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KIERKEGAARD AND SOLOV'YOV AS RELIGIOUS THINKERS AND CRITICS OF PUBLIC RELIGION

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On the basis of the work of S. Kierkegaard "Exercises in Christianity" and V.S. Solovyov's "Readings on God-manhood" the article presents a comparative analysis of the positions of the authors as religious thinkers, formed in line with the problem of limiting the claims of the mind, which in earlier philosophy had become the only and comprehensive explanatory principle. The article outlines the common ground of their positions, which is a criticism of the official religion and the formalism of state churches. It notes that the innovative and original religious philosophies of Kierkegaard and Solovyov have a common mission - the revival of Christianity degenerated into a public religion, but at the same time they differ in character and structure. It concludes that Kierkegaard and Solovyov, critically reinterpreting the Christian religion that is contemporary to them, offer their religious philosophy as a way out of the crises of their time.

Keywords: Christian religion, Lutheran theology, Orthodox theology, Solovyov's religious philosophy, Kierkegaard's religious philosophy, Solovyov's concept of God-manhood, Kierkegaard's idea of Christ's oneness

КЬЕРКЕГОР И СОЛОВЬЕВ КАК РЕЛИГИОЗНЫЕ МЫСЛИТЕЛИ И КРИТИКИ ОФИЦИАЛЬНОЙ РЕЛИГИИ

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На материале работ С. Кьеркегора «Упражнения в христианстве» и В.С. Соловьева «Чтения о Богочеловечестве» представлен сравнительный анализ позиций авторов как религиозных мыслителей, сформировавшихся в русле проблемы ограничения притязаний разума, который в предшествующей философии сделался единственным и всеобъемлющим объяснительным принципом. Обозначено общее основание их позиций, которое заключается в критике официальной религии и формализма государственных церквей. Отмечено, что новаторские и оригинальные религиозные философии Кьеркегора и Соловьева имеют общую миссию – возрождение выродившегося в публичную религию христианства, но в то же время различаются по характеру и структуре. Делается вывод, что Кьеркегор и Соловьев, критически переосмысливая современную им христианскую религию, предлагают свою религиозную философию в качестве выхода из кризисов своего времени.

Ключевые слова: христианская религия, лютеранское богословие, православное богословие, религиозная философия Соловьева, религиозная философия Кьеркегора, соловьевская концепция Богочеловечества, идея единства со Христом Кьеркегора

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Introduction

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813-1855) and Vladimir Sergeevich Solov'yov (1853-1900), and their works, are two worlds apart. In many ways they are so different that bringing them together appears strange or perhaps unjustifiable. It is like hearing the loud and penetrating organ tones of Lutheran hymns while gazing at the flickering lights of wax candles in front of an ancient icon in a darkened Russian Orthodox church, a situation that can be imagined but would never occur. The works of both thinkers¹ were written in different contexts and times, and to realize this one only must think of the fact that in 1853, the year Solov'yov was born, Kierkegaard was in the final phase of his activity. The biographical parallel that both thinkers lived short lives did not help them either to get to know each other's work and appreciate it. However, Solov'yov read some tiny fragments of Kierkegaard's texts, but this reading had no noticeable effect on his work [1, p. 129].

Even though Kierkegaard and Solov'yov are two worlds apart, there are fundamental things that unite them. In this paper, I will explore the philosophical kinship that exists between Kierkegaard and Solov'yov, which is a kinship that has all too long been overseen.² Both thinkers were born in countries that were latecomers to modernity³ and both young Kierkegaard and young Solov'yov had to cope with the scientific and philosophical innovations from abroad without having a sturdy native philosophical tradition to rely on. However, both Solov'yov's Russia and Kierkegaard's Denmark had strong native religious traditions where both thinkers could find refuge. Eventually, both thinkers thought their way out of their religious and existential crises and took up their life's work of development of religious philosophy. Their shared mystical inclination, the study of the history of philosophy they immersed themselves in, and their native Danish Lutheran and Russian Orthodox traditions provided them with the means to analyze the crises of their day and lead them to explore new paths.

Kierkegaard's and Solov'yov's work differs in structure and temperament and was created in different contexts, but both thinkers share a common mission and use comparable philosophical and theological tools to achieve their goals. Both

¹ I describe Kierkegaard and Solov'yov as *thinkers* and not as just philosophers, because their activity goes well beyond the scope of traditional philosophy and involves religion, theology, literature, and politics.

² Cf. [2, p.173].

³ Neither Denmark nor Russia was a center of scientific or industrial innovation in the late eighteenth and early to mid-nineteenth century, and both countries can be considered latecomers to modernity. In the field of philosophy early and mid-nineteenth century Denmark and Russia were followers rather than trendsetters. Kierkegaard is in fact the first Danish philosopher worth mentioning, while the same can be said about Solov'yov in relation to Russian philosophy. The term 'latecomers to modernity' is taken from [3, pp. 68–70]. In his book Mishra *does* mention Russia as a latecomer to modernity, but not Denmark.

