



Barbara Hallensleben,
Regula M. Zwahlen,
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Pantelis Kalaitzidis (eds.)

BUILDING THE HOUSE OF WISDOM

Sergii Bulgakov and Contemporary Theology:
New Approaches and Interpretations

 **Aschendorff**
Verlag

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Abstract

Sergii Bulgakov (1871–1944) is one of the preeminent theologians of the 20th century whose work is still being discovered and explored in and for the 21st century. The famous rival of Lenin in the field of economics, was, according to Wassily Kandinsky, “one of the deepest experts on religious life” in early twentieth-century Russian art and culture. As economist, publicist, politician, and later Orthodox theologian and priest, he became a significant “global player” in both the Orthodox diaspora and the Ecumenical movement in the interwar period.

This anthology gathers the papers delivered at the international conference on the occasion of Bulgakov’s 150th birthday at the University of Fribourg in September 2021. The chapters, written by established Bulgakov specialists, including Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury (2002–2012), as well as young researchers from different theological disciplines and ecclesial traditions, explore Bulgakov’s way of meeting the challenges in the modern world and of building bridges between East and West. The authors bring forth a wide range of new creative ways to constructively engage with Bulgakov’s theological worldview and cover topics such as personhood, ecology, political theology and Trinitarian ontology.



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The World as the Household of Wisdom: Political Theology and Philosophy of Economy

Dionysios Skliris

Sergei Bulgakov, an economist, philosopher, politician as well as an important Marxist scholar in the 1890s, had distanced himself from Marxism in the early twentieth century, after having taken a spiritual path that led him to the work *Philosophy of Economy* in 1912.¹ The latter includes Bulgakov's critique of Marxism and his own alternative view of an idealist (i. e., non-materialist) communism, which he relates to his notion of *Sophia*.

The Ideal of Sophic Communism

For Bulgakov, true philosophy consists in the coordination with life and its source. It starts from a stance of wonder (θαυμάζειν) toward the miracle of life, as in Aristotle, and consists in a coordination with life in all its concrete manifestations. Following the traditional theology of the logoi of beings, Bulgakov considers that the logos, i. e., the logical principle of life, transcends thought, while life itself is an eminent supralogical synthesis of the logical and the alogical.² Formal thought with its emphasis on limits and boundaries cannot render it fully; however, Bulgakov supports the possibility of ascribing to an eminent philosophy that could coordinate with life's flow. For Bulgakov, modernity has produced a vicious couple of intellectualism and anti-intellectualism: The former consists in regarding the logical principle as fundamental and thus considers being as self-developing thought. The latter gives priority to the

1 Catherine Evtuhov, "Introduction," in: Sergei Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy. The World as Household* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 1–2.

2 Sergei Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy. The World as Household*, trans. Catherine Evtuhov (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 48.

unconscious instincts over conscious reason.³ Bulgakov himself is inspired by the traditional philosophy of the *logoi* of beings,⁴ as expounded by a variety of thinkers from Philo of Alexandria to Saint Maximus the Confessor, according to which the *logos* signifies a connection of beings with a trans-subjective and realist meaning.⁵ However, Bulgakov does not propose a return to pre-modern thought. On the contrary, he proposes a transcendence of modern dilemmas from within the spiritual itinerary of modernity. In this sense, Bulgakov would propose a reception of modern liberal values in his Sophiological project.⁶ He would also expound a synthesis of the particularly modern types of intellectualism and anti-intellectual scepticism, since thought is for him self-reflecting life. Concepts could become abstract fossils of living thought in the context of intellectualism; but they can also be regarded as signs and symbols of living reality.

Bulgakov's synthesis lies in a modern interpretation of the Christian faith in the Holy Trinity. Christian Trinitarian theology is viewed as an archetype of synthesis between interior subjectivity and exterior otherness.⁷ Bulgakov thought that this Trinitarian archetype is reflected in the conciliar structure of the Church, which synthesizes between an invisible aspect of divine inwardness and a visible one of exterior institutional structures.⁸ He also linked this synthesis to the theology of creation *ex nihilo* through the agency of the *Logos*: The "void" that precedes creation is formed by the Word thus leading to a worldly synthesis of the logical and the alogical, which echoes the Trinitarian one through Christ. Bulgakov tries to reformulate the Orthodox theology of creation in a novel way drawing from Fichte and Schelling,⁹ as a synthesis between the 'I' of subjectivity and the 'not-I' of otherness. The same view is articulated as a synthesis between being and non-being in the sense of the $\mu\eta\ \acute{\omicron}\nu$. It is to be reminded that the term $\acute{\omicron}\nu\ \acute{\omicron}\nu$ signifies what does not exist in any way whatsoever, such as the absolute nothingness, the nihil 'before' and 'outside' creation whereas the term $\mu\eta\ \acute{\omicron}\nu$ denotes a relative non-being, a posi-

3 Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy*, 48.

