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Professional Intellectual and Zealous Heliotrope: A Study of the Role and Perception of Vladimir Solov'ev in Russian Society

Introduction

Many Russian intellectuals of the nineteenth and early twentieth century have been qualified by their contemporaries as *Einzelgänger*: Aleksandr Herzen, Pëtr Chaadaev, Ivan Kireevskii, Nikolai Strakhov, Konstantin Leont'ev, Vladimir Solov'ev, Boris Chicherin and the *Vekhi*-authors, to mention just a few key figures in Russian thought. The frequent use of this characterization, which has come to be a persistent image of the Russian intellectual,¹ prompts the question: how can an intellectual be isolated, misunderstood and seen to lack soulmates, and yet, at the same time, be an *obshchestvennyi deiatel'*, belong to a *partiiia*, adhere to the editorial board of a newspaper or journal, and be a member of a society or circle? In other words, how might we characterize, or understand perceptions of, an individual who seemingly forms part of an intellectual network, but is nevertheless stigmatized, during his lifetime or later, as a loner? What did this isolated position signify exactly, and how was it created? Were these intellectuals misunderstood, ignored and not taken seriously? Was their work or were they

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¹ Marc Raeff has referred to the first generation of the Russian intelligentsia as 'unusual personalities', who were all 'near geniuses with very individual personalities and minds'. *Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia: The Eighteenth-Century Nobility* (New York, Harcourt Brace, 1966) p. 4. Martin Malia, another expert on the phenomenon of the Russian intelligentsia, highlights their alienation and isolation from Russian society, noting that it was far deeper than that experienced by French, British and American intellectuals. 'What Is the Intelligentsia?' in: Richard Pipes (ed.) *The Russian Intelligentsia* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1961) p. 4.

themselves particularly inaccessible? Did they wish to be understood by their contemporaries and included in society to begin with? Did the stigma of *Einzelgänger* signify a ‘tragic reality’ or did it constitute one element of a self-chosen style or image?

The paradox of the Russian intellectual as a person who is, on the one hand, alienated from society, while, on the other, claims to embody the critical conscience of the Russian nation, has been elaborately examined in studies on the Russian intelligentsia. In this article, I shall focus on Vladimir Solov’ëv (1853–1900), a Russian intellectual who is known as a philosopher, poet, and *publitsist*, and, above all, a zealous Christian activist. The Symbolists, for whom Solov’ëv served as a source of inspiration, heavily romanticized and mystified him after his death, identifying him with Wagner’s *Wanderer* (Solov’ëv did not have a permanent address) and calling him a ‘knight-monk’, a religious pilgrim and a prophet.² Other memoirs and obituaries also bear testimony to Solov’ëv’s image as a loner, a free and independent mind whose religious ideas met with ignorance, as intellectually and morally isolated, as not belonging to any *partiia* and as one who was both worshipped and hated at the same time.³

Deviating from the usual picture of Solov’ëv as someone alienated and isolated from society, I contend that he was actually rather integrated and very much a part of Russian society. His triple function as scholar, lecturer and *publitsist* serves to demonstrate this fact. At the same time, however, Solov’ëv succeeds in rising above these functions. As ‘heliotrope’, i.e. as a moral teacher who, like a sunflower, points himself in the direction of the divine light, Solov’ëv mediates between the divine and the human world by strongly advocating his idea of ‘Christian politics’. The trope of heliotrope, an image which the Symbolists heavily drew upon, should, I believe, be taken seriously as a key to Solov’ëv’s understanding of himself.

² Aleksandr Blok, ‘Rytsar’-monakh’ (1911); Sviatoslav Ivanov, ‘O znacheniiia Vl. Solov’ëva’ (1911); Andrei Belyi, ‘Vladimir Solov’ëv’ (1911). All reprinted in: V. Bashkirova (ed.), *Kniga o Vladimire Solov’ëve* (Moskva: Sovetskii Pisatel’, 1991).

³ See for an overview the double volume D. Burlaka (ed.), *Vl. Solov’ëv: Pro et Contra* [seriia: «Russkii Put’»] (Sankt-Peterburg: Russkii Khristianskii gumanitarnyi institut, 2000) and *Kniga o Vladimire Solov’ëve*.

Although he was generally perceived as *Einzelgänger*, Solov'ëv was certainly not a total outcast. He addressed topics of public interest, and although he did so in controversial ways, the relevance of his statements cannot be denied. This applies in particular to his call to the state, the Church and society in Russia to live up to the Christian principles they claimed to embody. He also responded to the religious-moral demand coming from society. At that time, the prevailing atmosphere discouraged people from freely and independently thinking about religion and discussion was limited to certain circles.⁴ Nikolai Nikiforov, who studied at St. Petersburg University in the early 1880s, writes that certain religious themes, such as the coming of Jesus Christ, love, universal unity and the meaning of life, had never before been addressed by anyone at the university.⁵ According to Anatolii Koni, if people had questions of a religious nature, they had to search for the answers in 'the little-understood dogmatic arguments of special theological journals'. It was under the influence of Solov'ëv, Koni writes, that 'religious and philosophical questions moved from the pages of little known and not always accessible special editions to the pages of collections [*sbornik*] and journals dedicated to general questions.'⁶ Solov'ëv first addressed religious questions in the journals *Rus'* and *Pravoslavnoe Obozrenie* and, to my knowledge, none of his articles dealing with religious matters ever appeared in the periodicals issued by the theological academies [*dukhovnaia akademiia*], with the exception of one letter to the editor of *Tserkovnyi Vestnik*.

In this article, I will seek to demonstrate that the overall contemporary perception of Solov'ëv as *Einzelgänger* was not based on social consensus, but rather, that different layers of perception can be distinguished. Unlike his contemporaries, early successors and present-day

⁴ See the subchapters 'Negation and Return' and 'Prohibition of Questioning' of *Ways of Russian Theology: Part Two* in: George Florovsky, *Collected Works* (Belmont, MA: Büchervertriebsanstalt, 1974) Vol. VI pp. 77–91 and pp. 184–199.

⁵ 'Peterburgskoe studentchestvo i Vlad. Serg. Solov'ëv' (*Vestnik Evropy* No.11, 1912) quoted from *Kniga o Vladimire Solov'ëve* p. 172.

⁶ A.F. Koni, 'Vladimir Sergeevich Solov'ëv' (Rech' v publichnom zasedanii Akademii Nauk 21-go ianvaria 1901 g.) in: *Ocherki i vospominaniia. Publichnye chteniia, rechi, stat'i i zametki* (Sankt-Peterburg: A.S. Suvorin, 1906) p. 204–205.

students of Solov'ëv, who have primarily sought explanations for this isolated position in his personality, I argue that his professional functions as scholar, lecturer and *publitsist* on the one hand and heliotropism on the other evoked different conflicting, and sometimes even inconsistent, expectations among both individuals who were close to him and social groups who 'claimed' Solov'ëv and considered him theirs.

Solov'ëv owed his public authority first of all to his outstanding scholarship. This, however, leaves open the question as to whether his readers grasped his message at all and, if so, in which parts of Russian society it resonated. This prompts the following questions: (i) how, by means of which qualities and through which channels, did Solov'ëv interact with society? (ii) how did he respond to the demands of society? and (iii) how was his message received by society? How were his ideas, to use the words of Isaiah Berlin, 'lived through' as solutions and which problems were they meant to resolve? To answer these questions, we may usefully consider the various roles that Solov'ëv played in society. As we shall see, Solov'ëv's self-perception as heliotrope appears in *each* of the three functions he fulfilled as professional in Russian society, namely, the functions of (1) scholar (2) lecturer and (3) *publitsist*.⁷

Scholarly career

Solov'ëv's scholarly occupations come to the fore in: a) his religious-philosophical work; b) his occupation as a collaborator on the periodical *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii* (1890–1899); c) his role as author and co-editor of the Brokgauz-Efron Encyclopedia (1891–1900).

Solov'ëv embarked upon his academic career in 1874 at the age of 21 at the University of Moscow. Soon after successfully defending his Master's thesis 'Krizis zapadnoi filosofii' at St. Petersburg University, he was appointed to the position of *shtatnyi dotsent* at Moscow University.⁸ Six years later he brilliantly defended his doctoral thesis 'Kritika

⁷ For a discussion of Solov'ëv as a poet see Pamela Davidson's article 'Vladimir Solov'ëv and the Ideal of Prophecy', *Slavonic and East European Review* Vol. 78 No. 4, 2000.