Kierkegaard and Solov'yov detect a de facto absence of the religious principle in their days and an overwhelming dominance of reason in all realms of knowing and understanding. Being contemporaries of Schopenhauer (1788–1860) and Nietzsche (1844–1900), Kierkegaard and Solov'yov formulate criticism that is to some extent comparable with that of both German philosophers. All four thinkers share their doubts about the capability of human reason to function as the sole base for understanding the world and for guiding human life. However, Kierkegaard's and Solov'yov's thought contrast sharply with the positions of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in its outcome. Both thinkers criticize the absence of the religious principle, which is even manifest *within* the official churches, and strive for the wholeness of the human person.

Kierkegaard and Solov'yov emphasize in their works the necessity of philosophy for religion and of religion for philosophy and maintain that there exists a possibility of unmediated access to the absolute, to God.

A common core of Kierkegaard's and Solov'yov's religious criticism is the idea that the petty state of public religion is as much an effect of the degeneration of the official churches as of philosophical developments. Both thinkers add to this criticism their shared critique of a state sponsored and supported Christianity that is forced upon people by means of power, and instead argue for a Christianity that is based on the inner willingness of the human person to freely engage in it. The development of a religious philosophy that is inspired by traditional Christianity but at the same time also at odds with it, and with its institutions, is a significant parallel between the activity of Kierkegaard and Solov'yov. It is *this* parallel that will be the focus of attention in this paper and the perspective from which the philosophical kinship between Kierkegaard and Solov'yov is explored.

Kierkegaard's and Solov'yov's common religious-philosophical mission is political as well because both criticize the official state churches of their native countries for failing to live up to what they consider to be the true ideals of Christianity. Both the Danish Lutheran State Church, of which Kierkegaard was a member, and the Russian Orthodox Church, to which Solov'yov belonged, were so much an integral part of state and society that any criticism of them was effectively criticism of society and state as a whole. Eventually, Kierkegaard was not allowed to become a countryside pastor by the bishop of Copenhagen and ended up in a fierce polemic against the Danish State Church, while Solov'yov received temporary teaching bans more than once and in 1896 was denied absolution after confession on the grounds of holding unorthodox theological views.⁴

In this paper both thinkers are presented as religious thinkers and critics of society and public religion by means of a comparison of their works *Practice in Christianity* [*Practice*] and *Lectures on Divine Humanity* [*Lectures*]. *Practice* was published for the first time in 1850 as *Indøvelse i Christendom* under the pseudonym Anti-Climacus and a part of the text was delivered as a discourse in the Church of

⁴ For example, in 1891, after a series of lectures at the Moscow Psychological Society. Cf. [4, p. 554].

Our Lady in Copenhagen. Solov'yov published the *Lectures* in 1878 as *Чтения о Богочеловечестве* and these were delivered as public lectures from 1877-1881 in Saint Petersburg. Attending Solov'yov's lectures were among others Dostoevsky, who attended several times, and Tolstoy, who attended only once.

Mystical experiences lay at the heart of Kierkegaard's and Solov'yov's religious-philosophical work, which is yet another parallel.⁵ In this paper I understand mystical experience according to James' classical definition.⁶

Kierkegaard's and Solov'yov's religious thought in relation to the history of philosophy

It is difficult to adequately interpret Kierkegaard's and Solov'yov's thought without reference to classical Greek philosophy, because both thinkers were deeply influenced by it. Socrates, the <<simple wise man of old>> [7, p. 12] to whom Kierkegaard devoted his dissertation *On the Concept of Irony* [*Irony*], is a significant authority for Kierkegaard and literally omnipresent in his oeuvre. According to American scholar Jacob Howland, one of the reasons for this esteem for Socrates can be found in the *Philosophical Fragments* where Kierkegaard portrays Socrates as a thinker who shows <<in his speeches and deeds the capacity of philosophy to know its own limits>> [8, p. 5, 7]. Because of its awareness of the limits of philosophy and its closeness to the human existence, Kierkegaard considers Socrates's activity the culmination of what a person can achieve in thought. Solov'yov thinks just as highly about Socrates and writes <<To go further and higher than Socrates – not in speculation only and not in aspiration only, but in the real achievement of life – would require to be more than human>> [9, p. 240–241].⁷ Like Socrates, Kierkegaard and Solov'yov both understood philosophy as an existential quest for wisdom and insight in relation to religion and real life. Kierkegaard and Solov'yov attribute the poor state of public religion in their days to modern developments in Western philosophy, and as early as in their dissertations they interpret the history of philosophy as a process in which from the days of Socrates philosophy gradually transformed into an objectivist and rationalist science of knowledge.

In *Irony*, Kierkegaard thematizes a <<shift from Socratic ignorance to Platonic speculation>> [10, p. 29] that is already taking place in the works of Plato. Kierkegaard considers Socrates's position to be more in touch with human existence, while Plato's perspective is more objectivist at the cost of its existential orientation. In connection with his translation of the works of Plato into Russian, Solov'yov published *The Life Drama of Plato* and in this work, he argues for the same as

⁵ Kierkegaard is known for his negative attitude towards mystical theology and mysticism, partly because he regarded the mystics as proto-speculative thinkers. However, in Kierkegaard's relations to the mystics there is not only refutation. Cf. [5, pp. 178–179].

⁶ Cf. [6, pp. 287–288].

⁷ My translation of: “Чтобы идти дальше и выше Сократа – не в умозрении только и не в стремлении только, а в действительном жизненном подвиге – нужно было больше, чем человека.”

