'ëv. As such, it deserves more than cursory attention from us.

Kavelin opens his brochure with a rebuttal of what he takes to be Solov'ëv's central claims in *The Crisis*, all four of which he considers to be the result of misunderstandings stemming from Solov'ëv's erroneous formulation of the relation between being and cognition. According to Kavelin, these claims are:

1. The external world does not exist in itself, but only for us;
2. The mind has discrete, innate forms and categories, viz., space, time and causality, that enter into all cognitive processes;
3. All worldly phenomena are manifestations of a single existent that is only partially accessible to individual human thought.
4. The single existent that alone actually exists is given neither in external experience nor in *a priori* cognition, but in inner experience alone.

[13] Mochul'skij believes that by the time of this lecture Solov'ëv's project expanded beyond the narrow confines of his Slavophile-inspired thesis. "In comparison with the fundamental positions of his thesis, the introductory lecture contains something new. In *The Crisis of Western Philosophy* Solov'ëv asserts that the truths which Western thought attained, coincide with the truths of the 'teachers of the East, in part the ancient East and especially the Christian East'. This can be understood in a Slavophile spirit: the need for a synthesis of Western rationalism with Eastern Orthodoxy. In the introductory lecture, the program is significantly broadened: the author sets as his goal to show that German metaphysics elaborated the same 'true view' as Indian religion and Greek art." Mochul'skij 1936: 61.

[14] Kavelin (1818–1885) was an important figure in Russian intellectual history in his own right. As a professor of law at St. Petersburg University since 1857, Kavelin took an active role in the preparation of the Great Reforms of the early 1860s, in which the government noted his decidedly liberal stance. Student unrest at the university in 1861 led to his forced resignation, after which he was not permitted to resume teaching until 1877.

Despite recognizing that the first claim, prima facie, is chiefly of an ontological nature, Kavelin reveals his perplexity as to just what it means and, therefore, what exactly he is ascribing to Solov'ëv. On the one hand, he believes that for Solov'ëv the external world exists merely in appearance, *esse est percipi*. On the other hand, Kavelin views Solov'ëv as holding that the world is as we represent it, and how we represent it is a result of our cognitive constitution. For this reason, Kavelin interprets Solov'ëv as holding that the world appears not immediately, but secondarily. The world is not presented immediately to our cognitive faculty, but manifested mediately through our representations of it. Again, it is unclear to Kavelin – and presumably many other readers as well – whether for Solov'ëv that the world exists only for us is due to the structure of our cognitive faculty or whether the mere fact that we are aware of the external world through representations leads to that conclusion. Since we have knowledge only of our own representations, only of what is "in" our individual minds, we do not have genuine knowledge of the external world. The subject is both cognizer and cognized. This, in short, makes the first claim the result of a subjectivist epistemology.

For Kavelin, Solov'ëv correctly recognizes that any account of cognition must begin with personal experience. Where Solov'ëv goes wrong, however, is in not recognizing that the external world is more than merely a representation. However strong the skeptic's argument may appear, Kavelin believes we must view the world as populated with the regular causes of our inner impressions. Such a view forms the absolute bedrock not only of our everyday lives, but also of all the individual sciences. In this respect, Kavelin disputes the psychological possibility of taking extreme skepticism seriously. However, he goes no further. On the absolutely crucial philosophical issue of the justification for our acceptance of an independent objective world, Kavelin has nothing to contribute. For him, our daily activities rest on presupposing an objective world. Far from refuting or even distancing himself from skepticism, Kavelin offers nothing short of epistemological resignation. He does not dwell on the ontological issue of whether there really is an independently existing external world. As he writes, "It is obvious that corresponding to this representation there is a fact that has taken place outside us."[15]

The main focus of Kavelin's attack on Solov'ëv, however, is neither the latter's alleged skepticism nor the religiously-charged issues associated with the third and fourth claims above. Instead, Kavelin pointedly directs his ire on Solov'ëv's admission of *a priori*, or innate, psychic forms and categories. The former does not discount the possibility that our representations of objects differ from the way these objects truly are, i.e., how they exist "in themselves." Nor can we be certain that each of us conceives the objects of the external world identically. Nevertheless, that we designate individual impressions received from external objects consistently by one and the same word suffices for us to speak of our cognition of these objects as valid. Indeed, from the perspective of the human adult the mind appears to possess, as it were, innate logical forms and categories that are applied to the empirically given. Nevertheless, there are no such forms and categories in the child or the

[15] Kavelin 1875: 298.

mentally underdeveloped. Rather, the schemes that Solov'ëv takes to be *a priori* are actually the products of unconscious mental operations effected early in childhood, often enough even earlier than the first flashes of mental awareness. What Solov'ëv and others have taken to be *a priori* are only general abstractions that have become part of our mental furniture at the same time as our first representations of the external world. "Thus, there is no basis to consider these schemes as *a priori* or innate. They are the result or product of unconscious thought processes that precede conscious thought."[16] Ultimately, Solov'ëv's proposed synthesis of philosophy, religion and science remains for Kavelin a confused and unattainable dream.

According to Kavelin, the concept of time, for example, is obtained through a two-stage process. First, we abstract the concept of motion from moving bodies and then, next, compare these abstractions, after having removed the bodies in motion. Nevertheless, it is unclear how Kavelin sees the general concept of time emerging from this supposed process instead of, say, the general concept of space. For one thing, as Kant pointed out long before Kavelin, my inner states succeed one another in time, and these make no appeal to an impression of a moving body. If, then, we were to take Kavelin's view seriously, we would have no way to account for our inner sense of the flow of time. Indeed, despite his use of contemporary terminology, Kavelin views Solov'ëv largely from within a Lockean perspective.[17] Kavelin, like Locke but unlike Kant, conceives the concepts of space and time as comparable to those of color, shape and force. As with these concepts neither time nor space exists as such any more than do color or shape except as an abstraction in our minds. Much the same holds true for causality. Against Kavelin we should note, just as Berkeley did with regard to Locke's position, that to abstract everything until we are left with a "pure" concept, be it of time, space or causality, would leave us with mere empty words, viz., nothing.[18]

Kavelin correctly recognizes that Solov'ëv neither proves nor even explains how he comes to the conclusion that there really is a single existent alone. However, in the absence of such an explanation it is plainly presumptuous for Kavelin to conclude that Solov'ëv's unitary underlying metaphysical existent is a derivative concept comparable to time, space and causality. Yet, the burden is also on Solov'ëv to explain his ideas clearly. If he does uphold the existence of such a single existent, not only must Solov'ëv provide us with the basis for this specific conclusion, he must also first demonstrate that the very notion of metaphysical knowledge is not an oxymoron.

Returning to our historical narrative, Kavelin's brochure appeared sometime in early March 1875. That Solov'ëv had not yet seen it by 20 March is clear from a

[16] Kavelin 1875: 303.

[17] Kavelin does not himself mention Locke, and it is unclear to what extent he was directly familiar with the latter's writings. In fact, Locke already realized, apparently unlike Kavelin, that the idea of time did not presuppose an impression of motion. Locke 1968: 148. On the other hand, the similarities between their ideas are so numerous and apparent that sheer coincidence must be discounted.

[18] Berkeley 1963: 113.

letter of that date in which he, referring to the press notices of his thesis, wrote, "the war against me is continuing…and the end is not in sight, but I have already stopped reading them."[19] Apparently, shortly thereafter Kavelin sent Solov'ëv a copy of his critical brochure, for in a letter dated 29 March Solov'ëv thanked him for it, adding, "I consider it my duty to answer you at length in print because of the importance of the questions that you examine in it. For the time being, I venture only to state that on certain questions, namely the reality of the external world and the significance of abstract concepts, it seems to me quite possible to come to an agreement. Therefore, the fundamental disagreement between us will be that concerning metaphysical cognition."[20] From this correspondence we can confidently conclude, then, that Solov'ëv started composing his reply to Kavelin sometime shortly afterwards. In fact, in yet another letter, this time to his friend Certelev, from 18 April Solov'ëv apologizes for the delay in writing, attributing it in part to his work on a reply to Kavelin. He adds that when completed his article should provide a better treatment of the philosophical issues of the reality of the external world and of the foundation of metaphysical cognition than was possible in *The Crisis*.[21]

The completed reply to Kavelin appeared in the June issue of one of the most prominent Russian journals of the time, *Russkij vestnik*. Whereas Kavelin explicitly concentrated his fire on what he took to be the psychological origin of *a priori* concepts, Solov'ëv concerned himself largely with the possibility of metaphysical cognition in general. Unlike Kavelin, for whom the questions of Western philosophy, and in particular epistemology, can find satisfactory answers only in psychology, Solov'ëv sees the answers in a speculative metaphysics that he interpreted ultimately in religious terms. Nevertheless, true to his word in the letter mentioned above, Solov'ëv shows every sign of welcoming the opportunity to clarify, rather than simply restate, his position and attempts to find common ground with Kavelin and the positivists.

Solov'ëv begins his article, "The Reality of the External World and the Foundation of Metaphysical Cognition," covering terrain traversed long before by both Berkeley and Schopenhauer – though without mentioning either by name. Solov'ëv affirms yet again that to me, a human individual, the world exists as my representation, or rather as an aggregate of representations, and as such is subjective. Among these representations are those of other people. Thus, following this train of thought, if the external world is only an aggregate of my representations, then other human individuals are only my representations, and their independent existence must be rejected. While I certainly have complete confidence in their independent existence, a confidence that guides me in my everyday life, much the same can be said of inanimate objects. Furthermore, I am aware of my own existence only through my conscious representations of myself. If I am to conclude that there is nothing "standing behind" my representations, no objects in themselves, so must I hold that I am no more than the simple representation of myself to myself. Just as there is no genuine object of

[19] *Pis'ma*, vol. 4: 146.

[20] Quoted in PSS, vol. 1: 355.

[21] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 226.

representation – the representation is the object – so too is there no genuine subject representing. … We need not prolong these deliberations. Solov'ëv thought he clearly discerned the argument's absurdity. If I am nothing but a representation, there must be someone that "has," in some sense, this representation.[22]

According to Solov'ëv, the error in the above argument lies not in its initial claim that the world is my representation, but in not realizing that it can *additionally* exist independently of my representation of it, that my representation does not exhaust the meaning of the world. For Solov'ëv,

> Truly, everything can be my representation and at the same time everything is an entity (*sushchestvo*) in itself. The phenomenality of the world does not contradict its independence. Appearance as representation and thing in itself – *Ding an sich* – are not two absolutely separate spheres that are inaccessible to each other but only two different yet indivisible sides of any entity. The merit of philosophical idealism lies in having shown the decisive, radical difference between essence and appearance, a difference in accordance with which the simple transference of properties from the appearance to the essence and vice versa is impossible.[23]

Despite his awkward terminology, his careless mingling of the ontological category of appearance with the epistemological category of representation, Solov'ëv is keen to distance himself from what he takes to be Hegel's stand that the sum-total of an object's appearances exhausts that object's essence. To say that the table in the next room exists means, in epistemological terms, that, on the one hand, if I physically go into that room and look in a particular direction I will have a representation of the table. As I walk around it, I have a continuous series of representations, from which I form a complete image of the table. In Husserlian terms, we would say that the perception of an objective thing is necessarily always inadequate. On the other hand, however, this is not all that is meant by saying a thing objectively exists. Unlike Berkeley, Solov'ëv holds that a physical object, an object in the world, is distinct from and supports the qualities or accidents that it presents to us in cognition.[24] There is always more to any particular entity than its phenomenality, i.e., more than what can appear to us in, to use Solov'ëv's terminology, "external or objective cognition." At this moment in his philosophical development, Solov'ëv seeks to combat not just a Berkeleyan idealism, but above all Comtean positivism, which, while allowing for independently existing physical things, holds them to be ultimately unknowable. In an overlooked letter to Certelev from 19 June 1874 – thus written while he was composing *The Crisis* – Solov'ëv remarks, "to be an object or thing means nothing other than to be cognizable, and it follows from a conceptual analysis that the *external* world simply signifies the *cognizable* world."[25] By implication, the Kantian concept of an unknowable thing in itself is an oxymoron.

Solov'ëv's distinction between a physical thing's appearance and its essence is, in his mind, particularly and obviously true of other people, as Hegel also recognized.

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[22] Shortly before his death, Solov'ëv returned to this argument, taking a radically different stand.

[23] PSS, vol. 1: 193.

[24] Berkeley 1963: §49.

[25] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 222.

A person's character or behavior is explained by his or her heart, not the other way round.[26] How I appear or relate to others is my phenomenal or external side, but what my heart is like, what I am to myself, is my essential side. Whereas I cognize my essential side or essence immediately, I cognize the other mediately, viz., through appearances. Were I able to cognize also the other's essence immediately, I would be unable to discern the difference between the other and myself, a refrain Husserl would repeatedly make some decades later in his own elaborations on the theme of a phenomenology of intersubjectivity. Solov'ëv merely extends this duality of a phenomenal and an essential side to everything in the universe, be it animate or inanimate.

Solov'ëv distinguishes inner cognition, that by which we have self-knowledge, from external or objective cognition, which is responsible for providing us with empirical knowledge. The difference between the two consists in the fact that external cognition necessarily presents its objects as other than the cognizing subject. A bestowal of a sense of objectivity is essentially a feature of such cognition. Inner cognition, on the other hand, provides the subject not only with a series of psychic appearances but also with a recognition that these appearances are ours alone. It provides a cognition of one's inner essence that is otherwise unattainable. My recognition of the other as having a unique essence of one's own, as a being that also cognizes me as well as him or herself, is obtained through a combination of the two sorts of cognition. Regrettably, Solov'ëv fails to elucidate the procedure more thoroughly, but he does mention that I know the other's inner states by analogy with my own, presumably meaning thereby along the lines of the classic analogical argument. However, on pain of inconsistency Solov'ëv must take this analogical process as occurring spontaneously and with minimal deliberation. For he also states that "I am immediately *certain* and know that the person with whom I am conversing is not a manifestation of some *Ding an sich* unknown to me but an independent existent who has the same inner reality as I myself."[27] Of course, Solov'ëv's facile and dogmatic claims are hardly likely to appeal to any but those who abjure philosophical reasoning and rational inquiry.

Be that as it may, however puzzling Solov'ëv's statements on our knowledge of others may be, it is once again his subsequent foray into speculation that is philosophically even more troublesome. Throwing both logic and scientific caution to the wind, he writes that since the behavior, in a broad sense, of other humans is constantly and obviously of the same sort as mine, their inner nature must also be of the same sort. Such a conclusion, he adds, is not the result of biological or psychological research but is given to us with the same immediacy and confidence as that there is an independently existing world. To make matters worse, Solov'ëv adds that science has already long ago (!) dismantled the borders between the animal and the vegetable worlds, indeed even between them and the world of inanimate physical things.

[26] Hegel 1904: 210–211. Surely for Solov'ëv, the influence is primarily through Jurkevich, rather than through Hegel. See Jurkevich 1860.

[27] PSS, vol. 1: 196. In a set of thirty "theses," presumably conceived in connection with preparing to write "Sophia," Solov'ëv remarked, "through the logical combination of inner and outer experience we have cognition of the existence (*sushchestvo*) of the other." PSS, vol. 2: 168.

In other words, not only do we find in animals and plants the same mental activity that we recognize in other people, albeit admittedly to a lesser degree, but even the inorganic has its "own inner activity that is homogeneous with what we immediately know in our own inner experience."[28] On the basis of this inner experience and extending the analogy between my inner and external sides, Solov'ëv concludes we know that underlying all phenomena in the world is a single psychic being. In light of the fact that for him we know only individual things, not the world as a totality, it is hard to see how Solov'ëv can consistently arrive at the existence of a single being as a substrate of the universe or cosmos. Directly contrary to this, he concludes his reply to Kavelin, affirming that we do have a cognition of the metaphysical principle grounding everything in an all-unity. Surely anyone willing to travel down this pitted, jagged and obstructed road so far with Solov'ëv, though, is unlikely to be troubled by such a spectacular leap of faith.

Solov'ëv's reply to Kavelin did not mark the end of their dispute. The latter penned a counter-reply under the title "Is Metaphysical Knowledge Possible?" that appeared in a weekly publication in October 1875. For the most part, Kavelin's stand remained unchanged. He gracefully acknowledged his misunderstanding of Solov'ëv's acceptance of the existence of the external world but reiterated his unaltered and implacable opposition to metaphysics and all talk of "essences" as more than another mere abstraction, as more than an "illusion of the mind."[29] The correct path to the resolution of traditional philosophical problems is not through a retreat into religion but into psychology, a psychology that does not shy away from employing introspection.

Solov'ëv was in London when Kavelin's second article appeared in print and simply abandoned the dispute. Judging from a letter to an older friend Petr A. Preobrazhenskij, written in August 1875, he, in general, considered authoring a detailed reply simply as a diversion from the work he was presently pursuing. As we shall see shortly, however, the general issues Kavelin raised continued to "haunt" Solov'ëv even while he concentrated on other issues during this first trip abroad.

2.3 In London

Certainly, Solov'ëv may have harbored ulterior motives for wishing to go abroad for a period of study. Nevertheless, if he had even a superficial knowledge of the professorial selection process in Russia at the time, Solov'ëv would have realized that he needed a doctorate to secure a higher position than that which he presently held.[30]

[28] PSS, vol. 1: 197. While Solov'ëv's position in this matter certainly sounds strange, if not ludicrous, to us today, it should be set in the context of his immersion in Hegel, Schopenhauer and German Romanticism.

[29] Kavelin 1899: 335.

[30] Two of the editors of Solov'ëv's collected works, A. P. Kozyrev and A. A. Nosov, write that his goal was "not to teach but to realize his scholarly intentions." If they mean by this that Solov'ëv's

With at least this consideration in mind, Vladimir wasted no time deciding his next course of action. We have already seen that by January 1875 he had made up his mind to go to London in the summer. In fact, in December 1874 – and thus one month after the defense of his *magister*'s thesis – Solov'ëv wrote to Vladislavlev in St. Petersburg expressing his desire to write a doctoral dissertation on Gnosticism, which, he added, "fully corresponds" to his abilities.[31] According to the preserved minutes of the meeting, the liberal arts faculty as early as 10 February considered Solov'ëv's application to study the chief works of Indian, Gnostic and medieval philosophy primarily at the British Museum for 1 year and 3 months. And at its meeting on 8 March the university council voted overwhelmingly in favor of granting Solov'ëv's request. We should note that Solov'ëv's decision to go to London rather than to a university town in Germany was itself most unorthodox. Germany, then the philosophical mecca, would seem to be the natural choice for a young, career-minded scholar, particularly one whose interests clearly centered on Schopenhauer and von Hartmann. One cannot help but conclude, then, that in his selection of a dissertation topic Solov'ëv again demonstrated a remarkable degree of self-confidence if not outright arrogance.

Solov'ëv left Moscow on 21 June stopping in Warsaw for a few days. He had originally entertained the idea of looking up von Hartmann while in Berlin, but his stay in Poland for some unspecified reason made this impossible. Instead, he resolved en route to meet von Hartmann on his return to Russia. In a letter from Warsaw to Certelev dated 27 June, Solov'ëv reported that he was already detailing his plans for some new work. Leaving the Polish city, he allowed himself no further delays, arriving in London 2 days later despite stormy weather during the Channel crossing.

Vladimir's initial impressions of London and the facilities of the British Museum were favorable enough that in his letters the following month he did not hesitate to state both his satisfaction and his intention to spend the entire allotted period there, minus visits to Paris and Switzerland on the return trip. As the days turned into weeks, however, his mood and his health took a sharp turn. Fortunately, during his stay in London Solov'ëv was befriended by a fellow Russian doctoral student, Ivan Janzhul, who was some 10 years older. Janzhul had been approached by Solov'ëv's father while still in Moscow to keep an eye on Vladimir as a personal favor. It is largely owing to Janzhul's subsequently published recollections and the correspondence of his wife Ekaterina to family in Russia that we are able to form a portrait of Solov'ëv's personal condition, behavior and character at this time. In a letter to her parents from 6 July 1875, and thus only days after his arrival in London, Ekaterina mentioned Solov'ëv as "a very frail, sickly man," who "is devoured by skepticism

hope was not to secure a professorship but to effect a reform of Christianity, there is nothing in the historical record to substantiate this nor is there any logical reason why Solov'ëv could not have hoped to achieve both. Given the speed at which he completed his *magister*'s thesis, he was obviously impatient for success including academic advancement.

[31] Quoted in PSS, vol. 2: 315.

and seeks salvation in mystical beliefs in spirits."[32] Surely one thing contributing to his declining physical condition was Vladimir's strong dislike of English cooking in general and its predilection for large amounts of meat.[33] On many days, he simply forgot to eat at all. Also of questionable benefit was his new fondness for beer, English stout and alcoholic apple cider. Of course, we can never be certain whether his rather poor diet promoted or at least served as a factor in his purported mystical visions. On the other hand, we simply cannot dismiss the possibility that the seat of his "apparitions" lay not so much in some ether world as in nutritional deficiencies and his ill-considered personal habits. Whatever the case, we know that although he admitted spending much of his time alone, he was not totally without human contact while in London. For one thing, he quickly struck up a warm relationship with Maksim Kovalevskij, a Russian sociologist who was but a few years older. Vladimir's interest in spiritualism also brought him into contact with the noted English naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace. As late as 12 October, Solov'ëv wrote to his mother that the weather was turning colder and that he was stocking up on warm clothes. Significantly, in this letter he also expressed his wish to travel to Newcastle and Bristol and aimlessly wander about.[34]

What happened to Solov'ëv between 12 and 14 October 1875 remains, arguably, the most intriguing mystery in the study of his life. For on the later date he abruptly wrote to his mother informing her of a radically altered plan for his remaining time abroad. Instead of remaining in England, he intended to leave in a mere 2 days for Egypt, traveling via Italy and Greece. This plan, he wrote, was necessitated by his work and would require a few months there. In this letter, we are informed that although he had caught a serious cold so early in the season, this was not to be seen as a determining factor in his decision to leave London. What, then, was the nature of this "work," which required him to go to Egypt of all places? In yet another letter, this time from Paris to Certelev dated 2 November, Solov'ëv writes: "All this time I was in London but found nothing of importance there in my field. The local spiritualism (and consequently spiritualism in general, since London is its center) is something quite miserable." Again, we are forced somewhat incredulously to ask what "field" Solov'ëv had in mind. It could hardly have been Gnostic literature, for there would have been no reasonable expectation of finding readily accessible material in Cairo that was not in London. It strains all rational understanding to find an interpretation of Solov'ëv's words that do not conflict with his behavior in London. We have seen that fundamentally he appeared quite content with his studies at the

[32] Janzhul 1910: 99. It is not clear what Ekaterina Janzhul had in mind when she ascribed "skepticism" to Solov'ëv.

[33] There is apparently some dispute concerning Solov'ëv's vegetarianism. Mochul'skij contends that although Solov'ëv was not a vegetarian he never ate meat. Mochul'skij 1936: 223. K. M. El'cova, a family friend and one who knew Solov'ëv for many years, wrote that as long as she could remember he never ate meat. El'cova 1926: 138. Evgenij Trubeckoj writes that Solov'ëv kept erratic eating habits and that when hunger prodded him he would consume vegetarian fare. Trubeckoj 1995. vol. 1: 27. Janzhul reports that while in London Solov'ëv was disgusted with English meals consisting of half-cooked meat alone. Janzhul 1910: 100.

[34] His desire to go to Newcastle and Bristol was obviously not a fleeting whim. In an earlier letter from 8 September, Solov'ëv wrote that he hoped to visit the former in October and the latter in January.

British Museum. Janzhul, who was also at the time doing research in the British Museum, reported seeing Vladimir spending hours absorbed in a book with strange drawings and symbols to the exclusion of all else. In his most famous poem "Three Meetings," written in September 1898 – thus more than 20 years later – Solov'ëv writes of three mystical visions or "encounters" with Sophia, the feminine aspect or Divine Wisdom of God. Taking the poem literally, during one of these encounters, which supposedly took place in the reading room of the British Museum, Sophia spoke and instructed Vladimir to go to Egypt. If we take the events recounted in this poem seriously as autobiographical, which the vast majority of studies do, we must place Solov'ëv's vision of Sophia as occurring between the two letters to his mother. Of course, whether he actually had such a vision, we cannot know – or what to make of it if he did. Nor do we even know with certainty whether Vladimir intended us to interpret his late poem literally, let alone whether he accurately recalled events from some 20 years earlier. Whatever the case, the issue concerning the state of his physical and presumably mental health looms large at this time. Particularly in light of Kovalevskij's recollections that while in London Solov'ëv told him of seeing at night an "evil spirit named Peter," it is hard to place much credence on a "vision" of Sophia in the British Museum. Such matters, however, are best left for a physician or psychiatrist, rather than the philosopher.

After spending some days in Paris, Vladimir made his way to Egypt feeling considerably better than he had when he left London. Unsurprisingly, he was enthusiastic about his new surroundings and, in particular, the climate. In a letter to his mother written after a week in Cairo, Solov'ëv again expressed his desire to remain there for as long as 4 or 5 months, returning home directly rather than via Western Europe, where, as he put it, nothing remained for him to do.[35] What he saw remaining for him to do in Egypt is unclear and, hence, controversial. In the same letter he wrote that he would stay until he learned Arabic, but this alone could hardly have been his reason for journeying to Egypt or for remaining there several months. Although he did spare time for the usual tourist activities, such as visiting the pyramids and the sphinx, we know from recollections that he was greatly interested in asceticism and what he took to be its associated mystical ecstasies.[36] That he was driven by an interest in Egyptian asceticism is further borne out by yet another letter to his mother 2 weeks after arriving in which he details his intention to abandon the tourist destinations for the remote desert accessible only on foot.[37] Likewise,

[35] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 16.

[36] See, for example, the testimony of Pypina-Ljatskaja 1914: 426–427.

[37] In his letter two days later, Solov'ëv recounts his journey into the desert, where during the night he was almost killed by bedoins. Those sympathetic to a literal reading of Vladimir's poem "Three Meetings" contend that while on this outing into the wilderness he was "visited" again by Sophia and that, indeed, it was his expectation of such a vision that led him to Egypt in the first place. Oddly, he never mentioned having such a vision at the time even to his friend Certelev, who in general was sympathetic to Solov'ëv's spiritualist bent. Additionally, if he had traveled to Egypt not to learn first hand more about asceticism but to await a mystical vision, why did he linger there for months afterward? Also, in letters written while in Paris en route to Cairo Vladimir mentioned a desire to continue on to India, a desire repeated in a letter to Olga Novikovoj, the sister of an old friend, written just prior to his supposed "vision." Would not the interest in asceticism be more consistent with these facts?

according to Kovalevskij, Solov'ëv traveled to Egypt after "spirits informed him of the existence of a secret cabalistic society and promised to introduce him into it, i.e., into the society."[38]

True to his initial plan, Solov'ëv did stay 4 months in Egypt. However, instead of returning directly to Russia or proceeding to India, he ventured back to Western Europe via the Italian city of Sorrento. Possibly this change in itinerary was influenced by Certelev's visit with him in Cairo in January 1876. Although his friend stayed for several weeks there, Vladimir may have hoped to meet up with him again in Europe. In any case, in a letter to his mother dated 4 March Solov'ëv, in effect, repudiated his earlier stance that the West had nothing more to offer him, claiming that he had "not found sufficient nourishment" in Egypt.[39] While the nature of the "nourishment" Solov'ëv found lacking in Egypt is ultimately ambiguous, the fact that in the same letter he mentioned his intention to do some research in the Parisian Bibliothèque Nationale naturally leads us to think he still sought greater *intellectual* nourishment.

Also in this letter from early March Solov'ëv informs his mother for the first time of his work on a "mystical-theosophic-philosophic-theurgic-political treatise." Almost certainly, preparation of this treatise consumed Solov'ëv's time and attention during his months in Cairo. In fact, such a work must have been incubating in his mind for some time, although its exact shape and content changed during his stay abroad. Despite his announcement while still in Russia to prepare and write a dissertation on Gnosticism, Vladimir apparently exerted very little, if any, effort on it. Virtually from the outset, his concern focused on elaborating his own ideas, stimulated to a large degree by his encounter with Kavelin and the construction of, as he phrased it already in the letter of 27 June 1875 to Certelev from Warsaw, a system "along the lines of a Kantian-Hegelian trichotomy."[40] Quite possibly, then, the unexplained and unplanned layover in Poland in late June 1875 was due to early

[38] Quoted in Luk'janov 1916. vol. 3, vyp. I: 190. Since this is the same Kovalevskij to whom Solov'ëv in London admitted seeing an evil spirit at night, it is unlikely that he would have been reticent in confessing to having seen a divine apparition in the British Museum. Moreover, if Solov'ëv was willing to confide in Kovalevskij of a spiritual communication regarding a secret society in Egypt, why would he not be willing to confide in a spiritual communication to travel to Egypt to receive yet another such vision?

The arguably most vivid account of Solov'ëv at this time comes to us from the French writer Eugene Melchior de Vogüé, who later in life recalled meeting him one evening in Cairo: "Despite the heat of the Egyptian summer, Vladimir wore a long black cloak and a top hat. He frankly told us that in this attire he once went into the Suez desert, to the Bedoins. He wanted to search for some tribe which he had heard had preserved certain secrets of the religious-mystical teachings of the cabala and masonic traditions, handed down, as it were, in a direct line from Solomon. Of course, he found nothing and ultimately the Bedoins stole his watch and spoiled his hat." Vogüé 1904: 17–18.

Despite the similarity of these independent statements, Mochul'skij claims that they constitute Solov'ëv's "official version" of what happened in the desert that night. "Only some twenty years later and in verses half in jest did he tell the truth." Mochul'skij 1936: 69. Yet what possible evidence and how much of it would convince Mochul'skij that the "official version" was the truth, and not the poem?

[39] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 23.

[40] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 227. As we saw in the previous chapter, Solov'ëv already displayed a particular penchant for such constructions in the closing pages of *The Crisis*.

preparation of this untitled treatise. Surely, this is also the same work that he mentioned in a letter of 8 September 1875 to his father. The difference is that as the months passed the content of the newly written portions of the planned treatise became increasingly mystical with little semblance to a philosophical tract, and instead of writing it in English, as he had told his father he would do, he switched to French, an international language with which he felt more at ease. We must also bear in mind that during the stay in London Vladimir's principal occupation in the British Museum was reading mystical literature, particularly the cabala. The biographer of Solov'ëv's early years, Luk'janov, writes that Vladimir already began reading these medieval Jewish mystical writings during his stay at the Moscow Theological Academy. Whatever the case, only in London did it begin to exercise a significant impact on his thought.[41] For example, mystical literature and doctrines play no discernable role in *The Crisis*.

Solov'ëv arrived in Italy from Egypt in mid-March and stayed in the environs of Naples until the end of April. During this period, he obviously continued his work on the treatise mentioned to his mother that is now generally known under the title "Sophia." One of its few clearly dated portions gives Sorrento as the location of its composition. Solov'ëv, however, must have written this portion shortly after arriving there, for sometime in early April he injured himself, including his arms, by falling from a horse on the return trip from Mt. Vesuvius. Meandering after his injury had healed, Vladimir arrived in Paris, writing immediately to his father on 1 May of his plans to spend a dew days in London to collect his books after which he would return to Russia via Kiev. Since a possible reply apparently has not survived, we cannot be certain of his father's reaction to his expressed wish to publish a small book in French with the title "Principes de la religion universelle."[42] Such a move, however, would be seen by his father and, more importantly, by the Russian authorities as ill advised, since, warranted or not, the latter would surely interpret it as an attempt to evade the strict Russian censorship. For a young ambitious scholar, any blemish on one's record could well be career threatening. Surely, Solov'ëv should have been aware of this, but if the opportunity arose his father undoubtedly would have reminded him of it. That he persisted with his plans, even if they ultimately failed to come to fruition, means that at this time an academic position was not his final goal or even an indispensable intermediate goal.

In what is now becoming a distinct pattern, Solov'ëv found little satisfaction with either Paris or the French people with whom he had dealings. Writing once again ostensively to his father some 2 weeks later, he vented his irritation with those he encountered, accusing the French of being even worse than the English and "the Ethiopians of Egypt," presumably meaning the blacks he encountered while in Cairo. Curiously, at about this time he also wrote to Ivan Janzhul, telling him of his plans to go not just to London at the beginning of June, but also to proceed from

[41] Luk'janov 1916. vol. 3, vyp. 1: 143–145.

[42] A. P. Kozyrev and N. V. Kotrelev, the two principal editors of Solov'ëv's collected works, inform us that although no manuscript with this French title is known to them, the expression "universal religion" repeatedly occurs in "Sophia." PSS, vol. 2: 322.

there to Prague, where he hoped to "publish one of his works."[43] Solov'ëv's idea to go to Prague with the hope of publishing "Sophia" there has not received a great deal of attention in the secondary literature. That he did not mention it in any letter to his family is also most strange. He may have hoped the work would have an easier time getting published in a Slavic country or at least would receive a better reception there than in Paris. In the end, all of these dreams and schemes came to naught, for Solov'ëv returned directly to Russia in early June without a detour either to London or to Prague. Why this is so is unclear. When he returned, however, he was more convinced than ever of the decadence of the West and of the unique status of the Slavic peoples, their traditions, cultures and languages and of the Orthodox faith. While in Paris, the faculty at Moscow University decided to have him teach logic and Greek philosophy during the next academic year. Despite his failure to get "Sophia" published abroad, Solov'ëv had not abandoned all hope for it. That he still valued his work highly is clear from the fact that in mid-June he wrote to Certelev that he needed to provide it with an appropriate number of foreign-language quotations before submitting it as a doctoral dissertation. He claimed that he had neither the desire nor the ability to start writing a separate dissertation.

2.4 The Philosophy of "Sophia"

The set of four manuscripts that comprise "Sophia" remained unpublished during Solov'ëv's lifetime. Upon his death, they passed to his younger brother Mikhail and then upon Mikhail's premature death to his son Sergey, who gave the first detailed account of them in the latter's biography of his uncle. The two manuscripts bearing a date are from February and March 1876 and were written in the form of a dialogue between a philosopher and the religio-mystic figure of Sophia. The other two manuscripts are in monologic form and bear neither a date nor any indication of where they were composed.[44] The philosophically most interesting of these manuscripts belongs to this second group.

There can be no mistake that much of the material in "Sophia" is far from what would pass for philosophy as currently understood, except in the broadest possible

[43] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 146.

[44] Owing to their different format and Solov'ëv's haste to conclude his activities in Western Europe after his stay in Sorrento, we can cautiously conclude that the undated manuscripts were written before those bearing a date, i.e., before February 1876. From his letters, we can surmise that Vladimir first conceived the idea for "Sophia" shortly before or immediately after embarking on his trip to London in June 1875. The surviving sketches for "Sophia," written in Russian, may well, at least in part, have been composed during Vladimir's stay in Warsaw. Of course, in the absence of evidence, such dating must remain conjectural. From the fact that the four manuscripts were written in French, we can conclude with a high degree of confidence that none were composed earlier than September 1875. For otherwise, as his letter to his father that month indicates, "Sophia" would have been composed in English, not French. Furthermore, there is no reason for us to suspect that Solov'ëv became disenchanted with the idea of writing in English before his abrupt departure from London in late October.

sense of that term. Indeed, many pages are devoted to mystical speculation of a sort that in isolation would lead us to question the rationality of their author. Nevertheless, there are extended passages that are of a philosophical nature and that represent an advance over Solov'ëv's earlier positions, and one of the undated manuscripts concerns itself exclusively with philosophical issues, particularly the role of metaphysical inquiry. Revealing the continuing influence of Schopenhauer, on the one hand, and the impact of Kavelin's criticism, on the other, Solov'ëv still felt a need to address anew the human need for metaphysics, for the possibility of metaphysical cognition and, then, for its reality.

As in his January lectures at the Moscow Higher Courses for Women, Solov'ëv now claims in the first chapter "The Metaphysical Need in Man" that all humans strive not just for the satisfaction of material needs and well-being, but for the satisfaction of a spiritual need, the quest for the fulfillment of which takes the form of metaphysical questioning. In contrast, although Schopenhauer held that human beings alone among animals have a "need for metaphysics," he believed metaphysics arose out of reflection on and a sense of astonishment when faced with the fact of death and of suffering and misery in life.[45] For Solov'ëv, the notion of a need for metaphysics here is more elemental than it is for Schopenhauer. Granted, for both philosophers all religious and philosophical systems stem from this need. Nevertheless, for Solov'ëv a confrontation with death is not what spurs metaphysical reflection. Human happiness requires more than just material security and the satiation of our corporeal appetites. To be happy, human beings, alone among animals, must act morally and seek to know the truth. Here we find that Solov'ëv's equal emphasis on morality is an important development of his earlier position, which afforded little attention to ethics. Additionally, morality is defined largely in Kantian terms as acting in accordance with universal principles and not out of instinctual impulses. The need both to act morally and to know the truth are now held to be essentially identical, a single need assuming two different forms. At least in Solov'ëv's understanding, both stem from a rejection of the immanently given. Just as morality is concerned not with what is or how we do in fact act in the world, so too is the quest for truth rooted in situating the empirically given in an ill-defined totality. Combining the Slavophile position of Kireevskij with the neo-Platonism of his teacher Jurkevich, Solov'ëv holds that both quests, to be morally good and to know the truth, have their foundation in a single, common need: to rise above the phenomenal world, affirming our superiority over the reality of the immediately given. This "metaphysical need" lies behind human moral and intellectual activity, and its presence in us also lies at the base of all religious and philosophical systems.

In "Sophia," Solov'ëv reaffirms his earlier position that the ability to laugh reveals humanity's inner need for metaphysics.[46] Unlike humans, other animals are unable to judge critically their surrounding world. They are perpetually absorbed in their

[45] Schopenhauer 1969. vol. II: 160.

[46] Based on a surviving sketch for the entire work, written in Russian and thus presumably composed either while still in Russia or en route to London, Solov'ëv for a time conceived the pages devoted to the human need for metaphysics as an introduction to the entire unnamed work. See PSS, vol. 2: 172.

everyday environment. That human beings can wrest themselves free from this world shows, in Solov'ëv's eyes, that we are not merely natural beings. That we are able to laugh shows that we also mentally inhabit an ideal, or meta-physical, world. Indeed, that we *existentially* inhabit both worlds. For only if we existentially belong to this ideal world can we free ourselves, albeit mentally, from the phenomenal world by means of laughter. Presumably, then, our need for metaphysics arises in some unexplained manner from our co-habitation in two worlds: the natural, or physical, world and a metaphysical world. Likewise, we have two corresponding characters: a physical one and a metaphysical one. Once again, we see here Solov'ëv's penchant for abrupt leaps on the basis of mental experiences to the positing of entities, even though they be metaphysical, to account for that experience. Solov'ëv, without any hesitation, concludes that not only does laughter presuppose the construction of an ideal world in our imagination, but also that the very involvement of the imagination would be impossible if the imagination did not serve as a "bridge" between our everyday, empirically-given world and another, a metaphysical world.

According to Solov'ëv, art as well as poetry reveals our metaphysical character, or, as he occasionally says, that we are metaphysical beings. A true work of art is neither a simple reproduction of reality, nor is it a pure abstraction. No, both art as well as poetry are concerned with concrete reality, but reality in its universal or typical features. What distinguishes the work is an intimate union of the concrete and the individual, a union that cannot be found in the real, physical world. The content or material of art is the same as our apparent or phenomenal world; what is different is the form. The proof that humans are metaphysical beings lies in the fact that we can create art objects and others can immediately understand them.

Solov'ëv disparagingly refers to his era as stupid and serious. Genuine art has disappeared, being replaced by copies of copies. Laughter is evoked, though only by habit. Science alone presents a recognized ideal, but even in this case the ideal is minimal. Science today is the avowed enemy of metaphysics. Being unable to disprove that human beings need metaphysics, some say that the need is abnormal, a form of sickness. Whether abnormal or not, metaphysical questioning can be found in many different cultures and at many different times. Nevertheless, there are some who although affirming the human need for metaphysics believe it impossible, from a scientific standpoint, to resolve the issues and thereby satisfy the need. Solov'ëv feels this resigned agnosticism is tantamount to a consignment to eternal suffering. Yet regardless of whether we share his general indictment of the positivist mentality, no one can deny that Solov'ëv has not directly addressed how the human need for metaphysics is manifested in science.[47]

The next chapter, "The Possibility of Metaphysical Knowledge" clearly stems from Solov'ëv's dispute with Kavelin. The former considers two arguments against metaphysical knowledge: one he calls "popular," and is most often used, whereas

[47] Possibly, Solov'ëv would say that the tacitly recognized insatiable quest for scientific knowledge is tantamount to metaphysical questioning. This, however, remains a conjecture, and, in any case, would meet resistance from the ardent positivist, for whom the methods employed in science make it entirely different from metaphysics.

the other is philosophical. According to the first, to say that owing to its inherent limitations the human mind is incapable of knowing the true nature of reality is a view that rests on extrapolating from past experience, namely, that previous human experience has not yielded metaphysical knowledge. However, as with all such claims the past cannot provide incontrovertible evidence for the future. Humanity as a whole is developing, and we cannot be certain whether even now some individuals are already capable of such cognition.[48] Others, questioning the possibility of metaphysical knowledge, say that the human mind is essentially incapable of knowing true reality due to its absolutely inherent limitations. Reminiscent of some of Kant's early critics, Solov'ëv answers that the charge itself is a claim to metaphysical knowledge of the workings of the mind and of its abilities, a claim that the charge, if true, could not make. In this way, Solov'ëv believes the critic himself has provided a *reductio ad absurdum* proof for the possibility of metaphysical knowledge.

Turning now to the philosophical argument, we find it can take three forms, depending on whether our starting point is the object of cognition, the nature of cognition or the knowing subject.[49] Demonstrating as we already saw in *The Crisis*, Solov'ëv's penchant for framing the opposing standpoint as a syllogism, the argument under the heading of the object of cognition runs:

> "The object of metaphysical cognition is being in itself, and not relative being.
> We can know only phenomena, i.e., what is relative to us. We cannot know being in itself.
> Therefore, we cannot have metaphysical cognition."[50]

Solov'ëv not only rejects the conclusion above, he rejects the positions taken in the two premises as well. Both presuppose an absolute distinction between phenomenal, or relative, being, and being in itself, or metaphysical being. It is precisely this distinction that Solov'ëv questions. In making such a dichotomy, we resolutely sever any connection between the two: Although we cannot provide a positive definition of metaphysical being, we can say that it is not phenomenal being. Yet metaphysical being is widely held – at least certainly by those who uphold the distinction – to be the foundation of phenomenal being. Thus, defenders of the dichotomy recognize a necessary connection or relationship between the two spheres. In other words, metaphysical being must be ultimately responsible, in some manner, for the specific forms and all the individual properties of empirical beings. Even if the specific forms in which objects are given to us are the result of our interaction with the objects, there must be something in the object "in itself" that makes it appear to us

[48] Apart from whether he saw himself as possessing such an ability, we know that Solov'ëv was, at this time, extremely interested in clairvoyance and séances.

[49] In the terms of Husserlian phenomenology, we could say that the philosophical argument can be framed under the three headings: cogitata, cogitatio and ego respectively. See Husserl 1970a: 171.

[50] PSS, vol. 2: 20. At this time, we will concern ourselves merely with an overview of Solov'ëv's position as it stood at the time of writing "Sophia," leaving a critical examination until we meet his more careful restatements of these arguments in later works. Nevertheless, we should point out here that the Slavophile Ivan Kireevskij charged in 1856 that the Roman Catholic Church's preference for syllogism over tradition served as the basis of its divorce from the Orthodox Christian Church. See Kireevskij 1856: 348.

in one specific way, rather than another. Even if the details of the correlation between the empirical object and the object as it is "in itself" are unknown, that there is such a correlation is unquestionable. However, those who say we know only appearances, i.e., objects as they immediately present themselves to us, and not things in themselves presuppose that the two realms are not just separate, but indeed opposed to each other, having nothing in common. Looking simply at our own terminology, we see that such a position is untenable, for an appearance can be nothing other than an appearance of something. Unless we wish to multiply entities endlessly and needlessly, this "something" if it is to be anything at all, must be a thing in itself. Thus, in knowing appearances, we have a certain knowledge of the thing in itself. Solov'ëv's own analogy is to that of an object in a mirror. Whereas the reflection certainly is not the object, the reflection does provide us with knowledge of the object. Thus, appearances do provide us with knowledge of the metaphysical thing in itself. In one of the "Sophia" manuscripts bearing the designation "Cairo, February 1876," Solov'ëv reiterates the same charge writing: "Ignorance confuses being in itself and phenomena. Abstract philosophy separates them absolutely. … The phenomenon is not the being in itself, but the former stands in a definite relation to the latter."[51]

Our ordinary or phenomenal cognition is of appearances, i.e., of objects as immediately cognized. Metaphysical knowledge, however, is of a being in itself, i.e., of what cannot be immediately known by another cognizing subject. Since all knowledge is to some degree knowledge of being in itself, the distinction between ordinary, or phenomenal, knowledge and metaphysical knowledge is relative. In other words, all knowledge, to some extent, is metaphysical knowledge.

Although when dealing with the third form of the argument against metaphysics he adds little to what he has already said, Solov'ëv does accord attention to the second form, the argument from the knowing subject:

> As the knowing subject, the human mind is determined by certain forms and categories that belong to it and apart from which no cognition can be given to it.
> Metaphysical being is not determined by these categories.
> Therefore, we cannot know metaphysical being.

Again, Solov'ëv denies all three positions stated in the syllogism above. And again, like Jurkevich, Solov'ëv agrees Kant proved that forms and categories of cognition determine all our representations. For example, space and time do "belong" to the subject, not to things in themselves. In a dated portion of "Sophia" written while in Sorrento in March 1876, Solov'ëv remarks that space and time are correlative and, as such, presuppose each other. Space allows for the existence of many beings at the same time, whereas time allows for the existence of many states in a single being in the same place.[52] Whether things in themselves, however, have something corresponding to these forms, something that leads us to associate this particular location in space and time with this particular object, is another matter. In principle, if Kant's formalism were correct, we should be able to abstract and

[51] PSS, vol. 2: 82. Interestingly, we see Solov'ëv here referring to the position he opposes as "abstract philosophy," adopting the terminology and general line of thought of Kireevskij.

[52] PSS, vol. 2: 126.

remove the formal elements from appearances and thereby obtain the metaphysical being, or thing in itself, responsible for the appearance. In any case, as Schopenhauer indicated, we have in our inner consciousness an *immediate* awareness of our own being. Therefore, in consciousness we see ourselves as the thing in itself.[53]

At the end of the second chapter, Solov'ëv tells us that his intention in it has been simply to establish the possibility of metaphysical knowledge, that the forms of cognition may not be absolutely subjective, but may correspond to independent realities. Nonetheless, in the next chapter, "On the Reality of Metaphysical Cognition," he returns to the same argument set out in the previous chapter, an argument largely inspired by Schopenhauer. As it advances towards the metaphysical, the argument becomes increasingly cryptic. Solov'ëv, borrowing Schopenhauer's terminology, says that an "immediate manifestation" is the manifestation of a being to or for itself, i.e., a manifestation without the mediation of the external senses. Such manifestations are not *signs* of other objects, but the objects themselves. On the other hand, a mediate or indirect manifestation is that of a being for itself via the senses. Solov'ëv holds that there is a single demarcation line between these two classes. Everything visually perceived or perceived through any of our other four senses is classed as a manifestation of a being for another, whereas our conscious, inner states, viz., our thoughts, feelings, and desires, are direct manifestations of our own being. Therefore, our own inner psychic being is a being in itself. By definition, then, in knowing our conscious inner states we have metaphysical knowledge. Needless to say, this lexical legerdemain would hardly satisfy Kant, for whom inner states are temporally ordered "in just the same way as we order those of outer sense in space." Thus, "as far as inner intuition is concerned we cognize our own subject only as appearances but not in accordance with what it is in itself."[54]

For Solov'ëv, based on an awareness of our own selves we are now in a position to say something positive about being in itself. Our present conscious states pass in and out of existence. Clearly, they are only partial expressions of our being in itself. Ever new expressions can and will arise. For this reason, we can conclude that being in itself is a force or power to sense, think and act. Yet, we find ourselves confronted with other beings with whom we are in "real contact." There is no basis for anyone to doubt the existence of other beings, but our perception of them is by means of our external senses. Thus, our perception is indirect. It is at this point that Solov'ëv's reasoning becomes difficult, if not impossible, to follow. He seeks to establish that the multitude of beings we confront in the world have, as a *consequence* of their mediate or indirect manifestation, an immediate manifestation and

[53] Solov'ëv provides no reference to Schopenhauer's work, but see Schopenhauer 1969. vol. II: 195.

[54] Kant 1997: B156. On the other hand, Schopenhauer remarked in a similar vein as would Solov'ëv that: "To the subject of knowing, who appears as an individual only through his identity with the body, this body is given in two entirely different ways. It is given in intelligent perception as representation…. But it is also given in quite a different way, namely as what is known immediately to everyone, and is denoted by the word *will*. … It is just this double knowledge of our own body…not as representation, but as something over and above this, and hence what it is *in itself*." Schopenhauer 1969. vol. 1: 100 and 103.

that "external beings are also manifested as the active power to wish, to perceive and to sense."[55] Seeing external beings as separate, individual beings is itself a mediate manifestation. Behind, so to speak, these manifestations lies an absolute or unitary substance.[56] Rather than designating this absolute substance or being by Schopenhauer's term "will," Solov'ëv calls it "spirit," thereby expressly and intentionally linking his own conception with traditional religious doctrine. Since the spirit is absolute and eternal, it cannot be subject to the secondary forms as phenomena can. Using Aristotelian terminology, Solov'ëv holds that the spirit is the material cause, the formal cause and the ultimate cause of all that concretely exists. His penchant for such constructions and the conception of spirit that they convey obviously lay behind Solov'ëv's enduring enthusiasm for Spinoza, despite their radically different approaches.[57]

At the end of the third chapter, Solov'ëv provides a brief teleological argument for the existence of superior and more powerful beings than those found in our everyday, empirically-given world. His reasoning, such as it is, is that the teleological goals of all worldly actions are both obvious and objective in the sense that they are not merely our own. The goal-directed activities we find evident in the world take place in space and time. As such, they cannot "proceed" directly from the absolute being, in whom everything is absolute. Therefore, these acts must "proceed" from superior but not absolute beings. Although hastily sketched and without further clarification, Solov'ëv appears here to be answering the traditional question concerning how an absolute entity, outside time and space, can interact with entities in time and space. Nevertheless without hesitation, he adds that once we acknowledge the existence of such individual superior, though non-absolute, beings, we obtain in some unexplained manner, a special means to know these beings. Solov'ëv refers to

[55] PSS, vol. 2: 36. In a similar fashion, Schopenhauer claims "will" to be the essence of everything in nature: "But the word *will*, which, like a magic wand, is to reveal to us the innermost essence of everything in nature, by no means expresses an unknown quantity, …but something known absolutely and immediately…. Hitherto, the concept of *will* has been subsumed under the concept of *force*; I, on the other hand, do exactly the reverse, and intend every force in nature to be conceived as will." Schopenhauer 1969. vol. 1: 111.

[56] At this point, Solov'ëv uses the term "substance" interchangeably with "being." Although Solov'ëv's reasoning here is rather vague, to say the least, we can supplement it by turning again to Schopenhauer: "The will as thing-in-itself is quite different from its phenomenon, and is entirely free from all the forms of the phenomenon into which it first passes when it appears…. As we know, time and space belong to this principle, and consequently plurality as well, which exists and has become possible only through them. In this last respect I shall call time and space the *principium individuationis*, an expression borrowed from the old scholasticism…. For it is only by means of time and space that something which is one and the same according to its nature and the concept appears as different, as a plurality of coexistent and successive things." Schopenhauer 1969. vol. 1: 122–123. Thus, pursuing my idea that he was at this time still deeply indebted to Schopenhauer, Solov'ëv concluded that the absolute substance was unitary because plurality is an empirical or mediate phenomenon. Not surprisingly, both use the term "plurality." See PSS, vol. 2: 39

[57] Solov'ëv some twenty years later came to the defense of Spinoza against the charge of atheism by Aleksandr Vvedenskij, the St. Petersburg neo-Kantian professor of philosophy.

this means as "inspiration," whose material element, i.e., the actual content, is the imagination and whose formal element is the dialectic.[58]

Taken in isolation from a knowledge of Solov'ëv's state of mind at the time or from an acquaintance with his later thought, the last paragraphs of this third chapter of the second manuscript certainly appear puzzling. The chapter abruptly terminates without a conclusion or any indication that its author has said all that he has to say or even that needs to be said. We would expect further elaboration at this point not just of the role of inspiration vis-à-vis the external senses as a source of cognition, but also of the imagination and how Solov'ëv conceives the dialectic. All of this is absent. We find instead documents of a most curious sort, quite unlike what we, in fact, expect from an important philosophical figure and certainly unlike any penned by a major philosopher. One of these, a separate manuscript, despite its enigmatic designation "First Chapter," could, judged simply in terms of its content and style and allowing for amplifications of the final points in the third chapter, be seen as a continuation. As the discussion in it is already well within the metaphysical, if not mystical, domain, a detailed examination is beyond the bounds of the present study. Indeed, whether a rational analysis of it, even in the broadest sense, is conceivable looms as a pressing issue. There are, however, several points with regard to it that are of some importance to Solov'ëv's philosophy. Without referring to his earlier use of the expression "absolute substance," he now evidently prefers "absolute principle." It is unclear if his own conception of the "absolute substance" has changed. In the dialogue portion of "Sophia," Solov'ëv continues to use "absolute principle." Whatever the case, as absolute, this "principle" exists independently of all other being. Yet as the principle of all being it exists in everything and, so he claims, can be known. While neither a particular being nor a being in general, to say that it is non-being would also certainly be incorrect. Solov'ëv informs us that we can understand it correctly as the power or possibility to be. While it itself *is* not being, it *possesses* being. In short, his view is that of either pantheism or emanationism, the view commonly associated with the Neoplatonist Plotinus and which holds that everything gradually proceeds via emanation or descent from a transcendent absolute, even though he, Solov'ëv, uses neither term.[59]

To complicate matters further, although in the dialogic chapters he seldom mentions the term "inspiration" and never as a separate means to know superior, non-absolute beings, Solov'ëv does add that despite its manifestation in all phenomena, the absolute principle cannot be known from just one. Only the totality of phenomena can provide such knowledge. For from a single phenomenon, we can gain only a particular element of the whole. From the totality, or ensemble, we can see the general connection or order of the whole. In other words, we can see the principle

[58] Solov'ëv does not say that the imagination *supplies* the material element of inspiration. No, the imagination *is* the material element. Again, the term "inspiration" plays a role in Schopenhauer's thought, particularly in his discussion of aesthetics where he claims it is a necessary, though not sufficient condition, of genius.

[59] As I read Carlson, she too sees Solov'ëv as a proponent of emanationism at this particular time, although she refrains from such an explicit identification. Carlson 1996.

behind the order, and this principle behind the universal order of everything is, needless to say, the absolute principle. Lurking behind our insatiable quest for scientific knowledge of the universe is our need to grasp the metaphysical absolute.

Without doubt, just as in *The Crisis* a concern with ethical philosophy is hardly evident at all in Solov'ëv's thought at this time. In "Sophia," Solov'ëv's remarks are general and connected solely with his eschatological vision in which the ultimate goal is a free union of spiritual beings, whatever that may mean, tied through love. For this reason, love, we are told, is the sole absolute good, superior even to justice. A society based on mutual love is the ideal human society, which, then, has no need for laws, rights and even justice. Unlike sexual love, the love that Solov'ëv has in mind is a love for all. Such love for those superior to us yields a spiritual wealth we could not attain otherwise, whereas in loving those lower than us we provide spiritual wealth.[60] As we will see, these themes will feature prominently in his later ethical thought.

Taken in isolation from Solov'ëv's works, "Sophia" not only strikes the contemporary reader as of marginal philosophical significance. Certainly, there are so few, if any, insights in it, and the argument, such as it is, lacks depth and apart from a few figures such as Schopenhauer reveals little familiarity with the Western philosophical tradition. In light of what we do know of his background, such an impression can be utterly deceptive. We should bear in mind that what we have before us is but a rough draft that Solov'ëv himself never published nor even sought to publish in its current state. Many of the topics and concerns in "Sophia" will reappear again and again in his later published writings, and it is these that need philosophical scrutiny. Clearly written while Solov'ëv was, for whatever reason, standing on the brink of a mental crisis, "Sophia" is quite arguably more a psychological testament to his state of mind at the time than it is a piece of philosophy or even theosophy.[61] In this regard we should not forget that Solov'ëv did not refer to this work later in his life, and it is only owing to the careful efforts of his nephew that it has come down to us. Lastly, in his later years, Solov'ëv distanced himself both emotionally and intellectually from his early interests in the occult and spiritualism.

2.5 The Return Home

After returning to Moscow presumably in the first week of June 1876, Solov'ëv evidently felt quite pleased with his work on "Sophia." It remained unpublished for more than a century, and Solov'ëv himself never even hinted what became of it. In a letter to Certelev from this time, he remarked that it would not appear in French,

[60] PSS, vol. 2: 66–72.

[61] Carlson writes that Solov'ëv's work is not "fragmentary, inconsistent, and ambiguous." This is quite a broad statement particularly in light of its quite obvious "fragmentary" condition, since it consists of various musings on a variety of topics. Thus, the burden is on Carlson to show that this piece is not what others have said it is. See Carlson 1996: 62.

as he had intended, "for various reasons."[62] What these reasons may have been we can only surmise. Nevertheless, in a rare letter to his father from 16 May 1876, Solov'ëv had earlier written, "As for my work, I need to publish it since it will be the basis of all my future concerns, and I can do nothing without referring to it."[63] Presumably, Solov'ëv quickly realized that whether "Sophia" was actually published or not would have no bearing on how he used its contents in future writings.

Solov'ëv's attitude towards the West, on the other hand, sank even lower than it had been before his departure for London. In stark contrast to so many others who had and would embark on a "grand tour" of Western Europe, Solov'ëv came away with a general sense of revulsion to the culture, people and even the geography. He wrote to his friend Janzhul that he could not state the positive results of his journey, and in a letter from 9 May, thus less than a month before returning to Russia, he confided that he found Italy to be "the most boring country in the world."[64] For whatever reason, Solov'ëv did not pause en route to Russia even to drop in to visit von Hartmann as he had resolved to do on his return a year or so earlier. Once back in Russia, Solov'ëv hurriedly worked on rewriting and expanding "Sophia."

[62] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 233.

[63] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 28.

[64] *Pis'ma*, vol. 4: 147.

Chapter 3
Towards an Integral Philosophy

After his return to Moscow from his travels abroad, Solov'ëv soon and suddenly became embroiled in university politics that pitted him against his own father. Resigning his position at the University, he quickly found a government position in St. Petersburg and began an aborted project outlining his metaphysical views. In this chapter, we will examine the "Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge," in which he put forward a philosophy of history that accorded a singular role to the Russian nation as a beacon to the world seeking an integration of humanity's cognitive, practical and creative endeavors. Short on details and absolutely devoid of historical facts, Solov'ëv anticipated no possible criticisms and doubts. By inclination a system builder rather than a critic, Solov'ëv proposed a unification of science, philosophy and theology to form what he termed "integral knowledge." Our analysis will reveal, though, that however laudatory the goal, Solov'ëv provided no details how this integration or unification is to take place. Recognizing deficiencies in empiricism and rationalism as mutually exclusive philosophical directions and approaches, he offered mysticism as the necessary missing ingredient without spelling out just how it dispels those weaknesses.

3.1 Genesis of the "Philosophical Principles"

Returning to Moscow from abroad earlier than necessary gave Solov'ëv the opportunity not only to prepare for the upcoming semester at the university but, more importantly, to start writing a doctoral dissertation. Just as he had earlier published individual chapters of his *magister*'s thesis even before completing and submitting the final work for a formal defense, so too did he now in 1876 hope to publish a revised version of "Sophia" as a complete book. He, then, intended to submit this text as his dissertation. The tentative title of the projected volume, "Positive Logic," reflected his ongoing confrontation with positivism, on the one hand, and his marked affinity with neo-Platonism and Hegelian dialectical logic, on the other. There is

T. Nemeth, *The Early Solov'ëv and His Quest for Metaphysics*, International Archives of the History of Ideas/Archives internationales d'histoire des idées 212,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-01348-0_3,

regrettably little information on Solov'ëv's activities in the official university records aside from his planned book. That he intended to devote the first part of it, however, to "The Principles of the Theosophical Sciences," surely must have aroused consternation among the faculty and officials aware of what such terms implied about the direction of Vladimir's studies. In a letter dated 12 September, Nikolaj Strakhov, a literary critic and family friend of the Solov'ëvs, wrote to Leo Tolstoy of his recent stay in Moscow and of Vladimir's work on a projected book "Principles of Positive Metaphysics."[1] In the absence of concrete information, we can only speculate as to why the various sources give different titles to Solov'ëv's projected work or parts thereof. Nevertheless, however far it may have advanced, Solov'ëv never completed the planned book as such. Yet its contents, almost certainly, formed the basis of and was incorporated into an unfinished series of articles bearing the overall title "Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge." Indeed, there is no reason for us to think that the five published articles are anything but the suitably revised chapters, albeit with a revised title as well, of the "Positive Logic" mentioned in the university records.

No doubt, his interest in Platonism and neo-Platonism lay behind his decision to offer courses in the fall semester on the history of philosophy – presumably Greek philosophy – and on logic.[2] This "logic" was certainly not the symbolic logic that confronts today's students, nor even the traditional Aristotelian logic of the scholastics. Instead, Solov'ëv had in mind a logic that had, as in Hegel's system, a considerable dose of sheer metaphysics. Based on surviving evidence, we can confidently surmise that initially at the start of the academic semester Solov'ëv's lectures were well attended. This, needless to say, almost surely was due in large part to the notoriety he had gained from his well-known and widely reported thesis defense in 1874. However, at least in his logic class Solov'ëv made scant accommodation to his student audience. Accepting the accuracy of the few surviving reports – and there is no reason not to do so – Solov'ëv's lectures seemed to have been improvised, itself an astonishing indictment in light of the preparation time he had had. His "logic" course, for example, met for only one hour each Wednesday and the history of philosophy course two hours per week, one hour each on Mondays and Fridays. Additionally, Solov'ëv's frequent use of Hegelian terminology, which would have been unfamiliar to the vast majority of the introductory students, did not facilitate an understanding of the subject matter. By one account,

> He dressed simply, stood erect and spoke plainly, but with the pale, thin face of an ascetic and with his long, black hair and beautiful black eyes he made an impression. What we saw was not only a specialist in philosophy, but a philosopher. He lectured to us on logic. The lectures were not particularly clear or very intelligible to the unprepared students and so were boring.

[1] See Luk'janov 1990. vol. 2: 358.

[2] The available information gives no indication of the time period covered by Solov'ëv's course in the history of philosophy.

> As always in such cases, many of the students ceased attending, and by no means did I myself
> attend all the lectures. As far as I could tell, Solov'ëv recognized this.[3]

Moreover, Solov'ëv's explicit metaphysical stand was not intellectually fashionable among the student body, driving them in effect to the far more experienced and positivistically-inclined Troitskij. Nevertheless, Luk'janov incongruously concludes that the students' obvious "inattention or misunderstanding did not dampen his [Solov'ëv's –TN] ardor."[4]

However he viewed his own pedagogic skills, Solov'ëv was oddly quite pleased with the pace of his writing. For he remarked to his friend Certelev not only that he intended to limit his dissertation to the "first, purely philosophical part of his system" – thereby implying that he also had in mind another, a "less philosophical" part – but that the completion of this work would require a scant three additional months! What lay behind the plan not coming to fruition is not entirely clear. We could speculate that personal affairs and political concerns again intensified and took a toll on his writing. Whatever the case, Solov'ëv abruptly resigned from the university at the very start of the new academic semester in early 1877. A decade later, he would write that his resignation was out of disinterest in becoming involved in university politics, a "desire not to participate in a partisan strife between two professors."[5] However, if we are to give credence to this self-interpretation of events, why did Vladimir, who at the time was a docent, feel that abandoning the University and, indeed, Moscow itself was the sensible course of action to take in order to avoid becoming embroiled in academic partisanship? The bare facts are these: At the time, Solov'ëv was personally close to the position of N. A. Ljubimov, an unpopular professor of physics at the University and an editor of Katkov's conservative journal *Russkij vestnik*.[6] Ljubimov had long proposed changing the university charter of 1863 in a conservative direction, drawing the wrath of many of the professors including the rector at that time, Vladimir's own father Sergej. Ljubimov, with Katkov's backing, advocated government participation in the professorial selection process and the introduction of state graduation examinations. Both measures would clearly reduce the degree of faculty autonomy accorded in the existing charter. Ljubimov publicly questioned the efficiency of the present system, whereas his opponents held that the university's independence from governmental interference was precisely the reason

[3] Sobolevskij 2000: 110. In one of the few extant letters from this time, Solov'ëv wrote to his friend Certelev: "Already a while ago, I began lecturing at Moscow University. To my surprise, the students are very satisfied and even prefer me to Troickij himself." *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 240. In this matter, we should recall that in his correspondence with his friend Solov'ëv consistently exaggerated and gave a positive "spin" on events in his life, as if boasting.

[4] Luk'janov 1990. vol. 3, vyp. I: 46. Even more egregious is Sergey Solovyov's citing of his uncle's letter to Certelev without comment or correction. See Solovyov 2000: 173.

[5] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 185.

[6] Mikhail N. Katkov is not without interest in his own right. A member of the Stankevich Circle in his youth, Katkov attended Schelling's lectures in Berlin in 1840. Later, he veered sharply to the political right, earning for himself, even among his contemporaries, a reputation as a reactionary. For a full-length study, see Katz 1966.

for the University's success in attracting more and more students.[7] Although Vladimir personally did not wish to get involved, he also did not hesitate to express his opinion, which ran counter to the majority.[8] In turn, Ljubimov and, particularly, Katkov surely valued Vladimir's youthful and intellectually vibrant support – indeed support from any quarter. Surely, they must have been particularly pleased to find the rector's own son aligned with them. Despite his personal disapproval of the manner in which the "liberal" professors behaved towards Ljubimov, Vladimir realized he could not oppose his own father, who also stood against the conservatives' plan for a new charter and who cherished the hard-won reforms of the 1860s, the university charter being one of them. Ultimately, not only did Vladimir resign, but his father, realizing that government officials were siding with Ljubimov, was forced to relinquish the rectorship. Of course, a recognition of Vladimir's own uneasiness in class, resulting from a realization of his dwindling student attendance, may have been a factor in his resignation.

