

## Sophian World Vision

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**Abstract:** Whenever I turn to the legacy of Russian philosophy I invariably marvel at it. Indeed, our compatriots were singularly farsighted. They endowed us with truly profound and brilliant ideas. On the other hand, one cannot but feel bitter: over the decades, whatever was associated with the loftiest culture of thought and Russian spirituality, was downright neglected and even anathematised. At present Our homeland's philosophy is going through a measure of spiritual rehabilitation. And yet, we still see Russian philosophy as a kind of relic and a culture belonging to the past. There is no denying that we say a great deal about its theoretical significance and the uniqueness of its quests and almost nothing about its relevance today. In the meantime, the various models of world outlook, offered by the Russian thinkers of the 19th-early 20th centuries, explain processes unfolding before our eyes far more effectively than up-to-date theories. The idea of the world's sophianism can justifiably be ranked with the more relevant ideas, that is, the ones capable of working effectively at the end of the second millennium. What is it? This question is related to another one: What Is Real Being's Mainstay?

**Key words:** Sophiology • Sophianism • Russian philosophy • Aesthetics • Christian Mystic

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### INTRODUCTION

For the answer, let's turn to the theosophical problem of the correlation of the two essentially different worlds-the other world ("transcendental", "noumenal") and this world ("human", "phenomenal"). Each of them is characterized by a measure of independence and self-isolation. "What is truly essential for a Russian-style perception of Christianity is a sober feeling of 'indivisibility' and 'non-integrity' of the divine and human world", said Vasily Zenkovsky who has done profound research into the Russian metaphysical thought. "In philosophical terms", he went on, "we're talking about mystic realism which sees all reality as empiric beyond which is a different reality. Both spheres of being are real but hierarchically unequal. The empirical being holds out solely thanks to 'involvement' in mystical reality" [1].

If in classical forms of objective idealism we find initial and constant predestination and causative conditionality of this world by the other world, in Russian philosophy these worlds do not cross: they exist independently - herein lies the tragedy of human being. The other world (also termed as heavenly) is distinguished by self-sufficiency and perfection.

This cannot be said about the earthly or material world. Alas, there is no firm link with the ideal world. The interlacing of the transcendental idea with mankind and of the absolute spirit with matter is not an actual fact but only a potential goal. However, Russian philosophers feel that creativity and art on an all-human scale, can bridge these worlds. As the Lord created the world and the artist creates his work, so mankind starts creating itself.

But why did some Russian philosophers refer to mankind's creative activity precisely as art, not science which seeks to establish the truth, nor politics designed to uphold whatever has been achieved by science, but "free theurgy" whose underlying law is Beauty?

**The Main Part:** Like art science has the truth as its ultimate aim. But the means it uses contrast those used by art. Science is rather indifferent to beauty. It is aimed at the overall exposure of the object's material structures. It does this by removing, layer after layer, spiritual accretions from objects and sees them as something extraneous and not expressing the true essence of the objects. Science superbly handles its principal function-helping people meet their practical needs.

However, its claims to revealing the world's essence are groundless, for the essence of being does not lie in formulas and equations, nor in chemical reactions or biological cells.

Science can explore man down to his molecular composition. It can reveal all processes taking place in him. But it cannot answer the question: what is the essence of man? [2].

Science tries to find the essence of being in the material sphere. It ignores the fact that everything on earth is permeated with Idea. Science craves for the objective truth and uses it as a pretext to get rid of everything human as subjective and everything ideal as immaterial. Thus, the fact is ignored that its truth is a fiction outside man or, to be more precise, outside the human spirit [3].

As distinct from the exact sciences, art - and philosophy for that matter - openly proclaims its adherence to phenomenology and doesn't strive to assert the truth alienated from the spirit and, consequently, from ethical and aesthetic values.

The idea of bringing the notions of the objective and phenomenal closer together, the possibility of seeing the essence of being in its aesthetic image and the idea of the human spirit as the essence-forming element of the universe permeate the sophiology of Russian thinkers [4].

Sophia represents an intermediary between God and Man, between the ideal and real worlds. Sophia is a well-nigh ethereal entity. Thanks to it the so-called material world is endowed with utmost meaning. Sophia implies the psyche of the "integral creature". Theologically, this psyche comes about as the result of a divine creative act. When creating the world, God inspired it with his wisdom, thereby providing it with spiritual essence [5]. Philosophically, "Sophia" represents mankind's ideal being, the phenomenal oneness of spirit and matter, the conceptualization of being by all mankind. The expression, "*the world's Sophianism*", signifies that the loftiest meaning is innate in the world, the one involved in supra-being. [6]

Insofar as "Sophia" is attended by spirituality, its main distinction is aesthetic. Pavel Florensky gave a remarkable definition of "Sophia". "*Sophia means Beauty... and Sophia alone is Beauty materialized in every living being. Everything else is merely tinsel and window-dressing...*" [7].

Sophia can certainly be defined as *spiritually organized being*, one effected through creative daring and breakthrough in surmounting the burden of fallen

being. It is by a creative act, says Nikolai Berdyaev, that "man emerges from 'this world' and goes over to the other world. The creative act does not help revitalize 'this world,' but leads to the creation of the other world, the true cosmos" [8].