4 Irénée-Henri Dalmais, "La théorie des "logoi" des créatures chez S. Maxime le Confesseur," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 36 (1952), 244–49.

5 Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy*, 53.

6 Aristotle Papanikolaou, *The Mystical as Political: Democracy and Non-Radical Orthodoxy* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 36–43.

7 Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy*, 57.

8 Stanisław Swierkosz, *L'Église visible selon Serge Bulgakov. Structure hiérarchique et sacramentelle* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1980), 195–96.

9 *Ibid.*, 56–57.

tive indefinite, that is, what does not exist in relation to something else. In this sense, creation is seen as a synthesis between on the one hand the subjectivity of the eidetic formation and, on the other, the initial unconscious void that received this formation. Philosophy thus aims at a synthesis between subjectivity and objectivity as well as between necessity and freedom. For this reason, it resembles poetry, which is also characterized by a combination of inner consistency and free creativity, being a “poetry of concepts.”¹⁰ The aesthetic activity of poetry is the highest embodiment of philosophy because it synthesizes between free creativity and necessary consistency or, in other words, between the conscious and the unconscious.¹¹ It is in this sense that in Bulgakov, Kant’s vision of aesthetics as a bridge between science and ethics and Schopenhauer’s vision of art as a coordination with will that is deeper than formal presentation, are integrated in a Christological vision that, after Dostoevsky, beauty will save the world.

The same antithesis is viewed by Bulgakov as one between life and death. Life is the world of teleology, whereas death is equated with inorganic matter and the realm of mechanistic determinism. But Bulgakov observes the coexistence of both in the universe, thus finding room for both types of philosophy in his worldview. The world of becoming is one of mortal life. The latter constitutes an inherently ambiguous and inconsistent concept that poses a grave problem for thought. Especially after the Darwinian theory of evolution we are accustomed to thinking that life uses death as an instrument for its preservation, but one could also possibly claim the inverse, namely that death, the ‘prince of this world,’ is strengthened through the reproduction of life.¹² For the human person, the reign of death is tantamount to a reduction to thingness and to alienation. However, in the world of becoming and mortal life, the survival of both the individual and the species is achieved through the satisfaction of material needs: The result is that the teleology of the mortal life paradoxically takes place through the determinism of lower instincts.

The philosophy of economy thus begins as an examination of the struggle for survival that man shares with other animals. However, this is only an initial version of economy. For human life can transcend this primordial level and broaden itself beyond determinism. The definition of economy as a proper philosophical domain is for Bulgakov one of studying humanity’s expansion and development as well as its expression through labour. The widening of

10 Swierkosz, *L’Église visible*, 59.

11 *Ibid.*, 92.

12 *Ibid.*, 70.

humanity takes place through an encounter with the reality of dead matter and mechanistic necessity. It seems that Bulgakov envisages a confrontation in which humanity is in combat with the forces of death on behalf of all life, since it may be true that humans share life and even some economic features with other animals (for example, one could speak of an economy of bees, ants etc.), but the freely creative life of humanity is the apex of life and the peak of its teleology as a synthesis between freedom and necessity that subdues the latter. For this reason, even though one can envisage an economy of animals, the teleology of economy consists in human expression as the peak of a rather continuous movement of life from animality to humanity. This humanization of nature consists in the organism assuming and transcending the mechanism and intentionality assuming and transcending causality.¹³