An additional element adding to the politically-charged atmosphere of late 1876 was the growth of Panslavic nationalism within Russia, which viewed with utmost horror the Turkish atrocities committed against Orthodox Christian masses that year in the Balkans. Although by no means a Slavophile, Katkov had already been an ardent champion of Panslavism for quite some time. Into this tense situation stepped the young Solov'ëv. At a public session of the Society of Lovers of Russian Literature held in Moscow on 5 December 1876, Solov'ëv presented a paper simply entitled "Three Forces," which appeared in print the following month. In it, he set aside his earlier exclusive intellectualism, interpreting the immanent crisis not as one within Western philosophy, but as one between specific historical forces. At this venue, he revealed his wholehearted acceptance of Russian messianism. Whereas in his *magister*'s thesis the crisis is viewed in specifically philosophical terms, in "Three Forces" Solov'ëv sees the crisis on a vastly expanded scale. Now it is a matter of the human understanding of life in general, including its religious and political dimensions. In the 1874 thesis, he saw the resolution of the *philosophical* crisis in an affirmation of truths recognized independently long ago "by the great theological teachers of the *East*." However in "Three Forces," Solov'ëv expresses the view that life has a purpose, that there is a higher, divine world, and that a mission has been entrusted to a nation, namely, the Russian nation, whose vocation it is to bring this revelation to the world.

At the very start of his piece, Solov'ëv claims that three fundamental "forces" have governed human development. He provides no evidence for the existence of these "forces," nor does he clarify his characterization of them as "forces."

[7] Sinel 1973: 114–115.

[8] Mochul'skij writes: "Although Solov'ëv was not at all on the side of Ljubimov, he was shocked by the defamation to which the latter was subjected and submitted his resignation (14 February 1877)." Mochul'skij 1936: 79. Mochul'skij derives his statement from Radlov 1913: XII. Given his sympathies and personal relationship with Katkov, the widespread negative view of Ljubimov by both the faculty and the student-body and the seriousness of resigning from the University, it is hard to believe that Solov'ëv did not side with Ljubimov and that Solov'ëv's indignation alone caused him to resign.

Nevertheless, the first is manifested in the master–slave relationship, wherein there is one master and all others are enslaved. The relationship excludes any substantial progress and all expressions of individuality. The second force acts to give freedom to the individual, presumably all individuals without exception and without limitation. In doing so, this second force, if left unfettered, breaks all bonds of human solidarity, ultimately resulting in political anarchy and moral egoism. Alone these two forces unequivocally oppose each other. Were they the only operative forces, human history would have been nothing but a mechanical struggle for the ascendancy of one force over the other. Nothing but enmity can result from such a struggle. However, human history is, obviously, neither static nor a mechanical oscillation between the two forces. Thus, there *must* be yet a third force at work in history that "gives positive content to the first two, that frees them from their exclusivity, that reconciles the unity of the supreme principle with the free multiplicity of particular forms and elements, and that thereby creates the integrity of the human organism giving it an inner calm."[9]

In turning to the contemporary world, we find three quite distinct cultures: The first force is predominant in the Islamic East. There, God is conceived as an absolute despot whose very act of creating the world and humanity was capricious. Not surprisingly, Islam suppresses any display of individuality. There is no separation, even in principle, of religious institutions from the state. The pursuit of knowledge has a purely utilitarian character. Further evidence for this is the fact that over many centuries the Islamic world has not taken a single step in the direction of inner development.

The second force predominates in the West, where we see rapid and continuous development. Although the religious principle on which Western Civilization is built is a distorted form of Christianity, it clearly is more conducive to development than Islam. This manifestation of the second force results in the church, the state and the nation being mutually exclusive and therefore as having no power over each other. The unfettered spread of individualism in the West has led to universal depersonalization. The West's pursuit of scientific knowledge leads to answers that have no relation to issues that concern life or to the higher goals of human activity. While science can state general facts and laws, it cannot provide a genuine explanation for them. Only a higher sort of knowledge can do that, a science that stands in an inner unity with theology and philosophy. Yet such a science is contrary to the general Western spirit. The only way to avoid the conclusion that life actually has no meaning, to affirm that it is more than a mere game, is by recognizing the existence of an absolute, divine world. The third force is the revelation of this higher, divine world.

The bearer of the third force, the nationality that is free of all narrow-mindedness is Slavdom in general and the Russian nation, in particular. Since all *other* nations that have or are playing an influential role in world history are under the predominant influence of one of the first two forces, only Russia can serve as the mediator between the rest of the world and the divine world. In this sense, the historical vocation of the Russian nation can be seen in religious terms. Although we cannot know

[9] PSS, vol. 1: 199–200.

when the disclosure of Russia's mission will occur, all indications are that it lies in the not too distant future, even though that nation may not be aware of its epochal task.

Solov'ëv's "vision" of Russia's vocation together with his depiction of the essential nature of the three respective cultures is laughable at best, probably even morally reprehensible in its facile denigration of the Islamic and Western European civilizations. However this may be, we can observe a certain similarity with Hegel's philosophy of history if instead of Hegel's "Spirit" we substitute Solov'ëv's concept of "force." Also whereas Hegel speaks of the Orient as static, Solov'ëv describes Islamic nations, without differentiation, in much the same way. Solov'ëv's roughshod treatment of the historical facts and his sweeping generalizations did not escape the attention of at least one critic at the time. The "Westernizer" Aleksandr V. Stankevich (1821–1912) pointed out that the Islamic world did not fit Solov'ëv's characterization, that it did undergo changes in its long history and that it did produce more than just echoes of Greek philosophy. Likewise, Western Europeans were not godless individuals, religion did continue to play a vital role in many of their lives and that their pursuits were not driven purely by individualistic egoism.[10]

Solov'ëv knew of Stankevich's criticism but for the moment remained publicly silent on the issues raised. In private, he simply dismissed the charges as if with a shrug.[11] Although Stankevich's criticism did not appear in print until April 1877, if we accept that the letter to Certelev mentioned above dates from late 1876, Solov'ëv must have found the experience of delivering a public lecture rather unpleasant. For he writes in that letter that he came to a "judicious" decision not to give more lectures to the public – a decision, as we will see, he did not keep for long.[12]

3.2 The Philosophical Role of the Russian Nation

Submitting his resignation from the University in late January 1877, Solov'ëv was officially relieved from his duties in mid-February. Of course, in his capacity as rector, Solov'ëv's own father signed the papers. Fortunately for Vladimir, there was a job opening at just this time on the Academic Committee at the Ministry of National Education, which had among its various responsibilities the approval and recommendation of texts. The chairman of the Committee, A. I. Georgievskij, recognizing the urgent need for someone with a broad educational background including philosophy,

[10] Stankevich 1877. de Courten, more recently, has correctly recognized Solov'ëv's penchant for operating "highly selectively with respect to historical data." de Courten 2004: 134.

[11] "Was it really unpleasant for you, and not amusing to read about 'three forces' in *Vestnik Evropy* …?" *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 201. The ellipsis is present in the original, leading us to conclude that some portion of the letter was omitted for reasons that only the original editor knows. The rest of the letter deals with other matters, and this simple query concerning "Three Forces" seems quite out of place.

[12] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 240. Regrettably, Solov'ëv does not remark what factors drove him to such a resolution.

approved Solov'ëv's application for the position in early March. No doubt, Solov'ëv hoped that the job would afford him the opportunity to continue work on his dissertation without the distraction either of academic politics or of elementary classroom lectures. The drawback as he saw it at the time was that it required re-locating to St. Petersburg, Peter the Great's "Window on the West" that he and the Slavophiles so greatly abhorred.

Soon after assuming his responsibilities in St. Petersburg, he expressed his longing for Moscow and his utter contempt for the Russian capital.[13] He also quickly came to the realization that the job was not the mere sinecure that he evidently thought it would be. Despite having such notable colleagues as the eminent mathematician P. L. Chebyshev, the critic N. N. Strakhov and the writer N. S. Leskov, it came as somewhat of a shock to Vladimir that he was expected to do serious work, including attending meetings! In a letter of 12 April he wrote to Certelev: "The meetings are a deadly bore and infinitely stupid. It is good they are infrequent. Only in the library do I work *con amore*."[14] Indeed based on his own testimony as well as that of others, Solov'ëv spent virtually all his free time in the library alone and surrounded with books on mysticism and spiritism.

In March, the same month that Solov'ëv took up his new job in St. Petersburg, the first chapter of his planned dissertation "Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge" appeared in the house journal of the Ministry of National Education. It certainly was composed prior to his arrival in the capital. Entitled "A General Historical Introduction (On the Law of Historical Development)," the chapter poignantly begins, "The first question that any philosophy must answer if it claims to be of general interest is that of the goal of existence."[15] If our lives were spent in incessant bliss, the question would not arise. That Solov'ëv poses it to philosophy as demanding an answer already shows a departure, however slight, from the standpoint he adopted in "Sophia." Unlike in the latter, where he dogmatically states that the goal of all human activity is the complete satisfaction of human needs, here Solov'ëv poses it as problematic. Eventually, he will make clear that he can no longer accept his earlier position. In any case, human consciousness demands that human life have a goal, for otherwise our present, individual actions would be ultimately pointless. Likewise, individual goals would be devoid of meaning in the absence of a universal human end. Presumably, for Solov'ëv the purely logical possibility that objectively there is no such goal would be of little, if any, practical consequence. If there were no goal, we, as rational beings, would have to posit one. As a matter of fact, though, Solov'ëv does not doubt for a moment that there is such an objective goal, and for that reason we can speak of human historical development. History is not merely a succession of random events and changes.

In its broad strokes, Solov'ëv's presentation of humanity's "historical development" is highly indebted to Hegel. The subject of any developmental process cannot be

[13] Sergey Solovyov cites several letters from this period to illustrate his uncle's low regard for St. Petersburg. See Solovyov 2000: 185–186.

[14] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 235.

[15] PSS, vol. 2: 185.

absolutely simple, for simplicity precludes change and development. Nor can the subject consist of a mere mechanical aggregate of parts that function together as a unit owing to an externally imposed design. The parts of a mechanical watch can change their respective positions by rotating; the piston in an internal combustion engine can move up and down within a cylinder, but such movement does not constitute development. Only a living organism, a creature that contains a number of internally connected elements can, properly speaking, undergo development. Not all change is a part or moment of a developmental process. Environmental factors can affect change, but they cannot alter the very content of the development, its fundamental direction. The growth of an oak sapling may be delayed or arrested owing to climatic conditions, but such conditions cannot make the oak into a pine tree.

Another necessary condition of development is a definite goal. Infinite development is, for Solov'ëv, an oxymoron, as would be that of development extending infinitely into the past. Thus, the law of development contains three moments: a specific original state or embryo, a goal or final state, and a series of intermediate states. Since the developmental process is purely immanent, all the principles and constituent elements of the development must be located within the organism in its original state. To use Aristotle's famous example, the acorn is implicitly, or potentially, an oak tree. The difference between the embryo and the fully developed organism lies merely in a different arrangement or in a difference in the state of the organism's formative principles and elements.

Solov'ëv acknowledges that what he calls "the law of development" is not his discovery. Hegel certainly provided a logical formulation of it, and Herbert Spencer applied it to biology. However, Solov'ëv, by his own estimation, is the first to apply it fully and consistently to human history. Here in the "Philosophical Principles," Solov'ëv believes we can view humanity as a whole, as an organism, and find applicable to it the same law of development that reigns in other organisms.[16] Every organism contains component parts and systems. For example, the individual human being has a head, hands, and legs. Such a being also has a nervous system, a circulatory system and a muscular system. Humanity, taken as a whole, likewise, consists of races and nations, but it too has systems or general forms of existence that are necessary for the continuance of its organic life. It is these forms that, properly speaking, undergo historical development. The three fundamental forms of feeling, thinking and the active will are the subjective, or personal, basis of a sphere of human life, and each form has a corresponding social, or objective, side. The fundamental form of feeling serves as the subjective basis for the sphere of creativity, whereas the form of thinking serves as the subjective basis for the sphere of knowledge. In the same way, the active will grounds the sphere of practical activity. The object or goal of the first form is objective beauty, the second objective truth and the third is objective, or general, welfare (*blago*).

[16] As Solovyov correctly observes, at no point does Solov'ëv attempt to demonstrate or argue for this claim. See Solovyov 2000: 174.

The sphere of practical activity, or human social life, whose subjective basis is the will, is manifested, not surprisingly, in three stages. Whether we are to understand these stages as distinct, separate and actual historical phenomena that have or will take place or, rather, as logical constructions is ultimately unclear. The first of these three, the material stage, is concerned with securing the means to our continued existence. This is done through work on the external world and is termed economic society. Its elementary form is the family, and in this Solov'ëv explicitly concurs with the view that ascribes an originally economic function to the family. The second or formal stage is political society, or the state. It concerns the relation of people not to nature, but to each other, their interactions, as members of a single whole. Solov'ëv remarks that all actual legal institutions associated with this stage are abnormal, and political life is seen as a "hereditary disease."[17] The third form of society is the spiritual society and reflects our fundamental religious character. Economic work and political activity serve merely as means for the achievement of absolute existence, which is the ultimate goal of the social union. The spiritual society can be called the church provided, Solov'ëv reminds us, that we keep in mind only the practical side of religion. Only that society immediately based on a relation to transcendent principles can be truly concerned with the good of humanity as a whole.

Passing to the second sphere of general human life, that of knowledge, we find three stages here as well. The search for factual information, factual truths, is the task of positive science. In terms of its material character, i.e., our relation to the external world, positive science corresponds to economic activity. Broadly speaking, the positivists believe the search for truth is adequately handled by science just as, in their view, all human social relations are ultimately a matter of economic ones. However, knowledge can rise above the purely factual to embrace universal principles and thereby the formal perfection of knowledge. In abstract philosophy, we find systematization expressed in terms of logical regularity. In its concern for the purely formal or rational, abstract philosophy corresponds to the political society, where the concern is, above all, with formal laws. For Solov'ëv, it is no coincidence that historically the closer the philosopher approaches to a purely rationalist standpoint, the more significance he attributes to the state. Finally, the stage of knowledge directed to absolute reality is theology. Again, Solov'ëv believes it is clear and undeniable that theology and spiritual society correspond to each other.

The last sphere of human life, the sphere whose subjective basis is feeling, is that of creativity. Solov'ëv calls the lowest stage "technical art" or "technology." Concerned as it is first and foremost with utilitarian goals, beauty, as an idea, is merely a decoration. Curiously, though, the sphere of creativity in which aesthetic form takes on a definitive significance, the fine arts, exists in four forms: sculpture, painting, poetry and music.[18] Although each is concerned with beauty as an artistic form, all four forms have a contingent content and necessarily so, since they have

[17] PSS, vol. 2: 191. Pribytkova sees Solov'ëv's comment here as based in the anti-Western teachings of the Slavophiles and the "Native Soil Conservatives." Pribytkova 2010: 92.

[18] Solov'ëv makes no remark why the triadic scheme fails in this case.

to do more or less with mundane beauty. Absolute beauty has not only an ideally necessary form but also an ideally necessary and eternal content. Of course, such a content cannot be found in our world, but only in a supernatural or transcendent world. Solov'ëv designates the concern with absolute beauty by the term "mysticism." Unlike Hegel and Schopenhauer, of the three spheres Solov'ëv accords the greatest significance to that of creativity.

However confusedly at first, human history must, according to the law of development, pass through the three stages. At the dawn of history, all the stages of human life were present with no discernible distinction between spiritual, political and economic society. The first economic units, the family and the clan, had both a political and a religious significance. Likewise, there was no clear distinction between theology, philosophy and science. The pagan priests of old were the closest thing then to philosophers and scholars; but they also served as the law-givers and the economic bosses. In general, we can speak of society as organized along theocratic lines, and the unity in the sphere of knowledge, such as it was, was a theosophy. Only in time did the various spheres become differentiated.

Looking at knowledge, we see that just as in the sphere of practical activity the two lower stages together historically separated from the higher stage earlier than from each other. This, in Solov'ëv's opinion, is consistent with the law of development. In the Middle Ages, there still was no distinction between philosophy, as a rational discipline, and empirical science. In fact, only at the beginning of the nineteenth century do we, through Hegel's absolutism, clearly see the false pretensions of rationalist philosophy, just as France's Louis XIV once and for all discredited the principle of monarchical government in the West. However, concomitant with the overthrow of rationalism, we find not just the emergence of positive science from behind the looming shadow of philosophy, but the specter of positivism, which claims for the sciences the mantle once held by theology and later by philosophy, namely, absolute supremacy in the field of knowledge. In this respect, positivism pretentiously seeks to combine all the sciences under a single banner and to reduce all the concerns of the other stages within the sphere of knowledge, again just as socialism seeks to reduce all concerns within the social sphere to a matter of economic relations. Both socialism and positivism present themselves as the last word in the history of Western development, and just as socialism can neither account for nor satisfy the essential and higher demands of the human will, so too positivism can neither account for nor satisfy the higher demands of the mind, demands for an explanation of natural phenomena and laws. Positivism applauds the dismissal of such questions as "Why?" and "What for?" on the part of science. However, science alone is unable to support, let alone inspire, human creative activity. For – and here Solov'ëv writes in language reminiscent more of Hume than of mysticism – "in order to do this it would be necessary to answer the question, 'What should be?' Empirical science, though, knows only what is happening. However, the former, obviously, does not ensue from the latter; the ideal does not ensue from reality; the idea does not follow from fact."[19] Although not according the sphere of creativity

[19] PSS, vol. 2: 208f.

the same attention as the other two spheres, Solov'ëv is not totally silent. He terms the parallel attempt to dismiss the fine arts and mysticism in favor of technology "utilitarian realism."

Surprisingly – at least for anyone unfamiliar with *The Crisis* – Solov'ëv sees neither positivism nor socialism as *simply* another, albeit the latest, phase in Western intellectual history. No, he takes at face value their adherents' contention that these positions *are* the "last word" in the respective spheres of *Western* Civilization, though that civilization is not the culmination of overall human development. Solov'ëv holds that the "incontestable" law of this development answers negatively, that Western civilization is merely a second, transitional phase.[20] A third phase is necessary to complete the human developmental process. Now echoing his recent article "Three Forces," Solov'ëv sees the intervention of a third force as necessary if history is to proceed.

"Individual, egoistic interests, contingent facts, petty details – atomism in life, atomism in science, atomism in art – are the final word of Western Civilization. … If the history of humanity is not to end with this negative result, or nothingness, if a new historical force is to appear, its task will not be to develop the separate elements of life and knowledge, to create new cultural forces, but to revitalize and inspire the hostile and dead elements by a higher conciliatory principle, to give them universal and absolute content."[21] This higher principle can be conveyed only by a third force, whose content is a revelation of the divine world.

It is unclear why Solov'ëv feels this force has to be carried, so to speak, by an entire people or nation, but clearly it is his adamant belief at this time that only the Slavic tribes, particularly the ethnic Russian people, are by their national character free of one-sidedness and parochial special interests. Of all peoples, only the Russian nation remains untainted by the lower two principles and consequently can serve as a historical guide to the third or divine principle for others. The Russian people alone exhibit complete faith in the reality of a higher world. All other nations are under the sway of one of the two lower principles. Russia's historical vocation is a religious one. Only when the mind and the will enter into communion with the eternal and truly existent will all the particular forms and elements of life and knowledge find their genuine significance and value. Only the Russian people can guide humanity to a synthesis, or inner free unity of the spheres and stages.

In this synthesis, the spheres and stages are not reduced or blended; they are seen not as equal, but as equivalent. Each is necessary, but above all the three highest stages together form an organic whole that Solov'ëv designates as "religion."

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[20] That it is only a transitional and incomplete phase is further shown by the fact that it cannot entirely supplant representatives of the first phase of undifferentiated unity. Western civilization has not become universal. Later in the 1890s, Solov'ëv recognized that this claim would have to be modified slightly to account for the adoption by certain Oriental peoples, particularly the Japanese, of elements of Western civilization. However, Solov'ëv now points out the impotence of the West in its confrontation with Islamic culture. Solov'ëv fails to note here Orthodox Russia's own decided lack of success in subjugating and assimilating Moslem tribes in the Caucasus mountains, a problem with which he certainly was not unfamiliar.

[21] PSS, vol. 2: 211.

Nevertheless, all the stages within a sphere are united and together form a particular ensemble or organization. Each sphere retains a single goal, that of the highest stage. For example, true art and true technology also have as their goal a communion with the divine but by means of their respective forms of inner creative activity. Solov'ëv terms this unity of the creative stages "free theurgy" or "integral creativity."

However, of greater interest to us here – and in fact to Solov'ëv, for reasons we will see shortly – is his conception of the unity of theology, philosophy and science that he calls "free theosophy" or "integral knowledge." In their original, undifferentiated unity, neither philosophy nor science could freely serve the goals of theology, since neither existed independently of the other two. Arguing in a far from clear manner, Solov'ëv holds that in its original state even theology was unable freely to pursue its goal, since only what or who gives freedom to others is itself free.

Lastly, the goal of the highest stage in the social sphere, spiritual society, forms the goal of political and economic society in humanity's next phase of development. Here the unity of the spiritual, political and economic societies is termed "free theocracy" or "integral society." Just as theology is not to meddle in the affairs of philosophy and science, each conceived as existing independently, so too the church is not to meddle in political or economic matters aside from providing each with the higher, proper and true goal. We have now seen that each sphere of human life forms its own integral unit or organization. Yet, these three themselves form an organic whole with organs and members such as, for example, philosophy, economic society, etc. In this next phase, the correlated activity of the various organs constitutes a general sphere that we can designate as "integral life." The "bearer," presumably meaning thereby those who embody the principle in terms of lifestyle and beliefs of this "integral life" and who will impart it to the rest of humanity, is now only the Russian nation, although it is not fully conscious of its vocation. Only this integral life can give genuine, objective satisfaction to all fundamental human needs and desires. Not without exaggeration or hubris can it be designated by the classical expression "*summum bonum*," and only it constitutes the genuine aim or goal of human existence. In this, Solov'ëv decidedly approaches Kant's identification of the concept of the highest good with the Kingdom of God.[22]

Although moral issues certainly do not play a prominent role in the "Philosophical Principles," Solov'ëv concludes this chapter on just such a note. In fact, in light of Solov'ëv's initial questioning of the goal of our existence, his entire presentation has thus far at least been merely a preparation for an ethical claim: Our genuine, objective moral goal lies in consciously and freely promoting the integral life. In doing so, we ourselves achieve freedom.[23] Genuine, objective freedom – as opposed

[22] Cf. Kant 1956: 133. Clearly for Solov'ëv here, the moral will is not purely formal; whether it is for Kant is an issue beyond the scope of the present study.

[23] Regrettably, Solov'ëv injects the notion of "freedom" here seemingly unaware of the huge complications it invokes. Only much later in his philosophical career would he address this matter in a direct fashion. Nevertheless, on the basis of his claim at this point, we can see that he has in mind a positive conception of freedom, however ill-defined it may be.

to mere subjective, personal freedom – is realized in the explicit recognition of the veracity of this goal.

Solov'ëv ends this first chapter introducing the topic of the next, namely integral knowledge. We have now seen the three general spheres of "normal" human existence. However, the realization of integral creativity and the integral society are dependent on conditions that a single individual alone cannot bring about. Indeed, try as the individual might, one cannot initiate the formation of these integral spheres nor even accelerate their development once they have emerged. Of the three spheres, integral knowledge is the only one whose goal the individual is capable of realizing in his personal consciousness. For this reason, it is incumbent on the person who is aware of the genuine goal of human existence to try to the best of one's abilities to effect integral knowledge, and this, in turn, can only be accomplished if one is aware of what that is.

	Sphere of creativity	Sphere of knowledge	Sphere of practical activity
	Subjective foundation – feeling	Subjective foundation – thinking	Subjective foundation – will
	Objective principle – beauty	Objective principle – truth	Objective principle – general welfare
Absolute stage	Mysticism	Theology	Spiritual society (the Church)
Formal stage	Fine arts	Abstract philosophy	Political society (State)
Material stage	Technical arts	Positive science	Economic society

3.3 The Three Types of Philosophy

The second chapter of the "Philosophical Principles" appeared in the April 1877 issue of the same house journal of the Ministry of Education. Since in all likelihood Solov'ëv was preoccupied during March with his relocation to St. Petersburg and his new employment, it is likely that he composed this chapter immediately upon completion of the first. At the end of that first chapter, Solov'ëv remarked that before detailing the conceptions underlying integral knowledge he would have to discuss its relationship to the other spheres of knowledge, even though each is a one-sided direction. Now in this second chapter, he begins with an overview of the synthesis necessary for integral knowledge. True philosophy, philosophy as it properly should be, is impossible without positive science and theology, just as the genuine forms of the latter two are impossible without the others. In integral knowledge, science, philosophy and theology have the same content but merely approach that content differently; it is of no consequence from which stage one begins the journey to integral knowledge. For this reason, Solov'ëv believes we can designate integral knowledge equally well as integral philosophy, integral science or integral theology, each choice merely serving to emphasize the respective starting point. For this reason,

we can presume that Solov'ëv's explicit decision to examine integral knowledge as a *philosophical* system, and not as a science or a theological system, is purely arbitrary. Having made that choice, though, we see that the term "philosophy" has many different, even opposed, meanings, chief among them being: (1) Philosophy is merely a theoretical, i.e., academic, discipline; and (2) philosophy is primarily a practical concern. In the first sense, philosophy is concerned exclusively with theoretical questions having to do with the human cognitive faculties, whereas in the second sense it is concerned additionally with the higher human aspirations and ideals. The first is fixed on theoretical questions, with no connection to social or moral issues, whereas in the second meaning philosophy aspires to play a formative role in life. Both approaches can legitimately lay claim to seeking the truth. Nevertheless, the issue of which is the "true" sense of philosophy is not so easily dismissed. The answer requires us to examine the *inner*, or implicit, principles of each, looking for that philosophy's inner consistency or lack thereof.

Not unlike certain other philosophers both before and after, Solov'ëv contends that all academic philosophies are reducible to two types or directions. One holds that the fundamental object of philosophy lies in the external, material world. As a result, the source of human cognition is external experience. Viewed as an ontology, this position can be called naturalism and correspondingly when taken as the basis of an epistemology forms empiricism. For the spiritual and the psychic are excluded, and we observe only empirical relations between phenomena.[24] However, all philosophical directions, regardless of how they may define truth, recognize it as being universal and invariable. As a philosophy, naturalism takes nature as that which is invariable, as that which is the general foundation of appearances, in short, as that which truly exists. In its shifting attempts to determine precisely how it conceives the ultimate bedrock of its position, naturalism passes through three developmental and historical stages: (1) elementary materialism (predominant among the ancient Ionians), (2) hylozoism – the view that everything material is alive – (in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries), and finally (3) mechanistic materialism, which views atoms as the ultimate and indivisible constituents of all that exists.

Proceeding in a manner strikingly reminiscent of Hegel, Solov'ëv argues that mechanistic materialism ultimately collapses owing to inherent internal contradictions, much as the two earlier forms of naturalism did. If atoms are extended, they are divisible and therefore not ultimate. However, if they lack extension, they are mere mathematical points, which, in turn, raises another set of irresolvable quandaries, not the least of which is how could anything, then, be extended. On the other hand, if we posit atoms not as the ultimate particles of materiality but as dynamic units, as centers of force, we leave mechanistic materialism per se. Two alternate and divergent paths, then, face the naturalist: Either deal with nature as a set of interactions between dynamic forces – despite the speculative character of such a view – or turn to appearances, seeking in them the universality and invariability necessary for knowledge. The former leads directly out of naturalism and into the minefields of mystical thought. The latter approach, confining itself to the empirical,

[24] PSS, vol. 2: 219.

is unable to locate a ground for truth. If it adheres to a rigorous empiricism, it culminates in a skepticism that asserts a given relation has been observed up until now, but the future remains quite uncertain. Alternatively, it can admit that a given relationship follows from a fundamental and necessary – and therefore *a priori* – law. This, too, is a path leading directly into the depths of speculative philosophy.

Yet, there is another approach, one that apparently avoids any lapse into overt speculation. Acknowledging only appearances relative to a cognizing subject, consistent empiricism accepts only appearances relative to an invariant cognizing subject. In this way, the cognizing subject is not you or me, not this empirical being, but the subjective pole of the cognizing activity. What truly exists, therefore, are the universal and necessary forms of cognition, viz., ideas given in pure, rational thought. These ideas, however, cannot be *of* anything, i.e., they cannot have any content, for all content is contingent. These ideas, therefore, must be pure thought. We cannot even, properly speaking, speak of them in the plural, for lacking content there is nothing that distinguishes one from another. We see that in being pure thought, thought of nothing, pure thought *is* nothing.[25] For Solov'ëv, there is but one unmistakable conclusion: As soon as we turn to their ultimate logical conclusions, we see that both empiricism and idealism "refute themselves and together with them falls all abstract academic philosophy, of which they are the two necessary poles." This train of thought reveals that both alternatives, empiricism *and* idealism, lead nowhere, that what truly exists is not empirically cognized, nor is it cognized by pure thought. "In other words, we must recognize that what truly exists has its own absolute reality, quite independent of the reality of the external material world. On the contrary, it announces its reality to this world and its ideal content to our thought. The views that recognize such a super-cosmic and super-human principle … go beyond academic philosophy and together with the latter's two types form a special, third type of intellectual conception usually called *mysticism*."[26] Its object is neither the world of appearances, as in empiricism, nor the world of ideas, as in idealism. Such a position is at the expense of neither mathematics, with its formal veracity, nor the natural sciences, with their exclusively material, or empirical, veracity. The former lacks content; the latter have content but lack rational sense. The object of mysticism, which here Solov'ëv also calls "mystical philosophy," is neither the empirical world, which is reducible to our sensations, nor is it the world of ideas, which is reducible to our thoughts. Its object is independent of the cognizing subject and of the external world; it is the multiplicity of "essences" considered in their interrelationships.[27]

[25] Solov'ëv's argument is aimed at all forms of idealism. However, he specifically mentions that "rationalist idealism" leads to Hegel's absolute logic, or "panlogism."

[26] PSS, vol. 2: 227.

[27] Solov'ëv's debt to German Idealism is evident even in his choice of terminology. He will devote more attention to the term "essence" in the fourth chapter of the "Philosophical Principles." Here, however, he uses it in a manner not far removed from the manner in which Hegel employed the term in his "Logic." On the one hand, an "essence" has an inherent, permanent nature; on the other, it is an entity that has more than purely empirical determinations.

In reply to those skeptics for whom knowledge is limited merely to representations, Solov'ëv remarks that we ourselves are more than a representation, and, contra Kant, we can know ourselves. Nevertheless, mysticism is not the end of philosophy, but merely one branch along with empiricism and rationalism. Its concern with interrelated essences is similar to empiricism's with external experience and rationalism's with logical thought. However, unlike empiricism and rationalism, mysticism provides a foundation for the object of its concern, for such essences, without which they would be inconsistent. That is, fundamentally reiterating the position he had already voiced in his polemic with Kavelin, Solov'ëv claims that empiricism's restriction of knowledge to representations presupposes that the representations be of something. This "something" is the concern of mystical knowledge. In this respect, Solov'ëv expands the charge against empiricism and rationalism that G.E. Schulze had already leveled against Reinhold's *Elementarphilosophie*. Therefore, mystical knowledge alone is not integral knowledge, nor is integral knowledge a type of philosophy. Rather, integral knowledge is the synthesis of mysticism, empiricism and rationalism and as such occupies a higher plane than philosophy. Moreover, just as empiricism is intimately associated with the natural sciences and rationalism with abstract thought, so mysticism is associated with theology. And just as the natural sciences complement abstract thought, and vice versa, so too does theology further complement the natural sciences and abstract thought. The result of this threefold synthesis is integral knowledge, or free theosophy.

Much of Solov'ëv's thought at this point remains ambiguous, and as such an evaluation of it must be couched as tentative. Solov'ëv certainly does give us to think that abstract thought no less than the natural sciences can yield knowledge of a sort. If there is a posteriori knowledge, then there is *a priori* knowledge. However, to what extent can we legitimately speak of mystical knowledge? The sciences employ the senses; abstract thought employs the mind. Yet as Kant aptly remarked, "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind. … The understanding is not capable of intuiting anything, and the senses are not capable of thinking anything. Only from their unification can cognition arise."[28] In this scheme, just where does mysticism fit in? Solov'ëv's unequivocal answer is that it provides the "objective content" (*ob"ektivnoe soderzhanie*), the in-itself that Kant excluded from his system. Nevertheless, Solov'ëv is hard pressed to reveal just what human faculty provides mystical knowledge. He has not addressed that issue at this point, and if there is such a faculty why have some denied its very existence. No one seriously denies that we have five senses or that humans are capable of thought. Yet it is not incontestable that we have a faculty providing mystical knowledge. For if there were, there would never have been a Kant or a Hume.

That there is mystical knowledge is, for Solov'ëv, a given. Such knowledge alone does not provide the Truth, what truly exists. Only integral knowledge can do that. Nonetheless, mystical knowledge taken by itself exhibits its own form of hubris: It declares not only that the senses and thought do not reveal the Truth, but that they do not so much as even contribute to the Truth. What truly exists, the Truth, in its

[28] Kant 1997: A51/B75.

full integrity is revealed only in the inner synthesis of empiricism, rationalism and mysticism. Reminiscent of Hegel, Solov'ëv holds that the Truth can be considered as it is in itself and as it is in its relation to our subjective and objective worlds. In this way, integral knowledge consists of three organic parts, the study of each of which forms a "philosophical science." The first of these, organic logic, "examines the absolute principle in its peculiar universal and necessary (and consequently *a priori*) determinations which includes the other, finite existence only potentially – the moment of immediate unity."[29] Thus, Solov'ëv's "organic logic," like Hegel's, is the unfolding of categories that express the Truth's knowledge of itself. Whether the Truth is a synonym for the traditional Christian conception of the Deity certainly, on the face of it, seems dubious. What is beyond dispute is that Solov'ëv's logic, again like Hegel's, is the conceptual expression of the necessary, and hence *a priori*, structure of reality. Yet as the structure of reality, this logic is also a conceptual ontology of the world. That Solov'ëv was quite enamored of Hegel's logic goes without saying. Indeed, in a footnote Solov'ëv remarks that Hegel's logic is "perfectly complete and closed. Therefore, the general formulas of Hegelianism stand as eternal formulas of philosophy."[30]

It is to organic logic that Solov'ëv will next turn in the third chapter of the "Philosophical Principles." He does, however, add here at the end of the second chapter that there are two other parts to integral knowledge, viz., organic metaphysics, which deals with finite reality as posited or created by the absolute principle, and, finally, organic ethics, which deals with the reunification of the absolute principle and the finite world in a real synthetic unity. Again, the parallels with Hegel's system are unmistakable: Corresponding to organic metaphysics, Hegel spoke of a "philosophy of nature," and corresponding to organic ethics Hegel spoke of a "philosophy of spirit." Unlike Hegel, Solov'ëv abandoned a full exposition of his "organic metaphysics," although as we will see further on he did manage to incorporate elements of it into his later doctoral dissertation.

3.4 The Call of War

Solov'ëv's arrival in St. Petersburg coincided with ever increasing tensions between the Russian and Turkish governments. To gain support for a war that those in power realized was all but inevitable, the Russian government initially allowed the press and various nationalist organizations to fan the flames. Absorbed in his own concerns, Solov'ëv chose at first to remain above the fray spending his free hours, of which he apparently had many, in the St. Petersburg Public Library reading everything he could find on mysticism and spiritism. We find an expression of his aloof attitude towards his surroundings in his letter to Countess Sofia Tolstaja of 27 April 1877: "The mystics have confirmed many of my own ideas, but they shed

[29] PSS, vol. 2: 230.

[30] PSS, vol. 2: 231f.

no new light. Almost all of them have a thoroughly subjective character and are, so to speak, full of drivel."[31] Amplifying this point, he wrote to Certelev on 30 April: "I live very modestly and alone. I read the mystics in the library, write my dissertation, and visit almost no one."[32] Nevertheless, Solov'ëv did not escape infection from the war fever. Hostilities were officially declared on 12 April, and Solov'ëv's reaction was not long in coming. In his letter of 27 April, he already expressed his hope of serving in some manner, either as a volunteer or as a correspondent at the front for Katkov's newspaper the *Moskovskie Vedomosti*. Keeping in character, Solov'ëv fails to mention the possibility of serving as a mere army volunteer in his letter to Certelev: "Incidentally, I almost forgot to report that *perhaps* I will also go off to Asia Minor in the army – as Katkov's correspondent. However, it is more likely only a dream of my imagination."[33] Whether Solov'ëv truly "almost forgot" to mention this to Certelev is questionable.[34]

During May, Solov'ëv waited for a positive response from Katkov. It should be said, of course, that Solov'ëv was optimistic with reason: Katkov owed him as a result of the Ljubimov Affair, and Katkov had already proposed that Solov'ëv serve as a correspondent from St. Petersburg, which struck Solov'ëv as comical, if not absurd. However it may be that he spent his time during this month, his job certainly did not receive top priority. Solov'ëv attended only one of the three meetings in May of the committee of which he was a member. Perhaps he expected to depart from the capital with approval on short notice. Whatever the case, in a letter to his father in Moscow dated 4 May, Solov'ëv notes that he had been appointed to some unspecified committee that met three times per week. No record of any such committee, however, let alone of Solov'ëv's attendance, has surfaced.[35] We can with reasonable confidence assume that he continued his investigations into mysticism during a portion of the month. In any case, he did not have long to wait. On 20 May, he wrote to Certelev that Katkov had agreed in principle to his proposal and that he planned to travel to Moscow within a day or two to arrange matters with Katkov. At around this time – the exact date is unclear – Solov'ëv submitted an application for a leave of absence for two and a half months on medical grounds. Solov'ëv's application raises many unresolved questions. It is unclear why Solov'ëv requested this specific amount of leave. It is also unclear whether he really intended to return to his position in St. Petersburg just after that time. As we will see, the period for which he was absent from meetings was far more than two and a half months. Nevertheless,

[31] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 200. Interestingly, in light of the usual characterization of Solov'ëv as being at this time a Slavophile he concludes this letter on a condescending note. With regard to the philosophical poverty of the Slavophiles, he writes: "I have become somewhat familiar with Polish philosophers. Their tone and aspirations are very congenial, but they have no positive content. They are on a par with our Slavophiles."

[32] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 236.

[33] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 236.

[34] Also indicative of his naïve, even flippant, state of mind at the time is another line from his already mentioned letter of 27 April to Countess Tolstaja: "I am preparing now for Pustynka and then *perhaps* for Asia Minor straight into the embrace of the Turks and the plague…."

[35] Luk'janov 1990. vol. 3, vyp. II: 113.

in the attest issued upon Solov'ëv's resignation, the minister of education did record his absence on leave for that specific period in 1877. His application for reasons of health is also odd, if not deceptive. In his letter of 4 May, expressing birthday wishes, to his father, Solov'ëv affirms that he is "quite well" and living again with his brother Vsevolod.[36] Soon afterward he stayed in Moscow for an indeterminate period and 2 days at Krasnyj Rog, the estate of the writer Aleksej Tolstoj, a cousin of Leo Tolstoj, located in what is now Ukraine. The next we hear from Solov'ëv is in a letter to Certelev dated 18 June from Kishinev, a city now in Moldova, where he paused to get a passport. Ten days later, he wrote to his mother from Bucharest: "It is possible that I will return at the end of July, but it is also possible that I will come for only a few days and then return again to Bulgaria."[37] At this particular time, Solov'ëv's thoughts clearly centered on his travels and on the war. However, based on his earlier letter of 27 April to Countess Tolstaja he had already by that date composed, to some degree, the third and fourth chapters of the "Philosophical Principles," even though these were published only in June and October.[38]

3.5 Organic Logic: Starting Point and Method

Solov'ëv tells us that we can view organic logic from two standpoints: (1) that of integral knowledge as a whole, and (2) from the standpoint of other sorts of logic. As a part of integral knowledge, we can characterize organic logic in terms of seven relations, the first five of which, namely, the object, aim, material, form and source, it shares with the other branches of integral knowledge, namely theosophical metaphysics and ethics. The difference between these branches lies in their respective starting points and developmental methods.

We have already observed that for Solov'ëv the object of integral knowledge is that which truly exists in its objective expression. Precisely how this differs from, say, what the sciences reveal, can best be clarified if we recognize his criticism of empiricism as not being concerned with what lies behind the phenomenal. As for rationalism, its object is purely ideational and not actual. In this regard, Solov'ëv agrees that unaided reason cannot deduce objective existence. He does acknowledge that mysticism as such intends that which truly exists, but for it the mystical object is accessible only by means of faith, an immediate feeling. Thus, mysticism disregards, or at least, diminishes the role of the senses and of thought in securing its object. Some mystics go so far as to reject the objective content of knowledge, holding that everything apart from what faith reveals is ultimately no more than a subjective, mental phantom.

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[36] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 29.

[37] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 30.

[38] The editors of PSS conjecture that Solov'ëv may have intentionally delayed publication of the fourth chapter so that it could be quickly followed by the fifth owing to the thematic unity of the two chapters. This is certainly possible, but of course in the absence of factual information it must remain conjectural. The fifth chapter was published in November. See PSS, vol. 2: 360.

A unification with what truly exists is the goal. However, as soon as we recognize this goal in these terms, we see that integral knowledge cannot be merely passive or contemplative. The highest form of knowledge cannot be knowledge for its own sake, nor can it be some intellectual love of God, as in certain types of rationalism. This unification with the truly existing, which Solov'ëv also calls the absolute, must be free of all external constraint. The achievement of this goal patently requires active, willful participation on our part, and, thus, we must view ourselves not only as cognizing subjects, but also as ethical actors and artists. Certainly, at this point in his intellectual development Solov'ëv has a difficult time incorporating a positive aesthetic into his overall outlook. This would remain a notable, though somewhat recognized lacuna, in his work. Nevertheless, despite being understandable at this stage in humanity's intellectual development, he does recognize that the effort by some to reduce certain phenomena, be they natural, moral, or aesthetic, to other phenomena is ultimately doomed to failure. The underlying motivation for reductionism is laudable in that it presupposes an essential unity and connection between all forms of being. One aspect in which reductionism is mistaken, however, is in holding that higher forms depend purely on lower forms, that the higher forms do not exist, to use an Hegelian expression, in and for themselves.

To attain its object, integral knowledge works with the entire aggregate of physical, mental and mystical phenomena. Solov'ëv recognizes that an immediate acquaintance with the data of experience does not alone yield knowledge. Such data must be informed in some manner into universal, integral truths. These truths take the form of ideas. However, the process involved here in this transformation cannot be one of simple abstraction, for abstraction would leave us with less than what we found in experience and could hardly serve the cause of an integration of all real experience. Thus, we still have Hume's problem of accounting for the possibility of universal and necessary truths pertaining to the empirically given world. A necessity cannot be culled from a contingency. That we have such truths is, for Solov'ëv, indisputable; that universal and necessary truths are pro forma distinct from the data of the senses no one, not even empiricists dispute. We must conclude, therefore, that they have their own independent existence, independent, that is, of the phenomenal world. The means by which we know of them is *intellectual intuition*, which constitutes a second form of cognition alongside sense perception.

Solov'ëv's notion of "intellectual intuition," the term being a familiar bugaboo in German Idealism, in this early work is somewhat ambiguous. At times, he uses it to mean a type, or form, of cognition alongside sense perception and abstract thought (e.g., geometry and arithmetic). In some other instances, he regards it as supplying the formal element, as opposed to the material element, of integral knowledge.[39] Solov'ëv's means of introducing "intellectual intuition" is also ambiguous in the sense that he certainly appears to be employing a transcendental argument.

[39] The latter is how Zenkovsky, in particular, interprets it. See Zenkovsky 1953: 521. Doing so, as Zenkovsky admits, has the advantage of assimilating Solov'ëv's ideas under those of his teacher Pamfil Jurkevich. The preponderance of evidence, however, fails to support Zenkovsky's anemic interpretation.

Like Fichte, Solov'ëv holds that intellectual intuition immediately reveals universal features of experience independently of our senses, and, like Fichte again, Solov'ëv characterizes it as an activity. Solov'ëv occasionally also refers to it as "ideal intuition," which can lead the reader quite astray.[40] Owing to the intimate connection between all phenomena and ideas, both sense perception and intellectual intuition can never be isolated from one another. The mere fact that there are art objects and cultural works proves the existence of intellectual intuition. Solov'ëv does not deny the possibility of abstract concepts, which lack particularity. Such concepts, though, are not to be confused with ideas proper. The medieval dispute between realism and nominalism grew out of a confusion between these two meanings. Neither of the quarrelling sides properly distinguished an idea from an abstract concept, and both assimilated the two different meanings under the term "universal." Regrettably, Solov'ëv fails to clarify how the supposed confusion, which both allegedly made, led to the dispute in the precise form it did. Moreover, assuming sense perception yields purely contingent, particular phenomena and intellectual intuition nothing but universal ideas, we still face the problem of how ideas can be instantiated in sense perceptions and logically then thought – Kant's problem of the "Schematism." Merely saying that we humans possess three faculties neither makes it so nor does it solve anything. For one thing, does intellectual intuition provide us with its own criteria for veracity? Like sense perception, can such intuition err, and if it can, on what basis would we adjudicate the claim? Solov'ëv has nothing to say on these questions.[41]

Along with epistemological lacuna, Solov'ëv's presentation hardly addresses the related ontological issue posed by Berkeleyan idealism. Not only do we face the issue of the very presence within us of intellectual intuition, but we have two preeminent claims with respect to it, namely, that (1) it provides us with universal and necessary truths, and (2) what it does provide is not a mere figment of the intuiter's imagination, but truths that are not merely phenomenal or "for us" but are objective or "in themselves." Putting aside the first claim, we can reasonably ask how do we know that the data provided by intellectual intuition are not merely phenomenal. To say as Solov'ëv seemingly does that the intellectually intuited is clearly objective merely begs the question, particularly in light of the fact that so many within the Western philosophical tradition have not seen this to be the case. He does claim that, "If our actual cognition of external appearances depends on the action of

[40] Later in life, Solov'ëv accorded intuition a much smaller role in cognitive processes. In his respective entry for the Brockhaus-Efron encyclopedia, he wrote that intuition is "the immediate seeing of something as true, regular, morally good or beautiful. It is opposed to reflection. It is impossible to deny that intuition is a fact, but it would be unfounded to seek a higher norm of philosophical reflection in it, before which reflective thought would lose its rights. Such a point of view (intuitivism) in essence takes away philosophy's very raison d'être." Solov'ëv 1997: 150.

[41] In the fifth chapter, Solov'ëv reiterates, without amplification, that a cognitive form must agree with sense data: "It is also clear, as I have already pointed out more than once, that a being for another, or appearance, agrees with a form of cognition in general. In this way, such a form cannot conceptually be anything other than an appearance." PSS, vol. 2: 302. Solov'ëv apparently believes that there is no genuine *philosophical* problem involved in the refutation of phenomenalism.

external entities or things on us, then the actual cognition or intellectual intuition of transcendent ideas also must depend on the inner action of ideal, or transcendent, entities on us."[42] Such a move on Solov'ëv's part, however, raises more problems than it solves. Indeed, it resolves none. Just as some critics charged Kant with applying the *a priori* category of causality to "deduce" from appearances the thing in itself, so too is Solov'ëv susceptible to the same charge. Presumably in his case, the universal applicability of the law of causality is obtained through intellectual intuition. In that case, though, Solov'ëv is caught in a vicious circle: He employs the alleged objectivity of intellectual intuition to justify that very objectivity!

Solov'ëv was not completely unaware of possible skeptical criticisms of his position. In fact, he sees these as taking, not surprisingly, three forms, depending on how the cognitive object is conceived. Solov'ëv's reply to the first form presents us with nothing we have not already encountered: The skeptic charges that the phenomenal object is not a thing in itself. Such a claim lacks any foundation. An appearance is an appearance of the actual object as it presents itself to us. In other words, an appearance is the object's being for another, whereas the object in itself is the object as it is without reference to a cognizing subject. Thus, the distinction between the object in itself and the same object for us amounts merely to two alternative viewpoints.[43] Were Solov'ëv to abandon this issue at this point we would have a legitimate expression of epistemological modesty, even if its introduction may seem to some as being of questionable utility. However, he again compromises his own careful philosophical stand through an injection of dogmatic and ill-considered metaphysics.

> It follows from this that the distinction between our ordinary cognition and a metaphysical cognition can be merely relative or staid. … If we would have to point out a definite distinction between physical and metaphysical cognition, we would say that the latter has to do with that which exists in its direct and integral manifestation, whereas our physical cognition is concerned only with the particular and secondary manifestations of what exists.[44]

Thus, the modesty Solov'ëv accords our ordinary cognition is overwhelmed by the conceit afforded a purported metaphysical cognition.

With Solov'ëv's response to the other two sorts of skeptical arguments, we need to look, albeit only briefly, at the second. His response to the third is largely a restatement of the first: Every appearance must be an appearance *of* something. The second argument is, as Solov'ëv himself readily acknowledges, inspired by

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[42] PSS, vol. 2: 240.

[43] Again, students of Kant's epistemology will not be surprised here by Solov'ëv's statements, which will remind them of the double aspect view of the thing in itself. See, in particular, Prauss 1974. Solov'ëv, quite likely, however, came to his position by way of Schopenhauer's writings, with which he was quite familiar. Schopenhauer held that reality can be looked on from two perspectives, as will and as representation. Balanovskij interprets Solov'ëv ontologically arguing for the will, representation and sensibility as forms of the being of that which is. Balanovskij 2011: 210.

[44] PSS, vol. 2: 245.

Kant and states that necessary forms and categories restrain the mind from cognizing what exists independently of them. Significantly, Solov'ëv reiterates in even more explicit terms than in his previous writings his agreement that our empirical cognitions are indeed conditioned by space, time and unnamed categories. What he disputes is that they belong *merely* to the subject and do not correspond to anything that "truly exists."

> That all of our external cognition, all that is given in our physical experience, consequently, our entire physical world is determined by the forms and categories of the cognizing subject is a great and undeniable truth. … But that the mentioned forms *by their very nature* are, *ipso genere*, subjective, i.e., that our space and time and the categories of our understanding cannot have anything corresponding to them beyond the bounds of our subject and its cognition is an assertion that not only is unproven, but that neither Kant nor his followers even attempted to prove owing to the obvious impossibility of doing this.[45]

What Solov'ëv here and throughout this discussion fails to provide is a means to insure the possibility of the very knowledge that he takes for granted. He does not question for a moment that sense data are purely contingent. Yet he would have it that such data *necessarily* agree with independently given forms and categories. Moreover, he must supply an account of how the objects of perception are ordered not merely by the forms and categories supplied by intellectual intuition but into the single unified and enduring structure that we call objective knowledge. The agreement and the overall unified structure cannot be the result of subjective processes alone but must lie in the very order of things as they are in themselves if Solov'ëv is to be consistent. In other words, for Solov'ëv, that knowledge is possible at all must arise from an unstated conviction in a pre-established harmony between the objects of perception and those of intellectual intuition. Clearly, this harmony cannot be the product of intellectual intuition itself, for that would make the harmony subjective. Thus, the demands placed on intellectual intuition are great: It provides us with a cognition of a third "factor" alongside the laws of logic and the empirical data of the senses that constitute knowledge. In short, this third factor is responsible for conferring objectivity.

One difficulty in precisely understanding Solov'ëv's position is determining just what intellectual intuition provides. On the one hand, he tells us that the objects of intellectual intuition are the forms of sensibility and the categories of the understanding. It is these that guarantee objectivity to our empirical cognitions through an integral connection or pre-established harmony: "We ascribe the predicate 'true' to that cognition in which the reality of the content and the rationality of the form, the empirical element and the purely logical, are combined not contingently, but through an inner organic connection."[46] He, then, goes on to say that this connection rests on a third principle that is neither empirical nor logical. Since the organic connection *presupposes* a third principle, that connection cannot itself be this principle. As before, the efficacy of Solov'ëv's introducing yet another principle is questionable at best.

[45] PSS, vol. 2: 246.

[46] PSS, vol. 2: 249.

Flying in the face of Ockam's Razor, it explains nothing and only leads to additional problems. The organic connection is obviously not merely phenomenal, for it would not then be necessary. However, if it is necessary and given through intellectual intuition, it must be part of the absolute realm, the realm of the in itself. Where are we then to place this newly introduced third principle? How are we to know that there is but one third principle and not a number of them? Solov'ëv does not answer the latter question, but he does address the former. The empirical and the purely logical are the two *modes of being*: the real and the ideal. However, he tells us, "the third absolute principle is determined to be neither of these modes of being. Consequently, it is in general determined to be not *being* (*bytie*), but the positive principle of being, or an *existent* (*sushchee*). This distinction between existent and being has an important and decisive significance not only for logic, but also for my entire world-view."[47]

Solov'ëv will elaborate this distinction in greater detail in his doctoral dissertation, but the major thrust is already clear here. That "to be" and its various cognates, both substantive and predicative, are used in multiple ways is undeniable, a practice that has led to a great deal of philosophical confusion. It is to Solov'ëv's credit that he recognizes this. However, it does not follow that the word "being" is, as he puts it, empty, and that it must be abandoned in referring to the absolute principle. Nonetheless, this is precisely what he proposes in saying that that principle is an existent, and not a being. For Solov'ëv to say that something has being, or "is," presupposes that it stands in relation to another. To say that an object has being means that it appears to someone. Thus, it stands in a cognitive relation to a subject. Solov'ëv avoids the Berkeleyan idealism that surfaces here simply by reiterating that all being must be the being of something, viz., an existent, which is objectively true. Solov'ëv writes, "Every actual being is an appearance, and there is no actual being in addition to appearance. However, it does not follow from this that everything is an appearance. This would follow only if everything were a being. However, in addition to being there is also an existent (*sushchee*), without which being itself is impossible, just as an appearance is impossible without that which appears. An existent is that which appears, but being is the appearance."[48] The denial that a being presupposes an existent amounts to unconditional skepticism. In short, then, Solov'ëv has no argument comparable to Kant's "Refutation of Idealism" – and feels that none is necessary. If the job of philosophy is to explain not just knowledge but all that exists, we cannot remain within the sphere of immanent human cognition. We must proceed into the realm of metaphysics.

Solov'ëv believes that up to this point he has been providing a transcendental argument for the absolute principle in that the inquiry has concerned itself with what is presupposed by empirical knowledge. However, the results of such an argument are largely negative. In fact, in his fourth chapter Solov'ëv adds that although

[47] PSS, vol. 2: 249.

[48] PSS, vol. 2: 252f. Molchanov 2009: 296–299 presents an extended reading of this passage from a phenomenological standpoint.

our facilities, including reason, demand the necessity of the absolute principle, this necessary existence is merely phenomenal, or, in Hegelian terminology, merely *for us*. Thus, the question looms: "But does its objective reality follow, and if it does not follow, then on what basis can we affirm this absolute reality?"[49] Solov'ëv's position is confusing. It is unclear whether he intends this questioning to be nothing more than logically possible, i.e., a possible thought posed in isolation from intellectual intuition, or a question that we can ask even in light of such intuition. Clearly, if he means the latter, he is inconsistent, for the objectivity of universal causality is affirmed through intellectual intuition. In other words, Solov'ëv should hold that the absolute principle is necessary, i.e., *in itself*, on the basis of sense data alone if we accept his characterization of that intuition.

In order to obtain a positive characterization or information about the absolute principle, we must turn to intellectual intuition. Now, although this intuition provides certain material or content, the logical necessity of that content has still to be shown and incorporated into an integral, logical system. Allowing for his talk of intellectual intuition, Solov'ëv appears to be endorsing a coherence theory of knowledge. Regrettably, he does not concern himself with the details of such a coherence theory. Instead, he tells us that although intellectual intuition provides the content of the absolute principle this content is present only potentially. Only thought in the form of "dialectical thinking," as opposed to analytic and synthetic, can deduce the essential, not contingent, concrete determinations of what exists in itself from the general. His choice of terminology here, undoubtedly indebted as it is to his immersion in Plato and Hegel, is most unfortunate.[50] For he really does have in mind an analysis of concepts, the unraveling of the particular from the general, not the other way round. In this way, dialectical thinking is a philosophical method, albeit the most general method, and not, as it is in Hegel, the foundation of all philosophy. Analysis, in Solov'ëv's sense, is the method employed primarily in "organic metaphysics," and synthesis is that used in "organic ethics." We have already mentioned these three divisions or types of philosophy. The oddity of it is that it affords no obvious room for aesthetics, even though Solov'ëv accords a place for it within the sphere of

[49] PSS, vol. 2: 261.

[50] Solov'ëv writes, "*Dialectic* is one of the three fundamental philosophical methods, the other two being *analysis* and *synthesis*. Since I use these terms in a somewhat different sense than is usually ascribed to them, I must present their general definition here. Under 'dialectic' I mean thinking that derives concrete content from a general principle in the form of a concept. Since this content, obviously, must be already included in the general principle (because otherwise thinking would be a creation from nothing) but is included only potentially, the act of dialectical thinking consists precisely in transforming this potential content into actuality. … Under 'analysis' I mean thinking that ascends from a given concrete being to its first general principles. Under 'synthesis' I mean thinking that starts from two different spheres of concrete being and by way of a determination of their inner relations proceeds to their higher unity." PSS, vol. 2: 256–257. When Solov'ëv writes that he is using his terms in a different sense than is usual, he arguably has Hegel in mind. At least concerning "the analytic method," Hegel writes, "The movement of the Synthetic method is the reverse of the Analytical method. The latter starts from the individual, and proceeds to the universal; in the former the starting-point is given by the universal (as a definition), from which we proceed by particularising (in division) to the individual (the theorem)." Hegel 1904: 366.

creativity. His inability to provide a comprehensive philosophical aesthetics or even integrate its general features into his overall metaphysical thinking would continue throughout his life despite repeated attempts to do just that.

In his fourth chapter, Solov'ëv provides us with considerably more information on the absolute principle, presumably based on an analysis of the intuitive data – and takes a number of major steps into sheer speculation. The absolute principle is, on the one hand, free of all form, from any manifestation and, thus, from all being (*bytie*). Yet, it is the very principle of being; it is above all being, a "positive nothing." Solov'ëv also calls this the first "pole" of the absolute, and it is the self-assertion of the first principle. On the other hand, there must be a second pole in order for there to be a self-assertion. This second pole is the immediate potency of being, viz., *materia prima*, which is a necessary property of what truly is or the existent (*sushchee*) and without which the latter could not be conceived. However puzzling and disconcerting such expressions may sound to the contemporary reader, those familiar with the ancient Greeks and medieval scholasticism will recognize them.[51] Indeed, concerning the second of the two "poles" in the absolute, *materia prima*, Solov'ëv explicitly warns that he does not mean "matter" in the sense used in contemporary physics or chemistry but the "hyle" of the Greek philosophers. Again, Solov'ëv's admonition here is not unlike that of Aristotle, who, in his *Metaphysics*, tells us that he is interested there not in specialized modes of being or subdivisions of being, but being qua being.

If we distinguish being from the existent, we have, Solov'ëv tells us, three determinations: (1) the first "center" or "pole," viz., the positive force of being, (2) the second "center," viz., *materia prima*, and (3) being. This second center or pole will also be referred to frequently as "essence." Solov'ëv's terminology here is needlessly obscure at best and hides a conceptual scheme familiar to students of the history of philosophy, even if that particular scheme is ultimately utterly rejected as untenable.[52] To the surprise of no one, Solov'ëv reveals that the expression "first center" is his linguistic legerdemain for God. Of course, this, however, still leaves unclear what he means by "God": Is it the God of the Russian Orthodox Church, the God of Spinoza or even the God of Aristotle? Whichever is the case, Solov'ëv, for the most part, uses the term "being" for that which is merely appearance and "existent," or "that which is," to denote what is not merely appearance, but exists, so to speak,

[51] Aristotle speaks of a "potency of being" in his *Metaphysics*, Book IX, Chapter 1. See Aristotle 1941: 820. In his *On Spiritual Creatures*, Thomas Aquinas writes, "For those things which are composed of matter and form are not immediately both being and one, but matter is being in potency and becomes actual being through the coming of the form, which serves as the cause of existence in its regard. But a form does not have being through another form. And hence, if there be a subsisting form, it is immediately both being and one, nor does it have a formal cause of its own existence." Hyman 1973: 475–476.

[52] The source of Solov'ëv's terminological choices has been of much concern in the secondary literature. Certainly, one possibility is neo-Platonism and another the works of the later Schelling, but the most likely source may well have been the writings of the early seventeenth century German mystic Jacob Boehme. For a great deal more on this, see David 1962.

by or "in itself."[53] Having made such initially plausible distinctions, however, Solov'ëv attempts, in a manner reminiscent of the worst excesses of German Idealism, to deduce from them such basic and otherwise intelligible notions as representation, feeling and the will.

Roughly speaking, from this point onward in this the fourth chapter and in the last, fifth chapter Solov'ëv moves ever closer to speculative theology with but scant references to material and issues that a reader today would recognize as even remotely philosophical. He attempts to introduce and make sense of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, for example, without direct reference to either the Bible and the Church Fathers, on the one hand, or to its orthodox treatment as ultimately a mystery to be accepted on faith.[54] Nevertheless, Solov'ëv's discussion is not entirely devoid of interesting points. He derides those who take goodness, truth and beauty as abstract concepts with corresponding principles independent of the "existent," in other words, of God. The ultimate definition of goodness is that which God wills, of truth the content of what God intentionally represents and of beauty the content of what God feels. Thus, to know the truth is to know God's mind, to do the good is to act as God wills, and to create beauty is to manifest what God feels. In other words, the moral law is not determined independently of and logically prior to the Deity. The same can and must be said concerning truth and beauty. Both ultimately are determined with respect to God. Yet are we any closer to understanding Solov'ëv's conception of God at this time? He specifically derides those who begin, on the one hand, with concrete actuality, stating that it is not the terminus a quo, but the terminus ad quem of philosophy. Our starting point can only be the absolute, even though the absolute is not itself, properly speaking, a something at all, but only a potential unity of something and nothing. On the other hand, however, he rejects, with arguably even greater vehemence, Hegel's initial departure from a purely abstract concept.

[53] The terms "appearance" and "in itself" here must not be understood within the framework of Kant's transcendental idealism, but from an ordinary realist standpoint. Solov'ëv's arguably best explanation is: "Obviously, (actual) being = appearance. Every actual being is an appearance, and besides appearance there is no actual being. However, it does not follow from this that appearance is everything. This would follow only if being were everything. However, besides being there is an existent, without which being itself would be impossible just as an appearance is impossible without that which appears. An existent is that which appears, and being is appearance." PSS, vol. 2: 252f. At another point, Solov'ëv tells us that the term "existent" refers to that which cannot be merely a predicate. Although we do ordinarily utter such statements as "The pain is in my head," the pain is not something that can subsist on its own without my head. That is, the pain cannot be an "in itself," whereas the table and the chair before me presumably can. The latter are, in Solov'ëv's terminology, "existents"; the former is or has "being." PSS, vol. 2: 250. This distinction will be developed further in the *Critique of Abstract Principles*.

[54] Solov'ëv continued in later writings to identify the doctrine of the Trinity with parts of his metaphysical system and thereby rationalized it. It should not be surprising, then, that the Orthodox Church at the time never embraced his various musings. As Trubeckoj correctly remarks, "From the religious point of view, which Solov'ëv recognizes as binding, this rationalistic dogmatism must be rejected as detracting from faith and positive revelation. If the highest truths of the divine life can be deduced *a priori* and known by the natural forces of pure reason, then, one may ask, what is the role of faith?" Trubeckoj 1995. vol. 2: 312.

In Solov'ëv's eyes, Hegel's logical system is nothing but a collection of predicates devoid of subjects that the predicates would determine. Insofar as Hegel has a subject at all, it is a pure concept, i.e., merely a form of logical being without true existence.

Despite his overall criticism of Hegel, Solov'ëv has, as we already mentioned, deep respect for the former's logic. His attitude towards Kant's transcendental idealism is a different matter. Kant admits to the logical possibility of an intuition different from our own sensible one and which he calls intellectual intuition. Since the object of this intellectual intuition would not be given empirically, it would not be subject to the conditions of our peculiar sensible intuitions. Its subject could determine its own existence without a consciousness of any relation to something outside itself, and such a subject would intuit its objects as they are in themselves. Therefore, this subject would cognize itself as it, to use Solov'ëv's terminology, truly exists. The understanding of such an *intuitus originarus* would have no need of a synthesizing activity of the manifold as does the human understanding. Kant recognizes, however, that under this supposition it is incomprehensible how the categories he delineates and with which Solov'ëv has no apparent quarrel, can have any relation to objects.[55] A later phase of German Idealism did not have Kant's qualms and hesitations about accepting an inherently creative mental faculty, and at least in Schelling's case believed that artists can occasionally manifest a free, inarticulable creative intuition. Solov'ëv indebted more to the later phases of German Idealism than its earliest, fully accepts intellectual intuition and its implications without recognizing, let alone resolving, the problems inherent in Kant's stand. In the fifth chapter of his "Philosophical Principles," Solov'ëv accepts not just the possibility but the actuality of an originary "Mind" whose thoughts have immediate objectivity, i.e., for whom there is no subjective-objective opposition. Like Schelling, however, humans can at times conceive "productively" as well as reflectively in terms of abstract concepts. Solov'ëv is silent, though, on what basis he can identify the object of this purported human intellectual intuition with God if it is non-conceptual, and if it is conceptual, we return to the Kantian problematic.

Finally, much can but need not be made of Solov'ëv's ill-considered remarks at the conclusion of the fifth chapter. He tells us that owing to a certain paucity in their respective languages, the French and the English can recognize only a reality of material substances. The languages of both peoples have but one word for reality, whereas the Germans and the Russians each have two: "*realnost*" – "*Realität*," and "*dejstvitel'nost'*" – "*Wirklichkeit*." Owing to this absence, the French and the English cannot conceive the reality of a creative, aesthetic idea until it takes form in external material! The English with their crude realism can designate an absence only in terms of no*thing* and no*body*. The French, although not as coarse in that respect, have only one word, *esprit*, for *dukh* (spirit) and *um* (mind). The point of these examples, according to Solov'ëv, is simply to show that, for example, the coarse realism of the English mind, unlike the Germans and Russians, can never penetrate the depths of philosophical speculation but must forever linger on superficialities. Walicki is, undoubtedly, correct in observing that the "Philosophical Principles"

[55] Kant 1997: A256/B311 and B145.

is "one of Solov'ëv's most 'Slavophile' works." Indeed, if anything, that is an understatement at least if we limit ourselves to his "philosophical" writings.[56] Solov'ëv never explicitly repudiated his hasty generalizations of national characters. Certainly as the years went on he realized he did not need to issue an explicit act of contrition. The absurdity of his earlier position was only too obvious.

