

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

RUSSIAN
RELIGIOUS
THOUGHT

Edited by

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and

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OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DB,
United Kingdom

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
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First Edition published in 2020

Impression: 1

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Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020937381

ISBN 978-0-19-879644-2

Printed and bound by
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

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SLAVOPHILISM AND THE ORIGINS OF RUSSIAN RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY

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RANDALL A. POOLE

INTRODUCTION

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THE ‘Slavophile controversy’, as Andrzej Walicki put it in the title of a classic book, has been the source of enormous creativity in Russian intellectual history (Walicki 1975). Slavophilism and the responses it has generated have touched virtually every area of Russian thought and culture. Nowhere has its impact been stronger, more creative, and enduring than in Russian religious thought. Slavophilism was Russia’s first religious-philosophical movement. It laid the foundations for the remarkable development of Russian religious philosophy that began around 1880. Nicholas Lossky wrote that while the two leading Slavophiles, Aleksei Khomiakov (1804–1860) and Ivan Kireevsky (1806–1856), may not have elaborated a system of philosophy, ‘they set out the program and established the spirit of the philosophical movement which is the most original and valuable achievement of Russian thought—I mean the attempt of the Russian thinkers to develop a systematic Christian world conception’. Lossky lists Vladimir Soloviev and others in the ‘whole galaxy of philosophers’ who were inspired by the Slavophiles (Lossky 1951, 14).

Khomiakov and Kireevsky were themselves concerned to ‘develop a systematic Christian world conception’, or at least to show how one might be developed. They recognized that precisely this—the defence of Christian theism and its meaning for humanity—was the task of modern religious philosophy, given the rise of materialism and other challenges to religious belief. Despite their criticism of Western rationalism, they were not irrationalists. They esteemed reason and held that faith and reason were compatible, indeed equally necessary, parts of an integral whole. They were ardent defenders of human freedom and dignity. At the basis of their worldview was the

common romantic idea of ‘wholeness of spirit’, but they gave it a deeper and multifaceted meaning, drawing out its epistemological, ethical, ecclesiological, and ontological implications. Their main religious-philosophical concepts were developments of it: *sobornost*’ (catholicity, conciliarity, community), faithful or believing reason, and integral personhood. Khomiakov and Kireevsky were convinced that human beings, through integrating faith and reason and achieving spiritual wholeness, could apprehend reality in its ontological or noumenal depths. This type of integral knowledge could not be attained by the abstract, analytic intellect alone, which by its nature remained at the phenomenal level of reality. These philosophical conclusions followed from their faith and religious experience.

Despite their hostility to Catholicism, which Nikolai Berdiaev called their ‘fundamental error’ (Berdiaev 1998, 331), Khomiakov and Kireevsky approached the perennial problem of faith and reason in a way that recalls St. Anselm’s formulation: ‘faith seeking understanding’ (*fides quaerens intellectum*). Clearly their thought has a significance that transcends Russia. Robert Bird has remarked that Khomiakov’s conception of the Church (his ecclesiology), in particular his concept of *sobornost*, has ‘changed the landscape of Christian theology the world over’ (Bird 2004, 198).

SLAVOPHILISM: SOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT

Religious philosophy and theology are universal by their nature; thus it is not surprising that one interpretive approach to Khomiakov’s and Kireevsky’s religious thought is to disassociate it to a certain extent from the rest of Slavophilism, on the grounds that the latter is too ideological, utopian, or nationalistic. Such matters of critical interpretation involve the question of sources and influences.¹ According to one of its earlier American historians, Slavophilism was the most ‘comprehensive’, ‘coherent’, and ‘authentic’ expression of romantic thought in Russia (Riasanovsky 1976, 176–7). No one can deny that European romanticism, Schelling first of all, fundamentally shaped it. Kireevsky was a member of the Society of Wisdom-Lovers (founded in 1823), which was absorbed in Schelling’s philosophical romanticism. Together with romanticism, another source-type was Khomiakov’s and Kireevsky’s personal faith, religious experience, and knowledge of patristic theology, especially the works of the Eastern Church Fathers.² There is an old and persistent debate in the historiography over the relative significance of these two types of sources, but clearly both were very important. Moreover, they were compatible. Romantic thinkers (such as Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi) extolled faith as a distinctive type

¹ See Berdiaev (1912, chapter 1), ‘The Sources of Slavophilism’.

² Berdiaev stressed this: ‘Slavophilism, of course, grew from religious experience, and not from books, not from philosophical and literary ideas’ (Berdiaev 1912, 12). At the same time he acknowledged the influence of German idealism and romanticism.

of sensibility by which human beings can affirm the noumenal 'thing-in-itself' and experience spiritual or divine reality. This was very close to the Slavophile conception. As mentioned above, 'wholeness of spirit' was pre-eminently a romantic concept, and no concept was more basic for Khomiakov and Kireevsky. They regarded Schelling as its re-creator (*vozsozdatel' tsel'nosti dukha*) (Christoff 1961, 129).

Slavophile religious thought developed in the period after Khomiakov's first (and seminal) essay in theology, 'The Church is One'.³ It was probably written in 1846 but was not published until 1864, after the author's death. Until the late 1840s, Khomiakov and Kireevsky concentrated on other areas of Slavophile doctrine, in particular the philosophy of history and social philosophy. In both areas, they, together with Konstantin Aksakov (1817–1860), elaborated sharply contrasting representations of Russian and European civilizations.

The first statements of the Slavophile position were articulated in 1839: Khomiakov's 'On the Old and New' and Kireevsky's 'In Reply to Khomiakov'.⁴ In these and other writings the Slavophiles argued that Russia's distinctive path of historical development, outside the classical legacy of the West, was a blessing: it enabled the country to avoid the rationalistic, formalistic, and antagonistic principles of Roman law and civilization. Instead, pre-Petrine Russia cultivated its own distinctive virtues—moral, spiritual, and communal ones that were held to be embodied in the village commune and in the Orthodox Church. In particular: 'The cult of the commune was a cornerstone of Slavophile ideology, revealing many of its most important aspects' (Horujy 2010, 33). Even the Russian autocracy had a place in this picture of Russian community: Authentic Russian freedom was 'freedom from politics', which the autocrat provided by carrying the burdens of state on his own shoulders, recognizing that he had absolute power only in the external or political sphere. The Slavophiles idealized the relationship between the Russian land (i.e. the common people) and the state as one of mutual non-interference. Clearly, their representation of old Russia can be seen as an example of retrospective utopianism and of romantic organicism.⁵

In the late 1840s and early 1850s, Khomiakov and Kireevsky began to shift their focus to ecclesiology and epistemology, with greater attention to more purely religious-philosophical problems, though still within confessional and polemical contexts (extolling the virtues of Orthodoxy over Western Christianity). Sergei Khoruzhii argues that there was a discernible trend away from the historical-organicist paradigm towards an ontological-personalist (or personological) paradigm, indeed towards a 'theology of personhood' (Khoruzhii 2004; Horujy 2010, 45–50). Integral personhood became the very centre of Khomiakov's and Kireevsky's mature thought. This development fully applied, even especially applied, to the concept of sobornost, which for Khomiakov

³ See Khomiakov (1886–1906, vol. 2, 1–26). For a recent Russian edition, see Khomiakov (2013, 381–400). Robert Bird has provided a new English translation of the text: see Khomiakov (1998a).

⁴ 'O starom i novom' can be found in Khomiakov (1886–1906, vol. 3, 21–29), and in Khomiakov (2013, 29–44). Kireevsky's 'V otvet k A. S. Khomiakovu' can be found in Kireevsky (1911, vol. 1, 109–20). For an English translation (abridged), see Kireevsky (1987).

⁵ For an excellent concise exposition of Slavophilism, see Walicki (1979, 92–114).

came to mean the ideal or transcendent (rather than empirical or historical) qualities of the divine-human community (the Church) through which people can most fully realize their personhood (Khoruzhii 2004, 48–57). Far from entailing any collectivist suppression of the person, the idea of sobornost was premised on the recognition that personhood depended on freedom and community, that persons realize themselves through free and loving interaction with each other (Rossum 2005, 307–10). This was a Trinitarian truth: God himself consists in a communion of persons (the Trinity) (Khoruzhii 2004, 57–62). Through the *sobornyi* qualities of freedom, faith, and mutual love, persons become ever more filled with grace and move ever closer to union with the divine (*theosis*).

In addition to ‘The Church is One’, Khomiakov’s religious-philosophical writings include his letters in English to William Palmer (1844–1854), as well as six essays in French on ecclesiastical and theological themes (1853–1860).⁶ In 1857, he published Kireevsky’s philosophical ‘Fragments’ and appended his own essay to them. This was followed by two open philosophical letters to Iurii Samarin (1858–1860). These three essays show that, together with his religious-ecclesial consciousness, Khomiakov had a powerful philosophical mind.⁷

Kireevsky wrote relatively little over the course of his life, about twelve full-length articles. In 1852 he published ‘On the Nature of European Culture and on Its Relationship to Russian Culture’, a transitional essay between his earlier works and his later, more philosophical writings. By far his most influential work (with respect to the future development of Russian religious philosophy) was his last essay, ‘On the Necessity and Possibility of New Principles in Philosophy’. It appeared just after his death in June 1856 and forms a set with the ‘Fragments’ published by Khomiakov a year later.⁸

Khomiakov and Kireevsky were men of deep faith. Their religious-philosophical thought was grounded in their experience of Russian Orthodoxy. Khomiakov came from a devout family; his mother’s piety was an especially important influence on him.⁹ From this spiritual atmosphere he acquired an exceptional ‘strength and firmness of a faith illuminated by reason’, as Zenkovsky puts it (Zenkovsky 1953, 180–1). Fellow Slavophile Iurii Samarin (1819–1876) was the first to emphasize the experiential character

⁶ For the Palmer correspondence, see Birkbeck (1895), which volume also contains an English translation of ‘The Church is One’. For the six French essays, see Khomiakov (1872). For Russian translations of these two sets of writings, see Khomiakov (1886–1906, vol. 2, 27–328, 343–415). For substantial parts of the French writings (in English translation) and two of Khomiakov’s letters to Palmer, see Jakim and Bird (1998, 55–159).

⁷ The three essays can be found in Khomiakov (1886–1906, vol. 1, 263–348), and in Khomiakov (2013, 248–66, 300–49). For English translations of Khomiakov’s two philosophical letters to Samarin (somewhat abridged), see Khomiakov (1976). For an English translation (by Robert Bird) of Khomiakov’s commentary to Kireevsky’s ‘Fragments’, see Khomiakov (1998g).

⁸ For the two essays and the ‘fragments’, see Kireevsky (1911, vol. 1, 174–281). For English translations of the full texts, see Kireevsky (1998a, 1998b, 1998c).

⁹ Studies of Khomiakov include Zavitnevich (1902–1913), Berdiaev (1912), Gratteux (1939), Christoff (1961), Walicki (1975, chapter 5), Koshelev (2000), and Tsurikov (2004).

of Khomiakov's theology, especially for his ecclesiology or theory of the Church.¹⁰ For him the Church was an experiential reality, a 'living organism, an organism of truth and love', as Samarin put it, 'or more precisely: *truth and love as an organism*' (Samarin 1998, 171). The true Church is one through its free communal experience and embodiment of the Holy Spirit. The idea of sobornost—a neologism coined later to express Khomiakov's vision—was premised on inner freedom, the very condition of genuine faith, religious experience, and recognition of divine truth. Khoruzhii defined it as '*the freedom of self-realization in truth*' (Khoruzhii 1994, 20–1). Samarin celebrated Khomiakov's ideas as a ringing defence of freedom of conscience, writing that he 'represented an original *manifestation of total freedom in religious consciousness*, one nearly unprecedented in our land' (Samarin 1998, 165).

