



Barbara Hallensleben,
Regula M. Zwahlen,
Aristotle Papanikolaou,
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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Sergii Bulgakov's Early Marxism: A Narrative of Development

Caleb Henry

Russia's pre-Revolutionary landscape was dotted with various and competing Marxisms usually schematized around two or three axes: Necessitarian (Populist) Marxism, Legal (Critical) Marxism, and Revolutionary (Orthodox) Marxism.¹ Within such schemes Sergii Bulgakov's earliest writings fall within the second designation, that of Legal or Critical Marxism.² The "legal" descriptor is phenomenological, indicating the historic tendency of this brand of Marxism to disseminate its ideas within legal publications and—in general—to promote political, social, and economic change through already existing (legal) structures. The "critical" descriptor is more conceptual in nature, indicating this type of Marxism's admixture with Immanuel Kant's critical project.

The most defining conceptual characteristic of Bulgakov's early Marxism, then, is this: his seemingly idiosyncratic intermingling of Marxist materialism with Kantian critical philosophy, a peculiarity not lost on Bulgakov himself, who retrospectively acknowledges the influence of Kant on these early works. "I considered it necessary to verify Marx with Kant and not the other way

1 Cf., Andrzej Walicki, *The Flow of Ideas: Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to the Religious-Philosophical Renaissance*, ed. Cain Elliott, trans. Jolanta Kozak and Hilda Andrews-Rusiecka, vol. 7, Eastern European Culture, Politics and Societies (New York: Peter Lang Edition, 2015), 665–720. See also, Andrzej Walicki, "Russian Marxism," in *A History of Russian Philosophy, 1830–1930: Faith, Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity*, ed. G. M. Hamburg and Randall A. Poole (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 305–25. Leszek Kolakowski combines Walicki's first and third categories together, resulting in two groupings: Legal Marxism and Revolutionary/Orthodox Marxism (*Main Currents of Marxism: Its Rise, Growth and Dissolution*, trans. P. Falla [New York: Oxford University Press, 1978], II.3).

2 For a brief overview of Critical Marxism, see Richard Kindersley, *The First Russian Revisionists: A Study of "Legal Marxism" in Russia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

around,” he writes, and again, “I could never accept economic materialism in its raw form, without clarification from Kantian philosophy ...”³ Within and alongside Bulgakov’s early Marxism, then, lies an equally operative Kantianism.

The correlation between Marx and Kant, however, took many different forms and arrangements amongst the representatives of Critical Marxism, often giving rise to fierce disagreement between them. Bulgakov’s Critical Marxism, as will be demonstrated, is a correlation between Marxist materialism (conceived as an ontological unity) and Kant’s transcendental unity of apperception (conceived as an epistemological unity) wherein the latter is perceived to grant philosophical veracity to Marxist materialism while the former provides ontological cogency which Kant’s transcendental unity is depicted as deriving from and gesturing toward. Ultimately, Kant’s epistemological unity (apperception) and Marx’s ontological unity (materialism) are—for Bulgakov—two sides of the same coin. The remainder of this paper will be devoted to unpacking these observations while outlining the consequences this correlation has upon Bulgakov’s evolving understanding of materialism itself.

The Kantian component of Bulgakov’s Marxism is most clearly seen in his early attempts to differentiate his Critical Marxism from that of Rudolf Stammler and Peter Struve’s similar proposals. His 1896 essay “On the Regularity of Social Phenomena” was written in response to Stammler’s *Economics and Law according to the Materialist Conception of History*. “Just as the recognition of the universal applicability of the law of causality and universal regularity is a condition for our knowledge of nature,” Stammler had written, “so the regular knowledge of social life in advance sets some conditions for knowing, accepting in advance the existence of the regularity of social phenomena.”⁴ The epistemological transcription of the discussion does not go unnoticed by Bulgakov, and he summarizes Stammler’s position quite accurately: “Whoever wishes to establish the laws of human social life must first understand the general conditions of knowledge under which all social science must stand with its own special features.”⁵ Any “knowledgeable person,” Bulgakov continues, “will not be left in doubt as to who inspired this perspective of social philosophy ...