Kierkegaard. About Socrates's existential thought and Plato's speculation, Solov'yov writes the following: <<[Socrates is] sometimes an unsuccessful pseudonym [for Plato], for example, when he has to hold discourses that the real Socrates not only did not hold, but *could* not hold: for example, when an imaginary Socrates seriously discusses metaphysical and cosmological issues, topics that the real Socrates recognized as barren and worthless, but topics in which Plato became especially interested long after the death of his teacher [Socrates] and under other heterogeneous influences>> [9, p. 194–195].⁸

In *The Crisis of Western Philosophy. Against the Positivists* [*Crisis*] Solov'yov deals with the transformation of philosophy from a quest for wisdom into a science of reason by giving a critical account of this development. In *Crisis*, Solov'yov describes how a rational comprehension of the world solely based on human reasoning and out of touch with religion, gradually is granted absolute primacy in Western philosophy from medieval scholasticism to the <<absolute Panlogism of Hegel>> [11, p. 26]. Like many Russian thinkers⁹ of his day Solov'yov saw the negative aspects of the rise of what he calls positivism, and the Russian scholar Lev Evgenevich Shaposhnikov adds that Solov'yov regarded the rise of positivism as a <<spiritual regression>> and a <<return back>> [12, p. 286]. One would, however, misinterpret Solov'yov by thinking that his ideal was a philosophical return to the day of unquestioned authority of religious texts, since in his *Lectures*, Solov'yov states clearly and repeatedly that human reasoning and the materiality of reality justly want to exercise their powers in the realm of philosophy.

Willingly or unwillingly, both Kierkegaard and Solov'yov through their works engage in a dialogue with Fichte, Hegel and Schelling. The American scholar John Stewart, argues that Kierkegaard's varied relationships to Hegel are not all negative or dismissive in nature and that Hegel's dialectics significantly influenced Kierkegaard, as did his interpretation of classical Greek philosophy.¹⁰ The British scholar Oliver Smith observes a similarity in Solov'yov's relationship to Hegel, and remarks: <<behind all the rhetoric, the form adopted by Soloviev owes much to the Western tradition, and betrays considerable reliance on the Hegelian dialectic>> [11, p. 26]. It is remarkable that in spite of Kierkegaard's and Solov'yov's critique of Hegel, the vital themes of Hegel's works, like church and state, the God-Human and the significance of history, are all present in the their works, and are of great significance. However, it was only after he lived through his materialist phase and

⁸ My translation of: “Сократ есть только принятый раз навсегда литературный прием, обычный псевдоним Платона, – псевдоним иногда неудачный – когда ему приходится говорить такие речи, которых действительный Сократ не только не говорил, но и не мог бы говорить: например, когда воображаемый Сократ серьезно рассуждает о метафизических и космологических вопросах, которые действительный Сократ признавал бесплодными и нестоящими внимания, но которыми Платон стал особенно интересоваться много времени после смерти учителя и под другими разнородными влияниями.”

⁹ Most notably the thinkers of the so-called Slavophile movement, like Khomyakov and Kireevski.

¹⁰ Cf. [13, p p. 132–135 & 164–166].

regained his religiousness with the help of the works of Spinoza, that Solov'yov thoroughly read the works of Hegel and Schelling.¹¹ In his materialist period Solov'yov was influenced by the Russian materialists Pisar'ev and Chernyshevsky, who themselves had studied Hegel, Feuerbach, and Marx. In a way Solov'yov never really abandoned materialism and as Oliver Smith points out, much of his philosophizing is aimed at reconciling materialism and idealism [11, p. 22].

The relationships between Kierkegaard's and Solov'yov's thought and Schelling's philosophy seem to be less ambivalent than to Hegel's philosophy. The Danish scholar Rasmus Rosenberg Larsen argues that Kierkegaard and Schelling share a common intention, which is: <<the ambition to re-describe freedom and subjectivity in coherence with a theological foundation>> [15, p. 482], which also applies to Solov'yov.¹²

Kierkegaard's and Solov'yov's mystical experiences and their religious philosophy

Nowhere do the Dane and the Russian claim to be prophets who directly communicate divine messages and it is certainly not in this way that mystical experience has a significance in connection with their work. It is equally important to notice that Kierkegaard and Solov'yov, as religious as they may be, are not irrationalists or fideists. Both thinkers have never dismissed philosophy, theology, and human reasoning, nor have they ever presented thoughts that were based solely on religious concepts or mystical experiences. Kierkegaard's and Solov'yov's mystical experiences were the so-called fuel of their thinking, but never the content. The German researcher Mariele Nientied has rightly argued that in Kierkegaard's writings, faith is never preferred over reason¹³ and this is even more true for Solov'yov, who [like Hegel] explicitly sees faith and reason as being in harmony with each other.

Kierkegaard and Solov'yov have written about their mystical experiences and from these accounts it becomes clear that both thinkers have experienced something insightful that influenced their activity and needed to be articulated in some way, but was difficult to put into words at the same time. Kierkegaard experienced two significant mystical events, while Solov'yov's life was characterized by three main mystical experiences and a succession of minor experiences. Solov'yov describes his mystical experiences in his poems, some of which are ironical in tone. On this irony, Estonian scholar Indrek Vaino remarks: <<He thought the subject was too serious to be serious about it>> [17, p. 3].¹⁴ Kierkegaard wrote about his mystical experiences in his journals¹⁵, which were not intended for publication. The mystical experiences

¹¹ Cf. [14, p. 116].