⁸ A. Panchenko (ed.), *Russkaia filosofia: filosofia kak spetsial'nost' v Rossii* (Moskva: INION RAN, 1992) Vyp.I p. 135; Ernest Radlov (ed.), *Pis'ma*

otvlechënnykh nachal' (1877–1880).⁹ These theses were published in *Pravoslavnoe Obozrenie* and *Russkii Vestnik* respectively, journals that were widely distributed among the reading public. He was also instantly recognized because he was the son of the famous historian and Rector of Moscow University, Sergei Solov'ëv, and was thus immediately considered a rising star within the Russian academic world. Many people attempted to further the career of this most promising student, among them his life-long friend, the historian Vladimir Ger'e (1837-1919), as well as the historian and Director of the St. Petersburg Courses of Higher Education for Women, Konstantin Bestuzhev-Riumin (1829-1897). Ger'e and Bestuzhev-Riumin, who had been Solov'ëv's most ardent supporters during his university years, regarded him as a notable addition to the academic environment.¹⁰ Despite this encouraging start and the prospect of an academic career, Solov'ëv resigned from the university in 1877,¹¹ thereby putting an end to his academic career before even having obtained the title of Doctor of Philosophy. Many years later Solov'ëv would claim that the reason for his departure was that he wanted to avoid becoming embroiled in a political conflict between professors.¹² He was later appointed a member of the Academic Committee of the Ministry of Public Education, which enabled him to dedicate his spare time to writing his doctoral thesis.¹³

Vladimira Sergeevicha Solov'ëva [*Sobranie Sochinenii V.S. Solov'ëva*] (Bruxelles: Zhizn' s Bogom, 1970) (Sankt-Peterburg, 1908-1923) Tom II p. 337.

⁹ The defence was announced in the press (*Novoe Vremia*, *Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti* and *Golos*). Aleksandr Nosov (ed.), *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii* [*Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v dvadtsati tomakh*] Tom III p. 436.

¹⁰ Returning from the defence of Solov'ëv's Master's thesis, Bestuzhev-Riumin was of the opinion that 'Russia could congratulate itself on the appearance of a new genius.' Quoted in: Koni, 'Vladimir Sergeevich Solov'ëv' p. 191.

¹¹ Panchenko, *Russkaia filosofii*, p. 141.

¹² [Ostaviv kafedru v moskovskom universitete vsledstvie svoego nezhelaniia uchastvovat' v bor'be partii mezhdru professorami] Letter to Faivel' Gets, dating from May 1887, in which Solov'ëv writes down part of his autobiography. *Pis'ma* Tom II p. 185. For further details, see 'Liubimovskaia istoriia' in: Sergei Luk'ianov, *O Vl. S. Solov'ëve v ego molodye gody: materialy k biografii* Kn.1-III (Moskva: Kniga, 1990) Repr. 1916-21) Kn. III Vyp. II p. 55-81.

¹³ According to Ger'e, Solov'ëv obtained this position with the help of the editorial board of *Moskovskie Vedomosti*. Sergei Luk'ianov, *O Vl. S. Solov'ëve i ego molodye gody*, Kn. III Vyp. II p. 55.

Regardless of this premature end of his academic career, however, Solov'ëv was fully acknowledged as a scholar and a specialist in the humanities. In 1891 he was appointed, together with six "other" professors¹⁴, among whom were major academic notables such as Semën Ven-gerov (literature) and Dmitrii Mendeleev (chemistry), to cover seven major fields of learning [nauka] in the Brokgauz-Efron Encyclopedia.¹⁵ In 1894, together with Nikolai Strakhov and Lev Tolstoi, he was elected to the Moscow Psychological Society (under the presidency of Nikolai Grot), of which he soon became an honorary member.¹⁶ In 1899 he was nominated an honorary member of the Academy of Sciences. He was also posthumously praised for his Plato scholarship.¹⁷

Returning to Solov'ëv's position in society, we can say that his theoretical ideas generally aroused strong reactions, that his philosophical idealism met with opposition and that his religious-philosophical interpretations were unusual and deviated from "mainstream" philosophical and theological thought. This, however, never excluded him from the academic debate; it simply bears witness to his originality and excellence.¹⁸

¹⁴ Solov'ëv insisted on the title of professor. In a letter to Konstantin Arsen'ev, the editor-in-chief of the Encyclopedia, Solov'ëv demanded [ochen' proshu] to be listed as professor. *Pis'ma* Tom II p. 68.

¹⁵ In an official capacity, Solov'ëv was responsible only for the field of philosophy, but he also wrote and edited articles on religion. See his obituary 'Vladimir Sergeevich Solov'ëv' in: Arsen'ev (ed.), *Entsiklopedichesii slovar'* T. I-LXXXII (Leipzig-SPb: Brokgauz-Efron, 1890-1940) Tom 59 p. 1-2. See also: Wladimir Szykarski, Wilhelm Lettenbauer and Ludolf Müller (Hrsg.), *Deutsche Gesamtausgabe der Werke von Wladimir Solowjew* Bd.VI p. 568.

¹⁶ See: 'Protokola zakrytogo zasedaniia Psikhologicheskogo Obshchestva 28-go fevralia 1891' *Voprosy Filosofii i Psikhologii* No. 4 (mart) Kn. 7 1891 p. 164. Already in 1879/80, as a member of the Academic Committee of the Ministry of Public Education, Solov'ëv argued strongly in favor of the foundation of a philosophical society. Sergei Solov'ëv and Ernest Radlov (eds.), *Sobranie sochinenii Vladimira Sergeevicha Solov'ëva*, Tom XII p. 242-244.

¹⁷ See Count Sergei Trubetskoi's foreword to the second volume of *Tvoreniia Platona* which was published after Solov'ëv's death. *Sobranie sochinenii*, Tom XII p. 496-499.

¹⁸ After the defence of his Master's thesis, Solov'ëv writes: 'The war against me continues, and the end is not visible, but I have already quit reading. In May, I am going abroad to recover from the fumes of Russia and see something.'

During his lifetime and shortly after his death, Solov'ëv was first and foremost portrayed as a philosopher, rather than a poet or *publicist*, although the diversity of his occupations was not overlooked. Contemporary critics referred to him as 'our philosopher', 'doctor in philosophy', 'our young scholar' [*uchënyi*] or 'philosopher-theologian'.¹⁹ Writers of obituary articles referred to Solov'ëv's death as a great loss for educated Russian society [*obshchestvo*].²⁰ Several early studies on So-

[Voina protiv menia vse prodolzhaetsia, i kontsa ne vidno, no ia uzhe perestal chitat'. V mae edu za granitsu osvzhit'sia ot russkogo chada i koe-cto posmotret'.] *Pis'ma* Tom IV p. 146. Koni writes that 'Solov'ëv was, in his kind, an exception in his time in secular society as he was well equipped with his theological knowledge, astonishing with his erudition and actual familiarity with pluriform and difficult accessible sources.' [Vo vseoruzhii svoikh bogoslavskikh znanii, porazhaia svoeiu nachitannost'iu i deistvitelnikami, Solov'ëv predstavil, v svoem rode, iskluchitel'noe iavlenie v svetskom obshchestve.] Koni, 'Vladimir Sergeevich Solov'ëv' p. 205. According to one of his students, Elizaveta Polivanova, some people were strongly opposed to Solov'ëv's philosophical idealism. 'Iz vospominanii o Vl. S. Solov'ëve' in: Luk'ianov, *O Vl. S. Solov'ëve v ego molodye gody* Kn. III Vyp. I p. 48. Nikoforov, another student, also mentions the fact that Solov'ëv's lectures far from coincided with social and political doctrine of the time. 'Peterburgskoe studenchestvo i Vlad. Serg. Solov'ëv' in: *Kniga o Vladimire Solov'ëve* p. 173.

¹⁹ *Russkaia Mysl'* 'Bibliograficheskii otdel' No. 5 1892 p. 237-8; Mirianin I. Palimpsestov, 'Golos Mirianina' in: *Knizhki Chtenii v Obshchestve ljubitelei dukhovnago prosveshcheniia* (Moskva: L.O. Snegirev, 1882) p. 3; Ivan Aksakov (editorial) *Rus'* No.56 1881 p. 1; Aksakov (editorial) in *Rus'* 1884 No.6 p. 4.