3 Sergei Bulgakov, *Ot marksizma k idealizmu: Sbornik Statej (1896–1903)* (SPb: “Obshestvennaia pol’za,” 1903), xi, xii.

4 Rudolf Stammler, *Wirtschaft und Recht nach der materialistischen Geschichtsauffassung: eine sozialphilosophische Untersuchung* (Leipzig: Veit & Comp., 1896), 6; as quoted in Sergej N. Bulgakov, “O zakonomernosti sotsial’nykh iavlenii,” in *Ot marksizma k idealizmu*, 2.

5 Bulgakov, “O zakonomernosti sotsial’nykh iavlenii,” 5.

the powerful influence of Kant and critical philosophy in general is evident.”⁶ Far from decrying this Kantian influence or the Kantian sublimation of the sociological question at hand, however, Bulgakov lauds the same as Stammler’s “masterly application of the principles of critical philosophy to social science,” and he considers it Stammler’s “great merit,” entitling him to the “appreciation of science.”⁷

The disagreement between Stammler and Bulgakov rests not with a generalized Kantian-Marxist conjunction but, rather, with the pragmatic outworking or interpretation of Kant in relation to Marx, and this coalesces around divergent readings of Kant’s notion of the transcendental unity of consciousness/apperception. Both Stammler and Bulgakov are in agreement that

Kant established the unity of transcendental consciousness as an unavoidable condition for the possibility of experience. On it is based the unity of space and time, hence the unity of the object, the unity of the law, and the unity of the world order. If the unity of consciousness and the identity of the knowing self are destroyed, no experience is possible. “The permanent and abiding self (of pure apperception) is the correlate of all our representations.”⁸

Kant’s critique of knowledge and his unity of transcendental consciousness remain just as “essential” and “unquestioned” for Bulgakov as it does for Stammler. The disagreement consists in Bulgakov’s discomfort with Stammler’s construction of “two contradictory points of view” (e. g., antinomic dualities of necessity and freedom, causality and teleology, knowledge and will, etc.) existing simultaneously and, at least in Bulgakov’s estimation, irreconcilably within the same Kantian transcendental consciousness.⁹ Such a philosophical construction, Bulgakov argues, yields not only two different “directions” of consciousness but two different bundles or unities of representations. Since these unities of representations are contradictory and exclusionary, what Stammler is perceived as proposing is two different transcendental consciousnesses altogether, and this, Bulgakov charges, remains fundamentally irreconcilable with the Kantian notion of the identity (or unity) of consciousness.¹⁰ The debate

6 Bulgakov, “O zakonomernosti sotsial’nykh iavlenii,” 6.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., 23.

9 Ibid.

10 If, on the other hand, these two directions remain asymmetrical or one subordinate to the other, then Bulgakov argues, “there is nothing new in [Stammler’s] whole con-

concerning materialism, moreover, hinges on these divergent readings of Kant, and Bulgakov's position is quite clear: "The unity of [Kant's] transcendental consciousness cannot tolerate two irreconcilable and at the same time equal points of view."¹¹ As such, Stammler's position is characterized by Bulgakov as "epistemological nonsense."¹²

Bulgakov's alternative proposal, of course, is a retrenched position of materialism which he argues possesses greater explanatory power by introducing "unity and regularity into the chaos of the constantly changing phenomena of social history."¹³ Such unity and regularity is accomplished by means of "causality," and Bulgakov describes his program of social determinism accordingly, without feeling the need to broaden or include other idealistic principles except by means of subordination:

Thus, the principle of social determinism is as follows: the whole of social life is a unity that is known on the basis of the laws of world mechanics, i. e., under the category of causality; the regularity of social life is the regularity of economic phenomena; the knowledge of this regularity is the knowledge of the causal origin of

cept" (ibid.). While eventually conceding much of the debate to Stammler within a few short years, Bulgakov remains persistent in his criticism regarding Stammler's alleged dualism (cf. "Zadachi politicheskoi ekonomii," in *Ot marksizma k idealizmu*, 321). In its place, Bulgakov prefers a more-Schellingian "philosophy of identity" already presciently formulated with his Kantian notion of an "identity of consciousness." (See Bulgakov, "O zakonomernosti sotsial'nykh iavlenii," 23; and especially, Sergei N. Bulgakov, "Osnovnye problemy teorii progressa," in *Ot marksizma k idealizmu*, 141; 141–42 (fn 1); "Basic Problems of the Theory of Progress," in *Problems of Idealism: Essays in Russian Social Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Randall A. Poole [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003], 107; 122 [note 33]). The Kantian notion of an "identity of consciousness," initially brought forward here in 1896, is referenced again in 1912 in explicit association with Schelling's *Identitätsphilosophie* (cf., Sergei N. Bulgakov, *Filosofia Khoziaistva. Chast' Pervaia: Mir kak khoziaistvo* [Moscow: Put', 1912], 181); *Philosophy of Economy: The World as Household*, ed. and trans. Catherine Evtuhov (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 175].