What is particularly theological about this vision is that Bulgakov regards economy as a battle with the forces of death, the “prince of this world,” the latter including, as we have observed, inorganic matter, necessity, deterministic causality and its reflection in lower instincts. However, the peak of this combat is not mere humanity, but Christ as God-man who is the only one able to conquer death and chase it out of life.¹⁴ This consists in a leap from teleology to eschatology and not in a simple progress from the one to the other. There is thus a first definition of philosophical economy as a necessity to defend life, which turns economy into a “function of death.” In this first definition, economy is a self-affirmation of life that is, however, defensive in character, since it aims to avoid or rather postpone death. But this effort is vain: Man remains subject to death and in fact this sort of economy cannot but instrumentalize death for the temporary protection of life. This happens on the one hand because the motivation of this economy is the fear of death. And, on the other hand, Bulgakov seems to refer to an economic equivalent of Darwinism, in which the evolution of the life of the species is achieved through the death of the unfit, which makes possible the progress of life as a whole. In a similar way, progress in this sort of economic life is based on an antagonism that comprises the reality of death and even uses it for the sake of economic progress.

The transformation into a theological understanding of economy thus seems to require this leap from teleology to eschatology: Christ makes possible the final overcoming of death and thus a definition of life that is not dependent on it. But this also means a definition of life in which life has no fear of death. This could arguably be a way to formulate after Bulgakov the mystery of the

13 Swierkosz, *L'Église visible*, 72.

14 *Ibid.*, 73.

cross: Instead of founding the economy on the fear of death and consequently on its instrumentalization for the progress of life, Christians can conceive of a life that knows no fear of death and is thus ready for any sacrifice. Thanks to the God-man, this mystery of readiness for sacrifice leads to the resurrection, which constitutes the final victory over death. It is to be noted that the mystery of the cross is not an instrumentalization of death for progress, as in a biological or economic version of Darwinism. One could arguably extend Bulgakov's thought and claim that the resurrection is in a sense the final survival of the unfit, since death is not used to achieve progress. This is an event that is eschatological in character and not teleological, since Christ's resurrection comes as an end from the outside and not as an internal evolution of mortal life. For Bulgakov, the mystery of the cross is after all a mystery of the entire Trinity.¹⁵ However, at the same time, I think that it would also be true to claim that if we follow Bulgakov's thought, then Christ's victory over death could also be characterized as a sort of "economy" and also as a sort of "progress." Thus, in the first place, one could say that what we theologians term "divine economy," i. e., God's plan for the salvation of the world, is regarded by Bulgakov as being the peak of human economy, studied by the philosophers, that is, as the confirmation of life's struggle to expand and develop. Similarly, Christ's victory over death could be regarded as the true ontological progress of life and it could establish a philosophy of progress that would not forget death like secular progressivist theories,¹⁶ but would engulf it as a moment to be transcended. It thus seems that the mystery of the cross is rather integrated by Bulgakov in a narrative of the continuity of life, while Christological eschatology is rather viewed as a confirmation of teleology.

In any case, one could sum up that there are at least three notions of economy in Bulgakov's work, the combination of which consists in a rejection of Marxist political economy.

The first notion is that of a scientific discipline that deals with the contingent aspects of economy, approaching it through analytic scientific methodology.

The second notion is philosophical economy as a speculative observation of the phenomenon of life as a whole in its combat with the forces of death. This combat is considered a battle between, on the one hand, organism, teleology, freedom, creativity, *natura naturans* and, on the other, correspondingly, mechanism, deterministic causality, necessity, lower instincts, *natura naturata*, etc. It

15 Sergius Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2008, 213–46).

16 Aidan Nichols, *Wisdom from Above* (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2005), 220.

is the task of philosophy to witness this combat as an event of economy, i. e., as an event of the real even if futile struggle of life for expansion. In this notion of particularly human economy, production and consumption play a similar role to that of inhalation and exhalation in biology.¹⁷ This economic metabolism bears witness to the fundamental similarity of the universe, its *sympathy*, if one puts it in Stoic terms, or in Bulgakov's own terms, to the 'physical communism' attested by the philosopher. For Bulgakov, economy as a whole as studied by the philosopher is both logically and empirically prior to separate and contingent economic acts.¹⁸

