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Nikolai Fyodorov – the Extravagance of Resurrection

["Kronos. Philosophical Journal", № 1, 2012]

Fyodorov's life was eccentric and extraordinary, although at the same time it was quite uneventful and devoid of any radical actions, which – paradoxically – made it even more exceptional. It was an amazingly modest life, even ascetic, yet at the same time – highly useful and valuable, both socially and intellectually. It was a life marked by an unflinching devotion to all those who sought wisdom; a source of constant inspiration to such luminaries as Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy or Solovyov. Fyodorov became a legend in his lifetime. Lev Tolstoy used to say that if saints still existed, they would have to resemble Fyodorov. He was often called a modern *jurōdivy* (a Holy Fool) or – perhaps even more aptly – “the Socrates of Moscow”.

It is not so much his life, however, but his views – in particular, a certain philosophical or perhaps religious idea of his – that make Fyodorov such a fascinating figure. A moral visionary, armed with scientific precision and lively energy of action, he explored regions of thought which hardly anyone had ever dared to chart, which were considered to be the proper object of faith, not speculation, and which most moderns – including strongly religious minds – came to regard as a sentimental longing, a naïve and unrealizable fancy of the human spirit, a child's toy lost in some intimate and lonely nook of the human soul. At best it was seen as a relic of the past, a throwback to the era of man's spiritual and intellectual adolescence, the real function of which was to maintain the symbolic integrity of that phenomenon we call Christianity whose importance is primarily historical, social and political. We are talking about resurrection. All of Fyodorov's thinking, all his writings are centered around this idea; in tackling it he is ingenious, uncompromising and fearless, perhaps even arrogant. In contrast to the usual spirit with which the mystery of resurrection is approached – that of humility, fear of God and devout ignorance – the intellectual struggles of Fyodorov may be fittingly described as “the extravagance of resurrection” (or perhaps more precisely: the extravagance of the idea of resurrection).

Fyodorov refuses to stop short at the idea of resurrection as a mystery unknowable to man (though central to Christianity), as something placed entirely in the sphere of prayer and faith (perhaps even blind faith); something entirely transcendent and belonging to one of the sole prerogatives of God. Thus understood, resurrection may be considered as an obvious (mechanically accepted) and principal component of Christianity, but such an understanding entails complete passivity, not to say enslavement of man; it also implies an unreserved acceptance of death, which according to Fyodorov is contrary to the very nature of Christianity. Christianity in its essence points to a liberation from death, which is the condition of any kind of liberation whatsoever. It also involves a denial of all the

false ways of dealing with death: of the bourgeois-hedonistic elusion, of finding solace in spiritual transcendence, or of domesticating death through heroism (as in the case of the stoics). Deliverance from death – this is the kernel of the Christian promise, misinterpreted in various ways in idealistic, spiritualistic or transcendentalist solutions. However, in order to find its true form, the religious idea or promise of resurrection must, according to Fyodorov, be united with the scientific and technological project of its active, physical, material fulfillment. The Christian inspiration of the human spirit through the promise of resurrection must become incarnated and materialized in a scientific scheme. As Andrzej Walicki states, “Fyodorov’s worldview was a peculiar mixture of mystical and religious ideas with common-sense utilitarianism and practicality (...), and the cult of technology and natural sciences.”¹

We are not talking, therefore, of the transcendental, mystical resurrection brought about by God *for* man, but an immanent, active raising of the dead, accomplished by God *through* man. To express this distinction Fyodorov will differentiate between resurrection and the raising of the dead). In Russian this distinction is based on a subtle terminological difference: “*voskresenie*” vs. “*voskreshenie*”. Fyodorov placed the latter concept at the center of his philosophy and declared it to be the proper formulation of the task set before mankind by Christianity². The risen Christ calls on man to resurrect his ancestors – bringing Lazarus back from the dead is an example of this formula. The resurrection of Christ is the fruit of the connection between God the Father and his incarnated Son and remains as inaccessible and incomprehensible to man as the act of *creatio ex nihilo*. The resurrection of Lazarus, however, is an expression of the most perfect connection between the human God and the created world, based on the renewal and revival of that which has ceased to be, thus snatching it away from the arms of death. This then is man’s proper, though risky and uncertain aim; it is the horizon of his life, of all his activity, the horizon of the boldest and fondest human desires, resolving the problem of evil and suffering in the world, and attainable through the gradual advancement of knowledge, science, technology, cooperation and collaboration. This project of resurrection-revitalization as a social and scientific goal may seem strange, audacious or naïve, a delusion and a utopian extravagance. Nevertheless, such a perspective may be a fine tool for the interpretation of human history and the accomplishments of culture and science; it may indicate with appropriate pathos the meaning and the ultimate goal of human knowledge and all human activity, which – particularly for philosophy – is in itself a distinction not to be lightly dismissed. What is more, this extravagant and outrageous project of revitalization may in the modern era (and possibly also in the postmodern) be the most fitting exposition of the deepest meaning of Christianity – of the absurd faith shared by the “daring fools”. It may be seen as a way of reaffirming the outrageous, extravagant essence of Christianity. The vapid

