

N. F. FEDOROV'S PLACE IN RUSSIAN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

By

Alexandra Medzibrodzky

Submitted to
Central European University
History Department

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Supervisor: Professor Karl Hall

Second Reader: Professor Alfred Rieber

Budapest, Hungary

2014

Abstract

In this thesis, I address the versatile interpretations that N. F. Fedorov, nineteenth century Russian thinker received in the first half of the twentieth century. After the fall of the Soviet Union, his name became associated with the term Russian Cosmism, but in the past this interpretation framework was absent from Russian thought. I reconstruct two debates at the turn of the century, between Fedorov's disciple N. P. Peterson and Prince Evgenii Trubetskoy, and Peterson and S. A. Golovanenko. These debates were about Fedorov's relationship to traditional Christianity and whether his teaching is "purely immanent" or it contains "transcendental elements". I argue that the positions available in these debates were later reproduced in Florovsky's and Zenkovsky's comprehensive works on Russian philosophical thinking.

Statement of Copyright

Copyright in the text of this thesis rests with the Author. Copies by any process, either in full or part, may be made only in accordance with the instructions given by the Author and lodged in the Central European Library. Details may be obtained from the librarian. This page must form a part of any such copies made. Further copies made in accordance with such instructions may not be made without the written permission of the Author.

Note on transliteration and translation

In this thesis, I use for transliteration from Russian Cyrillic to Latin alphabet the “Modified Library of Congress” system. This is the system used by a large number of libraries in the UK and the USA. I do not necessarily follow MLC in the transliteration of names, in some cases I use other forms which I felt more to be more widespread such as “Tolstoy” instead of the standard MLC version of “Tolstoi”.

Translation from languages other than English are mine if otherwise not noted. There is no complete translation of Fedorov’s works, only segments are available in English¹, therefore, I work from the Russian original and use my own terminology for translation in order to maintain consistency. In many case, when the English translation might be inefficient, I provide the Russian original in transliteration.

A translation issues has to highlighted because it has an important role in understanding the argument of this thesis. The Russian words *voskresenie* and *voskreshenie* can be translated with the same word in English: *resurrection* and the difference in meaning is lost. However, the difference between these two words is crucial for Fedorov. Therefore, I will translate *voskresenie* as *passive resurrection*, while *voskreshenie* as *active resurrection*. Young proposes to translate the second one as “resurrecting”, but I prefer *active resurrection* to emphasise the active character of the term in Fedorov’s teaching.

¹ The most comprehensive translation in English: Fedorov, N.F., *What Was Man Created For? : The Philosophy of the Common Task*. Ed. E. Koutaïsof and M. Minto. Honeyglen Publishing. L’Age d’Homme. Lausanne, 1990.

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Chapter 1 Nikolai Fedorovich Fedorov - life and ideas	6
1.1 “An Enigmatic Thinker” – N.F. Fedorov (1829-1903)	6
1.2 The Philosophy of the Common Task	9
1.1 The building blocks of the Common Task	15
Chapter 2: Sui generis deconstructed: similarities and links	24
2.1 General remarks on philosophical thinking in Russia	25
2.2 Possible influences on Fedorov	29
2.3 The crisis of value: contemporary ideas on death at the turn of the century	32
Chapter 3 Paradigms of past interpretations	35
3.1 Two debates from early twentieth century	35
3.1.1 “Fedorov or the Gospel?” – Debate between E. N. Trubetskoy and N. P. Peterson	35
3.1.2 Creation or Re-creation – Debate between S. A. Golovanenko and N.P. Peterson	42
3.2 Fedorov and the “intelligentsia in exile”	49
3.2.1 George Florovsky (1893– 1979) and Paths of Russian Theology	50
3.2.2. Vasilii Zenkovsky (1881-1962) and the History of Russian Philosophy	53
Chapter 4 The forefather of Russian Cosmism	55
4.1 “Did Russian Cosmism Exist?” – Some remarks on the post-Soviet phenomenon ...	55
Conclusions	60

Introduction

Nikolai Fedorovich Fedorov² (1829-1903) is a controversial figure in Russian intellectual history, though he is considered by many – both in and outside of Russia – to be one of the most *original* Russian thinkers. This does not only mean that he is original among other thinkers, but it also refers to the tendency to see his ideas as the superlative of originality. Originality (*samobytnost'*) itself is an important term in the self-reflection of Russian people, a recurring tendency to interpret and explain Russian history through the glasses of a *Sonderweg* paradigm, especially since the 19th century.³ Fedorov's originality is due to his extreme *synthesizing*: he combines religious *and* scientific ideas in an extreme manner and connects them together by multiple-paradoxes.

During the Soviet times, especially during Stalin, Fedorov was banned and more or less forgotten within Russia, as many other Russian pre-revolutionary thinkers: “[u]nder Stalin, silence; Fedorov never existed.”⁴ (Although he had enthusiastic followers in distance countryside areas, for instance, N. A. Setnitsky in Harbin.)⁵ After the fall of the Soviet Union when the vacuum left by the desertion of Marxist-Leninist ideology triggered the rediscovery of the pre-revolutionary Russian intellectual heritage – Fedorov returned to the bookshelves as well. This also means that he had to be – so to say – catalogued, he needed a *place*. This demanded the shift of focus from his originality to the search of a more generic framework in which he can be interpreted and in which his relationship to other thinkers can be discussed.

² There is no consensus on transliterating Fedorov's name from Cyrillic. I decided to use "Fedorov" instead of „Fyodorov" because George Young in his last book, *The Russian Cosmists: The Esoteric Futurism of Nikolai Fedorov and his Followers*, uses Fedorov and this is currently the most available book on Fedorov in English.

³ Although I do not have the space to discuss this issue in detail, it is not an overexaggeration to say that adjectives like *original*, *unique* became part of never-ending discussions on the nature of Russianness.

⁴ James Scanlan, "Nineteenth Century Revisited" In: James P. Scanlan, ed., *Russian Thought after Communism: The Recovery of a Philosophical Heritage* (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1994).

⁵ For more details on Fedorov's influence in the 1920-30s, see. Michael Hagemeister, *Nikolaj Fedorov: Studien zu Leben, Werk und Wirkung* (Sagner, 1989). 343-458.

Analysing Fedorov's place in Russian intellectual history, i.e. in a historical framework, in a diachronic manner contributes to the enhanced understanding of the working mechanisms of Fedorovian ideas. Fedorov's teaching, which became known as the *Common Task*, is at first sight seems to be a dense, impenetrable idea-jungle which is better to be left alone in its darkness. But jungles has their own mechanisms, and by looking at the way other Russian intellectuals interpreted Fedorov's thoughts, by reconstructing debates, we might arrive to a better understating about how certain Fedorovian ideas are interconnected and how they work together. It will also be clearer that Fedorov undeniably was a man of his age, and he was concerned by the same "cursed questions" as other thinkers of his time – though his answers might belong to the most radical ones.

Fedorov's place in the post-Soviet intellectual scene became Russian Cosmism which is a term that is hard to define. Even providing a comprehensive list of the issues and topics on Russian Cosmism would need more space than an MA thesis; therefore, I will only point out some issues that should be addressed in future research. My thesis will focus more on the preceding, non-Cosmist interpretations from the first half of the twentieth century.

In chapter 1, it will be necessary to provide some biographical information about Fedorov as his figure is not known enough in Western scholarship to expect familiarity with his life. Although it will by no means include a detailed biography because lengthy biographies are available in academic literature. The second part of chapter 1 will be devoted to the reconstruction of Fedorov's central idea. Presenting Fedorov's ideas is necessary not only because the reader might not be familiar with them, but also because what he might know might be not precise enough to understand the later arguments in the thesis. Furthermore, Fedorov's ideas were subject to distortion due to arbitrary selection and focus on some of his ideas while disregarding and ignoring other parts.

In chapter 2, I look at Fedorov's place in Russian intellectual history and argue that despite his *sui generis* character, he is deeply embedded in Russian philosophical thinking. This is the chapter where after making some general remarks on the term "Russian philosophy", I look at possible influences and sources of Fedorov's ideas. As I will show, *death* is Fedorov's central idea, therefore, I also included a short chapter on other ideas about death at the turn of the century both in religious and in scientific thinking.

In the first part of chapter 3, I turn to the first half the twentieth century. I reconstruct two debates from the years of early Fedorov reception. In this subchapter, focus will be on the period between Fedorov's death, 1903, and the 1917 October revolution. I single out those two debates because I see them as exceptionally relevant to the issue of Fedorov's interpretation in that period. Looking at the arguments developed in these debate help to deconstruct the wall of originality around Fedorov. In both debates, the "defender" of Fedorov was N. P. Peterson, one of Fedorov's closest disciple during Fedorov's lifetime and most enthusiastic propagator following his death. His partner in the first debate was one of the Trubetskoy brothers, Prince Evgenii Trubetskoy. The debate initially arose around the intellectual relationship between Vl. Solovev and Fedorov, but as the argument exacerbated, it turned into a question about Fedorov's relationship to Orthodox Christianity. The second debate started when S.A. Golovanenko, a young theologian, published several articles about Fedorov's ideas in the ecclesiastical journal of the Moscow Theological Academy, the *Bogoslovskii Vestnik* in the years 1913-14. The underlying argument of his criticism was that *secret*, i.e. transcendence is not present in Fedorov's teaching. I argue that in both debates, the central issue was how to interpret Fedorov's teaching – as an immanent or as a transcendental project?

In the second part of chapter 3, I include two interpretations from two comprehensive works on Russian thought after the revolution, from the émigré scene: I look at Fedorov's

place in George Florovsky's *Paths of Russian Theology*⁶ (1937) and in Vasilii Zenkovsky's *The History of Russian Philosophy*⁷ (1948-50)⁸ These two works are widely known in Russia and often used as reference books. If one goes to the Philosophy section in a bookshop, usually these two books can be found on the shelves. Florovsky and Zenkovsky present two differing interpretations on Fedorov's teaching in their comprehensive works about the history and development of Russian thought. I argue that the underlying difference is the same difference of opinion as we identified in the debates in the 1910s: what is Fedorov's project? Immanent or transcendental?

In chapter 4, I discuss the relatively new, post-Soviet interpretation framework that was assigned to N.F. Fedorov, i.e. the forefather of Russian Cosmism. It must be noted that this label bears a low level of interpretative benefit, as the term Russian Cosmism is too new and too vague to assist us in positioning Fedorov in the history of Russian thought.

It must be noted that I do not intend to discuss Fedorov's influence in Russian intellectual history. It would be a huge topic and there is already a great number of books on it.⁹

⁶ Georgii V. Florovsky, *Puti russkogo bogosloviia*. (M.: Institut russkoi tsivilizatsii, 2009)

⁷ Vasilii V. Zenkovsky, *Istoriia russkoi filosofii*. (M. Akademicheskii Proekt, Raritet, 2001)

⁸ Translated to French and English (George L. Kline) in 1953. See: "Zenkovsky" In: Mikhail A. Maslin ed., *Russkaia filosofiia: Slovar'* (M.: Respublika, 1995) 162.

⁹ The most important literature on Fedorov's influence: Michael Hagemester. *Nikolaj Fedorov: Studien zu Leben, Werk und Wirkung*. (Sagner, 1989), Svetlana Semenova. *Filosof budushchego veka. Nikolai Fedorov*. [A philosopher of the future era. Nikolai Fedorov] (M.: Pashkov Dom, 2004). Also two books by George M. Young: George M. Young, *The Russian Cosmists: The Esoteric Futurism of Nikolai Fedorov and His Followers* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) and *Nikolai F. Fedorov, an Introduction* (Nordland Pub. Co., 1979). On Fedorov and Andrei Platonov see Teskey, A. : *Platonov and Fyodorov: The Influence of Christian Philosophy on a Soviet Writer*. Amersham: Aveburg Publishing Company, 1982), but keep in mind that her use of terminology, for instance "Christian thinker" is ambiguous and not explained.

Chapter 1 Nikolai Fedorovich Fedorov - life and ideas

*“The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”
(1 Corinthians, 26)*

1.1 “An Enigmatic Thinker”¹⁰ – N.F. Fedorov (1829-1903)

Extensive biographical information about Fedorov is available in English, Russian and German, therefore, I will include only a brief summary of his life in order to give a biographical context. Familiarity with Fedorov’s life is also important because it is easy to confuse opinion on Fedorov as a person and on Fedorov’s ideas.¹¹¹²

N. F. Fedorov was born in 1829 in the Northern part of Tambov province.¹³ He was the illegitimate son of Prince Pavel Ivanovich Gagarin (1798-between 1858 and 1865) and Elizaveta Ivanova who was from a low-rank noble family.¹⁴ Fedorov’s childhood is shrouded

¹⁰ “An Enigmatic Thinker” is an article written by S. N. Bulgakov on Fedorov. First published in *Moskovskii ezhenedelnik*, 5 December 1908. Sergei N. Bulgakov, “Zagadochnii myslitel’ (N. F. Fedorov)” [An enigmatic thinker] In: Sergei N. Bulgakov, *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh*. T.2. [Collected works in 2 volumes] (M.: “Nauka”, 1993) 286-301.

¹¹ For instance, Lev Tolstoy highly respected Fedorov as a thinker, but could never accept his ideas.

¹² A good biography can be read in English by George Young, one of the most famous Fedorov researchers. In his books, *N.F. Fedorov: An Introduction* (1979) and *The Russian Cosmists: The Esoteric Futurism of Nikolai Fedorov and His Followers* (2012), he deals with Fedorov’s life in detail. (Although Michael Hagemeister calls our attention to be cautious with the biography included in the 1979 book because it “contains several mistakes.”) Hagemeister’s account about Fedorov’s life is particularly interesting because he also tracks down many “myths”, speculations and false biographical data in the literature, although in general the biography might be a bit outdated. In Russian, the most detailed and comprehensive Fedorov biography is accessible in Svetlana Semenova’s fundamental book, *The Philosopher of the Future Era*, which also presents the most up-to-date information. Despite these valuable works, it must be noted, that it is not possible to completely reconstruct Fedorov’s life, due to lack of information his biography will never be absent of black spots. For a very long time, it was even controversial when he was born.

¹³ For a long time, the literature dated his birth to 1828. The year 1829 is supported by a document, found by V. S. Borisov in 1985 in the archives of Tambov province. It is a certificate of baptism from 26 May 1829. The document is published in Hagemeister, *Studien*, 18.; and in Semenova, *Filosof*, 14.

¹⁴ An interesting fact about Fedorov is that he was from his paternal side the second cousin of Petr Alekseevich Kropotkin, the famous anarchist.

in mystery. They lived for a while on the Gagarin estate with his mother, but after a couple of years they had to leave the house. There is an abundance of theories and stories about the possible reasons why they had to leave, but none of them is proved by reliable documents. There is, however, a frequently quoted short text which was discovered on a piece of paper by V. A. Kozhevnikov, a close disciple of Fedorov, after Fedorov's death. There was no note on the paper that the text was about Fedorov, but Kozhevnikov recalled that Fedorov had talked about this memory to him in person, therefore, he was convinced that it was *Fedorov's* childhood memory:

I have three memories from my childhood: I saw a black, a pitch-black bread, which (they said in my presence) was eaten by peasants in some kind of a, in all likelihood a year of famine. I heard in my childhood the explanation of war (when I asked about it) which arose in me a horrible confusion: "in war, people shoot each other!" So, in the end, I got to know not that there are non-kins (*nerodnoe*), i.e. strangers (*chuzhie*), but that the kins (*rodnoe*) themselves are not kins, but strangers.¹⁵

It is an important memory because it already lists some of Fedorov's most important topics: hunger, war, alienation and lack of kinship. Fedorov was financially supported by his uncle, by Konstantin Ivanovich Gagarin, so he could attend the gymnasium in Tambov, and later could enter the prestigious Richelieu Lyceum in Odessa and study law. However, he never finished the Lyceum, he did not take his exams. (The reason for that is unclear.) Between 1854 and 1868 he worked as a teacher in provincial schools, mainly as a teacher of History and Geography. This is the period when he met Nikolai Pavlovich Peterson, who later became one of his most devoted disciples. In 1869, Fedorov started his career as a librarian in Moscow. First, he filled in a vacancy next to P.I. Bartenev in the Chertkov Library and from 1874 he became the "duty-officer" in the Moscow Public Library and Rumiantsevski Museum. He worked in this position for the next twenty-four years. In 1898, he was sent into retirement, but until his death he continued working as a librarian in the Moscow Library of

¹⁵ Vladimir A. Kozhevnikov, *Nikolai Fedorovich Fedorov. Opyt izlozheniia ego ucheniia po izdannym i neizdannym proizvedeniiam, perepiske i lichnym besedam* (M.: Tip. Imp. Mosk. un-ta. 1908) 55-56.

the Foreign Ministry. Fedorov died on 15 (28) December 1903 as a consequence of severe pneumonia. His grave, in all probability, was destroyed in the end of the 1920s.