Khomiakov's religious experience was deepened by his knowledge of the works of the Church Fathers, which he seems to have studied carefully, 'becoming permeated with their spirit' (Zenkovsky 1953, 184).¹¹ In general he was highly learned across a large number of fields. A crucially important event in his theological development was the Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs of 6 May 1848, in reply to Pope Pius IX's Epistle 'to the Easterns' exactly five months earlier (Christoff 1961, 142, 157–9). Khomiakov interpreted the Patriarchal Encyclical (relying especially on paragraph seventeen) as affirming that the guardian of Christian truth is not the ecclesiastical hierarchy but 'the whole *people* of the Church' through their faith and love. Quoting the encyclical from memory (inaccurately) in his letter to William Palmer of 8 October 1850, he continued: 'No Hierarchical Order nor Supremacy is to be considered as a guarantee of truth. The knowledge of truth is given to mutual love' (Khomiakov 1998f, 157). This is a key formulation of Khomiakov's 'epistemology of love'. In the decade that followed he would develop it as the experiential core of sobornost (see the penultimate section below, Sobornost).

In contrast to Khomiakov, Kireevsky's faith, at least in a self-conscious sense, came not with childhood but somewhat later, under the influence not so much of his mother (though she was very religious) but of his wife, Natal'ia née Arbeneva (1809–1900). They were married in 1834 and by 1842 his 'conversion', as she called it, was complete. She and her spiritual adviser, the monk Filaret (1758–1842) of the Novospasskii Monastery in Moscow, were instrumental in this process. Kireevsky proceeded to immerse himself in the religious world of Optina Pustyn, located near his family estate.¹² According to Zenkovsky, 'His whole personality and spiritual world were shot through with the rays of religious consciousness. His was a genuine and profound religious *experience*, and in

¹⁰ He did so in his famous introduction to the first edition of Khomiakov's theological writings (Prague, 1867): see Samarin (1998). The Holy Synod did not approve the publication of Khomiakov's works until February 1879 (Christoff 1961, 160n.47). Berdiaev also stressed the experiential character of Khomiakov's religious thought (Berdiaev 1912), as did Georges Florovsky (1987, 38–53). For a more recent account, see Archimandrite Luke (Murianka) (2004).

¹¹ There is some dispute over the actual extent of his knowledge of patristics. See Khondzinakii (2017, 161–5).

¹² On Kireevsky and his religious development, see Müller (1966), Christoff (1972, esp. 75, 78–80, 125–30, 143–204), Gleason (1972, 137–53, 236–94), Walicki (1975, chapter 4), and Engelstein (2009a).

giving it meaning he drew very close to the immense spiritual wealth that was opened to him in the Optina Cloister' (Zenkovsky 1953, 213). The Optina spiritual elder (*starets*) Makarii (Ivanov) (1788–1860) was the most important spiritual and intellectual influence on Kireevsky's life from 1845 on.¹³

Makarii, Ivan and Natal'ia, and also Archpriest F. A. Golubinskii (1797–1854), professor of philosophy at the Moscow Theological Academy, collaborated on an important project: translating and publishing the works of Simeon the New Theologian, Maximus the Confessor, Isaac the Syrian, and other Eastern Church Fathers (Michelson 2017, 54). Their publication programme resulted in sixteen volumes by 1860 (Engelstein 2009a, 138). In this way they played an important part in the century-long patristic revival in Russia. The revival was promoted especially by the massive, multi-generational effort undertaken in the country's four theological academies to publish the works of the Church Fathers in Russian translation (see Chapter 6 in this *Handbook*). Kireevsky's own study of the Eastern Church Fathers convinced him that the Holy Trinity was 'the most exalted core of all divine truth' and that it should ground and give direction to the development of the Christian philosophical worldview (Christoff 1972, 125). As Christoff notes, he came to this realization about the same time that the 1848 Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs helped to crystallize Khomiakov's religious consciousness.

KIREEVSKY: FAITH AND REASON

Kireevsky's faith and religious experience achieved their fullest philosophical articulation at the end of his life, in his famous essay, 'On the Necessity and Possibility of New Principles in Philosophy', and in his essential philosophical 'Fragments'. The essay and fragments present a type of programme for the development of a distinctive Russian religious philosophy, a new Christian philosophy grounded in Orthodox spiritual experience and faith. In striking ways, his programme anticipates the subsequent development of modern Russian religious philosophy by figures such as Vladimir Soloviev, Sergei Trubetskoi, and Sergei Bulgakov. That prescience, perhaps more than the actual content of his own writings, has contributed to his reputation.

Kireevsky's central theme is the mutual relationship of faith and reason. They have often been put in opposition to each other, perhaps no more so than in the modern secular West, but also in certain forms of religion such as fundamentalism. Kireevsky's approach is very different. He regards faith and reason as necessary and integrally related parts of one whole. Both he and Khomiakov referred to that whole by various terms, including reason, mind, soul, spirit, and person, with 'person' being perhaps the best and most encompassing term. Khomiakov speaks of 'integral reason' and Kireevsky of 'believing reason' or 'believing thought'; they use these terms to indicate that reason

¹³ The twenty-seven letters that Kireevsky wrote to Makarii between 1846 and 1855 testify to his deep faith and dedication to Orthodoxy. All but one can be found in Chetverikov (1926, 107–57).

properly includes faith and cannot be integral or whole without it. Berdiaev wrote that ‘Slavophile philosophy is the philosophy of the integral life of the spirit’ (Berdiaev 1998, 337). While integral reason must be faithful, so too should faith be reasonable. Khomiakov wrote of ‘intelligent faith’, and Kireevsky asked, ‘What kind of faith is it that is incompatible with reason?’ (Khomiakov 1998b, 60; Kireevsky 1998b, 236). Both thinkers deplored blind faith and religious fanaticism. They firmly defended intellectual freedom. Berdiaev remarked that the Slavophiles’ ‘love of freedom was astonishing’ (Berdiaev 1998, 334).

Kireevsky’s landmark concept is ‘believing reason’ or faithful reason. His 1856 essay gave it a formative role in the future development of Russian religious philosophy (Slesinski 1999; Antonov 2007). By integrating faith and reason, it strives to achieve ‘the inner wholeness of the mind essential for the comprehension of the integral truth’ (Kireevsky 1998b, 240). In a revealing and oft-cited passage from the ‘Fragments’, he wrote that faith:

embraces the entire wholeness of the human being... Therefore, believing thought is best characterized by its attempt to gather all the separate parts of the soul into one force, to search out that inner heart of being where reason and will, feeling and conscience, the beautiful and the true, the wonderful and the desired, the just and the merciful, and all the capacity of the mind converge into one living unity, and in this way the essential human personality is restored in its primordial indivisibility.

(Kireevsky 1998c, 285)

Faith has the essential role in integrating our intellectual and spiritual capacities, in making the person whole, and in bringing us to truth. Zenkovsky held that Kireevsky’s philosophical anthropology (his conception of human nature) was ‘extremely close to patristic thought’ and that it (like patristic thought) was a dynamic conception because inner spiritual focus, depth, and wholeness was not a given state but a task to be achieved (Zenkovsky 1953, 216). The Slavophile philosopher insisted that wholeness was an ideal and an aspiration. ‘The first condition for the elevation of reason is that one should strive to gather into a single indivisible whole all one’s individual powers, which in the ordinary human condition remain in a state of dispersion and conflict’. One should, he continues, ‘constantly seek in the depths of one’s soul that inner root of understanding where all the separate forces merge into one living and integral vision of the mind’ (Kireevsky 1998b, 259–60). Faith was both the ideal driving the quest for wholeness and thus for truth, and also the means for achieving them.¹⁴

Why is faith, and not reason alone, necessary for knowledge of truth and reality? Khomiakov addressed this question more directly four years later in his second letter to Samarin, writing that faith is ‘that faculty of reason which apprehends actual (real) data and makes them available to analysis and awareness by the understanding [*Verstand*]

¹⁴ For a superb discussion of how this statement is true of the broader context of Russian thought, see Obolevitch (2015, and specifically on Kireevsky and Khomiakov, see pages 11–14).

(Khomiakov 1976, 251). But Kireevsky, too, wrestled with faith and reason as a basic problem of epistemology: how can the mind know anything beyond itself, how can it transcend the immanent phenomena or objects of consciousness and know reality? His answer was that 'on its own'—which for him was an artificial and false way of posing the problem—the mind does not have access to reality and cannot know truth. Thus his concept of reason (believing reason) includes faith from the beginning as a necessary constituent element.

Faith is necessary for integral reason because it transcends the limits of immanent consciousness and grounds reason in being, which for Kireevsky meant ultimately in divine being. He wrote that faith is 'an actual event of inner life, through which people enter into essential communion with divine things (with the higher world, with heaven, with the Godhead)' (Kireevsky 1998c, 289). Faith is the very consciousness 'of the relationship between the living Divine personality and the human personality' (Kireevsky 1998c, 285). Believing reason penetrates to the ontological or noumenal (ultimately Trinitarian) depths of reality, whereas rationalism remains at the abstract, detached level of phenomena. It is a kind of inner revelation or immediate apprehension that grounds the mind, the human person, in divine being. That is what makes possible integral knowledge (Walicki 1975, 150–6). The restoration of being by believing or faithful reason, the recognition that being transcends the narrow confines of rationalism (understood as 'immanentism' or 'phenomenalism'), came to be hailed as the distinctive ontologism of Russian religious philosophy. As Berdiaev put it in 1911: 'Epistemologism is the philosophy of the abstract, rationalistic understanding, whereas ontologism is the philosophy of the integral reason, which grasps not abstract categories but concrete realities' (Berdiaev 1998, 345). No doubt the most passionate champion of Russian ontologism was Vladimir Ern (1882–1917), who put it to nationalistic purposes.¹⁵ Four decades later V. V. Zenkovsky adopted it as one of the major principles informing his interpretation of the history of Russian philosophy (Zenzkovsky 1953).

In his 1856 essay Kireevsky gives a sweeping account of the rise of rationalism and its pernicious, almost hegemonic hold (in his telling) on Western thought and culture, beginning with Aristotle, continuing through scholasticism, and culminating in Hegelianism. He saw rationalism as faithless reason, and thus as the antipode of believing reason. Together they form one of his main binaries. Rationalism is the assertion of the autonomy of reason, the attempt to exclude faith and to claim the supremacy and self-sufficiency of the abstract, analytic, logical understanding (*Verstand, rassudok*). But without faith, reason must confine itself to its own immanent sphere, barring itself from access to transcendent reality. Referring to the rise of modern rationalism after the Reformation, Kireevsky writes: 'Having broken the wholeness of the spirit into fragments, and having left the higher consciousness of truth to detached logical thinking,

¹⁵ During the Great War he celebrated Russian ontologism as an antidote to German phenomenism, which he traced to Kant and which he thought was a source of German militarism. In 1915, he published an essay collection under the title, *Vremia slavianofil'stvuet*, or *The Times are Going Slavophile*, in Laura Engelstein's felicitous translation (Engelstein 2009b, 203).

people were torn away, in the depths of their self-consciousness, from all connections with reality, and they themselves appeared on earth as abstract beings' (Kireevsky 1998b, 257). Rationalism dissolves reality into its concepts. Thus, Kireevsky asks, how can it not present 'the whole existence of the world as the transparent dialectic of human reason, and human reason as the self-consciousness of universal being?' (Kireevsky 1998b, 234). Clearly he thinks Hegelianism was the culmination of rationalism. But he indicates that there was also an empiricist path, which sought to derive the laws of being and thought from empirical phenomena. Both types of rationalism, empiricist and idealist, 'merged into one intellectual view based on the identity of reason and being' (Kireevsky 1998b, 243).

This is an important conclusion, one which soon would be further developed by Khomiakov. For both Slavophile thinkers, rationalism was a type of immanentism or phenomenalism. Though they did not use those terms, by the end of the century their Russian neo-idealist successors did, following their logic. Russian philosophers typically criticized rationalistic German forms of idealism as 'abstract' because they dissolved being into immanent consciousness. Russian idealism and religious philosophy, by contrast, were extolled as 'concrete' (e.g. Sergei Trubetskoi's 'concrete idealism' and Lev Lopatin's 'concrete spiritualism') because they recognized that being was transcendent and needed to be faithfully experienced rather than merely thought. The term 'concrete' captured the distinctive 'ontologism' of Russian religious-philosophical thought—and also its personalism.