¹ A. Walicki, *Rosyjska filozofia i myśl społeczna od Oświecenia do marksizmu [Russian Philosophy and Social Thought from Enlightenment to Marxism]*, Warsaw: 1973, p. 561.

² See N. Fyodorov, *Sochineniya [Works]*, Moscow: 1982, p. 126, 208.

idea of resurrection adhered to by the theologians should be, in Fyodorov's view, replaced with the living and revitalizing excess of the scientific project; with the organized raising of the dead. Finally, the idea of outwitting death continues to fascinate not only occultists and charlatans, but also – within the bounds of reason – serious scientists. “Are the processes of aging reversible?” – asks one of them. “Currently”, he says, “it is unfortunately impossible”, but goes on to add that: “There is a certain quantity of unspecified stem cells in our bodies which intervene when something ceases to work. That is how we »fix ourselves«. These cells are highly active when we are young, but less so as we grow older. This raises the question: what if we could strengthen these repairing abilities of the body?”³. In my opinion, these are precisely the sort of questions that Fyodorov himself would have wished to see considered and researched by science.

Even if the world is ultimately governed by rational laws and principles, man still tends to see in it nothing but chaos, anarchy and blind force. Life is violent, absurd and slavish. It is a death trap. Death robs the world and life of any vestige of meaning, order or rationality. But it is so only as long as death is consciously perceived as the “outrage” of this world, and not interpreted back into the permanent and final order of things. It is so, in other words, only to individual man. Here we touch upon a theme crucial to Fyodorov's philosophy which, as is often described (quite accurately, I believe) as emphasizing the communal, collective aspect of human existence. Death is natural and quite rational wherever the life of the species takes precedence over the life of the individual; wherever the eternal wheel of unconscious “painless” death seems to be at the same time the eternal wheel of life understood as the continuity of the species. This ceases to be the norm once an individual gains prevalence over the species, once the continuity of the species ceases to soothe the suffering of the individual and to appease his outrage – the outrage caused by self-awareness and by a conscious, moral relation to infinity. In man, nature's development based on the continuity and dominance of the species over the individual, on the natural rationality of death, reaches its limits, exposes its illusive nature, its disgrace, demands a radically new order, new rules – those of freedom, self-awareness and vitality triumphing over death. Man – grieving over death and struggling with it – is fighting not only for his own cause, not only in order to fulfill human goals and ideals opposed to nature; he is also seeking after a cosmic transformation of nature herself, he is attempting to liberate nature from death, effecting the good which cannot be attained by nature alone, while for man it is the very sense of his existence. In Fyodorov's approach evolution is replaced with regulation. Teilhard de Chardin's well-known terminology seems appropriate in this case, a terminology used also by Vladimir Vernadsky, a representative of Russian cosmism (whose ideas are closely related to Fyodorov's): in the process of cosmic evolution the era of the biosphere is followed by the era of the noosphere.