²⁰ Ernest Radlov described Solov'ëv's death as a great loss to Russian science and civilization [*prosveshchenie*], affecting all of educated society [*obshchestvo*] in Russia. 'Vladimir Sergeevich Solov'ëv' *Zhurnal Ministerstvo Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia* No.9 sent. 1900 p. 33. The 'thick' journal *Vestnik Evropy* portrays Solov'ëv as a 'writer' whose activities in intellectual and social life were familiar to all members of educated Russian society. Anonymous 'Vladimir Sergeevich Solov'ëv' 1900 No. 9 p. 401; Vasilii Rozanov describes Solov'ëv as 'the brightest light in the past quarter century of Russian philosophical and philosophical-religious thought.' [samyi iarkii za istekshuiu chetvert' veka svetoch nashei filosofskoi i filosofsko-religioznoi mysli] 'Pamiati Vl. Solov'ëva' *Mir iskusstva* No.15-16, 1900 quoted from: *Kniga o Vladimire Solov'ëve* p. 335; the Brokgauz-Efron Encyclopedia describes Solov'ëv's death in more general terms as a loss for Russian educated society [*obshchestvo*], literature and science. 'Vladimir Sergeevich Solov'ëv' Tom 59 1900 p. 1; Count Sergei Trubetskoi, soul mate and

lov'ëv focus on his religious philosophy,²¹ while others concentrate on different aspects which form part of his oeuvre, among which his poetry received attention.²² Judging from these testimonies, written primarily by Solov'ëv's personal friends and colleagues²³, it appears that the emphasis on his scholarly achievements as philosopher provided him the necessary esteem and authority that were crucial to forming the basis for his career as an intellectual and enabled him to become an important public figure.

Lecturer

The function of lecturer can be subdivided into: a) *shtatnyi dotsent* (1875–77), b) *privat-dotsent*²⁴ (1880–81) and c) public lecturer with no

close friend of Solov'ëv, describes him as 'a great Russian man, a genius person and thinker'. 'Smert' V.S. Solov'ëva' *Vestnik Evropy* 1900 No. 9 p. 415; Theology professor Vasilii Rozhdestvenskii writes about him as 'the beauty and pride of Russian philosophy' 'O znachenii filosofsko-literaturnoi deiatel'nosti V.S. Solov'ëva dlia khristianskago bogosloviia' *Khristianskoe Chtenie* 1901 Fevr. p. 236.
²¹ Sviatoslav Ivanov, 'O znachenii Vl. Solov'ëva' (1911); Sergei Bulgakov, 'Chto daet sovremennomu soznaniuu filosofiiia Vladimira Solov'ëva?' (1903); Evgenii Trubetskoi, 'Vladimir Solov'ëv i ego delo' (1910); Ernest Radlov, 'Kharakter tvorchestva Vl. S. Solov'ëva' (1901).

²² For an overview of works about Solov'ëv, see: Kristi Groberg 'Vladimir Sergeevich Solov'ëv: A Bibliography' *The Modern Greek Studies Yearbook*, 14-15 (2000) pp. 325-429.

²³ It should be noted that many of Solov'ëv's serious opponents from the conservative camp had already passed away by 1900, among them: Ivan Aksakov (d.1886), Nikolai Liubimov (d.1897), Konstantin Leont'ev (d. 1891), Iurii Nikolaev (pseudonym Govorukha-Otrok) (d.1896), Nikolai Danilevskii (d.1885), Nikolai Strakhov (d. 1896). Their absence might have affected the image that was created of Solov'ëv after his death.

²⁴ The new teaching category of *privat-dotsent* was established in the University Statute of 1884 and was intended to bring healthy competition to the professoriate. Samuel Kassow, 'Professionalism Among University Professors' in: Harley D. Balzer (ed.), *Russia's Missing Middle Class: The Professions in Russian History* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996) note 21 p. 218. Solov'ëv also mentions the fact that the University Statute of 1884 intended to generate free competition between teachers. P.B.D. (pseud.) 'Gosudarstvennaia filosofiiia v programme Ministerstva Narodnago Prosveshcheniia' (*Rus'* 1885 No.11 p. 6) (*Sobranie Sochinenii*, Tom V, p. 409).

affiliation. The discussion that follows will be limited to Solov'ëv's role as a public lecturer, as this is the role that he assumed throughout his life (albeit with interruptions) and which had the most impact.

Much the same can be said about Solov'ëv's lecturing performances as about his scholarly achievements: Solov'ëv was able to fill the lecture hall with his fluency and eloquence. According to Vasilii Rozanov, Solov'ëv was 'a natural born teacher' and 'constantly needed an audience'.²⁵ It is clear from the numerous memoirs of contemporaries that Solov'ëv's lectures never failed to impress his listeners, and not only thanks to his physical appearance and personal presence — Solov'ëv definitely had charisma.²⁶ Yet his lecture hall would not have been crowded had it not been for the often unusual and sometimes provocative themes covered in his lectures. The most notorious example was his 1881 lecture 'Kritika sovremennogo prosveshcheniia i krizis mirovogo protsessa', which appealed to Tsar Alexander III to pardon the assassins of his father, Tsar Alexander II. In the lecture's concluding section, Solov'ëv skillfully played to his audience of approximately 800 people. Starting with the generally accepted idea that the tsar represents the personal expression of national spirit, he developed the argument that Tsar Alexander III could not possibly kill his father's assassins for this

²⁵ [V sushchnosti, emu postoianno nuzhna byla auditoriia, slushateli; on byl urozhdënnii, vrozhdënnii uchitel'] Rozanov, 'Pamiati Vl. Solov'ëva' *Mir Iskusstva* 1900 No.15-16 quoted from *Kniga o Vladimire Solov'ëve* p. 335. Liudvig Slonimskii writes that lecturing was Solov'ëv's calling, 'Vladimir Sergeevich Solov'ëv', *Vestnik Evropy* 1900, No.9, p. 424. Solov'ëv's introductory lecture at St. Petersburg University attracted so many students — approximately 400 people attended — that the lecture was moved to a bigger auditorium in which Mendeleev normally lectured. Nikiforov, 'Peterburgskoe studenchestvo' in: *Kniga o Vladimire Solov'ëve* p. 171.

²⁶ A considerable number of testimonies highlight Solov'ëv's charismatic impact on his audience; these include descriptions of the changing color of his eyes, his luxuriant hair, his ascetic features, and the timid voice in which he spoke. Aleksei Ivanovich Sobolevskii, 'O Vl. Solov'ëve kak lektore Moskovskogo universiteta' in: Luk'ianov, *O Vl. S. Solov'ëve v ego molodye gody* Kn. III Vyp. 2 p. 38; Liudvig Slonimskii, 'Vladimir Sergeevich Solov'ëv' *Vestnik Evropy* 1900 No.9 p. 424; Polivanova, 'Iz vospominanii o Vl. S. Solov'ëve' p. 90–92; Nikiforov, 'Peterburgskoe studenchestvo' p. 171–172; Vladimir Kuz'min-Karavaev, 'Iz vospominanii o Vladimire Sergeeviche Solov'ëve' *Vestnik Evropy* 1900, No.11, p. 444.

would violate the moral principles of the Russian people which the Tsar is obliged to uphold. By framing his argument in this way, Solov'ëv made it appear, in terms of public opinion, that the community was against the death penalty.²⁷

Another well-known example of a lecture in which Solov'ëv confronted a matter of general principle was 'Ob upadke srednevekogo mirosozertsaniia', which was held in 1891 at a public meeting of the Moscow Psychological Society. Nearly 400 people (professors, men of letters, members of educated society) attended the lecture, which was followed by a closed discussion for which people had to pay a 10-rouble entrance fee. The general theme of the lecture was 'true Christianity' — as opposed to 'false paganism' — its evolution throughout history and the task that this 'theandric [*bogochelovecheskaia*] religion' imposed upon mankind, i.e. the realization of God's Kingdom on earth. Solov'ëv's provocative view on Christianity, which (as he himself wrote) was rather 'unusual', evoked a strong reaction from the conservative camp, who considered Solov'ëv's lecture blasphemous and anti-Orthodox. Discussion continued on the topic of Solov'ëv's lecture for approximately one year, the journal *Moskovskie vedomosti* serving as the main platform.²⁸

More specifically, Solov'ëv's lecture dealt with the 'compromise' between Christianity and paganism in the medieval world, which had given rise to a 'perverted' teaching in which 'exclusive dogmatism', 'one-sided individualism' and 'false spiritualism' prevailed. He sharply condemned those 'nominal' or 'pseudo-Christians' (in the Middle Ages and beyond) who acknowledged Christian truth merely in name, that is, as an external, formal matter, without ever internalizing it and fully living up to its norms.²⁹ By contrast, Solov'ëv provocatively stated that those 'non-believers' who promoted the idea of progress were, in fact, acting in the interest of true Christianity. He ended his lecture by di-

²⁷ *Pis'ma* Tom IV pp. 243-246.