Kireevsky found the fundamental flaw of rationalism in its pretension to ground reason in itself, rather than in divine being as revealed through faith. He indicated that recent German philosophers, Schelling in particular, had come to a similar conclusion, as they realized that reason cannot be reduced to abstract, logical understanding and that its wholeness needed to be restored. Rationalism seemed to be nearing the end of its cycle. In short, Kireevsky hoped that a consensus was taking shape on 'the necessity and possibility of new principles in philosophy'. It goes without saying that he thought the main new principle for the future development of philosophy, the way forward beyond the rationalistic impasse, was his own concept of believing or faithful reason. But this new principle was actually an old one: he emphasized that long ago the Church Fathers recognized it and built the first Christian philosophy on it. He himself, as noted above, studied and translated their works during his visits to the Optina Pustyn Hermitage near his country estate. In his philosophical fragments he wrote evocatively:

Believing philosophy will accept the guidance of the Holy Fathers as the first grounds for its self-comprehension, all the more so as this guidance cannot be surmised by abstract thinking. For the truths expressed by the Holy Fathers were achieved by them from immediate, inner experience and are communicated to us not as a logical conclusion... but rather as the testimony of eyewitnesses concerning a country they have been to. (Kireevsky 1998c, 283)¹⁶

¹⁶ These words might well have inspired Georges Florovsky, who led the neopatristic revival in twentieth-century Orthodox theology. See Chapter 31 in this *Handbook*.

Though patristic in foundation and inspiration, Kireevsky envisaged that the new philosophy would be modern. It would develop ‘in accordance with the modern state of learning and in concert with the requirements and issues of modern reason’ (Kireevsky 1998c, 281). In particular it would respect, draw sustenance from, and itself nourish intellectual freedom, science, and culture. True, Kireevsky refers to ‘the inviolability of the bounds of Divine Revelation’, but following Khomiakov he understood this to mean the highest ideal of truth towards which believing reason can aspire. Divine truth ‘is an assurance of the purity and firmness of faith in the Orthodox Church’ (Kireevsky 1998b, 258–9). It protects the freedom of all those who pursue it. Kireevsky’s understanding of revealed divine truth was ecumenical, inspired not only by the seven councils, of course, but also by Schelling, whom he praised as the type of person ‘born not once in centuries but once in millennia’. He expressed critical sympathy for Schelling’s project of tracing Divine Revelation through the history of all of humanity’s actual consciousness of God (Kireevsky 1998b, 272).

KIREEVSKY AND KHOMIAKOV: COMMON PRINCIPLES

Kireevsky’s programme for the development of a distinctive Russian religious philosophy had a deep and enduring impact on Russian thought. That is evident already in the case of Khomiakov. The intellectual and spiritual affinity between the two thinkers is striking. There are at least five main similarities. First and foremost, each had the same fundamental vision of the wholeness of mind and spirit by which truth can alone be understood. They used the term ‘faith’ to describe both this wholeness and the way to achieve it. In 1853, in the first of his French ecclesiological writings, Khomiakov defined faith as ‘an act of all the powers of the mind, grasped and subjugated in their most intimate depths by the living truth of the revealed fact’. ‘All the powers of the soul’, he said, ‘are illuminated by faith’ (Khomiakov 1998b, 60–1, 62). Second, they understood spiritual wholeness as a moral aspiration that was premised, therefore, on human freedom. Zenkovsky’s observation about the dynamic quality of Kireevsky’s conception of human nature—because spiritual wholeness is an ideal or aspiration—is even truer of Khomiakov, who wrote: ‘It is this striving that comprises the inner human life; any halt in human striving is inner death’ (Khomiakov 1998g, 302). For him, free will and moral aspiration were the essential human qualities. They could not be explained as natural phenomena, so Khomiakov thought they indicated that human beings were created in the image and likeness of God—an especially important point for him, as we will see.

Third, both thinkers recognized that faith, like freedom and morality, was an inner human quality (rather than externally prescribed dogma). Indeed, it was integral to personhood itself. Khomiakov remarked that faith was ‘an essentially moral principle’ (Khomiakov 1998c, 88). Kireevsky wrote that without faith, ‘no action will have a moral

character, and there will be no human beings, properly speaking. For human beings are their faith' (Kireevsky 1998c, 286). Fourth, both appreciated that knowledge of truth depended on the extent to which reason conformed to the moral law and thus ultimately to love, but Khomiakov gave the moral quality of integral reason much more emphasis. He wrote that 'love is the first and highest of the moral world's laws, in accordance to which our reason must be structured in order to achieve knowledge'. The 'comprehension of truth is founded upon love and is impossible without it', because truth is 'inaccessible to any individual method of thought' (Khomiakov 1998g, 313). This is the epistemic core of the concept of sobornost. Fifth, they had the same understanding of abstract rationalism and the way it radically impaired wholeness and impeded progress towards truth.

KHOMIAKOV: CRITIQUE OF ABSTRACT RATIONALISM, FAITH IN SPIRITUAL REALITY

Though Khomiakov's philosophical writings span just the four years between Kireevsky's death and his own, they are incisive. In his commentary to Kireevsky's philosophical fragments and in his first philosophical letter to Samarin, he says that the whole error of rationalism was that it mistook abstract, rational understanding (*Verstand, rassudok*) for all of reason (*Vernunft, razum*). Taking abstract concept as the sole basis of all thought 'destroys the world', for it turns reality into mere possibility (Khomiakov 1976, 231–2). His focus is on German idealism from Kant to Hegel. He acknowledges that it represents the highest achievement of the science of dialectical understanding (analytical reason) and thus should be recognized as 'a great and immortal monument to human genius' (Khomiakov 1998g, 305). It has disclosed the nature of rationalistic knowledge, and also (unwittingly) the insufficiency of such knowledge. For in such knowledge the object is reflected without its reality, in Khomiakov's formulation (Khomiakov 1998g, 305). To put it a bit differently, what is known becomes an object or phenomenon, while the noumenon or thing-in-itself is left behind. In such knowledge, even the subject itself remains in the noumenal sphere. Kant referred to this subject as the transcendental unity of apperception (or simply the transcendental self) while Khomiakov calls it 'the energy of the spirit or reason: will' (Khomiakov 1998g, 306). Both Kant and Khomiakov drew the same conclusion: the human person in its essence (reason and will) remains in the pre-objective sphere and thus preserves its freedom. This is a point of great importance for Khomiakov in view of the primacy of freedom and morality in his understanding of human nature.

Khomiakov explicitly recognized that there was an immeasurable gulf between Kant's view that we cannot know the thing-in-itself and the view of his successors, Hegel in particular, that the thing-in-itself does not exist. Hegelianism, he says, deprived itself of

a 'substratum', and the end result was a phenomenon 'curious and worth studying' (Khomiakov 1976, 228). Without a substratum, with nothing other than abstract thought, Hegelian idealism was highly unstable. Among Left Hegelians such as Ludwig Feuerbach, it was easily transformed into materialism. Thus Hegelianism, 'the most abstract of human abstractions, simply grabbed hold of matter and passed to the purest and crudest materialism' (Khomiakov 1976, 234). Khomiakov was the first Russian thinker to thus diagnose German idealism as a type of free-floating phenomenalism fated to degenerate into materialism. His interpretation became the standard one among subsequent Russian idealists such as Sergei Trubetskoi and Lev Lopatin. Further, Khomiakov explains why matter cannot serve as the sought-for substratum: the human mind properly conceives the substratum, or the ground of being, as absolute or infinite, which matter obviously is not. The untenability of materialism is clear in another way: it cannot begin to account for the emergence of mind. How, Khomiakov asks, can thought be a development of matter? Where is there any kind of resemblance to consciousness? (Khomiakov 1976, 237–8, 240).

The inner testimony of human consciousness, including free will, morality, and religious experience, made it obvious to Khomiakov that the 'substratum' or ultimate reality was spirit. "The human soul has an instinctive sense for all that is beautiful, true, and holy," he wrote in 1855, in the second of his French writings (Khomiakov 1998c, 101). Faith is the conviction that this instinctive sense, our inner experience and moral intuition, is not delusional but truthful, that it testifies to a spiritual, divine reality. Thus integral reason, to be true to reality, must include faith. Khomiakov describes faith as 'unmediated, living, and absolute knowledge...reason's ability to see, as it were' (Khomiakov 1998g, 310). Faith provides for a type of reason (integral reason) 'which is inwardly organized in full moral congeniality to omnipresent reason'. Yet it 'preserves the freedom of the rationalistic understanding with its own independence, while at the same time enriching the analysis of the rationalistic understanding with the infinite wealth of data acquired with its clairvoyance' (Khomiakov 1998g, 311–12). Since Khomiakov conceived faith as 'an essentially moral principle' and since love is the highest moral law, it is clear that 'full moral congeniality' with omnipotent reason comes through love, both divine and human. In this way Khomiakov found that 'philosophical thought returns to the unshakeable truths of faith, and that the Church's reason is the supreme possibility for human reason without restraining the latter's own particular development' (Khomiakov 1998g, 312–13; cf. Khomiakov 1998c, 88). He presents this conclusion as a clarification of Kireevsky's thought, but it is a more profound development of it.

It bears emphasizing that the faith that reveals the 'substratum' or ultimate reality to be spirit comes from within. In his book on Khomiakov, Berdiaev wrote that faith is a 'function of the will as the nucleus of our integral spiritual being' (Berdiaev 1998, 341). Khomiakov himself said that 'willing reason or reasoning will' (most clearly through its highest law of love) constitutes 'the definition of the spirit itself' (Khomiakov 1998g, 312). In short, in our rational will and free creativity we recognize ourselves as spiritual beings, thence we recognize being itself as spiritual. Free will is the primary (inner)

evidence for the ontological reality of the spiritual—for faith in it—because free will refutes materialism: Khomiakov's argument is straightforward in its logic, if not always in its formulation. In his 'Second Letter to Iu. F. Samarin', he maintains that free will is a basic concept of reason, which 'simply *cannot doubt its creative activity*' (Khomiakov 1976, 264–8, quotation at 267). Free will substantiates his spiritualistic (theistic) conception of the world. Berdiaev calls it 'concrete spiritualism': concrete because it does not restrict itself to the abstract concepts of the rationalistic understanding but through faithful integral reason plumbs the depths of spiritual being (Berdiaev 1998, 341).¹⁷

While Khomiakov may not have been (as Berdiaev characterized him) 'the founder of Russian philosophy', certainly he was a seminal Russian philosopher of Christian freedom and truth (Berdiaev 1998, 344). He taught that free will was one of the pillars of faith in divine reality, that through their freedom human beings can aspire towards that reality and become more worthy of it (moral perfectibility), and that knowledge of the truths of faith depends on their free, inner recognition (freedom of conscience, freedom of thought). Khomiakov found sanction for human freedom, dignity, and moral perfectibility in the 'image and likeness' theology of the Church Fathers and in the decisions of the ecumenical councils. Against various Christological heresies that distorted either Christ's true divinity or His true humanity, the Church Fathers affirmed the value of human nature alongside the divine and thus gave validity, 'in Christ, to the rights of human freedom' (Khomiakov 1998d, 123). In his French writings Khomiakov interprets the determinations of the ecumenical councils to mean: 'the rational creature is the *image* of its creator to such an extent that God was able to be and was human. The abyss is overcome: humanity receives the glorious privilege of plumbing the perfection of the eternal being. Human beings receive the happy obligation of aspiring toward moral perfection, for they are like God' (Khomiakov 1998c, 109; cf. Khomiakov 1998d, 123). Khomiakov gave so much importance to this idea of human perfectibility according to the image and likeness of God that he expressed it in very similar terms in two different places. Vladimir Soloviev would later formulate it as *Bogochelovechestvo* (divine humanity) (see Chapters 12 and 15 in this *Handbook*).