We have no photograph of Nikolai Fedorov because he did not approve taking photographs of him. He “considered permissible representations of the face only in iconography and only for iconographic purposes. Therefore, he categorically rejected every single request to take a photograph of him.”¹⁶ Fortunately, the painter Leonid Pasternak, father of the writer Boris Pasternak, was a frequent visitor of the Rumiantsevski Library and once managed to make a sketch of Fedorov, hidden behind a tower of books.¹⁷ Later he used this sketch to create a painting, in which he depicted Fedorov, Vl. Solovev and Tolstoy talking together in a library setting. The title of the picture is *Three Philosophers*.¹⁸

Fedorov was famous for this erudition and intellect among the visitors of the library.¹⁹ He “knew perfectly foreign languages, although he never said a single word in any other language than Russian.” He was an efficient and enthusiastic librarian, as Linnichenko describes him:

He had a phenomenal memory. The most various specialists visited him in the Rumiantsevski Museum to ask for information and advice and N.F. Fedorov, after listening to the question of the inquirer, immediately – without consulting the catalogue – found a whole stack of books and articles on the topic. It was his responsibility to find books for library use and he brought any requested book at once because he knew the place of every book in the huge Rumiantsevski Museum.²⁰

Fedorov led an ascetic life. He was famous for giving his modest salary to the poor, he usually had cold meals, he drank often strong tea, but without sugar.²¹ But, as Young

¹⁶ Grigorii P. Georgievsky, “L. N. Tolstoy i N.F. Fedorov. Iz lichnykh vospominanii” In: *N. F. Fedorov: pro et contra*. T. 1. (SPb: Izd-vo. Russkogo Kh-ogo gum-ogo in-ta. 2004) 169.

¹⁷ Semenova, *Filosof*, 71.

¹⁸ See the picture: Hagemeister, *Studien*, 36.

¹⁹ There were even some “legends” about him. For instance, once he corrected a map of Siberia belonging to some engineers. The people did not believe him, but a couple of years later, the legend says, it turned out that Fedorov was right. See: Young, *An Introduction*, 19.

²⁰ Ivan A. Linnichenko, “Moi vstrechi s L’vom Tolstym” In: *N. F. Fedorov: pro et contra*. T.1., 219.

²¹ Nikolai P. Peterson, *N.F. Fedorov i ego kniga “Filosofiia obshchego dela” v protivopolozhnosti ucheniu L. N. Tolstogo “o neprotivlenii” i drugim ideiam nashego vremeni* (Vernii: Tip. Semirechen oblastnogo P-niia. 1912) 78.

highlights, his ascetic life should not be confused with him being “a gloomy recluse.”²² Fedorov frequently had, so called “meetings” in the catalogue room of the library, after working hours. Among his regular visitors and debate partners we can find the most prominent members of the contemporary cultural and spiritual life such as Lev Tolstoy, Vl. Solovev, Vl. Kozhevnikov or Afanasii Fet.²³

1.2 The Philosophy of the Common Task

Two paradoxes surrounding Fedorov compel me to discuss his ideas in more than a couple of sentences. The first paradox is that although Fedorov wrote constantly and extensively during his lifetime – he basically never published anything. The two posthumous volumes²⁴ that were edited by his two closest disciples, V. A. Kozhevnikov and N.P. Peterson, and were published under the title *The Philosophy of the Common Task*, soon became a bibliographical rarities.²⁵ The second paradox is that despite this *limited access* to his writings – Fedorov does have a significant history of influence in Russian intellectual history. Influence is always a controversial topic in research. Michael Hagemeister, a renowned German scholar, in his 600-page-long monograph on Fedorov, cautiously, but also convincingly, tracked down the possible afterlife of Fedorovian thoughts. The first paradox will be resolved to a certain extent in my discussion on Fedorov’s ideas on copyright. It is harder to understand the second paradox, especially as it is usually a challenging task to follow the “fate” of ideas in history. Sometimes it is hard to prove that a certain person was familiar with the ideas of another, often ideas “travel” through persons and are modified by each

²² Young, *Introduction*, 36.

²³ Hagemeister, *Studien*, 39.

²⁴ Fedorov N.F. *Filosofia obshchego dela: Stat'i, mysli i pis'ma. Pod redaktsiei V.A. Kozhevnikova i N. P. Petersona*. T.1. Vernyi, 1907.; T.2. M., 1913

²⁵ George Young in his pioneer reference book on Fedorov (*N.F. Fedorov: Introduction*, 1979) mentions some articles which were published in countryside journals and which expressed ideas similar to Fedorov, but they were never published under his name.

subsequent interpretation, etc. In Fedorov's case I can offer only speculations in this respect. I presume that his radicalism and extremity might have contributed to the survival of his ideas. If we look at the history of Fedorov reception, it typically involves one or two main figures (for instance N.A. Setnitsky in Harbin in the 1920s) who became intensively affected by Fedorov's writings and became enthusiastic interpreters and propagators of Fedorov. Also, Fedorov was a charismatic thinker and even though no one could *accept* his teaching in its entirety (maybe only N. P. Peterson), a great number of contemporary thinkers and writers, among them V.I. Solovev and Lev Tolstoy were *fascinated* by him and the idea of the central task and this fascination had its repercussions later. In any case, the consequence of these two paradoxes is that Fedorov's ideas were *heavily distorted* during their afterlife. As Michael Hagemeister highlights:

...often only certain parts were taken out and taken over from the project and they did not pay attention to the total context, especially to the ethical base. Therefore, Fedorov's writings became kind of a thought-mine where everyone at one's will and pleasure could dig out (and by doing so also distort) those parts which seemed necessary for them...²⁶

It must be noted that it is extremely *easy* and extremely *hard* at the same time to summarize Fedorov's central ideas. On the one hand, he wrote about the same thing *again and again*. This essence, this central idea can be summarized in one single complex sentence. On the other hand, he was expressing this one central idea in the most various contexts and it is impossible to list them all. In other words, it is consequent and constant *what* he is saying, but the *how*, the way he is expressing it – it is in the most colourful and versatile contexts. I attempt to deconstruct his central idea to the main distinctive, constitutive elements without attempting to put it into a concrete interpretative framework, for instance materialism or Christianity. I am aware of the fact that I cannot reduce the distortive effect of interpretation to zero. During my analysis, I will single out certain ideas from the whole corpus of Fedorovian texts and selection is also a type of distortion. However, I do strive for the just

²⁶ Hagemeister, *Studien*, 104.

use of the sources and I do attempt to single out the most important, the core ideas by Fedorov. Apart from the actual content, I also reconstruct briefly the circumstances of the first publication of Fedorov's texts and address the question whether it can be considered a "philosophy". Then, I will try to draft the main idea that is either explicitly explained in Fedorov's text or serves as an underlying idea behind the discussion of various topics. Fedorov's writings were published only posthumously, but some of his writings hints that his main idea developed quite early in his life. The following quote which he wrote a couple of months before his death in 1903 support this:

It has been fifty-two years since the birth of these thoughts, this plan which seemed and seems to me the most significant and simplest at the same time, which is the most natural (*estestvennii*) and not invented (*vydumanii*), but born together with nature! The thought that through us, through conscious beings, nature reaches complete consciousness and self-regulation, and recreates all that she destroyed in her blindness and by that fulfills the will of God...²⁷

A frequently quoted memory by Nikolai Peterson confirms that the idea about the Common Task were born quite early in Fedorov. Peterson met Fedorov for the first time on 15th March 1864 and his account of the meeting is the following:

While he spoke, N[ikolai] F[edorovich] gradually described a whole worldview which was for me completely new, and which demands the unification of all the people in the work (trud) of universal [active] resurrection (*vseobschee voskreshenie*), I became immediately imbued with the idea and still I am.²⁸

Sergei Bulgakov called Fedorov "the Moscow Socrates" and it is true that Fedorov did prefer sharing his ideas with other people in spoken word, but it does not mean that he never wrote down anything like Socrates. There are mainly three sources for Fedorov's ideas. He frequently sketched his ideas "spontaneously and unsystematically" on the side of newspapers or little papers. He kept part of these notes in a sack – which also served as a pillow to him, and he kept another part constantly with himself.²⁹ Another important source is Fedorov's

²⁷ IV, 165. I quote texts by Fedorov from the complete works of Fedorov published between 1995-2000. It has four volumes and one complementary volume (5). The Roman number refers to the volume, the Arab to the page number.

²⁸ Peterson, *Nikolai Fedorov*, 89.

²⁹ Hagemeister, *Studien*, 47.

correspondence, especially those letters which he sent to his close disciples, Kozhevnikov and Peterson. And the last one are ideas by Fedorov which were not written by him. During the meetings in the library, the participants of the discussion often took notes, and Peterson also mentioned in his book that during their private meetings: “when we were together, we did not only talk, we also wrote, that is, I wrote what N[ikolai] F[edorovich] dictated.”³⁰

The fact that Fedorov did not publish anything during his lifetime is often interpreted as a sign of his unlimited *humility* and *modesty*. This seems to be a logical explanation on the basis of what we know about his life and personality, but I would like to call attention to the fact that his reluctance to publish his works fits perfectly into his ideas about science, culture, knowledge and man. I do not question his humbleness, but I would like to complement it with his view on copyrights of intellectual products. Taras Zakydalsky highlights that for Fedorov “culture is the product of many generations. Hence, what one creates, according to Fedorov, consists mostly of what one has borrowed from others – one’s predecessors and contemporaries.” This means that things that are “not borrowed”, things that are truly original can be only a minute element of one’s work.³¹ Zakydalsky concludes that the practice of previous generations when one published under the name of famous people is still more acceptable for Fedorov’s logic than the contemporary practice that we claim copyrights of works for our simple, insignificant being when it is obviously the result of the works of several previous generations.³²

Fedorov’s ideas were published after his death in two volumes under the editorships of his two closest disciples. The first volume appeared in 1906³³, in Vernii (today Alma-Ata,

³⁰ Peterson, *Nikolai Fedorov*, 89.

³¹ Taras Zakydalsky, “Fedorov’s Critique of Nietzsche, the “Eternal Tragedian”” In: Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, ed., *Nietzsche in Russia* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1986). 121.

³² Ibid.

³³ According to Hagemeister the date of publication was 1907 because Kozhevnikov and Peterson dated the publication of the first volume to 1907, despite the fact that on the cover it is “1906”. Hagemeister, *Studien*, 51. The solution to the problem can be read in Semenova’s book: the technical copy of the book was already ready in 1906, but they had to wait for the actual publication until April 1907. Semenova, *Filosof*, 498.

Kazakhstan) under the following title: *The Philosophy of the Common Task. Articles, Reflections and Letters of Nikolai Fedorovich Fedorov. Ed. by V. A. Kozhevnikov and N. P. Peterson*. The second volume was published in Moscow in 1913. The editors also planned a third volume, but they never managed to publish it. First, the editors encountered financial hardships then in couple of years both of them died: V. A. Kozhevnikov in 1917, N.P Peterson in 1919.

On the cover of the first volume it was written – following Fedorov’s attitude to his own works – “Not to be sold” (Ne dlia prodazhi). (The second volume was priced at 2.5 rubels.) The editors in the foreword, “in Fedorov’s spirit”, renounced all copyrights and they asked the readers to spread the content of the book in all possible ways. Another important note in the foreword by the editors is that many of the included articles were unfinished and were only fragments, thus, they had to edit them intensively. Hagemeister interprets this note as basically meaning that the disciples heavily *interfered* with the body of texts.³⁴ This does not necessarily mean deliberate changes, rather serious editorial work, for instance putting together two separately found fragments. However, this still means that their editorial work might have both added and took away from the meaning of certain texts.

All in all, we cannot think about Fedorov’s *The Philosophy of the Common Task* as a work created only by him. Therefore, it is slightly misleading when Asif Siddiqi mentions in a footnote that “Fedorov devotees independently printed and distributed 480 copies of the original [The Philosophy of the Common Task] in 1906.”³⁵ There was no such original, the corpus of *The Philosophy of the Common Task* was constructed by Kozhevnikov and Peterson out of Fedorov’s writings. Young also highlights this in his book on Fedorov: “the book

³⁴ Hagemeister, *Studien zu*, 52-3.

³⁵ Assif Siddiqi, “Imagining the Cosmos: Utopians, Mystics, and the Popular Culture of Spaceflight in Revolutionary Russia” In. *OSIRIS* 23 (2008): 265.

cannot be considered the work of one individual, but must be viewed as a product of the collective efforts of three men: Fedorov, Peterson, and Kozhevnikov.”³⁶

Another issue to be discussed is how much Fedorov’s ideas should be considered to be *philosophy*. Unfortunately, the title of the two volumes does not help a lot. The title was given by the editors, although they were not satisfied with the word *philosophy* in it. It seems that the final title, *The Philosophy of the Common Task*, was proposed by Kozhevnikov in a letter to Peterson from 9th December 1904 we can read the following:

Concerning the title, I agree with You – it should not have the title *Works (Trudy)*, it does not express anything, but I also do not like (*mne ne po dushe*) *Philosophy of the Task (Filosofiia dela)*, N. Fedorovich would not have liked it either, for him the task (*delo*) was important not philosophy, not wisdom teaching (*liubomudrie*), not the love of only wisdom, something idle and Platonic, but wisdom itself which induces to act (*delo*).³⁷

Then Peterson proposes the following title: “A call for action, for the common and single (*edinyi*) task of all the people, of all humanity in its totality (*sovokupnost*)”! Apparently, this title was voted down by Kozhevnikov and they settled for *The Philosophy of the Common Task*. In his letter, Peterson refers to Fedorov’s aversion to the word *philosophy*. In the introductory text to chapter two in *Russian Thought After Communism*, it can be read that “what Fedorov called the “Philosophy of the Common Task” ... is to unite all mankind in these cosmic endeavors...”³⁸ In fact, Fedorov never considered and never called his ideas *philosophy*. There are some examples when he calls it the “project of the Common Task”, but this is rare. He never used the word *philosophy* to describe his own writings because he never seen them as *philosophy*. However, it must be added that he had his own interpretation of *philosophy*. Philosophy for Fedorov is first and foremost *Western* philosophy. Fedorov condemns the practices and products of Western philosophy because it only passively observes and poses questions – and usually the wrong ones. Therefore, philosophy remains

³⁶ Young, *Introduction*, 77.

³⁷ N. P. Peterson – V. A. Kozhevnikov, 9 December 1904. In: *Filosofiia bessmertii i voskresheniia. Po materialam VII Fedorovskikh chtenii*. Vyp. 2. 1996. M. 249.

³⁸ Scanlan, *Russian Thought*, 26.

on the “baby talk of humanity”³⁹ in Fedorov’s eyes. He referred to his ideas usually as teaching (*uchenie*), project (*proekt*) or call (*prizyv*).⁴⁰ Sometimes he used the word *supramoralizm*.

I reviewed the circumstances of the first publication of Fedorov’s work under the title *The Philosophy of the Common Task* and his attitude to philosophy in general. In the upcoming pages I make an attempt to reconstruct the essence of Fedorov’s work to orientate the reader and to have a better understanding of the debate that arose about Fedorov’s Common Task in the early twentieth century.

1.1 The building blocks of the Common Task

Fedorov’s main premise is that “[l]ife is good, death is evil.”⁴¹ The central idea in *The Philosophy of the Common Task* can be summarized in one sentence: the main aim is to (a) *defeat death*, i.e. (b) it is the *moral duty* of humanity (c) to *unify* (every living and dead generation) in the common task (d) i. e. to *resurrect physically* the dead (every single one of them). This is the central idea of the Common Task. Each and every element is interconnected by entangled nets of paradoxes and each of these building blocks is equally relevant. To clarify certain parts of the above sentence I will analyse the separate clauses that constitute it.

(a) Death, mortality and nature

In Fedorov’s eyes *death* is not unavoidable. It is a misconception that death is inevitable and it is every human beings fate:

Mortality is an inductive conclusion – it means that we are the sons of the multitude of dead fathers; but however large is the number of the dead, it cannot serve as a basis for accepting death unconditionally, because it would be the renunciation of the filial debt

³⁹ I, 394.

⁴⁰ Hagemeister, *Studien*, 59.

⁴¹ II, 136.

(*dolg*)⁴², of sonship. Death is a property (*svoistvo*), a condition which depends on causes, but it is not a quality (*kachestvo*), without which man would ceased to be *what it is and what it has to* (*dolzhen*) be.⁴³

Death for Fedorov is an error, an imperfection – we just do not recognize its true nature and this is why man cannot see that death is flaw (*porok*) and abnormality (*urodstvo*).⁴⁴ The main source of death is starvation and disease: “Death is the result of hunger, i.e. of not sufficient nutrition or the total absence of it. ... Death also comes from disease which is the more or less harmful or fatal influence of nature (death as decay and contagion).”⁴⁵ In other words, the final and real cause of death is man’s *dependence on nature* which is a blind, unconscious power of destruction: “[i]n fact, death is the consequence of depending on the blind powers of nature which [powers] affect us externally and internally and which we do not regulate, we accept this dependency, we surrender ourselves to it.”⁴⁶

The relationship of man to nature is complicated: Fedorov believes that man was not created by nature, i.e. evolution, but nevertheless man is part of nature. The appearance of man means the appearance of consciousness in an unconscious, blind nature: there is no purposiveness (*tselesoobraznost'*) in nature, man has to bring purpose along with himself. Thus, nature is a primary source of death, but there is *no intention* in nature, it does not “want” to bring death and destruction. Nature *needs* man, it needs to be regulated (*regulatsia*). Regulation, however, is not possible by man as an individual, it can be realized only by a unified humanity – but the unification of people is possible *only* if they have one common aim in front of their eyes:

...the blind forces... clearly do not demand from us anything else than what is missing from it, what it does not have, the guiding and regulating reason (*razum*). Obviously, regulation is not possible until we are divided (*pri nashei rozni*), but we are divided exactly because there is no one common task; could be the regulation and control of the

⁴² It can also be translated as *duty*.

⁴³ I, 258.

⁴⁴ I, 250-1.