- 11 Bulgakov, "O zakonomernosti sotsial'nykh iavlenii," 23.
- 12 Ibid. On a proleptic note, once Kant's notion of the transcendental unity of apperception has been retooled in Bulgakov's thought via Soloviev's influence, Bulgakov will charge Kant with a similar failure. With the publication of "Basic Problems of the Theory of Progress" (1902), Bulgakov begins to accede to Stammler's interpretation of Kant, yet far from offering a Kantian substantiation of Stammler, Bulgakov extends his critique of Stammler's ontological dualism to Kant himself (cf. "Osnovnye Problemy Teorii Progressa," 140–41; "Basic Problems of the Theory of Progress," 106–07).
- 13 Bulgakov, "O zakonomernosti sotsial'nykh iavlenii," 6.

economic phenomena. In the sense of the complete rule of the law of causation, social development is a natural process, like all other processes of nature.¹⁴

What is important to note, once again, is that Bulgakov is careful to argue that this conception remains not only in full agreement with Kant's critique of reason, but the fullest expression thereof: "[A] unity of law corresponds to a unity of object, which in turn is conditioned by the unity of space and time," all of which correlates with Kant's transcendental unity of consciousness, which Stammler—and not Marx!—is said to violate.¹⁵ Accordingly, the theory of social development derives from social materialism's monism of causality rather than from two different directions as Stammler's antinomy of causality and teleology suggests.

Bulgakov's criticism of Stammler, however, quickly drew the attention of Peter Struve, the hallmark representative of Russian Critical Marxism, who remained unpersuaded and unimpressed with Bulgakov's materialist retrenchment. Once applied to history, Struve argued in his rebuttal published the following year, Bulgakov's conception of regularity becomes extended beyond its proper bounds, trespassing into the domains of goals (teleology), ideals, and—most importantly—freedom, all of which remain "directly contrary" to the idea of necessity.¹⁶

For Bulgakov, Struve's rebuttal was little more than a representation of Stammler's earlier idea of two contradictory directions within the same transcendental consciousness, and he issued his defense, "The Law of Causation and the Freedom of Human Actions," the same year.¹⁷ On the one hand, Bulgakov doubles down on his materialist position. On the other, he offers two interrelated emendations, both precipitating from a clear demarcation between primary and secondary principles strongly reminiscent of Vladimir Soloviev's early, synthesizing period.¹⁸

14 Bulgakov, "O zakonomernosti sotsial'nykh iavlenii," 7.

15 Ibid.

16 C. B. Struve, "Svoboda i istoricheskaia neobkhdimost': Po povodu knigi Shtamlera i stat'i S. N. Bulgakova (Voprosy Filosofii i Psikhologii, Noiab.—Dek., 1896)," *Voprosy Filosofii i Psikhologii* VIII, no. 1 (36) (1897): 120.

17 Cf., "Zakon prichinnosti i svoboda chelovecheskikh deistvii," in *Ot marksizma k idealizmu*, 35–52.

18 Cf., Vladimir S. Solov'ev, *Krizis zapadnoj filosofii (Protiv pozitivistov)* (Moscow: V" Universitetskoi tipografii (Katkov" i k), 1874); *The Crisis of Western Philosophy: Against the Positivists*, trans. Boris Jakim (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1996); and Vladimir S. Solov'ev, *Kritika Otvlechenykh Nachal* (Moscow: Univ. tip., 1880).