SOBORNOST

The culmination of Khomiakov's religious thought is the concept of sobornost—the highest development of the idea of spiritual wholeness that was the central Slavophile

¹⁷ He further remarks: 'The idea of the freely creative spirit is the fundamental idea of all Russian philosophy' (Berdiaev 1998, 341). As noted above, the philosophical systems of Berdiaev's contemporaries Sergei Trubetskoi and Lev Lopatin were designated 'concrete idealism' and 'concrete spiritualism', respectively. Lopatin's conception of free will as 'creative causation', and his derivation of metaphysical spiritualism from it, follows Khomiakov's logic.

teaching.¹⁸ In its properly theological meaning, sobornost refers to the qualities of an ideal community united by the moral law of mutual love and by an ever-deeper faith in divine truth. Through love and faith, the *sobornyi* community is ever more illuminated by grace, and the human becomes ever more like the divine. The essence of sobornost is love—a love both divine and human, and spiritual in both the moral and ontological meanings of the term. As we have seen, love also had an epistemological meaning for Khomiakov. In fact, he was emphatic: ‘the communion of love is not only useful, but fully necessary in order to grasp truth’ (Khomiakov 1998g, 313). All three levels of meaning form an intricate whole. If at the ontological level God is love as spiritual being, then the more that human beings embody the supreme moral law of love, the more they will both know divine truth and themselves become like God. By its nature, love is both personal and communal: persons grow in (divine-human) personhood through loving each other. Ultimately this is a Trinitarian truth: three (and in principle all) persons in one God. In one place Khomiakov refers to the Trinity as ‘the inner definition of divinity’ (1998c, 108), which seems to entail that being itself is a communion of persons and thus can be known only in loving communion (Zizioulas 1985). That is the ontological premise of Khomiakov’s epistemology of love. With it, he laid the foundations for the subsequent development of sobornost as a Trinitarian ontology of personhood (Khoruzhii 2004).

For Khomiakov, the Church is the ideal *sobornyi* community. Its unity, he wrote, is based on ‘the moral law of mutual love and prayer’ and on ‘the mystery of human freedom in Christ’ (Khomiakov 1998d, 134). This man of deep faith can be forgiven for sometimes seeming to conflate the ideal Church with its historical or institutional forms, as when, for example, he claimed that ‘the whole history of the Church has been that of human freedom illuminated by grace and bearing witness to Divine Truth’ (Khomiakov 1998d, 133). He often referred to the Church as truth. He meant transcendent truth, which can only be recognized freely from within, through faith. For him, the true Church transcends any of its historical, institutional representations. It is not an external authority. Any form of coercion violates its nature. Khomiakov consistently defended freedom of thought within the Church as the only way to truth. He understood the Church as divine truth and as the *sobornyi* realization of that truth through freedom, mutual love, and faith. His conception deserves to be recognized as an ecumenical and perennial one, which is why Iurii Samarin called Khomiakov a teacher of the Church (Samarin 1998, 183).¹⁹

¹⁸ Riasanovsky wrote that sobornost can also be considered the culmination of Khomiakov’s thought for the following reason: ‘although he was developing the concept his entire adult life, [he] explicitly defined and discussed the term itself only once, in his last theological treatise, published in 1860, the year of his death’ (Riasanovsky 1979, 91). For the treatise in question, see Khomiakov (1998e).

¹⁹ Further on Kreevsky and Khomiakov, see Chapters 7 and 38 in this *Handbook*.

LEGACY

Kireevsky and Khomiakov left a rich and productive legacy. As Lossky emphasizes, it decisively shaped the future development of Russian religious philosophy (Lossky 1951, 14, 26, 28–9, 41). The most important part of their legacy is Russian philosophical personalism: the defence of the intrinsic and insuperable value of the human person, or of human dignity. As Kireevsky put it, ‘only a reasoning and free personality is what is essential in the world. It alone has a distinctive significance. Everything else has only a relative significance’ (Kireevsky 1998c, 284). By way of review, it is possible to distinguish (somewhat artificially) between two aspects of the Slavophile conception of personhood. First is the ontological conviction that the person is grounded or substantiated in transcendent being, which can be known or experienced only through faithful, integral reason. The second aspect is the recognition that personhood consists in community, the ideal qualities of which constitute sobornost. As we have seen, by the end of the nineteenth century Russian philosophers were using the term ‘concrete’ to designate the ontological-personalist distinctiveness of Russian religious-philosophical thought. But the communal-sobornyi aspect was also present in Russian personalism. In its fullest theological development (among thinkers like Soloviev, Florensky, and Bulgakov) it was a type of Trinitarian personalism.

Vladimir Soloviev (1853–1900) is generally regarded as Russia’s greatest religious philosopher (see Chapter 12 in this *Handbook*). His debt to the Slavophiles is obvious even by the titles of his early philosophical works: *The Crisis of Western Philosophy: Against the Positivists* (1974), *Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge* (1877), and *Critique of Abstract Principles* (1880).²⁰ The last named work was his doctoral dissertation. In the final chapters (39–46) he turns to epistemology and adopts the Slavophile position. His essential argument is that abstract, rational knowledge operates at the level of the phenomenal, external relations between subject and object. Therefore, it cannot get to their real existence or inner unity. Only faith can do that. It reveals them in their ‘all-unity’, in absolute being, in God. All-unity, the inner ontological affinity of subject and object, is the necessary metaphysical premise of knowledge, ‘for in the contrary case the object could not pass over into our consciousness and our consciousness could not penetrate into the object’ (Soloviev 2001, 296).

One of Soloviev’s first and closest philosophical disciples was Sergei Trubetskoi (1862–1905). In his first major essay, ‘On the Nature of Human Consciousness’ (1889–1891), he, too, put the Slavophile conception of faith at the basis of his theory of knowledge, embracing Khomiakov’s ‘epistemology of love’ in particular. Their fellow Moscow philosopher Lev Lopatin (1855–1920) wrote that while they sharply differed with the

²⁰ For the Slavophile influence on these works, and more generally on Soloviev’s relation to Slavophilism, see Walicki (1975, chapter 15).

Slavophiles in their political and social philosophy, they were on the same ground when it came to matters of theoretical philosophy. ‘Both Soloviev and Prince Trubetskoi were fervently convinced that authentic knowledge rests on the harmonious combination of experience, reason, and faith’ (Lopatin 1911, 173). Moreover, Trubetskoi followed the Slavophile teaching on the necessary social or communal nature of personhood. In his celebrated concepts of ‘sobornyi consciousness’ and ‘metaphysical socialism’, he held that everyone’s consciousness is sobornyi and related (ultimately one) in the sobornyi consciousness of the Absolute, and that, by its nature, personhood is a shared or communal property (essentially, persons cannot *be* alone). Perfect love in the perfect divine-human community (the Church) is ‘the unity of all in one, the consciousness of all in oneself and oneself in all’ (Trubetskoi 1908, 109).

Soloviev and Trubetskoi valued law as a necessary condition for the existence of society and therefore for the realization of all higher human development—including the ideal moral communities of sobornost (and Soloviev’s very similar social ideal of ‘free theocracy’). Lopatin had just this difference in mind when he noted that Soloviev and Trubetskoi parted company with the Slavophiles in matters of social and political philosophy. The prominent liberal philosopher Pavel Novgorodtsev (1866–1924) praised Soloviev’s moral-philosophical justification of law, in particular against ‘Slavophile illusions’ that law was unimportant and unnecessary for the Russian people (Novgorodtsev 1901). It is certainly true that Slavophilism (especially in the figure of Konstantin Aksakov) contributed greatly to the Russian ‘tradition of the censure of law’ (Walicki 1987, chapter 1). By the end of the nineteenth century, that tradition was being challenged by powerful new legal philosophies advanced by Russian religious idealists (see Chapter 15 in this *Handbook*). Yet the necessary element of law was never entirely absent from the Slavophiles’ legacy for Russian philosophical personalism. In his penultimate philosophical ‘fragment’ Ivan Kireevsky wrote: ‘Justice, morality, the spirit of the people, human dignity, and *the sanctity of lawfulness* [*zakonnost’*] can all be felt only along with an awareness of the eternal religious relations of humanity’ (Kireevsky 1998c, 291, italics added).

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CHAPTER 15

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THE LIBERALISM OF RUSSIAN RELIGIOUS IDEALISM

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RANDALL A. POOLE

THROUGHOUT the imperial period of Russian history, beginning with Peter the Great, the autocratic state controlled the Russian Orthodox Church through a collegiate board of bishops called the Holy Synod. The synod was supervised by a lay official, the chief procurator, whose power greatly increased in the nineteenth century. The tsarist system of church–state relations was epitomized by K. P. Pobedonostsev, chief procurator from April 1880 until October 1905. Under Russia’s last two emperors, he helped forge the monarchy’s new myth of power, which was essentially a form of divine right (Wortman 2000). In the last chapter of his *Reflections of a Russian Statesman*, Pobedonostsev referred to Romans 13:1 (‘there is no power but of God’), adding, ‘Power is a great and terrible thing, because it is a sacred thing.’ To seek to replace it by the authority of law was, he said, ‘a vain fancy’ (Pobedonostsev 1965, 253–4, trans. modified).

The autocracy’s instrumental use of religion for its own purposes reinforced the widespread assumption in Russian educated society that religion was socially conservative while positivism was progressive and liberal. Positivism formed the general climate of ‘advanced’ public opinion in Russia down to the twentieth century. It was irreligious or agnostic in asserting that the only reality, or at least the only one that we could know, was the empirical world of positively given sense data. As rigorous epistemology positivism eschewed metaphysics, but as a popular intellectual movement it tended towards scientific naturalism. In ethics and social philosophy, it generally took the form of utilitarianism.

Russian liberals who relied on positivism were following the wider European trend.¹ A good example is Russia’s most famous liberal, the historian Pavel Miliukov (Stockdale 1996). Such liberals faced, or rather failed to face, a major problem: positivism could not

¹ For a study focusing on four of them and their journal, *Herald of Europe*, see Fedyashin (2012).

offer a strong defence of liberalism's core value, the human person. Indeed, positivism undermined that value by reducing the person to naturalistic processes. The freedom, dignity, and rights that liberalism ascribed to the individual could not be demonstrated empirically, which is why Jeremy Bentham famously called the notion of natural rights 'nonsense upon stilts'. Nor could positivism uphold the equality of persons; empirical experience indicates, rather, the natural inequality of people. In short, on positivistic premises, liberalism could not sustain its own values. It could not defend the inviolability of the person against its sacrifice to class, society, or nation, a sacrifice other positivistic currents in Russian social thought were sometimes ready to make. Positivistic liberalism itself made them (Beer 2008).

For these reasons Russian liberalism needed a stronger theoretical foundation than positivism could provide. This need was met by a group of neo-idealist philosophers associated in the Moscow Psychological Society (1885–1922), a learned society at Moscow University.² The society did sponsor psychological research, but more important was its emergence, within a few years of its founding, as the first and most important centre of the growth of Russian philosophy in the last three decades of the imperial period. By the turn of the century, at the onset of the Russian Liberation Movement that would culminate in the revolution of 1905, the Psychological Society was becoming the theory centre of Russian liberalism. Classic works of Russian liberalism were published in its journal, *Questions of Philosophy and Psychology* (1889–1918). In 1902 the society published *Problems of Idealism*, a large collective work that advanced a trenchant critique of positivism and an innovative idealist defence of liberalism (Kolerov 2002a, Poole 2003a). The volume marked the ascendancy of Russian neo-idealism—a revival (hence 'neo') of the Russian idealist tradition founded by the Slavophiles and Westernizers in the 1840s and of classic German idealism, especially Kant. The beginnings of the idealist revival can be traced to the publication of Boris Chicherin's *Science and Religion* (1879) and Vladimir Soloviev's *Critique of Abstract Principles* (1880). The Psychological Society then galvanized the revival.

Six neo-idealist philosophers in the Psychological Society made essential contributions to Russian liberal theory. Most important were Boris Chicherin (1828–1904) and Vladimir Soloviev (1853–1900), Russia's greatest metaphysical idealists (on Soloviev, see Chapter 12 in this *Handbook*). Their followers were Sergei Trubetskoi (1862–1905), Evgenii Trubetskoi (1863–1920), Pavel Novgorodtsev (1866–1924), and Sergei Kotliarevskii (1873–1939).³ All four were Moscow University professors, either of philosophy (Sergei Trubetskoi) or of law (the three others). They were also public figures who had leadership roles in the politics of Russian liberalism, first as organizers of the Liberation Movement and then (in the case of Novgorodtsev and Kotliarevskii) as deputies to the First State Duma and central committee members of the Constitutional Democratic (Kadet) Party

² On the Psychological Society, see Kolerov (2002b), Plotnikov (2002), and Poole (2003b).