⁴⁵ I, 250.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

blind forces of nature could become this great task (*velikoe delo*), [a task] which could and should become common (*obshchee*).⁴⁷

By analyzing the relationship of nature and man in Fedorov's writings, it becomes obvious that he had *unlimited faith* in the power of science, that he never even considered that nature might not be *tamed* by the power of human reason:

Man, as an intelligent being, has only one enemy – the wild forces of nature; but even this enemy is temporary and it will be transformed into an eternal friend when there will be no more enmity between people, when people will unite by familiarizing and regulating those blind forces of nature which punish us with death for our ignorance, as they punished not so long ago, in 1902, the island of Martinique with death because the scientists does not understand fully the volcanic processes.⁴⁸

In other words, natural catastrophes are the consequences of human ignorance and passivity, they could be avoided – the same way as death could be avoided. This clearly demonstrates Fedorov's unlimited faith in science and via science his faith in the unlimited abilities of human reason and action to *change the world*. Nikolai S. Trubetskoy noted this in a letter to P.N. Savitsky:

It seems to me that Fedorov's whole worldview is to some extent the equivalent of the positivist cult of Reason (*Razum*), but a deeply autochthon Russian form of it. The unconditional faith in knowledge and progress was typical for that era. In Fedorov's case this faith is so strong that it is on the same level as religion.⁴⁹

Fedorov, looking around, saw everywhere dissolution, division, alienation, separation... he seems to be particularly sensitive to the constantly rising entropy around us and he disapproves and is convinced about the reversibility of these processes. The aim of the Common task is to reverse the alienation of people, which was for him the primary characteristic of society as such.

(b) *Man, humanity and duty (dolg)*

From the aim to conquer death it does not follow inevitably that humanity should resurrect the dead. Theoretically, once humanity achieved immortality, it would be enough to be

⁴⁷ I, 40.

⁴⁸ I, 393.

⁴⁹ Nikolai S. Trubetskoy, "Iz pisem P. N. Savitskomu" In: *N.F. Fedorov: pro et contra*, T.2., 685-687.

content that future generations does not have to face death. But Fedorov's ideas is not only about conquering death. Conquering death is the *starting point* of his project, but the focus point is the *moral duty* that we have to resurrect physically past generations. The source of moral duty is that death is universal – that death affects everyone, no one can be exempt from it:

The sorrow (*skorb'*) felt by sons over the death of their fathers is really a global phenomenon because death, as the law of blind nature (or, more precisely, its unavoidable accident (*sluchainost'*), could not not induce deep pain in the being which came to consciousness, in the being through whom it is possible and it is evitable to realize the transition from the world of blind nature into a world where reason rules and where there is no place for death. This true world sorrow is a world phenomenon in an objective sense as well, in the sense that death is universal (*vseobshchaia*); and also in the subjective sense, in so far as the grief (*pechal'*) felt over the death of fathers is universal.⁵⁰

The immortality of humanity cannot be separated from the mortality of man. By procreation, by having children, the species lives on, but the individual is doomed to die. Fedorov believes that humanity should realize that birth is nothing more than the seizure of the life of the fathers, of previous generations. Real immortality, the immortality of the individual can be achieved only by resurrecting the fathers – they are co-dependent. One cannot be realized without the other. It must be noted that while birth is usually seen as something natural and normal, for Fedorov birth is part of nature, therefore, it belongs to blind nature just as much as death because it lacks consciousness: “For nature, which is transformed from unconsciousness to consciousness, [active] resurrection is as indispensable and the most natural thing (*estesvennoe delo*), as for blind nature birth and death is natural.”⁵¹

The source of humanity's moral duty is that we do not work for our life – we simply get it and this is a debt that has to be repaid. In Russian this is compressed into the semantic field of one single word: *dolg*. *Dolg* can mean both *debt* and *duty*.

We have nothing which is really ours (*svoi*), which we made (*proizvodit'*), all we have is debt; our life is not our life at all, it is separated, alienated, fatal; we received our life from

⁵⁰ I, 92.

⁵¹ I, 398.

our fathers, who owe the same kind of debt to their parents, and so on; birth is passing on the debt – not repaying it.⁵²

Consequently, *progress* – in its nineteenth-century, positivist sense – is *irreconcilable* with the Common Task. Fedorov wrote that “[a]lthough stagnation (*zastoi*) is death and regression is not heaven, progress is the true hell, and the truly Godly, the truly human task (*delo*) is to save the victims of progress, in other words, [to save] them from hell.”⁵³

(c) *Fathers, sons and union*

The union of man should follow the model of the Holy Trinity, i.e. the people in the union will create an *indivisible*, but *unmerged* unity. But the Holy Trinity should be more than a model, than an ideal for humanity, it should be a *commandment*, a call to action:

Until in life, in reality, the independence of people (*litso*) is expressed in division (*rozn'*) and [their] unity in enslavement, until that the all-unity (*mnogoedinstvo*) as resembling (*podobie*) the Holy Trinity will be only an ideal (*myslennye, ideal'nye*). But if we do not allow the separation of act (*deistvie*) from thought, then the Holy Trinity will be for us not only an ideal, but a project, i.e. not only hope, but a commandment (*zapoved'*).⁵⁴

Addressing the social problem of individual and community, Fedorov applies his usual technique: he identifies two extremes which will never lead to the solution and proposes a third option which represents the true answer to the question. The two end of the spectrum is West and East. The social structure in the West is burdened by division (*rozn'*), while the East is dominated by oppression (*gnet*). The reconciliation of the two extremes is possible by the golden mean, by kinship, by *rodstvo*. *Rodstvo* comes into existence when the sons of the fathers unite in the Common Task:

The question of crowd (*tolpa*) and personality (*lichnost'*) can be solved only in the teaching about kinship: unity does not absorb, but highlights each units, the diversity of personalities only strengthens the unity, the essence of which is, first of all, that everyone recognizes in himself the son, the grandson, the great-grandson, the great-great-grandson... the descendant, i.e. that he is the son of all the dead fathers and not a vagabond in a crowd who forgot about his kinship...”⁵⁵

⁵² I, 107.

⁵³ I, 51.

⁵⁴ I, 90.

⁵⁵ I, 44.

Fedorov believes that the unity of people in the Common Task is more than “many people together”. The Task will transform the crowds into the union of sons, and this will be a real union and not the simple merging (*sliianie*).⁵⁶

Two important sub-topics are connected to the problem of the separation and the union of the people. The first one is the relationship between the *intelligentsia* and the *people*, and the second one is the relationship of the urbanized community with the countryside, i.e. the problem of the *city* and the *village*.

(c)/1 The educated (uchenye) and the uneducated (neuchenye)

For the separation and the distance between the intellectual classes and the people (*narod*), Fedorov uses the words educated (*uchenye*)⁵⁷ and uneducated (*neuchenye*). The source of this dichotomy can be traced back to a more basic dichotomy: the separation of thought from action which is the most serious evil in Fedorov’s eyes: “[o]f all the divisions, the separation of thought (*mysl'*) and act (*delo*) ... is the greatest scourge, it is incommensurably greater than the division of the rich and the poor.”⁵⁸ The separation of thought and act is manifested in the two groups of people, the educated and the uneducated.

(c)/2 The city (gorod) and the village (selo)

The division among people is also physically manifested in the lifestyle and habitat of people: some live in cities, some in villages in the countryside. Fedorov is not neutral to the two ways of life, he categorically prefers living in a village. He argues that the city-dwellers are separated from nature, which means that they do not observe, they do not feel its “blind, destructive” force and, consequently, they do not feel the urge that it should be regulated and controlled:

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ “Scientist” might be a more accurate translation, but it seems to me that Fedorov uses *uchenye* in a more general sense, therefore I will translate it as “the educated”.

⁵⁸ I, 41. He identifies the source of this separation in ancient Greek philosophy. Socrates first went from idolatry to the worship of ideas, while later in Platon the separation of thought and act was fulfilled.

It is obvious that the food and sanitary question depends exclusively on the agrarian classes. The city population does not produce anything; it only processes (*dat' utonchennyiu formu*) everything that they gain outside of the city. The food problem for the city is only an economic problem, the problem of distribution. The city ignores man's dependence on nature, they cannot imagine and they do not want to know that it is not possible to distribute a not sufficient amount [of food] in a way that everyone would be satisfied; it is not possible to divide 100 pounds of bread among 100 people, in a way that everyone receives 2 pounds.⁵⁹

The relationship of the city to village is the same as “the predator or the carnivore to the herbivore.” The question of *industrialization* is closely connected to the city-village dichotomy. Fedorov condemns industrialization and refers to it as the best example of humanity's immaturity. We produce all kinds of toys (*igrushki*), instead of focusing all our energy and technological invention to resurrect the dead forefathers. Fedorov identifies sexuality and the “fight for women”⁶⁰ as the main motivation and engine behind industrialization and the place of this fight is the city:

...every industry, every technology is doomed to serve the sexual fight (*polovoi podbor*), and this bears witness to the debasement and disgrace of the human reason (*um*), [to the fact] that man approaches [the level] of animals, that the city is falling into a deeper and deeper moral decadence. We can say that that all urban culture is adoration and worship, i. e. the cult of women.⁶¹

(d) *Active resurrection (voskresenie), passive resurrection (voskreshenie) and the “dust of fathers”*⁶²

In my framework of analysis, the last building block of Fedorov's central idea, is the question of physical active resurrection. Fedorov proposes the realization of physical resurrection by *scientific* means.

⁵⁹ I, 251.

⁶⁰ Fedorov never got married and he rejected physical, erotic love. He thought that sexual energy should also be used to realize the Common Task, he called it “positive asceticism” which would transform “the creative power (*rozhdaiushchaia*) into a re-creating power (*vossozdaiushchaia*). (I, 393) It would be interesting to juxtapose to Fedorov's idea on sexuality to Vasilii Rozanov's “Patriarchal Eroticism”. See: Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Si cle Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

⁶¹ I, 397.

⁶² Remember the note on translation of the words *voskresenie* and *voskreshenie* in the beginning of the thesis.

Zakydalsky identifies three main properties of Fedorov's active resurrection, *voskreshenie*: it is 1) physical, 2) universal and 3) immanent. He notes that the uniqueness of Fedorov's idea is the combination of this three properties, as to his knowledge "no one before Fyodorov has ever thought of a resurrection that would have all three or even a combination of any two of these properties."⁶³ The first two attribute is an easy case, Fedorov wrote about them quite explicitly. The third attribute – *immanence* (versus transcendence) – is a more complicated issue and, as I will argue, it is the cornerstone of how to interpret Fedorov in the early twentieth century debates.

(d)/1 Physical resurrection – the dust of the forefathers

When Fedorov discusses physical resurrection, he often refers to the "dust of the forefathers"

(prakh predkov):

All matter (*veshestvo*) is the dust of the forefathers and in those smallest particles – which could be accessible to microscopic animals invisible to our eyes, but only if [those animals] are equipped with that kind of microscopes which would widen their range of vision as much as our microscopes widen our range of vision; and there, in those squares and cubes and so forth of microscopic particles we could find the trace (*sled*) of our forefathers.⁶⁴

Man can be reconstructed from these traces with the help of *science*. This is why a united humanity has to collect the "dust of the forefathers" which is a challenging task as these particles are "scattered all over the solar system, maybe in other worlds, and they have to be collected as well."⁶⁵ It has to be added that Fedorov emphasises the importance of science in active resurrection, but he also reinterprets *science* – it should merge all the disciplines and other spheres of life and knowledge such as religion and art.⁶⁶ Resurrecting people is a hard task and humanity needs all his *united knowledge* to realize it.

⁶³ Taras Zakydalsky, "N.F. Fyodorov's Philosophy of Physical Resurrection" (PhD. diss., Bryn Mawr College, 1976) My copy is a microfilm-xerography reproduction from 1978.

⁶⁴ I, 290.

⁶⁵ I, 291.

⁶⁶ In his interpretation of science Fedorov draws near to Occultism.

(d)/2 Apokatastasis – universal salvation

Fedorov does not deny the possibility of the Second Coming and passive resurrection, but he neither approves:

...the question about life and death has to be identified with total and universal (*vseobshchii*) salvation, not with partial and not universal [salvation] in which some (the sinners) are condemned for eternal suffering while others (the righteous) [are condemned] to watch that suffering.⁶⁷

As I highlighted, active resurrection is the sons' *moral* duty, but in the idea of universal salvation – it also becomes man's own *interest*. If humanity realizes active resurrection then no one has to go to hell. The idea of universal salvation has a long history, it goes back to the cosmology of Aristotle, but it gained special importance in the first three centuries of Christian thought.⁶⁸ The most well-known propagator of universal salvation from early Christianity was Origen of Alexandria whose interpretation of the Scriptures were declared heretic in the sixth century. In the framework of apokatastasis (from the Greek word "restoration" "[t]he justice of God demanded that there be a hell, but the mercy of God permitted (or perhaps even required) that we pray for it to be empty."⁶⁹

(d)/3 Immanent active resurrection and transcendental passive resurrection

In traditional Christian teaching the world will end by Jesus Christ's Second Coming, by the transcendental resurrection of the dead and by the Judgment of each and every one of us. According to Zakydalsky and Hagemeister, Fedorov propagates *immanent* resurrection, resurrection realized by united humanity. As it was mentioned, Fedorov does not deny the possibility of transcendental resurrection at the end of the world, but he reinterprets it in a

⁶⁷ I, 391.

⁶⁸ "Apokatastasis" In: Jaroslav Pelikán, *The Melody of Theology: A Philosophical Dictionary* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1988) 4-5.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 5.

unique way. In his interpretation, transcendental resurrection by God is *conditional*, it is *only one of the scenarios* and it will come exactly in that case if we, humanity, does not realize active resurrection. He wrote that humanity can:

...wait for transcendental [passive] resurrection, which will be realized not by us, but from outside and which will happen aside from and even against our will, the [passive] resurrection of wrath, the last judgement, when some (the sinners) will be condemned for eternal suffering, while others (the righteous) [will be condemned] to watch that suffering. We, who esteem God, “Who wants to save everyone”, so that everyone would realize the truth (*v razum istiny prishli*) and no one would die; we cannot see this end as other than highly tragic and highly grievous, and, therefore, we allow ourselves to think that the prophecy about the last judgement (*strashnij sud*) is conditional (*uslovno*), like the prophecy by Jonah, like any prophecy has an educational aim, to improve those to whom it is addressed...⁷⁰

In other words, Fedorov believes that if the Common Task is fulfilled then there will be *no apocalypse* which is how it should be because “it would be insolent to think that Jesus would be sorry if the prophecy about the destruction of the world would not be fulfilled.”⁷¹

The issue of immanence and transcendence will be revisited in chapter 3 because I argue that this dichotomy serves as a dividing line in Fedorov interpretation: one stand focuses on citations that contain materialist ideas and claims that Fedorov’s system is devoid of transcendence, of God and propagates pure materialism; the other stand usually recognizes the materialist content, but still sees Fedorov’s task as the amalgamation of immanent and transcendent ideas. Before looking at that issue in detail, it is necessary to include some general remarks on Russian philosophical tradition of the nineteenth-twentieth century and on ideas about death at the end of the nineteenth century.

Chapter 2: Sui generis deconstructed: similarities and links

⁷⁰ I, 402.

⁷¹ II, 50.

“Ivan Karamazov is a real Russian, meaning that he is completely occupied with moral problems; his mind is strikingly indifferent to all the other problems of philosophy, for instance, to the theory of knowledge.”
(S.N. Bulgakov)⁷²

2.1 General remarks on philosophical thinking in Russia

I do not intent to give a comprehensive, all-encompassing list of the characteristics of Russian philosophy or thought, but I do need to provide my reasons for avoiding the systematic use of the term “Russian philosophy” and these general remarks serve as a good introduction to the upcoming chapters which focus more on the interpretations of Fedorov.

I do not see it wrong to use the term, but “philosophy”, inevitably, invokes ideas about Western philosophy and might create a misleading semantic field or incorrect associations in certain arguments. *Russian thought* is a more neutral choice, but I use *intellectual history* because I think this is the term that really emphasizes and expresses the deep *embeddedness* (compared to Western patterns) of Russian philosophical thinking in life and, consequently, in history. Furthermore, I apply a temporal limit, the general remarks I make here refer mainly to Russian thought in the nineteenth-twentieth century.

The first important characteristic is that Russian philosophical thinking did not only take place in forms of “clear” philosophical genres and did not involve only “professional” philosophers. Obviously, there are border-zones, border-people in the same sense in Western philosophy as well, for instance, in the case of Voltaire. Also some critics say that Samuel Beckett might be considered in the future to be more of a philosopher than a writer. However, this tendency is more conspicuous in Russian intellectual history. It is more the rule than the exception, so to say. A large number of writers is discussed as philosophers, the two most

⁷² Sergei N. Bulgakov, “Ivan Nikolaevich kak filosofskii tip” [Ivan Nikolaevich as a philosophical type] In: Bulgakov, *Ot marksizma*, 110.

often mentioned name is Dostoevsky and Tolstoy in that respect.⁷³ But for instance, Georgii Florovsky included Gogol as well in his book on the development of Russian thought.⁷⁴ Another border-zone can be seen between Russian philosophy and theology or politics. In the introduction to *A History of Russian Philosophy: 1830-1930*, though the editors use the term “philosophy”, it is clear that they are aware of the historical embeddedness of Russian philosophy and they keep in mind throughout the book that:

...a proper appreciation of Russian philosophy must take into account its profound connections both with Russian literature (both narrative fiction and poetry) and Russian politics (populist, social democratic and liberal traditions alongside the Byzantine or Russian Orthodox discourse on politics and human nature)...⁷⁵

A similar approach and attitude can be observed in the foreword of another recent book, *A History of Russian Thought*, when it is declared in the introduction that they “attempted to root the thought examined in the volume in a broad political, social and cultural context.”⁷⁶ As the borders of practicing philosophy were less solid, so were the people who pursued such occupation or activity. Sometimes this phenomenon is referred to as “amateur philosophizing”. For instance, Young wrote that “[t]he major contributions to Russian thought, then, as reflected in the standard anthologies, have been made not by trained academicians but by gifted amateurs...”⁷⁷ But I think labeling these thinkers as amateur might be misleading, because it implies that these people were interested in philosophy as *hobby*. This semantic field totally enshrouds the real motivation behind the tendency of these people to turn to philosophical writings. Christopher Read summarizes perfectly and profoundly my point, i. e. this phenomenon as such, therefore, despite its length it is worth quoting the whole observation:

⁷³ This tendency does not only apply to Russian writers, we can find some of Stanislaw’s Lem more philosophical writings in the traditional “Philosophy” section in bookstores.