First, a secondary (or psychological) antinomy between freedom and necessity is acknowledged, yet this is still placed within a larger framework of causal monism. In contradistinction to Stammler and Struve's alleged dualistic proposals (characterized by irreconcilable antinomies such as freedom and necessity), Bulgakov insists that the idea of a strict regularity of human actions, "proclaimed by Spinoza and critically established by Kant," only "apparently" or "fictitiously" comes into conflict with psychologically perceived notions of human freedom.¹⁹ Stammler and Struve, he observes, correctly recognize this "psychological contradiction," yet they mistakenly transpose it into a logical contradiction.²⁰ This confusion, he argues, remains the "source of [their] corresponding theoretical constructions ... which desire to somehow, and at all costs, defend the freedom of human action and thereby escape from the inexorable law of causation."²¹

Bulgakov's argument is that goals and ideals, representing the noumenal pole within Stammler and Struve's constructed antinomies, "are mere motives in human consciousness and provide as such only a special kind of causation—psychological."²² This remains only an apparent contradiction for Bulgakov, for the antinomic poles under investigation have been relegated to a secondary position, unified within the larger rubric of causation. The "ideals" in question are not given by science, Bulgakov concedes, yet materialism nonetheless is said to offer the clearest explanation "of those interests and feelings which encourage [humans] to set certain ideals."²³ This is because, as Bulgakov explains, interests and feelings are entirely borrowed from one's surrounding environment, regardless of their psychological modification and combination in forming certain qualities.²⁴ On the one hand, Bulgakov's allowance of "freedom" in antinomic relation to "necessity" amounts to little more than denial by absorption, for the end result, as Bulgakov himself is not shy in noting, is that "freedom turns out to be unnecessary and superfluous."²⁵ Both are unified under the primary law (or meta-principle) of causality. On the other hand, Bulgakov does

19 Bulgakov, "Zakon prichinnosti," 36.

20 *Ibid.*, 36–37.

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Ibid.*, 39.

23 *Ibid.*, 51.

24 *Ibid.*, 50.

25 *Ibid.*

admit for the first time that those ideals noted by Stammler and Struve are not given by science ... at least not directly.²⁶

Most importantly, Kant's unity of apperception—which prohibits contradictory directions or dualistic juxtapositions between freedom and necessity—is perceived to derive from and gesture toward a more fundamental ontological unity which excludes the same contradiction. The ontological unity of materialism and the epistemological unity of Kant's apperception presuppose one another, and this conjunction is then measured against Stammler and Struve's proposals with unsurprising results. Bulgakov not only determines their notion of contradictory directions in a single consciousness yields two contradictory consciousnesses (as previously argued), but these are now described as deriving from and pointing to two irreconcilable ontological bundles or unities as well. Stammler and Struve, he charges, are ontological dualists.

The same primary–secondary-differentiating logic can be seen in Bulgakov's second emendation, which attempts to broaden understandings of history while continuing to argue for the unity of the same via notions of causality. In response to Struve's criticism of materialist understandings of history, which purportedly cannot account for human ideals and freedom, Bulgakov adds an epistemic clarifier to his previous position. He argues that the unifying logic of necessity and causality (as an *ontological* principle) becomes *epistemically* manifest *a posteriori*. “Both Stammler and Struve,” he writes, “mistakenly imagine history as being limited to a single present moment,” with the setting of goals and ideals (along with their accompanying sense of freedom) being likewise limited to the present.²⁷ Bulgakov's materialistic understanding of history, however, is “an attempt to introduce the history of humanity into the system of scientific experience.”²⁸ Viewed microscopically—and cordoned off from both the past and the future—Stammler and Struve's construal of history-as-present lends itself to the allowance of free human actions, but this is only a psychological façade, one produced by the limitations of scientific human knowledge as circumscribed within the present. On the contrary, and using the analogy of waves hitting a beach, Bulgakov insists that one cannot “doubt that each

26 Bulgakov's attempt to unify these antinomic poles within “different states of consciousness” will be abandoned shortly thereafter (cf. Sergei N. Bulgakov, “O sotsial'nom ideale,” in *Ot marksizma k idealizmu*, 291 (fn 1)). And his full capitulation to Stammler and Struve's argument that ideals are not given by science, either directly or indirectly, is fully affirmed the same year (Bulgakov, “Zadachi politicheskoi ekonomii,” 321 (fn 1); and *Ot marksizma k idealizmu*, xi).