³ On Chicherin, Soloviev, and Novgorodtsev, see Walicki (1987), a fundamental work on Russian liberal theory. On Chicherin, see also Hamburg (1992), Hamburg (1998b), and Hamburg (2010). For good, concise presentations of the ideas of (roughly) this group of philosophers, see Zimmerman (1980) and Nethercott (2010).

or (in the case of Evgenii Trubetskoi) as a member of the State Council, newspaper publisher (*Moscow Weekly*, 1906–1910), occasional member of the Kadet Party, and member of the Party of Peaceful Renewal. Associated with, and influenced by, the Moscow professors was a younger group of religious idealists (all former Marxists): Peter Struve (1870–1944), Sergei Bulgakov (1871–1944), Nikolai Berdiaev (1874–1948), and Semyon Frank (1877–1950).⁴ All were contributors to *Problems of Idealism*, as was the neo-Kantian liberal Bogdan Kistiakovskii (1868–1920)—who, unlike the others, was not metaphysically committed to theism (on him see Walicki 1987, chapter 6; Heuman 1998).

The Psychological Society philosophers built a remarkably coherent body of liberal theory on the Kantian foundations of personhood, human dignity and rights, natural law, and human perfectibility (progress). Their neo-defence of Russian liberalism was a genuine innovation in Russian social thought, given the common association of idealism with religion and of religion with repression. The challenge they faced was compounded because they themselves were religious idealists who thought that liberal values, beginning with the paramount principles of personhood and human dignity, entailed a theistic metaphysics. Moreover, Chicherin had long had a reputation for being a conservative and Soloviev called his social ideal ‘free theocracy’, which did not sound very liberal. In the face of the prevailing positivist climate of opinion, the Psychological Society philosophers sought to demonstrate that idealism was a more natural philosophical expression of the progressive aspirations of Russian educated society, that it offered a much better defence of liberal values (i.e. human values), and that it accounted much more adequately for the full range and depth of human experience. They did not shirk from their further conclusions that idealism, as a philosophical conception of human nature, entailed theism (hence their ‘religious idealism’) and that religion, if true to its highest principles, was itself liberal in the fundamental sense of promoting respect for human dignity. They were religious humanists, which distinguished them as much from official church–state conservatives as from anti-establishment positivists.

The six Russian philosophers shared essentially the same conception of liberalism, namely, that it was a normative social and political philosophy based on human dignity and human rights. Their conception rested on four main principles. The first was personalism: the defence of personhood (*lichnost*), the idea that human beings are persons, each having an intrinsic and insuperable worth or dignity. Human dignity entailed human equality. It was also the source of natural or human rights. As Pavel Novgorodtsev put it, ‘Contemporary idealist philosophy... continuously emphasizes and advances the principle of the person, its absolute dignity, its natural and inalienable rights’ (Novgorodtsev 1904, 66). For Russian neo-idealists, personalism meant there were no higher values or purposes (such as the good of society or nation) to which individual persons legitimately could be sacrificed. The good of society consisted in the good of

⁴ On these four figures, see Chapter 13 in this *Handbook*. On Bulgakov, Berdiaev, and Frank in this period, see Chapters 16, 18 and 29 in this *Handbook*, respectively. In 1902, Frank was not yet a religious idealist.

every person in it, in every person's fullest possible self-realization and flourishing. The personalism of the Moscow philosophers was metaphysical and theistic: they believed that the distinctive qualities of personhood had metaphysical implications and entailed theism.⁵ Their second liberal principle was freedom of conscience, which the philosophers regarded as the first and most fundamental human right because it was most closely related to human dignity. The third principle was natural law and justice. The philosophers understood the highest purpose of the rule of law to be the guarantee and protection of human rights. They maintained that in the final instance it was civil society, informed by a keen consciousness of justice, that had to ensure that the state fulfilled its purpose of enforcing, and not itself violating, the rule of law. The fourth and most pervasive principle was human perfectibility or progress, the transcendent culmination of which the Russian neo-idealists imagined to be the Kingdom of God.

PERSONHOOD AND HUMAN DIGNITY

The religious idealism of the Moscow philosophers—their belief in the ontological reality of spirit or mind, thence of the Absolute or God—followed directly from their conception of human nature, of what it is to be human. They understood the human mind (reason) as having an astonishing dual capacity, theoretical and practical: to recognize or posit ideals (e.g. truth, the good, beauty) and to determine the will according to such ideals. Kant called this awesome human power the autonomy of the will, self-determination, or practical reason. Following him, Sergei Trubetskoi referred to it as 'ideal self-determination' (Trubetskoi, S. 1908b, 108; 1908c, 121).⁶ It refuted naturalism, affirmed the causal power of the ideal or spiritual, and was the very foundation of the Russian neo-idealists' conception of reality and of their theism.

Even when they rejected (as most did) Kant's theory of knowledge and his strictures against theoretical metaphysics, they embraced as their own his core 'practical' concepts of autonomy, self-determination, practical reason, morality, personhood, and human dignity.⁷ As first laid out in Kant's seminal *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), these concepts are closely related and tend to explicate one another, as Boris Chicherin noted in *Science and Religion*—one of several places where he provides an exposition of Kant's ethics (Chicherin 1901, 113–14). Kant's argument is pristinely analytic. The distinctive human capacity is autonomy or self-determination (practical reason), that is, free fulfilment of the moral law (or ideal) given by pure reason. In his famous formulation, this capacity is 'the ground of the dignity of human nature and of every rational nature' (Kant 1996b, 85). In other words, morality, 'and humanity insofar as it is capable of morality, is that alone which has dignity' (Kant 1996b, 84). The striking analytic

⁵ For the broader context of Russian personalism, including Kantian influences, see Boldareva (2018).

⁶ On Trubetskoi's Kantianism, see Poole (1999, 324–31).

⁷ The main texts of Kant's practical philosophy are collected in Kant (1996a).

character of Kant's practical philosophy is the basis of its truth, if you accept the metaphysical premises of autonomy (reason and will).

Kant's conception of human nature, his grounding of human dignity in autonomy or practical reason, is not directly theistic. It is idealist in the basic meaning of the term: human beings are bearers of ideals and are capable of self-determination and perfectibility according to them. One might remain agnostic about whether the human capacity for ideal self-determination has metaphysical implications. Kant himself had no doubt that theism followed unfailingly from it, or more precisely from human perfectibility towards the ideal of 'holiness', or the complete conformity of the will with the moral law. He thought that human beings could never achieve this state on their own, not even in the afterlife. We are capable only of what Kant calls 'endless progress' towards holiness. The soul itself must be 'endless' in order to pursue 'endless progress', and God must exist as the condition of the soul's highest good (the Kingdom of God) and implicitly of its substantiality. Hence Kant's metaphysical postulates of the soul's immortality and the existence of God (Kant 1996c, 238–46). This enables Wood to claim that 'Kant is fundamentally a religious thinker' (Wood 1999, 318). The Russian neo-idealists emphasized the metaphysical, theistic implications of Kant's moral philosophy. Evgenii Trubetskoi emphasized them in the case of Kant's epistemology as well, in his book *The Metaphysical Premises of Knowledge: An Attempt at Transcending Kant and Kantianism* (Poole 1999, 341–2). Where Kant spoke of the moral law as the ideal, the Russian philosophers spoke directly of the absolute or divine principle.

Boris Chicherin has been called 'the greatest theorist of Russian liberalism' (Leontovich 1980, 169).⁸ He always thought of himself as a Hegelian and is generally regarded as Russia's preeminent Hegelian philosopher. Yet by 1880 he had adopted a liberal, Kantian interpretation of Hegel that stressed the intrinsic, absolute value of human personhood. His restoration of the Kantian principles of human autonomy and dignity makes him the father of Russian neo-idealism. He accomplished this in a number of works, including *Science and Religion* (1879, 1901), *Property and State* (1882), and his masterpiece *Philosophy of Right* (1900).⁹ These three treatises are classic philosophical works of Russian liberalism. In them Chicherin develops his metaphysics, philosophical anthropology, and social and legal philosophy as one integral whole.

The first principle of Chicherin's liberal theory is human personhood (*lichnost'*). It is a main theme in *Science and Religion*, as well as the subject of the first part ('Person and Society') and much of the third part ('Morality') of *Philosophy of Right*. Human beings,

⁸ My presentation of Chicherin's liberal philosophy in this chapter incorporates material in Poole (2017, 285–90). For fuller accounts see Walicki (1987, chapter 2), Hamburg (1998b, 2010), and Eviampiev (2013).

⁹ *Philosophy of Right (Filosofiya prava)* was serialized in the Moscow Psychological Society's journal in 1898–1899. 'Pravo' can be translated either as 'right', its more precise meaning, or as 'law', in the general sense of the philosophy of law. The distinction between right (*pravo*) and positive law (*zakon*) is made in the text below. *Property and the State (Sobstvennost' i gosudarstvo)* consisted of three books published in two volumes (1882–1883). The first book, *Pravo*, is an earlier version of Chicherin's 1900 treatise on the subject. Three chapters from *Property and the State*, including the key first chapter 'Liberty', are included in Hamburg (1998a).

according to Chicherin, are persons by virtue of their reason and will, neither of which can be explained by the positive or empirical sciences (Chicherin 1900, 26–8, 54). This alone makes man a ‘metaphysical being’, in his phrase (Chicherin 1900, 7). Together reason and will form ‘practical reason’, which is the essence of personhood and ground of human dignity, for Chicherin no less than Kant.

Since its ideals are by their nature absolute or infinite, Chicherin defined reason as consciousness of the absolute, or the absolute principle. Reason transcends the data of sense experience, which are always finite and particular, bringing them under universal categories and laws. It is ‘consciousness of pure law’, of necessity and universality, in both knowledge (theoretical reason) and action (practical reason) (Chicherin 1901, 113). In another place he wrote: ‘Reason is the conscious recognition of absolute universal principles and laws, and as such contains the infinite’ (Chicherin 1998c, 360). Reason seeks the absolute and infinite, yet everything in external experience is relative and finite. There is, Chicherin suggests, something mysterious about this. Where does the idea of the absolute come from, since sense data convey nothing like it? ‘If experience is the only source of human knowledge, then it is obvious that this idea could never occur to us... Consequently, the very fact of the existence of this idea exposes the untenability of positivism’ (Chicherin 1901, 78). Despite positivism’s injunctions, we cannot limit ourselves to empirical knowledge but inevitably strive for ‘knowledge of the absolute’, as Chicherin calls one of his chapters in *Science and Religion*. Clearly he believed that the idea of the absolute entailed its reality. His approach recalls the traditional ontological proof of God, which argues that the idea of God as the highest possible perfection entails God’s actual existence, and in fact Chicherin embraced the proof (Chicherin 1901, 84–7). It seemed obvious to him that human reason, as consciousness of the absolute, entailed divine or absolute reason. He often refers to human beings as bearers of the absolute principle, in the dual sense of our rationality and real connection to the Absolute.

Consciousness of the absolute defines reason not only in the theoretical sphere of cognition but also the practical sphere of morality. Here it takes the form of the moral law, ‘which was revealed in all its profundity by the father of modern metaphysics, Kant’ (Chicherin 1998c, 359). While Chicherin went well beyond Kant in the powers he ascribed to theoretical reason, he closely followed the German philosopher in his account of practical reason. The first problem he had to confront was freedom of the will; his approach draws on both Kant and Hegel.¹⁰ The will, as he understood it, is essentially the capacity for choice, which presupposes that we are not wholly determined by the environment or natural necessity. Thus he calls freedom of the will a ‘metaphysical capacity’ (Chicherin 1900, 176). He distinguished between two aspects of free will, negative

¹⁰ In the essay on Hegel in his five-volume *History of Political Theory* (1869–1902), he writes that ‘the most remarkable and profound reflections ever uttered about the freedom of the will’ belong to Hegel (Chicherin 1998b, 297). Chicherin’s account of free will in *Philosophy of Right* draws on this essay (Chicherin 1900, 44–7).

and positive.¹¹ The first is independence, but only from blind external determination. At this level, freedom is still limited; from among the various appetites or motives (sense impulses) affecting us we choose which ones to make *our own*. In effect, he says we choose how we will be externally determined. Tellingly he remarks that ‘this is in fact the state of most people’ (Chicherin 1900, 46). The higher, positive sense of free will is self-determination, which corresponds to our rational nature. ‘It is not enough,’ Chicherin contends, ‘that freedom be manifested in the arbitrary choice among different external determinations’ (Chicherin 1900, 46). The will can rise above them and be determined by pure reason. ‘It is only because a human being carries in himself the idea of the Absolute,’ Chicherin writes, ‘that he is capable of renouncing any particular determination . . . and making himself the absolute principle of his actions’ (Chicherin 1900, 48).

