

Russian Metaphysics and Philosophy of Religion in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries from the Religious-Studies Perspective of K. M. Antonov

A Review Article

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Russian religious studies (*Religionswissenschaft*), after abandoning “scientific atheism” in the early 1990s, have been growing very strongly, although this new development is not always noted or appreciated in Western science in the way it deserves to be. Moscow alone has an Institute of Philosophy of Religion and Religious Studies, Faculty of Philosophy, M. W. Lomonosov University with its affiliated Moscow Society for the Study of Religions, and religious subjects are also addressed in St. Tikhon’s Orthodox University.

Two major books in Russian religious studies are worth mentioning: an older – but still valid – synthesis by Y. A. Kimielyev, “Filosofia religii” (*Philosophy of Religion*; 1998) and the most recent work by A. N. Krasnikov (1949–2009), “Metodologičeskje problemy religioviedenja” (*Methodological Problems of Religious Studies*; 2007. – Cf. Hoffmann (2010).

The doctor of philosophy, Konstantin Mikhaylovič Antonov, is deputy head of the Theological Faculty, Department of Philosophy of Religion and Religious Aspects of Culture at this distinguished, prestigious Orthodox center of learning. His scholarly interests include philosophy and religion, Russian religious philosophy, history and methodology of religious studies, history of Russian religious studies, history and methodology of theology, problems of atheism, as well as religious attitudes to science (faith vs. reason). K. M. Antonov has authored many works, chief of which include the

monograph “Filosofskoje nasledie I. V. Kirejevskogo. Antropologičeskij aspekt” (*The Philosophical Legacy of I. V. Kireyevskii. The Anthropological Aspect*; 2007), and numerous articles including philosophical analyses of such authors as I. V. Kireyevskii (1806–1856), A. S. Khomiakov (1804–1860), Y. F. Samarin (1819–1876), V. S. Solovjov (1853–1900), S. L. Frank (1877–1950), V. N. Lossky (1903–1958). The following publications are especially significant from a religious studies perspective: “Elementy psichoanaliza v filosofskoi publicistike S. N. Bulgakova” (*Elements of Psychoanalysis in the Philosophical Essays of S. N. Bulgakov*; 2002a), “Filosofja Ničše v intierpretacii L. Šestova. Problema ateizma” (*The Philosophy of Nietzsche as Interpreted by L. Šestov. The Problem of Atheism*; 2002b), “Fenomen religioznogo obraščdenja w antičnoj filosofii” (*The Phenomenon of Religious Behavior in Ancient Philosophy*; 2006).

The synthesis of Antonov’s long-standing interest in philosophy of religion is the monograph “Filosofja religii w rusckoj metafizikie XIX – načalo XX vieka” (*Philosophy of Religion in Russian Metaphysics from the 19th to the early 20th Centuries*; 2008).¹

The book consists of an “Introduction” (5–24) and three main parts: Part I “Sources and Precursors. The Development of Russian Philosophy of Religion in the mid-19th Century” (25–83); Part II “Philosophy of Religion in Late 19th-Century Russian Idealistic Metaphysics” (84–183), and the most extensive Part III “Philosophy of Religion in the Early 20th Century. Typology and Topics” (184–342). The volume closes with a brief “Conclusion” (343–348), an English “Summary” (349–351), and a “Selected Bibliography” (352–356).

1 Antonov, Konstantin Mikhaylovič: *Filosofia religii w rusckoj metafizikie XIX – načalo XX vieka*. Moskva: Izdatiel'stvo Pravoslavnogo Sviato-Tikhonovskogo Gumanitarnogo Universiteta, 2008. 360 pp. ISBN 978-5-7429-0415-1.

The fundamental problem signaled already in the book's title is the relationship of metaphysics toward the philosophy of religion (and vice versa). After all, metaphysics is traditionally treated as a part of philosophy; therefore, metaphysics should be considered as being within Russian philosophy (of religion), and not the other way around, as Antonov's title proclaims (*Philosophy of Religion in ... Metaphysics*). Antonov goes on to explain the problem in detail.

To the term "metaphysics" he attributes the meaning that it acquired under its – first Kantian and then positivist – understanding, although he omits the original understanding of the term by Andronicus of Rhodes and many other ancient and mediaeval interpreters. By this term, Antonov understands not only a certain philosophical discipline, but also the entirety of philosophical inquiry into faith, religion, God, etc. It is precisely in this sense that the term is used in Russian philosophy in the 19th and 20th centuries, already from the time of V. S. Soloviov (24).