¹² Cf. [12, p. 288].

¹³ Cf. [16].

¹⁴ My translation of: "Teema oli tema arvates liiga tõsine, et sellest tõsimeeli rääkida."

¹⁵ Meant here are Kierkegaard's *Journaler*; his diaries which were posthumously published.

of both Kierkegaard and Solov'yov are related to important personal moments but the accounts both thinkers give of these mystical events differ. Kierkegaard's descriptions are laced with Bible quotations in a style resembling the popular style of the Pietists. Solov'yov's descriptions of the mystical events in his life are written in a vivid, poetic style and often refer to his concept of Sophia.

For both Kierkegaard and Solov'yov their mystical experiences were events that, as James' definition indicates, significantly influenced their lives' interests and activity. Mystical experiences helped them to overcome the religious crises of their youth and to reacquire their Christian faith in a new and unorthodox way.

Practice in Christianity and Lectures on Divine Humanity as critical works

Kierkegaard's *Practice* and Solov'yov's *Lectures* are works of criticism of public religion par excellence. Both thinkers present comparable criticism even though *Practice* and *Lectures* criticize different situations. Both the Dane and the Russian argue that in their societies, religion is a shallow and superficial affair and that the absolute is regarded as something secondary and circumstantial. In relation to this, both thinkers reflect on the process of history and on the God-Human Christ as a way out of the religious crises.

Society and the absolute

In the *Lectures*, Solov'yov writes that: <<Contemporary religion represents a very pitiful thing: properly speaking, religion as the dominating principle, as the center of spiritual attraction, does not exist today; instead, there is the so-called religiosity as a personal mood, a personal taste: some have this taste, others do not, just as some people like music and others do not>> [18, p. 67]. To this, he adds in an ironical fashion: <<I will not dispute those who at the present time maintain a negative attitude toward the religious principle. I shall not argue with the contemporary opponents of religion – because they are right>> [Ibidem]. Comparable words on the regrettable state of religion can also be found in Kierkegaard's *Practice* where he writes: <<Christianity came into the world as the absolute (...) In relation to the absolute, there is only one time, the present; for the person who is not contemporary with the absolute, it does not exist at all>> [7, p. 63].

In *Practice*, Kierkegaard draws attention to the fact the New Testament Christ was a scandalous person in the eyes of the authorities of his days and came in conflict with them. From this, Kierkegaard proceeds to argue that worldly power and religious integrity can never be combined in the form of a State Church. It is remarkable that in Solov'yov's *Lectures* Roman Catholicism and Protestantism are criticized, while at the same time there is no explicit criticism of the Russian Orthodox Church. It is, however, possible to interpret Solov'yov's reluctance to

mention the Russian Orthodox Church as *precisely* his critique of a church that lived a life of subjugation to the state and was not free to function in its own right.¹⁶

Both thinkers view the societies they live in and the official churches as untruthful. The Danish and Russian societies of Kierkegaard's and Solov'yov's day claim to be officially Christian, and people even seem to take a certain pride in this, while at the same time it is obvious that Christian religion is more a matter of fashion and trend, or is presented in such an anamorphic way that it becomes the total opposite of what religion ought to be. In all circumstances, Kierkegaard and Solov'yov observe that the absolute presented in religion, is not the absolute in the lives of individuals, nor in society, nor within the official churches. Kierkegaard and Solov'yov argue that this absence of true religion results in a loss of wholeness, unity and meaning.

In his *Lectures*, Solov'yov emphasizes the significance of religion for the wholeness of the world and the human being in the following words: <<Religion <...> is the connection of man and the world with the unconditional beginning, which is the focus of all that exists. It is evident that if we admit the reality of this unconditional beginning, it must define all the interests and the whole content of human life>> [18, p. 67]. Solov'yov regards wholeness to be so important for humanity that people will always search and strive for <<some uniting and integrating principle>> [18, p. 68], and he continues: <<Although according [to] the prevalent conviction all the ends and beginnings of human existence are reduced to the present reality, to the given natural existence, and our life is locked 'in a narrow ring of sublunar impressions'; yet even in that narrow ring contemporary civilization is laboring to find a unifying and organizing principle for mankind>> [Ibidem].

Socialism and positivism

That Kierkegaard and Solov'yov lived in different periods of the nineteenth century becomes most clear from the fact that Solov'yov in his *Lectures* refers to positivism and socialism, while Kierkegaard primarily engages in criticizing the Danish State Church. Although Kierkegaard makes some remarks about socialism in his oeuvre, socialism and positivism in his day were not the popular political and philosophical movements that they would become during Solov'yov's lifetime.