⁷⁴ Florovsky, *Russian Theology*, 331-344.

⁷⁵ *A History of Russian Philosophy 1830-1930: Faith, Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) 2.

⁷⁶ *A History of Russian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) ix.

⁷⁷ Young, *Russian Cosmists*, 21.

In Western thought these themes [religion and revolution] might be said to belong to different spheres, the abstract and the practical, but in Russia pure thought had not been as divorced from real life as had been the case elsewhere. Thought in Russia was still close to what had long been called ‘the cursed questions’ of love, death, God and immortality rather than to abstract concepts and logical reasoning. Philosophy, psychology and theology remained much less distinct than in Western Europe. In this way Russian thought remained much closer to life, and, like existentialism which shared this characteristic, found its expression in literature, literary criticism and political, social, economic analyses rather than in philosophical treatises.⁷⁸

The issue of Russian intelligentsia is closely connected to this phenomenon and though it cannot be addressed in its entirety, I would like to turn the attention to the use of the term “philosopher” in Russian context. It is problematic for the same reason as the use of “philosophy” – its primary connotations in English come from our image of Western philosophy, for instance the image of the “ivory-tower philosopher” who is totally isolated from life. Thinkers associated with the “Russian religious renaissance” at the turn of the century, often referred to as “religious philosophers”. In contrary to this, Christopher Stroop proposed the use of “religious intelligentsia” in his dissertation because he argued that these figures were “first and foremost public intellectuals” and that they “had an influential presence in late imperial Russian civil society, which makes Russian religious thought more socially significant than it might seem at first blush.”⁷⁹ Stroop makes an important point, but it remains controversial if his solution to rename “religious philosophers” to “religious intelligentsia” is the most appropriate or if it is the only solution. It would be also possible to use “philosophers”, but define more precisely what this term means in a Russian context. In the framework of this thesis, I can only turn attention to the complicated issue of the term “Russian intelligentsia” and “philosopher” and wish for further research on the topic.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Christopher Read, *Religion, Revolution, and the Russian Intelligentsia, 1900-1912: The Vekhi Debate and Its Intellectual Background* (London: Macmillan, 1979). 8.

⁷⁹ Christopher A. Stroop, “Providential Empire Russia’s Religious Intelligentsia and the First World War” (PhD diss., University of Stanford, 2012) 3.

⁸⁰ See G. M. Hamburg’s chapter “Russian intelligentsias” in *A History of Russian Thought*, 44-69. To demonstrate the complexity and heterogeneity of Russian intelligentsia, here is a list of the different types of intelligentsia Hamburg discusses: “early”, “classical”, “revolutionary”, “zemstvo”, “professional”, “serf”, “village”, “intelligentsia of the people”, “new or religious”. And then we could add also the issue of “intelligentsia science”, See: Gordin, Md, and K Hall. “Introduction: Intelligentsia Science Inside and Outside Russia.” *OSIRIS* 23 (2008): 1–19.

The second important characteristic is the intense self-reflection, or even obsession of Russian thought about its *originality* – in relation to Western philosophical thinking. Undoubtedly, Russian philosophical thinking was heavily influenced by European tradition, although its intellectual and cultural basis was different, partly due to its Eastern – Orthodox – Christianity. The question about the *nature* of transfer of ideas is of paramount importance throughout Russian history. Some claimed that Russian thought could never achieve anything original in that respect, it just kept *adopting* and *repeating* ideas borrowed from the West. One such person is Iakovenko who in his work, *Outlines of Russian Philosophy*, is highly skeptical about the originality of Russian philosophy. Ermishin cites his harsh verdict, i.e. that Russian philosophy “had been born either as a result of direct imitation, unconscious submission to foreign influence, or an eclectic desire to slap together several dominant foreign trends.”⁸¹ To sum it up, Russian philosophy has been in a *constant existential crisis* and this deeply felt crisis becomes one of its recurring themes.

There are several other characteristics that could be mentioned, like the increased attention to humanism, to *lichnost'*, which characteristics is the organizing principle in the book *A History of Russian Philosophy: 1830-1930*. Some literature emphasise the religious character of Russian philosophy which stand does have strong arguments, but it can also lead to a distorted image of Russian philosophy. Ideas “not existing” and ideas “being ignored” should be clearly distinguished.

⁸¹ O.T. Ermishin, “On Two Conceptions of Russian Philosophy,” *Russian Studies in Philosophy* 43, no. 3 (Winter 2004): 83.

2.2 Possible influences on Fedorov

There are many controversies concerning Fedorov and his teaching, but if there is one characteristic on which everyone agrees is his *originality*. Fedorov's teaching is undoubtedly *sui generis*, but certain influences and ideas from others can be detected in his worldview. Unfortunately, Fedorov rarely named his sources which was due to his ideas about copyright, i.e. the insignificance of the individual writer who adds only little to all the knowledge accumulated by previous generations. Young mentions that Fedorov usually includes other names when he wants to challenge them and argue against them.⁸²

Kozhevnikov contemplates on the source of Fedorov's ideas in the beginning of his book. He believes that first of all Fedorov's ideas developed "under the influence of direct impressions, life experiences, independent thought and long years of stubborn work on himself."⁸³ He explains that Fedorov never learnt philosophy in an academic environment and the only one influence he singles out by name is Herzen. Hagemeister points out that Fedorov might have borrowed from Herzen who also wrote about "unconscious nature"⁸⁴:

Nature, as eternal immaturity, is subdued to the law of necessity, of fate, inexplicable for itself, especially because of the lack of that developed self, i.e. man; in man the law becomes clear, it becomes conscious reason; the moral world is as free from external necessity, as mature it is, i.e. as conscious it is. ... Nature, without consciousness – is a trunk, an undeveloped, an adolescent, a child, without the command of all its organs because not all of them is ready.⁸⁵

Fedorov is also often linked to Slavophilism in the literature. Koehler mentions in the chapter "Possible origins of Fedorov's theories" that "it is ... customary to place Fedorov in the context of Slavophilism."⁸⁶ Sisák also mentions in his review on Hagemeister's book that despite the originality of the "active resurrection project", Fedorov's "thoughts and topics"

⁸² George M. Young: "Fedorov's Transformations of the Occult" In: Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, ed., *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1997). 173.

⁸³ Kozhevnikov, *Opyt*, 55.

⁸⁴ Hagemeister, *Studien*, 70.

⁸⁵ Aleksandr I. Herzen, *Sobranie Sochinenii v 30-i tomakh. T.3. Diletantizm v nauke, Pis'ma ob izuchenii prirody 1842-46* (M.: Izd. Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1954) 302.

⁸⁶ Ludmila Koehler, *N.F. Fedorov. The Philosophy of Action* (Pittsburgh: Institute for the Human Actions, 1979) 137.

can be linked “to that ideological (ideinyi) tradition which we can provisionally call “Slavophile”.⁸⁷ Young even says that “Fedorov began where the Slavophiles ended”⁸⁸ because Fedorov believes Russia will have a significant role in the realization of the Common Task.

I think it is true that Fedorov and especially the early representatives of the Slavophiles (1840-50s)⁸⁹ i.e. Aleksei Khomyakov, Ivan Kireevsky, Konstantin Aksakov and Iury Samarin shared common topics and common ideas. To mention some of these common topics: both Fedorov and early Slavophilism discarded rational *law* as a means of organizing and controlling relationships between people. They condemned *individualism* in general and saw it to be the characteristics of the West. The Slavophiles were also concerned about the socio-cultural abyss between “society” (*obshchestvo*) and the “people” (*narod*) which was a crucial and often discussed issue in nineteenth-century Russia among intellectuals. Fedorov was also deeply interested in this separation, although, he saw this phenomenon to be true not only to Russia, but to the whole world. In his terminology, it is the separation of humanity to the “educated” and “non-educated”. A third conspicuous similarity is that both Fedorov and the Slavophiles believed that Russia has its own peculiar, special path in history and, therefore, it also has a messianic role in the history of mankind.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Gábor Sisák, Review on *Michael Hagemeyer: Nikolaj Fedorov. Studien zu Leben, Werk und Wirkung. Marburger Abhandlungen zur Geschichte und Kultur Osteuropas*, Band 28. Verlag Otto Sagner, München, 1989. 550 S., In: *Studia Slavica Hungarica*, 1996. (41) 387–394.

⁸⁸ Young, *Introduction*, 172.

⁸⁹ I apply “early Slavophilism” following the terminology of Gábor Sisák, *Az 1840-50-es évek oroszországi szlavofilizmusa. Eszmetörténeti elemzés*. [Slavophilism in Russia in 1840-50] PhD Dissertation. Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem. 2008.

⁹⁰ The idea that Russia has a *mission* in the world appeared in Russian intellectual history before the Slavophiles, it goes back to Petr Chadaev. He first declared that Russia did not contribute in any way to the history of humanity and the only role it can have is to be a “bad example”. After the publication of his ideas, he was declared mad by the Emperor and put under house arrest. In the following years, he changed his mind (or tried to convince himself that his verdict was false) and came up with the idea that maybe *exactly* because of Russia’s different past – she will be able to answer questions the West cannot answer and save the civilized world from decadence.

This list could be continued⁹¹, but instead of adding other similarities, I would like to highlight a different kind of analogy, a certain type of *thinking* that was typical both to Fedorov and to the Slavophiles.

This way of thinking in Fedorov's case is usually referred to as *projective* thinking which means that Fedorov "shifts emphasis from what exists to what should exist (*dolzhnii*), that is from ontology to deontology."⁹² It is important to keep this in mind because it means that when Fedorov uses a word he might not refer to its existing equivalent in the world, but he uses the term to refer to its desired form. This characteristic was already pointed out by Berdyaev, he wrote that Fedorov "shifts the focus from the sphere of existing to the sphere of necessity, into projectivism."⁹³ For instance, Berdyaev also notes that Fedorov's philosophy on autocracy (*samoderzhavie*) is "purely projective. And this project of autocracy has nothing to do with what autocracy was in the past (and in the present)."⁹⁴ Similarly, Sisák identified a certain "idealist" viewpoint in the writings of Slavophile thinkers. For instance, Orthodoxy for them was not the existing Orthodox Church in Russia and in other countries, but rather an ideal Church community, the idea of the untranslatable *sobornost'*.⁹⁵

Another source of possible influence for Fedorov might have been Occultism, although he never cited occult sources. A detailed discussion on the topic was published by Young in the collection of articles: *The Occult in Russian and Soviet History*.⁹⁶ Actually, similarities

⁹¹ For a detailed analysis of the thematic similarities see: Alexandra Medzibrodzky. "A deontológiai prioritás: Gondolatrokonság Ny. F. Fjodorov és a "korai szlavofilizmus" képviselői között" [The priority of deontology: Similarities between ideas by N. F. Fyodorov and representatives of "early Slavophilism"] In: *Slavia Centralis* (SCN) VI/2 2013.

⁹² Semenova, *Filosof*, 168.

⁹³ Nikolai A. Berdyaev, "Religiia voskresheniia: "Filosofiia obshchego dela" N.F. Fedorova" [The religion of [active] resurrection: "The Philosophy of the Common Task" by N.F. Fedorov] In: *N. F. Fedorov: pro et contra*. T. 1. SPb: Izd-vo. Russkogo Kh-ogo gum-ogo in-ta. 2004. 427.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 433.

⁹⁵ Sisák, "Szlavofilizmus", 73.

⁹⁶ Young, George M.: *Fedorov's Transformations of the Occult*. In: *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*: ed. by Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, Cornell University Press, 1997. pp. 171-184. Young does not discuss whether "Fedorov was or was not a high-level secret mahatma", but he tries to identify occult themes in Fedorov and to show how Fedorov transformed them in his ideas. Common themes include: "the notion of a hidden reality, a fascination with the Orient, the transformation of matter and the elimination of temporality, the achievement of

between Occult teaching and Fedorov is an important because the end of nineteenth century was the heyday of Occult teaching and Spiritualism in Russia, but the detailed and just discussion of the topic cannot fit within the frames of this thesis.⁹⁷

2.3 The crisis of value: contemporary ideas on death at the turn of the century

The end of the nineteenth century and beginning of twentieth century in Russia was characterized by the crisis of values. Economic and industrial boom triggered great changes in social and political life. The transformation from *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, the problem of modernism and how people experienced modernism was not a unique transformation to Russia, but due to its enduring economic backwardness, rigid social and political system, these changes became even more articulated. The period is an intensively discussed period, I will single out only certain phenomena that I see relevant to my later argument.

This is the period of the Silver Age in literature and the term is more and more commonly used to refer to Russian intellectual history in that period. Ideas created and propagated by Vl. Solovev and Dostoevsky became highly influential in this period. But apart from them, Fedorov and the Silver Age artists also shared common themes, especially due to Fedorov's active attitude. Ruth Coates highlights this in her essay on the Silver Age: "Fedorov's great project has common features with the theurgic orientation of the Silver Age artists'. He as they, conceived of human destiny as resting with humans themselves: salvation was to be primarily through human agency and not through grace."⁹⁸

total enlightenment, the recovery of lost knowledge, and the restoration of ancient geographic power centers." 173.

⁹⁷ Also see: Birgit Menzel, Michael Hagemester, and Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, eds., *The New Age of Russia: Occult and Esoteric Dimensions*, Studies on Language and Culture in Central and Eastern Europe, v. 17 (München: Otto Sagner, 2012).

⁹⁸ Ruth Coates, "Silver Age" In: *A History of Russian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). 183.

The end of the nineteenth century was also a heyday for Marxism among intellectuals, “a loss of faith” and a turn to Marxism was a general pattern among young seminaries in 1880s and 1890s. But the turn of the century brought another turn, a turn *away* from Marxism to Idealism. Russian Marxists like Nikolai Berdyaev, S. N. Bulgakov or Petr Struve all felt the image and function of man in Marxism to be too narrow. They felt attracted to Marxism because of its scientific approach, but they had to realize that Marxism could not give them answers to “the cursed questions”. These questions were deeply *ethical*, they questioned the meaning of human existence: “man asks and cannot not ask not only the *how*, but also the *what*, the *why* (*pochemu*) and the *what for* (*zachem*).”⁹⁹ But the turn to idealism was only a phase not the destination. A large number of these thinkers turned from Idealism to religious philosophy, this is the period which is referred to in the literature as the “religious renaissance” at the turn of the century. For instance, S. N. Bulgakov’s life can be characterized by the following changes: “from Marxism to idealism, from idealism to religious philosophy, from religious philosophy to the church proper and then to theology.”¹⁰⁰ The paths of these thinkers who became interested in religious philosophy is unique to each of them, but there was definitely a *turn to religion* in general in a group of Russian intellectuals.¹⁰¹

In this period, through the discussion of the “cursed questions”, death and the idea of progress became central theme as Read notes it:

There does not seem to have been any period in Russian thought when death had such a strong hold on the imagination as it did in these years. Isolated thinkers had tried to come to terms with it, the most original being Fedorov who believed in

⁹⁹ Bulgakov, Sergei Nikolaevich. “Osnovnye problemy teorii progressa” [Fundamental problems of the theory of progress] In: Bulgakov, S.N., *Ot marksizma k idealizmu: sbornik statei, 1896-1903*. [From Marxism to Idealism] Obshestvennaia pol’za. 1904. 115.

¹⁰⁰ Evtuhov, Catherine. *The Cross and the Sickle: Sergei Bulgakov and the Fate of Russian Religious Philosophy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997. 45.

¹⁰¹ See: Nicolas Zernov, *The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century* (Lond: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1963). On Merezhkovsky and his “new religious consciousness” see: Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, *Dmitri Sergeevich Merezhkovsky and the Silver Age: The Development of a Revolutionary Mentality* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975).

the eventual ability of science not only to prolong life indefinitely but also to reconstitute from the original molecules the bodies of all dead people.¹⁰²

Religious thinkers, like Berdyaev and Bulgakov were interested in the relationship of death and progress. Developing further Ivan Karamazov's problem with the idea of progress which justifies present suffering in the name of the happiness of the future generations is a recurring theme. Sergei Bulgakov wrote in his programmatic article, *The Fundamental Problems of the Theory of Progress* that [o]ur descendants are vampires, drinking our own blood"¹⁰³ which is a similar interpretation of the idea of progress to Fedorov's views. Death was also the concern of scientific investigation at the turn of the century and its concrete discussion was first and foremost in the framework of prolonging life. Ideas by Alexander Bogdanov and blood transfusion¹⁰⁴ should be mentioned and also the Nobel prize winner Il'ia Mechnikov. Mechnikov perceived the human body to be a "living organism as intrinsically disharmonious" and „[t]his vision of evolutionarily necessary disharmony led Metchnikoff to a worldview in which mankind required science to overcome the disharmonies set by nature" – and eventually death itself.^{105, 106}

¹⁰² Christopher Read, *Religion, Revolution, and the Russian Intelligentsia, 1900-1912: The Vekhi Debate and Its Intellectual Background* (London: Macmillan, 1979). 32.