²⁸ *Sobranie sochinenii* Tom VI pp. 381-393. Evgenii Barabanov, 'Zabytyi spor' *Vestnik russkogo khristianskogo dvizheniia* No.118, II-1976.

²⁹ Lev Tolstoi fully subscribed to this point of view.

rectly calling upon these nominal Christians ‘to do better themselves’ and ‘to create a living, social and universal Christianity.’³⁰

This polemical public complaint against the Orthodox-Christian community in Russia made Solov’ëv’s struggle with society complete. As opposed to his friend Evgenii Trubetskoi who ‘called for all Christians of different convictions to unite themselves in a common battle against non-belief’, Solov’ëv, on the contrary, chose ‘to unite with contemporary non-believers in a fight against contemporary Christians.’³¹ As a result, those who had initially welcomed and supported his ideas, like the Slavophiles Aksakov and Kireev as well as the editors of *Pravoslavnoe Obozrenie*, grew further alienated from him and openly turned against him in some cases (for instance, the members of the *Moskovskie Vedomosti* circle). On the other hand, intellectuals who were not Orthodox-oriented or who considered religion a private matter — the Liberals, for example — did not share the Christian core of Solov’ëv’s social and political thought.³² According to Vladimir Spasovich, who like Solov’ëv was a member of the editorial board of *Vestnik Evropy*, Solov’ëv, as a philosopher, though numbering among the Liberals, stood entirely apart from them in terms of worldview.³³

³⁰ *Sobranie sochinenii*, Tom VI, p. 392–3. English translation after S. Frank (ed.) *A Solovyov Anthology* (London, The Saint Austin Press, 2001) pp. 60–71.

³¹ [“Ty prizyval khristian vsekh veroispovedanii soedinit’sia v obshchei bor’be protiv neveriia; a ia zhelal by, naoborot, soedinit’sia s sovremennymi neveruiushchimi v bor’be protiv sovremennykh khristian”.] Quoted in: Aleksei Losev, *Vladimir Solov’ëv i ego vremia* (Moskva: Progress, 1990) p. 589–590. Originally from Evgenii Trubetskoi, *Mirosozertsanie Vl.S. Solov’ëva* (M, 1913) II p. 319.

³² According to Liudvig Slonimskii, Solov’ëv’s fundamentally philosophico-mystical and somewhat theological worldview remained closed to his coworkers at *Vestnik Evropy*, for he did not discuss common topics with those who did not share his views. [Osnovnoe filosofsko-misticheskoe, otchasti bogoslovskoe mirosozertsanie Vl. Solov’ëva bylo dlia nas zakryto: on izbegal govorit’ ob izvestnykh predmetakh s liud’mi, ne razdeliavshimi ego verovanii.] *Vestnik Evropy* 1901 No.9 p. 424.

³³ V. Spasovich, ‘Vl. S. Solov’ëv kak publitsist’ *Vestnik Evropy* 1901, No.1, p. 212. Manon de Courten has done five case studies of the tsaricide, the Old Believers, the Jewish question, the Slavic question and the famine, in which Solov’ëv’s standpoint is examined with regard to other groups who participated in public debate. Her overall conclusion is that Solov’ëv ‘was often perceived as a

In the next section, which will delve into the function of *publitsist*, we will consider whether the fact that Solov'ëv stood alone in his moral-social conviction might account for his isolation. But first we will consider Solov'ëv's position as heliotrope.

Heliotrope

In 1886 Solov'ëv published a few humorous poems in *Novoe Vremia* under the pseudonym of Prince Esper Heliotrope [kniaz' Esper Geliotropov].³⁴ At that time, he was hardly able to publish anything at all due to censorship.³⁵ Rather than regarding this pseudonym as an accidental choice, I believe it warrants being taken seriously, as it reveals a great deal about Solov'ëv's perception of himself. It can be regarded as a secret allusion to the task that Solov'ëv believed was conferred upon him, that of acting as an intermediary between this world and that of the divine. In this respect, the choice of 'heliotrope' as pseudonym has a double meaning. First, it sheds light on Solov'ëv's privileged position between the human and divine worlds from which he was able to observe Russian society independently from an absolutely Christian cos-

troublemaker by the authorities (tsaricide, Jewish question, famine), a false patriot talking rubbish by conservatives (tsaricide, Old Believers, Jewish question) and a utopian by the progressive camp (tsaricide, Old believers, Jewish question, famine). *History, Sophia and the Russian Nation: A Reassessment of Vladimir Solov'ëv's Views on History and his Social Commitment* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004) p. 483.

³⁴ Letter to his mother dated 1886. *Pis'ma* Tom II p. 40. About Solov'ëv's pseudonyms, see: Ivan Masanov, *Slovar' psevdonimov* (Moskva: Vsesoiuznoi knizhnoi palaty, 1957).

³⁵ In 1886, Solov'ëv was prohibited by the ecclesiastical press from publishing. *Pis'ma*, Tom III p. 189. In an 1887 letter to Kireev, Solov'ëv wrote that everything submitted for publication within the past half-year had been blocked by the censorship committee. He had heard through a friend that Pobedonostsev considered all of his activities to be harmful to Russia and Orthodoxy, and therefore he could not be allowed to publish. *Pis'ma*, Tom II p. 142. See also Aleksandr Polunov's characterization of Pobedonostsev as a 'watchdog' who, as the chief procurator of the Holy Synod, belonged to the Supreme Press Commission and, in this role, had put 12 newspapers and journals out of business by 1887. 'Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev — Man and Politician' *Russian Studies in History*, Vol. 39, No.4 (Spring 2001), p. 22.

mic perspective. Secondly, it points to Solov'ëv's function as signpost in Russian society — one who sets a shining example of moral strength. From a religious perspective, the image of heliotrope, or sunflower, signifies man's manner of turning to God as the ultimate source of light and seeing God's will in everyday life.³⁶ From a philosophical perspective, the figure of heliotrope is reminiscent of the philosopher in Plato's metaphor of the cave.³⁷ Similar to Plato's philosopher, who had obtained knowledge of the ideal world, Solov'ëv had an epistemological advantage as compared to the rest of society by virtue of his mystical visions.³⁸ Like Plato's philosopher, Solov'ëv too 'returned' to society in order to 'enlighten' his fellow men, who often critically questioned and ridiculed him.³⁹ In the foreword to the second part of *Natsional'nyi vopros* (1891), he writes: 'those worthy patriots attacked me precisely for showing Russia the Christian path.'⁴⁰ Unlike Plato's philosopher, however, who was rather unwilling to return to the cave, Solov'ëv considered it his Christian duty to point the people in the right direction and to set an example.⁴¹ Thus, Solov'ëv's role as heliotrope consists in the

³⁶ The German Jesuit Jeremias Drexel (1581–1638), a preacher and teacher of rhetoric, wrote a very popular book entitled *Heliotropium* in 1627. The book serves as a guide to unite man's will to the will of God. Given Solov'ëv's profound knowledge of Western theological writings, it is not unlikely that he was familiar with it.

³⁷ Plato, *The Republic* Book VII, i and ii (514a–517b).

³⁸ Solov'ëv had three mystical visions: the first at the age of nine during a church ceremony, the second in the British library during his stay in London in 1877 and the third in the desert in Egypt.

³⁹ Solov'ëv was frequently subjected to slander and often complained about this in his correspondence with friends. See also Solov'ëv's poem 'Skromnoe prochestvo' [Modest prophetism] (1890) which makes clear that he was well aware of the way in which he was ridiculed. Judging from an early letter to Ekaterina Romanova (1873), Solov'ëv had expected such a thing to happen: 'At the very best I will be taken for a madman.' [Eto eshche samoe luchshee, chto menia sochtut za sumasshedshago.] *Pis'ma* Tom III p. 94.

⁴⁰ [eti pochtennye patrioty napali na menia imenno za ukazaniia khristianskogo puti dlia Rossii.] 'Natsional'nyi Vopros' in *Sobranie sochinenii*, Tom V, p. 158.

⁴¹ [Soznatel'noe ubezhdenie v tom, chto nastoiashchee sostoianie chelovechestva ne takovo, kakim byt' dolzhno, znachit dlia menia, chto ono dolzhno byt' izmeneno, preobrazovano. (. . .) Soznavaia neobkhodimost' preobrazovaniia, ia tem samym obiazvaius' posviatit' vsiu svoiu zhizn' i vse svoi sily na to, chtoby

fact that, on the one hand, he embodies man's natural tendency to turn to God and be spiritually guided by the light of good, while, on the other hand, he acts as a lighthouse in society, transmitting messages intended to set people on the proper path.