The third notion is theological economy as observing the final victory, expansion and progress of life through the mystery of the cross and the resurrection of Christ, as well as the Pentecost in the Spirit, which fulfils the divine plan for salvation.¹⁹ In Christ we find the "divine economy" as the culmination of the human one, be it scientific or philosophical. It is true that this theological economy is eschatological and not teleological in character. It is based on a reversal of terms: Death is not avoided but assumed by Christ and the result is that the unfit for survival ultimately survive together with the fit. But Bulgakov examines this eschatological event in terms both of economy and of the expansion/progress of life. For Bulgakov, the theological notion of economy constitutes the inevitable debt of the philosophical one, since for him death is "metaphysically unnatural"²⁰ and life should be able to be defined philosophically by itself and not through an opposition to its opposite. But the latter is only revealed in Christ, who reverses the terms of mortal life and manifests this possibility of defining life itself. At the same time, the Word shows the ultimate synthesis between body and soul or, philosophically speaking, between materialism and idealism,²¹ something that was impossible for pre-Christian Neoplatonism.

What is peculiar to Bulgakov's thought is the ultimate valorization of the notions of economy and progress, which even have an eschatological content and are considered part of spiritual life.²² This might seem a modernist progressive attempt, but one could claim that this is a subject also present in traditional theology. For example, one can refer to the vision of Gregory of Nyssa

17 Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy*, 95.

18 *Ibid.*, 124.

19 Sergius Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2004), 267–84.

20 Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy*, 88.

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Ibid.*, 217.

in which the eschatological state is one of perpetual progress (*epektasis*).²³ Or to the patristic notion of divine economy as the caring for the salvation of the worldly house and body of the Word. Bulgakov's originality rather lies in the fact that he considers this perpetual progress and divine economy to be the culmination of a movement of progress and economy that is already present inside history according to the progressive narrative of modernity.

Bulgakov's most interesting difference from Marxism lies in his theory of labour. For Bulgakov, the philosophical notion of economy could also be defined as "the struggle through labour for life and its expansion."²⁴ Consequently, the world as household is the world as the object of labour. For Bulgakov, labour is "a feeling of outwardly directed effort"²⁵ that constitutes the expression of life in its direction of expansion. He insists on an expressivist understanding of labour as "man's coming out of himself to act in the external world"²⁶ and consequently as life's effort to integrate the exterior world in it. Labour also has an epistemological value, since it manifests the subject. The problem of solipsism that is inherent in the philosophy of establishers of modernity, such as Descartes and Kant, is thus solved, since the fundamental act of cognition lies in the manifestation of subjectivity in the external world through labour. The latter arguably also creates a form of intersubjectivity. Bulgakov thus follows the Marxist attempt to raise communion to the level of first philosophy, in order to respond to the objection of solipsism, but, contrary to Marx, he observes the exteriorization of labour as a question of idealism and not of materialism.

It equally has a theological Trinitarian meaning: As an exteriorization of subjectivity, it is like an echo of the synthesis between subjectivity and otherness in the Trinity.²⁷ The two fundamental versions of labour are modelling and projecting, which are also the two main forms of technology. However, Bulgakov insists that intellectual and scientific activity should also be considered a form of labour. Bulgakov thus finds that the Marxist notion of labour as an expenditure of nervous-muscular energy that constitutes the foundation of economic values is an excessively narrow definition and that in this Marx presents a fundamental continuity with liberal predecessors such as Adam

23 Kathryn Rombs, "Gregory of Nyssa's Doctrine of Epektasis: Some Logical Implications," in *Studia Patristica* Vol. XXXVII. *Papers presented at the Thirteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 1999. Cappadocian Writers. Other Greek Writers*, ed. Maurice Wiles and Edward Yarnold (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 288–93.

24 Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy*, 74.

25 *Ibid.*, 75.

26 *Ibid.*

27 *Ibid.*, 115. See also Swierkosz, *L'Église visible*, 195.

Smith and David Ricardo. It is to be noted, however, that Bulgakov is closest to Marxism when he considers labour what is particularly human in contrast to the merely natural forces of life and growth.²⁸ More precisely, production and consumption are regarded by Bulgakov as being the particularly human version of interactions that in mere biology have the form of inhalation and exhalation or of metabolism.²⁹ In a neo-Aristotelian sense, labour is considered humanity's specific difference in relation to animals.