³ *Inżynierowie matki natury. Z profesorem Piotrem Stępiem rozmawia Sławomir Mizerski [“Mother Nature's Engineers: Sławomir Mizerski in conversation with Prof. Piotr Stępień], Niezbędnik Inteligenta. Supplement to Polityka, 17. XII. 2005, p. 27.*

As man enters the scene, nature becomes a “distortion of God’s image”⁴, an obvious evil and disgrace which may be overcome by man alone, or – to be exact – by the dynamic, joint (universal) activity of man towards the goal of defeating death, of raising the dead. Without human activity the world would disintegrate, fall into degradation, disorganization. Though intuiting that it has been charged with such a task (in fear of death, in passionate and heroic taming of death through culture, religion and social life), humanity has as yet been incapable of grasping it fully and lucidly and has not yet proceeded to fulfill it. So far humanity has always ended up accepting death’s irreversibility, while (at the very most) expecting a miraculous act of grace, a direct intervention of God, an *interposition* from the transcendental dimension. In Fyodorov’s opinion, although humanity has long ago managed to reject overt cannibalism, it is still engaged in covert cannibalism, denying its vocation and trying to excuse its passivity by seeing it as part of the objective order of nature and of the rigid socio-historical laws. The burning need of the moment – both in the socio-historical sense as well as in the cosmological and natural – is to inaugurate the third epoch of human endeavor: the epoch of the resurrection of the ancestors and the regulation of nature.⁵ If we do not undertake this task, we will be faced with a multiplication of the various forms of false (and therefore ineffectual) denial of nature and death: pettiness (fashion), triviality (mass culture), short-term utilitarianism (trade), the exaltations of parenthood, the cult of youth and immaturity, the quietist abstractionism of philosophy and art, the unreflective automatism of church rites, cheap mysticism, spiritualism, drug addiction, alcoholism⁶.

To get out of the cul-de-sac of human history, to get out of the blind alley of Christianity as we know it, we need to, first and foremost, treat resurrection with full seriousness as man’s true destiny and the true meaning of history, and secondly – to treat this goal and this meaning in an active way, as a practical task set before humankind, an organizational purpose which should mobilize the whole potential of man: his autonomy (spirituality), freedom (morality), reason (science), industry and effectiveness (social life). In Fyodorov’s writings faith in God (i.e. in the idea of resurrection) is possible only if we first gain faith in man (via the act of resurrection, of rekindling life). Yet, without faith in God (humanity’s ultimate calling), faith in man is trivialized, measured out in “coffee spoons” (the endless process of generational development, historical progress, intellectual achievements of philosophy, utilitarian achievements of science and the therapeutical function of art and religion, all of which is additionally enhanced by eschatological expectations). These two faiths are the two sides of a single whole motivating man (both spiritually and historically): the idea of Divine Humanity. It is not incidental that Solovyov and Dostoyevsky were Fyodorov’s greatest admirers (though not without

⁴ N. Fyodorov, *Sochinieniya*, op. cit., p. 437.

⁵ See op. cit., p. 165.

⁶ See op. cit., p. 362.

their reservations) – after all, next to Fyodorov these two were Russia’s most famous prophets of Divine Humanity.

According to Fyodorov, two primary and fundamental sentiments (or “moods”) define man, or rather – they constitute the essence of humanity, the “surplus” of humanity in relation to nature, a peculiar “fissure” of nature occurring in man, thanks to which he is lifted up from the horizontal dimension of nature into the vertical dimension of freedom and spirituality – into the realm of God. These sentiments are, first of all, the experience of mortality and the fear of death, and secondly – the shame (or the remorse) of birth.⁷ We could describe the first of these emotions as anti-thanatic and the second as anti-erotic⁸, which points us – in a sort of symmetrical reversal – to Freud. This Freudian context will perhaps enable us to elucidate what may well be the most important aspect of Fyodorov’s philosophy (though it is so integrated that it would in fact be very difficult to point to aspects which might be qualified as “minor”). What I have in mind is the fact that in Fyodorov’s system man is determined not so much by the burden of passively internalized past events, from which he helplessly tries to escape into the future (as Freud sees it), but by a consciously internalized future – the organized task of effectively preserving the past (its rebirth, its resurrection). If the pain of mortality and the shame of birth are considered to be the insurmountable boundaries of human existence, these emotions enter into a mutually destructive dialectic which until now has governed human life. This dialectic points to the intensification of the sexual instinct as a proper way of overcoming death. Even though this creates new life, such life – in Fyodorov’s terms – only allows death to triumph once more, and so on *ad infinitum*: escaping from death through the natural (sexual) life-making passion, man only grants death its ultimate victory. In the final count the erotic passion is the deadly passion – and this, we may add, with fearless perceptiveness was shown by Freud. Yet for Fyodorov the proper consequence of the pain of mortality and the shame of birth is resurrection.