In the *Lectures*, Solov'yov discusses socialism and positivism in relation to the gradual demise of religion and he argues that people seek solace in positivism and socialism precisely because the religious principle has become <<subjective and

¹⁶ It is possible to interpret Solov'yov's reluctance to mention the Russian Orthodox Church in his critique of Christian traditions not only as something that was done in connection with censorship, but also as a criticism of the fact that since 1721 (under the reign of Czar Peter I) the patriarchate of Moscow was abolished and replaced by a synod consisting of bishops and government officials, which changed the Russian Orthodox Church from a church body into an integral part of the Russian State, and in the eyes of Solov'yov into a non-existent church. Only in 1917 would the Moscow patriarchate be reinstated.

impotent>> [Ibidem]. According to Solov'yov <<neither socialism nor positivism stands in any direct relation to religion>>, but <<they would simply occupy the empty space that religion has left in the life and knowledge of modern civilized humanity>> [Ibidem]. And although Solov'yov refuses to argue against socialism or positivism because he recognizes some truth in them, he does not accept them as valid philosophical options. In his *Lectures*, Solov'yov analyzes socialism as <<right in rebelling against the existing social untruth>> [18, p. 71], but at the same time he sees that when socialism is not based on self-denial and love, it is factually based on the same egoistic striving for material welfare that it claims to fight. This makes socialism inherently self-contradictory [18, p. 72].

In the *Lectures*, Solov'yov also depicts positivism as a philosophical position that is unable to create and sustain its own epistemological base, because <<Reason, <...> is only a means, an instrument, or a medium of knowledge, but not its content <...> while the content of reason or of rational knowledge is reality>> [18, p. 73]. Since reality in rationalism is limited to the natural phenomena because metaphysics has been abolished, Solov'yov argues that there cannot be any totality of knowledge or truth in human reason.

Without any uniting and unconditional principle there is only an unknowable multitude of widely divergent natural phenomena that no single mind could study [18, pp. 73-74]. Solov'yov maintains that basing the knowledge of reality on the presumed epistemological foundation of human reason alone is impossible, without a uniting and unconditional principle. Even though positivism and socialism are not religions themselves, Solov'yov argues that a logical furthering of the socialist and the positivist principles ultimately leads to the unavoidable necessity of an unconditional beginning, and thus to religion [18, p. 74].

At the end of his argumentation about socialism and positivism, Solov'yov defines religion in the following words: <<Religion is the reunion of man and the world with the unconditional and integral principle. That principle <...> excludes nothing, and therefore the true union with it, the true religion cannot exclude, or suppress, or forcibly subject to itself any element whatever, any living force either in man or in his universe>> [Ibidem]. Solov'yov argues that forced subjugation and exclusion of otherness is incompatible with true religion, which leads him to the conclusion that <<the religious principle appears to be the only actual realization of liberty, equality, and fraternity>> [Ibidem]. This broad definition of religion is further developed into the idea of divine humanity, directed at countering the loss of wholeness.

The God-Human

Although in *Practice* one can find references to the Hegelian conviction that it is possible to comprehend the God-Human, the main purpose of *Practice* is not criticism of Hegelian thought and its harmonization of faith and reason. *Practice* is

Kierkegaard's attempt to reintroduce Christianity into Christendom.¹⁷ In order to achieve this goal he presents a kenotic Christology: a portrayal of Jesus Christ as a rejected human which contrasts sharply with the heroic Christ-figure of the Christendom of the State Church. Kierkegaard states: <<Christianity has been quite literally dethroned in Christendom <...> it has also been abolished>> [7, p. 227], and he blames the distorted religiosity of the Danish Lutheran State Church for this. He considers this the religiosity of the established order¹⁸ to be an illegal occupant of the religious sphere, and most of all he despises this religiosity because according to his opinion it deprives individuals of the opportunity to encounter the true Christianity that is presented in the New Testament.

Both Kierkegaard and Solov'yov have difficulty with the unity of spiritual authority and the exercise of worldly power. In *Practice*, Kierkegaard elaborates upon the thought that in Christendom the established order defies itself at the cost of human freedom and individuality. In his *Lectures*, Solov'yov argues that: <<Every power that does not represent the unconditional principle of the truth, is oppression and subjugation to such a power can be only a forced one>> [18, p. 72].

On the first page of *Practice*, Kierkegaard begins to contrast his imagery of the abased and suffering God-Human¹⁹ of the New Testament with what he calls a <<thoughtless-romantic or a historical-talkative distortion>> [7, p. 9] of Christ. Kierkegaard argues that the distorted Christ-figure of the established order has little in common with the outcast-Christ of the New Testament and is created to make him more palpable for a larger public, and thus more functional. It is impossible, Kierkegaard argues, to be offended by the Christ-figure of the established order and precisely because of this, the established order makes Christian religion inaccessible. Kierkegaard presents the Christ-figure of Christendom in the following words: <<But precisely this is the calamity, and for many an age has been the calamity of Christendom – namely, that Christ is neither the one nor the other, neither the person he was when he lived on earth nor the one he will be at his second coming>> [7, p. 35] and he continues <<we have learned that he was some kind of great somebody>> [Ibidem]. According to Kierkegaard, the end result of this was that <<one became a Christian without noticing it and without the slightest possibility of offense. Christ's teaching was taken, turned, and scaled down>> [Ibidem]. In his *Lectures*, Solov'yov argues like Kierkegaard that the person of Jesus Christ alone, and nothing else, is the core of Christianity.²⁰

¹⁷ Kierkegaard distinguishes between what he, in Danish, calls Christendom [Christianity] and Christenhed [Christendom]. Christendom is the religion of the abased God-Human of the New Testament, while Christenhed is the fantastic construction of the established order. Cf. [7, p. 58].