However, Bulgakov's philosophy is rather one of idealistic vitalism. He considers a natural teleology in which nature's goal is to become an object to herself, the latter finally being achieved by man.³⁰ For Bulgakov, the teleology of nature is not put merely in terms of a struggle between matter and form, as in Aristotle, but also as one between the unconscious and the conscious, after the modern German idealism of Schelling. The teleology thus consists in the unconscious goal-orientedness of nature, economy in its philosophical notion being the very discipline that can explain this teleological passage from the unconscious to consciousness, or in other words nature's 'achievement' of becoming the object for the labour of human consciousness. Economy is thus considered by Bulgakov in the terms of a philosophy that one could arguably name 'idealistic vitalism.'

The World as Sophia's Household

Even though Bulgakov engages in a harsh criticism of Marxism, at the same time he draws certain important signifiers from the latter, in order to re-interpret them in a very novel and interesting way. After all, Marx is considered an offspring of German idealism, i. e., of thinkers such as Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel and Schopenhauer, and the same is true for Bulgakov. The philosophical strategy of Bulgakov is to read the Marxist ideal of communism through the more fundamental modern project propounded by Kant, Fichte and Schelling³¹ and then to achieve a synthesis of the latter with intuitions from the tradition of the Eastern Fathers, which has incorporated elements of Neoplatonism and Stoicism. In this, Bulgakov is significantly inspired by Vladimir Soloviev, as he himself admits. To take a characteristic example, Bulgakov does use the

28 Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy*, 76.

29 *Ibid.*, 95.

30 *Ibid.*, 86.

31 Mikhail Sergeev, *Sophiology in Russian Orthodoxy. Solov'ev, Bulgakov, Losskii and Berdiaev* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), 127–30.

signifier 'communism' in his political thought, in many different versions. The first is in the version of the signifier 'physical communism,'³² which means the fundamental similarity of being in the world in a way that is reminiscent of the Stoic notion of sympathy. This 'physical communism of being' is attested by the philosopher and the metaphysician and is considered to be the ontological foundation of economy, since it makes consumption and thus also production possible in the economic metabolism that is the particularly human sublimation of biological metabolism.

At the philosophical level, one can observe merely a "communism of life and death"³³ which consists in the simultaneous mortality of life and the life capacity of the non-living. This is also formulated as an accessibility of nature to human action that makes technology possible.³⁴ But the philosopher who observes this identity of life and death has to choose which reality is the most fundamental and either engage in a monism of death or in a monism of life. Bulgakov opts for the latter, following Soloviev, but also Plato, Plotinus, Böhme, Baader and Schelling, and terms his metaphysical philosophy "panzoism."³⁵ But Bulgakov's panzoism is rather an idealistic vitalism that is contradistinguished from pantheistic hylozoism, the latter being a materialistic monism, not an idealist one like in Bulgakov. For the latter, it is important to note not only that life permeates everything, but also that even material non-living mechanisms are organisms *in potentia*. Bulgakov thus engages in Aristotelian teleology with the significant emphasis that this is a teleology of life's expansion, i. e., leading to a linear temporality of perpetual progress in a modern sense. Bulgakov does include the ancient and even pre-Christian elements in his thought, like the Platonist image of matter as a feminine principle of 'chora' and its interpretation by Plotinus as non-being (μηὄν), but always reinterprets them through a Judeo-Christian vision of linear development toward the eschaton.

Consumption, the basis for seeing the world as a household, is founded on the similarity of being, its 'communism,' which permits not only biological eating but also every form of reception, such as sensation and even thought. Eating is for Bulgakov, as for Feuerbach and later for Schmemmann,³⁶ the paradigm for every relation with the world. But the philosopher can only witness the 'mortal' version of eating, i. e., an eating through which we kill what we

32 Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy*, 96.

33 Ibid., 97.

34 Ibid., 120.

35 Ibid., 98.

36 Alexander Schmemmann, *Pour la vie du monde* (Paris: Desclée, 1969), 9.

eat, or, to be more precise, we become what we eat, as Feuerbach would put it, but only through killing other beings, thus remaining ourselves mortal. It is the task of the theologian to evangelize another non-mortal form of eating that is made possible by the resurrection of Christ and the communion of His crucified and resurrected Body in the Eucharist.