¹⁰³ Sergei N. Bulgakov, "Osnovnye problemy teorii progressa" In: Sergei N. Bulgakov, *Ot marksizma k idealizmu: sbornik statei, 1896-1903* (Obshestvennaia pol'za, 1904.) 115.

¹⁰⁴ See: N. L. Krementsov, *A Martian Stranded on Earth: Alexander Bogdanov, Blood Transfusions, and Proletarian Science* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011).

¹⁰⁵ Scott H. Podolsky, "Cultural Divergence: Elie Metchnikoff's Bacillus Bulgaricus Therapy and His Underlying Concept of Health," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 72, no. 1 (1998): 1–27, doi:10.1353/bhm.1998.0056.

¹⁰⁶ More details on ideas of death in Hagemeister, Studien. Chapter: Das Problem des Todes im russischen Denken um die Jahrhundertwende.

Chapter 3 Paradigms of past interpretations

3.1 Two debates from early twentieth century

3.1.1 “Fedorov or the Gospel?” – Debate between E. N. Trubetskoy and N. P. Peterson

It is in this atmosphere that the two debates that I will reconstruct took place. The Orthodox Church also felt the new challenges that modernism brought to society at the turn of the century and it had troubles adopting or reacting to it. In that period, members of the intelligentsia felt the need to engage with the life of the Church, to contribute to its reforms. The question in reforms is, obviously always – how far one should go. Today, Fedorov’s teaching might seem quite irreconcilable with traditional teaching (especially its universality), but at the turn of the century Russian intelligentsia turned to religion as a search for values and questioned the role of traditional Christianity in the world of the modern man. In this context, Fedorov’s ideas did not seem as extreme as they might seem today.

G. Young, in his 1979 book on Fedorov phrases the controversy in the following way: “The real question for theologians is whether Fedorov merely spells out ideas that have always been implicit in Christian doctrine, or whether he distorts the entire idea of Christianity by treating spiritual truths as projects for the material world.”¹⁰⁷ Michael Hagemeister, renowned Fedorov scholar, named two thinkers from the period of early Fedorov-reception (1904-1917) who problematized the issue of the *materialism* in the text of “The Common Task”. One of them was A. S. Pankratov (1872-1922) and the other S. A. Golovanenko (1888-

¹⁰⁷ Young, *Introduction*, 147.

1938).¹⁰⁸ The debate between S.A. Golovanenko and one of N.F. Fedorov's most devoted disciple, N. P. Peterson will be discussed in the next sub-chapter, but now I reconstruct another debate that happened in the 1910s between Prince Evgenii Trubetskoy and Nikolai Peterson. The debate is mentioned by Ia. V. Morozova in her article "Distant, but dear dreams...": two debates about the paths of salvation¹⁰⁹, but it is not discussed in its entirety. Furthermore, Morozova does not mention that the Trubetskoy-Peterson debate had its repercussions in the correspondence between Peterson and V.A. Kozhevnikov.

In the beginning, the debate was primarily about whether or to *what extent Fedorov* influenced Vladimir Solovev's intellectual development, but, in the end, it turned into a debate about the relationship of Fedorovian ideas and the teaching of the Orthodox Church. The polemics started on the pages of the famous *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii* and then ended in private correspondence. It is worth looking at the pro and contra arguments as it sheds light on two of the issues that this thesis is concerned with: N. Fedorov's place in intellectual history (in this debate in relation to Vladimir Solovev) and ways of interpreting Fedorov's ideas in general (in relation to Orthodox Christianity).

Prince E. N. Trubetskoy (1863-1920) was the brother of Prince Sergei Nikolaevich Trubetskoy, both of them is remembered for their interest in philosophy. Evgenii studied at the legal department of the Moscow university, after defending his dissertations on master and afterwards on doctoral level he worked (on the history of law) at the university in Kiev and later in Moscow. He wrote both his dissertations on the history of law and held courses within that discipline. After 1917, he had to leave Moscow and he lost his life in the Caucasus in 1920. Concerning his intellectual development, Evgenii mentioned in his autobiographical "Memories" that "both brothers" started with "positivism" – the "Spencerian type"–which

¹⁰⁸ Hagemeister, *Studien*, 193.

¹⁰⁹ Morozova, Ia. V., "“Mechta dalekaia, no dorogaia”: dva spora o putiakh spaseniia In: *Na poroge griadishchego: Pamiati Nikolaia Fedorovicha Fedorova (1829-1903)* (M.:Pashkov Dom, 2003)

was followed by an “easily” developed “atheism”. However, in the last year of gymnasium, Evgenii read *The World as Will and Representation* by Schopenhauer and it turned him to religious themes. Later, ideas by V.I. Solovev exerted great influence on him. According to Zenkovsky, “E.N. Trubetskoy’s philosophical oeuvre clearly has the impression of incompleteness and disharmony¹¹⁰”, presumably, partly due to his untimely death.

The starting point of the polemic was an article, published in *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii* in 1912 by E. Trubetskoy.¹¹¹ Trubetskoy devoted a small sub-chapter to the relationship of ideas developed by N.F. Fedorov and V.I. Solovev in his article *Vital task of Solovev and the Universal Crisis of Worldview*. The article was later re-published and included in his two-volume work: *V.I. Solovev’s Worldview*.

Trubetskoy starts his discussion by referring to Solovev’s letter to Fedorov in which he calls him “ my teacher, comforter (*uteshitel’*) and spiritual father” and quickly adds that on the basis of this one letter it is “hardly justified” to call Solovev “without reservation a “student” of Fedorov.”¹¹² He also mentions that “Fedorov *influenced*¹¹³ Solovev not in his initial, but rather in his middle period”¹¹⁴ of his writings and emphasized that a great number of ideas by Solovev were developed “earlier and independently from Fedorov’s influence”. The first part of the article deals mainly with *similarities* between the two thinkers; while the second half is dominated by the *differences* in their ideas. For instance, both of them believed, in Trubetskoy’s opinion, that the “ideal human society” is the “all-unity” (*vseedinstvo*). Trubetskoy, at one point, quotes another part from Solovev’s letter – the interpretation of which will be one of the main issues in the debate between Peterson and Trubetskoy. Solovev

¹¹⁰Bibliographical data about Evgenii N. Trubetskoy from Zenkovsky, V.V., *Istoriia russkoi filosofii*. M.:Akademicheskii Proekt, Raritet, 2001.

¹¹¹E. Trubetskogo – “Zhiznennaia zadacha Soloveva i vsemirnyi krizis zhizneponimaniia” // *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii*. Kn. 114. 224-287

¹¹²Trubetskoy, “*Zhiznennaia zadacha*”, 272.

¹¹³ Italics in original.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

wrote to Fedorov that “I take your project *unconditionally* and without any [further] discussions:¹¹⁵ we do not need to speak about the project itself, but about some of its theoretical fundamentals and presumption and about the first practical steps for its realization.”¹¹⁶ According to the article, these “first practical steps” constitute the main difference between Solovev and Fedorov: “Solovev ... regarded Fedorov’s “project” deep and true (istinnyi), but he was rather skeptical about the *methods* proposed by the latter for the *realization* of the project.”¹¹⁷ Trubetskoy’s concludes that though the two thinkers ideas converge about the final goal of universal resurrection (vseobshchee voskresheniie); their ideas about the *how* diverge significantly Fedorov’s ideas about the “scientific ways and methods of reaching that goal did not leave any traces on Solovev’s worldview.”¹¹⁸

N. P. Peterson was convinced that Fedorov exerted great influence on Solovev and, therefore, he did not left the article unanswered. He wrote a response article and sent it directly to Trubetskoy. Peterson also asked Trubetskoy to publish his response in *Voprosy Filosofii i Psikhologii*, and in the beginning of 1913, Trubetskoy “informed Peterson about his agreement with L.M. Lopatin, the editor of *Voprosy Filosofii i Psikhologii*”¹¹⁹ that both Peterson’s response and Trubetskoy’s notes to the issue will be published in the journal.

As promised, both of the articles appeared in 1913 in №118 of *Voprosy Filosofii i Psikhologii*¹²⁰, followed by each other, under the headline “Polemics”. Peterson starts by highlighting that Trubetskoy claimed in his article that Fedorov did not exert on Solovev any

¹¹⁵This is the point where this quotation usually ends.

¹¹⁶Trubetskoy, “*Zhiznenaia zadacha*”, 276.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 278.

¹¹⁹ “Commentaries” Svetlana G. Semenova, et al., *N.F. Fedorov: Pro et Contra. T. 2.: Seriiia “Russkii Put’*. (SPb: RKhGA, 2008) 1061.

¹²⁰ Nikolai P. Peterson, “Zametki po povodu stat’i kn. E. Trubetskogo – “*Zhiznennaiia zadacha Soloveva i vseмирnyi krizis zhizneponimaniia*” v “*Voprosakh Filosofii i Psikhologii*”, sentiabr’-oktiabr’ 1912 goda” [Notes about E. Trubetskoy’s article – “Solovev’s vital task and the global crisis of worldview” – in “Questions of Philosophy and Psychology”, September-October 1912 .and Evgenii Trubetskoy, “Neskolka slov o Soloveve i Fedorove. (Otvet N. P. Petersonu.)” [A couple of words on Solovev and Fedorov. Answer to N.P. Peterson] Kn. 118. 412-426.

influence at all. He also shares with us some interesting practical information, for instance, that the manuscript which Solovev read describing Fedorov's ideas was written by him, Peterson and it discussed the scientific methods Fedorov proposes. The most interesting part, however, is that Peterson quote the same part from Solovev's letter about the need to talk about the "first practical steps for the realization of the project" – but he interprets it in quite the opposite: "By stating that the first *practical* steps for the realization of the project has to be discussed, Solovev admits, consequently, that he has and is able to accept the realization of the project precisely by those methods which were described in the manuscript, i.e. by scientific [methods] (estestvennye nauchnye)." ¹²¹

Prince Evgenii Trubetskoy gives several "comments" to Peterson's response. First and foremost, Trubetskoy refutes Peterson's accusation that he, Trubetskoy, denies *any* influence by Fedorov on Solovev and highlights that the question is not whether there was an influence at all, but the controversy is about "the date when it started and its content." ¹²² Prince Trubetskoy perceives difference in how the two thinker sees *science* and *religion*. According to Trubetskoy's interpretation, Solovev "*sets the religious against the scientific*" and "proposes that precisely positive religion and church, and not science "are the "real means to resurrection (voskreseniie)". ¹²³ In contrast to this, for Fedorov, "the religious way is at the same time a scientific one." Trubetskoy's most convincing argument is that Fedorov himself was aware of the crucial difference between him and Solovev, and he explicitly wrote about it in the "The Philosophy of the Common Task" as one of the subtitles is the following: "Supramoralism, or uniting for resurrection (voskresheniie) by way of knowledge and act, by scientific and real methods, not by mystical, in contrast to mysticism in general and mysticism by Dostoevsky and Solovev in particular." ¹²⁴ Fedorov, in the light of scientific methods of

¹²¹ Peterson, "Zametki", 407.

¹²² Trubetskoy, "Neskol'ka slov", 413.

¹²³ Ibid., 415.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 416.

resurrection, considered Dostoevsky's and Solovev's "method was "black", some kind of a witchcraft (koldovstvo)."”¹²⁵

On a more philosophical level, Trubetskoy describes Solovev's ideas as ideas of Godmanhood and argues that Solovev in his letter to Dostoevsky propagates that "resurrection (voskresheniie) in Godmanhood cannot be understood as man's unilateral act”¹²⁶, it as to happen together with God and man. In a nutshell, Fedorov's ideas are "dreams of resurrection (voskreseniie) without transfiguration.”¹²⁷

The debate *in public* ended with Trubetskoy's second article, but the debate continued *in private*.¹²⁸ Peterson wrote a lengthy letter to Trubetskoy on 21 July 1913¹²⁹ in which he basically agrees that Fedorov thought transfiguration is not necessary and Peterson does not see any problem with this.¹³⁰ Trubetskoy categorically refutes the idea of such resurrection where people are resurrected "in the same condition (vid) that they died". He closes his short letter by saying that if "it is necessary to choose between Fedorov and the Gospel, then, I, of course, without hesitation, would choose the latter one.”¹³¹

The debate had its echo in the correspondence between Peterson and the other most famous disciple, V. A. Kozhevnikov. In general, Kozhevnikov was a much more down-to-earth thinker and was less partial to Fedorov than Peterson and was more aware of the problems that might arise in interpreting Fedorov's ideas. He was also devoted to the "Common Task" and to Fedorov, but not at all costs.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 418.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 419.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 421.

¹²⁸ Actually, Peterson tried to publish his second letter, first in *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii* and then in *Bogoslovskii Vestnik*, but his attempts remained unsuccessful. See: *N.F. Fedorov: Pro et Contra. T. 2.*, 1063.

¹²⁹ N. P. Peterson - E.N. Trubetskoy, 13 July 1913, Zaraisk In: *N.F. Fedorov: Pro et Contra. T. 2.*, 193-201.

¹³⁰ The commentary to the letter in the collection of *N.F. Fedorov: Pro et Contra. T. 2.* deems Peterson's answer that Fedorov ideas did not include transfiguration as false and arbitrary and as part of Peterson's "fantasy". See: 1062.

¹³¹ E.N. Trubetskoy – N. P. Peterson, 28 July 1913, old Piatovskaia. In: *N.F. Fedorov: Pro et Contra. T. 2.*, 202.

The topic first comes up in a letter by Kozhevnikov from 14 July 1913 in which he asks Peterson to send a copy of the journal in which the polemics between him and E. Trubetskoy was published.¹³² However, it is a letter from 10 August 1913¹³³ from Kozhevnikov to Peterson which is extremely relevant to our discussion. Kozhevnikov received a copy of the journal and in this letter presents his opinion on the debate. First of all, he admits that the “letter of the Prince was better than [he] expected” and supports Trubetskoy in two issues: Kozhevnikov also do not think that Solovev was a “convinced supporter” of Fedorov and that the differences between the two thinker are due either to a “lack of knowledge” or to the fact that Solovev did not dare to propagate Fedorov in public. Kozhevnikov also reprimands Peterson for his way of argumentation because he believes that it forces the opponents to formulate their opinion more and more sharply. He mentioned Trubetskoy who “ended with praise” his last letter article about Fedorov now was forced into a “completely undesirable dilemma: “Feodorov or the Gospel!”. See, you pushed a man who is not at all hostile to N. F. with Your far too early “either everything or nothing”...”¹³⁴ Furthermore, Peterson’s aggressive attitude forced not only Trubetskoy, but Kozhevnikov itself into the dilemma and his answer did not differ from Trubetskoy’s: “N.F.’s teaching is highly dear and valuable for me; but if it would be unavoidable [to choose] between the alternatives “Gospel or N.F.?”, me too, like Trubetskoy, would not hesitate and would choose the 1st one.” However, Kozhevnikov did not end the issue here, this clearly shows that he had a much more sophisticated attitude to interpreting Fedorov’s ideas in comparison to Peterson. He continues by saying that there is no need to maintain such a dichotomy, he proposes to interpret Fedorov’s text not “by letter”, but “by spirit”, thus, opening the door to possible

¹³² V. A. Kozhevnikov– N. P. Peterson, 14 July 1913, Isar. In: *N.F. Fedorov: Pro et Contra. T. 2.*,91.

¹³³ V. A. Kozhevnikov– N. P. Peterson, 10 August 1913, Isar. In: *N.F. Fedorov: Pro et Contra. T. 2.*,92-3.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 93.

reconciliation of Fedorov with Orthodoxy.¹³⁵ It has to be accepted that the question about the way of resurrection and its dangerous materialistic interpretations is “unavoidable” and has to be addressed. Kozhevnikov refers to Florensky who wrote to him that “if it would happen that the teaching has to be realized only by scientific, human means, if resurrection (voskresheniie) has to be carried out only by chemical, physical, laboratorial [ways], then he turns away, horrified, from that great triumph of materialism.”¹³⁶

3.1.2 Creation or Re-creation: The debate between S. A. Golovanenko and N.P. Peterson

The other debate that revolved around Fedorov’s ideas in the 1910s arose between S.A. Golovanenko and N.P. Peterson. The debate took place primarily in the ecclesiastical journal of the Moscow Theological Academy, the *Bogoslovskii Vestnik*¹³⁷. This debate was focused on the content of Fedorov’s ideas from the viewpoint of Orthodox Christianity.

S. A. Golovanenko (1888-1938) was a young theologian who finished the Academy in 1912 and worked on his dissertation during the time of the debate.¹³⁸ He belonged to the circle of students around Pavel Florensky. Florensky was also the editor-in-chief of *Bogoslovskii Vestnik* at that time.¹³⁹ It was due to Florensky’s insistence that the articles by

¹³⁵ Svetlana Semenova explains a similar opinion in her article on Fedorov: “... in the same way as the Gospel, The Philosophy of the Common Task in principle, by its own definition and task (zadanie) – a book which is open for co-creation and for our input.” Svetlana Semenova, “Aktivnoe khristianstvo N.F. Fedorova v kontekste nashego vremeni” [Active Christianity by N. F. Fedorov in the context of our times] In: Aleksandr P. Ogurtsov and Lidia V. Fesenkova, ed., *Filosofia russkogo kosmizma* (M.: Fond “Novoe tysiacheletie”, 1996) 52-78.