¹⁸ Kierkegaard writes about *Det Bestaaende*, which can be translated both as 'the established order' or 'the existing order.' Kierkegaard criticizes *Det Bestaaende* for its self-deification.

¹⁹ *Gud-Mennesket* in Kierkegaard's Danish, which literally translates as God-Human. The idea of the God-Human originates in an ancient Christian dogma that was established at the Council of Chalcedon in 451. The God-Human is also a significant theme in Hegel's works.

²⁰ Cf. [18, p. 152]

Contemporaneity and history

The strange truth of Christianity, Kierkegaard argues, is that a rejected human, in fact God himself, wants to save the world. He calls it a <<meaningless madness>> [7, p. 53]. When the God-Human is observed through the eyes of his historical contemporaries and through the literal text of the New Testament, Kierkegaard argues, nothing indicates that this man is the God-Human. Because of the improbability of the truth of Christianity, taking offense is always in between the believer and the God-Human. Without offense, Kierkegaard argues, there is no contemporaneity in faith, since in order to achieve contemporaneity one first needs to pass through offense. Here, Kierkegaard is far away from the thought of Solov'yov, who is always convinced of the rationality of Christianity. Oliver Smith writes: <<Soloviev defines the task which stood before him and humanity alike: 'to clothe the eternal content of Christianity in a new and suitable, i.e. absolutely rational form'>> [11, p. 25]. For Kierkegaard, this would simply be an impossible position since his thought is primarily based on the assumption of the inherent absurdity of Christianity.

The concept of religious contemporaneity is of decisive importance in interpreting Kierkegaard's understanding of Christianity. It is in fact a concept of faith.²¹ In the eighth issue of *The Instant*, Kierkegaard presents the concept of contemporaneity as his most precious concept as he writes: <<Pay attention to contemporaneity! <...> This idea is the idea to my life. <...> Not that I have invented this idea myself <...> the idea is old, it is from the New Testament>> [19, p. 273].²² According to Kierkegaard, contemporaneity of faith means that there is no difference in time or distance between the believer and Christ. Kierkegaard argues that Christ enters the time and life of the believer and that the 1800 years historically separating Christ and the believer have no religious relevance.

The idea that Christian faith cannot be based on or defined by historical knowledge about Christ is fundamental to *Practice*. Kierkegaard writes that <<knowledge annihilates Christ>> [7, p. 33], to which he adds that <<one cannot know anything at all about Christ; he is the paradox, the object of faith, exists only for faith>> [7, p. 25]. Because of this, demonstrating that Christ is the God-Human is the folly of all follies for Kierkegaard, since to 'demonstrate' is after all, to turn a thing into the rational-actual. Is it possible to turn that which conflicts with all reason into the rational-actual? [7, p. 26]. The one who knows Christ from history and likes him as a <<great somebody>> [7, p. 35] is called an admirer by Kierkegaard, distinguishing this person from the believer, who is a contemporary of Christ in faith and an imitator of his example [7, p. 53]. In Kierkegaard's understanding of

²¹ *Samtidighed* in Kierkegaard's Danish.

²² My translation of: "Denne Tanke er mig mit Livs Tanke. <...> Ikke at jeg har opfundet den, Gud forbyde, at jeg skulde forskylde saadan Formastelse, nei, Opfindelsen er gammel, er det nye Testamentes."

Christianity, the imitation of Christ is the process in which unification of the divine and the human takes place, it *is* the process of divine humanity itself. However, unlike in Solov'yov's thought, Kierkegaard's process of divine humanity is a process on the level of the individual believer and not at the collective level.

Although, according to Kierkegaard, the contemporaneity in faith and the imitation of Christ are both affairs between the individual and the God-Human, it is not about <<a private gnostic flight of the soul to God>>, as American scholar David Gouwens argues [10, p. 229]. Gouwens describes Kierkegaard's concept of the imitation of Christ as <<a call to discipleship in the social matrix>> [Ibidem], indicating that the contemporaneity of faith with Christ and the imitation of Christ will have its effects in the social sphere. Redemption is only to be experienced through Christ and was a fundamental conviction of Kierkegaard. In *Practice*, he writes: <<So human in his divinity! With the Father he knows from eternity that only in this way can the human race be saved: he knows that no human being can comprehend him, that the gnat that flies into the candlelight is not more certain of destruction than the person who wants to try to comprehend him or what is united in him: God and man. And yet he is the Savior, and for no human being is there salvation except through him>>[7, p. 53].

Divine Humanity

Solov'yov, like Kierkegaard, employs the idea of the God-Human²³ to present an alternative for the decaying religion of his day. But, unlike Kierkegaard, Solov'yov links his concept of the God-Human to both his broad definition of religion and his historical-philosophical perspective. Noteworthy is that because of this perspective, the religious-historical process, that has no religious relevance and significance in Kierkegaard's thinking, is of the utmost importance for Solov'yov's religious philosophy. For Kierkegaard, eventually, everything boils down to the mystical relationship between the one believer and Christ, albeit with consequences for society. For Solov'yov, the historical-religious process of the whole of humanity *itself* becomes the process of divine humanity. In his *Lectures*, Solov'yov presents an account of the historical and religious development of European and Asian civilizations, and in his examination of these developments he aims to show how everything reaches its culminating point in the life of Jesus Christ, the God-Human in whom the divine and human became united in history and time.²⁴

The first stage of the development of religious consciousness, according to Solov'yov, is that of the pessimism and asceticism of Buddhism, with its emphasis on the renunciation of the world as something false and illusionary. Idealism is the

²³ Solov'yov uses the word *Богочеловек* which translates as 'God-Human.' The concept *Богочеловечество* is translated in this article as 'Divine Humanity' and refers to the process of deification of the whole of humanity.