This perspective, however, changes entirely our current cognitive attitudes and life aspirations. The essence of the world (of God, of God’s world) is movement and not stability, immobility or changelessness; it is energy and not substantiality; it requires man to go beyond nature. Therefore activity, constant endeavors, the future, projects, plans and risks define man and his world; only in this sense can man be adequately said to have been created in God’s image and likeness; only thus may he follow Christ. Considered in this light, numerous other biblical principles and metaphors reveal a new, unorthodox meaning – their *true* meaning, as Fyodorov believed. When, for example, we are told to “be like little children” this does not mean that we are supposed to be spontaneous and carefree, but is in fact a definition of our basic “social role” and of our principle obligation which should never be abandoned in favor of our parental responsibilities. Christ’s essence is his status of a son in relation to

⁷ See *op. cit.*, p. 398.

⁸ See S. Semyonova, *Nikolay Fyodorov: Tvorchestvo Zhizni*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

God, and for humans this relationship is also, we may say, “defining” and morally motivating. Man – Christ seems to suggest – is first and foremost “the Son of Man”, and this status of a son is precisely why he is not just another representative of the species, but can deem himself to be fully human (or even Humanly Divine). The command to “replenish the earth and subdue it” is – obviously – not an incitement to exploit nature or to be selfish, but a postulate of resurrecting from the ashes (by willpower, science and action) all the previous generations. The Holy Trinity is not just an expression of the internal differentiation of God, but – most importantly – a symbol of the living God, of the God of life. It also represents the ideal of human relations, both communal and personal; it gives priority to the relationship of the Father, Son and Daughter⁹ (Holy Ghost) over all other relations (those of brotherhood, marriage and nationhood) which are secondary and represent the threat of naturalistic degeneration (embodied in – appropriately – socialism, hedonism and nationalism). The commandment not to kill is something much greater than a call to refrain from murder; refraining makes us just as guilty and responsible; only he who actively and vigorously abstains from killing may be said to fulfill the biblical commandment; a person who truly does not kill not only abandons all action on behalf of death, but also acts for the benefit of life. For Fyodorov then the true meaning of “do not kill” is “raise the dead”¹⁰. If Christianity requires a certain restraint in the sphere of eroticism, it is not in the name of the asceticism and pure spirituality, or out of contempt for flesh. To the contrary: it is done in the name of turning the body into a divine, eternal, imperishable object, to prevent wasting the power of the body on something that is trivial and acquiescent with transience and death. The Christian vision of Earth’s central place in the cosmos, i.e. the place where God became incarnate, is elucidated by Fyodorov in the following way: Christ indicates and initiates a great transformation of the cosmos, its rebirth, ennoblement, its repudiation of the power of death. From the place of His incarnation, life and resurrection, a great process will begin, the purpose and the meaning of which is not life after death (and in another world), but life without death, while the testimony of the overcoming of death will be the resurrection (in this, though transfigured world) of all the dead.

⁹ Some interpreters accuse Fyodorov of disfavoring women and daughters, as if he totally ignored them in the face of the importance of the status of the son. See for instance C. Wodziński, *Trans, Dostojewski, Rosja, czyli o filozofowaniu siekierą*, [Trance, Dostoyevsky, Russia, or Philosophizing with an Axe] Gdańsk: 2005, p. 95, where we find the following statement: „rarely, carefully and unwillingly does Fyodorov use in his project such terms as ‘daughter’ or ‘mother’, realizing that women are not characterized by such obvious messianism as the ‘Son of Man’ and do not quite fit into the religion of ‘God the Father’”. Fyodorov’s texts, however, do not support this opinion. Fyodorov defines the Holy Ghost’s function as corresponding to the position of the daughter, and states her full equality with the Son, which in the light of the Orthodox attitude to the question of *filioque* becomes especially important and powerful. (See N. Fyodorov, *Sochinieniya*, op. cit., p. 141-143). Fyodorov several times underscores the equality of men (sons) and women (daughters) within Christianity, indicating it as one of the crucial differences between Christianity and Islam, as well as the main reason of the „imperfect idea of God” in Islam (Ibid. p. 149). In fact Fyodorov’s work may be seen as a hymn of praise in honor of the woman-daughter who, impersonated in Mary Magdalene, was the first to recognize the resurrected Christ, and impersonated in Antigone gave an example of absolute love of fathers; it is in a daughter – states Fyodorov – that the feeling of love to parents was first born, earlier than in a son. (See *ibid.*, p. 412-413, 418).