¹³⁶ V. A. Kozhevnikov– N. P. Peterson, 20 August 1913, Isar. In: *N.F. Fedorov: Pro et Contra. T. 2.* 97.

¹³⁷ *Bogoslovskii Vestnik* was the journal of the Moscow Theological Academy (*Moskovskaia Dukhovnaia Akademiia*). The history of the journal can be separated into two parts: the pre-revolutionary (1892-1918) and the contemporary (1993-) periods. In the pre-revolutionary period, 321 numbers were published which meant all in all 88672 pages. The journal was distributed partly by subscription. The readership constituted primarily of “urban and countryside white clergy” (*beloe dukhovenstvo*) and members of theological schools, but the journal was also sent to pontiffs, to monasteries, to secular schools and libraries. It even had subscribers at abroad, for instance the Russian Archeological Institute in Constantinople. See: Igumen Dionisii (Shlenov): “Bogoslovskii Vestnik (1892-2006): istoriia i sovremennost”

¹³⁸ Svetlana Semenova, *Filosof buduschego veka: Nikolai Fedorov* (M.: Pashkov Dom. 2004) 511.

¹³⁹ Igumen Dionisii singled out the period of Florensky’s editorship as he “was the only one among the pre-revolutionary editors of the journal who held the office of a priest. During father Pavel, the journal became more

Golovanenko on Fedorov could have been published in *Bogoslovskii Vestnik*, as the President of the Academy, bishop Feodor was against their publication.¹⁴⁰ Golovanenko's article was planned to be published in the February issue, but bishop Feodor, after reading the article "did not allow its publication and the article had to be excluded and substituted with something else," because "Fedorov's teaching does not concur with Orthodoxy."¹⁴¹

Eventually, Golovanenko's articles were allowed to appear in the official journal of the Theological Academy. The first article¹⁴² by Golovanenko on Fedorov was a review of the two volumes of *The Philosophy of the Common Task*. It is a balanced review, not particularly critical, but its interpretation of Fedorov's ideas already foreshadow the more elaborate criticism in subsequent articles. Golovanenko claims that "the idea of resurrection (voskreshenie), as the other side of the idea of death, is the essence of "The Philosophy of the Common Task"." He highlights the difference between the active and passive versions of resurrection: "The same way as death is an act of nature, not of freedom, an immanent act in its consequences – [active] resurrection (voskreshenie) is also an immanent act – it is [active] resurrection and not [passive] resurrection In Golovanenko's retelling [active] resurrection in Fedorov's ideas is "a recreation (*vossozhdanie*) and not creation (*tvorchestvo*)"¹⁴³ He misses the act of transfiguration (*preobrazhenie*) and sees the scientific means as a substitute for that: "In the confirmation of [active] resurrection and in the rejection of [passive] resurrection – Fedorov does not accept real-transcendental, the creative, the individual (*lichnoe*). This is why [active] resurrection has to be realized with the help of scientific knowledge."¹⁴⁴

oriented to the wide context of Christian culture, it responded more strongly to the vital demands of contemporary society, it became closer to that part of the intelligentsia which was pulled toward the Church." Igumen Dionisii, "Bogoslovskii Vestnik"

¹⁴⁰ Hagemester, *Studies*, 194.

¹⁴¹ Letter V.A. Kozhevnikov – N. P. Peterson. 5 March 1914, Moscow. In: *Pro et Contra*, T.2. 100.

¹⁴² Sergei A. Golovanenko, Rev. "Fedorov N.F. *Filosofia obshchego dela: Stat'i, mysli i pis'ma*. (Fedorov, N.F. The Philosophy of the Common Task: Articles, thoughts and letters) T.1. Vernyi, 1907.; T.2. M., 1913." In: *Bogoslovskii Vestnik*, 1913. T.3. №12. 832-844.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 836.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 839.

Golovanenko also identifies a recurring theme that of the “philosophy of soberness”: Fedorov attempts to unify the Apollonian and the Dionysian traditions and create the philosophy of soberness.

This first initial review in 1913 was followed by a series of articles in 1914 and in 1915. These articles are methodologically connected to each other as Golovanenko explains in the first one.¹⁴⁵ In the article № 1 and 2 he plans to give a *short summary* of Fedorovian ideas. The first one will deal with Fedorov’s “general religious-philosophical views and his views about the essence of Christianity.” The second one will analyse more specifically “Fedorov’s views on the essence of Orthodoxy.” The remaining three articles will be devoted to *criticism*. I will discuss the five articles in two larger units: the short summaries (In articles “The Philosophy of Death and [active] Resurrection” and “Orthodoxy and the Cult of Forefathers”¹⁴⁶) and the criticism (“Immanence and Christian Philosophy”¹⁴⁷, “The Secret of Sonship (Synovstvo)”¹⁴⁸ and “Project of Symbol?”¹⁴⁹)

Golovanenko starts the short summary of Fedorov’s views by warning that “The Philosophy of the Common Task” “cannot be called a *system* in the common sense of the word”¹⁵⁰, but afterwards he presents a meticulous and systematic analysis of Fedorov’s teaching. He considers the Common Task a religious and Christian philosophy. He lists at length the “philosophical premises”: the ontological, the psychological, the epistemological, the ethical and the sociological. Golovanenko singles out basic building blocks in “The Philosophy of the Common Task” and identifies their function in Fedorov’s ideas. Such basic

¹⁴⁵ Sergei A. Golovanenko, *Filosofiiia smerti i voskresheniia*. (The Philosophy of death and [active] resurrection) Rev. “Fedorov N.F. *Filosofiiia obshchego dela: Stat’i, mysli i pis’ma*. T.1. Vernyi, 1907.; T.2. M., 1913.” In: *Bogoslovskii Vestnik*, 1914. T.1. № 4. 664-688.

¹⁴⁶ Sergei A. Golovanenko, “Pravoslavie i kult predkov” In: *Bogoslovskii Vestnik*, 1914. T.2. № 5. 83-109.

¹⁴⁷ Golovanenko, “Immanentizm I khristianskaia filosofiiia. O real-filosofskikh predposylkakh N.F. Fedorova” In: *Bogoslovskii Vestnik*, 1914. T.2. № 7/8. 569-592.

¹⁴⁸ Golovanenko, “Taina Synovstvo. O khristianstve N.F. Fedorova” In: *Bogoslovskii Vestnik*, 1915. T.1. № 3. 498-516.

¹⁴⁹ Golovanenko, “Proiekt ili simvol? O religioznom proiektivizme N.F. Fedorova” In: *Bogoslovskii Vestnik*, 1915. T.1. № 3. 498-516.

¹⁵⁰ Golovanenko, “Filosofiiia smerti”, 664.

premise is that “[l]ife – kinship (rodstvo)” while [d]eath – evil (zlo)”¹⁵¹ or that “nature is a temporary, apparent enemy, but an eternal friend”¹⁵². He emphasizes the binary oppositions along which Fedorov developed his ideas. For instance, Fedorov delegates “consciousness” to man, and unconsciousness to nature: “[m]an is a conscious being. Death is in the unconsciousness, and nature is the symbol of all unconscious and blind.”¹⁵³ Binary oppositions dominate the whole of Fedorov’s thinking: “[city] and village, the educated (uchenii) and the non-educated (nieuchenii), the rich and the poor – this is all the same dichotomy of man and nature, consciousness and unconsciousness, thought and act.”¹⁵⁴ As to what is the essence of religion in Fedorov mind, Golovanenko concludes that “[t]he essence of religion, as a mutual connection between God and man, is the cult of the forefathers.” As part of the brief summary, Golovanenko also recognizes Fedorov’s unique interpretation of “traditional” Apocalypse, i.e. its conditionality and accurately describes the argument: if the “sons of humanity” does not realize the Common Task, if they do not unite for realizing universal [active] resurrection then “universal, transcendental [passive] resurrection will come, the [passive] resurrection of Judgement. (sud)”¹⁵⁵

There are several comparisons between Orthodoxy and Catholicism or Protestantism, to demonstrate that Orthodoxy is the “true Christianity”. Catholicism “substituted kinship with juridical relationships, it shattered the kin-consciousness (rodovoe coznanie).”¹⁵⁶ Protestantism is equated with “individualism” which is from the perspective of universal resurrection a negative characteristic because the common debt is transformed into an individual debt. There is also a difference in the function of priesthood: in Orthodoxy [p]riesthood is not simple teachership (Protestantism), and not mediation between God and

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 666.

¹⁵² Ibid., 667.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 668.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 670.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 684.

¹⁵⁶ Golovanenko, “Pravoslavie”, 84.

man (Catholicism), but “dedication” (sviashchenie) in Christ.”¹⁵⁷ An important distinction is made in the attitude towards faith and knowledge: “[i]f Catholicism legitimizes faith, and Protestantism knowledge, then in Orthodoxy faith and knowledge are unified.”¹⁵⁸ We can see that Orthodoxy emerges as an ideal “golden mean” which is farther on the road to true Christianity in contrast to Catholicism and Protestantism. The brief summary is ended with a reference to the mission that Russia – and Orthodoxy – has to fulfill, the legacy that Orthodoxy inherited by becoming the Third Rome: “the fate of the Earth (zemli), the fate of the heaven (nebo) depends on Orthodox Russia. Moscow – the Third Rome, there will be no fourth.

Criticism by Golovanenko

Golovanenko published his critical analysis in three separate articles. In his units of analysis he follows the framework along which he presented the brief summaries: he approaches with a critical mindset the themes of religious-philosophical views, the essence of Christianity, the essence of Orthodoxy in Fedorov’s teaching. It is not necessary to discuss all the details of his criticism, as these are relatively long essays and his critical notes has a common argument: Fedorov rejects transcendentalism, the idea of creation and freedom. Golovanenko’s fundamental premise is that the “basic intuition” that dominates Fedorov is “the intuition of the whole (tselyi)”¹⁵⁹ which will lead to an immanent worldview. In Golovanenko’s opinion, the key to “give a general evaluation about Fedorov’s philosophy” is to understand the nature of *transcendental* in his ideas.

Golovanenko is highly concerned with Fedorov’s ideas about the body, the soul and the spirit. In his discussion he clearly separates this three concepts and clearly he delegates the soul into the immanent world and the spirit to the transcendental, to God in the Fedorovian

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 95.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 104.

¹⁵⁹ Golovanenko, “Immanentizm”, 570.

framework¹⁶⁰: Fedorov “excludes the reality of spiritual (*dukhovnii*) experience, leading him to a psychic-bodily phenomenon (*iavlenia dushevna-telesnogo*). If one felt the quality difference between body and soul, between death and life ... then it would not be possible to talk about the victory over death by scientific-natural (*estestvenni*) ways.”¹⁶¹ In Golovanenko’s criticism *secret* belongs to the sphere of transcendental and by refusing secret, Fedorov denies the transcendental too: “Fedorov repudiates any kind of a secret and together with it the creative-transcendental, the spiritual world. Life and creation became misty, obscure projects.”¹⁶² In Golovanenko’s interpretation Fedorov does not “accept God’s creative energy”, thus, creation (*tvorchestvo*) for Fedorov becomes “recreation (*vozcozodanie*), amalgamation (*cmeshenie*) and formation.”¹⁶³ The binary opposition *delo* (work, act, action, deed) and *bezdel’e* (idleness, inactivity) has their own pairs in terms of passive and active resurrection. Work and activity (*trud*) is the source of value and it is associated with [active] resurrection. Idleness is “rewarded” by transcendental, passive resurrection, by the coming of Judgement Day. Golovanenko categorically rejects looking at Judgment Day, i.e. passive resurrection as *punishment*: “[t]ranscendental [passive] resurrection, as the initial act of the *salvation* of the sinful consciousness, does not mean that people accept passively [God’s] grace, it does not make them non-working, idle slaves. It is an answer to the deepest thirst for salvation...”¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ The relationship of body (*soma*), soul (*psyche*) and spirit (*pneuma*) and their nature (material or non-material) is one of the most complicated questions within Christian theology and anthropology. In early Christianity, a tripartite view was dominant which differentiated between the three concepts and perceived them as independent from each other. Later, a bipartite, dichotomic view came to the foreground which claimed that “soul” and “spirit” were used interchangeably in biblical texts. Sometimes, spirit is referred to as the “higher faculty” of the soul.

¹⁶¹ Golovanenko, “Immanentizm”, 582.

¹⁶² Ibid., 583.

¹⁶³ Note: An interesting parallel is the difference between the Hebrew verb “*bara*”, creating ex nihilo, and the verb “*asah*”, creating from already existing material. “*Bara*” was used in the Bible exclusively in Genesis, in connection to God, while “*asah*” can also be translated as “to make” instead of “to create”.

¹⁶⁴ Golovanenko, “*Taina*”, 511.

Related to the theme of active versus passive resurrection is the function of hell in Fedorov's ideas. For Fedorov, heaven and hell also represented a kind of separation, the lack of wholeness and, therefore, "Orthodoxy, in Fedorov's opinion, does not know heaven and hell, it knows only the purgatory: the universality of [active] resurrection becomes clear in the idea of purgatory."¹⁶⁵ N. Peterson felt the need to answer these charges and he did so in his pamphlet "On the Religious Character of N. F. Fedorov's teaching)¹⁶⁶ but he did not provide counter-arguments against Golovanenko's arguments, he just emphasized Fedorov's religiosity as a person. It will be only Vasilii Zenkovsky, who gives serious thoughts to the question of transcendence in Fedorov's thought.

¹⁶⁵ Golovanenko, "Proekt", 305.

¹⁶⁶ Nikolai Peterson, *O religioznom kharakhtere uchenia N.F. Fedorova*. [On the religious character of N. F. Fedorov] 1915.

3.2 Fedorov and the “intelligentsia in exile”

After the Bolshevik Revolution, members of the intelligentsia had to decide their alliances. If they welcomed or at least accepted the Bolshevik regime and Soviet Russia they could continue their life and work in Russia. If they refused reconciliation they had to face the consequences which in most of the cases involved prison, exile to camps or death. Some decided to leave, some decided to stay. There were some rare figures who stayed in mother Russia and could avoid severe repression, for instance the renowned scientist Vladimir Vernadsky.¹⁶⁷ However, he was an exception to the rule. Even those who stayed were later personally handpicked by Lenin and condemned to be threats to the new regime and to be removed abroad. The removal took place eventually in 1922 when on two German ships, later labeled as the Philosophers' ships (*filosofskii parokhod*), more than 160 intellectuals were sent into exile. Among these intellectuals we find prominent thinker such as Nikolai Berdyaev, Sergei Bulgakov, Lev Karsavin, Nikolai Lossky, Piterim Sorokon, Sergei Trubetskoy, Semen Frank and many others.¹⁶⁸ Russian philosophy went into exile. Although Mikhail Epstein highlights that Russian philosophy also remained in Russian soil, but its story is not yet written: “a coherent history of Russian non-Marxist and non-emigre thought of this period has still to be written.”¹⁶⁹

In this subchapter, I analyse two interpretations of Fedorov's teaching from two prominent émigré thinkers in their two comprehensive works on Fedorov. I chose them as units of analysis because their work has been and is still widely used as reference books on the history of Russian thought. I argue that Florovsky echoes similar interpretation to

¹⁶⁷ See: Kendall E. Bailes, *Science and Russian Culture in an Age of Revolutions: V.I. Vernadsky and His Scientific School, 1863-1945*, Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

¹⁶⁸ See: Lesley Chamberlain, *The Philosophy Steamer: Lenin and the Exile of the Intelligentsia* (London: Atlantic Books, 2007).

¹⁶⁹ Mikhail Epstein, “The Significance of Russian Philosophy”, Project for the National Council for Soviet and East European Research. 1993.

Golovanenko's from the 1910s and highlights the lack of transcendence from Fedorov's Common Task, while Zenkovsky in his thorough analysis argues that Fedorov's system is more complex and it does include some forms of transcendence.