²⁴ Cf. [18, p. 154]

second stage of the process of divine humanity, Solov'yov writes, and this is visible in the <<mystical perceptions of Plato>> [18, p. 151]. The third stage is monotheism with its <<acknowledgement, beyond the boundaries of the visible reality, of not only the realm of ideas but also of the unconditional beginning as the positive subject>> [Ibidem]. Judaism, the fourth stage of the religious development according to Solov'yov, adds <<the last definition of the divine beginning in the pre-Christian religious consciousness>> [Ibidem], namely, <<the definition of it as the triune God>>, which according to Solov'yov is found most prominently in the Alexandrine school of theology [Ibidem]. At the end of his argumentation, Solov'yov states that <<All these phases of religious consciousness are contained in Christianity [and] became parts of it>> [Ibidem]. However, Solov'yov simultaneously points out that Christianity is more than just the sum of these historical-religious developments when writing that <<Christianity has its own content, independent of all these elements which enter it; and this content is singularly and exclusively Christ>> [18, p. 152].

Solov'yov states that the person of Christ and not his teaching is the center and the absolute of Christianity, which is comparable to Kierkegaard's criticism of those who want to turn Christianity into mere teaching and then subordinate Christ to this teaching. Strangely enough Solov'yov only mentions Protestantism explicitly when he criticizes this theological position and writes that <<at the present time in the Christian world, especially in the Protestant world, one meets people who call themselves Christians but maintain that the substance of Christianity is not in the person of Christ, but rather in His teaching>> [Ibidem]. According to Solov'yov, Jesus Christ is the center of the whole divine-human process of history and religious consciousness, and therefore he writes: <<The individual being, or the realized expression of the unconditionally-extant God, is Christ>> [18, p. 154]. Solov'yov considers reason and faith to be in harmony which each other and is convinced of the rationality of Christianity, but all of this does not mean that religious truths can be understood by reason alone. On this, Solov'yov remarks that <<It is quite evident that the reality of the unconditional beginning, as existing in itself, independently of us – the reality of God <...> cannot be deduced from pure reason, cannot be proved by logic alone>> [18, p. 90]. Faith, according to Solov'yov, is just as necessary as is reason to understand religious truths, because <<all proofs of that existence, reduced to the law of causality, appear thus to be only considerations of probability, not evidences of certainty – only faith remains to be such an evidence>> [18, p. 91].

Unlike Kierkegaard, Solov'yov is convinced that <<Divinity belongs to man as well as to God>> [18, p. 84], and even though he argues that <<God possesses it [divinity] in eternal reality, whereas man can only attain to it>> [Ibidem], he is certain that humanity is destined to be deified. Here, a significant difference in native theology between Kierkegaard and Solov'yov becomes visible. In Solov'yov's words clearly resonates the Orthodox theological concept of *συνέργεια* (working together) that describes the relationship between a mutually interdependent God and human

cooperating <<in a harmony of two wills>> [20, p. 34].²⁵ In his *Lectures*, Solov'yov writes that <<the uniting link between the divine and the natural world is man>> [18, p. 158], for humanity, according to Solov'yov is <<at once divinity and nothingness>> [Ibidem]. With one leg in the divine world and the other leg in the natural world, human beings are the linking pin between God and his creation. In the *Lectures*, Solov'yov defines Sophia, the divine wisdom, as <<the ideal or perfect humanity, eternally contained in the integral divine being or Christ>> [18, p. 159], and it is Sophia who is the guarantee of the eternity of humanity and of every single human being.

Like Kierkegaard, Solov'yov writes about the necessity of imitating Christ in the process of achieving divine humanity. The fundamental difference between Kierkegaard's and Solov'yov's understanding of the imitation of Christ is, however, that Solov'yov is focused on <<the self-negation of the human will and a free subjection of it to Divinity>> [18, p. 200], and not on suffering as in Kierkegaard's interpretation.²⁶ This difference in understanding is most likely related to Kierkegaard's and Solov'yov's native theologies that show significant dissimilarities on this point. Traditionally, Lutheran theology is categorized as *theologia crucis* [theology of the cross] that emphasizes the human incapability to play an active role in the process of their own salvation. In this perspective, the salvation of the believers is earned *for them* through the suffering and death of Christ on the cross.²⁷ Eastern Christian theology, on the other hand, traditionally emphasizes the resurrection of Christ and not so much his death on the cross, which explains its categorization as *theologia gloriae* [theology of the glory]. Eastern Christian theology teaches a possibility for humans to partake in their own salvation in a more active way, for example in the form of monasticism.