The *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* has been called ‘one of the greatest and most influential achievements in the history of philosophy’ (Wood 1999, 12). It left a deep impression on Chicherin. He included an exposition of it in his essay on Kant in *History of Political Theory* (Chicherin 1874, 330–6), and then adopted its key concepts of autonomy and dignity in his subsequent works, most clearly in *Philosophy of Right* (Hamburg 2010). Autonomy is the positive sense of free will as self-determination by the moral law. Kant contrasts it to heteronomy, or the will’s determination by sources external to the moral law, such as ordinary natural inclinations and any type of coercion, including fear, threat of punishment, or promise of reward. He defined the autonomy of the will as the ‘supreme principle of morality’ and thought that without it there was no true morality or self-determination, only coerced or externally determined behaviour (Kant 1996b, 89). This is a crucial definition for Chicherin—in his philosophical anthropology, defence of freedom of conscience, and legal philosophy. Because juridical or statutory law (*zakon*) is backed by coercion, Chicherin insisted it must have no jurisdiction over the inner, autonomous sphere of morality or conscience: ‘Law, intruding into this sanctuary of the human soul, infringes upon the most sacred rights of man, upon his spiritual essence, which is the basis of all right [*pravo*] and morality’ (Chicherin 1900, 111). Law pertains to external actions, not inner motives. In *Philosophy of Right* he says that Kant ‘fully explained’ the distinction between morality and law (Chicherin 1900, 175).

Chicherin also embraced Kant’s cardinal principle of human dignity and followed him in thinking that autonomy was the source of dignity. He wrote that ‘the sublime dignity of rational beings consists precisely in that they fulfill the [moral] law not out of compulsion, but freely’ (Chicherin 1900, 176). In the first chapter of *Philosophy of Right* (titled ‘Personhood’), he adopts Kant’s conception of practical reason or rational autonomy, ‘for freedom belongs only to the will of a rational being, carrying in itself the idea of

¹¹ Chicherin (1900, 46, 51, 175). This is essentially Kant’s distinction, which Chicherin also explains at other places: Chicherin (1874, 335, 339, 347; 1998c, 361). For Kant’s formulation, see Kant (1996d, 375, 380–1).

the Absolute and capable of determining himself purely from within' (Chicherin 1900, 52–3). He considered practical reason to be the ground of personhood: 'Freedom of the will constitutes... the basic definition of man as a rational being. Precisely because of this is he recognized as a person [*litso*] and are rights ascribed to him' (Chicherin 1900, 53). In a significant passage summarizing the nature and properties of personhood, he emphasized its intrinsic dignity:

The source of this supreme dignity of man and all the demands flowing from it consists in the fact that he carries in himself consciousness of the Absolute, that is, this source lies precisely in the metaphysical nature of the subject, which raises it above the whole physical world and makes it a being having value in itself and demanding respect. In religious language this is expressed in the saying that man is created in the image and likeness of God. Freedom itself and the demand for its recognition depend... on this consciousness. (Chicherin 1900, 55)

The 'image and likeness of God' was a powerful metaphor for human dignity for the other Russian neo-idealists as well, Vladimir Soloviev in particular (see further in this section).

In *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant speculates that there may be rational beings whose will is determined solely by reason; human beings are not among them, since our will is also subject to empirical determination (it may be either autonomous or heteronomous) (Kant 1996b, 66–7). For us, therefore, the moral law takes the form of a command or imperative. This was an important contrast for Chicherin, who stressed that we are not only rational beings but also sensible ones, in whom the infinite is combined with the finite (Chicherin 1900, 52, 177; Chicherin 1998c, 363). We are capable of rational self-determination against sensible inclination, but it is not inevitable. We must choose the moral law and strive to fulfil it. This choice, Chicherin says, is the 'supreme manifestation of our freedom' (Chicherin 1998c 360–1).

The combination in human beings of infinite (absolute) and finite (relative) principles is the basis for Chicherin's important specification that idealism is the true philosophy of freedom, in contrast to pure spiritualism, which he portrays as a monistic and therefore deterministic worldview (Chicherin 1901, 116–18, 122). He attributes this conception of idealism specifically to Kant. With the German philosopher, he writes,

man is not wholly subordinate to one principle: he stands on the border of two worlds, combining both in himself, with the possibility of rejecting everything relative and taking as his point of departure the absolute truths disclosed by reason. Only with such a system is it possible to understand man as an inwardly free being. There is not and cannot be any other foundation of inner freedom and morality.

(Chicherin 1874, 339–40)

Note this categorical endorsement of Kant by someone who considered himself a life-long Hegelian. Not all Russian metaphysical philosophers followed Chicherin in his

Kantian conception of idealism—Lev Lopatin, chair of the Psychological Society, was a neo-Leibnizian spiritualist—but the liberal theorists did.

They also considered idealism to be the true philosophy of progress, or the ever-closer approximation of the imperfect, finite world to the perfect, infinite ideal. In one of Chicherin's formulations, 'Humanity's entire development proceeds from ideal aspirations. Reason, in the name of as yet unrealized goals, reworks what is [*sushchestvuiushchee*]. As soon as we renounce idealism, we will also have to renounce progress, and with it freedom, which serves as its instrument' (Chicherin 1901, 129n). In a chapter of *Philosophy of Right* ('The Moral Ideal') devoted to his conception of idealist progress, he stressed that ultimate perfection in the Kingdom of God is a transcendent ideal. Nonetheless, 'through the successive work of many generations man can establish a social order infused with moral principles.' This is possible because the moral law, absolute in form, acquires real content in its application to life, and in the process life acquires more and more moral content from it. 'The perfection of life'—here 'perfectibility' is closer to Chicherin's meaning—that is the goal of humanity's development consists in this accordance of the moral element with the empirical' (Chicherin 1900, 223).

At this point we have good grounds to characterize the Russian neo-idealist defence of liberalism, beginning with Chicherin, as a Kantian philosophy of autonomy, dignity, and perfectibility.

Vladimir Soloviev, Russia's greatest religious philosopher, followed Chicherin in his Kantian conception of personhood and human dignity. 'Kant better than any other philosopher established the principle of the moral person,' he wrote (Soloviev 1892, 35n). In his *Lectures on Divine Humanity* (delivered in 1878), his doctoral thesis *Critique of Abstract Principles* (defended and published in 1880), and in other works, he stipulates that human beings combine in themselves three principles: the absolute or divine principle, the material principle, and (between them) the distinctively human principle, which is rational autonomy or the capacity for self-determination. He derived the middle, human principle of autonomy entirely from Kant (Poole 2010, 137–41; 2017, 291–2). Together the human and divine principles form *bogochelovechestvo* (divine humanity, also translated Godmanhood, theanthropy, or the humanity of God)—the central concept of Soloviev's entire religious philosophy. It is the free human realization of the divine principle in ourselves and in the world, the realization of humanity's divine potential in the Kingdom of God (thus conceived as a joint divine–human project): deification or, to use the patristic term, *theosis* (see Chapter 14 in this *Handbook*). The concept strikingly combines patristic ideas (of the divine image and likeness, of Christ's divine and human natures, and of deification) with Kant's ideas of human autonomy, dignity, and perfectibility (Poole 2014).

In his magnum opus, *Justification of the Good* (1897), Soloviev called Kant's conception of morality 'one of the greatest achievements of the human mind' (Solovyov 2005, 135).¹² He preferred to speak of the divine principle or the divine image rather than merely of

¹² At points I have modified the Duddington translation in accordance with the Russian text.

Kant's moral law, but for him the 'image' of God functioned as the ideal just like Kant's moral law, while the human 'likeness' to God described our capacity for self-determination and infinite perfectibility according to the image or ideal (Solovyov 2005, 145). This 'double infinity' of the image and likeness belongs to everyone. 'It is in this that the absolute significance, dignity, and worth of human personhood consist, and this is the basis of its inalienable rights' (Solovyov 2005, 176). In another passage, perhaps the most capacious in *Justification of the Good*, he wrote: 'The absolute value of man is based, as we know, upon the *possibility* inherent in his reason and his will of infinitely approaching perfection or, according to the patristic expression, the possibility of becoming divine (*theosis*)' (Solovyov 2005, 296).

Bogochelovechestvo is a rich and multifaceted concept. In *Justification of the Good*, Soloviev develops it as the divine-human project of building the Kingdom of God, involving the full, integral development of human society and its modern resources (intellectual, cultural, economic). The very concept of the 'justification of the good' is human perfectibility or progress towards the divine ideal. Soloviev stressed that the Kingdom of God cannot be expected by the immediate action of God for 'God has never acted immediately'—a striking expression of the need for free human participation in God's work. 'In man's consciousness and his freedom is the inner possibility for each human being to stand in an independent relation to God', Soloviev writes, 'and therefore to be His direct end [*tseľ*], to be a citizen possessed of full rights in the kingdom of ends' (Solovyov 2005, 149–50). The 'kingdom of ends' is a very significant reference in this context. It is Kant's ideal, first formulated in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, of a moral community whose members recognize each other as ends-in-themselves and who are self-legislating in that their will makes only universal law (Kant 1996b, 83–9). Following Chicherin, who had referred to it in his *History of Political Theory* (Chicherin 1874, 334), Soloviev explicated Kant's ideal in *Critique of Abstract Principles* and embraced it as his own (Poole 2010, 140; 2014). In *Justification of the Good*, his point is that the Kingdom of God can be achieved only through the kingdom of ends. This is so because man is precious to God 'not as a passive instrument of His will... but as a voluntarily and co-participant in His work in the universe' (Solovyov 2005, 150).

Soloviev's followers embraced the kingdom of ends as their ideal. In *Problems of Idealism*, Novgorodtsev called it 'the supreme good of the moral world' (Novgorodtsev 1902, 305). In the same place Evgenii Trubetskoi called it 'that empyrean sphere of *what ought to be*' (E. Trubetskoi 1902, 134). As Soloviev's closest disciple, he adopted *bogochelovechestvo* as his own religious-philosophical framework, indeed as the 'meaning of life', which was the title of his last book. His words there echo Soloviev's:

The justification of freedom consists precisely in the fact that without it *partnership* [*druzhestvo*] between God and creation would be impossible. A being deprived of freedom, i.e., of the possibility of self-determination, could not be a free collaborator [*sotrudnik*] with God, a co-participant in His creative work. And this is precisely what God wants from His partner. (E. Trubetskoi 1922, 104–5)

FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

The second principle of the Russian neo-idealist defence of liberalism was freedom of conscience (Poole 2018, 34–40). It is obvious that it would be a top priority, for two reasons. The first is its dual meaning: inner freedom as ideal self-determination and external freedom as the human right to seek, express, and live according to one's ideals or beliefs. It is clear that freedom of conscience as inner freedom is just another way of specifying Kantian autonomy as the ground of human dignity. In 1880, Chicherin called this its 'supreme meaning' (Chicherin 1880, 62). In other words, the first principle of personhood and human dignity necessitated, for Kantians, the second principle of freedom of conscience. But the second principle emphasizes perhaps more than the first that the ideals that make self-determination possible must, by their very nature as ideals, be freely recognized from within. Otherwise, there is no power of self-determination. External coercion deprives ideals of their very nature as ideals and eliminates the possibility of self-determination; heteronomy replaces autonomy.