According to the author, the term "philosophy of religion" may be understood as a name for a philosophical subdiscipline or as one aspect of the philosophical system of any thinker for whom religion as such is of primary interest. However, when certain aspects or manifestations of religion are explored, it is the subject of religious studies; when God, mystical experience, or principles of faith are studied, then it is the subject of theology.

Antonov believes that conceptualizing the philosophy of religion is determined by its three basic understandings: 1) philosophical theology and criticism of religion, which ask questions about the essence of religion; 2) religious studies that attempt to fathom the nature of religious beliefs; and 3) religious philosophy.²

As religious philosophy Antonov understands such philosophy in which religion is the central idea. It is always a result of a crisis of religion, when theological interpretations of religion appear insufficient and unconvincing to religious people who must function in a secularized environment. It usually involves critique of traditional theology and religious practice, and tries to find methods, approaches, and interpretations. Understood this way, it follows Husserl's phenomenological postulate of "Zurück zu den Sachen."

Russian philosophy of religion in the 19th and beginning of the 20th century is closest to the third of the above-mentioned understandings and

partly to the first (influences of Russian theological schools called Ecclesiastical Academies). The second understanding of philosophy of religion (closest to religious studies) is especially present in the works of the brothers (princes) S. N. Trubetskoy (1862–1905) and E. N. Trubetskoy (1863–1920).

Antonov starts out by discussing in detail the links between Russian philosophy of religion with its Western counterpart (mainly with Enlightenment philosophy and classical German philosophy) and goes on to point out that the latter provided a foundation for the philosophies of such Russian thinkers as P. Y. Čaadayew (1794–1856), I. V. Kireyevsky, A. S. Khomiakov, M. A. Bakunin (1814–1876), and P. D. Yurkevič (1825–1874).

From the point of view of religious studies, a very interesting chapter is the one dealing with the philosophy of religion of Y. F. Samarin, especially his polemic with the concepts of F. M. Müller (73–82), whom, by the way, Samarin valued highly and whose ideas he was one of the first to disseminate in Russia. By way of reminder, the "father of comparative religion," F. M. Müller, considered mythology as a "disease of language," but as a disciple of F. W. J. Schelling (1775–1854) he derived religion from a "perception of the Infinite." Samarin shared Müller's views on the importance of language in the construction of mythological representations, but of religion itself he thought as something independent and irreducible to any other constituents of reality as we know it. His views in this respect greatly resemble R. Otto's much later theses about the holy as expressed in his noted "Das Heilige" of 1917, and presents strongly antireductionist and antirationalist tendencies. Antonov openly suggests (and rightly so, in my opinion), that Samarin's polemic with F. M. Müller's theses is in fact aimed against representatives of atheist philosophy of religion: A. I. Herzen (1812–1870) and M. A. Bakunin, who drew from the concepts of L. Feuerbach (1804–1872).

Part two of the book is devoted to the analysis of philosophy of religion in Russian idealistic metaphysics. In it, Antonov conducted a short analysis of the chief Russian philosophical orientations of the late 19th century, among which he highlighted "mystical metaphysics," "spiritualism," "neo-Hegelianism," and the "philosophy of Ecclesiastical Academies." Moreover, he discussed the philosophical views of religion of the most notable Russian philosophers like V. S. Soloviov, L. M. Lopatin (1855–1920), and prince S. N. Trubetskoy (143–173). The author paid a special attention and gave much breadth to the ontological, gnoseological, and historiosophical aspects of the

² For distinctions between the various senses of the term "philosophy of religion," see Hoffmann (2009).

philosophy of the time's greatest Russian philosopher V. S. Soloviov. Antonov emphasized his position on the relation (conflict) of "faith vs. reason," and on cognitive analyses of the religious faith and mystical experiences. He shed some interesting light on mutual interrelations between Soloviov's and S. N. Trubetskoy's (also E. N. Trubetskoy's) ideas. Both Soloviov, the Trubetskoy brothers, and Lopatin followed A. S. Khomiakov by supporting philosophical discourse with knowledge of history and psychology or religion (S. N. Trubetskoy's idea of "collective imagination" as a foundation of religious faith). They understood faith as a cognitive skill different from either the senses or reason but close to mystical experience. Faith as such and understood this way is not opposed to reason and appears to be the highest (fullest) form of cognition.

Part three of Antonov's book is devoted to the Russian philosophy of religion in the early 20th century. Three philosophers stand out in that period: S. L. Frank, P. A. Florensky (1882–1937), and V. V. Rozanov (1856–1919). In Frank's philosophy of religion, Antonov emphasizes his studies of religion-culture relationship and his attempts to specify the notions of myth vs. dogma. He also points to his evolving ideas from the original Nietzschean critique of religious awareness to its apology in the style of J. W. von Goethe, F. Schlegel, or (much later, and thus free of those constraints) W. James.