Solov'ëv's stay in Svishtov, Bulgaria as a war correspondent was relatively short. It is impossible to establish precisely when he arrived, when he departed or what he did while he was there. Clearly, his enthusiasm had gotten the better of him. He quickly realized that he had no training of any sort as a journalist and did not know what was required of a correspondent stationed at a war front: He thought he could simply observe and report. If he did not recognize his own deficiencies from the moment of his arrival, they were, in any case, bluntly pointed out to him. The advice he received was to return home.[57] Fortunately for all concerned, Solov'ëv heeded this wise counsel sometime in July.[58] His return, though, was not immediately to St. Petersburg to resume his duties there, but, rather, to Moscow.[59] His foray into journalism proving disastrous, Solov'ëv's thoughts naturally turned again to a resumption of his philosophical work. As already noted, publication of the "Philosophical Principles" resumed in October, although this fourth chapter was in all likelihood already written before his aborted foreign mission. Earlier in his April letter to Countess Tolstaja, Solov'ëv ventured the opinion that this fourth chapter was more interesting than his previous ones. Now, however, in September looking back on the chapters he had written just prior to his summer travels and immersed in preparing the fifth chapter, he again wrote to Tolstaja voicing his displeasure: "It is simply a shame that I cannot destroy the two chapters written during the summer which are as empty as my head was at the time."[60] Soon, he simply abandoned his plans for the "Philosophical Principles," the fifth chapter being the last one he composed. Instead, he decided to start writing an entirely different work, which, again, he hoped to submit as his doctoral dissertation. Nevertheless, the opportunity soon arose for him to present a series of public lectures in which he could elaborate and continue many of the themes introduced in the now abandoned work. Solov'ëv never referred to the "Philosophical Principles" in his subsequent publications, though he did mention it in a curriculum vitae from 1890.

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[56] Walicki 1989: 568.

[57] Skalon 1913: 142. Solovyov reports that his uncle even "fitted himself with a revolver en route" despite the fact that he "would scarcely hit a target." Solovyov 2000: 188.

[58] In his biography of Solov'ëv, Mochul'skij, writing apparently without knowledge of Skalon's advice, says that it is a mystery why Vladimir decided to leave so soon after having arrived in Bulgaria, particularly in light of the fact that there were no external obstacles to staying. For example, his passport was in order, and he had sufficient money. What is puzzling here is Mochul'skij's puzzlement: Solov'ëv quickly saw that his idealism was not an adequate preparation for the job at hand. See Mochul'skij 1936: 634.

[59] Although at least nominally still employed as a member of the Academic Committee, Solov'ëv failed to attend meetings throughout the months of June, July, August, September and most of October! In short, he missed a total of 14 in a row. Luk'janov 1990. vol. 3, vyp. II: 113.

[60] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 202.

Chapter 4
From Intuition to Faith

In this chapter, we will look principally at a series of public lectures Solov'ëv presented in St. Petersburg on the philosophy of religion to an audience that included a number of distinguished figures. These lectures, as they have come down to us, reveal his ever increasing interest in metaphysical issues at this time and his belief in the impotence of reason and empirical evidence to resolve them. Instead, he appeals to intellectual intuition to reveal what the senses and reason cannot. Nonetheless, for all that neither it nor our other faculties can account for the sense of objectivity that the data of our external senses and of intellectual intuition carry. For this, Solov'ëv turns explicitly to faith.

We will also look here at Solov'ëv's panoramic philosophy of history written with an undisguised religious intent. In this scheme, human history is the gradual development of a moral awareness leading to humanity's complete unity with God. What that might mean in practical terms is left unsaid, and Solov'ëv's very depiction of the historical stages leading to this telos is highly selective broaching no exceptions to his abbreviated sketch of the historical process.

Finally, we will turn to an unfinished piece Solov'ëv wrote in late 1877 – early 1878 in which he discusses the role of reason and experience in knowledge. Although each taken singularly is incapable of revealing the Truth, both as presenting different viewpoints are regarded as essential along with faith to yield true knowledge.

4.1 Presentations on Divine Humanity

On 29 January 1878, Solov'ëv gave the first of 12 public lectures on, what he himself characterized at the time as, "philosophy of religion." The lectures continued throughout February and March on Sundays and Fridays, the last lecture being

T. Nemeth, *The Early Solov'ëv and His Quest for Metaphysics*, International Archives of the History of Ideas/Archives internationales d'histoire des idées 212,
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delivered on 2 April.[1] These talks, delivered in St. Petersburg, were given under the auspices of that city's section of the Society of Friends of Spiritual Enlightenment, an organization originally founded in Moscow in 1863 with decidedly clerical support. The St. Petersburg section, on the other hand, established in 1872, was secular. Among those who joined were Dostoyevsky, M. I. Vladislavlev, the professor of philosophy at the university, and Solov'ëv's own older brother Vsevolod. The circumstances that led to Solov'ëv's lectures are unclear. Since until the late summer of the previous year his attention was focused on various matters including acting as a war correspondent for an indefinite period, it is highly unlikely that any arrangements were made before the autumn of 1877. In an undated formal letter to A. A. Kireev, an old friend and secretary of the local organization and who was probably intimately involved with the arrangements in some manner, Solov'ëv writes of concerns and difficulties involved with the lectures.[2] In another undated letter, though to Certelev and probably from late 1877, Solov'ëv wrote that public preparations for his lectures had run into significant obstacles which he failed to specify. These, however, were removed by a highly placed personage, most likely the tsar's brother Konstantin, who would go on to regularly attend the lectures and mentioned them in his diary.[3]

During the few months immediately before the start of the lectures, Solov'ëv occupied himself with not just the fifth chapter of the "Philosophical Principles," but, as we will see, with a radical change of plan for a doctoral dissertation.[4] He also

[1] Unfortunately, there are apparently widespread inaccuracies circulating concerning the dating of these lectures. In his editor's "Introduction" to the English translation of the *Lectures*, Boris Jakim writes: "The lectures continued until 1881 and were attended by many of the leading Russian intellectuals of the time, including Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy." Solovyov 1995: vii. First of all, the lectures were not presented over a period of years, but over weeks. Additionally, whereas it is correct that Dostoyevsky, who was by this time a good friend of Solov'ëv's, attended the talks, Tolstoy was present for only the eighth lecture accompanied by N. N. Strakhov, the literary critic and a colleague of Solov'ëv's in the Ministry of National Education, who felt obligated to attend. Tolstoy, in short, was by no means impressed. In a letter to Strakhov from 16 March 1878, Tolstoy wrote: "However much Solov'ëv irritates me, I don't wish you to write about him. It definitely isn't worth it. Your opinion that he concludes *a priori* what he has found out *a posteriori* is absolutely right." Tolstoy 1978: 318. Dostoyevsky's wife Anna, who also attended the lectures with her husband, testified that the auditorium was full and that the audience included not just interested students, but also the cream of St. Petersburg high society. Dostoyevsky 1975: 290. This was the only time in the lives of the two great novelists, Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy, when they were in the same space at the same time. Yet they never met, Tolstoy purposely asking not to be introduced to anyone!

[2] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 95.

[3] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 242. This letter must have been composed sometime in late 1877, for Solov'ëv writes of starting the lecture series in the second half of January and therefore before final arrangements were made. Yet the letter could not have been written much earlier than late in the year, for he already quite confidently speaks of precisely 12 talks.

[4] Although nominally still a member of the Academic Committee, Solov'ëv demonstrated no greater concern for its work after his return from Bulgaria than before his departure. He did attend the meeting of 24 October but was absent again at the next *five* sessions. At the last one of the year on 12 December 1877, he was present but said nothing.

devoted considerable attention to a careful preparation of the immanent lectures, further evidence that he saw them as an opportunity to bring his philosophical and theological message directly to the public. In short, he continued to harbor the hope of effecting a radical change in the popular attitude toward an assessment of Christianity. Additionally, another albeit unexplored possibility is that he hoped that such highly visible lectures would prove to be a stepping stone towards securing a university position. By attracting popular attention, which in fact it did, and that of influential people within St. Petersburg society, Solov'ëv might conceivably circumvent the usual academic selection process that stymied his candidacy for a professorship at Moscow University several years earlier. We have seen that his planned lectures had already been noted by prominent individuals, and he made well-known at this time his continued disappointment with the state of philosophical instruction in Russia, a view also shared by many of these same people.

The announcement of the lectures and their detailed outline were widely distributed, itself an indication of the importance Solov'ëv attached to his planned talks. The announcement reads:

> The aim of Mr. Solov'ëv's lectures will be to show the rationality of positive religion, to show that the truth of faith, in the entire fullness of its concrete content, is at the same time the truth of reason.
>
> The central concept of the lectures is the idea of Divine humanity, or the living God.
>
> The first six of the 12 lectures will present the necessary transition from the natural content of human consciousness to the central idea that received its first historical expression in Christianity. With this, the chief stages of this transition will be kept in mind as they are manifested in the intellectual history of pre-Christian humanity, viz., Buddhist pessimism and nihilism, Platonic idealism and Old Testament monotheism.
>
> The remaining six lectures will be devoted to the positive development of the religious idea itself. They will be concerned with the existence of Divine humanity both eternal and in time, of the divine world, of the Fall of spiritual entities, of the origin and significance of the *natural* world, of the earthly incarnation of Christ and of redemption, of the visible and the invisible church, of the end of the worldly process and the full revelation of Divine humanity.[5]

Solov'ëv's announcement and the detailed outline, both of which he presumably wrote himself, are historically, if not philosophically, important for the simple reason that they do not quite conform to the published versions of the lectures. There is a divergence already between the first lecture as published and the outline distributed. The latter mentions, for example, a discussion of Roman Catholicism, but that topic will appear only at the beginning of the published *second* lecture.[6] Other topics mentioned in the outline simply do not appear in the published lectures. Judging from

[5] [Anon.] 1878. The first lecture was presented in late January, and the announcement appeared not earlier than mid-February, thus only after the lecture series had already begun. However, a slightly different version had been distributed to the members of the Society already earlier.

[6] Additionally, since the length of the published first lecture is by no means extravagant compared to other published lectures, it is unlikely that Solov'ëv simply ran out of time in his presentation. For these reasons, we can conclude that the actual text of the first lecture at least was prepared after he composed his outline of the entire set of lectures.

various contemporary accounts of his talks, Solov'ëv did not have finished texts at the start of the individual presentations.[7] He, most likely, simply came with more or less detailed notes. The initial rapid publication of the individual lectures in the usually favorably disposed *Pravoslavnoe obozrenie* (*Orthodox Review*) began without incident. It is only when Solov'ëv turned his attention to Christian doctrine that troubles began.

Both the secular and the clerically-administered press in Russia in Solov'ëv's day were subject to censorship, the severity of which fluctuated over time and naturally depended to some degree on the diligence of the individual reviewing the work. The Orthodox Church in Russia had its own separate censorship authority, parallel to the secular authority, which sought to insure conformity with a minimum of philosophical, i.e., critical, intrusion.[8] That Solov'ëv's first five lectures appeared in a steady monthly sequence in *Pravoslavnoe obozrenie* leads us to conclude that those addresses encountered little, if any, opposition from the censor Stefan Zernov.[9] Judging, however, from a letter of 27 October to Petr Preobrazhenskij, the journal's editor, Solov'ëv was asked to modify in some manner an installment of unspecified lectures. The latter wrote that he would be ready to add an explanatory note but thought it impossible to alter the text.[10] One conjecture has been that the eighth lecture's planned discussion of "sexual duality," absent from the published version of the talk, aroused theological concern. However, as was noted by one newspaper reporter at the time, Solov'ëv, for whatever reason, did not cover this topic even in his lecture.[11] Another has to do with the biblical Fall, mentioned in the lecture program but which is also absent from the published text. The seventh and eighth lectures were not published until October 1879, i.e., more than a year and a half after being delivered, and were considerably shorter than the fifth and sixth chapters. Additionally, the publication of the seventh and eighth lectures together was prefaced with the following cautionary note from the journal's editor:

> To avoid any misunderstandings, in publishing the lectures of V. S. Solov'ëv in the pages of *Pravoslavnoe obozrenie*, we think it necessary to ask our readers to direct their attention to the fact that these lectures have a philosophical, not a theological, character. The author

[7] Solov'ëv's actual lectures did receive critical press attention at the time. However, arguably the most telling is Kireev's own assessments of them, coming as they did from what should have been a sympathetic audience member. He noted in his diary: "Solov'ëv's first lecture took place and was unsuccessful. He came tired, relying on his memory and spoke poorly." Concerning the second lecture, Kireev wrote: "Solov'ëv's lecture was more successful than the first, but it was still far from meeting my expectations." Cited in PSS, vol. 4: 541, 543.

[8] In official circles in Russia, be they governmental or clerical, philosophical intrusion was virtually synonymous with a critical attitude towards the establishment. For great detail on the Church censorship, see Kotovich 1909.

[9] Zernov, himself, was an interesting figure within the Russian church, both typical in rising from rural poverty, and atypical in being widely read with a degree of fluency in Latin and interested, as would be Solov'ëv too, in Christian reunification. His grandson, Nicholas, authored a book in England that concerned itself with Solov'ëv! Zernov 1944.

[10] *Pis'ma*, vol. 4: 233.

[11] See PSS, vol. 4: 562.

> goes into an explanation of religious truths as a philosopher by way of an independent investigation, not as a theologian on the basis of Church authority. It is no wonder, then, that we find the author, along with the discovery of Christian truths, comes upon original formulas not found in our dogmatic theological systems and that he has certain distinctive views that do not fully agree with generally accepted opinions. However, as Orthodox theologians, we cannot help but show genuine sympathy with such a philosophical direction, which raises social thought to the sphere of higher spiritual ideas, where philosophy and theology meet. From the point of view of independent philosophical thought, that direction also gives free confirmation of fundamental Christian truths and, additionally, sheds much light on many particular problems in Christian theology. We must look with sympathy on such a direction the more so as we rarely find it in modern philosophy in general and in particular among our Russian representatives of philosophical thinking. Therefore, it is with particular satisfaction that we give a spot to the philosophical lectures of V. S. Solov'ëv in our journal.[12]

The ninth and tenth lectures had to wait yet another year for unknown reasons before being published, and the last two lectures, appearing only in 1881, were not published as originally presented. Instead, Solov'ëv substituted a new text for them in line with his emerging interest in the historical aims of the Church and which served as the nucleus of a new series of articles later collected under the title *Religioznye osnovy zhizni*. In submitting these pages to Preobrazhenskij, he wrote: "Here is finally the conclusion of the *Lectures on Divine Humanity*. I am more satisfied with this than with all that preceded it. In any case, this is the best of all that I have written up until now. This is why I recommend this work for your special attention and ask you to publish it in the next issue of *Pravoslavnoe obozrenie* (without dividing it)."[13] In other words, what was labeled in the theological journal as the eleventh and twelfth "lectures" was not at all the text of the lectures from 3 years earlier.[14] Indeed, based on newspaper accounts of the lecture series Solov'ëv in his twelfth lecture referred to the Christian doctrine of eternal punishment in hell for unrepentant sinners as contrary to reason, our moral sense and the Christian spirit of love. It would come as no surprise, then, that Solov'ëv would encounter obstacles to the publication of these lectures in a church journal subject to strict censorship. Additionally, however, it was not uncommon for Solov'ëv to re-use material written on one occasion for another. For example, he presented significant portions of the fifth lecture – which were composed already in mid-1778 if not earlier – in a course he taught at the St. Petersburg Higher Women's Courses devoted to the history of philosophy in the 1880–1881 academic year.[15]

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[12] As cited in PSS, vol. 4: 531. This note originally appeared in *Pravoslavnoe obozrenie*, October 1879: 223–224.

[13] *Pis'ma*, vol. 4: 233.

[14] A general consensus has emerged that there was no original text of these lectures. It often happened that Solov'ëv improvised in his various talks, and these occasions may be such instances. See Nosov 1992: 245–246.

[15] Cf. PSS, vol. 4: 240ff. We will discuss the material presented in the course in a later chapter.

4.2 Faith in God's Existence

As already mentioned, the topic of Solov'ëv's announced lectures series was the philosophy of religion. Nonetheless, little, though by no means none, of the material presented in the course of the 12-lecture series is apt to strike contemporary readers as what they have come to expect under that heading. Solov'ëv, understandably, opens with a broadly-conceived characterization of religion as "the connection of the human being and the world with the unconditional principle and center of all that exists."[16] If we determine that there is such an unconditional or absolute principle – one of Solov'ëv's numerous locutions for God – the next order of business, as he himself admits, is to establish our relationship and that of the world to it. That essentially all we know, do and create is determined by this principle follows, he believes, from the principle's existence. However, it does so only under a particular understanding of its attribute of being absolute.[17] It is not manifestly illogical, for example, to posit an all-powerful creator who purposefully abstains from direct intervention in human affairs if, for no other reason, than to see how events will transpire or out of a lack of interest. Nevertheless, Solov'ëv further holds that only if we admit the existence of an unconditional principle, as he conceives it, can *our* actions and *our* sufferings become rational events. Needless to say, such a broad assertion receives no substantiation.

Only in his third lecture does Solov'ëv directly address the existence of God philosophically. There, we notice a firm and decided shift away from his position in the "Philosophical Principles" where he alleges a faculty of intellectual intuition can seize the in itself including the unconditional principle. Taking an important step, he boldly, though not inconsistently with his earlier position, states that God's existence cannot be proven by reason alone – nor for that matter can it *prove* the existence of entities other than ourselves. Only *faith*, a term largely absent from his earlier work, can provide unconditional certainty in the existence of God, indeed of any particular individual entity and even of an external world independent of consciousness. In short, we find here a radical revision of his position from a mere year earlier. Now, Solov'ëv sees our direct or immediate acquaintance with the external world as restricted to sensation and sensation alone. He admits that we do have knowledge of arithmetical truths and that we can establish with certainty the constant conjunction of empirical events. However, the objectivity of those events, i.e., that they are not merely phenomenal, albeit necessary, occurrences, is a matter of faith, and not a matter of the senses or of reason. Faith supplies objectivity,

[16] PSS, vol. 4: 9; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 1.

[17] Later in the same lecture, Solov'ëv significantly broadens his claim. Not merely does the unconditional principle determine everything that is *essential* in what we do and know, whatever that might mean, but it is also "all-embracing, excluding nothing." PSS, vol. 4: 18; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 10. The burden, however, falls on Solov'ëv to explain how a "principle" that excludes nothing can yet determine *only* what is *essential* in human actions and knowledge, and not everything.

whereas experience and reason supply the content of cognition. Without faith, experience and reason are merely subjective.[18]

> We cannot know that something exists outside and independently of us, because all that we (really) know, i.e., all that we experience, exists within us, and not outside us (as our sensations and our thoughts). What is not in us, but is in itself, is *thereby* located beyond the limits of our experience and, consequently, of our actual knowledge. Therefore, it can be maintained only by an act of the spirit that reaches beyond the bounds of our reality and is called faith.[19]

Thus, taking an example Solov'ëv himself gives, "Fire burns," we find that it has a sense of objectivity attached to it. That is, any observer at any time under conditions conducive to fire would find that it burns. Such an objective sense is imparted to a judgment by a faculty separate from reason and the senses.[20] In the absence of faith, there can be at best only a high degree of probability that our judgments are objective, i.e., that they reflect a standpoint *sub specie aeternitas*.[21] Again as in his earlier writings, Solov'ëv maintains that willing, thinking, and feeling are intentional acts. That is, to think is to think something; to will is to will something. However, it does not follow from this that in any particular intentional act the intentional object necessarily exists. I can think of a unicorn, even describe it to you, but, though my thinking is directed toward an object, viz., the unicorn, it may turn out that there are none in reality. That God objectively exists would serve and be consistent with our human interest in being moral, in seeking objective truth and expressing genuine beauty. Without God, these pursuits become vain, but the presence of such interests within us does not make God's existence more than probable. When our empirical judgments, however, are accompanied by faith in the objectivity of their constituent components, the judgments can be organized into an interconnected integral system, which, in turn, further enhances the sense of objectivity the individual judgments possess.

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[18] Kulikova 2001: 115.

[19] PSS, vol. 4: 36; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 31. Poole explicitly recognizes that for Solov'ëv neither the existence of God nor of the external world can be rationally proved. However, if so, it is hard to see how Poole can claim that divine humanity can be the logical conclusion of sound philosophical method unless God's existence has nothing to do with divine humanity! For God's existence itself, in Solov'ëv's eyes, is not a logical conclusion of sound philosophical method. In short, one would need to interpret Solov'ëv's notion of divine humanity secularly. See Poole 2010: 134–136.

[20] At one point, Solov'ëv's words suggest that our human will is in some manner involved in the conveyance of the sense of "objectivity" on judgments. He writes, "We demand that the object of our will have its own worth in order to be wanted, or, to use scholastic language, that it be *objectively desirable*, an *objective good*. Likewise, we demand that the object and the content of our thought be *objectively true* and the object of our feelings be *objectively beautiful*, i.e., not for us alone but for everyone unconditionally." PSS, vol. 4: 34; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 29.

[21] Pronina recognizes that Solov'ëv's view of objective cognition ultimately rests unabashedly on sheer faith. What she does not acknowledge is that such a position renders Solov'ëv's already emaciated epistemology virtually impotent when confronted with any form of skepticism. See Pronina 2001: 78–79.

Solov'ëv neither here nor anywhere for that matter breaks with his view of the importance of religious experience. It, like any experience, provides information. Our senses can tell us, for example, much about the "how" of the table before us, such as its color, texture, even that it was recently polished, but they cannot tell us that it exists with apodictic certainty. Similarly with God, religious experience can provide us with something about *how* God is, but not *that* God is. The organization of religious experience, just like organization in any science, coupled with a belief in the objectivity of that experience yields religious knowledge. The process by which such experience gets organized is religious thought, a by-product of which is philosophy of religion, defined as "a connected system and a complete synthesis of religious truths."[22] Solov'ëv's characterization, however, is perplexing in that a connected system and synthesis of truths would be more appropriately labeled a science than a philosophy. It is an even more egregious error to say that a *philosophy* of something consists of a synthesis of truths in that sphere. If that were the case, then the atheistic positivist, in rejecting not merely the existence of God but of metaphysics in general, and thus of the very possibility of religious truths, could not engage in philosophy of religion. Yet Solov'ëv, holding the opposite, writes that, "A philosophy of religion is equally necessary for all thinking people, both those who believe and those who do not."[23]

At the start of his eighth lecture, Solov'ëv reaffirms his view that reason alone is incapable of establishing beyond doubt any external, factual existence. Additionally, sense perceptions provide us with information concerning contingent and temporal appearances, but nothing more. What, then, is the basis of religious experience, and, therefore, of religious knowledge? Regrettably, Solov'ëv is quite confusing on this issue and offers no completely consistent answer. In his fifth lecture, he reintroduces his notion of intellectual intuition, which, he tells us, "constitutes the originary form of true knowledge, a form that is clearly distinguished from sense perception and experience as well as from rational, or abstract, thinking."[24] Thus, in these lectures intellectual intuition plays a vital role in providing content, but the acquisition of this content does not guarantee its objectivity, for which faith is also necessary. Solov'ëv warns that what he has in mind is not a subjective or purely passive process. The products of intellectual intuition are, therefore, not subjective creations of the imagination, nor are they arbitrary. Thus, on the one hand, we see that faith alone can insure the existence of religious objects. On the other hand, he tells us that the objects of intellectual intuition are "actual *revelations* of a superhuman actuality,

[22] PSS, vol. 4: 39; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 33. In these matters, it is interesting and insightful to compare Solov'ëv with Hegel, who wrote: "*Thirdly* and lastly, the immediate consciousness of God goes no further than to tell us *that* He is: to tell us *what* He is, would be an act of cognition, involving mediation." Hegel 1904: 136.

[23] PSS, vol. 4: 39; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 33.

[24] PSS, vol. 4: 64; Cf. Solovyov: 1995: 60. Solov'ëv's expression "true knowledge" is not to be understood as contrasted with, say, inaccurate knowledge, as if that were not an oxymoron, but with mere sense knowledge, i.e., knowledge of the purely contingent. "True knowledge" pertains to what is timeless and necessary.

perceived in this or that form by a human being."[25] As in the "Philosophical Principles," Solov'ëv here too mentions that the fact of artistic creation testifies to the existence of intellectual intuition and with it that its object is "an existent idea."[26]

On the one hand, Solov'ëv indeed writes as though intellectual intuition does provide us with information about ideas and that these ideal entities do exist in some manner that allows us to say that they objectively exist, much as we can say that tables and chairs exist. On the other hand, he writes as though faith is necessary to convey objectivity on the ideal entities. Surely he – and those to whom he was speaking in early 1878 – would have been uncomfortable with an unqualified acceptance of the former, for it jeopardizes the need for religious faith. One implication, of course, is that if we have direct and immediate knowledge of ideal entities, including spiritual ones, there is little need for the mediation of priests and the Church in general. In effect, whether knowingly or not, we approach Protestantism. On the other hand, a reliance on faith, despite an insistence to the contrary, smacks of a subjective attitude and simply runs counter to Solov'ëv's firm contention that his experiences bear the sense of objectivity. He remains totally convinced that religious experiences are not just phenomenologically real, but that the objects of those experiences testify to their objectivity.

Regardless in which of the two alternatives we find the source of the objective sense of ideal entities, there are few practical consequences. Those who reject one of the alternatives are hardly likely to be able to convince their opponents of their own position. Whether conscious or not of the futility of both, Solov'ëv, for the most part, found another path for detailing his philosophy of religion. Here in the *Lectures*, Solov'ëv did not systematically investigate the pretensions of speculative reason as such, although we have already seen that it cannot extend to factual existence. Clearly, in disavowing the Kantian scheme, he did not consider reason's speculative employment needed to be severely restricted. If we accept God's existence as a matter of faith, we can and must, then, follow up by asking what God is. For if we affirm that God is purely a "being in general," our claim would be tantamount to saying that God is nothing. In a chain of reasoning deeply indebted to Hegel, Solov'ëv writes, "In fact, if we assumed an entity that *in no way* affirmed or posited *any* objective content, that did not represent anything, that was nothing either in itself or for itself or for another, then we could not logically acknowledge the very being of this entity. For in the absence of any actual content, being would become here an empty word, by which nothing would be meant and about which nothing is affirmed."[27]

Having established that God cannot simply be without qualification of any sort, Solov'ëv's next step is to determine what these qualities are. God must, above all, be absolute, for otherwise God would not be the supreme being. While such a position must appear straightforward enough, it follows only if we had initially established

[25] PSS, vol. 4: 94f; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 91f.

[26] PSS, vol. 4: 67; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 62.

[27] PSS, vol. 4: 81; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 78. Solov'ëv is certainly here borrowing Hegel's chain of thought concerning "being."

God to be absolute, i.e., unrestricted in number and range of determinations. Of course, we have done no such thing, and Solov'ëv presents no argument in its favor. He is on firmer ground, however, in saying that God, conceived as absolute, is everything, the unity of all. For if God were otherwise, something would be external to or separate from God, meaning, therefore, that God has a limitation and is not absolute.

Solov'ëv provides other characterizations of God. Not surprisingly in light of his early interest in Spinoza, he is particularly anxious to avoid a charge of pantheism, a charge that nevertheless haunted him both in his own day as well as beyond. However, here in the *Lectures* he makes clear – or at least as clear as Hegel did – that God is not just content, but subject as well.[28] That is, God is not only everything, but *possesses* everything: "Thus God, as an existent, is found in a certain relation to His content or essence: He manifests or affirms it. In order to affirm it as *His own*, He must possess it substantially. That is, He must be all or the unity of all in an inner eternal act. As the absolute principle, God must include or contain in Himself all in a continuous and immediate substantial unity."[29] Additionally, as subject, God is, for Solov'ëv, an individual being, a person. Solov'ëv faults ancient Greek philosophy for its abnegation of the moral will. Indisputably, the Greeks were concerned with ethical issues, but their greatest philosophical representatives, Socrates and Plato, preached and advocated a contemplative quiescence as the moral good. The ideal human being is the philosopher who resigns from active participation in this world and simply contemplates the eternal forms. On the other hand, if we conceive the divine principle as having an active will, we thereby conceive the deity as legislating a moral law for humanity. Solov'ëv sees this as the essential reason why the Biblical Old Testament ranks so high compared to other ancient religions.

> If we acknowledged an active principle of the will in the deity, our moral task would not be the simple elimination of one's own will, but the substitution of the divine will for that will. Therefore, in order to have a positive moral significance, to determine and fill the domain of practical life, a religion must reveal the deity as a willing person. The will of this deity gives the supreme norm to the human will. … Clearly, in order to determine positively a personal human will the deity must be a willing person, a living God.[30]

Although Solov'ëv's train of thought here is not entirely conspicuous, he does have in mind that positing a moral will in God leads to a moral law for humanity. Surely, however, the lines quoted above, alone and taken in isolation, do not provide a rational argument for this position, but must be supplemented with additional assumptions that are neither clear nor uncontentious. The conclusion, in any case, is clear: Any religion that preaches a moral code must ascribe to God a moral will.

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[28] Solov'ëv's point here is essentially the same one made by the early Hegel, who famously wrote: "In my view, which can be justified only by the exposition of the system itself, everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject*." Hegel 1977: 9–10. Whether Solov'ëv had any direct familiarity with Hegel's *Phenomenology* is unclear. In any case, Hegel's essential point can also be found in the "Encyclopedia Logic," though not with the same eloquence. See Hegel 1904, p. 353.

[29] PSS, vol. 4: 82; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 79.

[30] PSS, vol. 4: 71; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 66–67.

Solov'ëv does not specifically comment here whether morality can be grounded on a non-theistic basis, but certainly, in his eyes, if this were philosophically possible, religion itself would not need a moral God. Thus, for morality to be possible, we must posit God as a personal being, possessing a will that legislates morality to and for humanity.

Possessing a moral will, God is an individual being with personhood, i.e., self-identity, and a consciousness. Precisely how we are to understand these terms is an issue that Solov'ëv fails to clarify. Throughout his writings up to this time, we have seen Solov'ëv emphasizing the phenomenological intentionality of consciousness. Whether the consciousness of God, too, must be a consciousness *of something* – and what such a something would *be* prior to Creation – is left unaddressed. Being absolute, God is without limitation, but, again in his eagerness to avoid the Spinozistic charge of pantheism, Solov'ëv tells us that God is not identical with the universe, the "all." Solov'ëv's express argument, given in the sixth lecture, is that everything, the "all," forms the content, or what is expressed, by the subject, viz., God. Just as in any expression there is a distinction between what is expressed and that which expresses it, so here too God, as we just saw above, is not identical with His content.

In terms of this argument, then, God, though distinct from the universe, must atemporally affirm it *substantially*. If God did not do so, He would not be aware of the universe as His own. However, God, as Solov'ëv goes on to say, *must* make such an "affirmation," and, thus, there is no room for Creation, unless we suppose that "prior" to Creation – whether understood temporally or logically – God was not God. Presumably to avoid such a heretical, albeit logical, conclusion, Solov'ëv invokes a straightforward deus ex machina: The universe, prior to Creation, exists only potentially! "The all is absorbed or immersed in God as its common source. Consequently, the *all* is not distinguished *actually*, but exists only as a possibility, potentially. In other words, in this first positing, only God as existent is actual, actually present, whereas His content (the *all*, or the universal essence) exists only in a latent state, potentially."[31] Not only is there no rational basis for us to accept such a "positing," as Solov'ëv terms it, but its invocation explains nothing. Quite the contrary, with it the logical conclusion, *pace* Solov'ëv, is that prior to Creation, God Himself existed only in a latent state, i.e., existed only potentially.

Certainly, Solov'ëv does not stop – and it is hard to imagine how philosophically he could – with a merely potential reality.[32] After having established God's existence, Descartes, in his *Meditations*, turned to the involuntariness of sensory ideas in an effort to prove the existence of material objects. Subsequent philosophers from Locke to Kant also pondered over the possibility of refuting ontological skepticism,

[31] PSS, vol. 4: 82; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 79.

[32] Although the "all" is merely in a state of latency, it, nonetheless, does "exist" in some manner that Solov'ëv fails to clarify. He writes, "God's content exists here too, for without it, as we have seen, the existent Himself would be nothing." PSS, vol. 4: 82; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 79. Furthermore, Solov'ëv refers to the latency and the actuality of the "all" as two *modes* of existence. PSS, vol. 4: 83; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 80. Here, he borrows freely from Aristotle without realizing the philosophical problems involved in doing so.

and from those efforts stemmed modern epistemology. Solov'ëv will have none of this. Unwilling, or unable, to acknowledge the mere facticity of the world, Solov'ëv simply opts for a Fichtean "positing" of the actual universe, or "all." Unlike Fichte, however, for whom the I is driven to posit the Not-I in order to explain the "check," or *Anstoß*, presented to the I's practical activity, Solov'ëv has no rational explanation for why God carries out a second positing making the universe, the "all," actual. "In order that the all, or universal essence, be actual, God must not only contain it *in Himself*, but He must also affirm it *for Himself*. That is, God must affirm it as other, must manifest and actualize it as something distinct from Himself."[33] In short, a condition for actualizing the merely potential "all" is that God be conscious of it as not the same as Himself. Although God contains the universe, He is more than the universe, and, thus, He is distinct from it and aware of this distinction. This does not, however, explain why the "all" is actualized in the first place.[34]

Having started with an act of faith in God's existence, and nothing more, we are continually confronted in these published lectures with assertions about the nature and characteristics of what Solov'ëv variously calls the "divine principle," the "divine subject," the "absolute," etc. – all of which are mere euphemisms for God.[35] Of far greater philosophical concern, however, is Solov'ëv's explicit identification of the first positing with the first Person of the Christian Trinity, God the Father, implying thereby that he intends to have more to say about the other two Persons. Indeed, we find that the act of self-differentiation, the result of which is the actual universe, is but one of two "poles," the other being an absolute unity. This latter unity differs from the positing in being mediated through its "opposite."[36] However

[33] PSS, vol. 4: 82; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 79.

[34] Solov'ëv does allude to this question further on in the sixth lecture, claiming that the question amounts to asking "Why does God need to be God?" PSS, vol. 4: 91; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 88. In this matter, he is simply wrong, for the two questions are not at all equivalent. In order for them to be so, Solov'ëv must demonstrate why God needs to posit anything at all, but that is precisely what Solov'ëv has not done nor even attempted.

[35] Writing in a highly metaphorical style, Solov'ëv, here in the sixth lecture, tells us that we can gain a certain knowledge of the deity by "abstracting from all of the manifested, determinate content of our external and internal life, abstracting not only from all of our impressions, but also from our feelings, thoughts and desires." In this way, "we collect all of our powers in a single focus of our immediate spiritual being." PSS, vol. 4: 84; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 81. Precisely how we are to understand this passage is unclear. Elsewhere in this lecture, however, he reaffirms his reliance on intellectual or ideal intuition, defining, or at least characterizing, it as "an actual relation to the world of ideal entities or an interaction with them." PSS, vol. 4: 93–94f; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 91f. Thus, intellectual intuition is a relation between or interaction with ideal entities without the admixture of human emotions or thoughts. On the contrary, though, Solov'ëv also in this lecture tells us that "organic thinking, which seizes or grasps the integral idea of an object, amounts to that intellectual or ideal intuition that was spoken about in the previous lecture." PSS, vol. 4: 92; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 90. In other words, intellectual intuition is both a *direct* relationship to ideal entities, bereft of thought, and, at the same time, a type or species of thought!

[36] Solov'ëv's terminology is most curious, being largely derived from his understanding at this time of the dialectic in German Idealism. It is doubtful that Christian theologians, particularly Christian Orthodox ones, could accept referring to the universe, the "all," as the opposite of the Deity, and in fact Solov'ëv's own position does not allow for such an appellation for it.

bewildering such a depiction of the Trinity may be, Solov'ëv wisely goes no further, thus leaving his intended identification of the second positing, or the actual "all," with Jesus Christ merely implicit. Nonetheless, that he had in mind to clarify, if not to *deduce*, the Christian conception of the Trinity through speculative reason is clear. "I have in mind only the essential truth of this doctrine, common to all of its variations, and will derive this truth in the form that I recognize as the most logical, a form that best corresponds to the demands of speculative reason."[37] Surely, it was statements such as this that sought to rationalize a fundamental mystery of the Christian faith that caught the censor's eye and delayed the publication of this lecture.

Solov'ëv, possibly, wrote down these thoughts under the direct influence of the German mystic Jacob Böhme. Certainly, we cannot discount it. Böhme's name does appear in Solov'ëv's writings at this time, particularly in "Sophia." However, as he was not interested in scholarship per se but in expounding his own ideas, we should not be surprised, then, that there is no detailed discussion. It is also possible that the transmission of Böhme's ideas was via a third party such as Jurkevich. Whatever the case, Böhme's ideas, on the one hand, hardly stand up to rigorous rational discussion and, on the other hand, were clearly suspect in Orthodox circles in Solov'ëv's time. It is no wonder, then, that if Solov'ëv's ideas mimic some of Böhme's, that Solov'ëv's lectures, as presented, ran afoul with the censor.[38]

4.3 Solov'ëv's Ambiguous Relation to Phenomenalism

Earlier we saw that in his third lecture, Solov'ëv, not unlike Schopenhauer, held that, properly speaking, our knowledge is limited to our representations, i.e., to what is within us. The sense of objectivity that we ascribe to represented objects is ultimately the product of faith. In the fourth lecture, we find a broad reiteration of this phenomenalism except without recourse of any kind to faith! Solov'ëv states it to be an "elementary truth" that the natural phenomena comprising the external world are merely appearances. What we truly experience are sensations, not independently existing objects: "Thus, this external object, this table, in the form in which it is really represented, i.e., as a sensuous, material object, is not some autonomous actuality, independent of us and of our senses, but only a combination of our sensuous states, of our sensations."[39] Although the world is but a representation, we find that, unlike purely imaginary objects, objects purporting to be part of an independently existing world cannot simply be dismissed at will or conjured up on a whim. Whereas I can picture to myself a unicorn in the middle of this room and then

[37] PSS, vol. 4: 80; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 77. Even at the time of the lectures, critics took exception to the perceived subtle pantheistic underpinnings of Solov'ëv's doctrines and its use of elements from late German Idealism to explain fundamental Christian dogma.

[38] For an informed discussion of Böhme's influence not just on Solov'ëv but in nineteenth century Russia, see David 1962.

[39] PSS, vol. 4: 51; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 46.

picture the room without it, the bills I must pay on my desk remain regardless of how hard I wish they would disappear along with the unicorn. In other words, represented objects bearing the sense of belonging to the external material world do not depend upon a cognizing subject for their continued temporal existence. For this reason, Solov'ëv concludes that the world as represented must have a cause that is independent of my will: "Although its [the world's – TN] tangible properties are determined by our senses and in this way depend on us, its very actuality, its existence, does not depend on us, but is given to us. Therefore, in its sensuous forms it, as our representation, must, nevertheless, have a certain cause or essence independent of us."[40] Thus, we are forced to recognize the existence of an independently existing world in order to account for the involuntary character of our own representations of that world. In light of Solov'ëv's commitment to the universal applicability of the Kantian categories including, as we saw earlier, to things in themselves, there is nothing contradictory in Solov'ëv's deduction were it not for his *other* declaration that we cannot know if anything exists independently of ourselves.

Solov'ëv's all-too-brief remarks on the topic of our knowledge of the external world prevent us from definitively concluding whether he was inconsistent in his treatment or whether he had some unexplained larger scheme in mind in which a faith-based ontological commitment could coexist with a realism resting on universal causality. Whichever the case, Solov'ëv in his eighth lecture takes yet another, a philosophically richer, approach to the problem. There, he again acknowledges the inability of reason to deduce not just any particular, factual existence, but even that of the world in general. Whether something contingent actually exists is the province of neither the theologian nor the philosopher. That something exists is a matter of experience, and in making such an affirmation Solov'ëv certainly opens the door wide for scientific investigation and experimentation as opposed to closed-minded dogmatism. Owing to its very inability to derive the contingent from the essential or absolute, reason confronts the existence of the world as a philosophical problem. Nevertheless, the world, Solov'ëv declares, is *logically* necessary.[41] For God, as active Deity, to exist there must be real elements serving as objects of this real, divine action. Of course, this argument depends on a particular conception of the Deity, in the absence of which the argument fails.

The next step in Solov'ëv's reasoning is not that dissimilar from Kant's in his chapter "On the schematism of the pure concepts of the understanding" in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. There, Kant, held that in order for an empirical object to be subsumed under a general concept, the representation of the former must be homogeneous with the latter. However, empirical intuitions are inhomogeneous

[40] PSS, vol. 4: 52; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 47.

[41] Solov'ëv writes, "This world, as the unconditional norm, is *logically* necessary for reason." PSS, vol. 4: 113; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 112. Amplifying this position, he states, "Since it is indisputable that God, to exist actually and really, must manifest Himself, manifest His existence, i.e., must act in the other, the necessity of this other's existence is thereby established." PSS, vol. 4: 114; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 113.

with general concepts. Kant's epistemological solution is to say that there must be a third "thing" that is homogeneous with both the representation and the concept and thus makes possible the application of the latter to the former. Such a representation, he tells us, is the transcendental schema.[42] Likewise, Solov'ëv believes that a third "thing" must link the essential with the contingent and that this linkage can only be accomplished if the mediator shares something in common with both spheres. We must find a mediator that is both ideal, or essential, and contingent. Such a mediator is the human being.

In attempting to clarify his stand, Solov'ëv tells us that he does not have in mind the human individual conceived as it is in a strictly scientific, empirical inquiry, but the intelligible [*umopostigaemoe*] entity that any scientific study presupposes. In the former, a human being is a physical organism consisting of organs and tissues. Clearly, such a conception is inadequate, for someone lacking an arm, a leg or even both is still a human individual and can still engage in science. If instead we turn to the human individual's psychic life, we meet with a similar lack of success. Surprisingly, Solov'ëv's remarks here have much in common with Hume's. The self, or I, utterly lacks enduring content. The self of self-consciousness is not an enduring entity that is continually present at the start of my stream of thoughts. Rather, it is the *result* of a long series of mental processes. Just as new cells are constantly being regenerated in my physical self, so too are the constituents of my mental self – my thoughts, feelings and desires – continually replenished as old ones fade. In the case of the mental self, its constituent parts are connected only by laws of association. "This self is itself different in each individual act of self-consciousness (when I mentally say 'I' at a given moment and when I later say the same thing in the moments that follow, these are separate acts or states that do not represent any real unity)."[43] In other words, neither an empirical nor a phenomenological investigation of the self yields a real unity. What we seek is the essential or ideal self that we know is there even though the mentioned investigative techniques fail to reveal it. According to Solov'ëv, we know that the essential essences, which are neither temporal nor spatial, are the basis of empirical reality. They, therefore, lie in a sphere beyond the bounds of empirical phenomena. This also explains why our mundane techniques are unable to find them. Being ideal, essences are neither contingent nor empirical. With regard to the essential self, or the spirit, it must be continuous and exist prior to – Solov'ëv is unclear whether he means temporal or logical priority – its manifestations. By being so, it accounts for our differentiated awareness of our own states and for those instances when our consciousness is interrupted, such as due to a loss of consciousness or sleep. Were it not for our spirit, our enduring self, it would seem that each of us mentally disappears for a period only to reappear suddenly with a complete knowledge of our earlier states and of our faculties.

[42] Kant 1997: A137–138/B176–177.

[43] PSS, vol. 4: 117–118; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 117.

Unless we *posit* a spirit "within" us, this phenomenon of remembering what happened earlier, etc. would be inexplicable.

> If such were not the case, i.e., if this idea and this character were only products of our phenomenal (manifested) life or depended on our conscious acts and states, it would be incomprehensible why we do not lose this character and idea along with the loss of our vital consciousness (in the states mentioned above) or why our conscious life, being renewed each day, does not create for us a new character, a new content for our lives.[44]

Solov'ëv conjectures that the human essence, or spirit, is much more than the sum total of an individual's manifestations up to any particular time: "There is in us an unlimited wealth of forces and content, concealed beyond the threshold of our present consciousness, over which passes gradually only a fixed part of these forces and content, never exhausting the whole."[45] Such a position, though contestable is at least understandable even within a rational perspective. Much less so, however, is his apparent sudden leap from this sense of the term "human being" (*chelovek*) to his claim that this sense "actually contains all human individuals within itself." If Solov'ëv means that the sense of the term "human being" is applicable to all humans, then his statement is analytically true. On the other hand, if he means that all flesh and blood individuals existing now and that ever have existed are, in some manner, "contained" within this sense he has made a considerable "category mistake," or to use a Greek expression Solov'ëv himself employs a μεταβαστς εις αλλο γενος.[46] Regrettably, there is ample evidence that Solov'ëv has in mind the second possibility. In his usual confused manner, Solov'ëv fails to distinguish between an ideal sense, which, as Frege convincingly argued, is atemporal, and the objects of the physical world. Indeed, in the sixth lecture he describes the human spirit as having "an original substantial being independent of its particular revelation or manifestation in a series of separate acts and states." There, he failed to inform us of the basis for his conclusion that the human spirit has a *substantial* being. Now, in the eighth lecture *immediately after* speaking of the sense of "human being" he announces that

> The deepest essence of every human being is rooted in the eternal divine world, that every human being is not only a visible phenomenon, i.e., a series of events and a group of facts, but an eternal and special entity, a necessary and irreplaceable link in the absolute whole.[47]

Proceeding on the basis of the argument up to this statement, this claim is a complete non sequitur. Solov'ëv has not in any manner established: (1) that the

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[44] PSS, vol. 4: 88; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 85.

[45] PSS, vol. 4: 118–119; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 118.

[46] PSS, vol. 2: 236.

[47] PSS, vol. 4: 119–120; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 119. In a footnote on this page, Solov'ëv remarks that: "In considering the origin of the world, Christian theologians and philosophers always distinguished between the finite manifestation of the world in space and time and the eternal existence of the idea of the world in Divine thought, i.e., in the Logos. It must be remembered that in God, as the eternal reality, the idea of the world cannot be conceived as anything abstract, but must be conceived as eternally real." PSS, vol. 4: 119f; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 119f. Indeed, as we have pointed out earlier, if we accept Solov'ëv's general scheme in which God is real and eternal, so too must the world be real and eternal and not just its idea.

sense of "human being" is rooted in anything, let alone the divine world, (2) that each human individual is a "special entity" in any particular sense, (3) that the human individual is a necessary and irreplaceable link presumably between the divine principle and the rest of creation.

As we will see, Solov'ëv has still much more to say about the human being and about the human race. Nevertheless, it appears that we have already progressed quite some distance from our initial Schopenhauerian phenomenalism. At least, this is what Solov'ëv himself would have us think. Unfortunately, we have not. He seeks to get beyond an epistemological phenomenalism that limits us to psychic representations and to explain rationally our firm conviction in the factual existence of the world independent of our cognitions: "Thus, it is not the eternal divine world, but, on the contrary, nature, the actual world factually given to us, that constitutes a riddle for reason. Its task is to explain this actuality, which is factually indubitable but rationally obscure."[48] If by invoking the human being Solov'ëv believes he has provided a refutation of idealism comparable to that of Kant's in the "First Critique," he scarcely could not be further from the mark. Even were we to ascribe the existence of a corresponding ideal, i.e., non-spatial and non-temporal, soul to each otherwise contingent human individual, the problem posed by phenomenalism is the contingent existence of such other individuals. In effect, then, Solov'ëv's purported solution merely begs the problem. Idealism in none of its varieties denies the existence of "essences," but we are left without any escape from that sphere to the contingent.

Another possibility is that Solov'ëv's excursus into human nature was never intended as philosophical argument, that although phenomenalism exhibits a persistent hold on the human mind an independently existing world is necessary in principle, though not in its particulars. Under such an interpretation, when Solov'ëv states that "reason by itself cannot prove to us the *factual* existence of this world," he is merely making a claim about the limits of our rational faculty, that just as reason alone cannot prove the existence of this particular sheet of paper before me, so it cannot prove the existence of this world, conceived as the sum-total of all particular real entities.[49] Such an interpretation, however, runs into the difficulty of explaining just what an external world would be if it is conceived as totally devoid of individual entities. To speak of a "factual actuality," as Solov'ëv does, is to make judgments concerning spatially determinate and temporally enduring objects. Without those objects, we are left with a bare void, at best. Yet on what basis would we then be able to say that this void is external to us? The problem, of course, is that Solov'ëv has no precise and clearly elaborated theory of space and time. To think, as he does, that the world is logically necessary arises from his particular conception of God, without which there is no necessity whatsoever. However, the very existence of God and His attributes is a matter of faith, not reason. In short, we have not budged a single iota beyond phenomenalism. Even his claim in the fourth lecture that our

[48] PSS, vol. 4: 113; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 112.

[49] Kudrjashova writes that both Solov'ëv and Berkeley start from the same point, viz., that the existence of externality cannot be logically proven, although their paths then diverge. See Kudrjashova 2005: 103.

enduring representations, precisely because they are enduring, must have causes numerically distinct from ourselves is subject to the criticism Kant voiced in his criticism on the fourth paralogism in the "First Critique," viz., that to say something is "outside us" is notoriously ambiguous. Its clarification, in any case, begs the very issue at stake.[50]

In holding that the world is logically necessary though factually contingent, Solov'ëv claims that reason – presumably his "speculative reason" – is forced to find something that is both eternal and temporal, both ideal and factual, necessary and contingent. This purportedly missing link is the human being or person. *Only* if we recognize that the human being has both a physical and a spiritual aspect, a body and a soul, is it possible for us rationally to accept or admit human freedom, which is necessary for life. On the face of it, then, Solov'ëv finds that the philosophical problem of freedom versus determinism can be resolved in favor of the former *only* in a religious context, indeed, only if we accept his conception of God and of all creation. At the close of the eighth lecture, he tells us that if we regard human beings as purely contingent beings lacking a soul, that God created us arbitrarily, i.e., that we, as a species, were not logically necessary, that God alone is active, we entirely exclude human freedom. Certainly, one difficulty here is that whether the human species is logically necessary or not has logically nothing to do with whether we individually have a free will. Another difficulty lies in saying "it is easy to see that … by regarding the human being as absolutely determined by God's arbitrary will and therefore as absolutely passive with respect to God, we decidedly leave no room for human freedom"[51] Solov'ëv has actually said nothing. For if we are absolutely determined by God, that simply means there is no human freedom. Unfortunately, the reader will search in vain for the promised clarification of these matters in the next or even in any of the subsequent lectures as they have come down to us. Certainly, by the tenth lecture the wellspring of rational thought had gone dry.

4.4 The Problem of Evil

Nature, the world describable in terms of mathematical laws and general forms, the world of the contemporary natural scientist, is ideal. On the other hand, the world around us, the actual world of our everyday lives, is everything but rational and comprehensible. In seeking to describe this world of everyday experience in ideal terms, i.e., mathematically, we transform the everyday world into an ideal world. In effect, we seek to rid the former of its contingency by making those contingencies ideal. Our concern in studying an individual object or event is not its individuality as such, but in how far we can effect such an idealization. Such is the perspective of theory. However, in everyday living, in our practical lives, one individual stands out as primary, viz., our own individual selves. To some degree, my individual self is

[50] Kant 1997: A373.

[51] PSS, vol. 4: 120; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 120.

present in all of my thoughts, reflections and actions. Although through intellectual intuitions we recognize our essential connection with all else that exists, such realizations are momentary. At times, this essential connectedness with the rest of creation appears to be no more than an illusion. What counts in these instances is the "I" first and foremost. We know ourselves, and others are ultimately incapable of truly entering into our individual minds or thoughts. Likewise, the other person is fundamentally a mystery to me. While others are capable of expressing in some fashion similar thoughts, emotions and feelings as I am, they too often behave in ways that I find incomprehensible. Even their own explanations of their behavior fail to illuminate their thought processes. This setting of oneself against all else, which in our daily activities can become all-powerful, forms the irreducible *evil* in every living thing. It is a universal property inherent in *all* of nature. Thus, on the one hand, everything in nature is a reflection of an ideal unity, and on the other hand everything is inimical to that ideal unity.

All of nature exhibits some egoism, a striving to eliminate everything else. Such a condition is moral evil. Suffering, or physical evil, is a necessary consequence of moral evil. It arises from the impossibility of seeing egoism through, the impossibility of being one with everything *and* yet being fundamentally unique. There is much here in Solov'ëv's discussion of evil that remains quite vague. For one thing, in speaking of suffering in terms of tension, it is difficult to believe he means the physical suffering we experience in the dentist's chair. Even were we to confine ourselves to moral evil, what are we possibly to make of a view that ascribes evil apparently to *everything*? If a natural and universal condition of *all* things is to seek their own preservation and betterment, how can that be called evil without diluting the term of all practical use? If in bending towards the sunlight the flower on my windowsill exhibits moral evil do we not thereby lessen the sheer horror of figures such as Hitler and Stalin? Solov'ëv remarks that "the actual being of the natural world is something wrong or abnormal insofar as it is opposed to the divine world (as an unconditional norm)."[52] Now, he adds that this opposition is not an independent essence or a specific principle, but it is difficult to give any credence to this. Since it is by his own admission a truly *universal* condition of all living things, it can hardly be merely an accidental feature. In fact, Solov'ëv again writes that evil "is simply a different, wrong *interrelation* of the same elements that also constitute the being of the divine world."[53] However, what is the source of this wrong or improper interrelation if not the Deity? If evil is intrinsically inherent in the world of living things, but that world is logically necessary, can we avoid ascribing evil to God as its ultimate source? Such a startling conclusion was already clear to Solov'ëv's more traditional Christian auditors.

[52] PSS, vol. 4: 124; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 124. Solov'ëv's rather odd position has its basis in one of his favorite Biblical expressions: "The whole world lieth in wickedness." 1 John 5:19. Some 15 years later, Solov'ëv would again use it in the sixth chapter of his major ethical treatise *The Justification of the Good*. SS, vol. 7: 131.

[53] PSS, vol. 4: 124; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 124.

Being the result or product of evil, individual living things cannot be its source. The egoism inherent in all physical life is responsible for the particularity of life.[54] Experience, rather, shows that an inherent evil lies in each living entity from the start of its existence.[55] Evil is an involuntarily given and, therefore, not freely produced. Solov'ëv concedes that by his own logic evil must have a *metaphysical* origin, which, since the physical world is spatio-temporal, must mean that the original source of evil is to be found in the timeless, or eternal, realm. Again here in this lecture-series, Solov'ëv has essentially nothing more to say on evil or its source. Having relegated by fiat, as it were, the entire issue to a realm beyond experience, he has in effect also placed it beyond argument and rational discussion.[56]

In addition to evil, however, there lies in the human individual a force for good, which Solov'ëv predictably characterizes as "a force of universal, all-embracing love."[57] The truly moral individual is one that has conquered egoism. Although we cannot utterly eradicate evil from our nature, goodness consists in transforming it from an active state into a purely potential one. Only when everyone realizes that an all-embracing love represents the moral good can the human individual make the effecting of this love a moral principle. Such universal love, i.e., the opposite of egoism, however, cannot be realized in nature, where people have widely differing capabilities. Additionally, nature itself pits each of us against the others. Solov'ëv praises socialism for seeking human equality, but its goal is the material and legal equality of all. As such, it lacks moral significance, since it fails to see that the evil in society is egoism. The socialist, in effect, says he wants his rightful share for himself. Moral truth, i.e., the good, however, lies in the opposite of egoism, viz., love or self-denial. The rebellious spirit of socialism against the moral ills of society can be satisfied not in economic equality, but only in religion, the genuine expression of moral truth. That religion alone can satiate the human desire for moral truth will appear to the reader as a bold and perhaps even questionable conclusion. Nevertheless, if we begin with Solov'ëv's presuppositions concerning the nature of religion, viz., that it is the *unique* path to the genuine unification of all people not only to themselves but to God and nature as well, his practical conclusion is far less interesting. Indeed, it amounts to an elementary tautology.

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[54] Whether such general statements can stand scrutiny is a matter we will leave aside for the purpose of elaborating Solov'ëv's position. He may be arguing that were it not for the presence of evil, i.e., egoism, in all living things, life could not survive in the presence of hostile natural conditions. Such a stand, of course, could, in turn, be seen as supportive of a Darwinian struggle of the fittest. In any case, however, Solov'ëv's statements could stand only on the basis of a number of presuppositions.

[55] For another fuller, though distinctively odd, treatment of the issue of free will see Nanashev 2002: 98–99.

[56] The practical danger of Solov'ëv's position is that seeing evil in all living things, including the flower on my windowsill, can lead to a trivialization of evil. If evil is inherent in all life, what sense does it make to resist or obstruct its advance, or at least at what point do we forcibly resist it?

[57] PSS, vol. 4: 150; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 152.

However ambiguous we may find his ethical doctrine, Solov'ëv's concern, above all, is not with developing the means to resolve moral conflicts arising from the real-world application of accepted ethical principles, but with preaching a general message. In this, we can clearly see Solov'ëv's move away from the patient exegesis of the academic scholar to the committed missionary armed with an unflinching conviction in the Truth, who simply has to convince others in order to set the world aright. Nevertheless, viewing himself as a revolutionary, Solov'ëv thinks he is armed in his crusade with the most powerful of temporal weapons – history itself, which inexorably is leading to the realization of religious consciousness.

4.5 History as the Unfolding of Divine Humanity

In Solov'ëv's eyes, a rejection of egoism in favor of universal love logically must entail that there was once an original unity that became severed: "For the particular principles and forces to reunite freely with the unconditional principle, they must first have separated from it."[58] Whether he believes this original unity ever existed in a temporal and geographic setting is unclear. The point is that the history of Western civilization is a history of the consistent and complete diremption of the Western nations from God and, concomitantly, the cessation of universal love. Western civilization is a witness to efforts to establish society on a purely secular foundation. Nevertheless, there is occurring a transformation of historical dimensions, the subordination of egoism and the emergence of divine humanity, hence the title of the lecture-series as it has come down to us in book form.

Whereas his *magister*'s thesis represents, as we saw earlier, a condemnation of much of Western philosophy, while wallowing in the self-absorbed satisfaction that history, in the long run, will prove him correct, here in the *Lectures on Divine Humanity* Solov'ëv vastly expands his criticism to the entire consciousness of Western humanity. In short, his condemnation is an ethical one: In the final analysis, the West is self-absorbed. Testifying again to the deep impact of Hegelianism on him, Solov'ëv, nevertheless, finds that despite the secular society of the West being morally reprehensible it was and is historically *necessary* as the link between humanity's primitive original religiosity and its complete and perfect union with the Deity. With this union comes a satisfaction that the West finds unattainable with its emphasis on absolute human rights, on what today is commonly called "negative freedom." However, this perfect union with God can only be approached gradually, just as our scientific knowledge of nature gradually accumulates or is achieved. Just as nature relentlessly reveals itself to human consciousness, so too does the divine principle, i.e., the moral ideal, reveal itself to consciousness. Finally, just as we cannot truly fault medieval science for not knowing about the nature of viruses,

[58] PSS, vol. 4: 18; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 11.

so too we cannot abstractly accuse medieval Christianity of being false.[59] Truth cannot arise without preparation:

> If one answered that truth could appear only after the exhaustion of falsehood, this would mean that the realization of falsehood is *necessary* for the realization of truth, that is, that the falsehood *had to be*. But it would not in that case be a falsehood, since by falsehood (as well as by evil and ugliness) we mean precisely what *should not be*.[60]

Solov'ëv also – again without argument – adopts and adapts from Hegelianism the idea that the historical development of a complex idea follows the order of its logical development. The first stage in the development of humanity's religious consciousness consists of mythological religions, polytheism in the broad sense.

Despite his depiction of history as a gradually emerging moral awareness, what is bound to strike the reader is Solov'ëv's description of this initial stage in thoroughly non-moral terms. Polytheism is depicted not in terms of a multitude of opposing *moral* forces, but of autonomous natural entities and forces certainly above or more powerful than humanity. When Solov'ëv does portray an early stage of religious consciousness, e.g., Indian philosophy, in ethical terms, he finds nature appearing as evil, as continually opposing human efforts to control it. If *all* forms of life fundamentally strive for continued existence, how can that be described as evil, as morally wrong?[61] Moreover, what are his criteria for singling out a particular historical era as polytheistic? We certainly do find ancient monotheistic Judaism and the monotheistic-leaning worship of the Sun by Amenhotep IV contemporaneous with polytheism. Moreover, if polytheism and the Eastern systems of Indian philosophy and Buddhism are "negative" religions and must precede positive ones, why do they still have so many adherents today centuries, even millennia, after the initial emergence of the latter?

At a somewhat later stage in the development of religious consciousness, the second stage, we find the "artistic religion" of the Ancient Greeks. In it, the divine principle is known merely in terms of harmony and beauty. Solov'ëv finds nothing particularly remarkable in the Greek connection of art to Platonic idealism. Yet he recognizes that the "moral element is completely foreign to the entire Hellenic worldview. The entire sphere of practical activity was left to the instincts, not to principles."[62] Indeed, although the Greek philosophers were concerned with ethical matters, they abjured moral principles! For Plato, the summit of activities was philosophy, but the philosopher leads a purely contemplative existence as far removed as possible from earthly concerns and day-to-day problems. The Stoics, too, preached a withdrawal from active, moral intervention in the world. However, here again we should recognize Solov'ëv's parsimonious selections within Greek philosophy. That which does not fit his preconceived ideas, he simply ignores. For example, he has nothing to say about Aristotle's ethics, nothing to say about why and how it is

[59] Although strictly speaking not of philosophical interest, the assessment of medieval Christianity served as the topic of a major controversy involving Solov'ëv some years later.

[60] PSS, vol. 4: 40; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 34.

[61] This contrasts sharply with Solov'ëv's later position in *The Justification of the Good*, where Solov'ëv will start from a naturalistic position.

[62] PSS, vol. 4: 70; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 66.

not a counterexample to his claims. Indeed, the latter is mentioned just once in the entirety of the *Lectures*, and then only in passing in a footnote.

Thus, the first phase in the development of religious consciousness is a negative attitude towards life that Solov'ëv associates with Buddhism. The second phase is Platonic idealism, which recognizes an extra-sensible or transcendent ideal world. The third stage is the monotheism that recognizes as transcendent not only the Platonic world of ideas, but also the divine principle or God. This third phase is characteristic of Judaism. Departing from his usual penchant for triadic schemes, however, Solov'ëv lists a fourth and final phase: the determination of the Deity as the triune God, which we find in Hellenistic theosophy and whose chief representative was the Alexandrian Philo. Solov'ëv notably adds that Christianity is not merely the sum-total of these phases, for it would not then be anything new. In effect, then, we can say that Christianity marks the fifth and surely final phase in humanity's religious development. As a committed Christian, Solov'ëv's stance should not surprise us. As a philosopher commenting on the alleged absolute logical and historical significance of his religion, however, we expect from him an explanation why the whole of humanity has not converted to Christianity, why non-Christian religions have historically emerged after it, most notably Islam. Again, Solov'ëv is – at least here in the *Lectures* – silent. Nevertheless, we can come to a tentative answer based on his diatribe against "Western" conceptions of Christianity, viz., Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Solov'ëv, in the published version of the combined 11th and 12th lectures, accuses the West of failing to understand Christ's teachings. The West succumbed to evil temptation by feeling a need to subjugate by force those who did not share their faith. Eventually, Western humanity realized the error of this approach, but in freeing itself succumbed to other temptations, first to a God-less rationalism and then to an equally God-less materialism. Solov'ëv again fails to address whether these "Western" failings were necessary or contingent occurrences. In either case, how can they be accounted for without introducing a significant dose of capriousness that would, in turn, render any perceived historical development fortuitous?

Yet, in spite of, or perhaps more accurately in view of, Solov'ëv's description of the modern world, we must ask how the different developmental stages in humanity's religious consciousness can coexist in the world. Solov'ëv does recognize that the gradualness of the process demands an explanation, particularly in light of the incessant struggles and sorrows we find throughout history. The process by which the re-unification of the world is to be achieved can take place only by means of a long series of free acts, such as those Solov'ëv believes took place in the West. Such statements, however, are unlikely to convince those who do not share his faith in the eventual outcome of the universal process, an outcome that is "divine humanity," the uniting of all individual living entities within a collective humanity.[63]

[63] Solov'ëv surely does not enhance the credulity of his position when he, almost laughably, ventures into the sort of speculative philosophy of nature historically associated with early nineteenth century romanticism. He goes so far as to project his idea of re-unification to the entire universe, finding three epochs: the first being the formation of celestial bodies under the influence of gravity; the second the development of complex forces, such as heat and light; and, finally, third the formation of organic life. See, for example, PSS, vol. 4: 138; Cf. Solovyov 1995: 139.

Notwithstanding the inherent ambiguity of this claim, this unification, for Solov'ëv, is perforce a gradual historical process the end of which is now within sight. The Western branch of Christianity is exhausting its possibilities. When it comes to realize this and recognizes that it needs the supplementation of the Eastern branch, the union will give rise to a new spiritual awakening. Regrettably, Solov'ëv does not inform us of the basis for his position. It can hardly be through an examination of world history. The previous unification of the Christian churches prior to the Great Schism could hardly be characterized as an era of ideal humanity. Nor is it likely that the basis is an unrevealed rational, philosophical argument. Throughout his albeit short critique of rationalism he disparages its belief that reason can organize life and that pure reason can deduce all of knowledge. In proscribing reason apart from independently given content, it is hardly likely that Solov'ëv pinned his ultimate position concerning divine humanity on what he has just condemned.

The *Lectures* end on an optimistic note, in effect, declaring that humanity stands on the brink of a new dawn. Solov'ëv surely thought he himself could help bring this about, for the sake of which he largely abandoned writing on issues of a narrow philosophical concern. During most of the decade of the 1880s, he concerned himself with issues relating to Church matters that lie well outside the bounds of the present study. However, as we have just seen, the *Lectures* stand in a quite precarious relationship to philosophy. Admittedly, in them Solov'ëv reiterated a number of themes and problems mentioned in earlier writings. While he, here in these *Lectures*, provides some clarification, he repeatedly breaks off his treatments abruptly, venturing into sheer speculation without supportive arguments or corroborative facts. Thus, these *Lectures* as they have come down to us, the writing of which began in early 1878 and culminated only in 1881, have one foot, as it were in philosophy, and one ending in speculative, even mystical, theology. However we may judge Solov'ëv's own estimation of his abilities and of his religious "mission" to help effect a reunification of the Christian churches, he chose this mission over the task of further developing his philosophical "system." But we are getting ahead of ourselves. During the time period when the *Lectures* were originally published in serial form, Solov'ëv completed the serial publication of his doctoral dissertation, which started in November 1877, and successfully defended it. The dissertation, which we will look at in the next chapter, is certainly the most important philosophical document from Solov'ëv's early years. Before looking at it and the circumstances surrounding its writing and publication, however, let us quickly take a look at another small article from this period.