¹⁰ See N. Fyodorov, *Sochinieniya*, op. cit., p. 171.

Finally, it is only in Fyodorov's philosophy that the words "faith without works is dead" ring with such simplicity, and yet with an adequate measure of pathos.

Fyodorov's whole project – the project of resurrection, of Christian endeavor, of "sonship" – is directed against nature which is seen as solid, substantial and governed by the necessary principles of reality, preserving its basic laws by a constant elimination of individuals. In short, nature lives by death. But a different understanding, a different perception of nature is possible – as a dynamic, evolving, universal interdependency of everything that exists and ever existed – in other words: a community. Yet this second understanding is not related to some already existing, though not yet discerned and realized factuality; it is also not a mystical insight into its future which is bound to occur due to the operation of some natural or divine principles. That second understanding of nature is its possibility; it is a project, a mission whose fulfillment depends on the conscious and subjective activity of man. In this pursuit nature must transcend itself and be metamorphosed; it must reject its basic principles, until now considered as unshakable certainties; and yet – nature is not to be annihilated but is to find a rational, moral, divine and Christian expansion. The element that connects these two approaches to nature will therefore have to be science, constantly exploring the structure, laws and possibilities of the world, as well as technology, verifying the innovative exploration and achievements of science.

Fyodorov saw the first spectacular experiments in weather control (such as inducing rainfall) as the inauguration of the new science. In the future he expected other achievements of this kind: ecological pursuits¹¹, research into human memory, electricity¹², solar energy¹³, management of the earth's movements and exploration of the cosmos¹⁴, progress in communication, storing of information, development of medicine¹⁵. Man, who until now was just an observer (zritel') of the cosmos, must become its master (pravitel'), just as our body (tyelo) must finally become our accomplishment (dyelo) ¹⁶.

Let us repeat: Fyodorov's project is to negate nature's erstwhile mechanisms through the power of that very same nature as it is being transformed by knowledge and consciousness. In other words, nature's mechanisms must be rewired, changed from the egoism and enmity of the parents (demanding gratitude from their progeny) into the gratitude and attachment of the sons (striving for the benefit of their fathers); from the anticipation of the future, dispersed in senseless endlessness, it must be directed towards a definite, reconstructed past; the force of sexual energy, characteristic of the first concept of nature, must be replaced with the power of resurrection, in accordance with the second concept. At the same time it will lead to the refutation of all conventionality, of the arbitrariness of social hierarchy; legal and economic ties will be replaced by bonds of kinship (ultimately – of

¹¹ See *ibid.*, p. 57.

¹² See *ibid.*, p. 356, 422.

¹³ See *ibid.*, p. 59.

¹⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 362.

¹⁵ See *ibid.*, p. 367.

¹⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 120.

universal kinship). Philosophically speaking, the fulfillment of these projects depends not upon a spiritual transcendence of any sort, but upon a position that is perhaps best defined as a moral materialism¹⁷. Nature will be ruled not by the laws of causality, not by the irreversibility of facts, not by the ruthless supplanting of the present by the future, but by the dynamic and fully conscious activity of the effect recreating (resurrecting) the cause, by the moral care of the sons, inspired by the limitless fulfillment of righteousness and duty, and not by submissiveness to mere facts which finds false comfort in parenthood – the parenthood of even more deaths. It will be a conquest of nature's laws not through a miracle (chyudom) – as was hitherto assumed – but through successful action, through work (trudom)¹⁸.