This chapter gives the most extensive information on Father Florensky. In painting an evolutionary perspective of his views, Antonov points to many parallels with R. Otto's ideas and goes on to emphasize original (and independent) analyses of Florensky, akin to what can be seen in later Western European phenomenology of religion and hermeneutics. Antonov detects attempts at aesthetic-psychological hermeneutics of religious phenomena relating to inquiries into psychology of religion (including those akin to psychoanalysis, philosophy of life, phenomenology, etc.) in the works of the controversial Russian thinker V. V. Rozanov, whose system he describes as "metaphysics of religion, authority, and gender" (234–266). He supposes that possible further development of philosophical and scholarly thought in Russia – if uninterrupted by war and revolutionary turmoil – would have evolved in a direction similar to that of Western European studies, and thus toward inquiry into history of (comparative) religion, psychology of religion, phenomenology of religion. In his opinion, an example of just such a scenario may be the works of the Polish professor at the Petersburg University, T. T. Zieliński (1859–1944) as well as

the then much publicized work by V. I. Ivanov (1866–1949) "Dionis i pradionisijstvo" (Dionysos and Pre-Dionysianism; 1923).

Toward the end of his book, Antonov concentrates on discussing those problems in philosophy of religion which dominated in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (267–288). Foremost among these is the controversy that arose between traditional theology and modern thinkers, from Soloviov and L. N. Tolstoy, and pertaining to the nature of dogma. Antonov recognizes W. Dilthey (1833–1911) and H. Bergson (1859–1941) as those with major influences on the making of Russian philosophy of religion in overcoming positivist tendencies in this respect. He thinks that it was then that change was introduced to the methodological foundations of Orthodox dogmatics, although at that point philosophers were not fully aware of it.

A separate question is how Russian philosophers understood the role of religion in the historical process. To those issues Antonov devoted a section titled "Religion and History in Early 20th-century Russian Thought" (289–310). In it, he pointed out that such notions as "new religious awareness" (novoye religioznoye soznanje), "religion of the future" (religia buduščevo), etc. served Russian philosophers not only to define their own religious concepts, but also as instruments to analyze their contemporary religious realities, the time's religious awareness, and emerging new tendencies in its historical development. As a consequence, there emerged various new and often highly complex concepts of religious history of heuristic potential, such as A. A. Meyer's (1874–1939) notion of "historical waves" or N. A. Bierdiayev's (1874–1948) theory of the logic of historical process.

Another issue Antonov addressed is philosophical analysis of atheism as carried out by V. V. Rozanov, D. S. Merežkovskoy (1865–1941), L. I. Šestov, and S. N. Bulgakov (1871–1944). All being religious thinkers, they pointed to a religiously favorable value of atheism, especially its Nietzschean variety, which, if overcome, helps cleanse religious awareness.

The last part of the book in question, "The Holy' in Russian Philosophical Thought and Western Phenomenology of Religion," was co-authored by M. A. Pylayev (327–342),³ a well-known younger-generation Russian scholar in phenomenology of religion, author of such major works as "Fenomenologija religii Rudolfa Otto" (The Phenomenology of Religion of Rudolf Otto;

3 First published in *Religiovedenie* 2008 (3: 118–128).

2000) and “Zapadnaja fenomenologija religii” (Western Phenomenology of Religion; 2006).

The authors (Antonov and Pylayev) note that Russian thinkers, independently of Western European scholars, arrived at many methodological formulations similar to phenomenological approaches (whether philosophical or religious-studies-oriented), by placing “the Holy” (*das Heilige*) in the center of their analysis.

The overall conclusion of Antonov’s monograph boils down to the statement that Russia saw a formative process (though not without reluctance) of philosophy of religion as a distinct philosophical discipline which underlies specific research programs. The process was nonetheless interrupted by the ferment of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. One of Antonov’s purposes was to investigate this process and periodize it. He distinguished the following periods in the making of Russian metaphysical thought: 1) 1st half of the 19th century to 1870; 2) the last 25 years of the 19th century; 3) early 20th century.