At the end of his *Lectures*, Solov'yov summons all humanity to partake in the redemptive process of divine humanity by following the example of Christ, which practically means <<the inner acceptance of Christ>> [18, p. 201]. This means turning away from taking pleasure in material welfare and making a free and willed subjection to divinity, which according to Solov'yov is something totally different than a subjection to church authority.²⁸ In this way, a double path of incarnation is realized, the first path being the life of Jesus Christ and the second path the religious-historical process of all of humanity, that subjugates itself freely to God in imitation of Christ. Solov'yov's ecumenist dream, that is not fully unfolded in the *Lectures*, was that the Eastern and Western Churches would reunite. About this Solov'yov writes that <<Western humanity sooner or later must turn to the truth of Godmanhood>> [18, p. 205], and he proceeds to argue that where the Western Church needs the truth of the Eastern Church, the Eastern Church needs the Western

²⁵ My translation of: "согласованность двух волей."

²⁶ Cf. [10, p. 229] & [5, p. 208–215].

²⁷ Cf. [21, p. 10]

²⁸ Cf. [18, p. 201]

Church to further its Christian culture. Through a reunion of the Churches of East and West and through a free subjection of all of humanity to divinity, Solov'yov argues, Gods redemption will take place [Ibidem].

It is worth mentioning here that, according to Russian scholar Igor Ivanovich Evlampiev, the later Solov'yov's view on salvation which is unfolded in the *Three Discourses* comes to differ dramatically from the perspective that Solov'yov gives in the *Lectures* [22, p. 125]. In line with Dostoevsky's thought, Evlampiev argues, Solov'yov abandons the idea of a salvation through a historical process of self-perfection of humanity under divine inspiration, but comes to consider Jesus Christ as the only force strong enough to overcome all evil in the world [22, p. 124]. This later Solov'yovian perspective is closer to the Kierkegaardian idea of the salvation through a mystical union between the individual believer and Christ than is the concept of salvation that Solov'yov offers in his *Lectures*.

Реферат

При всем различии двух известных религиозных мыслителей и критиков XIX века Сёрена Обю Кьеркегора (Søren Aabye Kierkegaard) (1813–1855) и Владимира Сергеевича Соловьева (1853–1900) исследуется их философское родство. Вдохновленные мистическим опытом, сформированным классической греческой философией, немецким идеализмом и их родным лютеранским и православным богословием, Кьеркегор и Соловьев развили свою религиозную философию и критику общественной религии. Кьеркегор и Соловьев – религиозные мыслители, которые активно участвовали в дискуссиях общества своего времени, а также сами находились под влиянием этих дискуссий.

Кьеркегор яростно критиковал Датскую Лютеранскую Государственную Церковь за ее искаженное представление о христианстве, а Соловьев прямо критиковал католицизм и протестантизм и косвенно, но столь же решительно критиковал Русскую Православную Церковь.

Отсутствие религиозного принципа в церкви и обществе, по мнению Кьеркегора и Соловьева, привело к неглубокой религиозности и общей утрате смысла и единства. Чтобы противостоять кризисам своего времени, Кьеркегор и Соловьев, критически переосмысливая современную им христианскую религию, предлагают свою религиозную философию в качестве выхода из кризисов. Сократ, который знал об ограничениях философии, является для обоих мыслителей авторитетной фигурой в истории религиозной философии, их философским героем.

Оба мыслителя не согласны с утверждением рациональности христианства. Несмотря на то, что Соловьев отверг идею христианства, которая вполне понятна для разума, он стремился представить христианство в рациональной форме. Кьеркегор, в отличие от Соловьева, рассматривает христианство как нечто абсурдное и в наибольшей степени противоречащее разуму, хотя он никогда не был иррационалистом или фидеистом.

История западной философии была для Кьеркегора и Соловьева одновременно объектом критики и богатым источником материала для построения собственных религиозных философий. Так, например, в трудах Кьеркегора и Соловьева появляются гегелевские темы. Кроме того, оба мыслителя, развивая свою религиозную философию, использовали шеллинговский подход.

В религиозной философии и Кьеркегора и Соловьева выдающуюся роль играет *Богочеловек* (*Gud-Mennesket*, на датском Кьеркегора), Иисус Христос. Кьеркегор представляет свою концепцию *Современности со Христом* (*Samtidighed med Kristus*), в которой объединены человеческое и божественное. Это объединение в современной вере является спасительным союзом отдельного верующего со Христом, союзом, который выражается в практическом подражании верующего Христу (*Christi Efterfølgelse*). Кьеркегор настаивает на том, что из истории ничего не может быть известно о религиозном значении Христа, что делает его идею единства со Христом в современной вере по своей сути неисторичной.

Соловьёвская концепция *Богочеловечества* резко отличается от этой концепции Кьеркегора. Согласно соловьёвской концепции, процесс религиозно-исторического развития человечества – это процесс спасения. Концепция Соловьева принципиально исторична. Богочеловечество, по Соловьёву, состоит из двух неразделимых компонентов: во-первых, из Богочеловека Иисуса Христа, который является исторической человеческой личностью, объединяющей Бога и человечество; во-вторых, из всего человечества, которое развивается благодаря взаимодействию религии и истории в человеческий божественный организм. В религиозной философии Соловьева есть идея двойственного воплощения: первое – воплощение Христа, которое описано в Новом Завете, а второе – историческое и религиозное развитие всего человечества, которое свободно подчиняется Богу в подражании Христу.

Таким образом, оба мыслителя используют сопоставимые богословские концепции и образы, но используют их по-разному, что связано с происхождением их теологий и их индивидуальным творческим мышлением.

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