3.2.1 George Florovsky (1893– 1979) and *Paths of Russian Theology*

Georgii Vasilevich Florovsky was born in late imperial Russia, but in 1920 he emigrated. From 1926 he was the professor of the St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute (Institut de théologie orthodoxe Saint-Serge) in Paris. He was ordained as an Orthodox priest in 1932. He spent the war years in Yugoslavia and in the Czech Republic, but in 1946 he returned to Paris to the Institute. After retirement, he continued teaching in the USA, at Princeton university until his death. He became famous as an active supporter of international ecumenical movement from the 1930s. He is also widely known as the propagator of the “return to the fathers”, his project of Neopatristic synthesis, i.e. “a new, contemporary reading of the works (tvorenii) of the fathers and teacher of the ancient, undivided Church.”¹⁷⁰ He develops his argument for the “return to the fathers” partly in his fundamental book, *Paths of Russian Theology*. Looking back at the intellectual and spiritual history of Russia, he described a tendency to move away from the authentic Orthodox tradition, especially from the eighteenth century when the “Western captivity” of Orthodox started under the influence of Catholicism and Protestantism. He had negative opinion on the developments in the nineteenth and twentieth century, he particularly rejected V.I. Soloviev's sophiology and his followers.¹⁷¹ In his opinion, Soloviev “was not an original thinker”.¹⁷² Florovsky in the foreword summarized his views:

I am convinced that the intellectual secession (otryv) from Patristics and Byzantism was the main reason behind all disorder and spiritual (dukhovnii) failure in Russian development. The history of these failures is told in this book. And all authentic

¹⁷⁰ “Florovsky, Georgii Vasilevich” In: Mikhail A. Maslin ed., *Russkaia filosofia: Slovar'* (M.: Respublika, 1995) 589.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Florovsky, *Russian Theology*, 404.

achievements of Russian theology (bogoslavia) were connected to the creative return to patristic (sviatotocheskii) sources.¹⁷³

Fedorov is discussed in Florovsky's book in the chapter "The Awakening of Philosophy", after the Slavophiles and Solovev. He believes that Fedorov had a highly eighteenth century character, especially in his "happy optimism of the Enlightenment". He also connects Fedorov to French positivism, especially to August Comte with whom Fedorov has a lot in common. Furthermore,

...all of his contemplation on the kinless (*nerodstvennoe*) condition of the world very strongly reminds one of the teachings of the French positivists and socialists about "anarchy" (A. Comte), about the pauperization of "brotherhood" (Saint-Simone) and about the "fragmentation" of life (Fourier).¹⁷⁴

In general, many of Florovsky's comment echo Golovanenko. He also mentions in the beginning that "one of his critic talked about the fascination of soberness in Fedorov's worldview", which I believe refers to Golovanenko. From the point of view of Orthodoxy, Florovsky considers Fedorov a bit of a Trojan horse: "In his words Fedorov seems to be in churchism, in Orthodox. But it is only historical patter."¹⁷⁵ In Florovsky's opinion, Fedorov does not talk about Christ enough, and even though when he does is not clear enough. In his project "there is no otherworldliness (*potustoronnost'*) at all, there is plain insensibility to transfiguration."¹⁷⁶ Florovsky, as Golovanenko, also notes that Fedorov emphasized the importance of Christ being the one who resurrected Lazarus. In Florovsky's eyes this mean that Christ was mainly a "miracle maker (*chudotvorets*)" and he never understood the "secret of the Cross". "Bethany, where Lazarus was resurrected, for Fedorov is more important (*vyshe*) than Nazareth, or Bethlehem or Jerusalem itself."¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ Ibid., 10.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 418.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 410.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 416.

For Fedorov, death is “only a natural defect, underdevelopment (*nedorazvitost'*) of nature and the world”¹⁷⁸ and this is why Fedorov considers curing death with methods within the limits of nature, “without grace (*blagodat'*)”. Fedorov reminds Florovsky of Mechnikov with his “disharmony of human nature”, although Mechnikov devoted more attention to the individual, as “teaching about human personality (*lichnost'*) is not developed at all in Fedorov.”¹⁷⁹ Man becomes a kind of “engineer of nature” whose main concern should be regulation. Fedorov’s project for Florovsky is a “labour heaven” (*trudovoi rai*) which gains its power from “reason” and “[active] resurrecting becomes a human task (*delo*), the task of science and the task of art.”¹⁸⁰ Florovsky does not see Fedorov’s religiosity in his “active” approach in contrast to ascetic Christianity: “He goes further. He sets against divine action – human [action]. He sets against grace – labour. He substitutes one with another. The world is closed in itself.”¹⁸¹

All in all, in Florovsky’s opinion, Fedorov’s teaching is a “sophisticated form of ‘positivistic religion. And, strictly speaking, nothing would change if there would be no mention of God in it (*umolchat' o Boge*) (as many of Fedorov’s followers now do so).”¹⁸² He denies Fedorov’s Christianity because his worldview is not in harmony with Christian Revelation. “He is building some kind of a “new Christianity””, but “Christian Revelation is not the source of his inspiration.”¹⁸³ Similarly to Golovanenko, Florovsky also see Fedorov close to magic and cannot see “free inspiration and creativity” in his worldview.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 412.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 414.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 415.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 416.

3.2.2. *Vasilii Zenkovsky (1881-1962) and the History of Russian Philosophy*

Zenkovsky studied at the Kiev University. During 1913-14, he studied abroad, and afterwards returned to Kiev as a professor. He held the position of the Minister of religion under the Skoropadski government in 1918. In 1919 he emigrated from Russia, first to Yugoslavia and then to Czechoslovakia. In 1926, similarly to Florovsky, he became a professor at the St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris and worked there until his death. In 1942, he became an ordained priest. His magnum opus, *The History of Russian Philosophy*, was published in the end of the 1940s.

Florovsky's interpretation of Fedorov echoed Golovanenko – Zenkovsky's interpretation is closer to Peterson and Kozhevnikov. In contrast to Florovsky and Golovanenko, Zenkovsky sees Fedorov's Common Task to be a Christian project – which might surpass the traditional Christian framework, but its origin is undeniably in Christianity: “even if Fedorov in the course of his constructions goes far away from the Church and from its worldview, it does not weakens the authenticity of his complete embeddedness in the theme of Christianity.”¹⁸⁴ Similarly to Peterson, Zenkovsky often emphasises that those who cannot see this Christian root, like Florovsky, did not acquainted themselves enough with Fedorov's texts, in case of “passing familiarity” (*pri beglom znakomstve*).¹⁸⁵ However, in contrast to Fedorov's early disciples, Zenkovsky does try to explain Fedorov's Christianity and the presence of transcendence in the Common Task. He provides quotes from Fedorov which has not received attention in past interpretations.

In general, Zenkovsky highlights Fedorov's *projective* thinking, his emphasis on deontology, on “what should be” (*dolzno byt'*) and that humanity should be active.

¹⁸⁴ Zenkovsky, *Russian Philosophy*, 567.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 561. Zenkovsky also adds that Fedorov's influence on Solovev is undeniable alithc Prince Evgenii Trubetskoy refuses to see for some reason. Int he previous subchapter, I showed that Trubetskoy does not deny Fedorov's influence all in all, he wrote that Fedorov's influence was the stronges in Solovev's middle period (1890s).

Zenkovsky does not only states, but also explains the root of this activity. Fedorov sees the root of the abstract nature of science (*nauka*) and philosophy in the original sin, man “believing to Satan, condemned itself to knowledge without action (*deistvie*)”.¹⁸⁶ However, in Fedorov’s teaching, this initial mistake by man can be fixed, the “internal connection between thought and action by the power of people”¹⁸⁷ can be restored. Zenkovsky argues that this “Christian naturalism” is in principle not immanentism, but “an acknowledgment that after Christ and the salvation of the world realized by him, the power of salvation is present (*prebyvat*) in the world.”¹⁸⁸ This is not a “denial of the transcendence”,¹⁸⁹ but an acknowledgement that transcendence entered our world.

Zenkovsky does see transcendence in Fedorov’s teaching, he does not agree with Florovsky that if we would take out God nothing would change. Though, he admits that the “bold project of “immanent [active] resurrection” distance Fedorov from traditional Christian teaching. The root of this distancing is that Fedorov “shares the common faith of Enlightenment in the value and transfigurative power of consciousness, faith in man, as a creator.”¹⁹⁰ The weakness in Fedorov’s teaching, in Zenkovsky’s opinion, is not that he highlighted the importance of man’s active participation in salvation, but “that he naively believed (similarly to the whole of Enlightenment) that reason (*razum*) and consciousness (*soznanie*) of man can realize this task on its own.”¹⁹¹ All in all, this naivety does not places Fedorov out of the group of religious thinkers and he “has a special place” in the history of Russian philosophy “which was always thrilled by religious topics.”¹⁹²

¹⁸⁶ Zenkovsky, *Russian Philosophy*, 565. Quote from Fedorov.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 566.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 571.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 575.

¹⁹² Ibid.

Chapter 4 The forefather of Russian Cosmism

4.1 “Did Russian Cosmism Exist?” – Some remarks on the post-Soviet phenomenon

“In my opinion,” said M. Hagemeister unexpectedly. “there was no such thing as Russian Cosmism, because there was no living tradition, no continuity in the development of ideas...”¹⁹³

As I mentioned in the introduction, when Fedorov’s name appears in Western academic literature, he is often referred to as the “forefather of Russian Cosmism”. Asif Siddiqi wrote that “the most important worldview that fed into twentieth-century Cosmism stemmed from the writings of Nikolai Fedorovich Fedorov (1828(sic!)-1903), the eccentric philosopher whose works influenced many...”.¹⁹⁴ Young gave to his most recent book the title *The Russian Cosmists: The Esoteric Futurism of Nikolai Fedorov and His Followers*, this clearly indicates that he sees Fedorov as the founder of Russian Cosmism. Therefore, Russian Cosmism cannot be left out in a thesis dealing with Nikolai Fedorov, although I can only draft certain issues. I will highlight that before we can talk about what it means that Fedorov is the forefather of Russian Cosmism, we have to make it more clear what is Russian Cosmism.

If we look at recent comprehensive works on Russian intellectual history in Russia, we can also find Fedorov’s name under the section “Cosmism” or “Russian Cosmism”. Although we can also find books (recommended for higher education) in which he is not discussed separately, only mentioned in connection to other thinkers.¹⁹⁵ In the book *History of Russian Philosophy*¹⁹⁶ (2001), edited by A. Maslin and others, Fedorov is grouped together with “other Cosmists”, his neighbours are Konstantin E. Tsiolkovsky, Vladimir I. Vernadsky and A. L. Chizhevsky under subchapter “Cosmism”. In the short introduction to the chapter “Cosmism”

¹⁹³ Nikolai K. Gavriushin, “A byl li “russkii kosmizm”?” In: *Voprosy istorii estestvoznaniia i tekhniki*. 1993. № 3. 104-5.

¹⁹⁴ Siddiqi, “Imagining the Cosmos”, 265.

¹⁹⁵ For instance in: Viacheslav V. Serbinenko ed., *Russkaia filosofii: kurs lektsii: kurs lektsii* (M.: Omega-L. 2006)

¹⁹⁶ Mikhail A. Maslin et al., *Istoriia russkoi filosofii: Ucheb. dlia vuzov* (M.: Respublika, 2001)

we can read that “Cosmism” “entered not so long ago the scientific and common lexicons, but it even became to a certain extent fashionable.”¹⁹⁷ Cosmism is defined as

... a specific perception, sensation of the world, realizing the organic whole of everything with everyone, and purposeful (tselesoobraznaia) socio-political activity to be realized in total-planetary scales or surpassing the limited, earthly boundaries into the universe (mirovoi prostranstva). In other words, it is a new property (kachestvo) of scientific perception of the world and the practical relationship of man to the world.¹⁹⁸

This is a very vague definition for Cosmism and it hardly grasps the essence of Cosmism. It is *problematic* to define Russian Cosmism. Talking about movements and groups in intellectual history is always reconstruction to a certain extent, but in the case of Russian Cosmism it seems to be even more the case. Unavoidably, especially in Russian history, issuing “labels” for groups of thinkers does lead to the image of increased homogeneity at the expense of visible heterogeneity. Young starts his book by stating that after the fall of the Soviet Union Russian Cosmism has been “one of the most vigorous and productive ... *rediscovered* [italics added] intellectual tendencies...”.¹⁹⁹ This implies that Russian Cosmism is something that existed, then was forgotten, but was rediscovered. I believe that more emphasis should be put on the *constructed* nature of Russian Cosmism. This constructed nature can be felt more in the following quote from the book edited by Scanlan on the revival of Russian thought:

...it is through the efforts of Semenova and others that a whole series of Russian thinkers who share some of Fedorov’s ideas are now being grouped together as exponents of what is called “Russian cosmism” – an outlook that focuses on the interrelationships between earthly life and the vast cosmos in which it is embedded.²⁰⁰

It is also conspicuous that there is no consensus on who should belong to Russian Cosmism, who should be labeled as a “Cosmist”. In my opinion, this problem is partly due to the lack of not even a clear, but at least a working definition for Russian Cosmism which could serve as a starting point for later debates. Young, following the paradigm of the Semenova group,

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 378.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 378.

¹⁹⁹ Young, *Russian Cosmists*, 3.

²⁰⁰ Scanlan, “Nineteenth Century Revisited”, 26.

differentiates between *religious* and *scientific* Cosmists. He discusses as a religious Cosmist Vladimir Solovev (1853-1900), Sergei Bulgakov (1871-1944), Pavel Florensky (1897-1964) and Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948). Among scientific Cosmists we can find Konstantin Tsiolkovsky (1857-1935), Vladimir Vernadsky (1863-1945), Alexander Chizhevsky (1897-1964) and Vasily Kuprevich (1897-1969). In the beginning of his book Young asks ‘What makes a Cosmist a Cosmist?’ and then answers his question by a not so helpful tautology:

Cosmism is a loose, diverse, and complex tendency, so rather than attempt another simple one- or two-sentence answer, I would prefer to look more closely, first, at the Russian context out of which Cosmist thought emerged, then at the major individual Cosmist thinkers one by one, ... and gradually, by the end of this study, we will have gained a clearer sense of what makes a Cosmist a Cosmist...²⁰¹

In other words, with a bit exaggeration, a Cosmist is a “thinker who I discuss as a Cosmist thinker”. This might provide us with an understanding of what similar ideas these thinkers might have, but it does not justify the *choice* of these figures under the label Cosmism. As Scanlan mentions, “[m]embership in this group of thinkers expands or contracts (over a range reaching Vladimir Solov’ev to Grigorii Rasputin) depending on the breadth with which the term ‘cosmism’ is conceived.”²⁰² Later, in Young’s book, close to the end, we can eventually find the answer to his question *how* he chose his list of Cosmists, when he does describe the constructed nature of Cosmism. Despite its length it is worth quoting the whole:

A major event in establishing Cosmism as a field for study was Gacheva and Semenova’s previously cited 1993 publication, *Russkii kosmizm: Antologiiia filosofskoi mysli* (Russian Cosmism: An anthology of philosophical thought), *the collection that defined who the Cosmists were and what shared themes made them a movement* [italics added]. Before the anthology, the religious thinkers Berdyaev, Bulgakov, and Florensky were not generally considered to belong to the same tendency of thought as the scientists Tsiolkovsky, Vernadsky, Chizhevsky, and others. But in their selection of texts, their introduction to the anthology, and their prefatory comments and notes on the individual thinkers, Gacheva and Semenova present a persuasive argument that despite differences, the shared theme of “active evolution” allows these seventeen thinkers to be considered together as participants in a common intellectual tendency, the major constituents of the Cosmist canon.²⁰³

²⁰¹ Young, *Russian Cosmists*, 11.

²⁰² Scanlan, “Nineteenth Century Revisited”, 26.

²⁰³ Young, *Russian Cosmists*, 223.

In my opinion researchers on Cosmism should ask: did Gacheva and Semenova established “Cosmism as a field for study” or did they established “Cosmism”? Is it the same to describe the “history of Cosmism” or the “canonical texts of a movement”? As Cosmism emerged in the post-Soviet era, it should be also analysed in its social context. One of the many question that has to be answered is not only *what* is Cosmism, but *how* did it emerge and *why*?

The problem with Young’s presentation of Russian Cosmism is that it is too *static*. Cosmism is not a finished chapter of Russian intellectual history.²⁰⁴ In my opinion, Cosmism should be seen as a term which covers a more *dynamic* and more *diverse* phenomenon. A collection of articles, *The Philosophy of Russian Cosmism* (Filosofia russkogo kosmizma)²⁰⁵, is a great example to support my point. The collection was the work of the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAN). Young did not discuss this collection and he did not include it in the bibliography. The collection recognizes the diversity and dynamism of the term Russian Cosmism, as it is explicitly stated in the foreword:

...even the existence of “Russian Cosmism” as a philosophical current (techenie) generate serious debates in our days. These debates found their way into the pages of the collection which was prepared by the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAN) where there are alternative approaches to this philosophical school (napravlenie). The collection was planned to be polyphonic: one sees in the philosophy of Russian Cosmism – a worthy and respectable philosophical current, a second – a form of neo-paganism which comes out against Orthodoxy, a third – the naturalization of religious dogmas and mythologem, a fourth – an answer to the current demands of natural science and a vision (predvidenie) of new paradigms both in philosophy and in science. The reader can juxtapose various views on such a complicated and multicoloured phenomenon as the philosophy of Russian Cosmism and determine his own relationship to it.²⁰⁶

This approach is completely missing from Young’s discussion. Research on Russian Cosmism should take into consideration the *social* dimension of the term, processes of

²⁰⁴ It is strange that, on the one hand, Young does devote his last chapter to “Cosmism and Its Offshoots Today”, but, on the other hand, he does not emphasise the significance of discussing a movement that it in constant change and development.

²⁰⁵ Aleksandr P. Ogurtsov and Lidia V. Fesenkova, ed., *Filosofia russkogo kosmizma* (M.: Fond “Novoe tysyacheletie”, 1996)

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 3-4.

creating a canon. Furthermore, the *diversity and heterogeneity* of the meanings assigned to the term should not be downplayed.

The problem a researcher outside of the movement might face is conspicuous if we read V. V. Kaziutinskii's article *Classical Cosmism and Contemporary Cosmism*. He mentions the problem of distortion of Tsiolkovsky's ideas: for a long time, parts about "dialectical materialism" were quoted, but other parts which were more essential for Tsiolkovsky were condemned as "mistakes". He wrote that one does not have to agree with everything in Tsiolkovsky's "cosmic philosophy", but one should also not

...banish K. E. Tsiolkovsky's idea about the world (*mirovozzrencheskii kontseptsia*) to the archives of the history of philosophy, like M. Hagemeister, the famous German historian did. Once he came to us for a reading, we were very happy about this visit. However, when he heard that cosmic philosophy has not only historical-philosophical, but also contemporary resonance (*zvuchanie*); he, without saying goodbye to anyone, left Kaluga late in the night.²⁰⁷

Fedorov's interpretation in Cosmism is as chaotic as the term itself and I would not encounter to provide the characteristics between Cosmist interpretations until the term itself received more research.