Solov'ëv's contemporaries took note of this heliotropism or, as they called it, prophetism. They often associated him with light, as the Symbolists would later do.⁴² Special attention was also paid to his physical appearance.⁴³ During his doctoral defence, people took notice of Solov'ëv's icon-like face, as well as to his monk-like character which, in combination with his extraordinary talent, made him 'a man not of this world'.⁴⁴ According to Liubov' Gurevich, editor of *Severnyi Vestnik*, Solov'ëv was an 'unusual figure whose traits oddly mixed with those char-

eto preobrazovanie bylo deistvitel'no soversheno. (...) Sama istina, t.e. khristiansvo. . istina sama po sebe iasna v moem soznanii, no vopros v tom, kak vvesti ee vo vseobshchee soznanie, dlia kotorago ona v nastoiashchee vremia est' kakoi-to monstrum — nechto sovershenno chuzhdoe i neponiatnoe.] Letter to Ekaterina Romanova in: *Pis'ma* Tom III p. 88.

⁴² According to Aleksandr Petrovskii, Solov'ëv 'carried within himself a divine flame' [nosivshago v sebe bozhestvennyi ogon']. 'Pamiati Vladimira Sergeevicha Solov'ëva' *Voprosy Filosofii i Psikhologii* 1901 ianv.-fevr. kniga 56 p. 39. According to the biographer Vasilii Velichko, the shining face of Vladimir Solov'ëv shines with unfading beams, like an unfaded lamp, in front of the altar of the Highest.' [svetlyi oblik Vladimira Solov'ëva siaet luchami neugasimymi, kak neugasimaia lampada, zateplennaia pred altarem Vsevyshniago.] *Vladimir Solov'ëv. Zhizn' i tvorenie* (2 izd. SPB, 1903/4) p. 5. Nikoforov describes him as an 'ardent prophet' [plamennyi prorok]. 'Peterburgskoe studentchestvo i Vlad. Serg. Solov'ëv' p. 172. Sergei Bulgakov writes: 'With the clairvoyance of a prophet, Solov'ëv saw his true source, the unfading light. During his entire life he encountered this light and called for it.' [S iasnovideniem proroka Solov'ëv prozreval istinnyi ego istochnik, svet nemerknushchii, nevechernii. On sam vsiu zhizn' shel navstrechu etomu svetu i zval k nemu.]. 'Chto daet sovremennomu soznaniuu filsofia Vladimira Solov'ëva?' p. 447. According to Aleksandr Blok, Solov'ëv 'radiates immaterial gold light' [izluchaet neveshchestvennyi zolotoi svet]. 'Rytsar'-monakh' p. 334.

⁴³ See note 26. See also: Aleksei Losev, 'Naruzhnost' i povedenie Vl. Solov'ëva' in: *Vladimir Solov'ëv i ego vremia*, pp. 635–645.

⁴⁴ Pëtr Morozov as quoted in: Luk'ianov *O Vl. S. Solov'ëve v ego molodye gody* Kn. III Vyp. 2 p. 29, 30. Polivanova 'Iz vospomani o Vl. S. Solov'ëve' p. 92.

acteristic of members of literary bohemia.⁴⁵ A Danish critic, probably Brandes, remarked that Solov'ëv, being both not of this world and yet higher than this world, presented himself as half-prophet, half-child.⁴⁶ In fact, Aleksandr Petrovskii, who met Solov'ëv only once in 1869 at the age of sixteen, is an exception when he states that Solov'ëv was a man of this world.⁴⁷ Bulgakov writes that although many people called Solov'ëv a prophet because of his appearance as well as his teaching, his prophetism was generally ridiculed and poorly understood.⁴⁸ According to Koni, people even reproached Solov'ëv for having assumed this prophetic mission.⁴⁹ Archbishop Antonii, for example, was very critical of Solov'ëv's so-called prophetism as evidenced in his article carrying the revealing title 'Lozhnyi prorok'.⁵⁰ Spasovich writes that although Solov'ëv had never claimed to be a prophet, he was deeply convinced that Solov'ëv nonetheless considered himself to be one and that he had his reasons for it. He believed that Solov'ëv received inspiration about the Good through his spiritual contact with Godman Jesus Christ.⁵¹ The daughter of Aleksandr Pypin, Pypina-Liatskaia, also noted Solov'ëv's prophetic self-image, writing that every now and then he liked 'to cast off the responsibility of "chosen one" of which he was always conscious.'⁵²

⁴⁵ [. . . v kotoroi cherty velichavago inoka tak stranno peremeshalis' s chertami, kharakternymi dlia predstavitelia literaturnoi bogemy'] 'Istoriia Severnogo Vestnika' in: S.A. Vengerov (ed.), *Russkaia literatura XX veka 1890-1910* (Moskva: Izd. T-va Mir, 1914), pp. 243.

⁴⁶ [Buduchi ne ot mira sego i vyshe mira sego, on predstavial iz sebia polu-proroka, polu-rebenka.] As quoted in Koni, 'Vladimir Sergeevich Solov'ëv' p. 194.

⁴⁷ Petrovskii, 'Pamiati Vladimira Sergeevicha Solov'ëva' p. 37.

⁴⁸ Bulgakov 'Chto daet' p. 446.

⁴⁹ [on prisvaivaet sebe prorocheskuiu missiu] Koni, 'Vladimir Sergeevich Solov'ëv' p. 208. Pamela Davidson has argued that Solov'ëv constructed a prophetic ideal and tradition. 'Vladimir Solov'ëv and the Ideal of Prophecy' *Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 78, No. 4 (October 2000), pp. 643-670.

⁵⁰ 'Lozhnyi prorok' (*Volynskie Eparkhialnye Vedomosti* 1908, No. 12) in: *Pro et Contra*, Tom II, pp. 54-58.

⁵¹ Spasovich 'Vl. S. Solov'ëv kak publitsist' p. 218, 225.

⁵² [. . . sbrosit' s sebia otvetstvennost' "izbrannika", kakim ne mog sebia ne soznavat'.] Pypina-Liatskaia, 'Vladimir Sergeevich Solov'ëv', p. 125.

Publitsist

Solov'ëv not only proved capable of crowding a lecture hall with his passionate addresses, he also provided copy for newspapers and journals.⁵³ Professionally, he earned his money as a publicist writing poetry, reviews, commentaries on current affairs, literary criticism and philosophical and theological essays.⁵⁴ As early as his university period, Solov'ëv was in close contact with several journals (*Russkii Vestnik* and *Pravoslavnoe Obozrenie*) and acquainted with many people of the *Moskovskie Vedomosti* circle headed by Mikhail Katkov.⁵⁵ According to Luk'ianov, his large and 'pluriform network went beyond family and academic circles and extended into the highest strata of Russian educated society.'⁵⁶

Although Solov'ëv was an able writer — his writing skills were unanimously praised — and produced work that sold in a manner characterized by an enthusiasm and rapid pace not unlike the excitement his lectures generated⁵⁷, his *publitsistika*, that is, his social critique or social activism, later received relatively little attention as compared to

⁵³ He was a valuable contributor to *Vestnik Evropy*, a journal which depended on subscriptions for survival. On *Vestnik Evropy* and its editor Stasiulevich, see Pogorelskii, 'N.I. Kostomarov and Origins of the *Vestnik Evropy* Circle' *Oxford Slavonic Papers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), Vol. XI p. 97.

⁵⁴ V. Kuz'min-Karavaev writes that once he and his brothers had sold the publication rights to his father's oeuvre, literary revenues were Solov'ëv's sole source of income and that this was another reason why he worked so intensively. [No byla i drugaia prichina takoi napriazhennoi raboty. So vremeni prodazhi, sovместno s brat'iami, prava izdaniia sochinenii ottsa, literaturnyi zarabotok sostavliial dlia nego edinstvennyi istochnik sredstv sushchestvovaniia.] 'Iz vospominanii o Vladimire Sergeeviche Solov'ëve' *Vestnik Evropy* 1900 p. 451. In a letter to his brother Mikhail (dated 21 July 1891), Solov'ëv complained about his financial problems — he was always short of money — and about the fact that ideals did not sell, but bad poetry did. *Pis'ma*, Tom VI p. 123.