Having given a rather comprehensive definition of Sophia, we'll try to project the main theses of its leaching onto present-day civilization.

Thus, the natural course of history has brought mankind to a qualitatively new state. Intensive development of science and culture has made it possible to speak of mankind as an integral and interrelated entity. We are witnessing the interdependence of political processes and seeing a true world economy coming into being. We're increasingly coming to realize the comprehensive character of our relationships with nature. In a word, we're witnessing the making of a worldwide civilization.

The list of processes and connections acquiring a planetary status would be incomplete unless we single out yet another aspect of planetarian unity - non-material and non-utilitarian but very important.

The matter is that mankind boasts a considerable spiritual potential today. This potential is almost acquiring an ontological nature. Notions like "social consciousness", "public opinion", "social psychology" are becoming increasingly widespread. Mankind has brought about a spiritual atmosphere which is starting to correlate our notions of the world. As a result of methodical and meticulous work of thought, the interlacing of spirit and matter has proved so profound and organic that the present-day objective world now appears before man as a *spiritualized world*. It is precisely from this interaction of spirit and matter that such notions emerge as truth, beauty, good, etc. And people are striving to cognize it and put to use. Hence human history is nothing else than the history of self-creation and the history of cognizing this same self-creation.

What about our being's Sophianism or, to be more precise, the possible degree of Sophian being today? As a result of human creativity the spiritualized world cannot be cognized and comprehended through rational means. For in this way we would not be able to fully cognize the creative act or the essence of reality as all-encompassing spirituality.

Have we matured enough to take the world as a great work of art capable of inducing every man and mankind as a whole to shoulder all responsibility for its creation? And even though reality is being constructed today

(like, incidentally, it was yesterday, a hundred and a thousand years ago), it's a far cry from true creativity, rather, it is a *deviation* from it.

Even in handling global issues mankind is guided only by narrowly pragmatic, rationalistic motivations. Its attitude to nature is conditioned above all by its discomfiting condition. Only fear for its physical condition compels the human race to renounce the tactics of all-permissiveness. On the issues of war and peace mankind is seemingly retreating from the ill-starred policy of strength.

But what is behind this? What underlies the so-called new thinking, I lie primacy of universal human values? In the first place it is the instinct for survival bolstered by convincing arguments concerning a world war's ineffectiveness. The same rational-pragmatic tendency can be traced in the area of social wellbeing. It is either a path to attaining the highest economic effect or creating a society patterned after a pre-set theory which is "omnipotent because it is true".

Obviously, in both cases "computer-style" methods of world organization prevail rather than a creative attitude to being.

The Sophian vision of the world as an evolving work of art offers man a fundamentally different scale of values.

As an artist, whose creative potentialities are unlimited, it is man's duty to explore the depths of his spirit. Extra-rational methods of mastering and cognizing reality should come to the fore in the act of creation. This predisposition can serve as a guarantee of an integral vision of the world.

A Sophian world vision can hardly be defined using subjective and objective categories, for mankind is represented here both as a subject and an object of creativity. Therefore, in Sophiology the very possibility of sponging and egoistic interest is theoretically untenable. Also, notions like "Sophia", "God-Man", "total unity" have little in common with pantheistic philosophy (God's omnipresence) and the intrinsic leveling of the individual in the name of the universal. The integrity of mankind's ideal state implies total freedom of its components [9].

One doesn't need to be excessively submerged in the philosophical depths of Russian thinkers to acknowledge the universal and singular advantages of an all-aesthetic vision of the world. That is, the vision of Sophiology.

Firstly, regarding an object as aesthetically meaningful, man perceives it as something *integral*.

This is one of the most remarkable properties of artistic perception: what is bound to be disintegrated in science is perceived as integral in art.

Secondly, in Sophiology-as in the aesthetic world vision-cognition and perception of reality is free of reasoning. This makes it possible to combine knowledge of the world with direct involvement in this knowledge, to make it concrete and reduce abstraction to the minimum. As Semion Frank remarked, "such living knowledge, as experiencing being itself, or the unity of experiencing things and knowledge do not signify the personification of an 'impersonal' object of knowledge nor absorption of an object alien to oneself but revelation of the life intrinsic to an object as such"[10].

Lastly, extra-rational forms of world vision make it possible to conceptualize moments of spiritual reality which are outside of the rational consideration of phenomena. Meanwhile these spheres of being (where rational-logical intellect proves powerless) play a well-nigh principal part in man's life. Problems associated with man's inner world and the ideal essence of being, with ethical and aesthetic values, are largely reduced to irrational "sediment" after rational treatment. Sophian world vision is free of such "slag".

## CONCLUSION

Sophiology thus offers a more progressive world vision compared with what we have today. Therefore it would be logical to assume that in the quest for a way out of the spiritual crisis modern-day civilization will increasingly turn to Sophian world vision. The correctness of this prognostication is evidenced by the need for viewing the world as an integral entity, by the attempts at establishing the primacy of moral regulators of social and international life over legal ones and by the gradual retreat from total rationalization and over-theorized patterns in any life style. However, all these aspects of Sophianism materialize spontaneously rather than consciously and purposefully. Analysis of the present-day situation by applying Sophiology could well spare us many errors and help us out of impasses.

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