27 Bulgakov, “Zakon prichinnosti,” 39.

28 Ibid.

individual wave hits the shore according to the laws of mechanics, although one cannot [at present] determine the regularity of each impact.”²⁹ However inadequate the analogy between human freedom and waves hitting a beach may be, Bulgakov’s point is clear: Although human actions might appear free, these are only “appearances” of freedom derived from a limited perspective, a temporal slice of history psychologically masquerading as the whole of the same. History—including individual human history³⁰— is an ontological unity (past-present-future) established by causality. Though this unity may not always be perceived by human knowledge due to its temporal limitations, it will undoubtedly be revealed as such in the future. Unbeknownst to Bulgakov, this second emendation in defense of Marx quite dramatically circumscribes the latter’s socially predictive power, a consequence Bulgakov will not fully realize until three years later.³¹

As with his 1896 interaction with Stammler, what is interesting in Bulgakov’s response to Struve is not the details of his argument in favor of social materialism but the mediating and even substantiating role Kant plays within them. In both interactions Kant emerges as the sole protagonist in this *tour de force* between friends, with Marx’s name hardly appearing at all. While acknowledging that Stammler’s teaching is also constructed in the spirit of Kant (which Bulgakov holds as “quite indisputable”) and, while acknowledging that he and Struve share a similar Kantian epistemology, Bulgakov’s main objective in these early essays is to demonstrate that both Stammler and Struve fundamentally misunderstand Kant, and that it is precisely this misunderstanding which precipitates their criticisms of Marxist materialism. The fulcrum of the debate in both instances hinges on Kant’s unity of transcendental consciousness.

In his response to Struve, Bulgakov introduces a clear distinction between hierarchical unities, that is, between primary and secondary principles:

Struve recognizes the unity of experience *while denying the unity of pure or transcendental consciousness* upon which the unity of experience, according to Kant, is grounded. But if you eliminate this unity of the pure self, on what, then, is the unity

29 Bulgakov, “Zakon prichinnosti,” 36.

30 Bulgakov is quite clear this extends all the way to the “highest products of psychic activity,” namely science and art (ibid., 37 [fn 1]).

31 This will be Bulgakov’s powerful conclusion as formulated for the first time in *Capitalism and Agriculture* (cf. *Kapitalizm i Zemledelie* [S.-Peterburg: Tipografia i litografia V. A. Tikhanova, 1900], especially 442–58).

of experience founded? ... "No knowledge can find a place in us," says Kant, "no connection and unity between its separate parts without that unity of consciousness which precedes all given views, and only in relation to them, to which every conception of objects is possible."³²

For Bulgakov, it is Kant's unity of apperception which "creates, out of all possible phenomena that can only occur side by side in experience, the unity of all these representations on the basis of laws," and this, to continue Bulgakov's argument, "eliminates the possibility that 'the unity of experience is not identical with the unity of transcendental consciousness,'" for "this latter unity is the basic and necessary condition for the unity of experience."³³ Here, a tiered, double-unity construct (e.g., primary and secondary principles) is quite discernible. While Bulgakov concedes Stammler and Struve's observed antinomy or contradiction occurs at the secondary level, he maintains that the only means of unifying the disparate, side-by-side phenomena of experience is their grounding in a more primordial principle, represented epistemologically by Kant's unity of apperception and ontologically by Marxist materialism. Despite this unity being purchased with the currency of causality, it is worth noting that Bulgakov's reading of Kant already signals a post-Kantian rupture in the vein of Fichte, Schelling, and Soloviev, all of whom read Kant's critical project as intelligible only if one presupposes a real, ontological unity undergirding it. Regardless, Stammler and Struve's fundamental problem is said to be their indiscriminate conflation of primary and secondary principles, and it is this failure, Bulgakov continues, which leads to the violation of the irreducible center of Kant's entire epistemology, the notion of the unity of apperception and/or transcendental consciousness.

Struve retaliates by charging Bulgakov with infidelity to Kant in bypassing the latter's notion of antinomy and the possibility of contradictions in pure reason. Bulgakov counters by repeating his position that the unity of experience is dependent upon the unity of transcendental consciousness, so any perceived Kantian antinomy found within pure reason, far from presupposing two different directions of consciousness, necessarily requires the unity of the same.³⁴ Struve's accusation of Bulgakov's "infidelity to Kant" is reversed as Bulgakov goes on the counter-offensive: Struve—and by extension Stammler—are the ones unfaithful to Kant:

32 Bulgakov, "Zakon prichinnosti," 41 (emphasis added).

33 Ibid., 41, 42.

34 Ibid., 42.

I [Bulgakov] spoke not of the absence of contradiction in pure reason, but of the impossibility of two contradictory directions in a single consciousness ... In this I perfectly follow Kant. Struve is wrong when he says that the theory of Stammler concerning the two directions of consciousness ... is unquestionably contained in Kant's main thought. It would be strange to suggest such a contradiction in Kant, and in fact Kant does not have it It must be recognized that Kant does not establish two directions of consciousness in the world of experience In this, Stammler does not follow Kant at all.³⁵