⁵⁵ Luk'ianov, *O Vl. S. Solov'ëve v ego molodye gody* Kn. I p. 369, Kn. III Vyp. II p. 12–13; Ivan Ianzhul, 'Iz vospominanii o Vl. S. Solov'ëve' *Pro et Contra* Tom I p. 97–98. According to Radlov, his biographer, Solov'ëv worked at *Russkii Vestnik* from 1875–1877. *Pis'ma* Tom IV p. 137.

⁵⁶ Luk'ianov, *O Vl. S. Solov'ëve v ego molodye gody* Kn. III Vyp. II p. 30.

⁵⁷ *Natsional'nyi vopros v Rossii* [The National Question in Russia] marks Solov'ëv's biggest success in publicism.

his philosophical and theological writing.⁵⁸ Some contemporaries regretted the fact that Solov'ëv dedicated so much time to *publitsistika* instead of devoting himself to philosophy.⁵⁹ *Publitsistika*, they believed, was a thing of the moment, transitory and short-lived and, therefore, far below the standard of the great philosopher. Although Solov'ëv might have nurtured such ideas himself by writing in the preface to the first volume of the Plato translations that 'he began to doubt the usefulness and realization of those external schemes to which he had given his so-called "best years" 'and that he was longing to return to 'philosophical studies', any attempt to assign a hierarchy to Solov'ëv's occupations must be rejected on two grounds. First, Solov'ëv himself provided a counterstatement. In the spring of 1900, shortly after having given his lecture on the end of history, Solov'ëv was tortured by the discrepancy that existed between his literary-philosophical work and his secret wish to go before the people with a (big) Egyptian candle. He told his brother that his mission did not consist in writing philosophical books, as all that he wrote was simply a prologue to his further activities.⁶⁰ Secondly, Solov'ëv himself refused to order his writings according to any

⁵⁸ According to Koni, Solov'ëv was much more of a *publitsist* than it seemed, even when he was, apparently, a representative of abstract thinking. He was a fighter, or better, a 'horn that calls to battle'. [Boets — ili, vernee, 'truba, zovushchaia na boi' — on byl gorazdo bolee publitsistom, chem eto kazhetsia, dazhe i togda, kogda iavlialsia, povidimomy, predstavitelem otvlechennago umozreniia.] Koni, 'Vladimir Sergeevich Solov'ëv' p. 194.

⁵⁹ Among them was Solov'ëv's close friend Lev Lopatin, 'Pamiati Vl. S. Solov'ëva' (*Voprosy Filosofii i Psikhologii* 1910 No. 105 (5) *Kniga o Vladimire Solov'ëve* p. 453–4. In addition, Solov'ëv's nephew-biographer, Sergey Solov'ëv, reflects a commonly-held opinion when he writes that 'it will surprise many that Solov'ëv wasted so much time and energy on petty polemics with the nationalists and "fired on swallows with a canon".' Sergey Solovyov, *Vladimir Solovyov: His Life and Creative Evolution* [transl. from the Russian by A. Gibson] (Fairfax, Virginia: Eastern Christian Publications, 2000(1922-23)) Part II p. 369.

⁶⁰ . . .Nastupila vesna 1900 goda. Solov'ëv kak-to osobenno byl izmuchen ne-sootvetstviem mezhdru vsei svoei literaturno-fiosofskoi deiatel'nost'iu i svoim sokrovennym zhelaniem khodit' pered liud'mi s bol'shoi egipetskoj svechoi. On govoril bratu, chto missia ego zakliuchaetsia ne v tom, chtoby pisat' filosofskie knigi; chto vse, im napisannoe, — tol'ko prolog k ego dal'neishei deiatel'nosti.] Belyi, 'Vladimir Solov'ëv' p. 281.

type of hierarchy. In his study of Solov'ëv's first philosophical system, George Kline has pointed out that the writer places the human functions of making (mysticism, fine art, technical art), knowing (theology, philosophy, science) and doing (church, state, society) on 'the same ontological and axiological level as essential components of integral life.' As far as Solov'ëv's own career is concerned, this means that his philosophy cannot be considered either superior or inferior to his poetry or his social activism.⁶¹

In Solov'ëv's own time, his engagement in current affairs (such as the famine of 1891) met with scepticism.⁶² In reaction to Solov'ëv's critique of Vasilii Vorontsov's article on the foundations of *narodnichestvo*, wherein Solov'ëv accused Vorontsov of having simply repeated what he himself and others had already said one year previous, Vorontsev replied that he did not consider Solov'ëv to have been a 'fully established' *publitsist* and that some of the ideas which were being aired in *Natsional'nyi vopros v Rossii* [The National Question in Russia] and which were akin to *narodnichestvo* 'remained undeveloped'.⁶³ Concerning Solov'ëv's engagement in the famine, the liberal journal *Russkaia Mysl'* wrote: 'Regarding the role of Mr. Solov'ëv, as a fighter for the well-being of the working mass, as a messenger (public crier) of the people's needs, as somebody who explains questions regarding which he

⁶¹ George Kline, 'Hegel and Solovyov' in: J. J. O'Malley, K. W. Algozin, F. G. Weiss (eds.), *Hegel and the History of Philosophy* [Proceedings of the 1972 Hegel Society of America Conference] (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974) p. 164–166. Vladimir Solov'ëv, *Filosofskie nachala tsel'nogo znaniia* (1877) *Sobranie sochinenii* Tom I pp. 250–406. Although Solov'ëv writes that the primacy lies with the sphere of creativity and, within this, with mysticism as it is closest to the absolute principle of divine life, I disagree with Pamela Davidson, who subordinates knowledge and practical activity to creativity for reasons that are unclear to me (p. 648).

⁶² Sergey Solovyov writes that Solov'ëv's transition to practical questions met with misunderstanding and irony, and that many people were bothered by Solov'ëv's didactic tone in matters that he had never addressed before. Sergey Solovyov, *Vladimir Solovyov: His Life and Creative Evolution* Part II p. 370–371.

⁶³ [Vprochem, my ne schitaem g. Solov'ëva, kak publitsista, vpolne ustanovivshimsia. . .] and [etim mysli ostalis' avtorom nerazvitymi] V.V. [Vorontsev], 'Popytki obosnovaniia narodnichestva' (stat'ia tret'ia) *Russkoe Bogatstvo* No. 6 p. 119.

now considers (it) necessary to speak out in a few words, literature and society did not hear of this role of his ten years ago, nor have they since.⁶⁴

These reactions prompt questions about the reasons behind Solov'ëv's engagement in public discussion of socio-political questions. It is obvious that his interest in Russian society and politics was motivated by something other than mere fascination with current events or a penchant for polemics. Indeed, it was intimately connected with his two most vital concerns: the future of Russia and the creation of a truly Christian society. Already in 1873 at the age of twenty, Solov'ëv realized that people are moved by their inner convictions and that in order to change society one had to exert influence upon them.⁶⁵ Against this background, it is important to note that Solov'ëv defines 'public speech' [publichnoe slovo] as an 'act' or 'system of actions'⁶⁶ and that, in his eyes, 'to act usually means to remove things,'⁶⁷ i.e. obstacles and hindrances that prevent people from thinking freely, independently and without prejudice.⁶⁸ Thus, every public statement -whether oral or writ-

⁶⁴ [O roli g. Vl. Solov'ëva, kak bortsya za blagosostoianie trudiashchikhsia mass, kak glashataia narodnykh nuzhd, kak uiasnitelia voprosov, po povodu kotorykh on schel nuzhnym teper' vkrattse vyskazat'sia, o takoi ego roli literatura i obshchestvo ne slykhali ni desiat' let nazad, ni pozdnee.] 'Bibliograficheskii otdel', *Russkaia Mysl'* No. 5 1892 Periodicheskiiia izdaniia p. 237. According to Manon de Courten, Solov'ëv as *publitsist* 'was mostly ignored by his contemporaries', at least as far as the five cases that she has analyzed are concerned. *History, Sophia and the Russian Nation*, p. 483

⁶⁵ [Liudi upravliaiutsia svoimi ubezhdeniiami, sledovatel'no, nuzhno deistvovat' na ubezhdeniia, ubedit' liudei v istine.] Letter to Ekaterina Romanova in: *Pis'ma* Tom III p. 88.

⁶⁶ 'Publichnoe zhe slovo est' nesomnenno deistvie i dazhe ves'ma slozhnoe, eto, možno skazat', tseliaia sistema deistvii.' 'Slavianofilstvo i ego vyrozhdenie' (*Vestnik Evropy* 1889 No. 11 & 12) in: *Natsional'nyi vopros v Rossii, Sobranie sochinenii* Tom V p. 206.