The essence of moral materialism lies in the rejection of evil, and this attitude, according to Fyodorov, remained in the background of human thought, in the shadow of mainstream culture and history, and at best it was seen as a beautiful, utopian naivety. The dominant attitude was – in different ways – to accept evil (especially metaphysical evil, death): there was the Buddhist attitude towards evil which was escapist and which saw man's purpose in his dissolution in radical transcendence; there was pantheism which accepted the evil of the world by pointing to its spiritual and divine dimension and insisting that man as a creature of reason should heroically endure evil; finally, there was subjectivism (egocentrism) in which man acknowledged that the evil of the world is his own evil and therefore attempted to neutralize it (and mysticize it), interpreting it as – for instance – free will (Socrates, Kant) or creativity (Nietzsche). And even though Fyodorov's concepts lead to a radically critical reevaluation of contemporary culture and human civilization as such¹⁹, they nevertheless draw our attention to some important events and signals in history which predict and in a way substantiate his project. A quite distinct position from the abovementioned worldviews is held by Zoroastrianism and Slavic spirituality, and the essence of their difference lies in the refusal to accept evil, an optimistic faith in man's future. The proper end of human history, and at the same time – of philosophical and scientific enquiry, was discerned (thought not clearly) by Bacon, Condorcet and Comte²⁰, philosophers whose veneration for science²⁰ was combined with a humanistic vision. Some scholars also list Fourier's and Feuerbach's concepts as congenial to Fyodorov's.²¹

¹⁷ See S. Semyonova, *Nikolay Fyodorov. Tvorchestvo Zhizni*, op. cit., p. 153-154.

¹⁸ See N. Fyodorov, *Sochinieniya*, op. cit., p. 324.

¹⁹ This is emphasized – perhaps even somewhat excessively – by S. Mazurek in his *Utopia i laska. Idea rewolucji moralnej w rosyjskiej filozofii religijnej [Utopia and Grace. The Idea of Moral Revolution in Russian Religious Philosophy]*, Warsaw: 2006, p. 21-22.

²⁰ See N. Fyodorov, *Sochinieniya*, op. cit., p. 311, 630, 638 (see also G. V. Florovski, *Puti russkogo bogoslovyia [The Ways of Russian Theology]*, Paris: 1937, p. 328; A. Sawicki, *Eschatocentryzm. Wskreszenie zmarłych przodków według Nikolaja Fiodorowa – naukowa fantastyka czy imperatyw wiary [Eschatocentrism. Fyodorov's Idea of the Resurrection of the Ancestors – Scientific Phantasy or an Imperative of Faith]*, in: *Idea – studia nad strukturą i rozwojem pojęć filozoficznych [Idea – Studies of Structure and Development of Philosophical Concepts]*, XVII, Białystok: 2005, p. 85).

²¹ See S. Semyonova, *N. F. Fyodorov i yego filosofskoye nasledie [N. F. Fyodorov and his Philosophical Inheritance]*, in: N. Fyodorov, *Sochinieniya*, op. cit., p. 17; G. Przebinda, *Wladimir Solowjow i Nikolaj Fiodorow. Dwie koncepcje eschatologiczne [Vladimir Solovyov and Nikolay Fyodorov. Two Eschatological Ideas]*, in: G.

On the other hand, Fyodorov's project develops out of his attempts to question and redefine the very foundations of metaphysics. If the basic questions of metaphysics are: "why does being exist?" and "why is there something rather than nothing?", these questions present a limited perspective, a narrowminded, passive and strictly theoretical outlook. In this paradigm man expresses his disinterested – nobly, aristocratically disinterested – concern in elucidating something that already exists; "why" is tantamount here to a "petition", it is a request to gain clarity, an appeal for the disclosure of the foundations, of the essence of something that "already" exists. In fact, however, man passionately desires to know the answer to an entirely different question which expands and redirects metaphysics; and that question is: "why do the living die?" or – to put it differently – "why does a living creature suffer and die?"²². In that query, in that "why?", there is something more than just a question, more than mere disinterested curiosity, there is a "concerned", passionate desire which may either become reconciled with the impossibility of finding an answer (thus remaining in the circle of metaphysics of existence, of fact), or turn towards action (thus opening up the sphere of active philosophy, the philosophy of a project). This second path leads to the philosophy of the common task – *filosofia obshchego dela*.

Filosofia obshchego dela is the title of the most important and best known of Fyodorov's works. It requires some elucidation. Translating the first word of the title as "philosophy" is of course unquestionable; the second word is best translated as "common" (though, in some instances and not without a reason, it is translated as "general" or "universal"); the third word, however, poses a translational problem which eludes a satisfactory and unambiguous solution. *Delo* (in the context of Fyodorov's philosophy) may be translated as "deed", which has been suggested here and which is the usual connotation. At the same time we need to be aware of political connotations – generally eschewed by Fyodorov – that this possess (especially in the light of 19th century Russian thought). For this reason some translators and scholars tend to interpret *delo* as "issue" (which seems, however, too passive and trivial), or as "work" (which is a rather unreflective translation from Russian), or finally – as "action" (which sounds too technical and praxeological).