Within a few short years, of course, Bulgakov will cede much of the Kantian debate to Stammler and Struve (although it is important to note this derives not from their respective arguments but from Soloviev's influence). The substance of the debate, however, will remain much the same, and Bulgakov's eventual acceptance of Stammler and Struve's portrait of Kant will result not in the Kantian substantiation of either antagonist but in the extension of these same criticisms and their redeployment against Kant himself.³⁶

Bulgakov's predilection for distinguishing primary and secondary principles in circumventing criticisms against Marx, however, quickly begins unraveling his understanding of materialism itself. This is clearly seen in "Economy and Law" (1898), wherein Bulgakov tackles the thorny issue of describing the relation between economy and law, which had long preoccupied Critical Marxists.³⁷ Economic materialists, he observes, give priority of expression to economy, whereas lawyers give preponderance to law, each subordinating the other principle within itself. Moderate authors, he continues—undoubtedly alluding to both Stammler and Struve—espouse equal influence to each, constructing a dialectic or contradiction between the same.³⁸ Bulgakov's proposal, however, is to relativize and unify both antinomies within an overarching grammar of "social life."³⁹

The positive relation between "economy" and "law" remains far less important to Bulgakov than the architectonic solution he proposes, which relegates both to secondary principles sublimated within the primary principle

35 Bulgakov, "Zakon prichinnosti," 42–43.

36 The criticisms of Kantian dualism begin surfacing in 1902. See fn 12 above.

37 Bulgakov, "Khoziaistvo i Pravo," in *Ot marksizma k idealizmu*, 53–82.

38 *Ibid.*, 53 f.

39 It is perhaps worth noting that similar to the Kantian notion of the transcendental unity of apperception, the notion of "life" will eventually become one of Bulgakov's earliest conceptual identifications of Sophia (cf. Bulgakov, *Filosofia khoziaistva*, 1–48 and 109–59; *Philosophy of Economy*, 29–76 and 123–56).

of “social life.”⁴⁰ “Social life,” he writes, is “a kind of trunk from which both phenomena under study [e. g., economy and law] grow.”⁴¹ Quite importantly, however, “social life” is still characterized by causality and regularity, and—while Bulgakov’s preferred nomenclature in 1898 is clearly “social life”—he still interchanges it frequently with “social materialism.”⁴² The main development in 1898, then, is that Bulgakov’s primary-secondary scheme has now fragmented his understanding of materialism: Social materialism continues as the primary principle, yet this is maintained only by bifurcating this materialism from economic materialism, demoting the latter to a secondary principle. This is a notable departure from Bulgakov’s 1896 essay, in which social materialism, economic materialism, and historical materialism were explicitly equated with one another.⁴³

With this distinction in place, Bulgakov now charges Marx’s critics—echoing his earlier arguments against Stammer and Struve—with confusing one type of materialism for another, that is, conflating primary and secondary principles, and his deflections are quite humorous in this regard. Accusations that materialistic investigations into history are characterized by “one ‘economic’ explanation in everything ... explain[ing] the whole history by narrow, egoistic, and economic calculation” are dismissed as having “nothing to do with *social* materialism.”⁴⁴ Similarly, accusations that “materialism ... ‘reduces’ all human life to economic activity” are forthwith dismissed with the assertion that such a desire “has never existed among the *social* materialists.”⁴⁵ Thus, by 1898 Bulgakov’s defense of Marxism and materialism has clearly resulted in the relativization of economic materialism. Writing five years after the publication of “Economy and Law,” Bulgakov recounts that with its publication he “was already accused of betraying Marxism,” and he further confesses this was “unsurprising” given the nuanced version of Marxism espoused therein.⁴⁶

Bulgakov’s subsequent Marxist writings are best described as successively tumbling dominos. In 1899 the Solovievian language of “social organism” is

40 Bulgakov writes that he certainly has in mind the relation between “any other parties or ‘factors’ of social life,” not just that between “economy” and “law” (“Khoziaistvo i pravo,” 55). See also his disregard of this particular relation when setting forth his larger argument (cf. *ibid.*, 62).

41 Bulgakov, “Khoziaistvo i Pravo,” 54.

42 *Ibid.*, 62.