4.6 Faith and Reason

In December 1877, i.e., either just before setting out to write the first few lectures or while preparing them, Solov'ëv published a short essay entitled "Faith, Reason and Experience" in the journal *Grazhdanin*, which Dostoyevsky had for a time edited a few years earlier. Solov'ëv never mentioned this piece in his later published

writings, and for some undisclosed reason(s) a preserved second and lengthier section never appeared in print. Whether Solov'ëv was dissatisfied with this second section, too busy with other projects to see to its publication or could not find a publisher, remains unclear. The last possibility is unlikely, since this second section contains little to which the censors could conceivably object, particularly, as we have seen, in light of some statements in the *Lectures* that were published.[64] One distinct possibility is that Solov'ëv viewed the entire work as an occasional essay that helped clarify certain ideas in his own mind. Having served its purpose, there was no need for him to persist with it especially in light of his ongoing work on both the *Lectures* and his doctoral dissertation.

Solov'ëv, essentially, breaks no new ground in "Faith, Reason and Experience." Its philosophical value lies in his clear and to-the-point statement of the place of faith vis-à-vis reason in human cognition and life. Of even greater interest in terms of Solov'ëv's philosophical biography, however, is the tone of the essay. Whereas the "Philosophical Principles" demonstrably reveal the strong influence of mysticism and, more importantly for our purposes here, later German Idealism – Hegel's *Logic* and the later Schelling – this essay, at least in comparison with the former, bears an unmistakable Kantian stamp.

Concerning the perennial dispute between faith and reason, Solov'ëv holds that the conflict is more apparent than real. The two actually have little to do with each other and therefore cannot be substituted for one another. Strictly speaking, then, there can be no struggle between the two: "To substitute faith with reason or science is just as impossible as to substitute mathematics with history or music with sculpture."[65] Solov'ëv, like Kant, holds that reason has a purely formal employment. For this reason, as we already saw in our discussion of the "Principles," it cannot, in the absence of independently provided data, deduce anything, let alone the existence of God. The aim or task of reason is merely interpretative. That is, reason seeks to understand what is provided to it by another faculty. Reason, unlike the human will, cannot initiate action nor does it have, unlike the imagination, a mental productive force. Experience alone can provide reason with particular and contingent data, which reason can raise to general concepts, and experientially provided particular relations can be raised into universal and necessary laws. Since reason can operate only on what is given to it, its employment is limited to the phenomenal realm, and, again as with Kant, universality and necessity are not introduced by reason. They are not given in experience. The interpretive work of reason consists in its refusal to see the particular and contingent as such. It refuses to rest until it has stamped the given phenomenon with a general form and placed it in a necessary order.

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[64] One of the editors of the PSS holds another view. A. A. Nosov claims that what Solov'ëv has to say at one point in the unpublished manuscript with regard to hell conflicts with traditional Church teaching. Be that as it may, there is no reason to think Solov'ëv could not have simply removed the offending passage, if need be, without effecting the general train of thought in any way. See PSS, vol. 3: 516.

[65] PSS, vol. 3: 368.

Turning now to religious faith, it is more than, as is commonly thought, just a belief in something for which there is no data – no empirical data. It provides *positive principles* to guide our daily lives. When reason takes up religious faith, it can do nothing but impart the forms of universality and necessity on what faith provides. In this way, reason can reject particular religious dogmas as irrational – because they cannot be interpreted in terms of universal laws – but it cannot simply reject religious faith as such any more than it can sense perception. Neither reason nor sense experience can provide guiding principles, for the latter cannot say what should be, only what appears to be at present, and reason cannot provide positive specific content. Underpinning Solov'ëv's position is his view, stated without argument here, that neither reason nor sense experience can provide knowledge of what truly is, i.e., of what exists in itself, or independently of human consciousness. Yet the human spirit seeks precisely this – knowledge of the in itself, which is precisely what a faith-based religion provides. In short, then, science and reason cannot satisfy a fundamental desire of our spirit. We see here that, as in the third lecture on divine humanity, neither reason nor sense experience can provide objectivity, but unlike in the third lecture Solov'ëv does not explicitly state that faith *imparts* objectivity on sense data. The issue of the objectivity of knowledge is simply not addressed. We also see that in December 1877 Solov'ëv *limits* faith to providing principles – moral and teleological – for human action. Also unlike in the third lecture, he here does not accord faith any explicit role in providing a cognition of God and of His attributes. Thus, at some time between the writing of "Faith, Reason and Experience" in late 1877 and the composition of the third lecture, May 1878 at the latest, Solov'ëv radically altered his stand on the power of faith by dramatically expanding its role in human cognition.

Nevertheless, Solov'ëv's philosophically most interesting comments in this essay, however embryonic, concern his notion of truth, which remains highly indebted to Hegelian idealism. Neither reason nor sense experience can tell us what should be the case. If an event does not occur – because it is impossible by the dictates of reason – or if an object is not present, neither is, strictly speaking, false. Rather, both are *nothing*. However, for Solov'ëv, the notion of truth is intimately linked with that of normality. To speak of truth is to speak of normality. Thus, whether something is true or false is not a matter of whether it happens or happens to be, but whether that something is normal or abnormal.

> From the point of view of experience and reason, such a distinction in what happens is impossible. For reason and experience themselves do not go beyond what happens. The latter provides them with all of their content. They do not and cannot have a principle and criterion that would allow for the rejection of something as abnormal, despite the fact that it *happens*. Obviously, for such a rejection it would be necessary to go beyond this happening (since we can judge something only by referring to it objectively, i.e., outside it), consequently, beyond reason and experience.[66]

Regrettably, here in this essay Solov'ëv provides no further information on how we are to ascertain what is normal and abnormal in any particular case.

[66] PSS, vol. 3: 370.

The underlying concern here is, frankly, existential: Can we humans, endowed with self-consciousness, lead an active life without religion? Can science serve as a substitute for religion in our daily lives? Given his understanding of the limits of reason, it should come as no surprise that Solov'ëv answers in the negative. A human life circumscribed by reason and the empirically given would be fatalistic in outlook and quiescent in practice. If no evaluation of what happens is possible in terms of whether it *should* happen, every event and every entity that exists is equally true. Everything is equally justified. There would be no possible appraisal of what takes place or what exists, only an explanation why it is so. In the absence of an independently given goal, the pursuit of knowledge loses any practical intent. In conclusion, then, faith and religion cannot be eradicated from human life nor can science replace them. The latter gives facts; the former give positive principles.

The only known comment on this published first section of "Faith, Reason and Experience" is from the pen of N. N. Strakhov, who wrote to Leo Tolstoy at the end of December 1877 concerning it and, thus, only shortly after the essay's appearance. Strakhov, for reasons he somewhat explains, was not particularly impressed: "I have just now read his [Solov'ëv's – TN] article … and I am simply ready to swear. All of this is just talk, in which a small spark of philosophical work is deluged by an incoherent mass of words. You can never make out where he is going, what is his own view and which is that of others, what he simply accepts and what he is augmenting, what is proven and what is the problem. In essence, his first work, *The Crisis*, was quite serious. Now he has set out to write without looking back."[67]

Unquestionably, Solov'ëv intended for a time to publish a continuation of his essay. He concluded this published portion: "In the following article, I will try to show the specific bases for a normal unity or synthesis of faith, reason and experience, from which, of course, the synthesis of religion, philosophy and positive science must follow."[68] In light of the fact that Solov'ëv did write a continuation but never published it, one possibility, as we already mentioned, is that he was dissatisfied with what he wrote. However, yet another possibility looms particularly in light of the change in his position towards the power of faith and its role in cognition, viz., that he sensed he had unduly restricted the scope of faith in what he had just published. Realizing that his new views were incompatible with those expressed in December 1877, he simply abandoned the essay project, focusing instead on a more complete expression in his *Lectures on Divine Humanity* and in his ongoing doctoral dissertation.

Unfortunately, we do not know precisely when Solov'ëv composed the unpublished second portion of "Faith, Reason and Experience." While he never referred to the manuscript in his writings – nor, for that matter, did he ever refer to the published first portion – this may be indicative of the change in his view on the role of faith. The unpublished portion, in any case, found its way, at least in terms of the ideas expressed therein, into his other writings from that period. That the unpublished

[67] Quoted in PSS, vol. 3: 515.

[68] PSS, vol. 3: 373.

portion survived, that Solov'ëv did not simply destroy it, may itself testify to the value he attached to those ideas. Had it been the other way around, had he expressed ideas in the manuscript that he would later abandon, as is the case with the published essay, he most decidedly would have discarded those unreleased pages. With this in mind, let us briefly turn to this continuation of the essay.

Solov'ëv tells us that although religion, philosophy and science can never replace one another, all three concern what exists: "The interrelation of the three spheres is determined by the fact that although each of them has as its object a separate aspect of what exists, all three aspects equally belong to what exists. The three are equally necessary for it."[69] Such already is an odd statement, not just because of its vacuity, but because in the first portion of the essay he held that the three disciplines, or "spheres" as he refers to them here, have fundamentally *different* concerns! Taking his own analogy there seriously, mathematics cannot conflict with history owing to their different subject-matter. Likewise, presumably, religion cannot conflict with science, because the former deals with guiding principles and goals in life whereas science is concerned with empirically given data. Here in the manuscript, however, he states that if we concern ourselves with an existing object's inner essence, i.e., regard it as it is in itself, look on it as a *Ding an sich*, to use the Kantian expression, we adopt the religious viewpoint. On the other hand, if we concern ourselves with those properties which are the necessary conditions for its appearance *to others*, i.e., the necessary and universal laws for it to exist, we see the object from the standpoint of rational philosophy.[70] Finally, if we take the object as it appears to us, i.e., as it is given to us in sense experience, our viewpoint is that of the natural sciences. Regardless of how adequate or tenable we view Solov'ëv's trichotomization – Do the sciences really leave an examination of universal laws of nature to *philosophy*? – Solov'ëv now explicitly places the object of religion within metaphysical ontology, rather than within ethics, as he had in December 1877.[71] Instead of the different concerns in the first portion of the essay, the three spheres have different viewpoints, which supplement one another to form a harmonious, or consistent, whole. In the historical development of this whole, however, this has not always been the case.

Solov'ëv does not explain why there must be a *historical* manifestation of what he takes to be the three "logically necessary moments" in the development of the whole. Nevertheless, it is an idea that we are already familiar with in his writings – and

[69] PSS, vol. 3: 374.

[70] Let us leave aside the separate but quite formidable question concerning the tenability of Solov'ëv's identification of necessary laws for existence with necessary conditions for an object to appear to us. Despite being a corollary in Solov'ëv's overall philosophical scheme, the identification can hardly stand up to critical scrutiny.

[71] This is not to say that Solov'ëv no longer held religion provided principles for action. Quite the contrary is the case. Further on in the manuscript portion, Solov'ëv, criticizing positivism for upholding empirical knowledge exclusively, writes: "However, if positive scientific or empirical cognition simply amounts to an assertion of facts, it obviously cannot give any principles for knowledge and for life, for fact and principle (*fact et principe*) are in a sense opposed concepts and cannot be identical." PSS, vol. 3: 389.

which we will see time and again. Solov'ëv also does not explain how he understands "logically necessary," though it obviously cannot mean, as it does today, the logically inconceivable without contradiction, or what would be the case in all conceivable universes. Passing from the initial undifferentiated unitary viewpoint of the first moment to the second moment, we find that each sphere strives to exclude the other two. Finally in the third moment, the three spheres, viz., religion, philosophy and science, realize, indeed must realize, that their respective specific goals or concerns are not exclusive, but complementary. Solov'ëv admits that we are still in the second moment and the struggle between the spheres is ongoing. Nevertheless, even though we are not yet at the third moment, that there must be one is quite clear from the evident complete exhaustion and impotence of each of the spheres in their respective attempts to dominate the other two. In this, we see a notable shift away from the main theme of his late 1874 thesis, *The Crisis*, which held that philosophy conceived as a purely cognitive activity has or is about to come to its end. Now, writing in early 1878 Solov'ëv accords philosophy a vital and prominent role along with natural science in human existence.

It is difficult to assess with assurance the role of "Faith, Reason and Experience" in Solov'ëv's intellectual development. His emphasis on intellectual intuition found in the "Philosophical Principles" from several months earlier is completely absent. Likewise, as mentioned, the role of faith is severely restricted. The essay stands as a transitional piece, in which Solov'ëv is visibly re-thinking his earlier positions but without any certainty how they need to be corrected. Here, he is reconsidering his earlier assurance in the power of intellectual intuition, but he has not yet come to embrace a basically Cartesian stand that the objectivity of the external world, along with much else, rests on "faith," properly understood, as he would in the *Lectures*.

The last months of 1877 were ones of considerable philosophical fervor for Solov'ëv. Not only was he writing the last published installments of the "Philosophical Principles" and outlining his *Lectures on Divine Humanity*, but he also started writing his most ambitious and systematic work yet. It is this to which we turn next. It need not be pointed out, however, that his official responsibilities suffered as a result of his writing and lecturing. Of the 40 sessions in 1878 of the Academic Committee, Solov'ëv attended a mere 11!

Chapter 5
The Morality of a *Critique*

In contrast to the defense of *The Crisis*, Solov'ëv's public defense of his doctoral dissertation, the *Critique of Abstract Principles*, was a placid affair with no acrimony. In this chapter, we will analyze the topically first half of this dissertation that treats ethical and socio-political issues. Emulating Hegel's procedure in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Solov'ëv looks at a succession of ethical theories finding each of them wanting. However, Solov'ëv, unlike Hegel, explicitly admits that his criticisms are from a particular standpoint, the standpoint of what he terms the all-unity. Thus, whereas Solov'ëv intended to offer an indirect proof of his position by demonstrating the inadequacies and the failures of all other ethical positions, leaving his own as the sole contender, his criticisms often lacking immanency are hardly likely to be seen as definitive. Nevertheless, his specific criticisms of individual ethical theories are often not without some merit, albeit that they are hardly original to Solov'ëv.

Solov'ëv also reminds us that the moral good cannot be realized in a vacuum, that we live in a society along with others and that no ethical theory can hope to be complete without an understanding of the implications of that fact which includes a social theory that at a minimum allows for the promotion of the moral good among its members. Relating positively to Kant's categorical imperative, Solov'ëv, nevertheless, acknowledges its incompleteness and therefore ambiguity as a practical guide. To remedy this situation he ventures into the arena of political and juridical theory for which he was ill-prepared leaving numerous and large lacunas.

5.1 Genesis of the *Critique of Abstract Principles*

Not unlike many university graduates even today, Solov'ëv vacillated on whether to pursue a doctoral degree and, even after resolving to do so, changed his topic several times. As we saw in Chap. 2, he expressed to Vladislavlev a desire to pursue the

T. Nemeth, *The Early Solov'ëv and His Quest for Metaphysics*, International Archives of the History of Ideas/Archives internationales d'histoire des idées 212,
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degree already in December 1874, just 1 month after his *magister*'s defense and 2 months after Jurkevich's passing. In all likelihood, still flush with the real prospect of succeeding his revered teacher at Moscow University, he now saw the doctorate as merely a small, though necessary, step towards achieving this goal. His initial intention was to write a dissertation on Gnosticism. Regrettably, Solov'ëv did not elaborate further as to just what he had in mind, but a fair assumption would be that at the moment he intended to write a largely scholarly, exegetic work. Although for us today the choice may sound odd as a dissertation topic in philosophy it was, as Solov'ëv admitted, in keeping with his interests, on the one hand, and, arguably, an astute political maneuver, on the other: Vladislavlev had written his own dissertation on Plotinus less than a decade earlier.[1] From this fact, Solov'ëv may have concluded that Vladislavlev would be quite receptive to his chosen topic. Presumably, it is with the idea of researching the Gnostic movement that he set out for London and the British Museum, rather than the more typical destination at the time, viz., a German university, where academic philosophy thrived amidst a traditional political conservativism.[2] The result of this period of study abroad was, as we know, the texts bearing the title "Sophia," which soon after his return to Moscow in June 1876 Solov'ëv thought he could edit, translate into Russian and submit as the required dissertation. Writing to Certelev on 19 June of that year, he outlined his immediate plans and expressed his feelings: "I did not publish my work in French for various reasons, but after expanding it considerably and providing the appropriate number of Greek, Latin and German quotations, I will publish it in Russian as a doctoral dissertation, because I have neither the ability nor the desire to write some special work for this purpose."[3] The next we hear of this matter is, oddly enough, in a letter from Strakhov to Tolstoy dated 12 September 1876. In it, Strakhov relates part of a conversation he had with Solov'ëv concerning his Western European excursion, in the course of which the latter referred to his "book" as already complete,

[1] Vladislavlev 1868.

[2] Those in an official position, in all likelihood, must have questioned the wisdom behind Solov'ëv's decision to go to England rather than Germany and a library instead of a university. A period of study abroad was intended not merely to facilitate acquaintance with research material unavailable in Russia, but to train further young scholars in order to raise the Russian professoriate to Western standards of intellectual rigor. Left unsaid, however, was the preference for presumably conservative Germany rather than politically liberal England and volatile France in order to minimize contact with democratic ideas. This would have been particularly true in the case of an only recently permitted discipline such as philosophy. In contrast, Vladislavlev studied in Jena under Kuno Fischer, and Mikhail I. Karinskij, who taught philosophy for many years at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, studied in Göttingen under Lotze.

[3] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 233. In his biography, Sergey Solovyov expresses surprise that his uncle entertained the idea that "Sophia" could serve such a purpose, which undoubtedly was the case, and that Vladimir, given his background as the son of a noted professor, could have been so ignorant of the academic process as well as of Vladislavlev's professionalism, at least to this extent. Solovyov 2000: 165.

totaling 400 pages and bearing the title "The Principles of Positive Metaphysics."[4] Strakhov added that Solov'ëv hoped to defend this dissertation in St. Petersburg already before Christmas – presumably meaning Christmas 1876!

When he began his work on the "Philosophical Principles," Solov'ëv clearly intended it to serve eventually as his doctoral dissertation, abandoning his earlier idea of a reworked "Sophia." Writing to Certelev on 30 April 1877, he stated, "I live very modestly and alone; I read the mystics in the library and write my dissertation; I visit almost no one."[5] Solov'ëv, without a doubt, was referring here to the "Philosophical Principles" as his projected dissertation. Several months later and soon after he had returned from his stay in Bulgaria as a war correspondent, he wrote to Sofia Tolstaja: "I am now most of all interested in my book. Something more will come of it. … It is simply a shame that I cannot destroy the two chapters written during the summer. They are as empty as was my head at the time."[6] Thus, as late as the date of this letter, 11 September, Solov'ëv was still thinking of the "Philosophical Principles" as his dissertation. However, its serial publication abruptly stopped, as we saw, with Chapter V in November 1877. In that same month, a new work began to appear in the journal *Russkij vestnik* (*Russian Messenger*), a work that Solov'ëv would ultimately complete and submit as his doctoral dissertation, viz., the *Critique of Abstract Principles*.[7] Thus, for some unexplained reason Solov'ëv yet again radically altered his plans apparently without leaving behind a paper trail that would help us understand what led to, or even possibly forced,

[4] Luk'janov 1990. vol. 3, vyp. I: 358–359. What we are to make of Strakhov's letter remains a mystery. A reasonable conjecture is that Solov'ëv was grossly exaggerating the length of "Sophia" – a practice that, as we have seen, was certainly for him psychologically possible – or Strakhov misunderstood and that Solov'ëv merely meant his revised and suitably expanded version of "Sophia" would eventually amount to some 400 pages. This, however, would have been a substantial work. For example, Karinskij's doctoral dissertation *Klassifikacija vyvodov* (*The Classification of Judgments*), which he defended in 1880 also at St. Petersburg, was 271 pages. On the other hand, the work Solov'ëv finally did submit as his dissertation totaled well over 400 pages.

[5] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 236. In yet another letter to Certelev, Solov'ëv writes that he has resolved not to lecture publicly and to submit as his dissertation only the first part of his system dealing with the "positive dialectic." In the edition of collected letters, *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 240, the date of this letter is simply given as 1878. In his editorial notes on the "Philosophical Principles," A. P. Kozyrev claims that this date is incorrect, that it belongs to the end of 1876. Kozyrev, however, does not explain Solov'ëv's reference to not giving public lectures. Sergey Solovyov concurs with this early date for the letter. See Solovyov 2000: 213. However, if we accept this date, then Solov'ëv had in mind the reworked "Sophia" as his dissertation.

[6] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 202.

[7] Sergey Solovyov writes that his uncle began work on the *Critique* "parallel to" his work on the "Philosophical Principles." Solovyov 2000: 174. There is no basis, however, to think that Solov'ëv ever worked on both titles simultaneously. Based on the available information, Vladimir began writing the former as soon as he realized the untenability of the latter as a dissertation. Borisova concurs, writing: "We do not share the view that Solov'ëv worked on the two pieces simultaneously. We can assume that he already began his work on the *Critique* close to the fall of 1877 and that the separate chapters were published immediately after writing them." PSS, vol. 3: 432.

the termination of one work, the "Philosophical Principles," in favor of the other. Our only clue remains Solov'ëv's nephew Sergey, who wrote that Vladimir "had to abandon the idea of presenting his 'Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge' as a dissertation; this work remained unfinished and Solov'ëv began to write the more academic *Critique of Abstract Principles*."[8]

The complete text of the *Critique* consists of 46 chapters plus a conclusion, and a preface was added to the text when the serialized chapters were finally collected into a book. The first 11 of these chapters were quickly published in November and December 1877 and January 1878. After this, there was a break until October. We know that during the first months of 1878 Solov'ëv was largely preoccupied with his *Lectures on Divine Humanity*, either presenting them or attempting to shepherd them through the publication process. Unfortunately, the few pieces of correspondence from this period are brief and shed no light on his activities. After 10 months, however, publication of the *Critique* resumed with the appearance of an additional four chapters. Oddly, Solov'ëv, in a letter to Certelev dated 19 November, wrote: "I think that our [doctoral – TN] defenses will be at the same time, since I will hardly finish before the fall."[9] Thus, if we accept his words literally, he recognized that the completion of his dissertation would take almost an additional year.

[8] Solovyov 2000: 165. Sergey, a few pages further on, adds: "Gradually, not without pressure from Professor Vladislavlev, he [Solov'ëv – TN] gave up the idea of submitting 'Philosophical Principles' as his dissertation, replacing it with the *Critique*." Solovyov 2000: 174. The basis, if any, for Sergey's statement is unknown. Certainly, Vladislavlev could have taken on himself the responsibility to advise Solov'ëv that his proposed dissertation did not meet the acceptable standards. Another possibility is that the change in plans was due to Strakhov, who saw Solov'ëv regularly in St. Petersburg and who repeatedly advised him against submitting the "Philosophical Principles" as a dissertation. In a letter dated 11 November 1877, Strakhov wrote Tolstoy: "Solov'ëv is stopping his 'Principles of Integral Knowledge' – I dare not think that it is a result of my carping – and is beginning a new article in *Russkij Vestnik*, which he will present as a dissertation." Quoted in PSS, vol. 3: 360. It is certainly quite possible that Solov'ëv would listen to Strakhov's advice. In an undated letter to Strakhov, Solov'ëv once wrote: "I look upon you as my own uncle." *Pis'ma*, vol. 1: 1. In short, both Vladislavlev and Strakhov may have warned Solov'ëv about the unsuitability of the "Philosophical Principles" for the purposes of a doctorate.

[9] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 241. Indeed, just as Solov'ëv surmised Certelev did defend his dissertation *Schopenhauer's Erkenntnis-Theorie* at Leipzig University in the following year, 1879 – though Solov'ëv did not. Comparing the two works, Certelev's consisted of a scant 50 pages of text, whereas Solov'ëv's, as already mentioned, was relatively massive. On the other hand, the *Critique* was an attempt to expound an original systematic view and as such largely lacked footnote references; Certelev's, though, was replete with references and demonstrated familiarity with the history of modern philosophy including the nascent neo-Kantian movement. In 1880, Certelev published in St. Petersburg a Russian-language work entitled *Filosofija Shopengauera. Chast I: Teorija poznanija i metafizika* [*The Philosophy of Schopenhauer. Part I: Epistemology and Metaphysics*]. The second part of this work on the ethical views of Schopenhauer (and Hartmann) appeared in 1885 under the title *Sovremennyj pessimizm v Germanii* [*Contemporary Pessimism in Germany*].

Yet, in a letter to Kireev from 16 December he boldly asserted the immanent completion of the work: "As I told you, it seems, I intend in a short time (in February or March) to publish my dissertation *Critique of Abstract Principles*, extracts of which were included in *Russkij vestnik*."[10]

Nevertheless, he toyed at this time with other possibilities. In the December letter to Kireev, he wrote of appending the entire text of the *Lectures* to his dissertation. Such a move would, perhaps, be understandable if we recognize his mounting frustration getting the individual lectures published in *Pravoslavnoe obozrenie*. Solov'ëv explained that by supplementing his dissertation with the lectures – under some suitable title – they together would "form a very voluminous book and by that fact alone would pose little danger from the censor's point of view."[11] In the November letter to Certelev, he even spoke of publishing something – exactly what is unclear and is still a subject of controversy – in the relatively "liberal" journal *Otechestvennye zapisky* (*Notes of the Fatherland*).

Solov'ëv, again and again while writing his dissertation, informed his friends that its completion was only a few months away. In February 1879, he wrote Certelev that it will "definitely" be finished in the summer and defended in the fall.[12] In the summer, he again informed his friend that he was busy writing, but that at last he had finished the first, ethical part of the work and had then plunged into, what he termed, the "abyss of metaphysics." Finally, in the fall of 1879 Solov'ëv confidently informed Certelev that he "absolutely will finish" his dissertation and defend it in February of the following year. However, he added a curious cautionary comment that if he could not have the defense in St. Petersburg under Vladislavlev, he would go to Warsaw to defend it under Heinrich Struve. He, then, added, "I hope I will not have to resort to the latter."[13] Shortly after this, on 23 October, Solov'ëv wrote to Vladislavlev elaborating on what possibly lay behind his comment to Certelev. Solov'ëv, apparently, had heard that Vladislavlev was considering leaving the University and continued: "I consider you to be the only professor of philosophy in the Russian universities who actually teaches philosophy, and not the devil knows what. Besides, I have a personal reason to regret your departure, since certainly only with you would I want to deal with regard to my doctoral dissertation, which I am

[10] Quoted in PSS, vol. 3: 432. Thus, even taking into consideration the usual time for procedural matters required before the public defense of a dissertation, it is difficult to reconcile this typically optimistic completion date of early 1879 with the projected defense only in the following fall, as stated in his November 1878 letter to Certelev. That is, it is unclear why he thought he could finish his work so much more quickly than he thought just a month earlier.

[11] Quoted in PSS, vol. 3: 433. The censors understood well enough that the larger the volume, the less likely it would be read and therefore the less chance that it would pose a threat or cause a scandal.

[12] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 247.

[13] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 250.

now finishing. Do I really have to submit it to the judgment of that farcical fool Troickij or run to the foreign city of Warsaw and that German Struve?"[14]

Solov'ëv finished writing the *Critique* at the end of December 1879 and quickly sent the final chapters and conclusion to the editor of *Russkij vestnik*, N. A. Ljubimov, for inclusion in the January 1880 issue. That accomplished, the dissertation had to be typeset as a complete book and distributed to the faculty in accordance with the academic regulations of the time. All administrative matters were handled expeditiously, and the defense was scheduled for 6 April. An announcement that it would take place appeared on 4 April in the newspaper *Novoe vremja* as well as in two others on the actual day of the defense.

Seen as a cultural event in nineteenth century Russia, Solov'ëv's doctoral defense now appears to us to have been placid and uncontroversial. In spite of the fact that Solov'ëv faced questions from *seven* official opponents, he handled all of them adroitly and without the rancor that accompanied his *magister*'s defense some years earlier. Vladislavlev, for his part, approvingly, called the dissertation a bold attempt to substantiate mysticism by means of critique and stated his fundamental agreement with the principal thesis. He congratulated Solov'ëv for his talent in creating a broad philosophical synthesis and for his enormous erudition. However, the second opponent, the professor of theology, V. G. Rozhdestvenskij, claimed that, from his perspective, Solov'ëv had said nothing new: The German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher had already expressed essentially the same ideas years earlier.

[14] Quoted in PSS, vol. 3: 434. That Solov'ëv would express rather sharp words about Troickij, while regrettable, is somewhat understandable in light of their sharply differing philosophical positions and that the latter became Jurkevich's successor at Moscow University, a position that Solov'ëv had coveted for a time. Solov'ëv's attitude towards Struve is another matter. Struve, after all, defended his own thesis in Moscow under Solov'ëv's teacher, Pamfil Jurkevich in 1870. Rather than objecting to Struve, Solov'ëv may simply have had an aversion to defending his thesis in Catholic Poland, which, though a part of the Russian Empire, was generally considered by the cultural elite of Moscow and St. Petersburg as an "intellectual backwater." Solov'ëv, apparently, objected both to the "German" Struve *and* the "foreign" city of Warsaw! If we take this comment as his considered opinion, we have to conclude that Solov'ëv had not significantly modified his earlier chauvinistic Slavophilism! PSS, vol. 3: 434. Possibly, Solov'ëv objected to Struve's ethnicity, though Struve himself was clearly *not* hostile to all things Russian. He did, after all, take his final academic degree in Russia, wrote and lectured in Russian and accepted a position within the confines of the Russian Empire. Possibly Solov'ëv objected to Struve's philosophical bent, though he too was sharply critical of reductionist psychologies and in other respects they were not philosophically that far apart. Parenthetically, Struve's own dissertation defense in Moscow, which lasted more than five hours, itself caused quite a stir and the dissertation itself drew notable attention. See Joravsky 1989: 96. An intense exchange ensued in 1870 over Struve's work that included the publication of two brochures by N.A. Aksakov and two by S. A. Usov. Struve replied in a lengthy article of his own taking to task both Usov and Aksakov. See Struve 1870. Aksakov charged Struve with harboring a "latent materialism" despite a manifest disavowal of it, a charge that Struve vehemently denied. Curious given Solov'ëv's enduring attachment to Jurkevich, on the one hand, and Solov'ëv's attitude displayed to Struve, on the other, is the fact that Jurkevich defended Struve's dissertation in a lengthy article. See Jurkevich 1870. It is unclear, however, whether Solov'ëv knew of this piece.

Solov'ëv casually dismissed any such comparison, though he admitted an affinity with the later Schelling. Such was the general tenor of the questions and comments. The audience that day included Dostoyevsky, Kireev, the still today renowned chemists Aleksandr Butlerov and Dmitri Mendeleev, and, of course, Strakhov, who soon reported his impressions to Tolstoy:

> Yesterday was Vl. Solov'ëv's dispute for the doctor of philosophy, which finally turned out to be a great triumph. He himself performed splendidly. He spoke calmly and plainly, yet in a masterful manner. Unfortunately, there were no forceful objections, and not a single one of the seven opponents dealt with the essential issue. However, this often happens at such disputes. This is why everything took place rather listlessly. The two positivists, who jumped in at the end, were toppled over by Solov'ëv with Olympian tranquility.[15]

Needless to say, with all questions answered to the satisfaction of the examiners Solov'ëv was awarded his degree. A number of newspaper accounts – some brief, some lengthier; some soon, some later – appeared in the press, the longest of which, though dated more than a month later, was that signed simply "A. K.," obviously Solov'ëv's old friend Aleksandr Kireev. However, before turning to any of these, which, after all, constitute part of the contemporary critical literature, we first need to examine the *Critique* itself.

5.2 The Aim of the *Critique*

The natural starting point for anyone undertaking to read the *Critique* is the book's "Preface." Yet as with Hegel's infamous "Preface" to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Solov'ëv's "Preface" was written only upon completion of the entire work, roughly 2 years after he first set out writing the book. Fortunately for us, Solov'ëv's "Preface" is by no means as difficult as Hegel's. Nevertheless, as we saw, Solov'ëv's thought was rapidly evolving during at least the period he was engaged in writing the first chapters. For this reason, anyone hoping to understand the work as a whole must tread cautiously. Prudence dictates that we look at specific claims made in the "Preface" in their proper context, i.e., as conclusions of various trains of thought reached only after having analyzed the respective problems. Solov'ëv makes clear, however, that his underlying *attitude* has not changed over the years since he wrote *The Crisis*. As he had done there, he reaffirms here in the "Preface" his earlier conviction that the epoch dominated by isolated principles struggling for exclusive hegemony is approaching an end. In its place, humanity is proceeding towards a great synthesis: the realization of an all-encompassing or all-unity (*vseedinstvo*) in life,

[15] Quoted in PSS, vol. 3: 436. Solov'ëv himself wrote a relatively objective account of the defense, for whatever reason, to Kireev in an undated letter. See PSS, vol. 3: 439–441, and for an English translation of much of it see Solovyov 2000: 218–222.

knowledge and creativity.[16] Isolated, or abstract, principles, considered apart from this all-unity, lose what veracity they have within their severely restricted confines.[17] Although this synthesis is not the work of a single individual or individuals, but humanity as a collective whole, it can be consciously recognized as such a synthesis *by* individuals. Moreover, unlike in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, where successive forms of consciousness and cultural life wither and succumb under an immanent critique purportedly without the importation of external criteria, Solov'ëv informs us at the start that his critique *presupposes* the idea of an all-unity in general: "This critique is based on a certain positive conception of what the genuinely integral or all-one is, and therefore it is a positive critique. In the first place, it presupposes the idea of the all-one in a general and yet undefined way as a certain unconditional criterion, without which no critique is possible. In the second place, determining the true significance of particular principles as isolated elements of the all-one, this critique (as a result of it) imparts to the latter a certain definite content. It develops for us the idea of the all-one."[18] The similarity with the *Phenomenology* lies principally in the fact that the successive forms of consciousness fall to internal contradiction when each in turn attempts to pose as the absolute or sole principle. We are not, then, to look in this *Critique* for a *direct* proof for the existence of this all-unity. On the other hand, by presupposing the idea of an all-unity Solov'ëv flies in the face of Hegel's admonition against "rapturous enthusiasm which, like a shot from a pistol, begins straight away with absolute knowledge."[19] Nevertheless, by showing the true significance of these abstract principles as elements within the true all-unity, Solov'ëv's *Critique* – so he tells us – provides definite content to the abstract principles as well as helps substantiate an acceptance of the idea of the all-unity. In a final sweeping generalization in the "Preface," he writes that science,

[16] In *not* setting Western rationalism against Eastern Orthodoxy with its notion of all-unity, Trubeckoj sees Solov'ëv as already taking "a significant step beyond the Slavophiles." Solov'ëv, in this interpretation, set his understanding of the notion of integral truth against both the God-less individual of the West and the human-less God of the East. See Trubeckoj 1995. vol. 1: 121. Motroshilova writes that the concept of "life" is closely connected in Solov'ëv's philosophy with that of all-unity. However, this is horribly vague. Motroshilova 2002: 18.

[17] Solov'ëv's concept of "all-unity" comes to the fore only here in the *Critique*. He takes for granted its intelligibility and completely fails to mention its paternity. Almost surely the Russian term *vseedinstvo* is his rendering of F.W.J. Schelling's *Alleinheit*. Schelling, for example, writes that, "Spinoza's error lies not in that he maintains an all-unity but in that this all-unity is dead, motionless and lifeless." Schelling 1857: 72. Conceivably, Solov'ëv was led to this concept through von Hartmann, who also used the term. See Hartmann 1869: 450ff. Solov'ëv's predilection for using "all-unity" in various contexts makes it difficult to judge the veracity of de Courten's remark that it serves as the "philosophical equivalent" of the expression "Divine Humanity." There is no one-to-one equivalence, since "all-unity" is used much more broadly to include all creation and not just a projected deification of the human race. See de Courten 2004: 134.

[18] We will see shortly that Solov'ëv did not set out writing the *Critique* with this presupposition consciously in mind.

[19] Hegel 1977: 16.

in isolation, yields positivism; abstract philosophy yields Hegelianism, and abstract clericalism results in the Catholic papacy.[20]

Solov'ëv's first chapter begins with a set of elementary psychological observations that he clearly believes leads the reflective person down a philosophical road. On the one hand, each of us is firmly convinced that we possess a free will and that we are autonomous beings responsible for our own lives. On the other hand, we also feel that we are not alone in the cosmos, that there is something greater or higher than ourselves to which or to whom we must ultimately answer. We also feel that our "spirit," our life-force, so to speak, cannot possibly be of our own creation. These apparently contradictory beliefs are just that, namely, an appearance, for the opposing beliefs can be reconciled at least in the minds of those receptive to a synthetic unity. What we find from this synthetic standpoint is that we have merely been looking at a single idea from two different angles. Indeed, Solov'ëv holds that from the external or objective viewpoint we will see that the subjective viewpoint, viz., that we are free, is itself necessarily seen as a fact. He proposes that we accept the subjective viewpoint as a fact that inescapably determines our entire life and see what logically follows from that acceptance.

Before turning to concrete analyses, however, Solov'ëv makes some additional remarks. The proper object of thought should be what is true, the proper object of actions should be what is good, and, of course, the proper object of aesthetic sensibility should be what is beautiful. The thoughts, actions and sensibilities that have these proper objects are considered "normal."[21] Nevertheless, such a claim only raises the further question of how we are to know when we have secured normality in the respective spheres. Clearly, there must be some standard or positive criterion, a criterion deduced from the supreme principle in each sphere. Historically, many principles have been proposed as supreme, a good number of which have demonstrated only a limited veracity. We simply cannot turn our backs on the historical record, nor can we simply force an artificial and mechanical synthesis upon the various proposals, as though grafting one successive principle onto another would result in a single, intrinsically consistent principle. Instead, Solov'ëv states he hopes to find a comprehensive principle that will relate to the others like the soul of an

[20] PSS, vol. 3: 15. Logically, the *terminus ad quem* of science and abstract philosophy, both seen as theoretical expressions, can itself only be a theoretical expression, not an institution. For the sake of consistency, if for no other, Solov'ëv might have concluded that abstract clericalism results in the Catholic *doctrine* of the role of the papacy, but surely not the papacy itself. On a more fundamental level, though, Solov'ëv's introduction of "abstract clericalism" is totally out of place. He writes of where both science and philosophy lead if taken in abstraction, but then instead of "clericalism" he should have written of where abstract religion, i.e., religion independent of other disciplines and life, leads. Where that is is anyone's guess. Could it be that very mysticism which forms a part of Solov'ëv's philosophy?

[21] Thus, here in the *Critique*'s first chapter, written no later than early November 1877, Solov'ëv gave a clearer statement of how he understood a "normal" action than in his December "Faith, Reason and Experience." On the safe assumption that his usage of "normal" was the same in the two pieces, we can now conclude with even greater assurance that Solov'ëv, in late 1877, viewed faith as supplying moral principles.

organism to that organism's various appendages and parts. Before answering whether there is such a comprehensive principle, however, we must first examine the other candidates with an eye to whether their one-sidedness has an intrinsic logical basis or whether their significance is of merely historical interest as fortuitous proposals made along the developmental path of human consciousness.

Solov'ëv believes that the historically proffered supreme principles fall into two categories: those that were accepted on the basis of faith alone, i.e., "positive" principles, and those that arose in an individual consciousness from a rational inquiry intended specifically to determine general norms, i.e., abstract, or "negative," principles. We recognize positive principles as binding on us only when we recognize them as sanctioned by a divine power. On the other hand, abstract principles are the product of an individual consciousness and as such have no higher sanction. Solov'ëv quickly adds that this dichotomy does not preclude the admixture of any abstraction into positive principles nor of dogmatism into abstract principles. After all, attempts are occasionally made to *justify* positive principles rationally – as Anselm sought to do with his ontological proof of God's existence – but, being positive, they are never *established* by reason. For example, Anselm's religious belief would not have been shaken even if he had been unable to provide a philosophical proof for God's existence. Likewise, Solov'ëv adds that rational principles themselves must ultimately rest on a faith in reason. Whether this last statement can stand philosophical scrutiny is an issue that is best left aside.

Reaffirming a position we have already seen, Solov'ëv holds that every (actually existing) object has three sides: (1) a *substantial existence*, or, in the terminology of his article "Faith, Reason and Experience," an "inner essence"; (2) a *general essence*, viz., the logical conditions under which alone others can conceive or think of the object; and (3) its *external, apparent actuality*. The first side is the intended object of faith, or mystical perception, the second side is the intended object of philosophical speculation, and the third that of empirical science. Concern with each side forms a type of knowledge: religious knowledge, philosophical or rational knowledge, and scientific or empirical knowledge, respectively. Only the harmonious synthesis of the three can provide the complete, integral truth of the intended object, and the pursuit of such truth alone can lead to human intellectual satisfaction. We hardly need point out that Solov'ëv adduces no evidence for the existence of religious knowledge. Indeed, the principles that constitute or follow from religious knowledge are explicitly *not* the object of the *Critique*. Consequently, the very possibility of the mentioned synthesis is not to be argued for in this work. Instead, Solov'ëv proposes to examine the logical consistency of the abstract, empirical principles that result from our intellectual activity on empirical data, on the one hand, and the formal determinations or principles of pure reason, on the other. The thesis of the *Critique* is that *all* abstract principles, i.e., principles taken in the abstract or separately, are "logically" inadequate. Although each abstract principle takes itself as having absolute veracity, all have only a limited or relative truth, as Solov'ëv's analyses hope to reveal. As a result, we must conceptually ascend to an ever more complete synthesis of the principles and, thereby, of the three types of knowledge. Despite the unmistakable influence of Hegel here, we should also note that since Solov'ëv states at the outset that he will not deal

with religious principles, he, unlike Hegel, has precluded any chance of fully demonstrating the possibility of a complete synthesis, let alone that one is necessary. In short, what he hopes to achieve is an indirect argument for the synthesis.

5.3 Empiricism in Ethical Theory

Solov'ëv recognizes that ideally the *Critique* should consist of three parts: one each devoted to ethics, epistemology and aesthetics. Yet, as he frankly acknowledges, the finished work contains only the first two owing to special difficulties involved with unspecified problems related to aesthetic creativity.[22] Although, as mentioned, all moral activity aims at the good, the specific determination of just what is the good has been disputed since humans first turned their attention to it. Empiricism in ethics seeks to derive the good, or normal aim of practical activity, from experience, i.e., from what people actually do desire. One obvious candidate for the good is pleasure, and the view that espouses its pursuit is hedonism. Unlike Hegel, who also starts his examination of ethics with hedonism, Solov'ëv explains why he sets out where he does: The common element in the successful completion of all practical activity is a subjective satisfaction, or pleasure. Surely, however, in the belief that it does not require or deserve much attention, Solov'ëv dismisses it rather casually and abruptly, and, frankly, he has nothing new to say concerning it: With our physiological make-up, we cannot continually experience pleasure, and taken in isolation it cannot prove satisfying for long. The ultimate practical aim of the hedonist cannot be a continuous state of unending pleasures, which is impossible, but only an existence in which pleasurable states predominate over unpleasant ones. Solov'ëv takes such a condition as what we mean by happiness, and with it we pass from hedonism to eudemonism.

That all of us seek happiness is both obvious and, at the same time, a vacuous claim. Different people find happiness in different ways and in the attainment of different goals. Some hold the aim of moral action to be happiness in this life, whereas others hold that aim to be eternal happiness in an afterlife. Eudemonism is, in any case, inherently ambiguous and in need of further elucidation. Like Plato and many others succeeding him, Solov'ëv believes the predominance of material or earthly satisfaction over dissatisfaction cannot represent the truly *human* good. Surely in order to be happy we must have a certain level of material satisfaction, but this is a negative condition, which cannot by itself make us happy. Although many think happiness lies in physical pleasures, such happiness invariably turns out to be illusory. Pleasures are of brief duration, leading nowhere and have no intrinsic value of their own.

Despite Solov'ëv's assurance that this examination of hedonism reveals its intrinsic untenability as a moral doctrine, his criticism of it rests on a fact of human

[22] Although in succeeding years he did go on to compose a number of short pieces on aesthetics, he never succeeded in presenting his thoughts on the subject in a single, systematic work as he would, for example, for ethical theory.

nature – a contingent fact that logically could be otherwise – namely, that the pursuit of pleasure alone cannot serve as our ultimate aim in life. That he finds such a pursuit to be unsuitable as a human goal is a matter of his independent conception of what is properly human, a conception for which he has not argued here and not owing to some internal contradiction within hedonism and eudemonism that forces us to continue on. He also levels essentially the same criticism at the exclusive pursuit of purely aesthetic or intellectual enjoyment. Since both find happiness in the pursuit of the ideal realms of beauty and thought respectively, neither has a direct relationship to the *active* life, i.e., to the practical activity in this world that he holds to be truly human but which he certainly has not already demonstrated.[23]

Another type of enjoyment is that connected with the general satisfaction of one's individual wishes, whatever they happen to be, even at the cost of interfering with another person's deliberate pursuits. We commonly label such a position "egoism." Both Solov'ëv *and* Hegel criticize egoism for its exclusive concern with oneself and therefore its lack of "universality," which they believe is inherent in the very idea of morality: "Egoism and its enjoyment obviously cannot ground a moral principle, i.e., an objective and universal principle of practical activity. For its exclusive realization by a single individual presupposes a passivity on the part of others. However, if this exclusive realization were to be a *universal* principle, if the activity of all was equally driven by active egoism, the egoism of each would be paralyzed by the egoism of all."[24] The only way in which some form of egoism can be saved is by setting the happiness *of all* as the aim of each individual's practical activity. In doing so, our initial egoism is transformed into utilitarianism. It preaches that the good lies in the benefit or happiness not of myself alone, but of all others affected by my actions. However, if the principle of utility is a *moral* principle owing only to the fact that it, unlike egoism, takes others into account, i.e., the element of altruism, then the logical basis of utilitarianism is not its call for utility or happiness, but its altruism. Surely, everything we do has utility and happiness in some form as its ultimate aim. Thus, the pursuit of happiness cannot be what makes a particular activity a *moral* activity. That utilitarianism and eudemonism view pleasure, happiness and even utility as the essential ultimate aim of all moral actions shows that they have not fully distinguished themselves from egoism. On this basis, Solov'ëv concludes that the utilitarian principle is not a moral principle.

In his final assessment of utilitarianism, we see once again the unmistakable influence of Schopenhauer on Solov'ëv, who concurs with the former's judgment.[25] Despite this agreement, however, and in keeping with his general outlook on the history of philosophy as linearly progressive, Solov'ëv saw Schopenhauer's own ethical theory, based on a universal and manifest feeling of sympathy, as

[23] This itself tells us more about how Solov'ëv saw himself and the messianic role that he saw himself playing in Orthodox Christian Russia than about any purported deficiency in eudemonism.

[24] PSS, vol. 3: 31.

[25] Schopenhauer writes, "If an action has as its motive an egoistic aim, it cannot have any moral worth. If it is to have moral worth, its motive cannot be an egoistic aim, direct or indirect, near or remote." Schopenhauer 1965: 141.

"the definitive form of empirical ethics."[26] Solov'ëv professes that his aim is not to refute Schopenhauer, but to show the limitations of the latter's moral theory. He finds Schopenhauer's supreme ethical principle, "Harm no one, but help everyone as much as possible," to have genuine ethical significance, and holds the German philosopher in high regard for recognizing sympathy as the fundamental ethical phenomenon.[27] Altruism is, after all, nothing other than that *natural* feeling and is the sole empirical basis of morality. However, "philosophical ethics," or metaethics in today's terminology, is concerned not with a statement of the facts, but their explanation. Solov'ëv, in other words, believes we need to provide a *reason* why sympathy, as a fact, a fact present as well in non-human animals, *should* lead to *human* moral action.

Solov'ëv's criticism notwithstanding, Schopenhauer does recognize the need for a rational answer to the question why we should act morally, but turns for an answer to his cherished metaphysical belief that all individuation is illusory, the veil of Maya. For Schopenhauer, sympathy lifts that veil and reveals the actual identity of all living creatures. Solov'ëv, on the other hand, finds such a metaphysical explanation not just unsatisfactory, but counterproductive. If individuation were illusory, as Schopenhauer holds, then moral activity, i.e., helping other individuals, would also be illusory. Thus, Schopenhauer's metaphysics leads to a rejection of morality, not its justification. The intent of moral activity is not to affirm that we are all truly one, but to help others in their "phenomenal" existence as individual beings. Morality, in other words, is the affirmation, not the denial of the individual as such. Solov'ëv concludes that we must look elsewhere, rather than to Schopenhauer, for the rational ground of morality. However, the latter has revealed the eternal principle of morality with its positive demand "Help everyone." Not only should we not inflict suffering on others, but we should free them from any suffering they are experiencing.

Suffering according to Solov'ëv is not merely a matter of pain. Rather, the suffering he has in mind is that which arises from being determined by others or by externality in general. In short, it occurs when the will remains unfulfilled. Thus, the ultimate goal of a human being's moral activity is to free others – all others – from any external constraints.[28] We see, then, that an essential condition of morality is an

[26] PSS, vol. 3: 34. This assessment was already questioned at the time by Solov'ëv's most dogged critic, Boris Chicherin, who found Adam Smith to be a more consistent and thorough moral empiricist: "With the intent to show the inadequacy of experience as the basis of morality, one has to turn to those writers who stand exclusively on its ground, viz., the English and Scottish moralists, Hutcheson and, in particular, Adam Smith, who developed an entire moral theory based on the principle of sympathy." Chicherin 1880: 29.

[27] Schopenhauer himself provides the principle in Latin: "*Neminem laede; imo omnes, quantum potes, juva*." Solov'ëv provides the Latin and his own Russian translation of it. See Schopenhauer 1965: 147; PSS, vol. 3: 35. Solov'ëv continued to regard sympathy as the *natural* basis of moral feeling long after he had distanced himself from Schopenhauer's influence.

[28] Solov'ëv clearly recognizes that the eradication of suffering caused by externality can be accomplished only upon the achievement of a moral world in toto. That is, morality demands that the external conditions in which we all live be made rational. For this reason, as we will see, he must turn in due time to social and political philosophy albeit from a moral point of view.

autonomous, or self-legislative, will, and the possibility of moral activity directly depends on the conditions for such an autonomous will. Clearly inspired by Kant, Solov'ëv sees the human will as heteronomous, i.e., as conditioned and constrained, at least at present to some significant degree, by external factors. Morality, however, demands an autonomous will, a will that responds to the universal law of reason that can say what should be, even though it is not. The conditions that make the truly autonomous will, i.e., the moral will, possible cannot be obtained from experience. It is for this reason that the ground of morality must be free from any trace of the empirical and the reason why we must turn to Kant's ethical theory.

5.4 Rationalism in Ethical Theory

Solov'ëv begins his discussion of Kantian ethics believing he has already convincingly demonstrated at least the limitations, if not the untenability, of utilitarianism and any ethical theory that has an empirical foundation. Quite simply, his argument rests on accepting the (Kantian) formalistic view of universality as a criterion of a moral principle. It is precisely this view, though, with its understanding of the term "universality," that Solov'ëv has not proven. That said, he, like Kant, takes moral action to be action that is *obligatory* for *all* rational beings. Regardless of whether or not they have an inclination to perform it, what motivates a moral action cannot simply be a *desire* to act in that manner, for that would be a merely subjective desire. No, what makes a moral action *moral* is not the inclination to do it, but the obligation or duty attached to its performance. Solov'ëv adds, however, that it does not follow from this that an action is amoral, as Kant thought, if someone recognizing an obligation nevertheless performs that act out of an inclination to do so. "Since the general *form* of the moral principle, conceived as universal and necessary, determines our duty, or obligation, and our feeling of sympathy is a psychological motive for a moral action, these two factors cannot contradict each other. They are two different sides of the matter – the material and the formal. In morality, as in everything else, form and matter are equally necessary."[29]

[29] PSS, vol. 3: 70. Solov'ëv immediately follows up with an intriguing claim, which he does not fully explain or develop: "However, the concept of universality presupposes *many* actors. If the principle of my action must be universal, there obviously must be other actors, for whom this principle must have that same significance. If a given subject were the sole moral actor, the principle of his action would have individual significance and could not be universal. Hence my very action as such necessarily presupposes others as its object." PSS, vol. 3: 70. This "moral argument" for the existence of others suffers from the fatal flaw that the rational principle in morality merely states that it holds for all rational beings, if there are such. We cannot conclude from it, however, that they do indeed exist. In his later *The Justification of the Good*, Solov'ëv cleaved the ethical from the epistemological sphere, having neither one dependent on the other. He, then, drew the logical conclusion that: "If the entire world were only my dream, only the objective, outwardly-oriented aspect of ethics (in the broad sense) would be destroyed but not its peculiar, inner sphere." SS, vol. 7: 33. In short, there would still be a sphere of moral obligations even were I the sole living creature in the universe.

Kant held that rational beings should never be treated as means to an end, but always as ends in themselves. For Kant, a rational being is one who possesses the faculty of reason, practical reason, regardless of whether or not that individual chooses to exercise it. Like Kant, Solov'ëv, as we saw, links the exercise of practical reason with autonomy, i.e., with being free. However, if we attempt to determine empirically which creatures are free – and therefore have a moral will – we find, on the contrary, that *all* are subject to the law of causality without exception, be they those to whom we surely ascribe rationality as well as those we do not. From another point of view, though – the transcendental point of view – all creatures are not merely appearances, but things in themselves initiating actions, as in Kant's formal ethics. Being things in themselves, *all* creatures are free! Solov'ëv corrects what he takes to be an inner contradiction of Kant's formal principle and obtains as a result the rule: "*The moral will as such must take as its genuine object all creatures not only as means, but also as ends*, or in the form of an imperative: *Act in such a way that all creatures form an end, and not just a means, of your action*."[30] If everyone were to treat all others as ends, the general result would amount to an organic unity within – to resurrect a Kantian expression – a kingdom of ends.[31]

Solov'ëv expresses the view that although Kant himself may have preferred his first, most abstract formulation of the categorical imperative this was merely a personal preference. Likewise, in believing that acting *from* inclination has no moral worth, even if that action should conform to duty, Kant was voicing a purely personal view. If the demand is that we be free of all inclination in order for our action

[30] PSS, vol. 3: 73. Solov'ëv's emendation of Kant's categorical imperative appears at first to rest on exceedingly shaky ground. Trubeckoj himself accuses Solov'ëv of committing "an obvious logical leap," ascribing it to Schopenhauer's influence, which was still so strongly felt. Trubeckoj 1995. vol. 1: 137. That all creatures are phenomenally subject to the law of causality in no way implies that all creatures are *noumenally* free. Additionally, even were they to be free we would have to determine just what kind of freedom this is. Phenomenal determinism is the denial to things and events of negative freedom. Even if Solov'ëv's argument would be logically valid, the most we could possibly conclude is that all creatures are negatively free. This does not mean, however, that they are free in the positive sense, i.e., possess practical, law-giving reason.

There certainly is much to be said for Trubeckoj's charges. Nevertheless, Solov'ëv did anticipate them. Kant holds that only rational creatures can be treated as the goal or end of moral actions. However, how are we to know which creatures have the requisite practical reason except by conformity to the moral law? If this possession is *actual*, i.e., demonstrated in action, we are caught here in a vicious circle: The moral law is defined by its object, viz., rational beings. Yet a rational being is determined by acting from the moral law. Furthermore, if we have moral obligations only to those who actually possess practical reason, i.e., those who act morally, then our moral obligations in general are *contingent* on the existence of other moral beings. No, the moral law must be absolutely obligatory for all and therefore devoid of empirical conditions. Thus, Kant must hold that morality concerns those who potentially possess practical reason, i.e., the faculty to initiate actions as autonomous or free beings. Again we can ask how we are to determine which creatures have this potential, and again the determination cannot be made on the basis of empirical data. Solov'ëv concludes that there is only one possibility, and formal ethics rests on it, namely that all creatures are not only phenomena but also have an inner essence or noumenon. As noumenal beings, then, all creatures are free. PSS, vol. 3: 71–73.

[31] Chicherin questioned whether holding all creatures as moral entities, as ends in themselves, is even possible. Can we hold locusts, beetles and worms as integral members of a kingdom of ends and thereby refuse to kill them even when they threaten us and our crops? Chicherin 1880: 138.

to be moral, he asks the impossible from us. What we need to know is whether the rational being can be free from this particular inclination, not inclination in general. Our concern is not with freedom of action, but with freedom of the will: Can I want something other than what I actually do want? This question can be understood in several ways, but for the purposes of moral philosophy the fundamental form is whether in overcoming, or displacing, our "lower," instinctual or emotional desires and wishes, our "higher," rational will is subject to some even higher necessary force. Clearly, we can overcome our lower desires. However, a question remains whether our rational will is itself subject to or determined by a higher force.

For Solov'ëv, like Kant and Schopenhauer, everything that happens in the world around us, the world of appearances, happens for a reason. In other words, all events are caused or determined. This causality can take different forms. For example, in the inorganic world causality is empirically manifested in purely mechanical terms. In the animal world, actions can occur not only as the result of some physical contact with an external object, such as a person being pushed, but from some inner motivation. An animal in the wild will leap at an attacker if it senses immanent danger. Human actions can arise in both of these ways, but human beings can also be motivated to act out of concern to conform to an ideal principle. In the last case, the principle or idea can be said to be the necessary cause of the subsequent action just as much as the impact of one billiard ball on another necessarily causes the movement of this other ball. A person's principles and ideas could be different from what they are and then, presumably, other actions would follow. If "free act" is understood as an unequivocally capricious act, then no action is free. However, being aware of a principle or idea is not enough to account for action. The person must be favorably disposed to act on that principle or idea. A billiard ball, struck by another, will not move if it is firmly glued to the table; there can be no constraints on its movement. Similarly, a person will not be moved to act if one's character is such that it resists carrying out actions consistent with the principle. Individuals will do as they want, but what they want is based on their respective characters. Thus, the ability to act on a moral principle, the ability to be moral, depends not on whether the individual has a good will, but on the person's character. That some people are able to surmount their "base" instincts does not prove that humans possess a free will. A saint's character is such that he or she simply cannot act immorally. Solov'ëv recognizes that he has not come to a definitive answer to the question of whether the will is free. He adds that if we were to limit ourselves to the empirically given, we would have to conclude, as Kant did, negatively. However, this cannot be the final word, for the issue demands that we not limit ourselves to the empirical realm. A thorough investigation requires that we ask what determines our empirically observable individual character. To Solov'ëv, it is clear that what we seek cannot be anything empirical, and accordingly our method cannot be that used in the natural sciences: "This new question can be answered only by means of speculation."[32]

Solov'ëv paused briefly after writing down the thoughts expressed above. When he did pick up his pen again, at most 1 month later, he effected, as it were, a

[32] PSS, vol. 3: 89.

conceptual leap. He now expresses not the slightest doubt that speculation is the only way to turn to resolve certain issues, such as whether the will is free, but for all his assurance he presents no argument that an empirical inquiry cannot accomplish the task at hand. He offers no chain of reasoning why a person's character cannot be determined through a purely empirical investigation. He is content to state that the matter is clear. He gives no indication that he has considered other logically possible solutions but found them wanting. When he resumed the serialized publication of the *Critique* with Chapter X in January 1878, he wholeheartedly endorsed Kant's notion of transcendental freedom, i.e., the ability to begin a causal sequence, as the means – the *only* means – to resolve the problem before him and thereby ground an ethical theory. Granted everything in experience is subject to natural causality. Therefore, *if* we are to hold that the will is free, that we *are* responsible for our actions, that we are moral beings, we *must* accept that our will is indeed free, albeit in another, non-empirical, sense, viz., transcendentally. The will of the moral agent must be free, i.e., must exhibit free causality, must be a thing in itself, for otherwise the agent would not be responsible for its actions and its actions would not be subject to moral scrutiny. If there were no strict dichotomy between the world of appearances and that of things in themselves, if we did perceive things as they are in themselves, there would be an unending series of conditions for any action and concomitantly no basis to delimit the series in an attempt to understand the action. [33]

Further investigation of the non-empirical, transcendental world lies beyond the scope of ethics. However interesting it may be to investigate whether the non-empirical world has laws of its own, an ethical inquiry has no pressing need for a definitive resolution to the problem of free will. For our purposes, a strictly non-metaphysical inquiry is sufficient.[34] The fundamental question of ethics is simply concerned with the difference between a morally good action and an immoral action. Like Kant, Solov'ëv holds that the special character of morality lies in its concern with whether a principle of action can serve as a universal law.[35]

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[33] Solov'ëv's discussion of free will is little more than a paraphrase of Kant's in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. See, for example, PSS, vol. 3: 92, and cf. Kant 1997: A535/B563. Solov'ëv continues this practice of paraphrasing Kant – actually, more often he quite simply translates Kant, though without indicating that this is what he is doing – through much of Chapter X of his own *Critique*. Solov'ëv, surely, could have written these pages quickly in late 1877 while immersed in his other concerns. Whereas Kant at least attempted to provide a theoretical foundation for an acceptance of the thing in itself in hundreds of preceding pages, Solov'ëv offers nothing of the kind.

[34] Of course, if a non-metaphysical inquiry into whether the will is free is sufficient for our purposes here, then much of the discussion we have just seen is irrelevant. In this respect, Solov'ëv foreshadows his later position in *The Justification of the Good* and sets himself apart from both Kant and Schopenhauer.

[35] Despite the puzzlement expressed by some of the relationship between Kant's first and second formulations of the categorical imperative, for Solov'ëv the issue is transparent. Whereas the first formulation concerns the *character* of moral activity; the second formulation concerns the *object* of moral activity, i.e., other beings as ends in themselves. The object of non-moral activity, on the other hand, is limited to the acting being. Kant's third formulation speaks of the ultimate goal of moral action, viz., the universal and intrinsically necessary kingdom of ends. Non-moral actions, on the other hand, have specific, contingent aims. PSS, vol. 3: 111.

Solov'ëv wholeheartedly endorses the Humean claim that empirically-derived principles cannot be truly universal. Thus, moral activity is not activity that lacks motivation, but activity that is motivated by adherence to an ideal or universal principle. Since moral activity logically presupposes a free will, human activity motivated by an ideal principle must be free! It is owing to our transcendental character as a thing in itself that universal ideas can move us to act.

Despite his overall admiration for Kant's ethical theory, on the one hand, and measured criticisms, on the other, Solov'ëv, consistent with his overall intention, stresses not its defects, but its limitations. It is not wrong, but incomplete. That is, every human action can be seen from two sides. On the one hand, we can concern ourselves with the subjective state of the individual, and, on the other, we can view the object and consequences of an action. The moral will does not exist in a vacuum nor does it wish to. Even if we should agree with Kant that the only truly good thing is a good will, that will does seek realization in the phenomenal world. If the moral will were frustrated at every turn, it would become impossible for the individual to will the good. For this not to be the case, we must turn to the necessary conditions under which the moral will can exist, and if we seek the development of the moral will, we must investigate the objective conditions that will promote or aid that development. Kant's moral theory is essentially a subjective, albeit rational, theory. What we need, though, is an objective ethics consistent with that subjective theory. In such an overall scheme, both the subjective and the objective sides are, as it were, moments or aspects of one complete ethical system. For Kant, each of us, as a rational being, is to act *as if* we were "a lawgiving member of the universal kingdom of ends."[36] For Solov'ëv, the object of all moral activity is, as we saw, all living creatures, but the goal is the organization of all these creatures in a kingdom of ends. Kant's concern is with the individual here and now. His perspective is essentially a-historical. Solov'ëv's perspective, on the other hand, *is* historical; his concern is with determining how this kingdom populated with moral beings can be achieved. Moral activity demands a social context. The notion of a hermitic moral saint is an oxymoron. A complete moral theory must pass from the question 'What ought I to do?' to 'How is the moral society to be realized?'

NOTE: In 1897, Solov'ëv included as a supplement to his just completed ethical treatise *The Justification of the Good* a revision of four chapters of the *Critique*. He informed his readers in a footnote that this supplement had actually been written some 20 years earlier when he was "under the influence of Kant and, in particular, Schopenhauer."[37] As a result of this editing, a succinct "Kantian" outlook is arguably even more apparent than in the original chapters. We can empirically ascertain that there are two general sorts of human action: one concerned with the good of others,

[36] Kant 1785: 87.

[37] SS, vol. 2: 351. Unfortunately, we have no further information as to when precisely this supplement was written or under what conditions. It is unlikely that it originated exactly 20 years earlier, i.e., in 1877, for that is when he, in all likelihood, composed the original chapters, of which this supplement is a revision. For this reason and taking into account Solov'ëv's testimony as well as its obvious Kantian influence, it must have been written sometime later the following year.

and the other aimed exclusively at improving, in some manner, one's own condition. As a matter of *fact*, we label the former to be morally good, whereas the latter is called morally bad. This fact needs to be explained: We need "to show the rational, intrinsically obligatory foundation of this factual distinction, i.e., to show *why* the first sort of action is what should be, or proper, and the second, what should not be."[38] The *empirical* foundation of the first is compassion; the second is based on egoism. However, both being facts of human nature, neither can explain what *should or should not* be done, and an intuitive approach to ethics is simply an abandonment of any rational explanation or justification of the facts.

Since we seek a *rational* explanation of the moral distinction between what should be and what should not, we cannot look within the empirically-given world around us. An explanation can be found only within the very concept of rationality. Only the very form of rationality gives moral worth to an action. Solov'ëv concludes again, just as he did originally, that an action can have moral worth even though it is performed to some degree out of inclination – just as long as it is not inclination alone without an awareness of obligation.

5.5 A Critique of Economism

With Chapter XII, Solov'ëv makes his first foray into social and political philosophy, albeit with a concern above all for ethics and the realization of a Kantian-inspired "kingdom of ends." Indeed, in his eyes, socio-political philosophy is the objective aspect or moment of moral philosophy. The ethical ideal cannot be realized apart from the realization of a moral society. Thus, a moral, or "normal," society serves as a necessary *objective* condition of the general moral ideal. Not surprisingly, he holds that a society can be compared to a *single* biological organism. The latter develops with a known origin and proceeds through determinate stages to a known end. Were Solov'ëv alive today, he would say that much of this process is written in the organism's genetic code. On the other hand, he held that the development of a society is not pre-ordained. How and in which direction a society will develop is a task it sets for itself. A biological organism cannot avoid its ultimate fate; each society, though, is free to do as it wishes. Without adducing any examples, either historical or from his own day, Solov'ëv tells us that each society posits its own ideal goal. Presumably, of course, that each society sets a particular ideal goal is a matter of fact. It is unclear, however, whether Solov'ëv thinks this is a necessary positing, i.e., that a society in order to be a society must lay down or posit an ideal goal for itself. Seen in this light, his claim is a broadening of the classic notion of the social contract. The social ideal, in any case, depicts how the society would like itself to be, i.e., how it conceives it *should* be. In positing this ideal, it should also posit the path that it sees leading to this ideal. Just as there is but one formal moral imperative, albeit expressible in several forms, so there should be just one social

[38] SS, vol. 2: 351.

ideal and one path leading to it. Nevertheless, we find little agreement today on just what the social ideal is and even less agreement on how that ideal is to be attained. Thus, our understanding of how morality applies to actual societies must be deficient in some manner. The mere fact that there is a dispute over the moral worthiness of the proposed social ideals, rather than a consensus around one ideal, is itself a fact that needs to be explained. Solov'ëv opines that the fault lies in isolating one element that comprises any actual society and applying the unique moral principle to that isolated element to obtain a social ideal. This process, however vaguely described, can be repeated for each element in society, resulting in competing social ideals, each of which bears an abstract character.