There is one more aspect of Fyodorov's philosophy we need to address here. The consciousness of death, the fear of death, the dream of overcoming death is believed by Fyodorov to be such a natural motivating force that adding a religious (no to mention Christian) dimension to it seems quite unnecessary, unless for "ideological" purposes. The scientific, organizational and technological efforts for the purpose of resurrecting our ancestors also seem to require the religious aspect only as a kind of initiating energy, in order to begin the required social, scientific and technological process, but not because it plays any further role in the development of this process. In

Przebinda, *Między Moskwą a Rzymem. Myśl religijna w Rosji XIX i XX wieku [Between Moscow and Rome. Religious Thought in Russia in the 19th and the 20th Century]*, Kraków: 2003, p. 115.

²² N. Fyodorov, *Sochineniya*, op. cit., p. 68, 477; a still more direct reading of this question would be: „why does something that lives, die (...), why do not the dead return to life?” (ibid., p. 479).

any case, the imperative of resurrection seems to be comparatively independent of religious preferences and values, and in the entire body of Fyodorov's works two separate themes or lines of argumentation may be identified: the religious and the naturalistic.²³ And yet, it was Fyodorov's intention to integrate these themes, both in his philosophy and in the fulfillment of the project of resurrection. Fyodorov feared that left to itself religion will become radically transcendent and thus lead to a passivism and a demobilization in the sphere of scientific and technological development (leading to a "poetic" reconciliation with death); at the same time, if nothing held naturalism in check, if nothing reined back the progress of science and technology aspect, the result would be humanistic idolatry, hedonistic progressivism and the victory of triviality, fashion and consumerism (i.e. the acceptance of death through forgetting). Without the religious inspiration human activity will no longer be a "deed"; within the spiritual dimension it will degenerate to individualistic decadence and in the bodily sphere – to short-term efficiency which blocks out the perspective of resurrection. Religion directs man towards a certain "impossible" goal, inspiring him to its attainment, and at the same time it makes man aware of his limitations: human beings – even in the most perfect brotherhood, having gained ultimate control over nature – will "merely" be resurrectors (of something preexisting), but will not be able to create *ex nihilo*; they will remain creatures made in the image of God, but not new Gods.

Connected to this is another, very subtle matter, which seems to place the idea of the resurrection of the fathers in a proper context (and on a proper scale of difficulty). This project according to Fyodorov must begin with the closest in kin, and gradually move back to embrace earlier and earlier generations. Yet the feeling of duty and moral guilt in relation to our fathers must be balanced by a feeling quite different in nature. We feel that "the fathers – in the narrow but also in the broader meaning – have not insured our safety"²⁴; even though there were so many of them in so many (countless) generations, they have abandoned us, left us to our fates and to our existential anguish; "they have not fulfilled their duty". This disappointment and this tension would be unbearable if it were not for the figure and example of the "first" father, "the Heavenly Father who overcomes the imperfections of all fathers"²⁵, who grants the appropriate purity and power of inspiration to the concept of resurrection, which would most likely prove insufficient for the cosmic (supercosmic) task, if it was limited to the "empirical" fathers, those that turned out to be too empirical, dying "too easily". God is the only true motivation for us in the project of resurrection of our fathers wherein we ourselves become their fathers in our turn; a motivation for us to become fathers who finally fulfill their task, instead of failing in it. Otherwise resurrection would become an absurdity, it would merely be a more perfect copy of deadly nature, and thus a more efficient, a more versatile slaughter. The naturalistic interpretation of resurrection is unable to manage without the religious motif, it is unable

²³ See S. Mazurek, *Utopia i łaska. Idea rewolucji moralnej w rosyjskiej filozofii religijnej*, op. cit., p. 25.

²⁴ V. V. Bibikhin, *Возвращение отцов [Return of the Fathers]*, „Nachala”, 1, 1993, p. 103.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

to retain its autonomy towards religious argumentation. It is either God, or death, one or the other – Fyodorov seems to say; and yet, such dilemma is possible only if there is someone who faces it and who does not allow the religious interpretation to abstract from nature.