⁶⁷ In the historical work of peoples, as well as in our personal work, *to do* usually means to remove obstacles. [V istoricheskoi rabote narodov, takzhe kak i v nashei lichnoi rabote, delat' obyknovenno znachit ustraniat' prepiatstviia.] 'Dogmaticeskoe razvitie tserkvi' *Sobranie sochinenii* Tom XI p. 5.

⁶⁸ In reaction to Lev Tikhomirov's article 'Dukhovenstvo i obshchestvo v sovremennom religioznom dvizhenii' (*Russkoe Obozrenie* 9, 1892) Solov'ëv issued a strong plea in favor of 'unauthorized thinking' [samochinno

ten, philosophical, poetical or social-critical is, in fact, an act and hence contributes to transforming contemporary society into an integral society as it fights ignorance (philosophy), stimulates creativity (art, poetry) and purifies (ochistit') public opinion (*publitsistika*).

Solov'ëv stressed the 'public service' character of his *publitsistika*: 'I have lately taken the voluntary penance on me to dispose of that printed rubbish and debris with which our pseudo-Orthodox pseudo-patriots try to stifle the great and urgent question of religious freedom in the consciousness of society.'⁶⁹ It was his Christian duty to speak out and, as he wrote in the preface to the second edition of *Natsional'nyi vopros v Rossii*: '[. . .] as long as the exposed untruth continues to actually control the public mind', 'I do not believe I have the right to end this debate'.⁷⁰ According to Trubetskoi, 'he compared his polemical activity to the obedience of a monk sweeping the trash and dirt out from under the monastery fence'.⁷¹

umstvovanii]. 'Vopros o 'samochinnom umstvovanii' (*Vestnik Evropy* 12, 1892) *Sobranie sochinenii* Tom V pp. 476–482.

⁶⁹ 'Ia za poslednee vremia vzial na svoju doliu dobrovol'noe "poslushanie": vymetat' tot pechatnyi sor i musor, kotorym nashi lzhepravoslavnye lzhepatrioty staraiutsia zavalit' v obshchestvennom soznanii velikii i nasushchnyi vopros religioznoi svobody. 'Spor o spravedlivosti' (*Vestnik Evropy* 1894 No.4) *Sobranie sochinenii* Tom VI p. 442. See also 'O raskole v russkom narode i obshchestve' (*Pravoslavnoe Obozrenie* 1884 No.5–8) in which Solov'ëv writes that servants of God have to purify [ochistit'] human society from all filth. *Sobranie sochinenii* Tom III p. 264

⁷⁰ [A teper' ne schitaiu sebia v prave prekratit' etot spor, poka izoblichennaia nepravda eshche vladeet fakticheski soznaiem nashchego obshchestva.] *Sobranie sochinenii* Tom V p. 160. Koni writes that in the heat of a polemic, Solov'ëv acknowledged himself chiefly as *publitsist*, explaining that recent developments in society had made him stand up for fundamental principles. [On sam, v razgare odnoi polemiki, priznal sebia publitsistom po preimushchestvu, ob"iasniaia, chto stal im kak raz v to vremia, kogda v nashei obshchestvennoi zhizni iavilis' osobyie povody vstupat'sia za elementarnye printsipy.] Koni, 'Vladimir Sergeevich Solov'ëv' p. 194–195.

⁷¹ [on sravnivaet svoju polemicheskuiu deiatel'nost' s 'poslushaniem' monakha, vymetaiushchego sor i nechistoty iz monastyrskoi ogrady] Trubetskoi, 'Smert' V.S. Solov'ëva' p. 296. Solov'ëv had considered becoming a monk more than once.

In his time, Solov'ëv was sharply criticized directly for not wholeheartedly adhering to a specific group or circle and indirectly because people in different camps tended to use his arguments for their own purposes, as a result of which it remained unclear what Solov'ëv actually wanted and expected.⁷² This *vnepartiinost'*⁷³ can be interpreted in several different ways. The fact that Solov'ëv's intentions remained unclear to his contemporaries is surprising, as he never tired of writing letters to the various editorial boards to rectify incorrect quotations, false interpretations and unfounded accusations. Indeed, he sometimes amended his articles in order to circumvent censure, but he never reduced his writing to any Aesopian language, for he then would have preferred not to publish at all.⁷⁴ Could it be that his ideas remained ambiguous because they were not what people expected and did not correspond to the socio-political categories of that time? In contemporary secondary literature on Solov'ëv, it is often stated that he broke with the Slavophiles and went over to the liberal camp, but I wonder whether this common interpretation does not too easily echo the representation already presented to us by his contemporaries — those who themselves formed part of this stigmatizing culture and whose testimonies evolved from their places within it.

Solov'ëv deliberately avoided becoming affiliated with one editorial circle or *partii* in particular; to have claimed membership in one group would have necessitated exclusion from another. Instead, Solov'ëv considered the '*raison d'être* of his activities' to be the unification of those aspects of his thought with which some writers partly sympathized, but

⁷² [Emu stavili na schet, kak nedostatok, chto on ne prichasten ni k kakoi partii, chto ego argumentami pol'zovalis', prisvoivaia ikh sebe, liudi raznykh napravlenii, chto ostavalos', budto by, neizvestnym, chego on khochet i chego on zhdet;] V. Spasovich, 'Vl. S. Solov'ëv kak publitsist' *Vestnik Evropy* 1901 No. 1 p. 212.

⁷³ Trubetskoi, 'Smert' V. S. Solov'ëva' p. 296. See also: Rotsinskii, S. B., 'Kritiki ucheniia Vl. Solov'ëva i kritika v uchenii Vl. Solov'ëva' in: P. Katilin (ed.), *Russkaia filosofii: mnogoobrazie v edinstve* [Materialy VII Rossiiskogo simpoziuma istorikov russkoi filosofii (Moskva, 14–17 noiabria 2001 g.) (Moskva: EkoPress 2001) p. 179.

⁷⁴ About his articles on the famine, see his correspondence with Liubov' Gurevich, editor of *Severnii Vestnik. Pis'ma* Tom III p. 131, 137.

in a total combination to which no group fully subscribed.⁷⁵ As a result, he was free to (and indeed did) collaborate with journals and newspapers of different social and political persuasions: he published in approximately 15 different journals and newspapers and collaborated with 6 (*Rus'*, *Pravoslavnoe Obozrenie*, *Russkii Vestnik*, *Vestnik Evropy*, *Voprosy Filosofii i Psikhologii*, *Russkoe Obozrenie*). As he was able to find numerous outlets for his ideas, the question of 'where to publish', though not unimportant, was always of secondary concern and was above all pragmatically considered.

Contrary to what is generally accepted in scholarship on Solov'ëv, I hold that Solov'ëv's articles should be read neither as part of the collected oeuvre of a particular journal or newspaper, nor as the common result of an editorial circle, as they only partly bear the specific trademark of the journal, newspaper or editorial circle in question.⁷⁶ Thus, his articles in *Rus'*, *Vestnik Evropy*, and *Russkoe Obozrenie* are not automatically representative of these social movements or *partii* [groups], and should therefore not be taken as testimonies of Solov'ëv's adherence to the Slavophiles, liberals, or monarchical-conservatives, respectively.⁷⁷ At the same time, his ideas do of course represent some-

⁷⁵ 'Zamechaniia na lektsiiu P.N. Miliukova' (*Voprosy Filosofii i Psikhologii* kn. 18 1893) in: *Sobranie sochinenii* Tom VI note 1 p. 424.