The proper understanding of society is that of a union of human individuals, the material content, bound together by a general or formal element that Solov'ëv terms "communalism" [*obshchinnost'*]. Every actual society faces a constant tension between the wishes of its members as individuals and the best interests of the society taken as a whole. Just as there can be no society in which there is no individual expression of thought and action, so there can be no society in which the aspirations of the individuals always dominate over the interests of society. Neither element, communalism or individualism, is intrinsically either good or bad. Communalism alone, for example, cannot realize the social ideal without the character development of the individuals in the society. The cost of personal slavery to the mechanical laws of society is paid at the expense of the individual's inner life. On the other hand, if the sense of individualism so predominates over communalism that the members see society merely as a means to the furthering of personal demands, the very existence of the society as a cohesive unit is jeopardized. The result of such individualism is "universal enmity and struggle. Instead of a harmonious kingdom of universal ends, society is transformed into a chaos of personal aspirations."[39] Individualism can serve as a moral force for the good only when each person strives for the realization of the universal moral idea, i.e., for the kingdom of ends or universal solidarity. Thus, the individual must act out of an inner sense of communalism. Likewise, true communalism is only possible with the full development of each member of society. The realization of the social ideal demands that the overall goal be that of each individual and that the goal of each individual be that of society. These goals, or ends, are the good. Morality itself, therefore, has two faces, or sides, communalism and individualism, comparable to a coin. One cannot be isolated from the other. In Kantian terminology, we have here an analytic judgment. Subjective, or individual, morality and social, or objective, morality go hand in hand. The intrinsic unity of individualism and communalism, both conceived in their proper, or true, relation to the other, is what Solov'ëv calls free communalism. When the two faces are not properly conceived or one is taken as the basis of the other, we enter into an error, from which true morality is impossible. One such error results in socialism.

No society can long exist, of course, without the material means for its continuance. Human activity on external nature to acquire these means is called work. It and that

[39] PSS, vol. 3: 119.

on which it is exerted form the basic element of life in society, the economic element. The assertion that the economic element serves not just as the material basis of social life but the ultimate basis of all other facets of that life leads to the principle of socialism. In Solov'ëv's understanding, socialism, as an abstract principle, preaches that objective morality is exclusively conditioned by the organization of economic relations. Thus, achieving the objective good should simply be a matter of the correct organization of those relations. Whether such a bald characterization of socialism can stand up to critical scrutiny is but one problem here. Solov'ëv keenly felt that the widespread attention accorded socialist theory in his own day showed it offered serious competition to his vision of the ideal society, competition not to be found in the capitalist's credo. Solov'ëv has no quarrel with the socialists who condemn the exploitation and misery of the proletariat. The development of a mass civilization with property rights, industry and a division of labor truly has resulted in economic evils that need to be addressed. Socialist theoreticians – and it is notable here that Solov'ëv mentions only Saint-Simon, Fourier, Proudhon and Lassalle, not Marx[40] – have noticed the morally improper relations that result from an economy based on absolute property rights. Property as such, however, is neither immoral nor unjust. All possessions and all economic relations are mere facts and as such have no moral significance. It is our use of them arising from our attitude that makes earthly goods moral or immoral: "The possession of material wealth in whatever form *can* be immoral when it is thought to be the ultimate goal of life and attaining it becomes the principle that determines our activity."[41] For Solov'ëv that socialists see the moral improvement of society as correlated exclusively with a society's economic structure shows the narrow scope of their vision. Both socialists and the bourgeoisie view material interests as what ultimately matters in life and nothing else as of intrinsic value. A human individual has significance only in relation to material goods. The final goal for both groups is material possessions. The socialist message is only a more consistent expression of the bourgeoisie's in that the latter still refers to other ideals in theory, though some socialists are guilty of this too.

Solov'ëv condemns the conviction that socialism alone is the morally correct economic system. No economic system embodies a moral principle, and even if socialism were the best *economic* order that would not mean it is *morally* the best system, that it forms the basis of the morally proper society. As with all abstract principles, socialism singles out only one particular aspect of human existence, interpreting everything else in terms of it. The chief error here is not that socialism demands too much be given to the working class, but that it demands too little with

[40] Trubeckoj writes that Solov'ëv was ignorant of Marx's ideas: "Karl Marx's name, however, is absent from this list, and this is no accident. Solov'ëv concerns himself exclusively with *utopian socialism*. The socialism calling itself *scientific*, apparently, remains unknown to him." Trubeckoj 1995. vol. 1: 156. We should add as well that even Solov'ëv's familiarity with the writings of the individual utopian socialists is quite unclear. We do not find here or elsewhere in the *Critique* specific discussions that would permit a judgment.

[41] PSS, vol. 3: 125.

respect to what Solov'ëv deems to be humanity's higher interests. A proper economic order is just one component in a proper society. The human being is not merely a *homo oeconomicus*. However, in viewing humanity exclusively in that way – all the while aiming for universality – Solov'ëv believes socialism commits philosophical suicide: "As with all abstract principles, socialism, representing one particular element of total human existence and limiting itself to this particular element, aspires to become everything, to overlay everything, and in this aspiration for completeness and universality it falls into an internal contradiction with itself and is logically annihilated."[42] We hardly need to point out that this alleged "internal contradiction" is of Solov'ëv's own making and is by no means immanent within the very concept of socialism. As an *economic* system, it is by no means necessary that its theoreticians – or practitioners – believe that the human individual is a mere "*homo oeconomicus*." However, even granting for the sake of argument that socialist theory views human individuals purely as economic actors we can and must question precisely where the contradiction lies. In posing as a theory of everything with an explanation for all historical events, socialism may be engaged in a certain overt duplicity, possibly even in a self-delusion of its own creation, but that is by no means a conceptual contradiction. Moreover, even were we to say that socialist theory is delusional would be to criticize or at least judge it based on an *external* conception of what reality truly is. Of course, Solov'ëv believes *his* conception of all-unity is just that, but he has not proven it to be so, nor does he even *attempt* to do so. Once again, we find him believing he has shown something to be *a priori*, viz., the inner contradiction of socialism, that is, *at best*, a posteriori.

Solov'ëv makes yet another attempt to demonstrate socialism's self-abnegation. He now takes socialism to be not solely a theory of economic reductionism, but an actual economic system the goal of which is the just distribution of material prosperity among all members of society. Solov'ëv never tells us the basis for his charge that socialism demands this or that, nor does he consider the possibility that socialism could preach anything other than what he claims for it.[43] In his eyes, socialism's demand for the equal distribution of material goods is fundamentally grounded in a demand for justice. The satisfaction of this demand can only be achieved if there are justly established and enforced laws insuring that each member of society is given what rightfully belongs to him or her. Such laws, in turn, depend for their implementation on a just political arrangement, i.e., a just state. On a practical level, socialists find that the recalcitrance of the existing authorities to effect justice

[42] PSS, vol. 3: 128–129. Walicki writes: "We may safely assume that in passing this judgment on socialism Soloviev had in mind Russian populist socialists who, as we know, represented a peculiarly extreme form of left-wing nihilism." Walicki 1997: 182. The merit of such a conjecture remains indeterminable. The fact is that Solov'ëv himself provides no references here and he paints his discussion in such broad strokes that any attempt to determine just who or what he had in mind can be nothing but sheer guesswork.

[43] Although admittedly his study is not intended to be a historical survey, in claiming that a theory makes one or another claim, independent of the historical context in which it was enunciated, Solov'ëv is as guilty as anyone of an "abstractionism."

forces them into active participation in the political arena including calls for a political revolution. Thus, socialism is not simply a call for justly distributed material prosperity, but for a just governance of the economic order. We see, then, that socialism cannot simply be an economic reductionism, for it itself ultimately must incorporate irreducible moral principles into its vision of how society should be. With this demand for economic justice, justice not merely for some but for each individual, we pass from the economic principle to the juridical. A morally proper society is one in which no individual can exploit others and in which everyone is treated as a rational *moral* being.

Solov'ëv's depiction of socialism suffers on many levels. Nevertheless, he is to be applauded at least for taking seriously the moral basis of socialism that many "scientific socialists" in his day tended to downplay, if not dismiss. Regardless of the inadequacy of his refutation of economic reductionism, his conception of political society leaves little room for doubt that he had distanced himself already as early as mid-1878 from both the Slavophiles, with their image of a glorious ancient Slavic nation living in harmony with itself and nature, and from the utopian Marxist notion of an ultimate withering away of the centralized socialist state. According to Slavophile doctrine, the Russian nation had no intrinsic need of written law, since its original laws arose organically out of social life and became in time part of the nation's customs and popular traditions.[44] For Solov'ëv, on the other hand, governments are logically instituted with the goal of bringing about a just social order. Given human nature what it is, the Slavophile ideal of a body of unwritten laws governing the community had to remain, at best, an unrealizable goal. In practice, the pursuit of the Slavophile ideal would prove deleterious to the furtherance of justice and the moral society. Of course, neither those within the Slavophile camp nor the orthodox Marxists would agree with Solov'ëv's ultimate assessment, and it is regrettable that he provides so little argument for his position. However sketchy this first foray into social philosophy may be, he does conceive the safeguarding of social harmony as a fundamental governmental function that economic prosperity alone cannot provide. Society is not merely an economic union of individuals, but a moral and legal union as well. In this way, we pass from the economic element of society to its juridical one.

5.6 Towards a Philosophy of Law

Solov'ëv's first foray into the philosophy of law is long on generalities, short on details, rich with conjecture, destitute of substantiation.[45] Written in self-imposed haste, these ruminations on the emergence of law straddle the divisions in nineteenth

[44] See Kireevskij 1911: 208.

[45] Trubeckoj too recognized that Solov'ëv had little appreciation at this time for the topic: "Of all the sections of the *Critique of Abstract Principles*, this is without doubt the weakest." Trubeckoj 1995: 169.

century scholarship. Solov'ëv certainly has no dispute with the claim that law develops over time as part of an impersonal, historical process. In saying this, he echoes the Slavophile stress on the "organic" nature of law.[46] This, however, is only its first foundation. The personal element, the human individual as such, becomes ever more prominent with humanity's historical development. A particular nation and its way of life become increasingly the product of the work of individuals who aspire for emancipation from the original unity of tribal life. Just as law partially reflects the immediate solidarity of such a life, another, later source is a contract among relatively isolated individuals. This "socio-political" contract establishes the relationship between individuals as individuals. Originally, the members of a primitive society lack separate and distinct goals and aspirations. Later, however, the goals of those who enter this contract entirely determine social laws. In this way, Solov'ëv forestalls a complete break with the "Historical School of Law" while yet ceding that the principle of the social contract enters into the formation of law and government. Thus, we see that two principles, that of organic development and of the "mechanical" contract, together are instrumental in the formation of law and government, the former predominant in the early stage of human history and the latter predominant later with the emergence of the sense of individuality. We can also easily see that these two principles are manifestations of the principles mentioned earlier of communalism and individualism respectively. Solov'ëv gives every indication that we are to understand his claims concerning the origin of law and government not merely as a philosophical analysis, as Hobbes, for example, did, but as a description of how they actually developed historically. Nonetheless, he fails to provide any historical evidence for his contentions. Concerning the two principles, he writes, "The first principle is predominant during the primitive stage of humanity at the beginning of history, whereas the second becomes predominant in the further development of the social way of life with the isolation of the element of individuality."[47]

With the actual emergence of a contractual society, laws become based on service to the common good, and a legitimate government sees itself as working for the benefit of society as a whole. Unfortunately not everyone has the same interests, and there is even less unanimity on how these interests are to be realized. Were it otherwise, there would be no need for government and laws. An actual government can at best set as its goal the betterment of the majority. At times, the interests of the individuals in society may become so diverse and so fragmented that even a simple majority of opinion becomes impossible. In such cases, a government can only seek to regulate these interests in such a manner that they become compatible

[46] PSS, vol. 3: 138. Although it was surely obvious to the members of his dissertation committee and the general reading public to whom he was referring here, the reference is purely implicit. Solov'ëv apparently did not see fit to footnote this point. Just as egregious was his failure to provide historical documentation for his claims concerning the emergence of law. In short, he takes as patently obvious precisely what he should have established.

[47] PSS, vol. 3: 141–142.

in practice.[48] Solov'ëv believes that a moral government must rise above all personal interests to treat all parties equally. Such work for the equal benefit of all is justice. Since this is not always possible, the most a government can sometimes do is insure that the interests of all the parties are respected and can be pursued within certain established bounds. A moral government works in and for the basic, common interest of everyone; such an interest is a right, albeit a negative one.

Although we cannot hold Solov'ëv responsible for not anticipating today's concerns and problems, we can reasonably ask of him just who – or what – possesses rights, what these rights are and what are their limits. In regard to the first of these, he is unequivocal: "A right is, above all, defined in terms of a relation between *people*." Thus, people have rights; things do not. Do animals have rights? At this crucial juncture, Solov'ëv is uncharacteristically silent! Taking his statement at face value, we can only conclude that animals have none. Yet, we saw earlier he held that animals are certainly not to be treated merely as means to an end, though they are non-rational creatures. Now, though, he goes on to write:

> A creature is called a person when its being for another does not exhaust it, i.e., when it cannot by its nature serve only as a means for another, but exists as an end in itself and for itself, a creature whose external actions meet with unconditional resistance, meet with something that does not yield unconditionally to these external actions. Such actions, consequently, are unconditionally intrinsic and independent. … This is *freedom* in the true sense of the word.[49]

Thus, a living being that is an end in itself *is* a person. Yet, animals too are to be treated as ends in themselves, though presumably they are not *aware*, or self-conscious, of any independence of action. Can we logically conclude, therefore, that for Solov'ëv animals are persons and, therefore, in turn have rights? Leaving aside this issue, however, Solov'ëv clearly regards freedom as a basis of a *human* individual's natural rights. Freedom here is defined in purely practical terms. There is no sense in demanding a right to the physically impossible. However, I have a right to something, a right that is to be acknowledged by others to act in some manner only if I recognize an *equal* right in others. In short, my freedom requires me to recognize others as equally free. Only if I restrict my freedom in exchange for their similar restriction do I have a right. In this way, Solov'ëv concludes with the formula: "*A right is freedom conditioned by equality*," or, as he also says, it is

[48] Walicki correctly observes that this notion can also be found in the work of Nicholas Korkunov, who taught law at St. Petersburg University. However, Walicki then goes on to say that this similarity of views "might be explained as due to the influence of one (probably Korkunov) on the other, …. Anyway, it is beyond doubt that each knew the relevant works of the other." Walicki 1997: 185. However, Walicki's evidence for Solov'ëv's knowledge of Korkunov's work is to another of Solov'ëv's works written some 15 years later. Korkunov's general outline of legal theory appeared only in 1886, thus some years after the appearance of the *Critique*! Thus, it remains an open question whether Korkunov influenced Solov'ëv's juridical and political philosophy.

[49] PSS, vol. 3: 144. Solov'ëv repeats these very words in a later treatise "Law and Morality." See SS, vol. 7: 498. Cf. Soloviev 2000: 138.

"the synthesis of freedom and equality." Regrettably, Solov'ëv's discussion is brief and begs for explication.[50]

Of the fundamental concepts in the *Critique*, that of freedom is among the least developed. This is particularly surprising when we recall the pivotal role it occupied in the development of German Idealism, a movement in which his disciples have said Solov'ëv was steeped. He introduces freedom abruptly, though it unmistakably is not directly connected, as it is in German Idealism, with epistemological issues. Yet Solov'ëv's conception of equality – civil equality – receives even less development. He states that every right has the equality of human worth as its necessary *form* – thereby again invoking, whether intentional or not, a parallel with Kant's epistemology – but such equality of human individuals is *not* an empirical fact. Rather, for Solov'ëv it is a thesis of reason, and he drops the issue at that. In this way, Solov'ëv's conception of equality is even less grounded than that of freedom and his position in this matter is hardly likely to convince anyone not already attracted to this rather nebulous and vague conception. Among the issues Solov'ëv should have addressed is the worth of the immoral person: Does the transgression of moral duties lessen the worth, and thereby negatively impact, the status of a rational being? Or is it the case that one's immoral conduct merely *appears* to lessen that person's worth, as Kant held?[51] Is it the case, then, that an individual cannot forfeit his equality in civil affairs? And if the answer in theory is negative, while in practice positive, what relevance does the theory have?

The established laws of a political society, i.e., a society united under and constrained by a set of laws, restrict certain activities but do not themselves provide or indicate any positive goal. In this sense, they express the negative side of morality, what the individual members may *not* do: "A legitimate government does not demand and cannot demand that all *help* each one and each one help all. It demands only that no one *wrongs* anyone."[52] However, that each of us should identify his or her own goal with that of others, that we should work together for a common end, is a positive moral demand that falls outside the scope of jurisprudence and governmental functions, properly speaking. The principle of justice does not indicate any

[50] One is sorely tempted here to supplement Solov'ëv's terse statements with some from Fichte, according to whom also a community of free beings is possible only if each member of the community freely restricts his/her external freedom in such a way that the other members of the community are also free. In his *Foundation of Natural Right*, Fichte claimed, just as Solov'ëv does, that this is the concept of right! Such a concept, according to Fichte, does not demand that a community of free beings actually exists. However, if it does exist, such a community must be based on this concept of right. Fichte 2000: 10–11. Although the similarity on this one point between Fichte and Solov'ëv is striking, there is again no evidence that the latter was familiar with the former's philosophy of law.

[51] Kant wrote: "Nonetheless I cannot deny all respect to even a vicious man as a human being; I cannot withdraw at least the respect that belongs to him in his quality as a human being, even though by his deeds he makes himself unworthy of it." Kant 1797: 580.

[52] PSS, vol. 3: 147. Walicki nicely summarizes Solov'ëv's position in stating that it "saw the function of law as both protecting and setting necessary limits to negative freedom; thus, it was perfectly in accord with the spirit of classical liberalism." Walicki 1997: 200.

specific goal but speaks merely of the *form* of our actions in a normal society. The "content" of our actions, i.e., the goals we set for ourselves in life, *can* be multifarious, in which case, as evidenced by the very fact of their diversity, they must be contingent and petty. The (rational) form of our actions can be commensurate with the content only if the latter rises above material nature, i.e., only if it too becomes rational, universal and absolute.

5.7 The Normal Society as a Free Theocracy

All of us as human beings are *material* beings and as such are creatures of nature. We also have a faculty of reason that makes us *human* beings and it is, of course, this faculty that sets us apart from other living creatures. Finally, we also have a mystical "side" that links us to the divine and accordingly makes each of us *divine* beings. None of these, be it the sensual, the rational or the mystical, is alone complete and exhaustive. That is, having physical bodies and carnal desires we cannot simply ignore the world around us and survive for long. However, *as* rational beings, we are not simply content with the contingent things that satisfy our material nature. Time and again, we see that the accumulation of mere material possessions is unfulfilling. After the quest for material security is achieved, some individuals turn to philanthropy, others to procuring timeless aesthetic works. We, nevertheless, invariably find in everyone a pursuit for the unconditional. Our material nature makes us strive for the acquisition of material things, and our rational nature impels us to strive for more than the merely contingent or conditional. We seek to make our actions conform to reason only to find that the rational, as Kant's early critics and even erstwhile successors noted, is but an absolute form, wholly lacking in content. Kant's categorical imperative, for example, is not wrong, but incomplete. For this reason, the categorical imperative cannot serve as an unambiguous guide for action in this world. Our aspiration for unconditional form *and* content is actually an aspiration for the all-unity and represents in Solov'ëv's eyes an indisputable fact! Our mystical or divine "side" provides just such unconditional content.[53] Here again, we find Solov'ëv appealing to a faculty or type of experience whose very existence, let alone claims for it, many would call into question. Yet, he does meet his skeptic challenger at least partway. As individual, finite beings, all of us can obtain absolute content by becoming a whole – meaning, presumably, a part of the all-unity and the all-unity part of us – that is, by *positive* interaction with all other

[53] In this matter, it is surely germane again to situate Solov'ëv vis-à-vis Kant and Fichte. Solov'ëv agrees with Fichte that ethics must be "material," i.e., must have content, as well as be formal. However, whereas Solov'ëv appeals to the "mystical" supposedly in each of us to provide this content, Fichte appeals to self-constitutive acts of the individual Ego, or I. Despite the technicality of the details, the difference in the two approaches is dramatic. Solov'ëv harkens to an implicit "original" ontological unity of the individual with everything, including the divine, whereas Fichte sketches an original unity within the Ego that demands a genetic analysis for its description.

human beings. Under positive law, we are *limited* by others, but in the all-unity we are complete.[54] What precisely Solov'ëv means by this is unclear. He does tell us, however, that the feeling of *love* serves as the psychological basis for this union of rational beings. Such a union, in which each member views the others as complementary rather than restrictive and in which each member is regarded as an end rather than a means to an end, is a mystical or religious society. Solov'ëv simply refers to this society, most regrettably, as "the Church," thereby mentally invoking an association of this social ideal with established religion, though this is not his explicit intent. Presumably, he envisions this goal of all-unity along the lines of a greatly enlarged family, in which each member truly cares for the welfare of the others and for the integrity of the whole while yet retaining one's own individuality. Sadly, he never addresses the concrete feasibility of this idea particularly in light of our continually enlarging human family.

Solov'ëv is eager to contrast his own position with its integration of the mystical, rational and material against a religious or mystical view that excludes or at least severely limits the role of reason and the senses in the acquisition of the unconditional. In the latter, "abstract" view, which, as we saw in our introductory comments on the "Preface," he calls "abstract clericalism," God is posited as external and separate from human beings and nature. God and His existence is a revealed fact, a matter of sheer revelation, and reason as a mode of access to the Deity is rejected.[55] Additionally, "abstract clericalism" regards the material side of human nature as a source of sin. This position seeks not only to suppress reason and a legitimate role for the sensuous side of human nature, but also to subordinate earthly societies and institutions to the authority of existing religious organizations. In Solov'ëv's estimation, any attempt at a *complete* separation of the spiritual from the natural and rational, i.e., the secularization of society, would prove impossible, although the basis for his charge is unclear. He certainly fails to provide either a logical argument for the impossibility of a complete separation of church and state or historical evidence to buttress his stand. That conflicts will surely arise now and then on how practically to demarcate the respective spheres from each other is hardly an argument against secularization. Rather, such conflicts, far from being something to be avoided, are indicative of social dynamism and growth. Solov'ëv just cannot realize that the theocratic, quiescent society he envisions is not the ideal, but, rather, a stagnant society. Accepting his claims as indubitable or at least obviously correct, Solov'ëv reasons that since the spiritual and the secular cannot exclude, and even less eliminate, each other, they must both be necessary in any active human life and be brought into an intrinsically harmonious relation or synthesis. The respective elements within this synthesis, however, are by no means equal. The secular element

[54] For Solov'ëv, the implicit "original" unity becomes explicit through such interaction with others, whereas for Fichte that same interaction allows the individual to posit or re-cognize one's own self.

[55] Solov'ëv does not mean by this to endorse philosophical proofs for God's existence as we find in Aquinas, et al. Such attempts, which he importantly does not offer, would amount to an abstraction. What he does mean is that reason must work together in some ill-defined manner with our mystical and sense faculties to understand the Deity and all that concerns the Deity. For him, the immanent presence of the Deity needed no abstract demonstrations.

admits and accepts its inferior status. It accepts the "unconditional" character of the religious and *freely* subordinates itself to the latter: "The divine element is the supreme and unconditional principle, since it essentially has an unconditional character. Once this is actually recognized, the divine element must be recognized as unconditional. The other, secular element must stand to the divine in a relation of *free subordination*, as its truly necessary and legitimate means, instrument and medium by which the one, divine end is realized."[56] Solov'ëv refers to the realization of this synthesis, of the complete and full instantiation of the religious principle in society as a "true" or "free theocracy."

There is much here in Solov'ëv's exposition that remains extremely vague in addition to its lack of argumentation or substantiation. For one thing, how did we progress from the rational element to the religious, which he introduces, we might judiciously observe, almost stealthfully? We saw earlier that the object of the rational element is itself the unconditional. Reason, after all, is one and unvarying. That it is the same for all of us is something Solov'ëv does not dispute. How, then, does the religious element, "conveniently" providing unconditional content to rationality's mere form, make its appearance? On what basis are we to accept that any content actually provided by some mystical or divine faculty is indeed unconditional, i.e., that it has the *form* of unconditionality? Solov'ëv addresses none of these issues here in the *Critique*. From every indication, the object of the religious element is the Deity, but aside from the obvious question concerning how we know that such an object – assuming there is one – is *the* Deity, we still face the issue of what this has to do with the *normal* society. He certainly does see a connection between the two, but is the connection contingent or necessary? After all, it is not contradictory to conceive of a human society living in harmony with itself and with nature without reference to a deity – or does Solov'ëv think otherwise? However, if the connection is contingent, what is the source of his information about the nature of the connection? If the source is our mystical, religious element, is it not, then, self-contradictory to say the connection is contingent? Furthermore, even assuming the presence of religious and secular elements in society, why must there be a subordination – whatever that would mean in practice – of the latter to the former? If we, as a society, agree to follow the Kantian categorical imperative in our daily lives, treating each other as ends, not as means to some other contingent end, have we not thereby achieved for all practical purposes the social ideal, *sans* God, that Solov'ëv's moral theory envisions?

Solov'ëv never tires of telling us that the proper balance between the needs and goals of society and those of the individual cannot be realized from either angle alone. Even in a lawful society where all are judged equally, the balance between the social and the individual is externally maintained by administrative fiat. The legal order alone cannot present a positive moral ideal. It says merely that I should not infringe on the freedom of others, but it does not tell how I can promote or extend that freedom. Even were I consistently to act rationally, my actions would be morally unconditional, but not necessarily have an unconditional goal or content. The object of our activity, however, must be absolute. This can be had only if all of

[56] PSS, vol. 3: 155.

us see each other as members of a whole, of an all-unity. Solov'ëv characterizes this relation, as we saw above, by the term "love": "Love, as a particular and contingent fact, undoubtedly, exists in the natural order. However, as a universal and necessary law, i.e., in the form of a moral principle, love can be established neither on a material nor a rational basis, neither from the point of view of experience nor from that of reason."[57] Clearly, then, by his own admission, we leave behind here the realm of science and philosophy. The underpinning of "love" lies elsewhere, namely in the mystical – or divine or religious (Solov'ëv uses these terms interchangeably) – element. We see here the emergence of a new, "higher," universal moral principle, namely to love everyone individually and all together as a single unit, to hold everyone and each one as a positive goal. Unfortunately, Solov'ëv fails to provide even one example of how this moral principle is to be implemented in practice, how it differs from the specific implementation of the Kantian categorical imperative, or how we are to resolve conflicting duties on its basis. Nevertheless, he does tell us that it requires a complete identification of oneself with the loved one. This new moral principle "lies" beyond or outside both the empirical and the rational orders, but presupposes a "higher," absolute order. Presumably, then, neither rational argument nor the sheer absence of empirical evidence can count against such a moral principle.

Although Solov'ëv repeatedly brings us to the very brink of the ineffable, he does ultimately draw back, even if only a short distance. Despite it being purportedly the "highest" of the three, the mystical, or divine, principle forms a unity with the others and as such is inseparable from them. That is, an individual's reason and material nature are just as necessary in the all-unity as the mystical, and without them the highest moral principle cannot be realized. Thus, the three elements must agree with each other, meaning that between them there must be perfect harmony. The goal of "absolute love" dictated by the mystical principle can be achieved only with the realization of such love both in the world of reason and in that of nature. Speaking once again in Kantian terms, Solov'ëv tells us that the rational moral principle serves as the *formal* means by which the divine idea of love is realized, whereas the empirical world around us serves as the *material*. In other words, the ultimate *goal* of the mystical principle, an all-unity, can be achieved only by natural or material means taking on a rational form. Drawing from his earlier interest in biology and physiology, Solov'ëv likens the role of the individual in the all-unity to the role of our organs in the human body. Just as the organs perform various essential functions to support the life of the whole, so too do individuals, though different from each other, all perform vital functions in the all-unity. Although as human individuals we are *naturally* different, we are similar in being expressions of the absolute idea, and therefore each of us has an absolute significance. Civil society must take into account these natural differences while recognizing that the material well-being of the individual is not the ultimate goal of life. An equal distribution of wealth would be unjust as long as there is an inequality of personal dignity and importance. Solov'ëv's rather conservative conclusion is that justice demands material wealth be

[57] PSS, vol. 3: 158.

distributed in accordance with one's dignity and importance to society. In a normal society, the functions of the members are retained along with a recognition of the importance of each such function. As moderate as this may sound, Solov'ëv still adds a bit of starry-eyed idealism in saying that the more an individual develops towards the divine principle, the greater should be that individual's influence on others and, therefore, the higher his/her position in society should be. In this way, Solov'ëv justifies the existence of a social hierarchy that invests more power in those who possess greater moral dignity. Although in the social ideal (which Solov'ëv calls "the mystical union or Kingdom of God") there is no place for differing levels, in anything short of the ideal a hierarchy is necessary.

5.8 The Metaphysical Underpinning of Ethical Theory

For Solov'ëv, a prerequisite for the realization of the moral ideal in the human individual is the realization of the social ideal. The lone saint is an anomaly. The aspiration for moral perfection, or in Solov'ëv's terminology, to have God within us, is, once again, indisputable. In other words, he simply takes for granted that human individuals genuinely wish to be moral. Likewise, society aspires to social perfection, to realize the Kingdom of God on Earth. Nevertheless, the *object* of these aspirations conceivably could be merely illusory. Therefore, we must determine whether this object is genuine. Solov'ëv's question and the very need for it are quite puzzling. Turning to the latter first, he informs us in the "Preface" to the *Critique* that the purpose of his subsequent epistemological and metaphysical inquiries is merely *practical*. That is, in order to realize the moral ideal we must first believe it to be absolutely true: "In order freely and consciously to realize the divine principle in practice, we must be convinced of its unconditional veracity, and this depends on resolving the general question of truth and true knowledge."[58] Few would doubt the psychological claim that people will strive harder for a goal if they firmly believe it can be attained. In this sense, while it may be the case that ethics is psychologically dependent on an ontological belief, there is no *logical* dependence. Yet in Chapter XXVI, Solov'ëv tells us that the fundamental ruminations in his succeeding chapters are necessary to insure the *logical* significance of the moral ideal: "Therefore, in order to recognize the religious principle as having the unconditional significance that it has in the free theocratic ideal, we cannot limit ourselves to its psychological and historical significance alone (which is always relative), but must answer the question of the authenticity or veracity of its object."[59] Thus, we must first establish the

[58] PSS, vol. 3: 14.

[59] PSS, vol. 3: 175. Unfortunately, Solov'ëv's subsequent statements fail to shed light on whether the need for metaphysics is logical or psychological. He writes at the start of Chapter XXVII: "The affirmation of the highest ideal and norm of our moral activity demands, as we saw, true knowledge. In order properly to realize the good, we must know the truth. In order *to do what we should do, we must know what is*." PSS, vol. 3: 178. Such statements can be read either way.

veracity of the object of the divine or moral principle in order for us to acknowledge its purported significance. Much of the later dispute concerning Solov'ëv's position on the autonomy of ethics as a philosophical sub-discipline stems from his own ambiguous transition from ethics to metaphysics.

Regardless of how we construe Solov'ëv's path to metaphysics, we must ask where that path leads. Just what is the "object" of the divine or moral principle? The immediate answer would certainly seem to be the moral ideal and, concomitantly, the social ideal of a free theocracy. However, since these are ideals and as such await a future realization, we can no more inquire into their veracity than we can of universal peace. In fact, Solov'ëv himself states that the realization of a free theocracy requires human efforts to realize the absolute order in the natural order of things. It is all the more surprising, then, that Solov'ëv immediately states that the question before us actually "breaks down" into three questions: (1) whether God exists, (2) whether the human being "as an essential member in the all-unity" exists, i.e., whether humans are immortal, and (3) whether human actions are free.[60] Solov'ëv fails to inform us how *these* three – and only three – problems arise from his broader inquiry into the object of ethics. Does he equate the *object* of the divine or moral principle with God? That is, is "God" nothing but another term for the moral order of the universe? And if "God" is not synonymous with the "moral order of the universe," just what is the connection between the two? The second question above is, if anything, even more problematic. When Solov'ëv speaks of human immortality, what is it about humans that is immortal? Surely, he cannot have in mind our individual, physical bodies? Does Solov'ëv mean that being an "essential member in the all-unity" is impossible without immortality? And when he speaks of the human being (*chelovek*), does he mean the human individual or does he mean the human race as a collective whole created in the image and likeness of God, etc.? Lastly, is it merely coincidental that Solov'ëv's questions are essentially the same as those Kant posed – or did Solov'ëv, as we are forced to suspect given his silence on their derivation, merely take them over from Kant?[61]

Solov'ëv states that only if we provide an "affirmative resolution" to the three metaphysical problems can we "recognize the possibility of realizing the moral principle." Presumably, he means not only must we firmly *believe* in the existence of God, an immortal human soul and an individual free will in order to usher in a free *theocracy*, properly speaking. No, his is the even stronger claim that only if God actually *does* exist can the social and moral ideal be realized. In this respect, Solov'ëv views his own position as diametrically opposed to that of Kant, who supposedly deduced [*vyvodil*] the existence of God, immortality and the free will

[60] PSS, vol. 3: 176.

[61] Kant writes, "Metaphysics has as the proper end of its investigation only three ideas: *God, freedom, and immortality*; so that the second concept, combined with the first, should lead to the third as a necessary conclusion." Kant 1997: B395n. Solov'ëv, in a footnote, expresses his departure from Kant by writing, "We will have occasion to show that the last two questions are implicitly contained in the first, i.e., that the existence of God as an all-unity necessarily presupposes human immortality and freedom." PSS, vol. 3: 176f.

from the *subjectively* obligatory character of the moral principle. Against Kant, Solov'ëv writes that "with an objective understanding of the moral principle … there appears the necessary conviction in these metaphysical truths as such, i.e., in their own theoretical validity, independently of their practical desirability."[62] In short, then, Solov'ëv proceeds in the opposite direction from Kant with postulates to which the latter will arrive rather than start with.[63] However, how do we get such an "objective understanding," as opposed to Kant's "subjective" one if not through a process of reasoning, i.e., through a philosophical proof? Indeed, what is an "objective understanding"? On what basis do we say it is objective, rather than subjective? Solov'ëv does inform us that such an objective understanding will refute the widespread [!] view that the "ought" is independent of the "is," that ethics is independent of metaphysics, that the naturalistic fallacy is itself just that – a fallacy. The philosophical independence of ethics, which Solov'ëv calls "abstract moralism," holds that one's conscience can alone be a moral guide without any reference to metaphysics. Solov'ëv denies that the moral feelings of sympathy and justice can alone serve as a guide.[64] The human conscience tells us merely what we must *not* do, but can neither tell us what we should do nor provide a positive goal for us to seek. However, if we do accept the moral principle, including the positive goal it sets for our activity, then we must also acknowledge that it can be realized, which in turn depends on our acknowledging of objective laws of at least what can *be*, if not what *is*. What he proposes, then, is an inquiry into the foundations of possible being. If such an inquiry is truly to be a metaphysical study, can it be other than *a priori* in Kant's sense? Surely, Solov'ëv would reject such a categorization of the investigations that follow.

Even were we to grant all that Solov'ëv has said, we still have no clear idea just what this ultimate goal of human activity is. All along, he has been referring to it as the social or moral ideal. But if this goal represents the telos of human activity, how can Solov'ëv speak, as he does, of "the genuine being of the true absolute order"? After all, if it has not yet been realized, it lacks being. Nevertheless, to know the objective laws of that which is is not the concern of ethics, of "practical philosophy," but of "theoretical philosophy." If we are to speak of anything as being true, we must have criteria for establishing that veracity: "We can settle the question of the truth of any topic only if we know where veracity in general lies, i.e., if we have *the criteria of truth*."[65] With this in mind, Solov'ëv tells us we must turn to epistemology.

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[62] PSS, vol. 3: 176–177. Solov'ëv's understanding of Kant here is inexact. On the one hand, as already mentioned, he accuses Kant of having a merely subjective consciousness of duty, and, on the other hand, of "recognizing the absolute obligatory character of the moral principle." Thus, Solov'ëv accuses Kant of understanding morality as merely subjective but yet as absolute! Kant, of course, had to refer to his "metaphysical theses," as Solov'ëv refers to them, as postulates of pure practical reason, because theoretical reason is incapable of proving (or disproving) them. Solov'ëv feels no such encumbrance.

[63] Pribytkova 2010: 78.

[64] Some 15 years later, in his *The Justification of the Good* Solov'ëv pointedly rejected this very position, appealing in part to St. Paul.

[65] PSS, vol. 3: 177.

Solov'ëv concluded the first portion of his dissertation with its publication in June 1879 and immediately launched into his promised metaphysical studies the following month. In one of the sparse letters from this period, dated 1 July, to Certelev, he wrote: "I have successfully concluded the first (ethical) part of my dissertation in the last issue of *Russkij vestnik* and am immersed in the abyss of metaphysics."[66] It is odd from our perspective today that he used the terms "metaphysics" and "epistemology" interchangeably. For Solov'ëv, though, an epistemological study, i.e., in investigation into how knowledge is possible, must be at least partially metaphysical, for the object of true knowledge is itself metaphysical.

[66] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 247.

Chapter 6
The Truth of a *Critique*

Solov'ëv devoted the second half of his *Critique of Abstract Principles* to epistemology with an ontological intent. To do so, he initially and carefully treaded much the same ground as did Hegel in the opening chapters of the latter's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Indeed, the former initially hews so closely to the latter's procedure that many times he simply paraphrases whole passages from the *Phenomenology*, all without realizing the implicit perils of such an approach to his own design. Fortunately, he soon veers from this path ruminating on his critique of positivism and what that entails for his outlook on science and human knowledge.

In this chapter, we will analyze the most sustained epistemological reflections of Solov'ëv's philosophical career. These reveal him as grappling, despite his many assumptions and omissions, with many of the same problems raised by Kant and Hegel. We will see that he remains concerned with accounting for the sense of objectivity that accompanies the intentional objects of perception.

6.1 From Epistemological Sensualism to Critical Realism

As remarked in the previous chapter, Solov'ëv's procedure in his dissertation bears a striking similarity to that of Hegel in the latter's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. This holds for that portion of the dissertation that concerns epistemological and ontological issues as well. His intent is to show the inadequacies of all viewpoints other than that of the all-unity. To do that he "parades" across the pages of the *Critique of Abstract Principles*, much as did Hegel before him, a succession of theories, starting with the most elementary and proceeding to ever more corrective ones until we reach the all-unity. To begin, though, Solov'ëv adduces what he calls a "general definition of truth," one that is so broad that none can dispute it including, presumably, Solov'ëv himself. Yet to the contemporary reader these opening remarks in §XXVII surely must sound puzzling, particularly his explicit definition of truth

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"as *that which is*."[1] It need not be. Similar to Hegel, whose pronouncement in the *Phenomenology* that the truth is the whole, he is not claiming, despite the apparent wording, that everyday objects, such as, this desk, this book, let alone Kantian objects "in themselves" are "truths." However peculiar his characterization of truth may sound to us today, its historical importance within Russian thought lies in the fundamental priority accorded ontology over epistemology. Significantly, Solov'ëv entitles the chapter initiating his transition from ethics as "The Dependence of Ethics on Metaphysics," i.e., on metaphysical ontology, not, as in much modern philosophy, on epistemology. For Solov'ëv, the *reference* of a true proposition *exists*, whereas that of a falsehood, a lie, does not. Solov'ëv, like Hegel, understands knowledge as a subject-object relation. As we will see momentarily, it just makes no sense to Solov'ëv for us to conceive truth as that which exists "objectively" apart from humanity, i.e., human observers, simply because in his eyes we *are* an *essential* part of that which is, i.e., of the universe, of the whole. Fortunately, Solov'ëv quickly reverts to traditional terminology – and the traditional correspondence theory – saying that true knowledge, knowledge properly speaking, is knowledge of what is. A proposition is true if the described state of affairs exists not only in the subjective thought or words of the one who utters them, but also outside the subject in objective reality. A proposition is false, on the other hand, if its sense fails to correspond to the objective reality external to the subject. That which exists outside the cognizing subject is a "real object" or "thing." In doing so, Solov'ëv essentially begins following the well-trodden footsteps of Hegel's opening chapters in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Since many of Solov'ëv's points are familiar to us today through Hegel, we can proceed through them comparatively quickly.[2]

[1] PSS, vol. 3: 178. In a similar vein, Hegel wrote in his *Phenomenology*: "It *is*; this is the essential point for sense-knowledge, and this pure *being*, or this simple immediacy, constitutes its *truth*." Hegel 1977: 58–59. Hegel, in his "Lesser Logic," also wrote that: "The objects of philosophy, it is true, are upon the whole the same as those of religion. In both the object is Truth, in that supreme sense in which God and only God is the truth." Hegel 1904: 3. Solov'ëv's statement can be read as affirming this Hegelian view that that which is is the truth and the truth is God. Pronina explicitly rejects interpreting Solov'ëv's statement as an affirmation of the correspondence theory of truth. Pronina 2001: 86. Curiously, while acknowledging that Solov'ëv "replicates" many of Hegel's methods, Smith looks not to the *Phenomenology* but to the "Lesser Logic" only to find, not surprisingly, the absence of Hegel's starting point with being and nothing. Had Smith looked to the former, he would have found much. See Smith 2011: 50–51.

[2] This is not to say that Solov'ëv is entirely faithful to Hegel or that he draws from the Hegelian arguments exactly the same points. Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that Solov'ëv's enormous debt to Hegel is potentially fraught with peril for his overall enterprise. Trubeckoj already observed this when he wrote: "Inserting the Hegelian critique of sense certainty into his own theory, Solov'ëv, apparently, does not notice that it is rationalistic through and through. This is why it rings with a sharp dissonance in a mystical system. It is not hard to convince oneself that panlogism forms the hidden presupposition of the entire argument of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*." Trubeckoj 1995. vol. 1: 197. Hegel certainly would have believed he had early on in the *Phenomenology* demolished the very position that Solov'ëv later took as his own and tried to establish via the same dialectical method.

Solov'ëv is especially eager to combat what he calls "abstract realism," which he characterizes as the view that truth lies entirely in "what exists in itself *outside* and independently of *the subject*."[3] Although his bald opposition would appear to be a rejection of realism tout court, we should keep in mind that the quoted words do not express a complete definition or characterization. Solov'ëv views abstract realism as the ontological correlate of that crude empirical epistemology exemplified in the first three-part section of Hegel's *Phenomenology* entitled "Consciousness." Adherence to abstract realism demands the simple and complete passivity of a subject seeking truth. Reality is to be taken as simply given. "There is no bridge extending from thought, as purely subjective, to the being of a thing, as purely objective. This is why we cannot in general reach the object by means of thought. In order to know the truth (which amounts here to the being of the object as such) we must not think but only passively perceive or immediately sense the reality of the object as it is given independently of us."[4] If the truth simply lies outside us and is determined by the external object alone, the surest way for the cognizing subject to get to the truth is for such a subject to play no active role in cognition. The subject should merely be the passive recipient of what lies outside itself. To ensure veracity, the subject should be as passive as possible. Thus, sense data, without interpretation, seem to be the most accurate conveyance of what reality is like. Sense data are truest, because such data neither add to nor subtract from reality, and our senses are the most direct, non-theoretical means consciousness has to grasp what lies outside it. And just what is consciousness in this model? – It is not a property or condition of something; it is but an immediate, individual, indescribable "I" and nothing more. We cannot say that the "I" is, for example, a mental substance as in Descartes nor even that it is in space and time. Likewise, the object in this model is a mere "this" without any further specification. Were we to determine it otherwise or more fully, we would introduce mental concepts via our own mental activity and, thereby, contaminate the truth. Yet, when we take a closer look at what we really have here, we see, on the one hand, a "this," the cognizing "I," and, on the other hand, a "this," the object of cognition. Most importantly, both are mutually conditioned. The senses ascribe certainty to the respective immediate being of both, but this certainty crumbles when we realize that the two "condition" each other. In other words, the alleged certainty of the sensory object turns out to be conditional upon the presence of the cognizing subject.

Solov'ëv repeats much of Hegel's argument concerning the "this-here" and the "this-now" with the intent to disprove the adequacy of any epistemological particularism. Pointing to the yard, I can say, "This is a tree," only to find upon turning around that the "here" is no longer a tree, but a house. This elementary demonstration already shows to Solov'ëv's satisfaction that truth lies not in the presupposed immediacy of being, the "this," but with conceptually determined being. The very notion of immediate knowledge, i.e., a form of knowledge unmediated by and

[3] PSS, vol. 3: 180.

[4] PSS, vol. 3: 181.

through concepts, is impossible.[5] Just as with regard to Hegel's original presentation, Solov'ëv is not saying something about the nature of language. He is not arguing that language is necessary to conceptualize or experience reality. Rather, we cannot immediately apprehend a determinate object as determinate despite restricting ourselves to experiences that are putatively certain. "When I say 'This particular thing,' I am thereby speaking of it as something quite universal, because *all* things are equally particular things, particularity is their *common* property, just as *this* thing is anything you like."[6] Solov'ëv draws from Hegel's dialectic of sense certainty the lesson that the immediate reality of a particular, individual fact is logically absurd, that an isolated bit of knowledge is untenable and that the very logic of sense certainty leads us on to "the truth of the universal."[7] And what is this truth? One thing we can be sure about is that it cannot be self-contradictory, for otherwise we could not understand it. Solov'ëv calls this a demand for *unity*. Now, if all he means by "unity" is that the object not be self-contradictory, his would hardly be a contentious claim. However, this is clearly not all that he means. One thing it *does* mean is that everyone upon cognizing a truth must acknowledge it as true. Nevertheless, universal acknowledgement itself, though a necessary condition, is not a sufficient condition of a true proposition. It is not what makes a proposition true. What makes each fact or phenomenon true must be the same for everyone. Hallucinations and dreams lack this necessary characteristic. Reality is objective, i.e., essentially the same for everyone. That I, as a human individual, experience something, in some manner, is insufficient to guarantee its veracity. I clearly experience many things in dreams and hallucinations that afterward I recognize lack objective reality. "What is true is not what is experienced as reality, but what is experienced as reality *by everyone*, or what has reality (really exists or, more precisely, can exist) equally *for everyone*."[8] Additionally, a truth cannot be true for a limited time. If something is true, it is true not only at this moment, but always true. Therefore, the reference of a true proposition can only be for everyone if it is an abiding thing, an essentially enduring substance or state of affairs.

In revealing the inadequacies of relying on sense certainty alone to determine truth, Solov'ëv believes we pass in an ill-defined manner to the claim that the objects of cognition are those objects that make up the external world and not a conglomeration of mere facts, which are, after all, alterable appearances. However, can an indefinite multitude of separate, albeit external, things form the object of

[5] Here lies a danger to Solov'ëv's system. Hegel's point is that non-conceptual knowledge through some sort of immediate intuition of anything, including of the Absolute or Deity, is impossible. To apprehend an object, we must comprehend it through universal concepts. Yet, as we have seen in previous chapters, this train of thought stands in stark contrast to Solov'ëv's.

[6] PSS, vol. 3: 185. Solov'ëv is here essentially translating a passage from Hegel's *Phenomenology*, §110. See Hegel 1977: 66. In the immediately subsequent pages of his *Critique of Abstract Principles*, Solov'ëv quotes frequently and extensively from the *Phenomenology*. However, there are also many long passages not marked as quotations but which are, nevertheless, just that.

[7] PSS, vol. 3: 190. Cf. Hegel 1977: 67: "Immediate certainty does not take over the truth, for its truth is the universal, whereas certainty wants to apprehend the This."

[8] PSS, vol. 3: 192.

knowledge? The lesson to be learned from the failure of sense certainty as an epistemic model is that there cannot be an infinite (or at least indefinite) number of unconnected truths standing in a one-to-one correspondence with a like number of independent things or states any more than the unlimited use of demonstratives in sense certainty can avoid the mediation of universals. This essentially Hegelian line of argument lies behind Solov'ëv's otherwise cryptic claim that "the being of things in isolation cannot form the object of true knowledge; the world as a multiplicity of separate things cannot form the content of truth."[9] If we are to continue to maintain that the object of genuine cognition is the external world, then in order for truth to be something we can speak of in general terms, we must have in mind the general *nature* of all things. In this way we pass from the principle of simple realism to that of naturalism, but a naturalism in which nature appears not as something contingent and varying, but as universal and inalterable. In other words, the truly existing is not a collection of ephemeral appearances, but what is the same everywhere and always. True knowledge, then, relates not to the simple reality of things, but to their abiding nature or foundation.

Although Solov'ëv examines a number of historical manifestations of naturalism, we need not look at each of these in detail. Despite their differences, they all share the view that externally existing things are in some fundamental way the same. Naturalism, in Solov'ëv's estimation, is to be applauded for its recognition of truth as abiding only in what is universal and constant, but its view that all existents have a single nature does not mean that all cognitive objects are presented to us in the same form. Things, after all, clearly can appear to us in a number of qualitatively different forms that lack even the elementary demand for objectivity. Yet, in many instances none of the various qualities we ascribe to external objects is either universal or independent of the cognizing subject. In passages reminiscent of Berkeley's criticism of Locke and Hegel's account of perception in the *Phenomenology*, Solov'ëv reminds us that all the qualities of a thing are dependent on the cognizing subject, and therefore cannot be properly considered objective and absolute. The particular qualities we ascribe to an object can be influenced by circumstances. A straight stick appears shorter when viewed from a certain angle or bent when partially immersed in water. Of course, we recognize this elementary fact and take the substrate of the thing's phenomenal qualities, the "thing in itself," which is itself not given, as the objective and real.[10] The truth of a thing, what truly exists, is precisely this substrate, the "universal medium" in Hegel's terminology, underlying all of a thing's ever-changing sensory qualities.[11] What, however, is this substrate? If reality is given to cognition purely in sense experience and the truth lies in what is sensed

[9] PSS, vol. 3: 194.

[10] There can be no doubt that Solov'ëv believes he has Kant's position in mind here. The former not only places the expression "thing in itself" in quotation marks but also parenthetically provides Kant's own German expression *Ding an sich*. PSS, vol. 3: 201.

[11] Hegel 1977: 73. Although Solov'ëv's discussion here is greatly influenced by Hegel's account of perception, the focus lies elsewhere. Whereas Hegel is concerned with perceptual knowledge as a form of consciousness, Solov'ëv is interested in the object of perception purely as a metaphysical entity.

universally, we must seek the truth in that common property of all external things, viz., their resistance to our own efforts. Whereas we can question the objectivity or externality of an external thing's color, texture, taste and even shape, what we cannot question is the resistance an external thing presents to our efforts to occupy the space it occupies. "In order to recognize something as external or real, i.e., as independent of it, the subject obviously must feel its resistance. For any sensation of reality there must be an interaction between the one who senses and the thing sensed or, in geometrical terms, there must be some contiguity, which is expressed psychologically in the sensation of touch."[12] What truly exists, therefore, is what offers resistance to my efforts. This fundamental opposition on the part of all external objects is termed "impenetrability" and is what we mean by saying that a thing is a substance or is composed of matter.

Unlike Samuel Johnson with his celebrated kicking of a stone, the lesson of Solov'ëv's obstructed touching is purportedly much more than that there are independently existing objects other than the cognizing subject. Having established that all external things present themselves to us as impenetrable, we have not offered an explanation for the sensuous manifold they provide. If impenetrability is taken to be the one and only foundation of things, then their apparent multiplicity and multiple appearances are not yet accounted for. Yet this, Solov'ëv believes, is what our naturalistic quest sought to achieve. Of course, there would be no such problem if the cognizing subject itself, through its inherent forms, were responsible for transforming the material singularity into the apparent manifold and multiplicity of things. This logically possible move, though, would run directly counter to the monistic intention of the simple naturalism now under consideration. The objective world with its purported singularity would be fundamentally different from the subject with its cognitive forms. No, there clearly is a concrete multiplicity of things, but if we are to uphold the standpoint of monistic naturalism that all matter demonstrates the property of impenetrability we must allow for the existence of multiple, individual, impenetrable particles, i.e., atoms, the various combinations of which produce the variety of things we see around us. With this train of thought, we pass to the next ontological doctrine – atomistic naturalism.

The atom as impenetrable resists outside activity upon it. This presupposes just such activity in the first place. We cannot speak of resistance except in terms of a resistance *to* something. Since atomism holds that *everything* is composed of atoms, the outside activity must itself be the activity of another, essentially impenetrable atom or combination of atoms. Impenetrability is, therefore, a negative characteristic or property. There is, however, a corresponding positive property that accounts for an atom's activity, namely, its initial inertial impulse.[13] This activity on the part of one atom, essentially to occupy the position of another, Solov'ëv terms "attraction."

[12] PSS, vol. 3: 201.

[13] While we must proceed cautiously in assigning a consciously developed philosophy of nature to Solov'ëv on the basis of his meager statements here in the *Critique*, he appears to agree with Newton and Euler against Kant in viewing impenetrability and inertia as non-derivative concepts, or at least he does so for his purpose here in the *Critique*.

"If an atom turns out to be impenetrable, i.e., does not allow another to take its spot, this obviously presupposes that this other atom is attempting to occupy the spot of the first. Since what was said obviously applies to all atoms, it is necessary to recognize that all atoms possess in addition to the negative property of impenetrability or resistance a positive property by virtue of which each atom strives for the other, i.e., wants to occupy its spot. This latter property or faculty, peculiar to atoms, is usually called *attraction* (*pritjazhenie*)."[14] Has Solov'ëv in the guise of atomism hereby provided an *a priori* "deduction" of the two forces of attraction and repulsion? Of course, he has done no such thing, and the atomist is hardly likely to agree with Solov'ëv's characterization of his stance. Indeed, the term "attraction" is a particularly inapt choice for what he has in mind. There is no "deduction" of action at a distance. The repulsion spoken of here is merely a restatement of the atom's defining impenetrability and thus, in Kant's terminology, is an *a priori* analytic proposition. Additionally, the supposed "attraction," such as it is, is merely the atom's hypothesized inertial impulse, which itself is merely postulated and neither a matter of empirical observation nor *a priori* deduction.

Despite the manifest lacuna in the depicted atomism – an atomism that its proponents would never accept *carte blanche* – Solov'ëv does not hesitate from putting into the atomist's mouth the conjecture that space, or extension, is *merely* the expression of a balance between the two opposing properties of all matter, attraction and repulsion. A single atom, in isolation, cannot be said to have spatial extension, for it would be nothing more than a mathematical point. Space, in other words, is understood by this ideal atomist as relational, just as it was for the rationalists. Thus, an atom's purported substantiality cannot lie in some impenetrability, or hardness, and extension, for these attributes exist only insofar as there is a reciprocal activity on the part of another atom or atoms. We see that the primacy accorded to these attributes cannot stand up under careful scrutiny. Impenetrability and extension can only be understood in terms of a dynamic interplay between reciprocal forces. In this way, we pass, to Solov'ëv's satisfaction, from a "mechanistic materialism" to a pure dynamism. "Atoms are not the constituent particles of a substance but are forces that produce a substance. Forces are not properties, *accidens*, of a substance, as mechanical materialism assumes. On the contrary, a substance is only the result of forces, or to put it more precisely, the general boundary of their interaction."[15]

In the dynamic interpretation of atomism, the next "scene" in the theatrical play, so to speak, that constitutes Solov'ëv's *Critique*, everything is still viewed as being composed of atoms, but now they are centers of the opposing forces of attraction and

[14] PSS, vol. 3: 209. Smith calls this step in Solov'ëv's argument the introduction of "a foreign element," an element that was foreign to both Leibniz and Jurkevich. See Smith 2011: 41.

[15] PSS, vol. 3: 210. Cf. Kant 1970: 56–58. It is unclear *at this point* whether *Solov'ëv* holds, for example, that "objective" space is the result of a balance between attraction and repulsion or merely his view of what the philosophical *atomist* holds. Solov'ëv does not refer to Kant's treatise, the *Metaphysical Principles of Natural Science*, here in any way. Nevertheless, he was familiar with it at least later in his life. See Solov'ëv 1997: 195 and 198. However, the train of thought here in the *Critique* is so similar to that of Kant's that it is hard not to conclude Solov'ëv was not influenced by Kant.

repulsion, non-substantial dynamic units or, to revive Leibnizian expressions, "*living forces*, or *monads*." According to this view, which Solov'ëv claims we are led to with logical necessity, the wealth of qualities and forms that belong to the physical world and that are given to us in sense experience is merely an appearance. Genuine existence belongs only to the living forces, or monads, which, however, are not given in sense experience or empirical science. Instead, the atomist has come to his position through logical thought alone. What truly exist, therefore, by the atomist's own admission, are metaphysical essences. We are inexorably led to conclude that what truly is is known only through philosophical speculation.[16] All empirical knowledge – whether obtained from everyday experience or from the most sophisticated natural science – has but a conditional significance subordinate to that obtained from speculation. Through an attempt to be consistent, the original realist's position, viz., that truth lies in a world existing external to and independent of the cognizing subject, has been "dialectically" transformed into a metaphysical one: The world around us, the world we think of as real, is merely appearance. Whereas we started with the idea that everything that cannot be empirically ascertained is a subjective invention, now we have come to the diametrically opposite stand that truth lies in the subjectively revealed.

Solov'ëv is well aware that this conclusion, which uproots the fundamental thesis of realism and affirms instead the right of speculation, i.e., purely intellectual deliberation, in ontology is itself reached through speculation. In rejecting from the outset that very right, the realist is under no obligation to accept the conclusion of pure logical thought severed from experience. Without disputing the logical train of thought that led to the conclusion, the realist points out that experience provides no evidence for immaterial monads. Solov'ëv, in turn, replies that there is no consensus among scientists on the nature of matter even though they all have the same concern and the same data. The disagreements between scientists are a result of an intrusion of speculation into their respective ideas and theories. If we take even the least speculative of these theories, we will see that it too transgresses the bounds of what is empirically given. Even the most realistic theory of substance, which views atoms as impenetrable and extended, cannot explain the possibility of those two properties. In the end, the very concept of an atom is speculative, or metaphysical. Our ordinary experience provides nothing that is ultimately indivisible.

With his claim that all physical theories ultimately contain non-empirical features, Solov'ëv believes he has adequately demonstrated that every attempt at explicating the concept of substance appeals to speculation. Every such theory

[16] PSS, vol. 3: 211. The fault here lies clearly in Solov'ëv's understanding of the physical sciences and their methodology, an understanding that fell far short of Kant's, even though the latter lived a century earlier. Solov'ëv apparently had no inkling of the importance of the mathematical formalism introduced into science by the Scientific Revolution which Kant clearly recognized: "I maintain, however, that in every special doctrine of nature only so much science proper can be found as there is mathematics in it." Kant 1970: 6. The boundary Solov'ëv draws between the physical and the metaphysical is based on a crude conception of the physical that even the science of his day had left far behind.

incorporates hypotheses in order to explain phenomena, but we have no bases for ascribing objective reality to these hypotheses. If we leave aside all subjective fabrications, we are left with the objective reality of appearances alone. What we genuinely can cognize are only things as they appear to us, not as they supposedly are "in themselves." Again, we return to sense experience. The difference now, however, is that whereas earlier we turned to the senses as our indubitable means of access to things as they truly are – a position we can label "substantial realism" – we now recognize the senses as providing the relative being of things, things as they merely appear to us. In other words, we have arrived at a phenomenal realism, which we can also justifiably label "critical" insofar as it "is based on a critical relation to what is cognitively given."[17]

6.2 From Critical Realism to Speculative Idealism

We have now passed to the position that an object exists for us only by and in terms of its relation to us. What, if anything, it is apart from this relationship is quite inaccessible to us. Such a thing in itself is a pure X, and it would be absurd for us to specify anything further concerning it. As it stands to us, that of which the thing is made, viz., its apparent content, is determined by our sensations of it, which, after all, are a product of our own inner states. The distinction between external and internal objects, between those considered to have external objectivity and those merely imagined in some fashion, lies in the fact that the former are passively experienced whereas the latter are willfully produced or at least explicitly recognized as subjective products. Nevertheless, from the critical, or phenomenalist, point of view all that is accessible of the object of cognition, be it external or internal, is our own inner states in the form of sense experience. Although we had already earlier appealed to the senses as the source of knowledge, they were previously understood merely as the conduit by means of which we have access to external reality. Now, however, sense data themselves are viewed as the very essence of the only reality of which we can meaningfully speak. Yet much the same criticism as before is applicable here as well: If we limit ourselves to sense data alone, we have to conclude that truths come and go. The true statement "It is daytime" is found to be false 12 hours later. Truth demands consistency, i.e., conformity to laws, laws stating that a

[17] PSS, vol. 3: 216. Despite the word "critical" here, Solov'ëv undoubtedly does not mean Kant's position in his mature, "critical" period. Solov'ëv will address it later in the *Critique*. Being concerned in this work with what we could characterize as ideal types, he would have denied having any particular historically-manifested philosophy in mind. Solov'ëv's depiction comes close to how he understood John Locke. Solov'ëv also uses the word "sensualism" as synonymous with "critical realism": "Thus, critical (or phenomenal) realism, by virtue of the fundamental significance that sense experience has for it, is characterized above all as *sensualism*." PSS, vol. 3: 219. Later in the same chapter, he writes that sensualism is the position that holds truth lies in the phenomena given in external sensations. PSS, vol. 3: 221.

constant, or necessary, relation holds between appearances. Such laws, however, are not and cannot be given in experience. They are not presented to us in the manner that, say, this sheet of paper is given. Laws governing the occurrence of appearances must be discovered through an investigative process, through what we call "scientific experience," and we thereby obtain real knowledge. Unfortunately, Solov'ëv provides no information on how he views this scientific discovery process – or, rather, how he views the phenomenal realist going about this process. However, the necessary character alone of these laws is insufficient to guarantee veracity. There is another criterion that a phenomenon must have in order to be true, viz., universality, which Solov'ëv characterizes as a phenomenon's "constant relation not to this or that limited group or series of phenomena, but its relation to all phenomena, or its place in the general system of phenomena."[18] We find in positivism a clear awareness of the need for and an attempt to find universal laws that govern all phenomena and bind these phenomena into a single, comprehensive system. Solov'ëv regards positivism as the necessary final result of phenomenal realism in that it takes natural science with its limitation to what is given to the senses as the only form of knowledge. Any purported claim to truth that lacks a scientific character is a subjective invention.[19] Positivism hails science for speaking of appearances instead of essences, and laws of appearances instead of causes and ends. As in his earlier *The Crisis of Western Philosophy*, Solov'ëv will be both harshly critical of positivism while remaining deeply respectful of its intent and its historical position.

Solov'ëv's line of attack not just on positivism but on phenomenal realism in general, indeed on any type of strict empiricism is to show the key role played by the mental in cognitive processes. Taken alone, the sensations that form the paramount concern of phenomenal realism are merely immanent, subjective states and as such are not intentional.[20] That is, they do not refer to an object, let alone an object with the sense of being transcendent. Yet in the vast majority of cases in daily life we are immediately aware of discrete objects, e.g., of this book in front of me, as "out there," as objective phenomena. Since sensations are subjective states, their referral to a temporally enduring external object, i.e., the "objectification" of our sensations, "obviously must have a special basis independent of the sensations as such"

[18] PSS, vol. 3: 220. Apparently unaware that his conception of "universality" is quite idiosyncratic, Solov'ëv provides no justification for it. This conception does prove convenient, as we shall see shortly, for his architectonic purposes.

[19] PSS, vol. 3: 221. Here, we finally have an explicit account of what positivism is. The reader will recall that even in *The Crisis* the term was used operationally, rather than receiving a clear account, let alone a definition. Nonetheless, Solov'ëv is by no means clear on this score. On the one hand, he writes as though positivism were the logical development of phenomenal realism and as such accepts only what is given to the senses as real. On the other hand, he writes that positivism holds truth to lie in the universal system of phenomena, a system that is cognized by the sciences. However, such a system, as a system, cannot be directly given in the senses.

[20] Husserl likewise remarks, "That not all experiences are intentional is proved by sensations and sensational complexes." Husserl 1970b. vol. 2: 556.

in what Solov'ëv calls a "special, independent activity of the cognizing subject."[21] To say that something is "objective" or "objectively exists," means for Solov'ëv, as it did for Hume, that *in addition to* having an external position in space, it has a *continued* temporal existence even when not cognized. The sensualist certainly cannot hold that the senses provide the notion of "objectivity," for to do so, as Hume wrote, would be to suppose "that the senses continue to operate, even after they have ceased all manner of operation."[22] Thus, an unadulterated sensualism cannot account for the commonplace attribution of objectivity to the objects of cognition, i.e., for their enduring existence independently of the cognizing subject.

Cognition, additionally, does more than simply situate sensations within a spatio-temporal matrix, for such a process would yield at most objectified sensations but not a single, unified intentional object. No, individual but fleeting sensations are formally referred to something definite with various properties in addition to being abiding. I recognize the whiteness I perceive as that of the blank sheet of paper before me. Tapping the sheet with my finger, I associate the sound of the thump with the impact of the finger on the paper. More than a mere act of association, I unite objectified acoustic sensations with a set of visual sensations and refer this unity to a single object. In other words, besides the initial referral, or objectification, there is an additional "act" of synthesizing by means of which my manifold sensations refer to one, single object, rather than to a multitude of indistinct things. I undoubtedly do distinguish this particular object from others, all the while ascribing objectivity to all of them despite the fact that my only empirical access is via my subjective sensations. To be sure, Solov'ëv himself gives every indication that he is not entirely clear on the tremendous difficulties to be found in accounting for the material objectification of sensations, i.e., the endowment of the sense of objectivity on them, and for their formal objectification, i.e., seeing these sensations as the content of a particular intentional object. Nevertheless, for the purposes of his critique of sensualism, this is all he needed to do, viz., to show that sensualism cannot account for a basic fact of conscious life, a fact the sensualist himself explicitly admits. The independent cognitive faculty responsible for these functions, for the formation of intended, objective objects out of empirical sensations, is the *imagination*: "Thus, the reality

[21] PSS, vol. 3: 224. We have seen that Solov'ëv was aware of objectivity as a philosophical issue already in his debate with Kavelin in 1875. In the "Philosophical Principles," he held that we have a distinct sort of power to cognize the world in itself called "mysticism." The terminology would again undergo a change here in the *Critique*. More importantly however, in the earlier work mysticism is a direct link with what is in itself, whereas the *Critique* is concerned, at least until the final chapters, with the *sense* of objectivity, possessed by objects of cognition, i.e., the sense that these objects are external and independent of us. By no means, though, is this sense subjective, as Solov'ëv would undoubtedly view Husserl as thinking.