²⁰⁷ Vadim V. Kaziutinskii, "Kosmizm klassicheskii i kosmizm covremennnyi" In: *"Sluzhitel' dukha vechnoi pamiaty" Nikolai Fedorovich Fedorov. Sbornik nauchnykh statei*. T.1. (M.: "Pashkov Dom", 2010) 129.

Conclusions

In my thesis, I presented shortly presented Nikolai Fedorov's life and ideas to provide the reader with background material to understand the controversies that can arise in interpretations of his ideas. I attempted to deconstruct Fedorov's teaching to his one central idea and identify crucial building blocks. My analysis can be questioned and complemented, but for the purposes of this thesis it was sufficient.

In chapter two, I showed the deep links that connect Fedorov to Russian philosophical thinking of the nineteenth century. I gave a short introduction on typical characteristics of Russian philosophical thinking, mainly in contrast to Western models. I also tried to find some sources of Fedorov's teaching, therefore, I emphasised thematic similarities and common traits of "projective" thinking with the Slavophiles. I originated Fedorov's ideas on "unconscious nature" to Herzen. I pointed out general trends and the importance of the challenges that modernism brought into Russia at the end of the century and the conscious reflections on these changes. I highlighted the significance of the theme death both in religious and scientific discourses at the end of the century.

In chapter three, I presented my research on several interpretations on Fedorov from the twentieth century. With close-reading of the texts that were dealing with Fedorov and the question of whether his teaching contains transcendence or is purely immanent. My main argument was that this controversy and these two viewpoints were adopted by later interpretations by Florovsky and Zenkovsky when they were working on their comprehensive books on the histories of Russian philosophical thinking. I did not argue for the "truthfulness" of either interpretations. As a conclusion, I can say that, in my view, Fedorov's writings are too complex and unclear. Because of this unclearness, I think the role of interpreter is crucial in Fedorov's interpretations because both an "only immanent" and an "immanent and

transcendent” interpretation can be built by using citation from *The Philosophy of the Common Task*. Thus, Fedorov’s teaching remains versatile – depending on the interpreter.

In my last chapter, I presented certain issues on the post-Soviet phenomenon Russian Cosmism. I argued that until there is not more research on the social context of this phenomenon and on the term itself, it is pointless to discuss what the “forefather” of Russian Cosmism, Fedorov’s newest label might mean. In the context of this social dimension, I see Bernice Rosenthal’s approach to periods of crisis of spirit and crisis of value and the rise of new paradigms – such as Occultism to be relevant to research on Russian Cosmism and I hope that this issue will be addressed in the future.

Bibliography

Primary sources by Fedorov:

Fedorov, Nikolai F.: *Sochineniia*. [Collective works] M.: Mysl', 1982.

-- *Filosofiia obshchego dela*. [*The Philosophy of the Common Task*] 1-2. L'Age d' Homme. Lausanne. (Reprint), 1985.

-- *Sochineniia*. [Collective works] M.: Raritet, 1994.

-- *Sochineniia v 4-kh knigakh*. [Collective works in 4 volumes] M.: Progress: Traditsia, 1995-2000. Available online: www.nffedorov.ru

-- *Die Frage der Bruderschaft oder der Verwandtschaft...* [The question about brotherhood or kinship...] In: *Die Neue Menschheit: Biopolitische Utopien in Russland zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts*. [The new humanity: Biopolitical utopias in Russia in the beginning of the 20th century] Ed. B. Groys and M. Hagemester. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 2005. 68-127.

-- *What Was Man Created For? : The Philosophy of the Common Task*. Ed. E. Koutaïssouf and M. Minto. Honeyglen Publishing. L'Age d'Homme. Lausanne, 1990.

-- *Szupramoralizmus, avagy az egyetemes szintézis*. [Supramoralism or the universal synthesis] Transl. Baán István. In: *Filozófiai Figyelő* XIII. 1991. 180-202.

Other primary sources:

Berdyaev, Nikolai A. "Religiia voskresheniia: "Filosofiia obshchego dela" N.F. Fedorova" [The religion of [active] resurrection: "The Philosophy of the Common Task" by N.F. Fedorov] In: *N. F. Fedorov: pro et contra*. T. 1. SPb: Izd-vo. Russkogo Kh-ogo gum-ogo in-ta. 2004. 424-468.

Bulgakov, Sergei Nikolaevich. "Osnovnye problemy teorii progressa" [Fundamental problems of the theory of progress] In: Bulgakov, S.N., *Ot marksizma k idealizmu: sbornik statei, 1896-1903*. [From Marxism to Idealism] Obshestvennaia pol'za. 1904.

--- "Ivan Nikolaevich kak filosofskii tip" [Ivan Nikolaevich as a philosophical type] In: Bulgakov, S.N., *Ot marksizma k idealizmu: sbornik statei, 1896-1903*. [From Marxism to Idealism] Obshestvennaia pol'za. 1904.

- “Zagadochnii myslitel’ (N. F. Fedorov)” [An Enigmatic Thinker. N.F. Fedorov] In: Sergei N. Bulgakov, *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh*. [Collective works in 2 volumes] T.2. M.: “Nauka”, 286-301.
- Florovsky, Georgii V. *Puti russkogo bogosloviia*. M.: Institut russkoi tsivilizatsii, 2009.
- Golovanenko, Sergei A., Rev. “*Fedorov N.F. Filosofiiia obshchego dela: Stat’i, mysli i pis’ma*. [Fedorov, N.F. The Philosophy of the Common Task: Articles, thoughts and letters] T.1. Vernyi, 1907.; T.2. M., 1913.” In: *Bogoslovskii Vestnik*, 1913. T.3. №12. 832-844. Available online: <http://www.bogoslov.ru/journal/vestnik/>
- Filosofiia smerti i voskresheniia. [The philosophy of death and [active] resurrection] Rev. “*Fedorov N.F. Filosofiiia obshchego dela: Stat’i, mysli i pis’ma*. T.1. Vernyi, 1907.; T.2. M., 1913.” In: *Bogoslovskii Vestnik*, 1914. T.1. № 4. 664-688.
- “Pravoslavie i kult predkov” [Orthodoxy and the cult of the forefathers] In: *Bogoslovskii Vestnik*, 1914. T.2. № 5. 83-109. Available online: --“Immanentizm i khristianskaia filosofiia. O real-filosofskikh predposylkakh N.F. Fedorova” [Immanentism and Christian philosophy. On N.F. Fedorov’s real-philosophical principles] In: *Bogoslovskii Vestnik*, 1914. T.2. № 7/8. 569-592.
- “Taina Synovstvo. O khristianstve N.F. Fedorova” [The secret of sonship. On N. F. Fedorov’s Christianity] In: *Bogoslovskii Vestnik*, 1915. T.1. № 3. 498-516.
- “Proiekt ili simvol? O religioznom proektivizme N.F. Fedorova” [Project or symbol? On N. F. Fedorov’s religious projectivism] In: *Bogoslovskii Vestnik*, 1915. T.1. № 3. 498-516.
- Georgievsky, Grigorii P. “L. N. Tolstoy i N.F. Fedorov. Iz lichnykh vospominanii” [From personal memories] In: *N. F. Fedorov: pro et contra*. T. 1. SPb: Izd-vo. Russkogo Khogo gum-ogo in-ta. 2004. 165-179.
- Herzen, Aleksandr I. *Sobranie Sochinenii v 30-i tomakh. T.3. Diletantizm v nauke, Pis’ma ob izuchenii prirody 1842-46* [Collected work in 30 volumes. T.3. Dilletantism in science, Correspondence on the study of nature] M.: Izd. Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1954.
- Kozhevnikov, Vladimir A., *Nikolai Fedorovich Fedorov. Opyt izlozheniia ego ucheniia po izdannym i neizdannym proizvedeniiam, perepiske i lichnym besedam*. [Nikolai Fedorovich Fedorov. An attempt to present his teaching on the basis of published and non-published writings, correspondence and personal discussions] M.: Tip. Imp. Mosck. un-ta. 1908. Available online: www.nffedorov.ru
- Linnichenko, Ivan A. “Moi vstrechi s L’vom Tolstym” In: *N. F. Fedorov: pro et contra*. T. 1. SPb: Izd-vo. Russkogo Khogo gum-ogo in-ta. 2004. 218-221.

Peterson, Nikolai P., Zametki po povodu stat'i kn. E. Trubetskogo – “Zhiznennaia zadacha Soloveva i vsemirnyi krizis zhizneponimaniia” v “Voprosakh Filosofii i Psikhologii”, sentiabr'-oktiabr' 1912 goda. [Notes about E. Trubetskoy's article – “Solovev's vital task and the global crisis of worldview” – in “Questions of Philosophy and Psychology”, September-October 1912 In: *Voprosy filosofii I psikhologii* Kn. 118. 405-411.

--- N.F. Fedorov i ego kniga “Filosofiia obshchego dela” v protivopolozhnosti ucheniu L. N. Tolstogo “o neprotivlenii” i drugim ideiam nashego vremeni. Vernii: Tip. Semirechen oblastnogo P-niia. 1912. Available online: www.nffedorov.ru

--- O religioznom kharakhtere uchenia N.F. Fedorova. [On the religious character of N. F. Fedorov] 1915.

Trubetskoy, Evgenii. “Neskol'ka slov o Soloveve i Fedorove. (Otvét N. P. Petersonu.)” [A couple of words on Solovev and Fedorov. Answer to N.P. Peterson] In: *Voprosy filosofii I psikhologii* Kn. 118. 412-426.

E. Trubetskogo – “Zhiznennaia zadacha Soloveva i vsemirnyi krizis zhizneponimaniia” [Solovev's vital task and the global crisis of worldview] In: *Voprosy filosofii I psikhologii*. Kn. 114. 224-287

Zenkovsky, V.V., *Istoriia russkoi filosofii*. M.:Akademicheskii Proekt, Raritet, 2001.

Secondary literature:

Bailes, Kendall E. *Science and Russian Culture in an Age of Revolutions: V.I. Vernadsky and His Scientific School, 1863-1945*. Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.

Bohachevsky-Chomiak, Martha, and Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, eds. *A Revolution of the Spirit: Crisis of Value in Russia, 1890-1918*. 2nd ed. New York: Fordham University Press, 1990.

Coates, Ruth. “Silver Age” In: *A History of Russian Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Ermishin, O.T. “On Two Conceptions of Russian Philosophy.” *Russian Studies in Philosophy* 43, no. 3 (Winter 2004): 81–89.

Engelstein, Laura. *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.

Epstein, Mikhail: “The Significance of Russian Philosophy” Project for the National Council for Soviet and East European Research. 1993. Available online: <http://www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceeer/>

- Filosofiia bessmertii i voskresheniia. Po materialam VII Fedorovskikh chtenii.* Vyp. 2. 1996.
M. Available online: www.nffedorov.ru
- Gavriushin, N. K., “A byl li “russkii kosmizm”?” [Did “Russian Cosmism” exist?] In: *Voprosy istorii estestvoznaniia i tekhniki* [Questions on the history of science and technology] 1993. № 3. 104-5. Available online: <http://bogomysl.narod.ru/Bylli.htm>
- Gordin, Md, and K Hall. “Introduction: Intelligentsia Science Inside and Outside Russia.” *OSIRIS* 23 (2008): 1–19.
- Hagemeister, Michael: *Russian Cosmism in the 1920s and Today*. In: *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*: ed. by Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, Cornell University Press, 1997. pp. 185-202.
- Hagemeister, Michael. *Nikolaj Fedorov: Studien zu Leben, Werk und Wirkung*. Sagner, 1989.
Available online: <http://digi20.digitale-sammlungen.de/>
- Igumen Dionisii (Shlenov). ”Bogoslovskii Vestnik (1892-2006): istoriia i sovremennost”
Available online: <http://www.bogoslov.ru/bv/bv.html>
- Kaziutinskii, Vadim V. “Kosmizm klassicheskii i kosmizm covremennyi” [Classical Cosmism and Contemporary Cosmism] In: “*Sluzhitel’ dukha vechnoi pamiati*” *Nikolai Fedorovich Fedorov. Sbornik nauchnykh statei*. [“The servant of the spirit of eternal memory”: N. F. Fedorov. Collection of academic articles] T.1. M.: “Pashkov Dom”, 2010.
- Koehler, Ludmilla. *Fedorov N.F. The Philosophy of Action*. Pittsburgh: Institute for the Human Actions, 1979.
- Krementsov, N. L. *A Martian Stranded on Earth: Alexander Bogdanov, Blood Transfusions, and Proletarian Science*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Maslin , Mikhail A. ed., *Russkaia filosofiia: Slovar’*. M.: Respublika, 1995.
- Maslin, Mikhail A. et al., *Istoriia russkoi filosofii: Ucheb. dlia vuzov*. M.: Respublika, 2001.
- N. F. Fedorov: pro et contra. T. 1. SPb: Izd-vo. Russkogo Kh-ogo gum-ogo in-ta. 2004.
Available online: www.nffedorov.ru
- N. F. Fedorov: pro et contra. T.2. Izd-vo. Russkogo Kh-ogo gum-ogo in-ta. 2008. Available online: www.nffedorov.ru
- Mannherz, J. Review of “The Russian Cosmists: The Esoteric Futurism of Nikolai Fedorov and His Followers.” *SLAVIC REVIEW* 72, no. 4 (WIN 2013): 897–98.
- Medzibrodzsky, Alexandra “A deontológiai prioritás: Gondolatrokonság Ny. F. Fjodorov és a “korai szlavofilizmus” képviselői között” [The priority of deontology: Similarities

- between ideas by N. F. Fedorov and representatives of “early Slavophilism”] In: *Slavia Centralis* (SCN) VI/2 2013.
- Menzel, Birgit, Michael Hagemeister, and Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, eds. *The New Age of Russia: Occult and Esoteric Dimensions*. Studies on Language and Culture in Central and Eastern Europe, v. 17. München: Otto Sagner, 2012.
- Morozova, Ia. V., “Mechta dalekaia, no dorogaia”: dva spora o putiakh spaseniia [Distant, but dear dreams”: two debates on the paths of salvation] In: *Na poroge griadishchego: Pamiati Nikolaia Fedorovicha Fedorova* (1829-1903). [On the threshold of the future: In memory of Nikolai Fedorovich Fedorov] M.: Pashkov Dom, 2003.
- Ogurtsov, Aleksandr P. and Lidia V. Fesenkova, ed., *Filosofia russkogo kosmizma*. M.: Fond “Novoe tysiacheletie”, 1996.
- Pelikán, Jaroslav. *The Melody of Theology: A Philosophical Dictionary*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Podolsky, Scott H. “Cultural Divergence: Elie Metchnikoff’s *Bacillus Bulgaricus* Therapy and His Underlying Concept of Health.” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 72, no. 1 (1998): 1–27. doi:10.1353/bhm.1998.0056.
- Read, Christopher. *Religion, Revolution, and the Russian Intelligentsia, 1900-1912: The Vekhi Debate and Its Intellectual Background*. London: Macmillan, 1979.
- Rosenthal, Bernice Glatzer, ed. *Nietzsche in Russia*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986.
- . , ed. *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997.
- Scanlan, James P., ed. *Russian Thought after Communism: The Recovery of a Philosophical Heritage*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1994.
- Semenova, Svetlana. *Filosof budushchego veka. Nikolai Fedorov*. [A philosopher of the future era. Nikolai Fedorov] M.: Pashkov Dom, 2004. Available online: www.nffedorov.ru
- Serbinenko, Viacheslav V. ed., *Russkaia filosofia: kurs lektsii: kurs lektsii*. M.: Omega-L. 2006.
- Siddiqi, Assif. “Imagining the Cosmos: Utopians, Mystics, and the Popular Culture of Spaceflight in Revolutionary Russia” In. *OSIRIS* 23 (2008) 260-288.
- Sisák, Gábor. ”Az 1840-50-es évek oroszországi szlavofilizmusa. Eszmetörténeti elemzés.” [Slavophilism in Russia in 1840-50. Analysis in intellectual history.] PhD diss. Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem. 2008.

- . Review on *Michael Hagemeister: Nikolaj Fedorov. Studien zu Leben, Werk und Wirkung. Marburger Abhandlungen zur Geschichte und Kultur Osteuropas*, Band 28. Verlag Otto Sagner, München, 1989. 550 S., In: *Studia Slavica Hungarica*, 1996. (41) 387–394.
- Stroop, Christopher A., “Providential Empire Russia’s Religious Intelligentsia and the First World War” PhD diss, University of Stanford, 2012.
- Teskey, A. : *Platonov and Fyodorov: The Influence of Christian Philosophy on a Soviet Writer*. Amersham: Aveburg Publishing Company, 1982.
- Young, George M. *The Russian Cosmists: The Esoteric Futurism of Nikolai Fedorov and His Followers*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- *Nikolai F. Fedorov, an Introduction*. Nordland Pub. Co., 1979.
- *Fedorov’s Transformations of the Occult*. In: Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal ed. *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*. Cornell University Press, 1997. 171-184.
- Zakydalsky, Taras. “Fedorov’s Critique of Nietzsche, the “Eternal Tragedian” In: *Nietzsche in Russia*, ed. B. G. Rosenthal, Princeton.
- “N.F. Fyodorov’s Philosophy of Physical Resurrection” PhD. diss., Bryn Mawr College, 1976. (Microfilm-xerography reproduction from 1978)
- Zernov, Nicolas. *The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century*. Lond: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1963.