Further, freedom of conscience clarifies that inner freedom is the source of external freedom, which is recognized in a series of natural or human rights, the very first being freedom of conscience as the right to seek, express, and live according to one's ideals or beliefs. Liberalism holds that the state's purpose is to guarantee these natural rights by the rule of law. In Western intellectual history there is a long tradition of liberalism, dating back to Roger Williams (who established the colony of Rhode Island on the principle of unlimited religious liberty), which recognizes freedom of conscience as the first and most fundamental right precisely because of its central bearing on human dignity (Nussbaum 2008, chapter 2). In 1855, Boris Chicherin, in his programmatic statement of the principles of Russian liberalism at the onset of the era of Great Reforms, identified freedom of conscience as 'the first and most sacred right of a citizen' (Chicherin 1998a, 134–5). Generally, liberalism relates the two dimensions of freedom of conscience in another way as well, contending that the ever fuller realization and deepening of the inner capacity depends on the free exercise of the external right in a human community.

The second reason why freedom of conscience was a top priority for the Russian neo-idealists was less philosophical. The tsarist regime called its religious policy 'toleration', which meant something very different than freedom of conscience as an inalienable individual right (Poole 2018, 4–7). In the struggle for a liberal Russia, freedom of conscience was the logical (and popular) demand with which to begin. All six of the Psychological Society philosophers under consideration here were resolute champions of freedom of conscience. All of them deplored the synodal system that subordinated the Russian Orthodox Church to the autocratic state. *Problems of Idealism* was planned (by Peter Struve and Pavel Novgorodtsev) as a collection of articles in defence of liberty of conscience and its importance in liberalism (Poole 2003b, 18–22). In 1906 another volume appeared, *The Free Conscience*. Though not a product of the Psychological

Society, it included a chapter by Boris Vysheslavtsev on B. N. Chicherin and a chapter by Sergei Kotliarevskii, 'Freedom of Conscience'. Despite the October Manifesto, in 1906 the case for unlimited religious freedom in Russia, including freedom for unbelievers, still needed to be made. Kotliarevskii made it. Because faith must come from within and because sincere and honest unbelief conceals true religious searching, he was convinced that 'full and absolute freedom of conscience is indeed the only gift that humanity can bring to the Divine' (Kotliarevskii 1906, 197).

NATURAL LAW AND JUSTICE

In their philosophy of law, the Moscow professors demonstrated once again their core idealist commitments. For all of them, the highest end and justification of law was the principle of human dignity. The purpose of law was to defend human dignity and the natural rights associated with it by limiting the arbitrary power of one person over another, if necessary through coercive means. Beyond this basic 'negative' purpose, law also served a closely related 'positive' purpose: by making possible civilized life and society, it also made possible the realization of all higher potentials of human nature. Law made people equal in a way that they cannot be in a state of nature, where the strong brutalize others and themselves in the process. By aiming to equalize human relations, law enabled people to develop as persons. It promoted their human flourishing and the ever further realization of their human potential. It was an essential spiritualizing force and a condition of human perfectibility. Since law served personhood as its highest end, it had moral value. As Soloviev put it in *Justification of the Good*, society is necessary for people to 'freely perfect themselves'. But society, he says, cannot exist if anyone who wishes can rob, maim, and murder. Law forcibly prevents this and so 'is a necessary condition of moral perfection; as such it is demanded by the moral principle itself, though it is not a direct expression of it' (Solovyov 2005, 320, 322; see also Soloviev 1897, 148–50). Pavel Novgorodtsev praised Soloviev for his defence of the 'ideal essence of law' and for making clear that the 'supreme task of law' was 'to serve the ends of moral progress' (Novgorodtsev 1901, 114).

All six Moscow philosophers recognized that the 'ideal essence of law' was a moral one. There was some disagreement among them over the precise relationship between law and morality. Chicherin insisted that morality by its nature as inner freedom must not be subject to external coercion, least of all in the form of law, lest the very foundations of personhood be undermined (Chicherin 1900, 88–9, 92; Walicki 1987, 146–55; Hamburg 2010, 121–6). He thought that some of Soloviev's ideas violated this principle and was sharply critical of him for that and other reasons, but he agreed that the ultimate justification of law, the highest end that it served, was the moral one of human dignity and that (ideally) law ought to be freely upheld because of its moral value, not from fear of coercion. Some of his formulations in *Philosophy of Right*, which began to be serialized

within a year of the publication of *Justification of the Good*, clearly benefited from Soloviev's work, despite his sharp polemical criticism of the younger philosopher.

The Russian neo-idealists defined the ideal, moral essence of law as natural law or justice, which was the main and distinctive principle of their legal philosophy. Their idealism virtually committed them to it. Natural law set the norms or standards for positive law, for evaluating whether and to what extent positive law was just. It provided the ideal for legal progress, for the ever-closer approximation of positive law to natural law. Novgorodtsev devoted his masterful chapter in *Problems of Idealism* to the neo-idealist revival of natural law, which he formulated as 'a norm and principle of personhood'.¹³ He wrote of 'the absolute foundation of natural law that is revealed to us in the moral idea of personhood' and of the way that the modern conception of natural law limits state power by 'the idea of the inalienable rights of the person' (Novgorodtsev 1902, 303, 313). The source of natural law, and therefore ultimately of law as such, was moral consciousness; the deeper the respect for human personhood, the deeper the respect for law. On these grounds, law ought to be observed not out of fear of coercion, but out of respect for its moral value as the condition of human progress. This emphasis on consciousness followed naturally from an idealist approach, and directly countered the main thesis of legal positivism that state power is the source of law. Novgorodtsev, and also Evgenii Trubetskoi and Sergei Kotliarevskii, emphasized that a lawful society depended on legal consciousness, and even more fundamentally—because of the sacred value of personhood—on moral-religious consciousness.

The foundations of Russian neo-idealist philosophy of law were laid by Chicherin. He recognized that human beings are social by nature and that their higher potential as persons cannot be realized apart from society (Chicherin 1901, 123; 1998c, 353–4). The existence of society requires that the external liberty of people, in order to prevent perpetual conflict among them, be mutually delimited as right (*pravo*) under coercive juridical law (*zakon*). In his definition, 'right is a person's external freedom, as determined by a universal law (*obshchii zakon*)'. In another formulation, 'Society consists of people, and for all of them it is extremely important that the areas left to the freedom of each be precisely delimited and protected by law, and this is the task of right' (Chicherin 1900, 84, 86; 1998c, 363–4). Chicherin took his conception of right from Kant, referring in particular to his definitions in *The Metaphysics of Morals* that right is the coexistence of everyone's freedom in accordance with a universal law and that it authorizes the use of coercion (Chicherin 1874, 345–6, 348; Kant 1996d, 387–8).¹⁴

¹³ The essay forms the first in a series of his works that Novgorodtsev called *Introduction to the Philosophy of Law* (*Vvedenie v filosofiiu prava*). The second work in the series is another long article, 'State and Right' ('Gosudarstvo i pravo') (1904). Walicki, who analyses the article at some length, sums it up as 'a theoretical defence of constitutional guarantees of human rights' (Walicki 1987, 317). Novgorodtsev (1909 and 1991) are the third and fourth works in the series. They are discussed below and also in Walicki (1987, 318–41).

¹⁴ For good overviews of Kant's concept of right, see Kersting (1992, 344–8), and Guyer (2000, 239–43).

Chicherin thought that law needed to be backed by the state's coercive power, but he did not maintain that right and law were based only on coercion. As he often affirms, 'Morality demands respect for right, because it demands respect for human personhood and the law defending it' (Chicherin 1900, 188; see also Chicherin 1900, 90, 172, 231). When juridical law is observed not from fear of external punishment but out of consciousness of duty, then, he argues, it is not coerced but observed by free moral conviction (Chicherin 1900, 172). This is an important qualification to his view that the threat of coercion is the distinctive criterion of the juridical law that upholds right.¹⁵ As noted above, the idealist tendency in Russian philosophy of law was to deemphasize coercion in favour of legal consciousness. Though it was broadly positivist rather than idealist, Leon Petrażycki's psychological theory of law also contributed to this development (Walicki 1987, chapter 4).

Chicherin's indications that morality demands respect for right and the juridical order took him directly to the problem of natural law and justice. In *Philosophy of Right*, he seldom uses the term 'natural law', preferring 'justice', but both terms signified virtually the same concept for him. He did use 'natural law' in distinguishing between positive or statutory law and the higher norms to which it should conform. Natural law is not enacted, 'and therefore is not coercive law, but a system of universal juridical norms issuing from human reason that ought to serve as a measure and guide for positive legislation' (Chicherin 1900, 94). What, he asks, does reason tell us in this sphere? To answer this he recalls that the essential task of right is to delimit people's individual sphere of external freedom. To do this by a universal law (which is the definition of right) requires a universal rational principle, 'which could serve as a guide both in establishing and applying the law'. Chicherin identifies this principle as justice and defines it in terms of human equality (Chicherin 1900, 95–6; see also Chicherin 1998d). Such equality is metaphysical (since human beings are not equal in their empirical abilities) and is rooted in the Kantian autonomy (pure reason and free will) that is the source of human dignity. 'Recognition of this core equality', Chicherin says, 'is the highest demand of justice' (Chicherin 1900, 96). It is clear that equality is essentially another analytic term that explicates the meaning of personhood. Thus he can also write, 'true justice consists in the recognition for all of equal human dignity and freedom' (Chicherin 1900, 99).

Chicherin treats justice not only in the second part of *Philosophy of Right*, devoted to right, but also in the third part, devoted to morality, where he considers it a virtue, in fact the highest virtue. Here he distinguishes between external and inner justice, between juridical and moral justice (Chicherin 1900, 198–9). His distinction generally follows Kant's division of *The Metaphysics of Morals* into the metaphysical principles of right (sometimes translated 'justice') and the metaphysical principles of virtue (Walicki 1987, 153–5). Inner justice is the moral ideal of love of one's neighbour, while external or juridical justice demands not love but respect: 'in every human being I ought to respect human

¹⁵ E. N. Trubetzkoi wrote that Chicherin, 'like the majority of contemporary jurists, sees in coercion the essential characteristic of law [*pravo*]' (E. Trubetzkoi 1905, 362). Trubetzkoi thought this view was mistaken and revised it in his own legal philosophy, which I consider below.

dignity' (Chicherin 1900, 204). It may well be that Chicherin returned to the topic of juridical justice in his chapter on virtue in order to emphasize that right should be upheld through moral respect for personhood, not coercion. After all, the division of justice into juridical and purely moral aspects nonetheless relates them as one whole, imparting to the first the dignity of the second.

For Chicherin, the highest form of human community was the state, and here there is no mistaking his Hegelianism. But from the beginning of his account in *Philosophy of Right*, he interprets Hegel in a Kantian, liberal direction to safeguard the sanctity of the human person, maintaining that the higher social order of Hegel's objective ethics 'achieves its true significance only when it is based on the rights and claims of the individual person' (Chicherin 1900, 228). He emphasized in particular the autonomy of civil society relative to the state: 'For human personhood, for its freedom and rights, this recognition of the autonomy of civil society could not be more important' (Chicherin 1900, 259). He thought that the rule of law ultimately rested on a strong civil society, one suffused with a consciousness of human dignity, civil rights, and justice.