[22] Hume 1968: 188. In the complete absence of direct references to Hume's writings, it is difficult to ascertain with any degree of certainty Solov'ëv's familiarity with those works. He does demonstrate, however, a familiarity with John Stuart Mill's writings.

of an objective appearance is given not by sense experience, but by the imagination; it is revealed not in the senses, but in the forms or ideas of the mind."[23]

Since sensualism cannot account for commonplace cognitive functions that accord an active role to cognition, Solov'ëv tells us that we pass from it to the view that does incorporate such a feature, viz., idealism. However, without explanation or fanfare the next presentation in the *Critique* is not an examination of that philosophy, but a discussion of something else, another criterion of veracity, for which empiricism cannot account. To get to the truth of a phenomenon, we must know how it stands in relation to other phenomena. The question why something is or happens the way it does demands an answer that can be formulated only in terms of regularity, i.e., in terms of conformity to law. The explanation for something or some phenomenon requires placing it in a lawful, i.e., constant and necessary, relation to other phenomena. Scientific empiricism holds that the laws of nature are deduced from experience through analogies and repeated observations. In this way, the rational laws governing the observed phenomena are extracted from their contingent circumstances. However, any such extraction can yield at most a factual generalization. That we have not observed any exception to the generalization is itself a fact and lacks the necessity of a law. Inasmuch as our empirical methodology limits us to what is apparent, not to things or events as they essentially are, we cannot say that that event or phenomenon is based on the very nature, or essence, of the matter. As a result, we cannot conclude that we have before us an absolutely necessary law. Properly speaking, since our observations lack universality and necessity we cannot say that our observations provide us with knowledge of what *truly* is. Thus, by being unable to secure invariable and necessary laws governing phenomena, scientific empiricism contradicts its own principle, viz., the attainment of truth, whose essence is invariable and necessary.

Of course, as we have remarked already many times, Solov'ëv's criticism presupposes his own position. He has argued neither that the scientific empiricist cannot be satisfied with statistical regularities nor that anything short of strict necessity cannot count as knowledge. Omitting to justify his premises, he, nevertheless, believes he has adequately established that "however we multiply our observations and experiences we will not advance in this way in the least towards the final goal of knowledge."[24]

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[23] PSS, vol. 3: 229. Solov'ëv does not mean that all of what is given to the senses is actually due to the imagination. Rather, the *sense* of objectivity, of objective reality, imparted to sense content is due to the imagination. We certainly cannot discount here the possibility of an influence from Kant, who wrote: "But since every appearance contains a manifold, thus different perceptions by themselves are encountered dispersed and separate in the mind, a combination of them, which they cannot have in sense itself, is therefore necessary. There is thus an active faculty of the synthesis of this manifold in us, which we call imagination." Kant 1997: A120.

[24] PSS, vol. 3: 239. Trubeckoj correctly observes with regard to Solov'ëv's critique of empiricism that it "presents comparatively little new. In general, it is a more or less talented rehash of what earlier critics of empiricism beginning with Kant had already expressed." Trubeckoj 1995. vol. 1: 211.

Solov'ëv has not the slightest doubt that we do know universal and necessary laws operative in the world, although these laws, be they laws of nature or laws concerning essential states of affairs, have only a "relative" universality. That is, these laws determine a relationship only from a certain angle or with regard to a certain aspect of the concern. Solov'ëv's own example is that of, on the one hand, mathematical laws that determine quantitative relations in space and time and, on the other hand, of natural laws that govern merely particular aspects or facets of the phenomenal world.[25] If we are to achieve universal truth, the multitude of laws must be united and the individual sciences integrated into a single interconnected system. In his own day, Solov'ëv saw this as the legitimate quest raised by Comtean positivism. However, in his eyes its principal proponents sought such a unification through a mechanical, rather than an organic, synthesis. They sought to base complex ideas on more elementary ones, somewhat like an inverted pyramid. The laws of human physiology were thought to rest on those governing chemical and physical phenomena. Mechanical laws were thought to rest on mathematical ones, etc. Solov'ëv dismisses the idea that mathematics can serve as the unifier of all the sciences. Although mechanics, for example, does contain a mathematical element, the object of mechanics is not mathematical laws, but "a new attendant factor, which does not follow from space, time and number in themselves, viz., the movement of physical bodies."[26] Mathematics is not concerned with the concrete objects of mechanics. Vice versa, there is no essential, inner connection between mechanics and mathematics. If there were no physical bodies and no movement of such bodies, mathematics would not have to undergo any change. Indeed, we do find a mathematical element in all the sciences, but that element does not embrace and connect the other particular elements that distinguish one science from another. Consequently, it cannot unite them into a complete system. There is no general principle that unites all disciplines, but this is precisely what is needed – a principle that would internally unite all the elements. In short, we cannot help but conclude that Solov'ëv rejects mathematics as the "unifier" of all the sciences simply for the reason that he wants to do so.[27]

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[25] We must be careful here again with our terminology. In saying that certain laws, for example, mathematical laws, have only a "relative universality," Solov'ëv does not mean to lapse into some philosophical relativism. He carelessly fails to distinguish the universality of a natural law, or law of appearance, from eidetic universality. As Husserl pointed out, a natural law – Solov'ëv's "law of appearance" – has a sense of positing a factual existence, of spatiotemporal actuality, something Solov'ëv would not deny, whereas a mathematical law, properly speaking, is a purely eidetic proposition and as such any positing of factual existence is suspended. A purely eidetic proposition has what we could call "unconditional" universal validity. See Husserl 1982: 15.

[26] PSS, vol. 3: 245. There is little need for critical comments on Solov'ëv's train of thought here. As mentioned earlier, he, like so many others in Russia at the time looked to biology, not physics, as the paradigmatic science, and it is hard for us today to see how he could have envisaged it to play such a role. Even more astonishing, however, is his evident failure to understand the thrust of the mathematization of natural science laying behind the Scientific Revolution.

[27] Obolevich faults Solov'ëv for his Kantian conceptualization of mathematics despite the overall Platonic character of his philosophy. Had he recognized, along with Cantor, the ontological possibilities of mathematics, rather than its purely formal character, he would have seen its applicability to appearances. Obolevich 2010: 38–39.

Nevertheless, positivism is not completely wrong-headed: It merely seeks unification in the wrong way. Solov'ëv reminds us that we should not confuse the process of unification with simply combining the elements of each discipline or science. The resulting combination would merely group the elements together, an approach he believes positivism takes. What we need is a synthetic principle or general "function" – a term he explicitly borrows from mathematics – that all disciplines presuppose.[28] Since the existing, particular disciplines/sciences cannot supply this principle, Solov'ëv maintains we must *assume* (!) there is a universal "science" (*nauka*) that contains all the formal principles of the individual sciences.[29] Like Kant, he holds that since sense experience cannot provide universality and necessity, and having thus eliminated the empiricist option, the only logical option towards which we can turn for the requisite universal "science" is to say that it must have a predominantly "speculative" (*umozritel'nyj*) character. Just how he understands this is far from clear – despite his claims to the contrary. Nevertheless, this universal science must not be concerned with the contingencies that accompany the contents of scientific truths, but with what is necessary in every experience, what underlies all that exists. Given that this science has as its object what is necessary and universal and that experience can provide neither, our only apparent logical recourse is to what we know does meet the stipulated criteria, namely, the principles of reason. The sought-for philosophical position that embodies these principles, thus, is "rationalism," which systematically presents the principles that every science presupposes.

Genuine knowledge, knowledge properly speaking, is not a matter of a simple declaration of a state of affairs. Genuine knowledge demands the sense or reason behind a fact, phenomenon or event. Whether or not we agree with Solov'ëv, there can be little doubt that humans as inquisitive beings are seldom satisfied without knowing the "why" behind the "that." For Solov'ëv, the "why" is a demand for information about *how* this particular fact relates to other facts, and these other facts, in turn, demand the same. Thus, true knowledge of something is a matter of situating or relating that something to the whole, conceived not as the sum total of discrete facts, but as a unity. To see everything together as a single unity there must be a single principle that can explain or embrace everything that not only does in fact exist, but everything that could possibly exist. This principle can be nothing other than reason: "Therefore, true knowledge is possible only in the form of rationality or an *all-unity*, i.e., its veracity is determined not by the rationality of its factual content, which constitutes only its material truth, but by the rationality of its form, i.e., by the relation of this content to everything in the unity, to the principle

[28] In spite of Solov'ëv's assertion to the contrary, it does not follow that this "function" or principle cannot be given by the sciences taken either separately or together as a whole.

[29] Solov'ëv's caveat here is that such an assumption is necessary if there is to be a single scientific system.

of all-unity."[30] Experience, clearly, cannot provide the reason linking together all the facts. Only our own human faculty of reason can re-cognize reason in the world.

Solov'ëv believes he has now indisputably shown that we must proceed from empiricism to rationalism, which logically can take – and historically has taken – several different forms. One of these, dogmatic rationalism, fails to investigate how human reason can know the reason linking everything external to the cognizing subject, and since this linkage constitutes the essence of things, the question is equivalent to asking how subjective reason can know that essence. Dogmatic rationalism *assumes* that reason can be applied to externality, that logical truths deduced by reason are ontic truths. In Solov'ëv's understanding, dogmatic rationalism represents the inverse of dogmatic realism: The latter takes it on faith that external objects are directly perceived and determine cognition, whereas the former takes it for granted that our subjective reason can penetrate into the essence of things and determine their veracity. Dogmatic rationalism shares empiricism's conclusion that "the rationality of what is cognized is not, as we saw, given by experience."[31] But in omitting an investigation into the possibility of true cognition, dogmatic rationalism is untrue to rationalism itself, the principle of which is to explain the reason for everything, to take nothing for granted.

With the recognition of dogmatic rationalism's logical lacuna, we pass to critical rationalism with its investigation into reason's ability to seize the essence of external objects. Critical rationalism does ask the overlooked questions. It holds, however, that reason exists only in the cognizing mind with nothing corresponding to it in the external world except what we put into it. Therefore, the external world, in itself lacking reason, must remain in principle unknown and unknowable to us.[32] Our cognition consists of the data of sense perception, which are the real content of cognition, and of *a priori* forms and laws of the mind, which have no proper content and therefore no true being. It is these forms and laws that ascribe the character of universality and necessity to sense data. At least to Solov'ëv, however, "It is obvious

[30] PSS, vol. 3: 250. In short, then, at this point in the *Critique* Solov'ëv identifies the concept of all-unity with reason, as that which unites everything that does and possibly could exist! Whereas the empiricist may doubt that reason can fulfill such a broad function, there is nothing mystical in either the claim itself or in what is being sought. Solov'ëv explicitly makes this identification of reason with all-unity later on the same page in writing: "The relation of a given to the whole can exist for us only insofar as in us ourselves there is the principle of all-unity, i.e., reason."

[31] PSS, vol. 3: 250.

[32] The reader will surely notice here Solov'ëv's own summary of Kant's path to transcendental idealism entirely avoids the lengthy and seeming tortured contours found in Kant's own presentation. In particular, there is no discussion of the ideality of space and time that recent commentators on Kant have considered pivotal to Kant's own path. In this regard, Solov'ëv follows a trend begun already by the first generation of Kant's disciples, particularly Karl Reinhold and Johann Fichte. Solov'ëv's own example, arguably, proved highly influential in the development of later Russian attempts to find a "shorter way" to transcendental idealism than that offered by Kant. For recent commentators on this "shorter way" see Ameriks 2000: 163–164 and Guyer 1987: 345–350. The principal example of a later Russian "shorter way" is Wedenskij 1910: 191–216.

that such a view is not a solution to the problem of cognition, but only a new formulation of it. Earlier, it was asked how the cognizing subject can refer to external things and combine with them in a true cognition of being. Now, the problem posed is how *a priori* forms of reason can refer to the independent empirical material of our sensations and combine with them into a true cognition of appearance. The fact is that critical rationalism accepts these two fundamental factors of our cognition as unconditionally independent of each other, without any internal, necessary connection between them."[33]

Cognition, properly speaking, can be neither form nor empirical content alone, but must consist of a synthesis of the two. Critical rationalism, however, viewing them as quite separate and independent of each other, cannot allow for any such combination. There would have to be, in effect, a third "element" or factor that both shared and that could serve as a link between the two, but this too is impossible owing to critical rationalism's posing of an absolute opposition between the *a priori* and the a posteriori. In this way, it cannot explain how true cognition is possible. In order to move beyond this position without simply returning to one of the earlier positions we have seen as untenable, we must accept that one of the two elements determines the other. However, if we were to hold that the a posteriori determines the *a priori*, we would have no way to account for the universality and necessity of cognized laws. Therefore, our sole alternative is to say that the content of our cognition is entirely determined by *a priori* forms, i.e., the categories of reason. In this way, Solov'ëv holds, we pass to the absolute rationalism of Hegel!

A few remarks are in order here. We see that Solov'ëv's treatment of Kant's epistemology is, unfortunately, far less detailed and far more superficial than even in his *magister*'s thesis. One might possibly excuse Solov'ëv on the grounds that he is not concerned here with Kant's position per se, but "critical rationalism" as an ideal type, were it not for the fact that he explicitly states it to be "inseparably linked in the history of philosophy with Kant's name."[34] As a criticism of Kant, it displays woeful ignorance of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, wherein Kant acknowledges the issue of how to subsume the empirical representation or appearance of an object under pure concepts of the understanding. Contrary to Solov'ëv's charge, Kant does admit there must be a third thing, a mediating representation that must be both intellectual and sensible at once, and this representation is termed the transcendental schema.[35] The move from Kant to Hegel depends on disallowing just this possibility of a mediating representation between sensibility and the intellectual that would be at least partially homogeneous with both.

Apparently without acknowledging Kant's investigations into such a mediation, Hegel in accepting a strict dichotomy between the contingent empirical content of cognition and the necessary forms of reason, deduces the former from the latter.

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[33] PSS, vol. 3: 253.

[34] PSS, vol. 3: 252. The reader will note here Solov'ëv's cautious attribution of this characterization of "critical rationalism" to Kant. Solov'ëv's explicit attribution of "absolute rationalism" to Hegel is unusual.

[35] Kant 1997: A137/B176–A138/B177.

In such a depiction of Hegel's absolute rationalism as given by Solov'ëv, there are no truly external objects, external, that is, to reason.[36] Since it cannot assume an initial content, this deduction proceeds, as it must, from the pure forms of cognition, i.e., pure thought, the pure thought of being in general without any determinations at all. Such a thought amounts to a thought of nothing. A thought of nothing is no thought, for thought is always a thought of something. What we now have here is a colossal absurdity, but one that is unavoidable given our starting point in an abstract reason, reason understood as lacking any independent content. Although Hegel's absolute idealism bears the form of an all-unity, it starts with pure thought, the empty form of intentionality abstracted from everything. Hegel's approach is negative in that he proceeds from the absence of any content in order to start with what is contained in everything, i.e., intentional thought. However, having discarded everything, Hegel can retrieve nothing. What we have here is a negative all-unity from which nothing can be deduced. Without further argument, Solov'ëv claims that such a negative result cannot be the principle of truth. Instead, Solov'ëv cryptically proposes that we proceed positively. That is, instead of seeking what is contained in everything, as we previously saw him advocating in "Sophia," we should now seek what contains everything within itself. Such an all-unity is neither purely formal, lacking all content, nor in reason alone, for then it would be merely subjective. No, the all-unity is the form of truth and as such presupposes the unconditional reality of that of which it is the form, viz., of what truly exists.[37]

6.3 From Epistemology to Ontology

In order to pass from the epistemologically oriented philosophies of the modern era to his own ontologically oriented view, Solov'ëv offers a brief overview of the negativism that he feels underlies both empiricism and rationalism, leaving to his satisfaction the only remaining alternative his own, self-described positive philosophy.

[36] Up to this time, Solov'ëv has understood reason as a subjective human faculty. The casual reader of the *Critique* will, therefore, incorrectly conclude that Hegel is a subjective idealist, if not a solipsist. Solov'ëv writes, "All truth, the entire content of true cognition must be deduced from pure reason as forms of cognition. No external object is allowed here; all objects, all possible determinations of being must be created by cognition itself." PSS, vol. 3: 254. To someone unfamiliar with Hegel's actual position, these words can only sound like a ringing endorsement of solipsism.

[37] We have mentioned Solov'ëv's term "all-unity" already a number of times but without defining it. Indeed, Solov'ëv himself seldom offers precise definitions for most of his philosophical terms. Fortunately, he did provide a definition of "all-unity," albeit several years later in his Brockhaus-Efron encyclopedia entry. He writes that it is "the unity of all taken in its two chief senses: a negative or abstract sense and a positive or concrete sense. In the first, the unity of all is posited in what is common to all that exists. What is common is different in the various philosophical viewpoints. For materialism, it is matter, and for consistent idealism it is the self-revealing logical idea, etc. In the second, the positive sense of the relation of the single principle to all is understood in the relation of the all-encompassing spiritual-organic whole to its living parts and elements." Solov'ëv 1997: 42–43.

Empiricism, with its representational theory of perception, holds that we are directly aware not of external objects themselves, but only of our representations of them. In this way, the fundamental distinction between externality and interiority collapses, for we are truly conscious only of our own mental states. What the perceiver has direct access to is only sensations, which, after all, are only internal. Logically extending this train of thought, I cognize my own self not directly but only as I appear to myself in the form of mental states. The absurdity here lies in that the empiricist speaks of representations but can say neither what the object represented truly is nor what that which has the representations truly is.

Rationalism in its final form as Hegel's panlogism believes that everything exists only insofar as it is conceptual or thought. The cognizing subject too must, therefore, be conceptual, but whose concept is it? To be consistent, we have to say that the affirmation of a possessor of concepts, if indeed it exists, must itself be a concept. The result, then, is a vicious circle. If we are to avoid this outcome, we have no other choice except to say that concepts exist without any subject that has them. Likewise, if concepts are all that there is, then there must be concepts totally lacking independent content. In other words, there could be no concepts *of* something. What content there is primordially emerges from cognition itself as it develops. In the beginning, then, conceived logically and not necessarily temporally, there is pure thought or pure concept. Empiricism ultimately reduces everything to representations without a subject and an object, rationalism to concepts without a subject and an object. What they fail to realize fully is that both a representation and a concept are *of something*. Even were we to admit this, however, the mere acquiescence that a representation and a concept must be of something does not mean that this something is true, that this object actually exists. I can conceive a unicorn standing in front of me even though there truly is no unicorn in this room. Truth demands unconditional reality and rationality, where reality and rationality are understood in terms of the all-unity. A book truly does lie in front of me as anyone can see. Moreover, it does make sense to ask why this book is here, the answer to which involves referring to other things. States of consciousness, such as sensations, are subjective facts and are not the same as the objective content intended in them.

Before continuing, let us pause briefly for a few general observations. Solov'ëv's criticism of the modern philosophies of empiricism and rationalism presents little that is new in the history of philosophy nor is it even novel in his own writings. He enunciated many of the same points in his earlier writings, and we can find many of the same general criticisms in Kant and particularly in Hegel. There is, nevertheless, in the *Critique*, to be sure, a shift in emphasis, an emphasis on the bearer, or possessor, of concepts and representations that, as we shall see, will lead him into the religious sphere not without a measure of similarity to Berkeley, though without the latter's professed "immaterialism." On the other hand, Solov'ëv's standpoint in the *Critique* perilously approaches a pantheistic Spinozism. Indeed, he derides other philosophies for not being sufficiently rationalistic, including those of the rationalist school. Despite their avowed belief in reason, they find the world utterly devoid of it. Even the so-called rationalists find reason only in the forms of the world, but not in its content. Additionally, with Spinoza, Hegel and his

own mentor Jurkevich, he shares the conviction that an investigation of cognition need not entail questioning the very possibility of cognizing what is transcendent.[38] Cognition, properly speaking, is a relation of the subject to something transcendent. To question the latter, i.e., whether cognition "grasps" the transcendent as something transcendent, as modern epistemologies do, is as equally absurd as it is to question whether cognition includes a subject: Just as we cannot speak of cognition proper without a cognizing subject, so too we cannot speak of cognition without a transcendent object. In singling out a particular experience or even set of experiences as evidence of truth, empiricism cannot help but conclude that experience is dependent on particular circumstances and therefore conditional. On the other hand, conceptual thought apart from content is, as Kant aptly remarked, empty, despite its universality and unconditionality. Truth lies not in the concepts or forms of thought, but in its content, yet not in the content of a particular set of questioned contingent experiences, but in what is transcendent to the cognizing activity. "Truth consists, above all, in the fact that it *is*, i.e., that it cannot be reduced either to the fact of our sensation or to an act of thought. Truth is independent of whether or not we sense or think it."[39]

True cognition is for Solov'ëv, as it is for Plato, cognition of the true, of what truly exists, and what truly exists is literally everything. Echoing Hegel, he remarks that the true is the whole, but the whole is not a simple aggregate or combination, but a unity, a completely interconnected whole, a single something.[40] Here, we see the three necessary predicates for a determination of truth, namely, (1) that which is, (2) the whole (= all that there is, or the "content") and (3) the one (= the interrelatedness of the "content," or the "form"). Without an interconnected whole, we have no single unity, no truth. The reason, or sense, of all that exists lies in this interconnection of the whole. Solov'ëv's terminology is needlessly obscure, but the thought, however imprecise, is quite simple. Without what is, truth is limited to subjective thought. Without the whole, truth has no content, and without the one, truth has no singularity of form. All knowledge is interconnected. The rational understanding of anything requires a reference to why it is the way it is, a reference to other things, which in turn requires further reference. In short, then, absolute truth requires a reference to everything. Anything short of that is only a partial truth. The rationality of a fact lies not in an abstract formula, but in its connection and relation to everything else, i.e., in its unity with everything else, the whole. A fact taken in isolation cannot be understood. Divorced from the rest of the whole, it appears irrational. "Surely, the rationality of some fact lies only in its interrelationship with the whole, i.e., in its unity with the whole. To understand the sense or reason of some reality,

[38] In one of his programmatic articles, Jurkevich wrote: "Certainly, we can engage in science without asking for the conditions of its possibility: *In order to know, it is not necessary to have knowledge about knowledge itself*." Jurkevich 1859: 11. Significantly, Spinoza said much the same: "…it is not necessary to know that we know that we know." Spinoza 1958: 13.

[39] PSS, vol. 3: 265.

[40] Hegel 1977: 11.

of some fact, only means to understand it in its interrelationship with the whole, in its all-unity."[41]

Both empiricism and rationalism err in starting their respective epistemological inquiries with the cognizing subject sundered from the unitary whole – in Solov'ëv's terminology the all-unity – and posing everything but itself as alien or external to it. In doing so, both directions are doomed to failure in their respective attempts to secure the truth. We should not be surprised, then, that they portray the now quite external world as not just unknown but fundamentally unknowable, as things in themselves. After all, that is the very presupposition – an unconditional opposition between the subject and the object – with which these and all other abstract philosophies begin. Cognition is, indisputably, an inner state of the subject. Thus, if, as abstract philosophies hold, the object is posited as absolutely external to the subject, then objectivity, of course, must be excluded from any intrinsic relation to the subject. Sensation becomes, from this point of view, purely subjective, and reason too is a subjective faculty or empty form of the mind. Sensation as pure content and reason as pure form have no inner connection between each other. Kant's proposal to have the subject apply categories of reason to the content supplied by the senses cannot possibly yield objective truths, for there is nothing objective in this interplay within the isolated mind. "It is quite obvious that the union of the subjective forms of reason with the subjective data of sensations cannot give them any objective reality, and on the other hand since these given sensations exist in us materially, quite independently of our reason, the application of its subjective forms and categories (above all the category of causality) to them appears to us quite external and contingent."[42] Thus, if veridical cognition is possible – which must be the case because we do have it – and neither empiricism nor rationalism, whether the latter be Leibnizian or Kantian, can explain it, then neither sense data nor the rational forms can be the cognitive object. Rather, the object is what is sensed and what is thought in a rational concept. Admittedly, there *are* sensations and concepts, and as such are two modes of being, i.e., two modes of relative being, but the object of a cognition, albeit supplied by sensations and concepts, is neither of them. Rather, the object is what is sensed or conceived and is an *existent* (*sushchij*). That which genuinely is, an existent, is held to be independent of us and not a form or type of being (*bytie*).[43]

Some will find Solov'ëv's talk of modes of being peculiar; others versed in the origins of analytic philosophy, in particular, Frege, much less so. Certainly, we regard our own selves as physical beings with particular properties. Thoughts too have a certain sort of being, a mental being, though their temporal duration can be quite short lived. Thoughts, emotional states and sensations have being or "are," but not in the same sense as I do in saying "I am" or the "we" of "We are." My thoughts, emotions and sensations belong to me, an entity (*sushestvo*), and they constitute, or

[41] PSS, vol. 3: 269.

[42] PSS, vol. 3: 269.

[43] Solov'ëv presupposes much here and quickly is fraught with difficulties. He has no way to account for "intentional inexistence," for in fact his view on the face of it is that there is no such thing. In this respect, his position resembles Meinong.

make up, part of my being, part of who I am. We certainly can and do routinely express propositions in which the grammatical subject is "my thoughts," "my feelings," etc., but logically thoughts and feelings can only be predicated of a subject. Herein lies, in Solov'ëv's view, the fundamental error of all abstract philosophies: They hypostatize predicates. "It is impossible to say simply or unconditionally 'The will is,' 'The thought is,' 'Being is.' For a will, a thought, or a being is only insofar as there is a that which wills, thinks or exists."[44] If we are to avoid the errors of these philosophies, we must recognize that the genuine object of philosophy – indeed of all knowledge – is not these predicates in abstraction, but that which exists with its predicates.

The seemingly simple passage above needs considerable comment – and a cautionary interpretation. That a will or a desire is in need of a bearer is uncontroversial. As we saw, he claims that they are also modes of being. However, Solov'ëv also claims, without argument, that all beings, such as you and I and the objects around us, are beings and are predicates of another in a logically ascending fashion until we reach that which is not the predicate of another. Just as I am the subject or possessor of my desires, emotions and sensations, so too is the "existent" (*sushchij*) the subject or possessor of all being. Just as I am not my desires, emotions and sensations and can meaningfully be said to be distinguished from them, so too is the existent not just all beings. Moreover, "just as that which thinks is not identical with thought but has thought, so too is the existent not identical with being but has or *possesses* being."[45]

We can now, unlike Solov'ëv, ask whether thoughts have bearers. He explicitly states that the individual human being is a bearer of thoughts. Frege thought otherwise. For Frege, a thought is not a subjective entity, but that of which we can ask whether it is true or false.[46] A thought has a truth-value regardless of whether someone takes it to be true or false. It requires no bearer, for otherwise no two people could have the same thought. Each of us would have our own set of thoughts, and no contradiction between your thoughts and mine could arise. You have your toothache, and I have mine. But I cannot have yours. People, though, do, on occasion, contradict each other, and people can have the same thought. On the other hand, for Frege, ideas do need a bearer. Therefore, no two people can have the same idea. An idea is a content of my consciousness much as sensations, moods and desires are. In short, for Solov'ëv thoughts are comparable to sensations in requiring a bearer, whereas for Frege thoughts do not. It is ideas that, according to Frege, need a bearer, but according to Solov'ëv do *not* need one – or so it appears apart from reflection. For in reality all ideas and all modes of being, according to the latter, ultimately have a bearer. An obvious possibility is that, apart from the philosophical difference, what we have here is merely a difference in terminology: what Frege called "thought" is what Solov'ëv called an "idea." Nevertheless, for both Solov'ëv and Frege truth is independent of our human individual sensing or thinking processes.

[44] PSS, vol. 3: 273.

[45] PSS, vol. 3: 274.

[46] Frege 1918: 511.

Thoughts for Frege and ideas for Solov'ëv are neither material objects of the outer world nor subjective contents of the mind. They can neither be set afire nor belong to the individual consciousness. Like Frege, Solov'ëv held that something essentially accessible to everyone, and thus not dependent on any particular consciousness, must be independent of everyone. This fundamental thesis lies behind the opposition of both Frege and Solov'ëv to psychologism. The latter, in fact, on this basis found reason not only in the human mind, but in the external world.

Although Solov'ëv will accept that an idea does not require an individual consciousness to be its bearer, this does not mean that it has *no* bearer at all. Unlike Frege, Solov'ëv contends that every being, every sort of being, must ultimately have some bearer that, properly speaking, does not have being, but "exists" and "exists" unconditionally. This forms one of the pivotal positions in the standpoint of the *Critique*, which though introduced with little fanfare, marks an advance over the stand enunciated in the "Philosophical Principles." Admittedly, in the earlier work, he had already distinguished "being" (*bytie*) from "existing" (*sushchij*). However, there he merely referred to an "existent" as the positive principle of being. Now, we have finally a clarification of what he meant: "That which exists is not being, but to it belongs every being in the same sense as when we say, for example, that a (thinking) person is not thought, but thought (*mysl'*) belongs to it."[47] The advance over his earlier statement lies in attempting to provide an explanation for the dichotomy between being and the ultimate existent. In other words, this view that all beings must have a bearer, in effect, amounts to a "proof," or argument, for God's "existence." From Solov'ëv's standpoint, it is the Fregean philosopher, who posits an inexplicable third realm populated with infinite timeless, immaterial, objective objects that have no bearer, who is the genuinely irrational or "mystical" thinker.[48]

For Solov'ëv, anything that *is*, whether it be a book, the Andromeda galaxy or a toothache, has being. In considering a toothache, we can, though not without some difficulty, focus our mental attention on the ache itself without thinking of the person who has the ache, namely myself. As we "move up" the tree of cognition, focusing on the possessor becomes harder. For example, someone can consider this book before me, looking at its size or other properties without heed to whose book it is. In fact, in many instances the identity of the possessor is difficult to discern. Solov'ëv, however, extrapolates from this to say that the "unconditionally existent,"

[47] PSS, vol. 3: 274. Solov'ëv expressed this idea in the final installment of the *Critique*, which consisted of its final six chapters and was published along with a conclusion in the January 1880 issue of *Russkij vestnik*. The position of the "Philosophical Principles" is that of mid-1877.

[48] Although we have alluded on occasion to specific points in common between Solov'ëv and Husserl, any conceivable turn to either transcendental phenomenology or, for that matter, to linguistic analysis was precluded by Solov'ëv's resolute conviction that ideas required a bearer, indeed ultimately a single, albeit metaphysical, bearer. Solov'ëv's disciples, accepting this fundamental tenet, could find little sympathy with Husserl's transcendental-phenomenological reduction or with an analysis of concepts and meanings as the means to resolve philosophical problems. Instead, professional philosophy in Russia turned with its very first steps in the direction of religion, i.e., a religious turn, whether it be the religion of Russian Orthodoxy or of the reductionist materialism of the Soviet era, in sharp contrast to the linguistic turn of analytic philosophy later in Great Britain and the United States.

the positive principle of *all* being, while cognized in every cognition, nevertheless, can never be sensed nor conceived in empirical or logical cognition. For it is not a predicate, but the ultimate subject of all predicates. Before proceeding, however to elaborate how it is that we cognize this existent, Solov'ëv engages in an ontological discussion.

6.4 From a Philosophical to a Religious Ontology

Is, then, the universe taken as a whole the ultimate or unconditionally existent? Anxious to avoid a possible charge of pantheism, Solov'ëv denies such an identification. The latter is *in* everything but not identical *with* everything. As with many other such doctrines, Solov'ëv is hard pressed to elucidate his reasoning. He writes: "If the principle of everything did not differ from that of which it is the principle, then everything would be fused into an empty indifference, would be transformed into pure being, an equal nothing."[49] Clearly, the reasoning here is that the unconditionally existent (=God) is either identical with everything or it is not. If it were identical, there would be no difference between this thing and that. However, since there is such a difference, the unconditionally existent is not identical with everything. Despite his words, Solov'ëv fails to clarify just why an "indifference" would result from the denial of an independent, in effect absolute, existent. Nonetheless, an ascription of pantheism to Solov'ëv, at least in his eyes, is unfounded: Just as I am more than the sum of the mere predicates that describe me, so too is God, the Supreme Being, the absolute, etc., more than just the predicates that populate, as it were, the universe. Yet, just as I am "in" my thoughts, desires, faults, etc., so too is God in the universe.[50]

Solov'ëv unequivocally affirms, as we saw just above, that the unconditionally existent, which he also calls the "truly existent," is cognized in everything. Thus, it cannot be found to be simply an external object. After all, as the original substance (*pervonachal'naja substancija*) – yet another locution he introduces – of everything, the truly existent is also our original substance. He even states that it is immediately perceived (*vosprinimaemaja*) by us in the depths of our spirit not as something manifested in being, but as free of all being. For Solov'ëv, there is *undoubtedly* an immediate perception of the "absolute reality in which the existent is revealed as

[49] PSS, vol. 3: 275.

[50] The charge of pantheism has doggedly followed Solov'ëv just as it has Spinoza. The arguably most notable example of this is that given in Speranskij 1901: 103–132. A somewhat more nuanced portrait is that in Lopatin 1916: 448: "A convinced theist in the conception of the absolute principle of things taken in itself, he [Solov'ëv – TN] understands the world's process pantheistically." This article is an English translation of an address originally dating from 1901. Trubeckoj, in a similar vein, writes: "The fundamental inadequacy of Solov'ëv's thought makes it impossible for him to overcome pantheism fully. Pantheism is the necessary consequence of a viewpoint that blends two worlds, two essentially different orders of being and understands the relation of the Divine to the earthly as a relation of essence to appearance." Trubeckoj 1995. vol. 1: 295.

unconditionally indivisible and free of all determinations."[51] What is indisputable here is, by Solov'ëv's own admission, that we have moved univocally from a rational discussion of what is to a non-rational claim that nonetheless purports to be universally ascertainable by some as yet unspecified means. Yet, Solov'ëv again draws back albeit ever so slightly: To view the truly existent merely as free of all being would amount to what he terms an "abstract mysticism." No, the truly existent is *in* everything. Indeed, there is nothing outside it. It is both nothing, no-thing, and yet it is everything, every-thing. Solov'ëv views his position here as the direct antithesis of Hegel's, which the former characterizes as a negative nothing in contrast to his own "positive nothing." Solov'ëv holds that Hegel came to the starting point in his *Logic*, pure being, through abstraction, by depriving being of all "positive" determinations.

Thus, the truly existent, or, to introduce another of Solov'ëv's locutions for this idea, "the absolute," has two poles or centers: the principle of unconditional unity, a unity without form or manifestations, and the principle of being, i.e., of the multitude of forms. Solov'ëv contends that this second principle is what in ancient philosophy was termed "*materia prima*." Solov'ëv's terminology here is effervescent, to be sure, but veers far from the concrete and hardly serves to explain let alone resolve any philosophical issues. That one pole is the opposite of the absolute and yet identical to it is something he acknowledges. He sees this not as a problem or even a deficiency in his construction. Rather, to resolve this antinomy Solov'ëv calls the second principle the "becoming all-one," and in doing so evokes in the reader whether this was his intent or not the specter again of Hegel's *Logic* with its initial triad of being-nothing-becoming.

Having ventured so far into the metaphysical realm there is nothing preventing Solov'ëv, not even the most elementary laws of logic, from spinning out any construction he chooses. If logic is no obstacle, certainly nothing outside the experiential sphere can be excluded *a priori*. Solov'ëv claims that the absolute in order to be the absolute demands or requires (*trebuet*) another that is not absolute. What sense we are to make of this word "demand" is unclear. Can a non-human being make demands or have requirements, and what are the consequences of the non-fulfillment of such a demand? To whom would the absolute address a demand if there is nothing in the first place? Such questions are of no interest to Solov'ëv, but in any case the demand is met through nature, which is a manifestation of its divinity. Just as contentious here is the very subject-matter of this so-called demand, viz., that the absolute, God, demands another in order to be absolute. In other words, God would not be, logically would not be, if there were no universe. Such is a strange claim that fits only very uncomfortably with traditional Christianity.[52] Not surprisingly, particularly in light of the none-too-subtle religious direction Solov'ëv is pursuing, he also claims that we must admit another absolute, though distinct,

[51] PSS, vol. 3: 276.

[52] The controversial nature of this claim is recognized by Gajdenko, who writes: "The chief thesis consists in that the absolute cannot exist except as realized in its other. Such an understanding of the relation between God and the world is essentially different from the Christian conception of the world's creation." Gajdenko 2001: 50.

entity. Its absoluteness, however, is not the same as that of the first, the absolute as such. The latter is the subject of absolute content in an eternal and indivisible act; the former is the subject also of absolute content, only in a continuous process. To be sure, it has a divine element but only as a potentiality that is gradually becoming a reality. By virtue of its natural or material element, it is not all-one but only a becoming all-one.

We already saw the expression "all-one" when dealing with *The Crisis of Western Philosophy*, where the all-one was said to have a spiritual character not in virtue of but apart from our awareness of it. Nonetheless, we are part of this all-one. We have also seen many of Solov'ëv's other religio-metaphysical constructions in his "Principles of Integral Knowledge." For this reason as well as that virtually all of them lie outside rational discourse and therefore a rational assessment, we need not prolong our investigation. What is of some interest, however, is the ire with which his views met in traditional Christian circles. Most striking, of course, is his numerous statements that many have read as bordering on, if not tantamount to, pantheistic expressions. Also disturbing is that Solov'ëv would go on developing the patent direction of his ontological claims to "deduce" the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which to traditionalists has to be accepted purely on faith. Arguably just as unacceptable, though more subtle, is the very notion of the human being as a "becoming all-one." Are we to understand this becoming process as a temporal one in which humanity, flesh and blood human beings, are becoming, to put it bluntly, God or God-like? Solov'ëv explicitly states that this process takes place in time. How, then, does he see the future of humanity as flesh and blood creatures? Admittedly, Solov'ëv in characterizing humanity as a "second absolute" immediately adds that this does not mean humanity possesses absolute content and so is not absolute in the same sense as is God.[53] One way in which we, as human beings, are absolute is that we are absolutely free, free as individual subjects of all our actions and states. To Solov'ëv, it is again "obvious" that this gradual process of becoming absolute presupposes a metaphysical order in which the absolute *is*. But again what is the basis for this alleged obviousness? Solov'ëv immediately tells us that there must be such an absolute, God, apart from us, for otherwise there could be no process of becoming, there would be nothing to become. However unsatisfactory such an argument appears, it hardly can be characterized as "obvious." Solov'ëv believes the basis for this alleged obviousness lies in the actual relationship we have to the metaphysical sphere through an immediate knowledge. It is to this that we next turn.

6.5 Grasping the Unconditionally Existing

We have seen that everything around us both material and ideal, this table as well as the Pythagorean theorem, i.e., everything that has "being" is a possession of that which unconditionally exists, a locution for God. Therefore, all being is predicated

[53] PSS, vol. 3: 285.

of the latter, but the latter itself cannot be a predicate. In this way, the unconditionally existing is not identical with nature or even with everything as a totality that has being. Have we again hereby advanced from the philosophical to the religious sphere? Solov'ëv remarks that we cognize the unconditionally existing *in* everything (*vo vsem*), but clearly this cognition cannot be one based on sense data.[54] He also adds that everything is an appearance or manifestation (*javlenie*) of the unconditionally existing. However, since he has repeatedly and consistently rejected the Kantian notion of the thing in itself, on pain of inconsistency he does not liken the unconditionally existing to it. How, then, do we have cognition of it? In the penultimate chapter of the *Critique*, Solov'ëv reminds us that our firm conviction, indeed certainty, in the independent being of the ordinary cognized object cannot be accounted for by sense data and/or the conceptual forms of reason. How, then, do we account for this certainty? Is there a connection between this certainty and our cognition of the unconditionally existing?

To all but the most resolute Cartesians, certainty in a universe populated with things existing independently of my cognition of them is, to be sure, one certainty. However is it the same certainty as that which we ascribe to, say, the law of causality? Kant's treatment of causality is both too well-known in its essentials and its details too elaborate to be summarized here. Although sympathetic in some quite limited measure with Kant's idealism, Solov'ëv rejects it both in its essentials as well as in many of its specific tenets. Earlier in the *Critique* when discussing the defect in "scientific empiricism," Solov'ëv added that although what he calls "speculation" provides us with the recognition that some proposition is necessary and universal, those qualities are not themselves introduced by the mind into what is conceived. A proposition that is necessary and universally true is not so because I think it is universal and necessary, but because universality and necessity follow from the "essence" of that state of affairs. Those qualities are empty, subjective conceptual forms without a universal and necessary object, i.e., without an unconditional content. Speculation, which Solov'ëv also characterizes as pure thought, is our means of access to that "essence" or content. It reveals to us the possibility of natural science by recognizing that nature exhibits law-governed behavior, a recognition that is not the result of empirically obtained data. Speculation, which Solov'ëv also calls both a type (*rod*) *and* a mode (*sposob*) of cognition, provides the element of universality and necessity independently of how many observations and experiences have taken place.[55] It, however, does not tell us that something must exist. It can merely tell us that there is a necessary relation between independently

[54] PSS, vol. 3: 275.

[55] Solov'ëv's talk of speculation as both a type and a mode of cognition again raises difficulties. Presumably, it runs parallel to Kant's talk of space and time as being both forms of intuition as well as intuitions themselves. Unlike Kant with regard to intuition, however, Solov'ëv has not defined "cognition" or even given a clear account of it.

given appearances or events. In characterizing speculation as "pure (formal) thought," though, Solov'ëv appears to be reviving a form of rationalism, a philosophical position whose deficiencies he already demonstrated at least to his own satisfaction. If the admission of speculation does not raise again the specter of rationalism, can it properly be described as pure thought?[56]

Even should we grant an epistemic role to speculation as Solov'ëv characterizes it, there is another factor in everyday cognition that needs explanation. The sense that concepts and sensations originate not from within my own psyche but from an independent object depends on a logically prior certainty in the independence of the object. For Solov'ëv, it is clear that neither sensations nor thoughts can generate that certainty. Here in the *Critique* he reaffirms his earlier position taken in the *Lectures on Divine Humanity* that the only means to account for this certainty is another, a third cognitive element, namely, faith (*vera*), which given its assigned role in Solov'ëv's account cannot be identified with speculation.[57] The certainty we have in the cognitive object's objectivity cannot be the product of a contingent relation such as that presented by sense data: Contingency can lead only to another contingency. Even our psychic states, our thoughts, are contingent. Were it not for this additional cognitive element, the law of causality would have merely an immanent, but not a transcendent application. We could never conclude that our sensations are induced by something outside ourselves. We would take our sensations merely as subjective states. "The objective significance of external cognition is based on faith. Properly speaking, what is the object of this faith? It is what can be neither a sensation nor a concept. It is greater than any fact or any thought, namely the unconditional existence of the object."[58] Our senses provide the *particulars* of an object, reason conceptualizes the *general* features and faith provides *certainty* in its absolute being, i.e., its continued existence independent of our cognition of it.

Faith is responsible for immediate certainty in the intentional object's objectivity or independence, but this certainty is by no means a subjective sense that could be otherwise. Faith allows cognition to "penetrate" into the object and thereby makes objective cognition possible. Through faith, the cognizing subject "unites" or

[56] PSS, vol. 3: 239. Solov'ëv's facile expression here, unfortunately raises a veritable plethora of questions. Why does he find untenable all other alternatives to his proposed solution? How do we know that in speculation we have the relation as it truly is? One question looms above all others: Just what is "speculation"? Is Solov'ëv merely dismissing Hume's doubt and Kant's treatment of causality by saying there is no real problem, that "speculation" provides all the solutions to philosophical problems?

[57] PSS, vol. 3: 294. Oddly, Solov'ëv does not comment on the respective roles of speculation and faith in relation to each other here, and he refers to both as a third element in cognition, not a third and a fourth. He writes here, in other words, as if he has already forgotten all about speculation. Moreover, as with speculation Solov'ëv, referring to faith, again characterizes it as not just a third *element* of or in cognition, but as a third *sort* (*rod*) of cognition. See, for example, PSS, vol. 3: 291. He said much the same about speculation!

[58] PSS, vol. 3: 297.

recognizes its unconditional connection with the object. Otherwise, on the basis of empirical or conceptual cognition alone the object would have only a relative or conditional being, reflecting, for example, the relativity of the perceptual act itself. If there were an absolute separation between the subject and the cognized object, we would recognize the object as having only a relative or conditional being just like the fleeting perceptual act itself.[59] Through faith and its concomitant unification with the object we recognize the object's necessary unconditionality. "Either we must recognize that there are sensations in themselves, i.e., sensations in which no one senses anything, and concepts in themselves, i.e., concepts in which no one thinks of anything, or we must accept that apart from all actual and possible sensations and concepts (thoughts) there exists something that senses and something that is sensed, something that thinks and something that is thought not as a determinate relation, but each as an unconditional entity. Sensations and thoughts must be understood as states and acts of a certain entity, for otherwise they lose any sense. At the same time, they presuppose a certain other entity to which the first refers, for otherwise they lose any determinacy and stability, which they actually possess."[60] In short, Solov'ëv holds that unless we ascribe an unconditional being to the cognized object there would be no such thing as objective cognition. That there is objective cognition is something he never demonstrates nor even feels a need to demonstrate. However, the reasoning here concerning the unconditionality of the cognized object is presumably supplementary to the certainty provided by faith and not in lieu of it.

There is no need for us to provide an extensive and detailed critique of Solov'ëv's position. Its ample deficiencies are obvious. For instance, he takes the perceptual object as the paradigmatic object of cognition without attending in the slightest way to other types of cognition, such as that of ideal objects and of objects in pure acts of fantasy. Solov'ëv provides no insight into the means by which we distinguish an actually existing object from the same object only fantasized. To say, as he presumably would, that the latter lacks the element of faith is inadequate if we are not informed of the conditions necessary and sufficient for faith to become operative. In the case of ideal objects, does it make any sense to say that in thinking of the Pythagorean theorem or even of a multiplication table the cognizing subject is "united" with it? Moreover, although on a certain level we could entertain a Cartesian doubt that the putative external world is merely a dream – and therefore its objectivity must be accepted on "faith" – can we say the same about the Pythagorean theorem? Can we say that the objectivity we ascribe to, say, the ratio of the circumference of

[59] I have tried to provide here a neutral interpretation of Solov'ëv's otherwise inconsistent wording. He states, on the one hand, that an absolute separation of the subject and the object can yield knowledge only of the object's conditional being. See PSS, vol. 3: 294. On the other hand, Solov'ëv admits that: "All cognition is a certain unification of that which cognizes and the cognized object. However, when we unite with the object (cognize it) in its external qualities, there is an external and relative unification." PSS, vol. 3: 295. Given his conception of the all-unity, Solov'ëv should have consistently rejected the very possibility of an absolute separation of the object from the subject.

[60] PSS, vol. 3: 292.

a circle to its diameter is a matter of the Solov'ëvian notion of faith? Additionally, Solov'ëv's use of the term "faith" is peculiar in that he explicitly does not conceive it to be a subjective attitude in the least. It is not something that, for example, an individual could summon on demand despite a lack of evidence or evidence to the contrary. Indeed, there can be no conflict between reason and "faith" as he understands the term, because they perform quite different functions in cognition. It appears at first sight that Solov'ëv is being patently inconsistent in ascribing a sense-bestowal function to faith, a function that we saw he had attributed in an earlier chapter of the *Critique* to the imagination. However, faith yields a logically more elementary certainty in the object's existence than even the imagination can provide.

> This certainty corresponds to the object's deepest inner determination, its determination as unconditional or that which is. By virtue of this it cannot be entirely reduced to something else or to any relation. In all respects, it always remains in itself (*an sich*). This being in itself (*bytie v sebe*) cannot be given in the cognizing subject's relative states, be they sensations or thoughts, but can be accessed only in the subject's inner unity with the object. By virtue of this unity the subject is in the object and the object in the subject.[61]

Solov'ëv provides no reason nor empirical data to support his position. In fact, given that faith operates at a more fundamental level than reason or experience, none by definition can be given. In other words, neither reason nor experience could even conceivably refute Solov'ëv's position here. It is driven solely out of architectonic considerations, a desire to find triadic schemes everywhere. Lacking any connection with the empirical realm and thought, faith plays no substantial role in an account of anything other than Solov'ëv's personal psyche. Solov'ëv's agreement with Hegel here comes back to haunt him: the pure thought of a completely undetermined being in general is a thought of nothing, and a thought of nothing is no thought.

In the *Critique*'s penultimate chapter, Solov'ëv returns to a somewhat fuller account of the role of imagination, or intellectual intuition, in cognition.[62] After having addressed *that* the object is, Solov'ëv turns – using his own expression – to *what* the object is, i.e., the issue of the enduring existence of this particular object and our ability to recognize it as the same despite an interruption in our perception. Our senses provide only particular data, and in the case of an interruption not even that. An object over a period of time can appear differently, especially if our observations are discontinuous. We are, nevertheless, able to recognize the object as the same from one instance to the next. Abstract thought also cannot provide a specific mental representation of the object, for it is able to yield merely a "general scheme of all

[61] PSS, vol. 3: 303.

[62] For Solov'ëv's identification of the metaphysical role of "imagination" with intellectual intuition, see PSS, vol. 3: 304. We have here yet another turn in Solov'ëv's understanding of the latter. Although not inconsistent with his exposition in the *Lectures*, in the *Critique* the role of intellectual intuition in cognition becomes somewhat clearer. Solov'ëv's own way of putting it is that intellectual intuition informs us *what* the cognitive object is as opposed to that it is and how it is, which are the functions of faith and the senses respectively.

homogeneous objects, but not this determinate object."[63] Abstract thought, in other words, can mentally reproduce features in common between objects, but it cannot mentally reproduce a specific object. Without that ability, an identification of a particular object as the same over a temporally interrupted period would be impossible. Yet clearly we are able to recognize an object as the same over time. Solov'ëv concludes we must presuppose that the cognizing subject can perceive the object's essence, or idea. This, in turn, logically presupposes that the subject itself is a single, continuous "something" that, additionally, is necessarily connected, or related, to other essences, or ideas. The Cartesian cogito is an absurdity. Just as our five senses are effected by the external world, by other external entities, so too does the cognizing subject, as an essence, interact with the essences of other objects and stands in correlation with them. Solov'ëv, oddly, speaks of this interaction as the imagination, and it is this that produces in our minds the identification of an object as the same over time. In other words, he views the imagination not as a logically separate cognitive faculty, but as a process inseparably bound with externality. Imagination "produces in our mind constant, determinate, singular and identical forms of objects."[64] Nevertheless, he recognizes that the sense data received from objects need to be united and fixed. Exactly how this unification takes place remains unclear, but the mind in some manner organizes sense data by referring them to the forms produced by imagination, thereby yielding empirical experience. Grievously lacking precision, Solov'ëv himself writes: "Sensations themselves, so to speak, gravitate to this ideal form, because this form expresses our inner, metaphysical interaction with *that very* essence of which they (the sensations) are the external manifestation."[65] Even if we should grant the presence in the mind of ideal forms, to say that sensations "gravitate" to particular forms is of no explanatory value. This "gravitation" is precisely what needs to be explained.

Solov'ëv adduces what we can call, in effect, a "transcendental argument" for a non-sensory relation to the external world. Clearly, we are able to identify a specific object as numerically identical over time. How is this possible if neither the senses nor thought can provide an explanation? All that thought can provide is an indeterminate general form. In the absence of another alternative, of any third device, to account for our obvious ability to identify things, he concludes that we must have an original, non-sensory interaction with the object. To support this conclusion, he believes it impossible otherwise to explain, for example, the fact that "we refer

[63] PSS, vol. 3: 299–300.

[64] PSS, vol. 3: 300. To his credit, Solov'ëv recognizes that the imagination of which he writes is not the empirical imagination. However, he fails to concede that, therefore, the former is a transcendental and productive imagination, and that the imaginative process is *a priori*. Likewise, we can see that the "faith" of which he writes is also, to be charitable, a transcendental "faith," and not the ordinary sense of faith, or belief, of which Kant wrote: "If taking something to be true is only subjectively sufficient and is at the same time held to be objectively insufficient, then it is called *believing*." Kant 1997: A822/B850. In short, Solov'ëv uses common terms in a most uncommon manner, a practice that could lead the inattentive reader to draw highly misleading conclusions.

[65] PSS, vol. 3: 302–303.

isolated and contradictory sensations to a single object."[66] This non-sensory interaction, which is the work of the imagination, provides the cognizing subject with an original form, or image (*obraz*), of the object. Sense data received from the object, then, evoke a corresponding interaction between the subject's mind and this image consisting, in some quite ill-defined manner, of the image entering empirical consciousness and being connected with the sense data. There is no reason for us to think that Solov'ëv conceives this to be a temporal process, though he does write that the forms in the mind "pre-exist" (*predsushchestvovat'*) the cognitive process. Yet he clearly ascribes to the mind, or spirit, – he uses the terms interchangeably here – a separate and independent existence from thoughts and sensations. In this way, Solov'ëv remains highly indebted to Cartesianism. This non-sensory interaction is not merely the conclusion of some argument based on transcendental logic, à la Kant, and therefore a merely logical construct or positing. No, for Solov'ëv this interaction is genuine though explicitly metaphysical. Sense bestowal is a result of the pre-existing forms being imposed on our sensations. It is not, however, an arbitrary or purely subjective process. It is not the case that the sense our mind imposes could be completely different from the one it actually does impose. The sense data we obtain from an object amount to the object's external or empirical manifestation, whereas the pre-existing form is the object's essence, which by definition is metaphysical.

The philosophical importance of the above discussion, brief though it is, lies far more in the issue raised than in Solov'ëv's proposed solution. It shows again, if nothing else, that epistemological issues were not foreign to him, even if his proposed resolutions were unsatisfactory, if not downright fanciful. A complete and detailed analysis of the problem of identity would take us on a philosophical journey far removed from Solov'ëv and his chief concerns. What is germane here is that at the very start he embarks on a path for which he provides no justification other than the historical failure to solve the problem in another manner. However, his path too involves a mechanistic approach in that it employs a series of subjective mental functions, each of which is expressly indiscernible and for each of which, being metaphysical, there is no possible, to use Husserl's expression, "originary presentive intuition."[67] Again, it is because Solov'ëv insists that each and every idea or sense has a non-ideal bearer that he is precluded from taking a similar approach as Frege in reinterpreting the problem of identity within a theory of meaning. Even more clearly, Solov'ëv's failure to recognize the basic distinction between sense and reference led him to think that his own view was corroborated by the every-day ascription of contradictory predicates to a single object. Indeed, in Solov'ëv's theory we have no means to distinguish a true designation of identity from a false one. Failing to recognize the Fregean distinction, Solov'ëv saw the contradictory

[66] PSS, vol. 3: 301. Solov'ëv does not elucidate precisely what he has in mind here. Presumably, however, he has in mind such a phenomenon as placing one hand in hot water, another in cold water and after a period of time placing both hands in lukewarm water. This water will seem to one hand to be cold and to the other hot, but of course the same water cannot be both hot and cold at the same time.

[67] Husserl 1982: 44.

predicates as attributes of a single object. Since that is impossible and lacking a theory of meaning, he postulated the existence within us of a non-sensory intuition that would "grasp" the object as it truly is logically, if not chronologically, prior to the empirical senses. Had he done otherwise, had Solov'ëv wrestled with a theory of meaning, he – and with it the direction of Russian philosophy for the next few decades – could conceivably have avoided the shoals of a religiously inspired neo-Platonism.

Solov'ëv returns in his final chapter to the theme of all-unity, reiterating his position from earlier works that the true cognition of one entity requires a cognition of all. Reason allows us to see the relation between a particular entity and all others. We have seen this idea before, and here it is simply baldly restated. However metaphysical much of this theory of cognition may appear to us, it need not unavoidably lead to a religious interpretation. Rational thought, for Solov'ëv, does not obtain information concerning what is true, i.e., the "all-one," from our five senses, but from faith and intellectual, or ideal, intuition. Since he employed a transcendental argument to establish the need for the latter two faculties and they are by no means empirical, it is understandable that Solov'ëv refers to each of them as a mystical element. Nonetheless, Solov'ëv himself for no apparent reason whatsoever additionally qualifies them as "divine" elements, again a characterization that needs to be established but logically could be dropped without impacting the central thrust of his position.

Extending this self-interpretation of his epistemology, he writes, "If we call the system of rational knowledge philosophy, we must recognize that philosophy obtains its content from religious knowledge, or theology, meaning by this knowledge of all in God, or knowledge of the essential all-unity."[68] On what basis Solov'ëv identifies the content supplied by faith and intellectual intuition with "religious knowledge" remains a mystery. Indeed, there is no discernable basis for identifying that content with knowledge of the supposed interconnections between everything, the "all-unity." Can we even legitimately speak of that content as knowledge in any fashion? We saw earlier that cognition has three elements, viz., that which is provided by the senses, by reason and by faith. How, then, can we speak of faith alone as providing knowledge? Is he using the single term "faith" in different senses? Solov'ëv answers none of these questions, and his failure to notice them speaks ill of his philosophical acumen – or at least of a lapse in it. He claims that theology is concerned with this mystical element both as it is in the human soul (*dusha*) and in religious revelation, but on what basis he identifies the two is unclear. He fails to provide any examples of such revelation that might assist us. Since religious revelation is supposedly manifest, i.e., clear and undeniable, to those receiving it, whereas the mystical element in external cognition is discovered only by philosophical analysis, the reader can only guess what criteria Solov'ëv has in mind in his identification: "The object that we see and cognize is a product. The synthesis that produces it lies outside the bounds of our consciousness, and this is why the production of this synthesis appears to consciousness as something simply given, as a fact and, consequently, in its apparent immediacy bears for us only an empirical significance.

[68] PSS, vol. 3: 308. Statements such as these, which appear on occasion in the *Critique*, certainly can lead us to think that Solov'ëv identifies God with the all-unity, that he is a pantheist.

Its mystical element exists only in a hidden state and can be revealed only by philosophical analysis."[69]

The final pages of the last chapter reaffirm Solov'ëv's passionate desire for a reformation or re-organization of knowledge along the theosophical ideal he elaborated largely in the "Philosophical Principles." As in that earlier work, he espouses the position that true knowledge can only be attained with the true organization of knowledge, and this in turn requires the organization of reality in such a way that there is a subordination of corporeal existence to our spirit. Next, the human spirit is to be subordinate to the divine. By the organization of reality, Solov'ëv does not mean the realization of a moral ideal. Such a task, as we saw, lies within the scope of ethics. Rather, he means the realization of the divine principle, whatever precisely that may be, through human effort, in other words, through human artistic creativity. The task of the aesthetic sphere is the realization of truth, and in stating this Solov'ëv realizes he differs from the commonly accepted view that art is either to be a reflection of reality or a subjective expression of the artist. No, in art we should fulfill the realization of the all-unity in nature and humanity. Solov'ëv, through such reasoning, introduces, albeit only in the briefest manner, his thoughts on aesthetics, which he never elaborated to his complete satisfaction. Although none of this comes as a surprise, these claims are offered without the argumentation we would expect in a serious philosophical treatise. To give Solov'ëv the benefit of the doubt, he does conclude affirming his intent to address the issues associated with the organization of reality in a subsequent work, one which regrettably would never see the full light of day.[70]

With the successful defense of his dissertation behind him on that early April afternoon in 1880, the details of which we will see in the next chapter, Solov'ëv may have hoped that the door to a highly visible professorship in St. Petersburg would be open to him. Such was not to be the case. Why this was so still remains somewhat murky. However, on that day he recognized that the *Critique* would not be completely intelligible to the wide circle that had gathered, some to support him, many others out of curiosity. Maria, Solov'ëv's younger sister, in an amusing aside, noted in her published recollections of her brother.

> When my brother defended his doctoral dissertation, the *Critique of Abstract Principles*, and obtained copies of the document that he had ordered, he distributed them to friends and acquaintances. He devised three inscriptions: 1) "As a token of my esteem, but also to be read"; 2) "Perhaps to be read, but more as a sign of my esteem"; 3) "By no means to be read, but only as a sign of my esteem." When our mother noticed that some would be offended by the last inscription, my brother replied: "Mama, I have not the least pretension that everyone will understand my book. I have heard that some say it is written as though in a deliberately obscure language. My first obligation is to save my good acquaintances, and even more my friends, from reading such things that will prove to be unpleasant and unproductive wastes of their time."[71]

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[69] PSS, vol. 3: 309.

[70] Solov'ëv in a sense returned to this general theme again in his later ethical treatise, *The Justification of the Good*, whose last chapter is entitled "The Moral Organization of Humanity as a Whole."

[71] Bezobrazova 1908: 333.

Chapter 7
Critiques of the *Critique*

As with *The Crisis* but only more so, Solov'ëv's doctoral dissertation met with a veritable string of highly critical reviews in the press. Most were of passing interest even if some contained rather poignant observations. Of note is that none ventured deeply into the realm of epistemology, let alone into the structures of consciousness and its sense-bestowing function that Solov'ëv had haltingly adumbrated. These, nevertheless, demonstrate the emerging intellectual scene in Russia even though Solov'ëv largely ignored his critics. Of far greater importance was the critique by Boris Chicherin, who meticulously analyzed Solov'ëv's work from his own quasi- or neo-Hegelian perspective. Unfortunately, it too met with Solov'ëv's absolute silence, which meant an opportunity for clarification and elaboration was squandered.

We will also in this chapter look at some minor pieces of writing from the time of the doctoral defense that show Solov'ëv still pursuing both narrowly focused philosophical problems as well as such traditional concerns as the role of philosophy in the modern intellectual landscape and, in particular, its place vis-à-vis religion. Finally, we will see the events surrounding his virtual abandonment of technical philosophy for almost a decade amidst swirling and mounting political tensions in Russia.

7.1 The Doctoral Defense

Solov'ëv's doctoral defense took place on 6 April 1880. Of course, we have already mentioned the final result, which almost surely could not have come as a complete surprise either to him or to those in attendance. Barring a disastrous grilling or any last minute change of heart from Vladislavlev or the ministry of education, the defense would never have been arranged had an unfavorable conclusion been anything other than a remote possibility. By this time, the serial publication of the completed thesis – a

T. Nemeth, *The Early Solov'ëv and His Quest for Metaphysics*, International Archives of the History of Ideas/Archives internationales d'histoire des idées 212,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-01348-0_7,

not uncommon practice in Russia in that era – allowed for a broad familiarity with it among not just the university faculty but also the educated public, who were allowed to attend and who in many instances thoroughly welcomed the opportunity to do so as a form of sophisticated entertainment. Furthermore, in accordance with the established rule, three St. Petersburg newspapers published announcements of the upcoming defense including its time and location. This helped insure that all interested parties could witness another in what had by then become virtually institutionalized public intellectual/cultural events. Included among the many in attendance were Dostoyevsky, the renowned chemists Dmitri Mendeleev and Aleksandr Butlerov, and N. Strakhov, who as a close friend of Leo Tolstoy's reported on the defense in a letter to the latter.

In comparison with Solov'ëv's *magister*'s defense, the unanimous consensus was that the doctoral defense passed tranquilly with none of the acrimony attending the earlier event. This may already have been a sign of the slowly changing attitude both within academia as well as among the general public towards positivism, but it may also have been a sign of the increasing indifference within the university to the impractical, if not absurd, speculations of metaphysics.[1] Presiding over the defense was the dean of the historico-philological faculty V.V. Bauer, a professor of history. After a reading of the candidate's curriculum vitae by the secretary of the faculty, Solov'ëv presented an introductory speech, the complete text of which has not survived. However, much of its content can be reconstructed on the basis of the fragment that has come down to us, newspaper accounts of the proceedings, and Solov'ëv's own detailed letter written soon afterward to A. A. Kireev summarizing the speech, presumably at the latter's request for such.

Solov'ëv initially raised perennial questions: (1) What is the difference between philosophy and religion? and (2) Is philosophy a distinct scholarly discipline with peculiar questions of its own, or is it an overarching discipline that embraces all other disciplines thereby connecting all into an interconnected whole? In light of our examination of his *Critique of Abstract Principles*, Solov'ëv's answer to the first question was quite surprising. He asserted that the various subdivisions of philosophy (ethics, epistemology, ontology, etc.) are distinct from religion in that all of them, and thereby all of philosophy in general, rely on a "free" investigation of given reality, of what exists. Unlike religion, philosophy employs rational thought without the admixture of faith. This character of a free, i.e., thoroughly rational investigation, necessarily belongs to every philosophical system, properly speaking,

[1] N. K. Nikiforov, later a journalist and at this time a student at St. Petersburg University, wrote that for the majority of students there, "to speak of being interested in philosophy meant almost the same thing as confessing to pursue pornography." Nikiforov 1912: 390. This attitude has recently been reaffirmed by Putnam: "At least through the 1880s in the philological and juridical faculties of Moscow University, almost every professor referred contemptuously to metaphysics and considered Comte's law of human development from theological to metaphysical to scientific stages a fundamental truth." Putnam 1977: 29.

without exception.[2] Thus, every philosophical stance must strive to eliminate all unexamined presuppositions. All faith-based tenets that are rationally unjustified must be taken as mere superstitions. The difference between philosophy and religion lies not in their respective subject-matter, for both can have the same content. Rather the difference lies in their respective methodologies. Religion recognizes its truth as dogmas of faith; philosophy may recognize the same truths but sees them as rational conclusions.

Solov'ëv, then, turned to the second issue, namely whether philosophy, as a discipline, has a unique set of concerns of its own apart from those of other fields of rational inquiry or whether its distinctiveness stemmed from its very universality of interest. To address this query, Solov'ëv introduced a trichotomy that included, or so he thought, all that existed or at least all that we are aware of as existing. First, upon introspection we find within ourselves something absolute and as such on a higher plane than ourselves and to which we "freely" subordinate ourselves. Without any demonstration of its presence and simply without accounting for its lack in some people, Solov'ëv designated this as the divine principle, and it is this within us, something that we possess, which makes us more than a mere natural, human being. There is also, however, a natural or material principle in us that makes us, when uncontrolled, less than we could be. It makes us, in effect, animals. Presumably, Solov'ëv had in mind here that the respective objects of these "principles" are such that they demarcate distinctive regional ontologies. The object of the divine principle is the spiritual realm, i.e., the religious sphere, whereas the object of the material principle is the material world around us including our physical being. Religion provides access to the spiritual realm and empirical knowledge to the material world. There is, though, another, a third principle, which contains the other two yet is distinct from both.