⁷⁶ Gaut's article 'A Practical Unity' underpins my statement as far as the *Vestnik Evropy* Liberals are concerned. In this article, Gaut carefully examines Solov'ëv's personal ties to the *Vestnik Evropy* circle and also compares the content of his writings with the liberal character of the journal, finally drawing the conclusion that his collaboration with the members of *Vestnik Evropy* signified a practical unity contributing to the practical process of building the Kingdom of God on earth. p. 302–313)

⁷⁷ Solov'ëv's publications in *Rus'* and *Vestnik Evropy* are often uncritically taken as proof of his transition from the Slavophile camp to the Liberals. However with respect to the period between 1878–1881, David remarks that 'Solov'ëv did not accept the liberals, Catholicism, Orthodoxy on their terms, but viewed them as potential instruments for the application of his ideology to real life. It was a loose association, not a firm adherence. Since his fundamental outlook included a belief in religious eschatology as well as in secular progress, it could equally well provide an ideological basis for the alliance with the churches or with agnostic liberalism.' 'The Formation of the Religious and Social System of Vladimir S. Solovev' p. 291–292. In addition, Solov'ëv himself stated more than once that he was not committed to any one newspaper [Ni s kakoiu

thing larger than his own thinking. Paul Valliere situates Solov'ëv in a stream of Orthodox Christian thought called the 'Russian school',⁷⁸ while Gregory Gaut places Solov'ëv's 'social gospel theology' in broader perspective by linking it to social movements within Protestantism and Catholicism beginning in the 1870s in Western Europe and the US.⁷⁹

In conclusion, we can say that although several groups laid claim to Solov'ëv⁸⁰ (and he himself was well aware of this fact)⁸¹ it is clear that he belonged nowhere in particular and could not be pigeonholed on the basis of political classifications in existence at that time. Solov'ëv's views transgressed the borders of the conventional political paradigm made up of Slavophiles, Populists, revolutionaries, conservatives, Westernizers and liberals.⁸² Furthermore, his writings as *publitsist* were

drugoiu gazetoiu ia ne nakhozhus' v snosheniiakh.] *Pis'ma* Tom II p. 150, nor to any one camp. *Pis'ma* Tom IV p. 247.

⁷⁸ Paul Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology: Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov. Orthodox Theology in a New Key* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000)

⁷⁹ Gregory Gaut, 'Christian Politics: Vladimir Solovyov's Social Gospel Theology' <http://www.valley.net/~transnat/gautfp.html> p. 10–11.

⁸⁰ The liberal Mikhail Stasiulevich called Solov'ëv 'a colleague for life' [sotrudnik zhizni] (Koni, 'Iz stat'i *Vestnik Evropy*' p. 193), whereas the Slavophile Aleksandr Kireev called Solov'ëv 'an accidental coworker' of the liberals. '*Slaviano-fil'stvo i natsionalizm. Otvet V. S. Solov'ëvu* (Petrograd: Izd. Russko-Slavianskogo knizhnago sklada, Geruts i Doshen), 1890) in: A. A. Kireev: *Sochineniia* (Sankt-Peterburg: Izd. Suvorin, 1912) Ch. I, p. 100.

⁸¹ That Solov'ëv was well aware of this circus that was going on around him is clear from a letter to his brother Mikhail: 'Here people court me; on the one hand *Novoe Vremia*, and on the other hand the liberals, not to mention the Jews. I conduct a shrewd politics (if I were a woman, I would say I was "flirting") with these and with those, and still with others.' [Za mnoiu zdes' ukhazhivaiut, s odnoi storony, *Novoe Vremia*, a s drugoi — liberaly, ne govoria uzhe o evreiakh. Ia vedu tonkuiu politiku (esli by imel tiurniur, to skazal by koketnichaiu) i s temi, i s drugimi, i s tret'imi.] *Pis'ma* Tom IV p. 97.

⁸² His landlord, Kuz'min-Karavaev, writes that 'separate party allegiances' [partiinaia obosoblenost'] were also unfamiliar to him. In literature, as in life, Solov'ëv stood beyond our group divisions. All these divisions are based on distinctions between political views, but to him [Solov'ëv] the difference between these opinions was secondary. In his eyes, religious questions were of primary importance.' [Partiinaia obosoblenost' takzhe byla emu neizvestna. Kak v literature, tak i v zhizni, Solov'ëv stoial vne nashikh delenii na gruppy. V osnove vsekh ikh lezhit razlichie politicheskikh vozrenii, a dlia nego raznitsa

sprinkled with evangelical terms such as love, renunciation, and God-manhood, which did not at all suit the political discourse of the time.⁸³

Concluding Remarks

Returning to our initial question regarding the underlying reasons for Solov'ëv's perceived position as a loner, we can first of all state that this perception cannot only be ascribed to Romanticism or Symbolism, but that it was widely shared by different groups in Russian society. Secondly, we have seen that the perception of Solov'ëv as *Einzelgänger* was not unanimous: different groups expected different things from the bright young philosopher: some regretted the fact that his academic career came to a premature end, while others admired him as free and independent scholar; some praised his activities as *publitsist*, while others ignored them; some claimed he was the successor to Slavophilism, while, according to others, his proper place was in the liberal movement. From this perspective, Solov'ëv could be seen as a 'victim' of inconsistent expectations with respect to the assignation of roles in society.

As far as the establishment of this image is concerned, we now see that it was partly self-chosen and partly the result of misunderstanding and ignorance. First of all, Solov'ëv's Christian worldview was geared towards reconciliation and reunification and, in line with his philosophy of all-unity he fused several disparate socio-political standpoints, i.e. the abolition of the death penalty, freedom of speech and religion, the tsar as the 'autocrat of conscience' and the critical current state of affairs of

etikh vozzrenii otstupala na vtorom plane. Pervoe mesto v ego glazakh zanimali voprosy religioznye.] 'Iz vospominanii o Vladimire Sergeeviche Solov'ëve' p. 449. Trubetskoi also writes that Solov'ëv 'stood outside the parties' [partii], because 'his social ideal was the religious ideal of the Kingdom of God', 'Smert' V.S. Solov'ëva' p. 296. Bulgakov writes that Solov'ëv faithfully and highly carried his own banner' [verno i vysoko nes svoe znamia], fighting on two fronts with the pseudo-Christians and the true non-Christians. 'Chto daet sovremennomu soznaniiu filosofiiia Vladimira Solov'ëva?' p. 428.

⁸³ When working on *Istoriia i budushchnost'* he wrote in a letter to his brother Mikhail that he was using a new writing method: 'the Bible under one elbow and white ruled paper under the other'. [beluiu bumagu i strochu]. *Pis'ma*, Tom IV, p. 94.

Christianity — ideas which, at that time, were not supposed (or, at least, not expected) to be combined. Secondly, his position as heliotrope met with ignorance, a result of which he was generally ridiculed, ignored and attacked. Thirdly, although the fact that he collaborated with several journals demonstrates that he shared an ideological affinity with them, he never managed to belong unequivocally to any one in particular, a fact of which he himself was well aware.

One of the difficulties that emerges in analyzing Solov'ëv's role and the perceptions of it in Russian society lies in the fact that he operated on two distinct levels: on one, Solov'ëv speaks as a professional intellectual in the function of scholar, lecturer and *publitsist* and, on another, he behaves as a zealous heliotrope, detached but still linked to this world, viewing events at a distance and perceiving them as small, progressive steps in the development of Christianity. The lines separating these two positions are, of course, not sufficiently distinct, and although we know that Solov'ëv was himself conscious of the divergence that existed between them, it remains unclear to what extent he was aware of their conflicting, and in some respects even mutually exclusive, character (which indeed generated rather paradoxical after-effects following each of his public performances). For how are we to understand his advocacy, as *publitsist*, of freedom of speech and public opinion while he simultaneously holds strong to his idea of the Christian tsar as an 'autocrat of conscience,' 'a representative only of that which in essence cannot be bad — the will of God' who hence 'should not depend on "public opinion" for public opinion can be false.'⁸⁴ And how are we to reconcile his function of *obshchestvennyi deiatel'* and scholar with his role of heliotrope, i.e. somebody who simply *knows* what is truth and what is good.

To draw a meaningful general conclusion from the individual case presented here, we should ask whether the specificity of Solov'ëv's situation might be considered typical for intellectuals by the turn of the century, rather than exceptional. Explaining Solov'ëv's isolated position in structural terms, rather than in terms of personality, has drawn our attention to his environment, i.e. to the society to which he was exposed. At the turn of the century, this society was undergoing a change

⁸⁴ 'Znachenie gosudarstva' (*Vestnik Evropy*, 1895, No.12) in: *Sobranie sochinenii* Tom XII (English translation after Wozniuk).

from a traditional stratified society into a modern society. It is against this background that Christiane Ruane situates the emergence of a new social class: the ‘professional intelligentsia’ — a group of intellectuals who combine the professional values of the modern era with the service ideals of traditional society. According to Ruane, members of the professional intelligentsia (having its origin in the traditional service elite) selflessly serve the public cause [*obshchee blago*], while, at the same time, self-consciously acting according to their own professional principles and education, thus strongly advocating freedom and autonomy. I believe we encounter a similar split-position with Solov’ëv who, in accordance with his different professional functions, attempts to foster the intellectual and spiritual well-being of his fellow countrymen.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Ruane, Christine, *Gender, Class, and the Professionalization of Russian City Teachers, 1860-1914* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994)