Like Chicherin, Soloviev held that human dignity and perfectibility were realized in society and develop in history. But he thought the highest form of community was the church, not the state, and that difference, among others, led Chicherin to enter into a bitter dispute with him. Soloviev's social philosophy was first presented in comprehensive form in *Critique of Abstract Principles*. Like Chicherin, he subscribed to a social conception of human rights based on Kant's definition of right as external liberty under law (for further development, see Poole 2017, 293). Law was essential to Soloviev's social philosophy but not its highest principle. Law dealt with the means by which people pursued their ends, not the ends themselves (which ends he defined as the pursuit of moral perfection in the free unity of spiritual love). As we have seen, he directly followed Kant in defining his social ideal as the ethical (and not merely juridical) community of the 'kingdom of ends', which both philosophers thought of as the church. Soloviev called it 'free theocracy' and conceived it as the way to the realization of *bogochelovechestvo*. It was at this point that Chicherin and Soloviev parted company.¹⁶

From its foundations in external right to the kingdom of ends, Soloviev's social philosophy closely follows Kant's in structure and logic. In *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, which Soloviev clearly knew well, Kant held that the Kingdom of God is to come through the kingdom of ends. The kingdom of ends is an ethical community whose members are under the laws of virtue, which are freely and inwardly accepted. By contrast, the laws of a political community are coercive and external. Nevertheless, by limiting 'the freedom of each to the conditions under which it can coexist with the freedom of everyone else', the state and its juridical laws are a necessary civilizational stage for all higher human progress (Kant 1996e, 133). In the qualitatively higher stage of the kingdom of ends, the laws of virtue are inwardly given by pure practical reason but are also recognized as divine commands (Kant 1996e, 134): In moral laws 'each

¹⁶ Chicherin was an implacable critic of the younger philosopher. He wrote an entire book against *Critique of Abstract Principles*. See Chicherin (1880).

individual can recognize by himself, through his own reason, the will of God... for the concept of the Divinity actually originates solely from the consciousness of these laws' (Kant 1996e, 137). In this way, members of the kingdom of ends autonomously do God's will ('Thy will be done') and autonomously follow his commands. 'Hence an ethical community is conceivable only as a people under divine commands, i.e. as a people of God' (Kant 1996e, 134). A people of God do not, Kant cautions, form a theocracy, which historically refers not to an ethical community but to a political one based on external clerical power (Kant 1996e, 134). But surely the concept of a people of God under the laws of virtue suggests a type of pure, free theocracy.

Soloviev returned to his social philosophy in *Justification of the Good*, where he revised some of his conclusions in *Critique of Abstract Principles*. Most important, he concluded that a just society ought to recognize that each of its members has the right to a dignified or worthy existence, and that it ought to materially provide, where necessary, for this right (Solovyov 2005, 296–8, 306). In this belief that the state ought to provide a certain minimum welfare for its members, Soloviev was a modern 'new' liberal (Walicki 1987, 195–6, 203–5). He also reformulated his conception of law, now defining it as 'the minimum degree of morality, that is, simply, actual restraint of certain manifestations of the immoral will' (Solovyov 2005, 318). In fact, it was not so simple. In a fuller definition, he wrote, 'legal justice is a compulsory demand for the realization of a definite minimum of the good, or for a social order which excludes certain manifestations of evil' (Solovyov 2005, 320, *italic removed*). Chicherin thought that this positive idea of a compulsory minimal good, and in general the whole notion of legislating morality, flagrantly contradicted the essence of morality as inner freedom or autonomy. He even compared Soloviev with Torquemada to warn of the dangers implicit in attempting to coerce morality (Chicherin 1897, 644–5).

It is true that Soloviev's use of the terms 'morality' and 'the good' to define law could confuse matters, but he was clear enough about the difference between them. He distinguished between 'external, formal, or strictly legal justice and inner, essential, or purely moral justice'—precisely the distinction that Chicherin makes in *Philosophy of Right* and that Kant made before them in *The Metaphysics of Morals* (Solovyov 2005, 389). He also put the distinction in terms of the external or practical goods of society that are secured by legal justice, by force if necessary, and inner spiritual goods. Ultimately there are two such spiritual goods: virtue and truth. Soloviev calls any coercive effort with regard to them 'a fraud':

The end of *externally* compelling or forcing someone to have an inner, i.e. an *inwardly* determined, disposition for the good, or an inner receptivity for the true, cannot possibly be achieved, and is indeed a logical contradiction or absurdity; and to use compulsion to no purpose is obviously an evil. Hence, all compulsory measures with regard to spiritual things in the supposed interests of truth and virtue are nothing other than the use of evil means for a false purpose—an abuse in the fullest sense.

Indeed Soloviev declares society's intrusion into one's spiritual life, 'with the false purpose of safeguarding the inner goods', to be 'a species of violence which is *wholly* false

and evil, and may therefore justly be called *diabolical* (Solovyov 2005, 325). It would be hard to find a stronger condemnation of the violation of autonomy or, as Soloviev also understood it, freedom of conscience.

Evgenii Trubetskoi, Pavel Novgorodtsev, and Sergei Kotliarevskii agreed with Chicherin that morality must not be subject to coercion. For this reason, though they endorsed Soloviev's new positive right to a dignified existence, they rejected his formulation of law as minimum morality.¹⁷ At the same time they also rejected coercion as the distinguishing characteristic of law. The result was that their legal philosophies emphasized natural law all the more, with a concomitant emphasis on moral consciousness as the basis of respect for the rule of law. Evgenii Trubetskoi thought that identifying law with coercion was to mistake law for one of its instruments. The resort to force is a mark of the violation of right and is applied when law fails, not when it succeeds (E. Trubetskoi 1916, 3–17). When law is upheld, it is because right is respected. For Trubetskoi this meant: 'The primary source of right is always and everywhere our consciousness'. It also meant that natural law 'forms the ideal basis and criterion of the whole juridical order' (E. Trubetskoi 1916, 58–9). His claims on behalf of natural law and the ideal of justice (they were the same for him) could hardly have been stronger.

In 1909, Pavel Novgorodtsev published an important book, *The Crisis of the Modern Legal Consciousness*. It is a rich intellectual history of the concept of the lawful state (*pravovoe gosudarstvo, Rechtsstaat*). Novgorodtsev argued that by the beginning of the twentieth century the concept had evolved to mean a state under the rule of law, founded on the idea of personhood and dedicated to the defence of human rights. This was his goal for Russia's long-term political evolution. He believed that the rule of law, liberal democracy, and a just society depended not only on well-ordered legal and political institutions but also on a highly developed legal consciousness and civil society animated by it. By 'crisis of modern legal consciousness' Novgorodtsev meant the contemporary collapse (as he saw it) of the former boundless hopes in human perfectibility through legal and political institutions, the loss of 'genuine faith in the salvific force of political institutions', the end of what might be called 'juridical utopianism' (Novgorodtsev 1909, 8). He believed that the crisis could be surmounted by a deepening appreciation of the moral foundations of law.

One of the book's main themes is the ideal of justice and the best means to achieve its realization. He devoted many pages to Rousseau, reinterpreting the idea of the general will as popular will or public consciousness, so that he could present Rousseau's teaching to mean that 'justice, to become a law of life, must permeate the consciousness of people' (Novgorodtsev 1909, 52). That may not be Rousseau but it is Novgorodtsev, who understood that the cultivation of a humane and liberal consciousness, capable of building and sustaining a democratic and just society, was a complex educational and formative process.

¹⁷ For Trubetskoi's critique, see E. Trubetskoi (1913, 164–7). Novgorodtsev revised Soloviev's formula by defining law as the minimum of *social* demands (Walicki 1987, 311). Kotliarevskii's position is more complicated and closer to Soloviev's (see further in this section).

To designate that educational–cultural process, Novgorodtsev highlights the term *vospitanie*, or moral and civic education and character formation (Novgorodtsev 1909, 367–91). In this context the term suggests *paideia*, *humanitas*, or *Bildung*. He remarked that ‘as a result of complex political experience, in our days the center of gravity once again is shifting from transformation of institutions to the *vospitanie* of man’ (Novgorodtsev 1909, 253). He was referring in part to the experience of the 1905 revolution and to Russia’s halting liberal progress in the four years since. *Vekhi*, the famous collection of essays on the Russian intelligentsia and liberalism, came out the same year as Novgorodtsev’s book (see Chapter 13 in this *Handbook*). Both pursued the theme of the moral and spiritual prerequisites of a liberal democracy. But Novgorodtsev reminds us that the question ‘What is more important, people or institutions?’ is a perennial one in the history of moral and political thought. His own answer expresses his balanced wisdom: Institutions ‘grow together with people, and people improve themselves together with institutions. But in addition to this thought there is a new awareness that on their own juridical institutions are not capable of bringing about the real transformation of society and that they must enter into combination with moral forces to achieve their goals’ (Novgorodtsev 1909, 387). Throughout his work Novgorodtsev left no doubt that the main moral forces were a deep and abiding commitment to the absolute value of personhood.

The concept of the lawful state was also the subject of a major work by Sergei Kotliarevskii. In *Power and Law: The Problem of the Lawful State*, he distinguished between two elements in the state: power (or coercion), which is intrinsic to it, and law, which is extrinsic. Power is the natural element, law the ideal one (Kotliarevskii 1915, 5–6). The institutions and practices of the lawful state, the various ways it seeks to realize the supremacy of law in practice, are all relative and subject to change, but the ideal itself—‘like the human spirit creating it’—is absolute and permanent (Kotliarevskii 1915, 22). For this reason Kotliarevskii suggests that the concept of the lawful state is essentially ‘metajuridical’: The principle of law ‘is inseparable in the final account from religious-moral foundations’ (Kotliarevskii 1915, 45). He identifies the aspiration towards the ever fuller realization of law as justice. ‘The state ought to be lawful’ he writes, ‘because it ought to be just’. The premise of justice is human dignity, the absolute value in the name of which state power ought to be limited and transformed (Kotliarevskii 1915, 394–5).

Kotliarevskii—like Kant, Chicherin, and Soloviev—distinguished between two types or levels of justice. At the lower level, justice is formal and properly legal, but in limiting power and equalizing human relations, it makes possible progression to the higher morality of compassion, forgiveness, charity, and love (virtue). The higher level is not the negation of the lower but rather its further development and fulfilment (Kotliarevskii 1915, 397–400). Here Kotliarevskii turned to Soloviev’s right to a dignified existence (Kotliarevskii 1915, 400–1). Recognizing and fulfilling this right presupposes not merely justice but charity as well. Charity begins privately, develops organizationally and institutionally in civil society (of which charitable associations are, of course, a major component), and may infuse the state itself with its spirit (Kotliarevskii 1915, 401–3).

This last ideal, he notes, was what Soloviev meant when he called the state ‘organized compassion’ and charged it with meeting every person’s right to a dignified existence (see Solovyov 2005, 384–7). In general Kotliarevskii’s ideas were much inspired by Soloviev:

Power ought to be limited by law in the name of justice, and justice ought to be fulfilled by active charity, which in a certain sense is a higher justice, flowing from the dignity of the human person and from consciousness of cosmic and moral unity. The higher level gives true meaning to the lower, encompassing it. But it is impossible for society to ascend directly to the higher level, and here is the basic justification of the lawful state. Not only is there no contradiction between it and higher moral-cultural forms, but the path to them lies through it. The lawful state is, so to speak, a *threshold*. (Kotliarevskii 1915, 403–4)

It was a step on the path towards *bogochelovechestvo*. Kotliarevskii’s idea of the lawful state fitted perfectly into Soloviev’s concept of the ‘justification of the good’ (further on Kotliarevskii, see Poole 2006).

Beyond the lawful state was the next threshold, the kingdom of ends, which Soloviev had made the supreme social ideal of Russian religious idealism. Both Kant and Soloviev conceived it as the highest stage of human perfectibility possible, at least in part, in this world. Pavel Novgorodtsev had long embraced the Kantian principle of infinite human perfectibility. It deeply informed his last book, *On the Social Ideal*.¹⁸ True, in it he criticized Kant’s abstract formalism and argued that the form of the kingdom of ends, to serve as the social ideal, needed concrete content: an integral, social concept of the personality accounting for the infinitely rich and diverse individuality of persons and for their mutual moral fulfilment and higher unity in society (Novgorodtsev 1991, 107–8). But Kantian infinite perfectibility (*beskonechnoe sovershenstvovanie*) remained the book’s entire philosophical framework. Novgorodtsev’s premise throughout was that the ideal (or the ‘absolute ideal’ as he termed it) made possible both true progress and personhood itself because it drove inner self-determination. By contrast, but for the same reason, ideologies such as Marxism (analysed at length in the book) that denied the ideal fatally undermined the possibility of progress and personhood. The perfections they posited were utopian, finite and false, because they were externally determined.

Novgorodtsev and the other Russian philosophers discussed here shared a deep faith. Their faith grew from their religious experience and from their idealism, in particular from their idealist understanding of human nature. They believed in the Kingdom of God, but they believed it would come through the kingdom of ends. In this they were, like Kant himself, at once religious idealists, liberal philosophers, and humanists.

¹⁸ See Novgorodtsev (1991). The work was serialized in *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii*, 1911–1916, and then published in three editions (Moscow, 1917; Kiev, 1918; and Berlin, 1921).

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