The religious and the empirical, or material, spheres exhaust all that is given to us. What is left is the task of philosophy, namely to establish an inner connection between these spheres, to provide a harmonious connection between the religious and the empirical. The third principle, then, has as its sphere rational knowledge, and this is what philosophy is. Solov'ëv inexplicably associates this third principle with consciousness *and* self-consciousness! In his short exposition, he leaves intact this ambiguity without specifying which of the two, consciousness or self-consciousness, he has in mind. Nevertheless, insofar as the religious and the material are external to the cognizing being, consciousness plays the role of the rational interpreter, and insofar as the religious is felt within the cognizing being and the material is our own

[2] Curiously, an unsigned summary of this introductory presentation that appeared in the St. Petersburg newspaper *Novoe vremja* on the following day, 7 April, ascribed to Solov'ëv the position that "examining all philosophical systems one cannot help but notice two essential characteristics always unique to them: a free investigation historically distinguishing philosophy from religion and the aspiration to cognize the common connection between all that exists, to unite by one common thought all that lies within human consciousness." Quoted in PSS, vol. 3: 525. The problem with such a summary is that Solov'ëv did not view free investigation as the *historical* difference between philosophy and religion, which would make it purely contingent. Rather, as the surviving fragment shows he saw it as the *essential* difference between the two disciplines. Whether history bears this out or not is unimportant.

animalistic traits, self-consciousness must intercede to establish the rationally sought harmony. The religious and the material complement each other. The spiritual must have the material for its realization, and the material lacking the spiritual would be devoid of absolute significance and the right to exist. Of course in a relatively brief introductory address, Solov'ëv did not and could not have elaborated on these all-too-vague ideas nor, as far as we know, address the tension these new pronouncements introduce with his textual claim that reason alone, via philosophical argument, cannot be the final arbiter. We should also note that this newly adumbrated conception of philosophy and its role would seemingly ignore in toto many of its traditionally understood concerns, particularly those that riveted German thought at this time, in favor of narrow ontological problems.[3]

The details of the exchanges between Solov'ëv and his seven opponents at his defense contain little of philosophical importance with the exception that Vladislavlev questioned the former's extension of the Kantian categorical imperative to all living creatures, not just human beings. Solov'ëv reaffirmed his position stating that morality simply demands that although we may not treat living beings solely as means to an end, it does not condemn the partial use of them in this way. Significantly, Solov'ëv extended this idea into the area of animal rights as well, saying that even if there could be a moral argument permitting the killing of animals, there could not be one permitting their needless suffering. How Solov'ëv could defend this caveat with its manifest appeal to an empirical condition, viz., suffering, within an otherwise Kantian-inspired moral framework, remains unclear. He did not address this possible criticism in the body of his *Critique* and to the best of our knowledge neither Vladislavlev nor any of the other opponents pounced on this possible objection.

In this way, the defense passed with little if any rancor. As Strakhov noted in his letter to Tolstoy, "there were unfortunately no forceful objections and not one of the seven opponents dealt with the essentials, as usually happens at such disputes. This is why everything proceeded listlessly. The two positivists who jumped in at the end were overturned by Solov'ëv with Olympian tranquility."[4] As a result, Solov'ëv surely must have thought that new vistas awaited him. However, even though the defense was peaceful enough he did not have long to wait for responses from other quarters. Let us start with the almost immediate public reaction to the *Critique*.

7.2 The First Barbs

The most detailed report of the dissertation defense appeared only on 20 May – thus some six weeks after the event – in the newspaper *Moskovskie vedomosti* signed simply "A. K.," undoubtedly the same Kireev to whom Solov'ëv, at some

[3] An English translation of much of this letter that summarized the speech can be found in Solovyov 2000: 218–219.

[4] Tolstoj 1914: 252.

undetermined time in between, wrote a lengthy synopsis of the dissertation and its defense.[5] Kireev's account did not go beyond the proceedings and did not add a critical dimension either to the dissertation itself or to the exchanges at its defense. Yet, already on 7 April, the day following the defense, the St. Petersburg newspaper *Novoe vremja*, reported on it, providing a summary of the dissertation and the points Solov'ëv developed therein.[6] Other newspapers in both Moscow and St. Petersburg followed suit within a few days. None of these accounts went beyond the standard bounds of journalistic reportage. However, on 19 April, barely 2 weeks after the defense, the newspaper *Nedelja* published an anonymous piece that raised a number of objections to certain central theses Solov'ëv had promoted. Quite significantly, as we shall see later, the reviewer observed and expressed displeasure not just with specific philosophical points in the dissertation but with its overall practical direction that went beyond the established grounds of a contribution to knowledge in its specific field. Indeed, the author noticed Solov'ëv's explicit disapproval of the current state of science and society and that to correct them the former should become a theosophy and the latter a free theocracy.

The anonymous reviewer held that Solov'ëv failed to make the case for the necessity of a "mystical frame of mind" within the cognitive process. On the one hand, Solov'ëv believes scientific cognition, not being able to reach what truly exists, deals only with appearances. This represents his debt to German philosophy. On the other hand, Solov'ëv held, in the reviewer's estimation, that what truly exists *is* manifested in appearances. Thus, we have to conclude that science does study what truly exists. Here is Solov'ëv's fundamental contradiction. Moreover, even were we to accept the existence of Solov'ëv's postulated "mystical frame of mind," he does not show how it provides genuine cognition, i.e., he does not show how it circumvents the interjection of subjective elements into cognition as the idealists allege.[7]

The reviewer next turned to Solov'ëv's discussion of ethics and again found it wanting. The attempt to ground ethics outside of our contingent human nature, on some "divine" part within us, is a result of Solov'ëv's thought dwelling in some

[5] The letter to Kireev is undated. The editor of Solov'ëv's letters, E. L. Radlov assigned it to 1881, a dating totally without foundation. Since Kireev surely was the author of the newspaper account and that account contains information unavailable elsewhere, he must have had access to privileged information, namely from Solov'ëv himself. Additionally, were we to accept Radlov's dating, why would Solov'ëv repeat essentially the same information to Kireev that the latter had already reported the previous year? See *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 97.

[6] This, of course, is not to say that newspaper accounts were the first basis for public awareness of Solov'ëv's views. Since, as previously mentioned, the chapters in the dissertation were published serially starting already in 1877, his positions were widely available to the educated public. For example, in a letter of 12 October 1879 Peter Tchaikovsky – yes, *that* Tchaikovsky – wrote to his patroness Nadezhda von Meck: "Have you, dear friend, read the philosophical articles of Vlad. Solov'ëv (the son of the late rector and historian) in *Russkij vestnik*? They are *excellently* written in that they are quite accessible to the non-specialist and are presented with great talent and ingenuity. … I advise you, my dear friend, to read these articles, if you have not already done so." Chaikovskij 1963: 390.

[7] [Moskovskii filosof-reformator] 1880.

"mystical haze." Furthermore, the reviewer totally rejected Solov'ëv's notion of a free theocracy with its moral aristocracy and his depiction of the ideal capitalist as a servant of society. In short, Solov'ëv amply demonstrated the immaturity of his entire thought, and his social thought is ill-conceived and ill-considered. Additionally, he failed to show any familiarity with real social issues as is clear from his criticisms of other theories.

An arguably more interesting review is that by V. D. Wolfson, the same Wolfson who served as a disputant at both of Solov'ëv's defenses.[8] That the 32-page brochure devoted entirely to Solov'ëv's *Critique* received the censor's approval already on 10 May 1880 shows that Wolfson must have written it rather quickly. At the respective defenses, Wolfson demonstrated his broad sympathy with positivism at least against the charges leveled by Solov'ëv, which the former found to be hopelessly unsuccessful. Wolfson contended, contrary to Solov'ëv's allegations, that positivism does not reject the entirety of philosophy and that it has an ethical doctrine. Indeed, positivism is more clearly aware than any other philosophical system that one must know what should be the case in order to know what to do in the present. However, the positivists are correct in holding that owing to the limitations of our cognitive faculties human beings are incapable of attaining universal truths. To reject this position, as he does, Solov'ëv must prove that we actually do in fact have a faculty for grasping absolute truths, but Solov'ëv argues only for its need. In any case, the human cognitive faculty should and will be perfected, but its progression will be manifested in our cognition of scientific, phenomenal laws. This gradual progression and the basis for it are quite independent of the absolute that Solov'ëv invokes. In fact, Solov'ëv fails to illuminate the role of the absolute, and in any case, its recognition is not a matter of some sort of intuition, but of faith and faith alone.

Although Wolfson, like Solov'ëv, had grave reservations concerning Comte's view of society, he could not abide by Solov'ëv's vision of a church based on a mystical principle. For all of its shortcomings, Comte's social philosophy is scientifically grounded in our inherent altruism. In the last analysis, the essential foundations of Solov'ëv's "theocracy" are borrowed from Comte, albeit that in the former they lack the depth we find in the latter. The differences between the two, though, are of a personal and arbitrary nature.

We next turn to a figure certainly not unfamiliar to those with any knowledge of nineteenth century Russian thought, namely N. K. Mikhajlovskij. In a comparatively short review of Solov'ëv's dissertation, Mikhajlovskij gave his unequivocal evaluation: Solov'ëv is thoroughly inconsistent. In his usual blunt, albeit verbose, style Mikhajlovskij asserted that to read the book through was done out of a sense of duty rather than of necessity. As a mystic, Solov'ëv espouses a moral intuitivism, but yet as a philosopher he respects reason. His discussion of intuitive and utilitarian morality is viewed as inconsistent and, along with it, so too is his stand on free will.

[8] Although trained as a biologist, Wolfson remained interested in philosophy. He produced a translation of George Henry Lewes's *The Biographical History of Philosophy* as well as a translation in 1895 of an early edition of Friedrich Kirkhner's *Geschichte der Philosophie von Thales biz zur Gegenwart*.

Never short of words, Mikhajlovskij writes, "Understanding the task of synthesis exclusively as a search for more or less attractive compromises between hostile, opposing views, Solov'ëv in this case cares only to feed the wolves to preserve the sheep. To do so, he resorts to some dialectical hocus-pocus, which while perhaps ingenious is essentially just as indecisive."[9]

Mikhajlovskij similarly finds an inconsistency in Solov'ëv's practical ideals. On the one hand, every human individual is said to embody the idea of the "all-one." Yet on the other hand, the individual must express the human, worldly idea. This, to Mikhajlovskij, again represents a combinatory stand that is well-nigh impossible to resolve. Mikhajlovskij, not surprisingly, also finds Solov'ëv's social ideals quite unsatisfactory: society must fuse with the church, and its members should be regulated by love. "Thus, if we can so express ourselves, a bastard character distinguishes the entire book."[10]

Such was the tone of many of the initial reviews of the *Critique of Abstract Principles*. By no means have we exhausted a survey of the criticisms. There were other reviews and discussions of the *Critique* within books and articles at the time. In short, the *Critique* seemed to have opened a pent-up well of vitriol. However, only one review elicited a direct response from Solov'ëv himself. In a series of ostensibly anonymous articles under the title "*Opyt postroenija filosofskoi religii*" ("An Attempt at a Construction of a Philosophy of Religion") in the St. Petersburg journal *Mysl'* its editor at the time, Leonid E. Obolenskij, acknowledged Solov'ëv's philosophical talent but offered a different assessment of the multitude of philosophical schools and directions found in history. Whereas, Solov'ëv essentially faulted human thought for this diremption into competing tendencies, Obolenskij viewed these contesting allegiances positively as necessary to secure an all-round solution to the problems posed by human thought. The competing schools of thought act and have acted as a division of labor, and owing to their contesting efforts we find their maximum development leading to the common good. Moreover, the differentiation of competing philosophical directions will additionally prove useful in that the integration of their resulting developed forms will allow us to find Solov'ëv's cherished idea of the "all-unity."

However judicious and in any case charitable we may view Obolenskij's remarks, they were passed over by Solov'ëv in his surprisingly brief reply dated 27 January 1881 "to the journal's editor." Instead, Solov'ëv focused on another charge Obolenskij leveled against him, but which Solov'ëv alleged he neither made in his *Critique* nor did it ever occur to him to make. The issue is an old one in philosophy dating at least from Kant, if not from the Greeks, concerning the reward or compensation, be it material or other, for leading a morally good life. Should there be some linkage between the two? On the one hand, some would argue that being moral is its own reward, that it provides a form of inner satisfaction that cannot properly be compared with and pales in comparison to the satisfaction provided by material

[9] Mikhajlovskij 1880: 95.

[10] Mikhajlovskij 1880: 97.

possessions. On the other hand, we can see this inner satisfaction as a reward for moral action, and as such this satisfaction can be seen as acting as a motive for acting morally. In other words, it is difficult to disassociate morality entirely from reward. Obolenskij in his remarks charged Solov'ëv with directly linking morality to material compensation, not that moral saints will demand material goods directly but that they will in a truly just society be compensated for their moral perfection by others out of their own sense of morality![11]

In reply, Solov'ëv denied ever writing in the *Critique* of "reward" or "compensation" and that Obolenskij's charge was his own fabrication. Solov'ëv admitted that although he may be guilty of some unclarity, what he meant was that in a moral society its most moral members, i.e., its spiritual leaders, should have the greatest material means. However, he added that he was not specifying where these means originate. Furthermore, inner perfection provides the human spirit with at least the requisite power over one's own physical nature as well as over the material world "as a consequence of which such a person possesses all possible material means, which of course are used only for the good of others who do not have such power over material things."[12] Unfortunately, Solov'ëv completely neglected explaining anything in this summary of his position. The reader is left completely in the dark as to how society's spiritual leaders are to acquire "all possible material means" simply because they, in effect, are saintly. In short, then, Obolenskij was not completely at fault in inferring that for Solov'ëv the "material means" in question are bestowed on spiritual leaders by others.[13]

7.3 The Stirring of an Old Étatist Liberal

Arguably the most prominent, trenchant and sustained critique of the *Critique* came from what must have been a decidedly unexpected quarter, Boris N. Chicherin. Already a towering figure in nineteenth century Russian intellectual history before Solov'ëv's maturity, Chicherin had championed the Great Reforms of Tsar Alexander II in the early 1860s while yet arguing for Russia's need of a strong central government. He resigned his professorship in law at Moscow University in

[11] N. N. 1880: 234.

[12] PSS, vol. 3: 363–364.

[13] There still remains the exegetic question whether Solov'ëv in the *Critique* itself provided grounds for Obolenskij's conclusion. We have seen that both parties helpfully refer to the same page of the *Critique*. There, Solov'ëv writes: "Obviously, justice demands that work and wealth be distributed in society corresponding to the inner dignity and civic importance of its members. This will at the same time satisfy the demand of love. In fact, the preponderance of the idea of all-unity over personal exclusivity or egoism is determined by the degree of inner dignity. Hence, a person with a higher level of dignity, and who, therefore, rightly possesses the greatest material means, will use these means only for the good of others." PSS, vol. 3: 170. Solov'ëv's words here differ little from his supposed clarification in his letter to the editor of *Mysl'*.

protest against the changing climate towards reform in the later part of that decade. Yet, he served for an 18-month period in the 1880s as the elected mayor of Moscow and still managed to sully his standing among progressives by favoring the government's repression of revolutionaries and the Polish insurrections. Then again, he was forced to resign the mayoralty when at the coronation of Tsar Alexander III he gave a speech that was viewed as too liberal by calling for the creation of some form of national representative institution. Coming of age in the same intellectual milieu as Solov'ëv's father, Chicherin was imbued with a general Hegelian philosophical outlook. Although he was by no means an orthodox follower of the German Idealist, he always held the Hegelian project in highest regard. If we discount his multivolume work on the history of political theories begun already in 1869, Chicherin came to philosophy relatively late: his *Nauka i religija* (*Science and Religion*) appeared only in 1879, but in it he had already elaborated many of the positions from which he would attack Solov'ëv a year later.

Chicherin, in particular, lashed out decidedly against empiricism and the glorification of scientific knowledge embodied in the positivist program, which he, like Solov'ëv, viewed as destructive of human progress. Chicherin opened his 1879 book with the words: "If experience, as many claim, constitutes the sole source of human knowledge, then the fate of man is an insoluble contradiction."[14] Empirical observations provide only particulars but never the general principles that reveal the inner essence of things or events. Again, there is nothing in this that Solov'ëv would reject. They would go on, however, to differ on the role of reason. Ultimately, Chicherin remained a principled rationalist and thought reason, not the unaided senses nor any mystical intuition, can unlock the mysteries of the universe. Reason guided by its innate laws introduces order into the chaos of external impressions, separating the contingent from the essential, the particular from the general. To hold that logic is derived from experience is to assert that reason has no laws of its own and therefore reduces rational cognition to pure nonsense.[15] Likewise, the key to morality is the absolute principles that can and should guide human activity. These can be derived from the essence of reason, commencing in the supreme moral law, which Kant called the categorical imperative. As we will see momentarily, Chicherin and Solov'ëv would agree on many points, though their respective paths would ultimately diverge. Both were indebted to Kant and to Hegel. Both valued the latter's dialectical method, as they understood it. However, one would take his inspiration from that method as employed in the *Science of Logic*, the other as found primarily in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Arguably, the most amazing feature of Chicherin's sustained attack on Solov'ëv in his *Misticizm v nauke* [*Mysticism in Science*] is its very existence. That he chose to devote an entire treatise to a laborious examination of the *Critique of Abstract Principles* testifies both to the importance Chicherin attached to it as well as to the threat he saw it posed to his cherished rationalist outlook – and thereby to the legacy

[14] Chicherin 1879: 1.

[15] Chicherin 1879: 39.

of the philosophical *Zeitgeist* of his own university days. Whereas we can view the earlier *Nauka i religija* as aimed principally at positivism's elevation of scientific knowledge to be the sole cognitive paradigm, Chicherin saw Solov'ëv's work as veering much too far in the opposite direction, that like scientific empiricism the *Critique*'s mysticism denigrated reason and therefore the intellect. Chicherin valued Solov'ëv's dissertation as signifying the emergence for the first time of philosophical systematization in Russia and expressed sympathy with the goal set forth therein of a grand synthesis, a positive all-unity in life, knowledge and creativity. For Chicherin, there was nothing mystical in this; reason itself strives for just such a unity. Solov'ëv, in Chicherin's estimation, did recognize the shortcoming of empiricism, that experience alone cannot move beyond the particular and so cannot attain principles that would serve to unite knowledge. Experience alone can never rise to the absolute, and thus empiricism must renounce the unity of knowledge and an understanding of the world.

What Solov'ëv did not recognize, according to Chicherin, is that much as mathematics rests on obvious axioms and definitions, so too does philosophy now need firm bases on which to proceed in order to move forward. However, already on the first pages of his *Critique*, Solov'ëv dramatically departed from this obligation. Although fond of employing the designations "negative" and "positive," these characterizations, upon investigation, expressed more his personal attitude toward an object than some property of it.[16] For Solov'ëv, not to accept something immediately given on faith makes the science or discipline dealing with that object negative. Chicherin claimed that with such an understanding astronomy, for example, would count as a negative science in that it rejects the obvious fact of the sun literally rising each morning, but in doing so Solov'ëv forgets his own admission of an all-unity. Abstract claims, i.e., claims taken in isolation from others, can at best have only a relative veracity. The level of truth of any principle can only be established by ascending to a higher synthesis, i.e., by viewing it in relation to other related principles.

Similarly, Chicherin levels another Hegelian-inspired criticism writing that every thought and every conception of an object or state of affairs is necessarily an abstraction. In thinking of anything, we separate that thing from all else, and in this sense we have a negation. However, the thereby abstracted object is not also thereby a negation and to be dismissed. On the contrary, only by the abstract process of thinking can we come to the positive "essence" of an object. Indeed, religion itself – and we might add the very notion of an all-unity – requires a significant degree of abstraction, for neither the all-unity nor many religious principles and tenets are given immediately. Nevertheless, Solov'ëv could have replied to Chicherin that even though both of them have in mind the all-unitary synthesis, they are actually speaking on two different levels. The former would not dispute that thought involves an abstraction of sorts, a singling out of something at a particular temporal moment, but to determine the truth of the judgment embodied in that thought involves recognition of its place within a higher synthesis. Chicherin recognizes that his criticism may fail to

[16] Chicherin 1880: 9.

hit its mark because of different conceptions. For example, they may each have different conceptions of religion, but Chicherin charges that a clear expression of the essence of religion is wanting in the *Critique*. Thus, Solov'ëv's views on a host of issues remain largely unknown.

Chicherin also remained puzzled why Solov'ëv began not with epistemology, as is customary, but with ethics, which by his own admission, is connected with metaphysics. Be that as it may, Chicherin is willing to applaud Solov'ëv's recognition that the highest moral principle, which is to serve as the norm for practical activity, is to be found in reason and reason alone. Nevertheless, Solov'ëv "makes too many concessions to empiricism," among which is the admission that pleasure or happiness serves as the normal goal of human activity.[17] Chicherin recognized Solov'ëv's debt to and concurrence on some points with Schopenhauer. However, he also ascribed to Solov'ëv a concurrence with Schopenhauer's opinion that sympathy is the fundamental principle of morality, whereas Solov'ëv assuredly held no such position.

More trenchant is Chicherin's criticism of Solov'ëv's extension of the categorical imperative to all living beings, which he found again to be indicative of Schopenhauer's influence. As Chicherin understood the argument, Solov'ëv admitted that empirically everything, as an appearance, is subject to natural laws, particularly that of causality. Yet from the "transcendental" viewpoint everything is also a thing in itself and as such has an inner essence that exempts it from such phenomenal causality. Therefore, all entities are free and are objects of our moral activity. Fundamentally, Solov'ëv, who fails to distinguish those animate beings possessing reason from those that do not, borrows from Schopenhauer, who also recognizes freedom as a general feature of things in themselves. Chicherin recognizes, however, that "from the fact that all entities outside the sphere of appearances have an inner essence it does not follow that this essence is the same in all."[18] But it is precisely this that Solov'ëv has not demonstrated. Thus, the issue comes down to whether there is some characteristic or fact that, despite the uncognizability of the noumenal realm, will settle the matter, and Chicherin believes there is, namely, moral activity itself. If we find a moral being acting from obligation, not from inclination, we must conclude this being possesses reason and is free, and since there is no freedom in the world of appearances it must be noumenally free. Thus, "it is completely absurd to suppose that all things in themselves are rational and free and therefore always must be for us an end

[17] Chicherin 1880: 24. Chicherin adds that these "concessions" may arise out of a misunderstanding, presumably Solov'ëv's and not his own. However, if they are Solov'ëv's, it is hard to understand just what Chicherin is charging him with misunderstanding. More likely, Chicherin misunderstands Solov'ëv's position, part of which is that the all-important operative term "happiness" is ambiguous, and when we clarify that ambiguity, we realize that an individualistic eudemonism must cede first to utilitarianism and then to the elimination of the empirical from moral theory. Chicherin does recognize this progression from eudemonism to utilitarianism but considers it far-fetched. Chicherin 1880: 26. Solov'ëv certainly does not doubt that the moral goal of human activity is not some worldly happiness, but on the other hand he also does not doubt that people in their everyday actions strive for the elimination of as much pain, broadly understood, as possible.

[18] Chicherin 1880: 37.

and not a means."[19] Actually, Chicherin is somewhat charitable to Solov'ëv: the former could have pressed his case even harder by pointing out that the latter explicitly recognizes, on the one hand, moral activity as presupposing a free will yet, on the other, fails to see the obvious train of thought Chicherin proffered.

Again and again, Chicherin lambastes Solov'ëv for his reliance on Schopenhauer at the expense of a considered understanding not just of Kant, but particularly of Hegel and his application of the rational, moral law in a philosophy of right. In terms of "subjective ethics," if Solov'ëv had wished to be completely consistent, he should have turned to religion for the moral law, not Kant, but being "carried away" by the latter's argumentation he could not help but rely on Kant's "moral formula." Yet, given what he has said concerning subjective ethics, Solov'ëv has not shown the need to turn to some mystical cognition. Quite the contrary, it would at best merely supplement but not ground a rational ethics. Likewise, in turning to "objective ethics," Solov'ëv is fixated on seeing the moral law realized throughout society without understanding that each individual is an independent unit and cannot be turned into what in effect would be a means. Each individual, as it were, forms an independent whole, and this whole would be abrogated should we try to make everyone conform to one standard. To use individuals "simply as a means for the realization of an abstract, general law would be to impose a deadening scheme on society."[20] Moreover, the moral ideal cannot even serve as the goal of society on the whole; it is not some social ideal to be attained at some future time but an absolute demand that concerns us here and now. Solov'ëv speaks of the emergence of a normal society as the combination of individuality and communalism, both fully developed. Chicherin, however, questions whether the two can actually co-exist. Indeed, what could "free communalism" possibly mean? Realizing that the development of one is usually at the expense of the other, Chicherin recognizes that the full development of one will result in making the other illusory. Defending the individuality of moral judgment, he stresses that by relinquishing the inner voice of our individual moral conscience to a social consciousness or to alleged social needs, our moral judgment ceases to be free and we ourselves cease to be moral beings. Subjective ethics can never be eliminated and replaced by objective ethics. One example of this is that of the communists who while not completely denying morality – after all they talk of "brotherhood" – want, like Solov'ëv, to subordinate individual moral principles to the economic sphere, which if realized would lead to the annihilation of human freedom.

For Solov'ëv, in order for conflicting principles of action among individuals to be reconciled, it is necessary that the principles be reconciled first in the individual's consciousness by a free act of self-limitation, i.e., through one's voluntary recognition

[19] Chicherin 1880: 38. Chicherin, understandably given his own position, expresses alarm at the short-shrift treatment Solov'ëv accords free will and its place in jurisprudence. In terms of the history of philosophy, both Kant and Hegel devoted considerable attention to the link between a free will and responsibility, something which Solov'ëv denied. Moreover, the entirety of Christian theology from St. Augustine onward views sin as a result of a freely chosen action.

[20] Chicherin 1880: 59.

of the interests of others. This self-limitation is effected out of a sense of duty. "However," Solov'ëv writes, "my duty is for others a right. If I abuse others for my own benefit, then I can internally resist this abuse only if I see myself as *obliged* not to abuse others. Therefore, the other's interest … becomes for me obligatory as *a right that is recognized by me*."[21] Chicherin counters that with these words Solov'ëv obviously confuses moral duty with juridical obligation. That I have a moral duty to act in some way towards you does not mean that you have a right with respect to me. "I am morally obliged to help the poor, but the poor have no right to demand anything from me."[22] Solov'ëv, in his eyes, does not fully realize that with a right comes compulsion, otherwise he would say that the reconciliation of personal and social principles results in a higher level of freedom. If the moral law and adherence to it were made compulsory, as the respect for legal rights are in society, then morality would simply cease to exist. Admittedly, Solov'ëv later in the *Critique* ascribes a negative significance to the concept of right saying that right is freedom conditioned by equality. This definition Chicherin considers to be quite imprecise, since there is a recognition of rights everywhere, indeed a mutual recognition of human rights even with an inequality between people. Surely, rights are a feature or property of free people, but they also concern differences between the sexes and the age of individuals among other things.

When discussing the relevant passages in the *Critique*, we saw that for Solov'ëv a "legitimate" government can only demand no one harms anyone. That we should cooperate for a common goal is a moral demand and as such falls outside the proper purview of governmental functions. Here once again, Chicherin finds Solov'ëv under Schopenhauer's influence. Against it, Chicherin charges that his own conception of right, unlike Solov'ëv's, is positive, because it accommodates property, contracts and responsibilities, and government serves more than a merely juridical function. A real government is always concerned about the interests of the nation; it establishes or at least supports schools, charitable institutions; it builds roads, etc. Why then, Chicherin asks, does Solov'ëv, contrary to the facts, to common sense, indeed to everything, limit government to the merely negative function of preventing its citizens from harming each other? Because otherwise his entire scheme would collapse. Opposing what he takes to be abstract principles, he endeavors to reduce them to some union of mystical foundations. At the basis of social life, he sees nothing but abstractions that need to be connected. Chicherin adds, "But surely such a philosophy is nothing other than a castle in the air, which can serve only as a sad example of the inconsistencies to which even exceptional minds can come and at the same time serve as the best weapon against philosophy in the hands of people who see in it only empty words."[23]

These are just some of the criticisms Chicherin lodged against Solov'ëv's discussion of subjective and objective ethics. He ends this portion of his own "critique" with a

[21] PSS, vol. 3: 136.

[22] Chicherin 1880: 68.

[23] Chicherin 1880: 76.

damning charge that should come as no surprise given the former's background both in scholarship and public affairs: "Solov'ëv has very little familiarity with the social sciences." Even stronger, he continues by writing of the ominous consequences of Solov'ëv's ruminations in political and legal philosophy: "He is apparently unaware that his theory leads directly to the elimination of work, property, inheritance and, consequently, the family, in short, to the overthrow of all the foundations of civil society, of all guarantees of personal freedom and to the erection of the most unprecedented tyranny ever."[24] And where is the root of these errors? It lies in taking a single abstract moral principle as the absolute idea, whereas it forms but one of the latter's elements. If the absolute idea, which Solov'ëv calls all-unity, solely had to do with morality, physical nature would have no reason to exist. Chicherin concludes, "Solov'ëv's principles of objective ethics have no significance for science."

Although clearly more comfortable discussing issues in political philosophy, Chicherin wades robustly into Solov'ëv's musings on metaphysical ontology laced, as they are, with epistemological terminology. Solov'ëv, as we saw, provisionally asserts that truth is that which is. Chicherin assents to this position with what he calls a small proviso. We must recognize, of course, that true knowledge must also consist in *recognizing* that something is not the case when in fact it is not the case: I know, i.e., have true knowledge, that the Earth is not flat. Likewise, we can know the impossibility of a square circle. Consequently, to speak of "that which is" must be understood both positively and negatively. However, when Solov'ëv claims that truth is concerned with the abiding nature of something, that it is the same everywhere and always, he reaches his conclusion only by playing with words. In saying that the truth must be identical with itself, we simply mean that that feature of something which we regard as true of it must be a feature every time we find that something. Contrary to Solov'ëv's claim, it does not mean that something must exist everywhere and always. To think so is just absurd.

It is surprising, particularly in light of its derivative character, that Chicherin holds Solov'ëv's critique of empiricism to be the best part of his work, whereas the analysis of rationalism is weak – surprisingly, that is, until one realizes Chicherin's broad allegiance to Hegel. Solov'ëv's preference for mysticism over logic and consistency is, for Chicherin, the basis for the weakness of his critique of rationalism. We would expect Solov'ëv to provide an all-round critique of the principles of cognition. Indeed, he states that dogmatic rationalism must pass into critical rationalism, because reason can take nothing for granted, and with such a pronouncement we have every right to await a critique of our cognitive faculties. Instead, however, Solov'ëv simply mentions that critical rationalism posits rather than resolves an absolute separation of form and content and drops this entire issue. Likewise, instead of a detailed treatment of Hegel's absolute idealism, Solov'ëv abruptly brushes it aside, saying that its failure has become obvious. His fundamental criticism of objective "rationalism" (= idealism!) in general is that it holds everything to be conceptual and therefore relational, but then in such a "rationalist" system there is

[24] Chicherin 1880: 94.

nothing that does the relating. However, the absurdity that Solov'ëv sees here is, for Chicherin, just an example of the straw man fallacy. Actually, objective rationalism holds that the essence of things is rational, and certainly does not doubt the existence of things or affirm that they are merely relations. The appearance of things is, indeed, truly revealed by our senses, but the validity of our knowledge so obtained is guided by and in conformity with reason.

Solov'ëv explicitly declares, as we saw, that the actual, or "true," object of knowledge is not being, but the unconditionally existent. This position Chicherin unabashedly labels pantheistic, despite Solov'ëv's protestations to the contrary. In any case, the latter's train of thought leading to the unconditionally existent is a continuous play on the word "being." He at first denies it can be applied and then completely reverses himself until he arrives at what he calls the "positive nothing" as opposed to the supposedly "negative nothing" of Hegel! For Chicherin, however, Solov'ëv's concept just makes no sense: Hegel's "nothing," containing as it does a contradiction owing to an absolute abstraction, is a starting point for the logical development of thought, whereas in Solov'ëv it is the end, the supreme definition of the absolute as such. Thus, Solov'ëv's "nothing" is either just that – nothing – or it is everything. Chicherin does provide a lengthy paraphrase of much of Solov'ëv's further metaphysical discussion with frequent long extracts from the *Critique* but concedes that he does so in the hope that the reader can make sense of it. As for himself, he is "absolutely unable to comprehend its meaning."[25]

Having expounded his metaphysical ontology, we saw in the previous chapter that in order to insure the objective significance, i.e., the certainty, that our concepts and sensations are not merely subjective states, Solov'ëv posited, as it were, a third sort of cognition, namely, faith. Chicherin considers this aspect of Solov'ëv's thought to be original and consistent, a distinctive combination of Spinoza and Jacobi. Nevertheless, "however enticing the logical qualities of this theory, it is hardly possible to find another that would stand in greater opposition to what we experience and know in reality."[26] We need no "faith" to insure that what we see or hear in front of us is in front of us, that it is not just a mirage or an hallucination. Our senses together with reason continuously confirm this. Chicherin opines that Solov'ëv's difficulty and why he appeals to a third cognitive element arises from his radical separation of reason and experience. Owing to this separation, he is *logically* forced to accept something in cognition to buttress reason and experience. In effect, then, Solov'ëv's argument again appeals to reason, which he has already deemed inadequate to provide philosophical answers. In Solov'ëv's defense, what Chicherin fails to recognize is that the issue concerns the sense of objectivity of external perceptions. Reason and experience surely play a role in objective cognition, but what Solov'ëv is groping for is the source within consciousness of its sense-bestowing function. An analysis of consciousness itself simply remained outside Chicherin's ontologically-oriented purview.

[25] Chicherin 1880: 133.

[26] Chicherin 1880: 138.

By no means do the above comments and criticisms exhaust those given by Chicherin in his book. They are, though, at least representative and hopefully the most illustrative of his general attitude towards the *Critique* without becoming tedious. While he declares forthrightly his personal allegiance to "rationalism," declaring it to be the "sole true philosophy," he attempts to show that Solov'ëv's own arguments ultimately rest on the employment of reason, despite his claims of its philosophical impotence. All purported knowledge of the external world is subject to rational examination, and what cannot be factually checked, such as the alleged veracity of historical events, must be critically investigated utilizing rational techniques against all other circumstances known to us. Reason, we see, is the sole criterion of truth. Even though he rejects rationalism as an empty form, Solov'ëv defines the truly existing in terms of logic. Moreover, if it were an empty form, as Solov'ëv alleges it to be, then it could not, contrary to Solov'ëv, experience anything. Science, in a broad sense, is an independent sphere of human intellectual activity, in which reason is the final arbiter, and faith an object of study rather than the source of cognition. In this way, Chicherin exhibits no sympathy and little patience with talk of cognition by means of the mystical interaction of ideas. His work, *Mysticism in Science*, despite appearing what could only have been months after the complete publication of the *Critique*, remains to this day the only full-scale philosophical treatment of it.[27]

It is surprising – and distressing – that Solov'ëv remained silent for as long as he did on Chicherin's painstaking criticisms. He mentions, but only in the briefest possible manner, Chicherin's work in his letter of 27 January 1881 to the editor of the journal *Mysl'*. Clearly, then, he knew of it by this time. Whether he had read it through carefully is unknown. Chicherin, surely, completed his book comparatively quickly, for, as we saw, the *Critique* appeared less than 1 year earlier in the first quarter of 1880. Of course, Chicherin conceivably could have started his own work shortly after the appearance of the first serialized installments at the end of 1877 under the presumption, as was the pattern, that Solov'ëv's *Critique* would eventually be collected in the form of single book. Whether written in haste or over roughly 2 years, *Mysticism in Science* remained unanswered and with it another opportunity for Russian philosophy to develop along analytical, deliberative lines again was squandered. Had Solov'ëv chosen to reply forthrightly to Chicherin's charges and thereby clarify his stand on a host of issues particularly the role of mystical intuition in cognition, subsequent developments in Russian philosophy might have avoided its unmistakable religious thrust. However, Solov'ëv chose not to answer Chicherin's criticisms directly. Only years later in 1897 did Solov'ëv reply to Chicherin and then only in connection with the latter's criticisms of Solov'ëv's latest work on

[27] Although it appeared only in 1886 and thus just outside the chronological scope of the present study, N. G. Debol'skij's book *O vysshem blage ili o verkhovnoj celi nravstvennoj dejatel'nosti* [*On the Highest Good or the Supreme Goal of Moral Activity*] also dealt extensively with the *Critique*. Debol'skij, however, also discussed Solov'ëv's more recent writings up to the appearance of his own text. Debol'skij (1842–1918) is best remembered today for his Russian translation of Hegel's *Science of Logic*.

ethics. There he wrote, "Despite the inner satisfaction afforded me by such attention to my somewhat immature work from an honored scholar, I resolved not to accept his offer and did not answer his critique. Although the main reason for my decision is still valid in this case, I believe that my repeated unresponsiveness could be interpreted to the detriment not only of justice in general, but also to my own moral interests in the critique."[28]

7.4 At the St. Petersburg Higher Women's Courses

As usual, with the successful completion of his doctorate Solov'ëv viewed his professorial prospects optimistically. He wrote disingenuously to his mother from St. Petersburg as late as 23 September 1880 that he had been elected – by what body he does not say – to a professorship at the university but that his election had still to be approved by the [university] council.[29] On what, if any, basis he made this assertion is quite unclear. Factually speaking, he would not have been selected by the faculty in the normal course of events, let alone win the approval of the university council. Solov'ëv's nephew Sergey in his biography repeats without clarification or amplification Radlov's words that his, Sergey's, uncle "obtained the right to a professor's chair, but 'Vladislavlev did not support him, and he joined the university only as a privatdocent.'"[30] Indeed, there is evidence supporting Radlov's claim. However odd his behavior may appear to us, Vladislavlev, who, we may note, was Dostoyevsky's nephew-in-law, did not particularly encourage the study of philosophy, and towards Solov'ëv, if we believe one account, he harbored "barely concealed disdain."[31] Other faculty members apparently held a derisive attitude towards Solov'ëv's philosophical leanings.[32] What he did not realize was the depth and breadth of the negative feelings towards him: Kireev's diary entry for 1 May 1880 reads, "Perhaps he missed the chair [in philosophy – TN] because the entire law faculty, and half of the mathematics faculty have privately expressed themselves against him."[33]

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[28] SS, vol. 8: 671. Of course, Solov'ëv did not really say what this "main reason" is, in the absence of which we must conclude that he may have had none.

[29] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 33.

[30] Solovyov 2000: 226.

[31] Shakhanov 1992: 394. The information contained here is from a conversation in May 1920 between Solov'ëv-biographer S. M. Luk'janov and E.E. Ukhtomskij, who had studied under Vladislavlev and Solov'ëv at the time in question. We should point out – whether it supports Ukhtomskij's view or shows Ukhtomskij may have been prejudiced – that he, Ukhtomskij, did extensive work for a paper on free will that included travel abroad. It was approved by Solov'ëv but viewed negatively by Vladislavlev, and as a result received only a silver medal. Apparently, Ukhtomskij himself hoped at the time for a professorship but, like Solov'ëv, he was passed over. He eventually served in the navy, and his interest in philosophy receded.

[32] Ivan P. Minaev (1840–1890), who taught linguistics, reportedly thought that, on the one hand, there was science and on the other Solov'ëv's chatter.

[33] Quoted in PSS, vol. 4: 574.

Revelatory of this general attitude is also the response to Kireev's request on behalf of Solov'ëv the following March to the university rector A. N. Beketov for a lecture room. According to Kireev, Beketov remarked that he did "not want to provide a room for Solov'ëv's lectures on account of his nihilism.?!!!"[34] In short, the left, on the one hand, viewed Solov'ëv as at best a metaphysician – but more likely a mystic – resolutely opposed to scientific progress, and the establishment, on the other, saw him as a disturber, even a destroyer, of the status quo.

Nonetheless, already weeks before his dissertation defense Solov'ëv was approached by K.N. Bestuzhev-Rjumin, who taught Russian history at the university and served as director of the Higher Women's Courses, with the possibility of teaching philosophy there in the Fall. Solov'ëv greeted this possibility warmly. At around this time, he also received an invitation from the rector of Odessa University, I. S. Nekrasov, to teach there. Judging from a letter he wrote to S. A. Tolstaja that very day, Solov'ëv intended to delay responding to Nekrasov until September presumably to give time to hear whether he would get a position at St. Petersburg University, which he plainly preferred.[35] Whether attempting to press for a decision from the University or some other reason, Solov'ëv wrote to Bestuzhev-Rjumin on 7 March informing him of the invitation from Odessa and that he had decided to accept it if "at their next session the faculty were not to turn their attention to my modest desire for an extraordinary professorship at a docent's salary."[36] It hardly needs to be said that the faculty did not assent to his wish, although Solov'ëv continued to hope for a professorship during the coming months and even through the following year and on into 1882. However, on 23 March 1880 he was officially invited to teach philosophy at the Women's Courses in the Fall. Whatever the reason, he did not accept the invitation at Odessa University but remained in St. Petersburg. He also continued on for the time being at the university teaching metaphysics as a privatdocent without the right to a regular salary.

In the Fall of the academic year 1880/1881, then, Solov'ëv presented a lecture-course on the history of philosophy, for which a lithography of his readings has survived. These lectures were parallel to those he gave concurrently at St. Petersburg University in keeping with the desired wishes of the administrators at the Women's Courses to have the program there at the same level as at the University. Undoubtedly, the character of this course was unusual in that it opened with a broad statement of Solov'ëv's philosophical opinions without regard to the history of philosophy per se. After that, he launched into a brief exposition of Indian philosophy before engaging in a survey of ancient Greek philosophy through Plato. Understandably for a survey course, particularly at an introductory level as this must have been, Solov'ëv failed to argue for many of his own views presented to the students. It should not come as a surprise, then, that those already of a similar bent would be receptive to them while those hostile to metaphysics in general would be dismissive.

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[34] Quoted in PSS, vol. 4: 575.

[35] *Pis'ma*, vol. 2: 204.

[36] *Pis'ma*, vol. 3: 33.

In these lectures, consistent with what we saw in his other writings, Solov'ëv is, in effect, fundamentally dismissive of any rational proofs for the existence of God or even of an objective reality independent of the cognizing subject. He holds, as he did in the *Lectures on Divine Humanity*, that we rely ultimately on faith, faith in God and faith that our sense data originate from independently existing objects. To make something taken on faith into knowledge, we must integrate that something into the body of already existing knowledge. In other words, we must strive to make sense of it. In this way, an isolated "fact" becomes rational and understandable. This process of assimilation or integration can proceed through many stages. The aim in science is to find a connection between a collection of facts. This connection is one general law, for example the law of gravity and the conservation laws. The structure of the world is thereby reduced to a system, albeit an external, mechanical one. Nevertheless, even though this represents a victory of reason over isolated empirical facts, the victory is hollow in that the human mind remains unsatisfied. Despite the progress of the modern physical sciences, the relations established between objects is limited to external contacts. Solov'ëv poses without argument – or great deal of clarification – that since everything physical is bounded or limited and since it is impossible for there to be a boundary or limit without something to establish this limit, we must accept that there is more than the external aspect of things. We must accept that all that exists has in addition to external relations an "inner aspect." It does not seem to occur to Solov'ëv that even if it were correct that we cannot conceive what he says we cannot, the fault may lie in our limited mental faculties rather than that something additional must actually exist. This "inner aspect" of all things is posited as an aspiration to go beyond itself and is characterized, moreover, as *psychic* [! – TN], and since everything must have an *inner* aspect – owing to the fact that it has an external one – we can conclude that "everything must be recognized as animate (*odushevlennyj*)."[37] Just as startling, Solov'ëv also holds that although every entity (*sushchestvo*) considered as material is limited by its particularity, in the non-material sphere each contains all others within itself and itself in all others. Whereas materially every entity is impenetrable, in the non-material sphere, wherein lies its "true being," it is penetrable.

Passing to the main concern of his course, the history of philosophy, Solov'ëv remarks that Greek philosophy, unlike Indian, started with a purely theoretical question. It is interested in explaining the world and its variety. The Greeks arrived at atomism but soon enough saw its shortcomings. They sought the single principle that would explain the variety and contingency of what exists but soon realized that this principle itself could not be extrapolated from what lies in the material world. Contingency and variety cannot explain contingency and variety. Thus, the sought-for principle must lie outside the material world, a principle that Solov'ëv has no hesitation in characterizing as "divine." It is surely in this way that Solov'ëv sees the transition from ancient Indian thought to the pre-Socratics and on to Plato with his theory of ideas, which forms, in his view, the fundamental truth of Greek philosophy.

[37] PSS, vol. 4: 173.

Regrettably, the surviving notes for the lectures stop with Plato. Apart from these historical remarks, Solov'ëv presents nothing not already found in his *Lectures on Divine Humanity*. In fact, the critique of empiricism and of naïve realism is almost word for word a repeat of what he said on that other occasion.[38] Of course, given the introductory nature of his lectures we cannot truly be surprised, but our disappointment still lingers that even in this academic setting he refrained from moving beyond his popular presentations.

In a relatively short speech delivered on 13 March at the Higher Women's Courses and again at the University, concerning which we will have more to say later, Solov'ëv directly but all too curtly addressed the transition from Platonism to Christianity. As mentioned, Solov'ëv held at this time that Plato's primary concern was theoretical. Plato denied that the world of ordinary objects around us is the ultimate reality, this owing to its contingency and irrationality. The world of ideas is the genuine reality, and it is revealed through mental activity. A moral element is certainly there, but for Plato this remains in the background. It was Christianity that for the first time gave this opposition between the genuine, true world and the untrue world a moral, practical significance. Christianity rejects our present, everyday world as being not only false but evil.[39]

Already several months earlier on 20 November 1880 in his opening lecture at St. Petersburg University that has come down to us as "Istoricheskija dela filosofii" ("The Historical Concerns of Philosophy"), Solov'ëv pronounced on much the same theme as he did on that day in March of the following year, only on this earlier occasion in somewhat greater depth.[40] Solov'ëv posed a question that still plagues philosophy today: What has it done for civilization; of what use is it to humanity? Unlike the natural sciences, whose practitioners and elaborators engage in constructions certainly no less technical than ours, can philosophy point to practical results that can be employed by all? Even the social sciences can point to successes of various sorts that belong to all humankind. Can philosophy do the same? Or is philosophy in some manner more an art form than a science? But even art is not confined to a narrow circle: The artist, whether a painter, a sculptor, or actor, strives to engage a wide audience most of whom have no familiarity with any theory of art or what goes into the execution of an art work. To answer the question Solov'ëv proposes turning, however briefly, to intellectual history. We find in India, above all other ancient Eastern nations, a fully independent and consistent philosophy. Already before the rise of classic Greek civilization, the human individual in Indian thought played a central role. However, for the most part the individual was viewed as engulfed by the external environment until several thinkers there proclaimed a new, previously unheard of doctrine: Everything is one. Despite widespread social divisions and the existence of slavery, these thinkers held that there is, nevertheless, but one

[38] §XVI [PSS, volume 4: 232–240] is drawn almost verbatim from Lecture 4, and the two sections both (!) labeled §XVII [PSS volume 4: 240–249] are drawn from Lecture 5.

[39] Solov'ëv was fond of referring to 1 John 5:19, which says that the world lieth in wickedness.

[40] The lecture was published in early 1881 in the journal *Russkija mysl'*.

universal essence, and in doing so undermined those very divisions. The emergence of Buddhism saw a recognition of the principle of all-unity as the principle of humanity. If all that is is one, i.e., a unity, then we can find this unity within ourselves, and there is no need to seek it elsewhere. Moreover, this unity, the "world essence, finds itself in one's own self-consciousness."[41] The all-unity can be found too in nature, but there it is "unconscious" or "blind." That is, in nature apart from humanity there is no cognizance that the all-unity is present within it. This differentiation enables human individuals to find freedom and unconditionality in a renunciation of the world, of external nature.

Indian philosophy did arrive at the principle of humanity, a concern with the vocation of pure thought, but only at its end. It fell to the Greeks, who by the nature of their national spirit, were destined to further develop this concern. The Greeks started with a recognition of the superiority of the human form over other natural forms through their idealized gods that took on our *external* form. However, it was Greek philosophy, beginning with the Sophists, that revealed the interiority of the human individual. The Sophists, like the Buddhists, rejected exteriority and gods and, in a sense, were nihilists, while both yet realized the eternal significance of the individual. One difference between them was that the individual in Sophism had an absolute self-confidence despite having no general and objective content. Thus, one's realization of being free is purely subjective, and it fell to Socrates to take the next step. But Socrates was only able to assert that there is an ideal principle without showing and determining what it is. Plato did just this. He opposed ideal being, the good and the beautiful and the rational in themselves, to the contingent and the irrational. We get to them, to the harmonious kingdom of ideas, not via our natural experiences, but via our inner selves and purity of thought.

Although Plato saw the two spheres, the dual world of the truly existing and the contingent, material world, they remained essentially separate and opposed. The next and definitive step was taken by Christianity, which in the person of Christ neither denies the world nor abandons it as happens in Platonic philosophy. Instead of departing from the world, Christ came to save it. The harmony of the ideal found in Plato enters into Christianity as a "living reality," the "active kingdom of God."[42]

The truth of the Christian message and therewith its power could not and would not be realized by the majority for many years, decades and even centuries. Instead, the message was transmuted as a higher power and delivered to the masses through an external organization demanding blind obedience and trust. In this form, a new slavery engulfed humanity – or at least Western Europe, although Solov'ëv mentions no such geographic limitation. Life in that era saw no essential lessening of violence and "contingency" (presumably Solov'ëv's euphemism for pursuing courses of action that were deemed expeditious for some ultimate worldly purposes and sanctioned by the Church). Christian truth was expressed in an untrue form

[41] SS, vol. 2: 404.

[42] SS, vol. 2: 408.

delivered by an untrue organization.[43] A two-fold task, thus, confronted humanity: first, to liberate Christian truth from its incongruent external authority and, second, to restore human rights, which were unrecognized and violated by this false Christianity. The sixteenth century religious reformation saw to the first part of the task, and the political revolution of the eighteenth century saw to the second, both of which were clearly accomplished under the dominating influence of modern Western philosophy.[44] Although none-too-clear, Solov'ëv attributes the influence of modern "mystical" philosophy, without mentioning names, to the successes of the first task and rationalism to the second. "Mystical" philosophy proclaimed that the divine principle lies within the human being and therewith an immediate inner connection with God. Rationalism did the same for human rights and thereby shattered the irrational foundations of patrimonial civil society. After these successes, philosophy, as found in German Idealism, turned its attention to the capabilities of reason, and finding its inner strength philosophy created the perfect logical form for the expression of truth.

In this way, we see that the development of philosophy, particularly that of rationalism from Descartes to Hegel, proved of great service to Christian truth. Thus, in answer to the question concerning what has philosophy accomplished the answer is simple: It has freed us from external coercion and shown us the beauty of the divine principle within us. Both of these accomplishments arose from a basic attribute of the human mind, viz., never to stop at any boundary nor accept without question anything given purely externally. Philosophy, in short, truly makes us human beings.

Excursus: Some Remarks on the Philosophy of Mind

In an only quite recently published fragment, Solov'ëv turned his attention, albeit briefly, to the mind-body problem in modern philosophy. We must again be cautious here in that we cannot be certain that the positions expressed in this fragment are those that he would have, on reflection, defended as his considered stand. The fragment is quite incomplete and was left unedited by its author. We do not even know the context in which it was written. Nevertheless, the positions enunciated therein do bear a resemblance to some views expressed in his lectures on the history of philosophy. Based on this fact together with terminological similarities to those used in the lectures, the fragment's editors have concluded that it dates from the period of September to early October 1880, i.e., at just the time when Solov'ëv was beginning his lectures on the history of philosophy in St. Petersburg.[45] The reader will surely

[43] Although here in the introductory lecture he does not explicitly say that he has the medieval Church in mind, leaving it to his audience to infer the era, Solov'ëv does explicitly make the identification in his 13 March 1881 address. See PSS, vol. 4: 264.

[44] Again, Solov'ëv, in this earlier lecture, only obliquely mentions the French Revolution. The identification is explicit in his 13 March address: "Attempts appeared to realize it [the kingdom of truth – TN] in the name of pure reason. The French Revolution of '89 carried out this role by its proclamation of the rights of reason." PSS, vol. 4: 264–265.

[45] PSS, vol. 4: 679 and 683.

recall that at the beginning of the modern era Descartes held to a dualism between the mind, the "*res cogitans*," and the body, which unlike the mind, has extension and, again unlike the mind, does not think. We, thus, have an essential dichotomy between two substances. However, I, as a "thinking thing," am able, despite my immateriality, to interact causally with my body. If the mind and the body are essentially different, how can this be? How can a substance, the body, that is by definition extended, interact with a substance that is not, and how can the mind, which thinks, interact with a substance wholly lacking in thought? Although Descartes offered a solution, however bizarre it may appear to us today, Solov'ëv does not so much as mention it in this fragment. For this reason, we need not linger on it here. Nevertheless, Solov'ëv realizes that if we hold the mind and the body as two absolutely separate substances, any interaction between them is conceptually inconceivable. Yet, factually there is interaction. Hence, the two cannot be absolutely separate unless there is an intermediary. Unwilling to abandon Cartesian dualism, the seventeenth century philosophers Arnold Geulincx and Nicholas Malebranche sought to enlist God as the active intermediary who coordinates each and every movement of my body with a mental desire to move the respective body part. Leibniz upheld a pre-established harmony between mind and body, i.e., that God at the start had arranged the respective mechanisms in such a way that they run parallel to each other.

It seems rather odd, then, that Solov'ëv, who so firmly believed in God and took His existence as in no need of a philosophical (= rational) proof, should himself point out that these three post-Cartesian theories all presuppose God's existence and therefore bear a hypothetical character. Even granted this assumption, though, Solov'ëv finds them all unsatisfactory in that none contains "any definite explanation of this or that particular sensation."[46] Leibniz's pre-established harmony, for example, simply begs the question in that it fails to explain how there can be agreement between two quite different natures as mind and body. Solov'ëv dismisses Leibniz's analogy with synchronized clocks saying that clocks, nevertheless, have the same nature and structure. After all, they are one and all mechanical clocks. We could reply to both Leibniz and Solov'ëv that the former's position does indeed require quite a feat of harmonization. However, since Leibniz attributes such action to an all-powerful Deity this alone should hardly count as a decisive basis for rejecting his proposed solution.[47]

Solov'ëv's interest in criticizing occasionalism is simply to bring out his own position, namely that "the mind and the body are not external, disjoined substances absolutely independent of each other. Rather, they are internally connected, determining and acting on each other. Between them, there is a certain actual commonality and unity."[48] On the one hand, it appears that the mind is determined by the body,

[46] PSS, vol. 4: 271.

[47] Solov'ëv grants "some" sense to Leibniz's theory but only because his monadology breaks with the Cartesian dualism of mind and body.

[48] PSS, vol. 4: 272.

our corporeal being. Herein lies the element of truth in materialism.[49] On the other hand, however, it is even more obvious that sensing and intentional bodily movements presuppose a mind that senses and directs those movements. Solov'ëv tells us that in light of these facts we are led to the Spinozistic position that the mind and the body are merely two sides or forms of one and the same unconditional substance. Thus, the mind is not reducible to the corporeal, as the materialists assert, nor is the corporeal reducible to the psychic, as subjective idealists maintain. Yet just as this theory of substantial identity is indubitable, so is it philosophically sterile. Solov'ëv is certainly willing to grant that everything is a manifestation of the absolute, but, he argues, this is not the issue. Substantial identity holds the mind and the body to be equal, but it does not provide an account of the interrelation between the two forms. That is, as mentioned just above there is a certain logical priority of mind over body, since the mind in its inner awareness "knows" ["*znaet*"] the body but not vice versa. The mind is aware of what the body senses, but the body is not aware of what the mind is thinking. Thus, a simple interpretation of the Spinozistic solution is ultimately unsatisfactory regardless of whether we take that theory to be arguing for a parallelism or an identity between mind and body.

The essential difference between mind and body means that we cannot look at them as analogous to two poles of a single magnet. The relation must be more complex. However, if we hold that there is a necessary connection between mental events and states and corporeal events and states, then this connection cannot be externally imposed but must follow from the very concepts involved, i.e., from the essence of mind and body. Solov'ëv claims that the relation of the mind to the body is in no need of any special attention: the mind has the body, its states, as its (intentional) object. He specifically adds, though, that contrary to the unnamed subjective idealists the body is more than such an object. Without giving the basis for his assertion, Solov'ëv adds that the body must have its own reality proper, and as a consequence we must presuppose that in addition to this subjective connection to the mind there is a real or objective connection, i.e., one that proceeds from the body. It is at this point that Solov'ëv's train of thought begins to falter. For he is now faced with the concrete task of accounting for the specific correlation between a mental event and a corporeal one. He remarks that we must now show the logical connection revealed in the actual connection between the two forms, i.e., "to connect in thought what is connected in reality."[50] Indeed, since he criticized occasionalism for failing to do precisely this, we cannot expect him to do no less. Nevertheless, such a description, however valuable its execution, still would not mollify the possible criticism that he has not accounted for his own observation of the logical priority of mind over body.

Solov'ëv's discussion of this classical philosophical issue is abbreviated and inconclusive. The fragment continues on for some pages discussing in some

[49] The argument under consideration in this fragment breaks off here but resumes again on another sheet. An additional draft has survived allowing us in part to fill in a few minor points as is done here. See PSS, vol. 4: 284.

[50] PSS, vol. 4: 276.

perplexing manner an analogy with the geometrical forms of points, lines and planes. He apparently thought this would render understandable the interaction of minds. Unfortunately, it fails to do anything of the sort. Yet already from his few remarks, we see that Solov'ëv was no slavish philosophical disciple of Spinoza. In fact, his refusal to accept any reductionism while still viewing the mental and the corporeal as correlative moments and his according a logical priority to the mental surely brings Solov'ëv to the threshold of phenomenology. Of all of his early works, it is in this fragmentary work that he came closest to the much later elaborations of Husserl.[51]

7.5 A Temporary Adieu to Philosophy

We can soon take up again the remainder of Solov'ëv's 13 March speech, but we must first set it into its context. The date, 1 March 1881, appears in retrospect no less significant in Russian history than it surely must have appeared at the time to eyewitnesses in St. Petersburg. For on that date Tsar Alexander II, who had emancipated the serfs and initiated numerous additional domestic reforms, was killed by a terrorist bomb on the streets of the capital. All talk of further reforms and the anticipated establishment of consultative bodies was soon abandoned. Six members of the terrorist organization *Narodnaja Volja* (People's Will), whose guilt was firmly established, were arrested and awaited trial along with the expected death penalty. In this charged atmosphere any positive word about the French Revolution in public would have been considered, to put it mildly, ill-advised. Yet, as we saw, this is just what Solov'ëv did:

> The contemporary revolutionary movement started where the French Revolution ended and such an approach is logical. The fact is that the reigning world view rejected not only theological principles but also the metaphysical idea of the right of pure reason, which underpinned the revolution of'89. If we take away theological principles and the metaphysical idea of the unconditional nature of the individual, there remains only our bestial nature, the effect of which is violence.[52]

So if the contemporary revolutionary movement seeks the kingdom of truth, it must reject violence as a means to obtain it. The use of violence in an effort to realize truth is a de facto recognition of the impotence of truth, and this is precisely what

[51] In her editorial comment, I. V. Borisova writes that this fragment must have been intended to form part of a much broader work, the other parts of which have not survived. See PSS, vol. 4: 677. It is most curious, then, that we have no information otherwise of his labor on this broader project. If Solov'ëv was writing at this time, circa 1880/1881, some large philosophical piece, what was its purpose? This fragment hardly fits into a suitable scheme as notes for an introductory course in the history of philosophy.

[52] PSS, vol. 4: 265. Solov'ëv in his 13 March speech pointed out the French Revolution in its "second half" rested on violence and led to despotism. It is doubtful that such a qualification would have been of much reassurance to officialdom.

the revolutionary movement has done. It has indeed resorted to violence. Solov'ëv concludes that for this reason unless we choose to return to savagery, a violent revolution has no future.[53]

The trial of the six accused regicides commenced on 26 March. On that very day and again on the 28th, Solov'ëv gave a public lecture before an audience of many hundreds in St. Petersburg. The text of the lecture, as far as is known, has not survived but his words, or the gist of them, were allegedly copied down by some of the attendees. Continuing the ideas put forth already earlier that month, Solov'ëv drew their logical conclusions, but first he attempted to make and in a fashion expand on the argument behind the logical conclusion he sought to draw. Far from invalidating religious faith, reason and science actually demand it. They testify that everything that exists forms a unity, a whole, without which there would be neither reason nor science. This unity, though, is not a mere sum of its parts, a mere conglomeration of individual things that exist. If it were, the world would be but an enormous machine. No, a machine requires a machinist. However, there would be no place for such a machinist if the whole is everything! Consequently, the universe does not fit this picture. It is, rather, "an organism, a single absolute living entity, and this entity is God."[54]

Solov'ëv presented a second consideration, namely, that the Russian nation already believes in the unconditional significance of the individual through its belief in Christ, even though our modern education rejects Him and therewith an actual basis for belief in human rights. On closer inspection, though, modernity's Christ is a person who lived at a specific time and place, whereas the Russian nation "believes in the living Christ, believes that the principle that operated in the historical Christ, can manifest its effect in all people after Christ. This national faith cannot be destroyed by education."[55] The Russian nation believes that humans and all of externality have a single soul, which strives to embody the divine principle. The nation's ideals are given in its faith, and since the divine truth has not yet been realized in

[53] One of the lecture attendees at St. Petersburg University, Ivan M. Grevs, years later vividly portrayed the charged political atmosphere there as well as the heated discussion following Solov'ëv's lecture. What stands out is, on the one hand, the radical attitude of the students in general and, on the other, that despite his clearly expressed Christian beliefs none of the students thought to lump Solov'ëv with their politically reactionary opponents. This fact is significant in that if the young "hot-heads" did not view him as the enemy we must ask ourselves how did Russian officialdom view him. See Grevs 1906: 502f. Kostalevsky, thus, is quite incorrect in writing: "The reception of Soloviev's speech is not known…." Kostalevsky 1997: 79.

[54] Shch[egolev] 1906: 50. Such a blunt expression of pantheism is not typical of Solov'ëv, and we must keep in mind that he may not have expressed himself in exactly this manner. Possibly, he chose to simplify his views for the sake of presentation, though this is less likely, since he surely would have known the risk of being misunderstood. Mochul'skij described the lecture so: "Solov'ëv's exposition was very short and formal, and the accounts of the listeners are unclear and contradictory." Mochul'skij 1936: 125. Grevs, in his article, advises that the text of the speech given by Shchegolev should not be taken as fully authentic. It is quite possible that Solov'ëv never actually wrote it out and that he improvised. Grevs 1906: 503.

[55] Shch[egolev] 1906: 50.

that not everyone has realized this ideal in oneself, the Russian nation recognizes the value of education and of government.

As the leader of the nation, the tsar is seen not as the representative of external forms such as the law, but the bearer of the nation's spiritual ideal of its very life. As such, he must hold fast to the spiritual principles of Russian life. On this basis, Solov'ëv then turned to the matter of the recent assassination and the appropriate punishment for the terrorists: "The tsar can pardon them, and if he actually senses his connection with the nation, he must pardon them. If he recognizes the truth of God as the truth, then there is no other truth for him. The truth of God says, 'Thou shall not kill.'"[56]

With these words and with this speech, Solov'ëv clearly entered a new phase in his life and a new phase in his thinking. He surely must have known that he had crossed a symbolic Rubicon. Already on 10 March, and therefore 2 weeks before his eventful talk, Solov'ëv mentioned, albeit almost in passing, in a letter, "In the autumn I think I will settle in Moscow for good, leaving behind this Finnish Sodom."[57] The next day after the lecture, he was summoned to appear before the mayor of St. Petersburg, who requested that he recount the events in writing. He also wrote directly to the new Tsar, Alexander III, explaining his position. Whether it was as a result of Solov'ëv's clever tactic of letter-writing or through the intercession of K. N. Bestuzhev-Rjumin and some "higher-placed individuals," as Shchegolev contends, is unclear, but in any case the Tsar simply ordered that Solov'ëv not give public lectures for a period of time to be determined by the Ministry of Public Education.[58]

Solov'ëv continued in his capacity as a privatdocent both at the University and at the Higher Women's Courses later that year. However, in the meantime he surely decided to make a break, perhaps only partially, with this phase of his life. He continued to serve on the Academic Committee at the Ministry of National Education, a virtual sinecure, until the end of that year. Submitting his resignation, he cited reasons of health.[59] It is to this that the minister allegedly remarked: "I did not demand this." The resignation was accepted on 11 November. His resumption of teaching, however, was delayed. On 18 September, he wrote to Bestuzhev-Rjumin: "It is impossible for me to lecture in the first semester owing to the fact that for personal reasons I could not rest the entire summer nor work, and now I must devote three months to intensive writing. … The following semester I want and hope to

[56] Shch[egolev] 1906: 52. Nikiforov in his interesting and seemingly well-informed account provides a different ending to Solov'ëv's speech than that given in Shchegolev's article. See N. K. Nikiforov 1912: 413.

[57] Solovyov 2000: 228. Solovyov quotes from a letter in *Pis'ma*, vol. 3: 107.

[58] See Shch[egolev] 1906: 54. Kostalevsky wisely observes, "It appears that the tsar was disturbed not so much by what Soloviev said as by the public's reaction to it. This explains the official advice to Soloviev to abstain from public speaking for a time – a measure aimed not against the philosopher himself, but toward the prevention of further political trouble." Kostalevsky 1997: 88.

[59] There seems to be some dispute on the date of submitting this resignation. Shchegolev gives 6 October, whereas Radlov gives 6 November. See Shch[egolev] 1906: 55 and Radlov 1913: XIII.

lecture in two courses. Last year, I dwelled on Plato, and now I could lecture on Platonism and Christianity."[60]

Solov'ëv resumed his courses at both institutions in late January1882. Perhaps he had not yet completely given up hope for a professorship. He apparently delivered five lectures at the Higher Women's Courses, the last of which took place on 24 February, and his last lecture at the University was on the following day, 25 February. Not even taking the time to bid farewell to the director of the Higher Women's Courses, Solov'ëv left St. Petersburg on either the last day of February or 1 March. In an undated letter to Bestuzhev-Rjumin most likely from shortly after this, Solov'ëv stated he left partly owing to concerns for his health but mainly for some other unspecified reasons that he would give upon their next meeting.[61] He never returned to teaching, despite an offer from Warsaw University some years later.

In the coming years without a regular income, Solov'ëv managed to eke out a bare existence living off royalties from his publications and the munificence of devoted friends. He spent much of his time in the 1880s and on into the early 1890s writing first on religious and church issues and then primarily on politics and nationalism. It was only in the last years of his life that he returned again to philosophy and managed to complete a major treatise devoted to ethics. In the intervening years, he only casually mentioned his philosophical views in essays and letters.[62] His premature death in 1900, while he was still in the early stages of elaborating his newly-framed epistemology, was surely hastened by his continued irregular work habits and life-style.[63] The assimilation of these last works was only just beginning when political events in Russia made that task impossible in a public setting. Nonetheless, if the rapid pace and sheer quantity of publications devoted to Solov'ëv today is any indication, there assuredly is every hope that Solov'ëv's philosophical ruminations are far from being forgotten.