Antonov devoted much attention to methodological problems. He was especially interested in the diverse methods used in Russian philosophy of religion applied to study religion and religious phenomena. In this matter, he asserts that Russian philosophers developed many methods and approaches which are close to such European currents of thought as philosophical phenomenology, phenomenology of religion, existentialism, hermeneutics. Following Hegel and Schelling, they attempted to discover the logic of historical processes. Their general approach was antireductionist: they treated religion as a reality *sui generis*, irreducible to any other aspects of human reality and culture, although closely bound up with them. They criticized sharply a theological approach as well as positivist and materialistic approaches. They tried to overcome the aggravating contention, present from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment and onward, between “faith” and “reason,” between “religion” and “science”; they desired to offer more appropriate interpretations of such categories as “faith,” “revelation,” “dogma,” “myth,” “symbol,” etc., to explain the place of Christianity in the history of religion by investigating various forms of religious life and tradition as a (historiosophically) logical consequence of humanity’s developing religious awareness. They wanted to present arguments to support the contention that it is religious experience that is the true fountainhead of cognition which may also substantiate attempts to prove God’s existence. Such understanding of religion dominated in Russian philosophy in the 19th and early 20th

centuries and was in fact very close to that existing in Western European thinking, although it was obviously colored with its own Orthodox-inspired ideas as distinct from the Protestant – Lutheran (N. Söderblom, followers of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*), Calvinist (G. van der Leeuw), Anglican (E. O. James) – roots of Western European religious studies. After all, a large number of Western European religious scholars were of Protestant denomination. Exceptions (which prove the rule!) included the Catholic cultural-historical school of Father Wilhelm Schmidt SVD, whose members included such prominent ethnologists and religious scholars of the Anthropos circle as P. Schebesta, W. Koppers, M. Gusinde, and others, and the programmatically aconfessional (not anticonfessional!) Italian religious studies school of R. Pettazzoni.

From the religious studies, point of view, Antonov’s most interesting chapters, in our opinion, are those devoted to:

- 1) M. A. Bakunin and S. N. Trubetskoy, where the author performed a penetrating analysis of intertwining strictly philosophical ideas with those of historical religion (religious studies proper); in it, he displayed a vast knowledge of philosophy and religious studies;
- 2) V. V. Rozanov; especially valuable is his explication of Rozanov’s critique of Eurocentrism and Christianocentrism and his pointing out to the mutual links between history of religion and Rozanov’s research in the field of psychology of religion and the hermeneutics of religious phenomena;
- 3) A. S. Khomiakov as a precursor in Russia of the idea of diffusionism; and
- 4) Father P. Florensky for parallels to R. Otto’s concepts and attempts to use phenomenological and hermeneutic procedures in the study of religion.

The sheer breadth of Antonov’s analyses renders it difficult to offer even a brief summary in a short commentary. What deserves especial emphasis is that, for Russian philosophy of religion (and also theology), Antonov did not stop at internal analysis. He showed close thematic, conceptual, and methodological links between Russian philosophy of religion and Western European science, while displaying excellent knowledge of the history of inquiry into the world’s religions. His book suggests in no uncertain terms that Russian philosophy of religion, despite its own peculiar features (prevalent Orthodoxy), developed very much in league with Western European philosophy, theology, and reli-

gious studies, without significantly falling behind. In fact, at times its ideas were developed independently and predated those in Western Europe.

Antonov's book is now the most comprehensive analysis of Russian philosophy of religion in its section called metaphysics. For this reason it deserves to be translated into Western European languages.

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Zur Rezeption der Maori-Tätowierkunst (*ta moko*) in Star Trek

Georg Schifko

“Nice tattoo, bet there is a story behind it”
(Eine Angehörige der Spezies 8472 zu Chakotay).

Kaum eine andere Fernsehserie ist so erfolgreich und beliebt wie Star Trek, das einen nicht mehr wegzudenkenden Bestandteil der Populärkultur¹ bildet. Millionen von Sehern konnten die in mittlerweile 47 (!) Sprachen ausgestrahlte Fernsehserie verfolgen (Wulff 2003: 36). In einem Zeitraum von über 35 Jahren sind mehr als 500 Episoden produziert worden (Richter 2003: 7). In weiterer Folge hat Star Trek “ein beispielloses weltweites, nationalspezifische, soziale und kulturelle Unterschiede überbrückendes ‘Fandom’ hervorgebracht” (Richter 2003: 5). Die als Trekkies bzw. Trekker bezeichneten Fans finden sich nicht nur im virtuellen Raum des Internets, sondern treffen sich auch auf regelmäßig stattfindenden Conventions. Von der Beliebtheit der Serie zeugt besonders plakativ, dass sich 1976 der amerikanische Präsident Gerald Ford aufgrund vieler Briefe von Star Trek-Fans genötigt sah, das Space Shuttle “Constitution” in “Enterprise” umbenennen zu lassen (Wulff 2003: 20).

1 Ein populärkulturelles Produkt dient primär der Unterhaltung und ist ein für den Massengeschmack hergestelltes und an den Markt gebundenes Produkt der Kulturindustrie (Richter 2003: 6).