43 Cf. Bulgakov, “O zakonomernosti sotsial’nykh iavlenii,” 1 (footnote 2).

44 Bulgakov, “Khoziaistvo i pravo,” 64 (emphasis added).

45 *Ibid.*

46 Bulgakov, *Ot marksizma k idealizmu*, xii.

introduced alongside that of “social life” and “socialism,” and the process of disassociating these terms from “social materialism”—already begun in 1898—becomes increasingly palpable.⁴⁷ This process will culminate in 1901 (if not 1900) as Bulgakov’s defense of Marx collapses altogether. Under the influence of Soloviev, all variants of materialism are once again gathered together under the single rubric of “philosophical materialism” which is itself positioned as a secondary or—to use Soloviev’s preferred diction—an abstract principle.⁴⁸ In short, Bulgakov’s 1896 and 1897 notion of materialism as a primary principle fragments in 1898 (with social materialism and economic materialism resting on either side of the divide), and by 1900/1901 the various species of materialism are once more unified, yet now demoted to a secondary position. This movement signifies materialism’s failure—in Bulgakov’s mind—to provide the ontological unity as originally promised. It now continues only as a one-sided or abstract unity.

Capitalism and Agriculture (1900)—Bulgakov’s empirical substantiation for what he conceptually formulated in 1898—publicly announces this failure. The important development here is that Bulgakov includes Marx in his polemic for the first time, purportedly defending the truth of Marxism from the “non-Marxism” of Marx himself. The fundamental problem as identified by Bulgakov—and one which recapitulates his argument against Stammler in 1896, Struve in 1897, and Marxism’s unnamed critics in 1898—is that Marx indiscriminately conflates a secondary principle/unity with the primary principle/unity undergirding it. The result is that economic materialism (as a secondary principle) spills outside its defined boundaries and usurps what does not belong to it. This is so, Bulgakov argues, temporally/diachronically (with respect to Marx’s inability to reliably forecast the future with scientific precision) and spatially/synchronically (with respect to Marx’s inability to account for the peculiarities of economic activity in its fullness, much less all of reality).⁴⁹ All of this evidences very little philosophical development, and it is worth noting

47 Cf., Sergei N. Bulgakov, “K voprosu o kapitalisticheskoi èvoliutsii zemledeliia,” *Nachalo* I, no. 2/3 (1899): 1–21; 25–33.

48 Cf., Sergei N. Bulgakov, “Ivan Karamazov (v romane Dostoevskogo “Brat’ia Karamazovy”) kak filosofskii tip,” in *Ot marksizma k idealizmu*, 109.

49 Bulgakov is primarily concerned with the latter transgression and Marxism’s inability to account for agrarian development, yet he is also concerned with the first transgression, as his concluding sentences make clear: “Therefore, as for predictions of the future, we prefer honest ignorance to social medicine or charlatanism. The veil of the future is impenetrable. Our sun illuminates only the present, casting an indirect reflection on the past. This is enough for us ... But we gaze in vain at the horizon beyond which our

that many of the gaps in Marxist theory he identifies in *Capitalism and Agriculture* were already noted in his earliest published writing from 1895, a review of Marx's third volume of *Capital*.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, his 1900 criticism of Marx and materialism—cogently articulated here for the first time—will remain largely unchanged throughout the next decade. Once materialism (as a secondary principle) masquerades itself as a primary principle, a whole host of ethical, idealist, and religious beliefs (lying outside materialism's one-sidedness) must be uncritically presupposed by the same. Once this occurs, Bulgakov observes, following Soloviev, a malignant positivism ensues. Bulgakov's anti-Marxist writings after the turn of the century—without too much reductionism—are perhaps best described as his continued attempt at uncovering and exposing Marxism's uncritical presuppositions.

Kant and Marx are united together in Bulgakov's Critical Marxism, and as such, they fall together. And this is precisely what happens at the close of the nineteenth century as Bulgakov determines that neither Kant's transcendental unity of apperception nor Marx's materialism can provide the unified vision of reality as originally promised. Bulgakov will begin new searches for new solutions at the dawn of the new century, and he will encounter new influences in the process. But that is a subject for another story; here concludes the present one.

setting sun is sinking, lighting a new dawn for the coming, unknown day" (*Kapitalizm i zemledelie*, II, 464).

50 Bulgakov, "Tretii Tom 'Kapitala' K. Marksa," *Russkaia Mysl'* 16, no. III (1895): 1–20.