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[60] *Pis'ma*, vol. 3: 34.

[61] Although this letter is dated by Radlov as having been written in 1881, this is quite unlikely. The events referred to in the letter surely occurred in 1882. See *Pis'ma*, vol. 3: 35.

[62] His dismissal of rational philosophical argument, already in evidence sporadically in his early writings, came to the fore in these works from his "middle period." For example, in his largely neglected, but intriguing, essay "Na pyti k istinnoj filosofii" ["The Path to a True Philosophy"] from 1883 he wrote that philosophy and science are only "products of the human mind which do not and cannot claim to have any other significance." And again, "If the general theoretical goal of human knowledge is to understand the sense of the universe, then neither modern philosophy nor modern science presents us with a direct path towards attaining this goal." SS, vol. 3: 284 and 286.

[63] He typically wrote at night at the expense of a good night's sleep and hardly ate properly. Although he complained in letters of various ailments, for example, problems with his eyesight and eczema, these alone should not have been enough to bring on his demise. As for his diet, we know that he had been for many years a vegetarian – though he ate fish – at a time and in a culture that would have made it difficult to eat well-balanced meals regularly given his erratic hours and penurious budget.

Conclusion

We saw at the beginning of our study that even as he embarked on his pursuit of philosophy Solov'ëv hoped to play a larger role in the spiritual and intellectual life of his country than that typically associated with a university professor. For an indeterminate period shortly before and after obtaining his *magister*'s degree, he saw himself as Jurkevich's philosophical heir with the proviso that he would be far more effective in combating the widely held belief in scientific methodology as the unique avenue to truth and knowledge. This message was, then, to spread in some ill-defined manner through not just academia but society at large a revivified Orthodox Christianity. Solov'ëv believed that with his early work he had shown that all possible philosophical directions had been exhausted. This was important in that in the modern era the secular philosophies had opposed the promulgation of this religious revival. The path now lay open. However, in his own time a new obstruction, indeed a new competitor, had emerged. The Western scientistic aspect of positivism in its various forms obstructed what Solov'ëv saw as the path forward and needed to be removed. That Solov'ëv never at this time saw himself as intrinsically part of the Western philosophical tradition and sharing its principal concerns is clear not just from the content of his early writings, particularly *The Crisis of Western Philosophy*, but also from his choice of topics, his writing style and his sheer neglect of contemporary scholarship, particularly Western but also Russian. He saw *The Crisis* as meant not solely for an academic elite, but also for a broader educated public willing to be convinced and participate in this religious awakening. Solov'ëv came to philosophy not to solve its traditional problems but, in an Hegelian manner, to supersede them. Make no mistake, though, he was addressing first and foremost a *Russian* audience during these early years – arguably throughout his literary career. In effect, he hoped to transform his own country by showing it the fruitlessness of its current philosophical and religious path: crude scientism in philosophy and stagnant dogmatism in religion. This approach with Russia, thereby, serving as a beacon would guide other countries along the path to truth, goodness and beauty.

For Solov'ëv, the first step but by no means the last, then, in this plan was to obtain a professorship. Yet apparently without fully realizing even the basic necessary steps

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to achieve a university position – this despite his own father holding one – Solov'ëv undertook a number of highly unconventional moves that surely could not have endeared him to those in a position to help him achieve his goal. His initial research program included the examination of ancient Gnostic texts. This, though odd, was not without precedent. However, Solov'ëv went not to German universities, as had Vladislavlev and was usual at the time, to acquaint himself with the latest developments and investigations in philosophy, but to England and not even the universities there. Instead, he isolated himself in the British Museum's library. After this aborted study-period, his tourism within Europe and in particular his stay in Egypt surely must have sounded frivolous and, if scarce government funds were used, alarming, perhaps even outrageous. All of this could hardly have won him supporters within academic circles. His brief involvement upon his return to Russia in academic politics at Moscow University set him against most of his colleagues, even his own father, and earned him few plaudits there. He did at first have supporters outside or on the periphery of the relatively small university circle, though these too distanced themselves when he evoked what they viewed as unusual and unacceptable stances. We saw, for example, the Church's reluctance to publish his *Lectures on Divine Humanity* as soon as he veered in the direction of unorthodox beliefs. That he finally abandoned all hope for a professorship in both Moscow and St. Petersburg shows merely that on some level he finally recognized its futility.

Solov'ëv's war on Comtean positivism, even when coupled with assistance from other, notably clerical, quarters, also proved pointless if viewed in the short term. The positivist rejection of metaphysics could not, of course, find a receptive audience among those at Russia's theological institutions, and so Solov'ëv's efforts in this regard were unnecessary, even superfluous. However, his espousal of a metaphysical all-unity with its subtle pantheistic implications, however adamantly he denied them, prevented any embrace of his system among the first estate. Given the sharp and implacable divergence of his philosophical stand from positivism, it comes as no surprise that his criticism fell initially on deaf ears within Russia's educated society, the radical intelligentsia most of all. The basic outlines of Comte's positivism, a dismissal of metaphysics and a belief in a progressive philosophy of history through stages leading to the apotheosis of natural science, continued to hold sway even in the philological and juridical faculties through the 1880s in Moscow.[1]

With his hopes of a highly visible professorship in either Moscow or St. Petersburg dashed and with it the transformation of Russia's religious consciousness by way of the classroom and academic publications, Solov'ëv in the early 1880s sought to bring about such a change through the role of a public intellectual. Although his one-sided struggle against positivism had failed to win immediate and decisive battles, his efforts did eventually bear fruit among a receptive, though, selective, audience in the younger generation and the following one – some within the philosophical community and some within the poetic. Like the early Solov'ëv, his successors emphasized grand schemes over detailed philosophical analysis.

[1] Putnam 1977: 29.

We need not search long and hard to find evidence of the early Solov'ëv's influence even if his messianic hopes proved to be delusive. True, many, indeed most, of these disciples invoked Kant's name as he did, but their Kant was not the Kant of the "First Critique." Few exhibited any interest in the natural sciences, particularly the latest developments in theoretical physics. Certainly none had the patience to probe the intricacies of the "Transcendental Deduction," and none pondered over any perceived deficiencies in Kant's "Refutation of Idealism." Instead, some – if they gave it any thought at all – simply accepted, as it were, from the early Solov'ëv the approach that the only avenue out of a Cartesian skepticism was ultimately a sheer faith allegedly grounded in a metaphysical intuition, thereby revealing their debt to Solov'ëv's fideism. For example, both the major Russian neo-Kantian Aleksandr Vvedenskij, Vladislavlev's successor at St. Petersburg University, and Sergej Trubeckoj, a professor at Moscow University and a long-time friend of Solov'ëv's, hailed faith as a major factor in cognition: "We must admit," Trubeckoj remarked, "that a *recognition* of the reality of external appearances and in particular of those independent living entities for which these appearances exist also independently of us – the recognition of such a reality has a valid logical foundation neither in our senses, taken by themselves, nor in our *abstract* thinking: it is an act of faith – a third factor in our cognition. That which is, consequently, is determined to be not just an object of the senses and of thought, but also *an object of faith*."[2] Surely, we cannot simply assume the "faith" that Trubeckoj mentions here and in many, many other passages is analogous, let alone equivalent, to religious belief. Nevertheless, if these Russian philosophers found it so easy to appeal to a vaguely described "faith" to escape a Cartesian solipsism, how much easier must it be to appeal to "faith," i.e., a non-empirical faculty, to posit the existence of God, immortality and the soul. Indeed, Trubeckoj himself remarks that there is no "impassable abyss" between the two "faiths," since both have the same object, that which is.[3] Similarly, Vvedenskij proclaimed that to accept the existence of a non-subjective world as truly existing can only be done on the basis of an "unprovable faith."[4]

And then there were some such as Lev Lopatin, a close friend of Solov'ëv's since childhood, who also gave far more prominence to the role of faith at the expense of reason than that found in all mainstream Western philosophical systems. In addition, it can be hard to distinguish Lopatin's position from pantheism in that he, like Solov'ëv in the *Critique of Abstract Principles*, held that everything is contained in, or an attribute of, God.[5] Lopatin also shared other tenets with the early Solov'ëv. That Lopatin, and others for that matter, failed to follow Solov'ëv's later philosophical trajectory is clear from a prominent disagreement that erupted between the two concerning the latter's explicit denial of the substantiality of the ego cogito, a position that Lopatin could not abide. Since everything is in God and, therefore,

[2] Trubeckoj 1994: 651.

[3] Trubeckoj 1994: 668.

[4] Vvedenskij 1917: 319.

[5] Lopatin 1911. vol. 1: 407.

a part of God, it comes as no surprise that something of God is in everything. God as spirit means everything is to some extent spiritual. For Lopatin, this deduction took the form of a panpsychism in which everything is an expression of a "free" force moving it along towards a teleological goal.

Another aspect of this influence – arguably its most interesting – revealed itself in the anti-scientism of many of those who came to philosophical maturity in the first two decades following Solov'ëv's death. Particularly notable in this regard was Nikolaj Berdjaev, who, like Solov'ëv, opposed applying scientific methods outside the scientific realm. Far more adamantly than Solov'ëv, Berdjaev rejected reason, logic and systemization. He viewed science as providing only relative information, whereas the metaphysics provided by his subjective, intuitionist thinking provided values. In the age-old controversy between faith and reason, Berdjaev squarely positioned himself on the side of the former.

There were others within Russian philosophy who came under Solov'ëv's spell, so many in fact that the early Solov'ëv's philosophy exerted the dominant influence on the way in which Russian philosophy was conducted until it was silenced with the consolidation of the Bolshevik regime. Certainly, it would not be an exaggeration to say that Solov'ëv's place in his country's intellectual history is univocal, that he "started a new philosophical tradition in Russian thought."[6] However, Solov'ëv's influence was also quite pronounced among an emerging artistic group, the symbolists Aleksandr Blok, Andrej Belyj, Georgij Chulkov and of course Solov'ëv's own nephew Sergej.[7] What they saw in Solov'ëv's mystical compositions naturally was what each wished to see, but there genuinely was much to inspire them. What interested them most in Solov'ëv was not the very elements of his philosophy we have been examining here, but his writings on Sophia, his poetry and his account of a future apocalypse. Such was the interest in and influence of the symbolists' reading of Solov'ëv that even today do we rarely see Solov'ëv's thought presented not bearing the stamp of their concerns.[8]

Make no mistake, though, Solov'ëv, for his part, was not consistently anti-scientistic and certainly not opposed to using reason when it suited his needs even at the time of his "Philosophical Principles." Berdjaev famously contrasted the "day" Solov'ëv with the "night" Solov'ëv.[9] There is much to be said in support of this, provided it is understood that the "night" Solov'ëv, Solov'ëv the mystic and irrationalist, appears not only in his poetry but is intermingled with the "day" Solov'ëv to various

[6] Evlampiev 2003: 77.

[7] Smith correctly notes: "Symbolism, sophiology, neo-idealism, humanism, neo-Leibnizianism, and many others, all claimed him as their own, and developed his ideas in directions that he could barely have foreseen." Smith 2011: 277.

[8] It is difficult to disagree with Kornblatt who writes: "What is more curious is that we, to this day, tend to read Solov'ëv through the symbolists' eyes showing interest in his ethics and social philosophy only with difficulty." Kornblatt 1996: 70. For a more complete depiction of the symbolists' debt to Solov'ëv, see Cioran 1977: 89–120.

[9] Berdjaev 1911: 357.

degrees even in his early philosophical writings. In these, as Berdjaev recognized, "rational philosophy and rational theology predominate over the mystical."[10]

Why did Russian philosophers, particularly Solov'ëv, appeal to an explicitly religious outlook with metaphysical answers with an abandonment of reason and empirical science? Just what was the philosophical basis for their rejection of positivism? What was it in positivism that alarmed them? Was there a neglected alternative between sheer fideism and scientism both as a general outlook as well as in terms of questions Solov'ëv posed? Finally, even if we regard Solov'ëv's project with its introduction of some intellectual intuition and an all-unity as misguided and unnecessary, does this mean it is an unmitigated failure and his philosophical thought delusional?

Already in *The Crisis*, Solov'ëv indicated that his opposition to modern philosophy stemmed from its reliance on *personal* reason. Such philosophy is the handiwork of *separate* individuals.[11] Given his criticism of abstraction, of abstract principles, this alone would be sufficient to condemn it. However, the underlying basis for this condemnation is the subjectivism and the relativism he sees entailed by it. Solov'ëv, on the same pages, claims that in true art artists relinquish their individuality and utilize their "ecstatic inspiration." The less of the personal element, the greater is the artistic worth of the creation. The same holds for philosophy: What the early Solov'ëv ultimately fears is the relinquishing of objective truth, positivism being the most recent and most consistent expression of this relativism. "The basic principle, or essence, of positivism consists in the fact that, besides observable phenomena as external facts, nothing exists for us, and that the relative knowledge of these phenomena therefore constitutes the sole actual content of human consciousness."[12]

On the other hand, Solov'ëv was no seeker of either a philosophically-informed natural science or a scientifically-informed philosophy. With characteristic youthful impatience, he could brook no excuse to wait for science's gradual asymptotic approach to objectivity when religious belief presented itself as having obtained truth from the outset and without effort. In this, he hastily dismissed Kant's lesson that objectivity is secured by *a priori* laws characterized by universality and necessity. In fact, as we saw when discussing *The Crisis* Solov'ëv did not even see this "lesson," being indebted as he was throughout his early writings to an interpretation of Kant drawn primarily from Schopenhauer. Furthermore, despite being enamored with Plato, Solov'ëv forgot Plato's position, which taught that mathematics provides just those qualities and provides the basis of pure natural science. Such a strategy avoids the relativism inherent in psychologism and a psychological reading of Kant's "First Critique." The point, though, is that if we take Kant's concern for the *a priori* conditions of the possibility of experience to mean the possibility of natural science, i.e., "experience" to be understood as physics, we eliminate a physiological or psychological interpretation of our philosophical investigations. We dispense

[10] Berdjaev 1911: 356.

[11] Solovyov 1996: 12 and 13; PSS, vol. 1: 39 and 40.

[12] Solovyov 1996: 167; PSS, vol. 1: 160.

thereby with not only talk of the psychophysical structure of the cognizing subject but also of the substantiality of that subject and come to a common ground though not a full concurrence with the later Solov'ëv. To the detriment of Russian philosophy, the early Solov'ëv clearly did not take this approach nor did his disciples.

Rather than an outright appeal at the start to a religiously-inspired faith, we saw in our discussion of *The Crisis* that Solov'ëv portrayed the history of modern philosophy as a *rational*, albeit dialectical, process culminating after having exhausted all of its logically possible options in the abandonment of "abstract formalism" and a turn to what we have to presume is to Solov'ëv's mind the only *rational* recourse, namely metaphysics. Not only does Solov'ëv not abjure reason but he upholds the role of universal forms in experience and the need to initiate an ontology of reality with a description of it as given in consciousness. Such bald proclamations would certainly not sound alarming to the student of twentieth century European thought.

Certainly, there is a great deal in Solov'ëv's philosophy that must be discarded as plainly groundless and fanciful. It is to his credit, however, to have recognized at an early age both the problematic status of Kant's concept of an essentially uncognizable thing in itself and our apparently quintessential human need for metaphysics. Regrettably, he lacked tenacity and the perseverance to provide extended treatments of these topics. Deeply troubled by a fear of relativism and ultimately of skepticism, Solov'ëv held that all knowledge in the final analysis rests on an acceptance of some metaphysical tenets. Yet he recognized that although none of the modern philosophies alone was satisfactory each had some merit that could not be discounted. While his proposed solution, an integration of all empirical experience, reason and metaphysics that he called "integral knowledge" remained an unrealized project, indeed a dismal failure, the aspiration must be deemed meritorious.

In the realm of ethical and political theory, Chicherin and subsequently others rightly pointed out the deficiencies and superficiality in Solov'ëv's pronouncements. Nonetheless, in upholding the spirit of Kant's approach tempered by the realization that our conscience has only a regulative but no positive function, Solov'ëv took a step beyond Kant in the direction of levelheadedness. Furthermore, Solov'ëv recognized that individual moral saintliness requires a social system that cooperates to bring this about. Hence, the project to make individuals moral must be accompanied by one aimed at society as well, for if the latter remains incomplete so will the former. We should also not forget Solov'ëv's pioneering belief in including the animal kingdom within the moral sphere, that animals should not simply be treated as means to human ends.

Arguably of greatest philosophical significance, however, is Solov'ëv's concern with objectivity, i.e., with the sense of objectivity that the intentional objects of our perception have. On what basis do we say that the perceived objects of my senses exist independently of our sensations of them? Solov'ëv persisted with this question through his early years thereby demonstrating the centrality of this issue in his philosophy. We saw that he recognized that the objectification of the intentional object of consciousness, that it temporally endures apart from consciousness, cannot be due to sense data, or at least not alone. It must be the result of some other, independent activity on the part of the subject. In his most extensive treatment of this

topic, such as it was, he ascribed the function in his *Critique* first to the imagination and also then to faith without specifying exactly how either can achieve such sense bestowal. Nevertheless, Solov'ëv is to be applauded for recognizing the issue despite its obvious shortcomings. Not the least of these shortcomings is that by relying on imagination and/or faith, Solov'ëv opens himself to the charge of subjectivism, which he surely would have disavowed upon reflection. He apparently did not realize that the objectivity of mathematical truths and those of contingent facts concerning the world are different.

We have pointed out a number of other features in Solov'ëv's thought that would become prominent concerns in European philosophy in the years to come, such as the intentionality of consciousness and, of course, his opposition to any form of reductionism, which was so characteristic of the positivism of his day. Other scholars have indicated, however fancifully, additional similarities.[13] There can be little dispute, though, that in spite of all this, in spite of numerous glimmers of genuine philosophical insight, Solov'ëv passed smugly and without hesitation into the realm of metaphysics and concomitantly introduced ambiguities and contradictions. As with any philosophical thought from the past, the job in the present is to retrieve its living kernel, illuminating that kernel with others from the present as well as the past, thereby shedding light on today's questions and concerns. The task of salvaging the rational from the irrational in Solov'ëv's thought still awaits us, though the door is now open.

[13] Chubarov sees several other common points between Solov'ëv and Husserl including a prescient "phenomenological reduction" and a doctrine of eidetic intuition in the former. If only this were true! In any case, many of Chubarov's other claims are well taken. See Chubarov 1998: 102–106.

Appendix 1

Comtean Positivism in Russia

In studying any philosopher, the ideas expressly opposed are often more illuminating than an investigation of the positive formative influences. In Solov'ëv's case, the paramount adversary, particularly during his early years, was Auguste Comte's intellectual progeny "positivism," with its rejection of metaphysics and its emphasis on natural science as the paradigm of human knowledge. Regrettably, we have scant information as to precisely why Solov'ëv chose to combat Comtean positivism and not, say, materialism – a more obvious target – so strongly in his *magister*'s thesis. Was his opposition purely intellectually motivated, or was there more to it than that, something having to do with Comte's sociological views? Could it even be that Solov'ëv saw in Comte's attempted establishing of a new positivistic clergy, expressly based on a religious model, a threat to his own quasi-messianic ambitions? Whatever the case, he must have felt positivism loomed as a threat, a threat at least within Russia if not on the world stage. However, there are no polemics against any Russian positivists in Solov'ëv's early publications. This in itself is not surprising in that theses and dissertations were implicitly intended to raise the level of intellectual discourse in Russia vis-à-vis the West by engaging with it at a time when Russians themselves considered their level to be inferior. Although with measured qualification we can agree with Walicki that positivism played neither a dominant nor even a large role in Russian intellectual life at large at the time, by no means was it an unknown doctrine, that it had no adherents, nor that it was uniformly dismissed.[1] What, then, was the position of Comtean positivism in Russia in the early 1870s, and was Solov'ëv alone in sensing a threat from it?

The first references in Russia to Comte occurred already in the 1840s by the literary critic Valerian Majkov (in 1845) and the economist Vladimir Miljutin

[1] Walicki 1979: 349. More accurately, Poole remarks that positivism "was remarkably pervasive in Russia from the middle of the nineteenth century." Poole 1999: 319–320.

T. Nemeth, *The Early Solov'ëv and His Quest for Metaphysics*, International Archives of the History of Ideas/Archives internationales d'histoire des idées 212,
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(in 1847).[2] However, it was only in the comparatively more relaxed atmosphere of the late 1850s and 1860s that Comtean positivism attracted widespread attention first among those on the political left, such as Dmitrij Pisarev, and then, as a reaction, in the early 1870s by critical scholars, broadly speaking on the right. Majkov (1823–1847), who studied in the law faculty at St. Petersburg University and was a close friend of the young Dostoyevsky's, in his first significant publication "Obshchestvennye nauki v Rossii" ("The Social Sciences in Russia") from 1845 urged the development of a new critical analysis. This was to be a new independent discipline (*nauka*) concerned with society that he called a "philosophy of society" and "social philosophy," but, significantly, not "sociology."[3] Although much of the article is infused with the spirit of Comtean positivism, the founder of positivism is actually mentioned only once and then only in a footnote in the incomplete published version. Majkov's qualified sympathy with positivism stemmed from his opposition to the introduction of metaphysics into social theory. Unlike Belinskij, Majkov never embraced nor even was influenced by classical German Idealism. For Majkov, the Germans, presumably including Kant, constructed their systems without consulting the facts of reality. However, in a fragment only posthumously published Majkov clarified his stand that Comte's synthesis was ultimately disappointing.[4]

Belinskij's name hardly needs an introduction to the student of nineteenth century Russian cultural and intellectual history. Although arguably the most distinguished literary critic of the era, his interests were wide-ranging and included following developments in contemporary European philosophy. Unfortunately, his ignorance of German made him rely on others to provide summaries and translations from that language. Nevertheless, he remained at least for a time enthralled with Hegel, particularly his philosophy of history. And it is from this perspective that he viewed Comte, with whose ideas Belinskij could acquaint himself in the French press. Yet, he best summarized his attitude towards positivism in a letter dated 17 February 1847 to V. P. Botkin: "Comte is a remarkable man; but that is a far cry from saying he is the founder of a new philosophy! One needs genius for that, and there is not a trace of it in Comte. This man is a remarkable phenomenon as a reaction to theological interference in science, and an energetic, troublesome and disturbing reaction at that. Comte is a man rich in knowledge and of great intellect, but his intellect is dry. He lacks that verve which is essential to every kind of creativeness, even to a mathematician, if it be given him to push asunder the walls of science."[5]

Miljutin (1826–1855), who hailed from a distinguished family, – his uncle Pavel Kiselev was a reform-minded high government official during the reactionary

[2] Radlov 1920: 20. In an early work on the Legal Populist Mikhajlovskij, one writer, S. P. Ranskij remarked in a footnote that "the first popularizer of the philosophy of Comte in Russia was V.A. Miljutin." He also remarks, though, that Miljutin's article had little influence on his readership. Ranskij 1901: 101 f.

[3] Majkov 1901: 6. Majkov's piece originally appeared in the new journal *Finskij Vestnik*, vol. 1, otd. IV, 1845, of which Majkov was the co-editor.

[4] Majkov 1901: 88.

[5] Belinsky 1948: 491.

regime of Tsar Nicholas I and his brother Dmitrij a long-serving Minister of War from 1861 to 1881 – studied at St. Petersburg University and received a *magister*'s degree with a dissertation on the real-estate holdings of the Russian clergy. However, already in a series of articles published in 1847 Miljutin tipped his hand revealing his deep-seated sympathy with Comte's overall position. These were the first explicit exposition and defense of positivism in Russian literature. Of course, as an economist Miljutin had little to say concerning traditional philosophical issues, but he expressed virtually at the start his dissatisfaction with the contemporary state of the social sciences, believing, as did Comte, that they remained at the second, metaphysical stage of development.

To answer why the social sciences have developmentally lagged behind the natural sciences, Miljutin appealed to their respective objects, not their respective methodologies. All of the sciences utilize reason and observation. In political economics – Miljutin's primary concern – we seek general and unvarying laws just as in the other sciences. In the former, these laws explain how societies develop materially.[6] However, the complexity of social phenomena and their relative dependence on other phenomena make the emergence of positive scientificity in their study that much more difficult. There is also the issue that the social sciences lack the abundance and variety of phenomena that can be observed in the natural sciences.[7] Once and only once does Miljutin name the individual whose ideas he has been expounding, although he gives every indication that he wholeheartedly endorses them. Concerning the enterprise of reformulating political economics to emulate physics and chemistry, he writes: "There is nothing that could prevent the success of such an attempt. This is all the more so in that contemporary positive science in the person of one of its most remarkable representatives has succeeded in proving quite scientifically both the necessity and possibility of using the positive method for studying social facts."[8] And in the accompanying footnote he mentions Comte as this pioneer.

The intellectually quiescent 1850s was a period inhospitable to the dissemination of ideas that could be deemed irreligious, iconoclastic or liberal. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the Crimean War, which witnessed Russia's disastrous performance on many fronts, the wellspring of socio-political ideas that had been seething burst forth at least temporarily with the relaxation of the censorship laws. The chief figure to emerge at this time as the voice of radicalism was the literary critic Nikolaj Chernyshevskij (1828–1889). Despite his exalted position in the Russian intellectual pantheon during the Soviet era, Chernyshevskij was by no means a philosopher in the technical sense. Yet as early as 1848 while still a student, he noted in a diary that he had been reading the first volume of Comte's *Cours de philosophie positive* the discussion in which of mathematics he found unintelligible. Nevertheless, he liked the opening sections dealing with positive philosophy in general. Whatever ardor he felt, however, was tempered with the passage of time. While still acknowledging

[6] Miljutin 1946: 379.

[7] Miljutin 1946: 367.

[8] Miljutin 1946: 391.

Comte in 1860 as "one of the most ingenious men of our time," Chernyshevskij remained averse to Comte's initiating of a philosophical system, as he saw it, via mathematics and science.[9]

The most significant single exposition of Comte's views in the 1860s stemmed from another young literary critic even more radical than Belinskij and Chernyshevskij, namely Dmitrij Pisarev. In his lengthy article, which appeared over four issues of the journal *Russkoe slovo* in 1865–1866, Pisarev hailed Comte as "one of the greatest thinkers of our century."[10] Pisarev remarked that although in the course of the previous decade close attention has been paid to other European intellectual movements, Russian readers lack any knowledge of Comtean positivism. Hence, the need Pisarev felt for his present article. Obviously quite enamored with Comte's three phases of historical development, he was favorably disposed to seeing social development as intimately connected with the accumulation of knowledge, particularly as manifested in the natural sciences. However, this did not entail any abrogation of human individuality and of the role played by those who are directly involved with the problems.[11] Nor did Pisarev's overall estimation of Comte's philosophy of history deter him from finding fault with it in specifics. In particular, he found positivism to have a defective account of moral development, according to which morality is quite independent of the economic conditions and other spheres of knowledge. Whereas Comte saw the principal task of morality in the systematic weakening of egoism, Pisarev held that the highest level of moral development will be reached with the understanding of rational egoism, with the attainment of the greatest knowledge and practical know-how.

We need not enter here into a discussion of whether Petr Lavrov (1823–1900) merits being designated as a "positivist." However, as indisputably one of, if not the, most notable Populist figures in his era, Lavrov surely helped draw attention to Comte and positivism in general in 1860s Russia merely by discussing and referring to them in his own writings. Although he mentioned Comte already as early as 1859, this was only in passing, providing no basis upon which we can determine his familiarity with the Frenchman's writings. Certainly Lavrov's most detailed and noteworthy discussion of positivism prior to the time of Solov'ëv's *Crisis* was a lengthy article that appeared in 1868. Lavrov already at this relatively early date emphasized the epochal significance of positivism by writing that it had many supporters among the intellectual elite in France and England. Lavrov was arguably best able to disseminate information about positivism in Russia, for unlike many others at that time he was well acquainted with contemporary philosophies through the works in their original languages, be they German, French or English. In this way, he saw that positivism was not simply the position of Comte nor even a French intellectual phenomenon. He recognized the contributions of others, particularly of Mill, Spencer and George Lewes. Lavrov's understanding of positivism, therefore,

[9] Chernyshevsky 1939–1953. vol. 1: 166. Chernyshevskij's article originally appeared in 1860.

[10] Pisarev 1869. vol. 10: 1.

[11] Pisarev 1869. vol. 10: 93.

was sufficiently broad that he could say, whether justifiably or not, that it was his era expressed in thought.[12]

Notwithstanding his overall rather high estimation of positivism as a philosophical movement, Lavrov did express his misgivings and criticisms of it. For one thing, despite his esteem for the physical sciences he could not accept the positivist reductionism that attempted to translate subjective phenomena into purely objective terms. He also faulted positivism for its deficiencies in treating moral issues. This, in his view, stemmed in large part from Comte's own education in the sciences. Nevertheless, Lavrov applauded Comte's philosophy of history and its anti-metaphysical stand. German Idealism, too, sought the laws of nature and how history unfolded. The clear difference, though, lay in the latter's elevation of the religious and metaphysical above the scientific spirit and its achievements.[13]

Lavrov's fellow Populist, Nikolaj Mikhajlovskij (1842–1904), too, saw valuable features in positivism as he understood it, and in expressing these opinions he also helped disseminate positivism within Russia already during the late 1860s and early 1870s. Although sharply critical of certain facets of positivism – indeed many facets – Mikhajlovskij already in 1869 in one of his most famous essays, "Chto makoe progress?" ("What is Progress?"), held that its fundamental principles had received little recognition among educated people. Indeed, "a clarification of the fundamental principles of positive philosophy is, perhaps, at the present time, one of the most pressing concerns of the Russian reading public."[14] These principles are that all human knowledge is ultimately based in experience and thus relative, that it is impossible to reach some "essence" of worldly things and that natural phenomena are law-governed.

In another essay from April 1870, Mikhajlovskij devoted considerable attention to Comte and positivism, writing that Comte had laid out the necessary conditions for genuinely scientific work. "This is why it is natural that all previous scientific work necessarily satisfied the demands of positive philosophy, for otherwise those works would not have been scientific."[15] Of course, prior to Comte scientific investigators were not explicitly aware of how they were pursuing their work. In this sense, Comte merely stated what was implicit all along in scientific methodology, and thus positivism was not Comte's creation, his exclusive property, but a simple, though explicit, recognition of the scientific tradition.

Yet another literary figure at this time who shared many of the views expressed thus far was Sergej N. Juzhakov (1849–1910), who has regrettably received scant scholarly attention. In late 1872, he stated with Comte that "first, everything that is true of both inorganic and organic phenomena is true also of social phenomena;

[12] Lavrov 1965. vol. 1: 586.

[13] Lavrov 1965. vol. 1: 592.

[14] Mikhajlovskij 1906. vol. 1: 24. Mikhajlovskij deserves arguably the somewhat dubious distinction as one of the most verbose figures in Russian intellectual history. Why say in a mere 10 words what you can say in 1,000?

[15] Mikhajlovskij 1906. vol. 4: 96.

second, that the general laws of life that hold wherever life is manifested are also true of social life; and thirdly, that physical and organic laws when manifested in society are influenced by a new series of conditions and agents. Therefore, they bear their own peculiar and special character."[16]

Finally, we turn to arguably the most outstanding representative of positivism within Russia in the years immediately preceding Solov'ëv's *magister*'s thesis defense, a name we saw in connection with that defense – Vladimir V. Lesevich (1837–1905). Although his book *Opyt kriticheskogo issledovanija osnovonachal positivnoj filosofii* (*Attempt at a Critical Investigation of the Fundamental Principles of Positive Philosophy*) appeared only in 1877 and thus after that defense, Lesevich had already made a name for himself as a propagandist for positivism through a series of articles starting in 1868. In one of these, "Filosofija istorii na nauchoj pochve" ["Philosophy of History on a Scientific Basis"], he defended Comte's position on history as the gradual development of the human outlook and linked progress with intellectual activity. Lesevich expressed his open admiration for the positivist belief in the three successive stages of human spiritual development.

In his next article, "Pozitivizm posle Konta" ["Positivism After Comte"], Lesevich, of course, discussed the contributions of others besides Comte to positivism as well as some of their disagreements with each other and with Comte. More than this, though, Lesevich wished to show that positivism was not simply the newest French philosophical fashion, that it was neither parochial nor ephemeral. Rather, it was international in scope, growing and spreading. In this way, he tried to make positivism more respectable and acceptable to his Russian audience. Lesevich also there reiterated his fundamental thesis that positivism essentially was the natural, inevitable and ultimate result of all previous human mental activity, i.e., of science. Therefore, despite being systematically enunciated by Comte and certain others, it is neither a personal expression of beliefs nor a matter of some individual creative insight. Its appearance was simply a matter of time and bound to be laid out. In a subsequent article published in December 1873, Lesevich reiterated his position that "positivism is the natural result of all previous conceptual work and the inevitable culmination of the intellectual development of society."[17] With the advance of science and its popular dissemination, it is only natural that as people around the world anchor their very outlook in science rather than religion positivism too expands, gaining more and more adherents. Whereas his first articles on positivism stressed its philosophy of history, Lesevich now emphasized what he considered its inseparable link with science: "Positivism forms with science one indivisible whole."[18] It is merely a philosophical or conceptual expression of the scientific outlook. Each science, such as astronomy and chemistry, exists in a concrete form, dealing with, say, our particular solar system and a particular set of chemicals, and an abstract

[16] Juzhakov 1891. vol. 1: 4

[17] Lesevich 1873: 57. The major theme of this article is to show how ancient Greek philosophy was already inching towards positivism.

[18] Lesevich 1869: 27.

form, dealing with planetary bodies or chemical composition in general. In other words, an abstract science is the philosophy of that particular science. Abstract astronomy is the philosophy of astronomy, understood as a concrete science. The aggregate of these abstract sciences composes the system of positive philosophy, which is, therefore, the world-view consisting of all the philosophies of the sciences.

Unlike Solov'ëv, Lesevich rejected a notion of truth that spoke of an objective reality *an und für sich* apart from the cognizing subject. Truth is for him a conditional relation with validity serving as its criterion. Since we have no access to reality apart from observation and scientific techniques, no single phenomenon can be taken in complete isolation from others.

Although he wisely attempted to veil the political implications of his position, he found it difficult to resist the temptation to express, albeit cautiously, his convictions: Scientific laws may be discovered by an individual, but as laws of empirical phenomena their operation is for all to see. They are not to be taken on faith nor accepted by the general public through some pronouncements of an authority figure. No, they can be verified by all without the intermediary of a "priestly" class or an autocracy.[19] Several years after the Solov'ëv thesis defense, namely in 1879, his association with the Populist underground led to his internal exile to Siberia. Although allowed to return to St. Petersburg the following decade, he was kept under surveillance.

Arguably more indicative of the dispersive influence of a doctrine than a simple tabulation of its adherents is a tabulation of its critics and an assessment of their vehemence. Of course, we have seen the young Solov'ëv's thorough, if at times belabored, lambasting of positivism. Although Solov'ëv came from the right, the others mentioned above, albeit qualified critics, such as Lavrov, Mikhajlovskij and Lesevich came from the political left. However, Solov'ëv's was not the first even from his direction. Already in 1866, S. S. Gogockij (1813–1889) in the third volume of his massive four-volume *Filosofskij leksikon* decried what he considered to be Comte's reduction of human morality to the set of physical forces and laws. Comte, in his eyes, sought to explain not just our human biological life in terms of physical laws but also moral life. This, he could not countenance. Morality not only cannot be explained naturalistically, but owing to that fact its study requires other techniques than those used in physics. Moreover, Comte's division of human history into three periods is far from original and is, in any case, fraught with conceptual confusion.

Given the nature of Gogockij's remarks contained as they were in an entry for what amounted to an encyclopedia of philosophy, we cannot rightfully expect a detailed analysis of positivism. What is interesting is to compare Solov'ëv's treatment with others, particularly others from the same general direction and from within academia. Surprisingly, Kudrjavcev, some of whose lectures at the Moscow Theological Academy Solov'ëv in all likelihood attended during his brief stay there,

[19] "Lesevich chose to work for a democratic polity by attacking the ideological and philosophical pillars of autocracy." Vucinich 1970: 253.

devoted a talk to the topic of "religion and positive philosophy" in October 1874 and thus some months after Solov'ëv had already ceased attending classes at the Academy. For this reason, it is hardly likely that there was any possible influence from Kudrjavcev to Solov'ëv. The possibility of some influence in the other direction, however, cannot be excluded, despite the fact that the former never mentions the latter. Although the talk was not officially published until early 1875 in a more complete and re-worked form, it is only on that basis that we can presently judge Kudrjavcev's stance.

Contrary to Walicki's remark about the meager influence of positivism, Kudrjavcev explicitly stated that he was taking up this theme because of its "significant influence" within his society even though, he added, there is noticeably less sympathy for it among philosophers.[20] A look at positivism again raises the issue of the relationship between science and religion, faith and knowledge. And again its philosophy of history with its view of all previous philosophical systems necessarily culminating in positivism as the ultimate and truly rational philosophy reminds us of Hegel with his similar contention. But is it not possible, Kudrjavcev asks, that this alleged third period, with the intellectual hegemony of science, will not be followed by a fourth period in human thought?

Nevertheless, the question of particular interest to Kudrjavcev was whether Comte had given religion a fair assessment. Does it belong to a transitional moment in human history to be superseded and completely displaced by the reign of science? After all, it does not share the same set of objects as science and is not, contrary to Comte's statements, a cognitive method. It concerns itself with a unique series of phenomena that are inexplicable in terms of scientific knowledge, and we can and do speak of religious knowledge. Moreover, Comte is silent on the logical processes involved in his alleged three phases or moments, but in fact the same laws of logic and the same cognitive methods are employed at all stages of thought. "If, therefore, we have no right to call Comte's three spheres of cognition 'methods of knowledge,' then obviously we have no right to seek the bases to distinguish them within their subjective spheres. … The bases lie outside the subjective, in a distinction between the very objects that form the content of religion, philosophy and natural science."[21] Assuming there is a Deity and a super-sensible world that we can cognize, there must be a form of cognition corresponding to these objects, a form that is as different in character from sense cognition as these objects are from those of our senses.

Looking at Comte's philosophy of history, we find a distinct oddity. Since nature usually proceeds from the simple to the more complex, would we not expect the same in history, i.e., a progression from the simpler to the more complex and abstract? Yet in Comte's rendering, intellectual history unfolds from the most abstract to the simplest and easiest, viz., a limitation to the phenomenal world. And again, were someone to claim that religion or philosophy in general is doomed

[20] Kudrjavcev-Platonov 1874: 322.

[21] Kudrjavcev-Platonov 1874: 329.

to disappear, that they cannot be revived, this can only be accomplished by proving that their very essence precludes such resuscitation. History alone cannot provide this; it speaks of what was, not of what can or must be.

Kudrjavcev devoted scarce attention to positivistic epistemology. For him, that it espouses the impossibility of metaphysical knowledge, that only a cognition of phenomena is possible, is a conclusion, a purely personal opinion, in the positivist's mind, not one based on historical data. As such, it need not concern those involved in theology and metaphysics. Even though one moment or type of knowledge – religious, philosophical or empirical – may be predominant at some particular time, Kudrjavcev concluded that all three supplement each other leading to complete truth.

Another figure to arise against positivism was M. I. Karinskij, whose name we encountered in connection with the chair in philosophy at Moscow University vacant upon Jurkevich's death. As we also saw, he, like Gogockij and Kudrjavcev, came with a background in theology. Just as Kudrjavcev wrote his piece on positivism in apparent ignorance of Solov'ëv's serialized *magister*'s thesis, so Karinskij in an article appearing in October 1875 mentioned neither Solov'ëv nor Kudrjavcev! In fact, he apparently would have us believe that his is the very first article of its kind: "The so-called positive philosophy has already existed for several decades; not once has it been subjected to a critical analysis."[22]

Karinskij wrote that when thinking of positivism, one naturally first thinks of Comte. There are, however, others who are counted as positivists and whose views are often enough in conflict, if not contradiction, with each other in specifics. Any examination of positivism in general, then, must first ask what distinguishes it, i.e., the common thread among all its adherents, from other philosophies. Additionally, if we take its pronouncement seriously that it stands in stark opposition to all other philosophical directions, we must ask what distinguishes it from the others with regard to the fundamental issue of modern philosophy. Yet, just what is this fundamental issue? Karinskij, without hesitation or qualification, believed it to be that of the conditions, limits and validity of human cognition. Modern philosophy places it center-stage, and the solutions to other philosophical questions are seen as dependent on this one.

Positivist epistemology can unabashedly be said to be an empiricism, indeed the empiricism stemming from Hume. Seen in this way, empiricism forms the foundation or essence of positivism.[23] To be more specific, positivist epistemology consists of three theses: (1) experience is the sole source of knowledge; (2) human knowledge

[22] Karinskij 1875: 345. It should be remembered here that this journal was the house organ of the Moscow Theological Academy and as such should certainly have been accessible to Karinskij, who was at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy and Kudrjavcev at the Moscow Academy. Additionally, we saw in discussing Solov'ëv's earliest publications that the interval between the submission of an article for this journal and its publication therein was not long indeed, thus ruling out the logical possibility that Kudrjavcev could not have known of *The Crisis* when penning his talk or of Karinskij not being able to know Kudrjavcev's piece when writing his article. Rounding out our picture, another article in the December 1875 issue also dealt with Comte, mentioning – and nothing more – Solov'ëv only in a footnote. See Gusev 1875.

[23] Karinskij 1875: 347 and 349.

is restricted to the similarity and succession of appearances; and (3) scientific conviction must ultimately be based on particular observed phenomena. However, for Karinskij it was John Stuart Mill and not Comte who consistently elaborated this viewpoint. The latter's full position in this matter is unclear.

Karinskij now asked us to conjecture: Let us suppose that contrary to empiricism our cognitive faculties did not restrict us to appearances. In that case, we would have to grant that at some point such faculties would find a use, an object. If, as positivism asserts, the third phase of our development is represented by the hegemony of science and its associated exclusive reliance on empirical techniques, then we must suppose that a fourth phase will be associated with the correct employment of these other faculties. Positivism would, as a consequence, fall to the wayside. Here, we see a similarity with Solov'ëv in that both recognized at least the possibility of human cognition beyond what is given to the senses, Karinskij being more cautious in not directly affirming the existence of such a cognitive capability. Karinskij, for his part, was manifestly indebted to Kant's criticism of empiricism, though he refrained from an explicit and wholehearted endorsement.

Karinskij rejected the Comtean stand that the religious and the empiricist standpoints are directly opposed and irreconcilable. Again taking a cue from Kant, he found no contradiction between the two. Empiricism denies the possibility of any metaphysical cognition, but the object of religion is not known in the proper sense. It is believed in. Religion ultimately rests on faith. "Empiricism is concerned with the natural order of phenomena, whereas religious intuitions are directed primarily to a sphere beyond appearances."[24] When it does happen that religion aims at something within the phenomenal realm, this something is extraordinary, not bound by physical law, and as such cannot be an object of knowledge.

We see from this short sketch of Comte's impact within Russia up to circa 1874 that positivism was by no means an unknown Western philosophy. In fact, if we include a stark scientism as part and parcel with it, the real influence of the fictional character Bazarov in Turgenev's 1862 novel *Fathers and Sons* provides another example of the Russian recognition of Comte's views. While it was not directly responsible for either a revolutionary movement or a counter-movement, such as Slavophilism, Solov'ëv's choice to attack positivism was by no means startling. What was startling was the manner in which he launched his attack and that his thesis was approved and applauded by so many. In comparison with the patient and rather judicious treatment accorded positivism by others, particularly Karinskij, this contrast becomes all the more apparent. We find little of the patient and thorough scholarship of the latter in Solov'ëv's thesis. In hindsight, we can say that the faculty committee charged with advising on a successor to Jurkevich wisely chose to pass over Solov'ëv for the professorship, but perhaps unwisely gave too little consideration to Karinskij's nomination. The direction and content of Karinskij's later writings are a testament to this error.[25]

[24] Karinskij 1875: 354.

[25] See, for example, during the years under discussion Karinskij 1878 and his doctoral dissertation Karinskij 1880.

Appendix 2

Family Constellation and Early Youth

Unfortunately, Solov'ëv's father, Sergej Mikhajlovich, was notably silent on his pedigree. In a formal resume he curiously, though vaguely, noted that he originated from the *dvorianstvo*, Russia's landed class. However it came about, his father, Vladimir's grandfather, Mikhail Vacilevich, was an Orthodox priest of ethnic Russian stock and taught religion at the Moscow Commercial School. Despite his death when Vladimir was merely 8 years of age in 1861, biographers unanimously concur that the boy retained warm memories of his grandfather throughout his life and remained proud of his clerical background. Vladimir's older brother Vsevolod, on the other hand, found it embarrassing and shameful – attitudes undoubtedly reflective of their respective religious viewpoints and of their respective views of their own social standing. To support their positions, biographers invariably adduce the fact that Vladimir's major ethical tract, *Opravdanie dobra* [*The Justification of the Good*], written when he was already in his forties, bears a joint dedication to his father and his paternal grandfather. However, we could pose the question in rather blunt terms: Which came first – the dedication or the memory? That is, are the biographers correct, or could it be that through an act of filial piety on his part stemming from a general moral stand he came to treasure what few memories he could possibly have retained of his grandfather and in this way came to revere the person? In this regard, we should bear in mind that the dedication was also to his father with whom Vladimir shared neither a particularly tender nor close relationship. Following this train of thought, it is only natural, then, to infer that since half of Vladimir's dedication was to a man with whom he was not exceptionally close either intellectually or emotionally, then the other half of the dedication also may not have sprung from anything other than a Kantian sense of duty. Whatever the case, though, other family portraits concur that the grandfather was a pious, happy and gentle man.

As for Vladimir's father, much can and already has been said by scholars. He himself shortly before his death wrote an autobiographical sketch intended chiefly,

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but not exclusively, for his children. Here, we need mention only those points most relevant for our purposes. Sergej Mikhajlovich Solov'ëv, one of Russia's greatest historians and the author of an enormous, 29 volume *History of Russia* among other works, was born in Moscow in 1820. Educated first at home, his father Mikhail, after agonizing deliberation, permitted Sergej to attend a secular secondary school, a most unusual step for the son of a clergyman. Arguably, this was at least in part due to the influence of Sergej's mother Elena née Shatova, who herself coming from a family of civil servants, was actually somewhat averse to the first estate. In any case, Sergej at the age of 18 entered the University of Moscow, where he quickly took to the study of history. Afterward as a tutor to the children of a Russian nobleman he had the opportunity to travel abroad for 2 years. Returning to Russia, Sergej received an appointment at his alma mater to the chair of Russian history, a position opened by the death of his own professor Mikhail Petrovich Pogodin. Sergej worked on his *History* at a furious pace producing almost a volume each year until 1879, when he died at his writing desk in mid-sentence.

As an active scholar and historian, Sergej could not help but participate in the controversies of the day particularly that between the Slavophiles and the so-called Westerners concerning Russia's past and thereby, at least by implication, its historical mission. Despite a personal relationship with several of the Slavophiles and an initial attraction to their ideas. Sergej distanced himself from them in view of what he considered their fundamental ignorance of Russian and modern Western history. As the years advanced, he harbored an even more disparaging opinion of Slavophilism. According to Sergej, the only truly "scientific" approach to history is through a comparative study of homogeneous phenomena. He advanced a view, starkly at odds with Slavophilism, that saw the development of government machinery as equivalent to that of the nation. Indeed, some scholars have seen the influence of Hegel, particularly his *Philosophy of History*, in Sergej's championing of the central role of the state in Russian history.[1] Nevertheless, he made clear that he was never fond of what he called "abstraction." He acknowledged having read that Hegelian work and that the book made a great impression on him at the time. Nevertheless, he felt ill at ease in discussing broad historical issues divorced from concrete facts. There can be no question of Sergej passing on to his son Vladimir even a vestige of some supposed Hegelian legacy. Whatever Hegelianism flowed through Sergej's veins was so meager and diluted that there was no possibility of direct contagion from father to son even were the bond between them strong and vibrant.[2]

Of course, the relationship was far from that. Immersed in his writings, Sergej spent little time with his children and devoted even less attention to them. The family picture in this sense was surely not unique for the time. At home, Sergej clearly conveyed a domineering presence demanding the utmost respect from his children

[1] One such example is Anatole G. Mazour, who claims the influence of Hegel is obvious. See Mazour 1975: 117.

[2] For a somewhat different opinion that attempts to illustrate the influence of the father on Vladimir with respect to history, see de Courten 2004: 184–193. de Courten's discussion focuses, however, not on the transmission of Hegel's philosophy of history through the father.

toward their elders. Silence promptly ensued at dinner when the father struck the table with his thumb several times. Years later, Vladimir publicly put the best face on his father's severe and serious demeanor toward his children, but there is no denying that it surely contributed to the estrangement of the eldest son Vsevolod and that of a younger sister Ljubov from their father and from the family on the whole, rifts that never quite healed.

In Vladimir's case, Sergej's personal influence was neither positive nor negative, but essentially nonexistent.[3] When Vladimir had to resolve spiritual and emotional conflicts within himself, he could find no comfort or encouragement from his father. Vladimir would have to work through his troubles on his own without any paternal advice or consolation. We have it on Vladimir's own testimony that when during his early adolescent years he began to have religious doubts and ceased attending church services with his father, the devout Sergej uttered not a word of remonstrance or thoughtful argument in hopes of persuasion but contented himself with insouciant sneers. True, later in life Vladimir retrospectively interpreted his father's cynical indifference as an intentional pedagogical device, but it is hard to give much credence to this construal of the father's mental attitude. There simply is no evidence to corroborate Vladimir's contention that his father was purposely indifferent to his children so that they could in some incredible manner lift up themselves to become morally stronger.

Based on Vladimir's correspondence published after his death, a reader of the letters may get the mistaken impression that his lengthy letters home to his parents while he was traveling serve as an unmistakable indication of his warm feelings toward them both. Yet a closer reading reveals that these letters were not addressed to both the mother and the father. Contrary to the impression conveyed by their editor, E. L. Radlov, a distinguished scholar in his own right though prone to making egregious factual errors, who places both names in brackets as the addressees, Vladimir's letters home were explicitly intended only for his mother. Vladimir simply was not on a familiar basis with his father even in adulthood and with reason did not think his father would take much time to learn of his son's activities abroad. Nor is there even the slightest evidence that the father took pride in seeing his son in time succeed academically. On these bases, Vladimir's partial dedication of the *Opravdanie dobra* to his father should not be interpreted as a display of affection.

Vladimir's mother Poliksena Vladimirovich, née Romanova, came from a Ukrainian family with purportedly a touch of Polish blood. For some unspecified reason, all biographers are quick to point out that the eighteenth century Ukrainian peripatetic "philosopher" Grigorij Skovorada belonged to one branch of Solov'ëv's maternal ancestry. The relevance of this is certainly dubious, even if true, for whatever philosophy is, a disposition toward it is certainly, and perhaps most fortunately, not an inheritable trait. Moreover, the respective positions espoused by Skovorada and Solov'ëv bear little resemblance, except perhaps for a shared

[3] To be fair, we should note that Vladimir's nephew and biographer, who was named Sergej after his grandfather, was of the opposite opinion. Solovyov 2000: 10.

religious striving and a propensity to express these longings through poetry! Vladimir's maternal grandfather, Vladimir Pavlovich Romanov, a merchant sailor born in 1796, was away from home much of the time and died in 1864, thus 3 years later than Solov'ëv's paternal grandfather. Yet, oddly there is no dedication to or even much discussion of this grandfather in Solov'ëv's writings. If anything, it was this grandfather who led a life that seemingly would impress any young man. Vladimir Romanov, for whom our philosopher was named and who served as Solov'ëv's godfather, was imprisoned for 9 months due to his acquaintance with two conspirators in the 1825 Decembrist Uprising and years later participated in the Siege of Sevastopol during the Crimean War, in which he was wounded.

Strangely, few concrete facts concerning Vladimir's mother exist. Again for some unspecified reason, Solov'ëv's biographers have been discretely silent as to her year of birth possibly in 1828, although her death is recorded as July 1909, some 30 years after her husband's and nine after Vladimir's. Clearly, Poliksena, at the time of her wedding was young. In his memoirs, Sergej spoke little of his marriage as such, this despite the undeniable affection Vladimir's parents shared. Sergej undoubtedly regarded such matters as purely personal and hence private between his wife and himself. One's intimate feelings, however exemplary, were not considered to be a fit topic for disclosure, not alone discussion. Yet, Poliksena and Sergej enjoyed each other's company, attending religious services together on Sundays as well as concerts and the opera. Vladimir in this differed so notably from his parents: Despite his demonstrable love of poetry and classic Russian literature, he evinced no appreciation for music at any time in his life.[4] Poliksena, a brunette, noticeably bore little physical resemblance to her balding, one-time blond-haired husband but much to her son Vladimir, who was also swarthy in appearance. She basically administered, albeit with the aid of a governess, to the needs of her large household on her husband's modest salary and remained quietly in the background. In later years after Sergej's death, Poliksena continued to reside in Moscow with her two unmarried daughters Nadezhda and Poliksena. However, when Poliksena the younger moved to St. Petersburg in 1898, the mother accompanied her. Upon her death, the coffin of Solov'ëv's mother was transported back to Moscow to be interred between her husband and her son.

Any discussion of Solov'ëv's background and upbringing would be remiss without some mention of the Solov'ëv children's governess Anna K. Kolerova, who in addition helped with domestic chores. She arguably exerted as important an influence, if not more so, on Vladimir as a child than either of the parents. Although overall responsibility for the children naturally rested on the mother, daily interaction with the children was the concern of Anna. An orphaned daughter of a priest, she studied for some unspecified period in Odessa but entered into the service of the Solov'ëvs while still a young girl. As so often happens in such cases, Anna grew to love her charges as if they were her own. Certainly, her own religious feelings were

[4] This, I believe, can be said despite his remark to his cousin Ekaterina in a letter of 23 September 1873 that he is glad she will study music.

pronounced and may have also contributed in no small measure to Vladimir's sensibilities. Even after the children were already grown, Anna remained a presence in the Solov'ëv household, such as it was. After the mother moved to St. Petersburg with her daughter, Anna remained behind in Moscow with the unmarried Nadezhda and died sometime during the winter of 1902–1903.

By today's standards, Vladimir came from a rather large family with a number of siblings. One older sister Vera, born in 1850, married Nil A. Popov, a Russian historian and director of the archives in the Ministry of Justice. When he died in 1891 Vera lost what little *joie de vivre* she originally possessed and devoted much of her time and attention thereafter to charity work. Another older sister Nadezhda (1851–1913), like Vladimir and as already mentioned, never married. Although in her youth she reportedly loved the arts and knew how to enjoy herself, her later years were plagued with what may have been a form of clinical depression. Whatever the cause, family members would often find her weeping for no apparent reason. Still another sister, Ljubov, 4 years younger than Vladimir, was reportedly also of a chronic unhappy disposition and in later years a hypochondriac. Although she did marry, her husband's early death left her rearing a son alone. To add to her grief, the boy developed a sudden illness and died. Just as ill-equipped psychologically to handle money as Vladimir, Ljubov wasted her inheritance and like Vladimir relied on the munificence of others for the rest of her life.

Some 10 years younger than Vladimir, Maria, a Francophile, spent many years in Paris and like Vladimir felt an attraction toward Catholicism. As with Vera, Maria married a distinguished historian Pavel Bezobrazov, himself a champion of the rights of women and, remarkably, even of animals. It is to Maria that we are indebted for a touching memoir of Vladimir's early years. Unfortunately, she died from typhus on the road while fleeing with her children from the effects of the Bolshevik Revolution in St. Petersburg.

Poliksena, named after her mother, was the youngest of the siblings born 14 years after Vladimir. Although she published some poetry already in the 1880s, her talent, such as it was, remained largely unrecognized, and she spent much of her time during that decade engaged in painting. After a move to St. Petersburg she began to publish more under the pseudonym "Allegro" and moved in the Symbolist circles. Secondary literature is noticeably discreet except to say that she liked to dress in men's clothes and had what her nephew called a "masculine character."[5] She spent the years immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution in the Crimea amid disease and poverty working in a sanatorium. Finally managing to leave for Moscow with her companion Natalija Manaseina in December 1923, she underwent surgery there. Unfortunately, her health continued to decline, and she finally succumbed in August 1924.

Vladimir had one younger brother Mikhail and one older brother Vsevolod. Mikhail, born in 1862, came closest of the siblings to fitting the traditional image of "normalcy." He lived a settled life, earning his living as an unassuming secondary

[5] Solovyov 2000: 28.

school geography teacher. A devoted father and husband, Mikhail still found time to cooperate with Vladimir in preparing Russian translations of the Platonic dialogues.[6] His character was reportedly closest of the brothers to that of their father, and like the father had a keen sense of history. While he shared during the 1880s Vladimir's idea of a reunion of the Christian churches, Mikhail's interest in biblical criticism partially separated him from Vladimir. Yet like his brother, Mikhail died an early death at the age of 41 in 1903. His wife Olga thereupon committed suicide.

Vsevolod, born in 1849, is chiefly remembered today, apart from being Vladimir's brother, as the author of minor works of historical fiction. He inherited far more of his father's physical features than his mother's. As the first-born or perhaps because of his resemblance to his father, Vsevolod remained his mother's favorite even later when much of the family had turned against him. Vsevolod's decision to commence his career in St. Petersburg rather than Moscow was not received with encouragement by his father if the fact that the latter failed to provide any financial assistance is any indication.

To say that Vladimir and Vsevolod were not personally close would be an understatement. In adulthood, Vsevolod spoke contemptuously of Vladimir and his ecumenical religious ideas, saying that his brother one day "hoped to be a Roman [Catholic] cardinal." Whatever its origin, the enmity between the brothers certainly went back to their childhood. Vladimir's ill feelings toward his brother aroused considerable anxiety within him that, despite combative efforts to overcome, he just could not dispel. This, he frankly acknowledged in an early letter of 23 November 1873 to his cousin Ekaterina: "By the way, I do not want to go on about [Vsevolod], because I must say that, however bad this may sound, I simply do not love him. Try as I might and however hard I persuade myself that I must love him and that I do love him, I fail. There is in me some kind of instinctive antipathy."[7]

It must be said that the two brothers enjoyed distinctively different lifestyles. In addition to his eventually settled marital status with three children from a second wife, who was a sister of his first wife, Vsevolod enjoyed comfortable accommodations in St. Petersburg. Politically, his unabashed monarchist sympathies endeared him to the government and its increasingly important bureaucracy. Despite his flirtations with potentially compromising theological positions, including a somewhat short-lived affiliation with the Theosophical Society, Vsevolod publicly and prudently remained an adherent of Russian Orthodoxy. Vladimir, on the other hand, was an

[6] Unfortunately, Vladimir's sudden death prevented the fulfillment of his original intention to translate Plato's entire corpus. He succeeded in completing only one volume and part of a second. Mikhail, together with S. N. Trubeckoj, completed the work on a second volume. A projected third volume containing the *Gorgias*, the *Meno* and other dialogues never appeared. See Trubeckoj 1903: VI.

[7] This letter was originally published as part of Solov'ëv's complete correspondence in 1911, when many of the figures mentioned by name were either still alive or memory of them was fresh. Vsevolod's name is simply given as "X." Nevertheless, the reference is clear and made explicit in Remizov 1938: 161–162. Vladimir's feelings were shared by others in the family and by family friends. K. M. El'cova, sister of the Moscow University philosopher Leo Lopatin, speaking surely for her entire family wrote of her dislike for Vsevolod. See her essay El'cova 1926: 112.

ascetic, peripatetic thinker, who depended much of the time on largesse from friends for even the barest necessities of life. He shunned possessions and spent most of his adult life unemployed. He was quick to become emotionally infatuated with one female after another, but whatever these relationships were they more often than not came to an abrupt end. Whether this was a result of excessive zeal on his part, a certain awkwardness, or simply a realization that he could not provide domestic security is unclear. Notwithstanding the various and numerous "love affairs" reported by friendly, if not indulgent, biographers and his audacity to write about the nature of love in grandiose, even bizarre and mystic, terms, Vladimir never married or had a lengthy involvement with a woman.

We have little information about Vladimir's earliest years, most probably because there is little to tell. The fourth of 12 children born to Sergej and Poliksena, we can be certain that given his father's profession he received ample intellectual stimulus and likely had access to quite varied resources. Vladimir himself once remarked that his mother read Pushkin and Lermontov to him and that his father developed in him a love of the natural sciences. On Friday evenings, the Solov'ëvs often welcomed numerous distinguished visitors and professional colleagues from the university, whose conversations undoubtedly could have piqued a bright child's interest. Yet in spite of the relatively high social status of the Solov'ëv family and its apparent normalcy, later accounts from those close to Vladimir tell that he often daydreamed and acted out various fairy tales and phantasies, that in this role-playing he animated and assigned names to the familiar objects surrounding him. Nonetheless, it is difficult to ascribe great significance to such behavior from Vladimir's earliest years even if true. Many, if not most, children play with dolls or toy figures – whether it be "Barbie" or "G I Joe" and still become in adulthood fully adjusted and functional members of society.[8] Likewise, on the face of it there is nothing extraordinary in finding a youth of, say, 10 years of age experiencing a brief infatuation with a young girl. One long-time friend, though, years later went so far as to say that Solov'ëv spent much of his life even from an early age in a state of "erotic enthusiasm" without clarifying precisely what he had in mind.[9]

In a short autobiographical sketch, Vladimir wrote that at the age of 13 he already began to have religious doubts and that during the course of the next 4 years this skepticism evolved along the same historical lines of modern European thought, passing successively through rationalism, deism, pantheism and materialism. There is, fortunately, ample evidence in support of this general scheme. In a remarkably early letter to his cousin E. Romanova dated 13 December 1872, Vladimir stated that he rejected the faith of his childhood when he was 13, and in an even earlier letter of 18 August of that year he wrote to a friend, Susanna Lapshin, that at the age

[8] It requires quite a leap of logic to see this rather common childish propensity to name playthings as "the basis of one of Solov'ëv's fundamental philosophical ideas," as Velichko 1903: 12 writes. In a similar vein, Mochul'skij sees Vladimir's childish practice as early evidence of his implicit mysticism. See Mochul'skij 1936: 17.

[9] Trubeckoj. 1995. vol. 1: 581.

of 13 or 14 he was a zealous materialist.[10] Leo Lopatin, who knew Solov'ëv already at this time, wrote that he "was a thorough materialist – in his early years, however, when he was barely more than 15." Nevertheless, whichever of these chronologies we take for dating Solov'ëv's materialist phase we have a conflict with his autobiographical claim. For if his thought followed the historical path of modern Europe over a 4-year period, Vladimir would have arrived at materialism only at the end of that odyssey, thus at the age of approximately 17. In all likelihood, he framed and schematized his autobiographical claim to fit a historical pattern to which he was then attracted. Another biographer, Velichko, relates that once during this phase after an evening of passionate discussion with friends, Solov'ëv went to his room, took down the icons and threw them into the garden.[11]

As mentioned in Chap. 2, the most well-known alleged event in Vladimir's youth is one he himself related in his 1898 poem "Tri svidanija" ["Three Meetings"].[12] He spoke there of three visions or apparitions of a single feminine figure that he called "Sophia." Taking the poem literally, he took these visions to be in some sense three manifestations of one and the same aspect of the Deity. The first of these three visions, which a note to the poem tells us were actual autobiographical accounts, took place unremarkably enough in a church in 1862 when Vladimir was just 9 years old. The peculiarity of this is that if it were such a profound event in his life why did he never mention the incident in his writings earlier than the composition of the poem and why did the incident not have an impact on his religious convictions during his adolescent years? Moreover, according to one of his sisters, there was never any talk in the family about "visions" during Vladimir's youth. Thus, if the incident actually did take place, he must have kept it to himself – a most unusual silence for a boy particularly in light of the extraordinary significance he later supposedly attached to it. Additionally, the occurrence of such a profound religious experience is difficult to reconcile with his marked abandonment of religion during his teen years. We would at the least expect later autobiographical accounts of his youthful apostasy to include how he came to renounce theism despite what could, to a believer, be taken as first-hand evidence in support of belief. Nevertheless, we find not a word of this mentioned.[13]

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[10] *Pis'ma*, vol. 3: 73 and vol. 1: 158 respectively.

[11] Velichko 1903: 15.

[12] For the complete text of the poem, see Solov'ëv 1968: 170–179.

[13] Most biographers, for whatever reason, simply accept the historicity of the visions. Peyton Engel, for one, demonstrates no hesitation in writing that Solov'ëv had three and only three visions! See Engel 1996: 28. Mochul'skij concedes Solov'ëv's "erotic agitation" at the time but incredibly holds that the emotional state simply made him receptive to the apparition but did not cause it. Mochul'skij 1936: 18. Such was also Solov'ëv's own understanding of his visions. The attentive reader of the secondary literature will also note that he experienced, or reported to have experienced, more than three "visions" during his lifetime. That Vladimir spoke of three in this poem was dictated by his sheer fixation on seeing trichotomies everywhere. One often neglected "vision" is that recounted in the tale "Na zare tumannoj junosti" ["At the Dawn of Mist-Shrouded Youth"]. In this story, he tells of fainting while traveling by train to visit his cousin Ekaterina in Kharkov. A girl who saved him from a potentially fatal accident was transformed when he regained

Solov'ëv did not start his formal schooling until 1864, at which time he entered the same gymnasium attended by his older brother Vsevolod as well as their father. Before this time, Vladimir received instruction at home, particularly in modern languages. Although as already noted he had a reading knowledge of German, he never acquired practical fluency in it, an awareness of which may account for his failure to visit Eduard von Hartmann in Berlin when passing through there en route to London in 1875. We know from surviving records that he received excellent grades in all subjects except mathematics and physics, but even in these classes his grades improved towards the end of his gymnasium years. All in all, his results, taken as a whole, must have been outstanding: Upon completion of these studies in the spring of 1869 he was awarded a gold medal and his name entered on the gold board hanging in the hallway. His remarkable grades granted him the right to enter immediately a university or other institution of higher education without submitting to a qualifying examination. The difficulty in this picture is that the regulations in effect at the time stated that students had to be 17 years of age: In August 1869, Vladimir was only 16. Regardless of how he obviated this requirement – whether the officials made an exception because of his academic record or through some other unmentioned device – he obviously did not run into any bureaucratic obstruction.

consciousness into a feminine demiurge, and Vladimir experienced a certain ecstasy. The tale is constructed as if it recounted actual events that took place 20 years earlier. Concerning it, his nephew Sergej wrote: "I think it necessary to stipulate that only with great caution can we use this tale as an autobiographical document. It was written in 1892, when Solovyov was in an extraordinarily erotic mood." Solovyov 2000: 59. How we are to understand Sergej's expression "erotic mood" is again far from clear. And of course, by the same token we should "only with great caution" take the other visions as actual and accurate accounts.

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