The ‘cosmic communism’ that is attested at the philosophical level is transformed in a ‘eucharistic communism’ at the theological level, since Christ has integrated in His person the flesh of the world, He has offered it to self-sacrifice without fearing and avoiding death, and has resurrected it in the Father and the Spirit, thus offering it to us as a “medicine of immortality.” The “metaphysical communism of the universe,” the unity of the living and the non-living, the universality of life, is transformed into a Christological and eucharistic communism which is the only possible form of communism that can justify the monism of life that is so precious for Bulgakov and consequently reject the monism of death that is for him tantamount to materialism. In Bulgakov’s epistemology, the scientific examination of economy with its analytic method is integrated in the philosophical synthetic vision of the metaphysical communism of being and the latter is transformed in its theological justification, namely the ‘communism of the resurrection’ that guarantees monist vitalism.

A question that arises is whether there is a space for the Aristotelian distinction between economy and politics in the thought of Sergei Bulgakov. The Russian thinker would rather say that economy proper is the preoccupation with universal humanity and that this is what distinguishes man from the animals. Even though many animals have ‘families,’ only humans have a self-consciousness of the unity of their species. For Bulgakov this distinction between humanity and animality is also one between economy proper and economic acts or one between the merely collective and the social.³⁷ For Bulgakov, economy proper aims at the universal and is thus different not only from the relative scientific discipline, but also from historiography. But this universal economy stands in need of a transcendental subject. The latter is the theological role of the divine Sophia.³⁸ The divine Sophia leads economy in a transition from mechanism to organism that has an aesthetic character. For Bulgakov, economy as the discipline that studies the sophic dynamism of life is concluded by aesthetics and it is in this sense that one should understand the famous dictum that “beauty will save the world, which is understood in both a Sophiological and in a Mariological sense, since Mary is considered as the embodiment of

37 Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy*, 125.

38 *Ibid.*, 130.

sophianic beauty.³⁹ Thus, the philosophical quest is necessarily complemented by the theological vision of the sophic community of free persons in harmonious love.⁴⁰ Even though theology integrates philosophy, which has already integrated science and history, there is also an element of discontinuity, since Bulgakov remarks that the sophic community is the reversal of the *homo homini lupus*. However, the element of continuity and integration prevails in Bulgakov's thought, since the divine Sophia partakes in the cosmic activity of the Logos and thus endows the world with divine forces that transform it from chaos to cosmos.⁴¹

Conclusions

For Bulgakov, the event of life has an ontological character of radical birth that is different from formation through labour, art and technology. Life is a sophic event, whereas man can only recreate. At the same time, Bulgakov insists that the word *natura* in Latin is in the future, thus signifying that nature is always recreated through human synergetic cooperation.⁴² The theological ground of the Sophia is the one that makes the economic process possible. For Bulgakov there are two levels: on the one hand, that of Sophia establishing metaphysical humanity and, on the other, that of the human nature of the incarnated Logos. The latter manifests the truth that death is not an indispensable part of life and economy. Thus, there can be an everlasting economic life even and especially after its abolition by Christ. This is not the economy of the *natura naturata*, i. e., of economy's dead products, but one eternally dynamic and creative *natura naturans* that can also take the form of unexpected worldly beauties, like the charm of a child, the enchantment of a flower, the beauty of a starry sky or the flaming sunrise according to Vladimir Soloviev.⁴³ When appropriated by man through art, this form of artistic labour is a confirmation of the primordial Edenic version of economy as harmonic interaction with nature.⁴⁴ Art, mystical intuitions and cognition through symbols have a higher epistemological value, since they constitute insights into the universality of the world

39 Walter Nunzio Sisto, *The Mother of God in the Theology of Sergius Bulgakov. The Soul of the World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018).

40 Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy*, 140.

41 *Ibid.*, 145.

42 *Ibid.*, 147.

43 *Ibid.*, 151.

44 *Ibid.*, 154.

as Sophia's household before and after the divisions brought by death, whereas science can only study the fragmentary world.⁴⁵ If science isolates itself, then it orients us to the kingdom of death.⁴⁶ On the contrary, if science is integrated in philosophy and theology, it can study life as being concluded in love, which is the highest form of divine trinitarian life. This latter is manifested in the world through Sophia, which is the transcendental subject that makes possible the universalization of both humanity and history, i. e., the fact that there is after all one single humanity and one single history.⁴⁷ The political result of observing the world as the household of Sophia would thus be a socialism of love that would transcend a version of socialism that is based merely on utilitarianism and rationalism.

45 Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy*, 155.

46 *Ibid.*, 191.

47 *Ibid.*, 215.