

УДК 7.01

Native Culture of the 19th – 20th Centuries in Search After Truth. Truth of Real Human Being in Vladimir Solovyov's Philosophy of the Universal Unity and Works of Art in the Russian Painting

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Received 24.02.2009, received in revised form 03.03.2009, accepted 10.03.2009

The specificities of the Russian culture of the 19th – 20th centuries are considered in the article. The authors think that the main philosophical problem of all times and nations is trustworthiness of truth for a man in all the levels of his being. The specificity of the native culture of the period is that truth, including the absolute truth, is a stem of a man's simple and real being. Vladimir Solovyov's philosophy of the Universal unity (Vseedinstvo) and works of art of the great Russian painters – «The Merchant's Wife at Tea» painted by B.M. Kustodiev, «The Great Taking the Veil» painted by M.V. Nesterov, «Phantoms» painted by V.E. Borisov-Musatov, and «The Whirlwind» painted by F.A. Malyavin – can be offered as metaphysical base of the conception. The authors consider works of fine arts to be visual philosophical texts where the painters set out their conceptions in keeping with the great philosophical discoveries characteristic of the epoch, which allows to comprehend the present reality with the means of painting.

Keywords: native philosophy, philosophy of the Universal unity (Vseedinstvo), V.S. Solovyov's conception, Russian painting, «The Merchant's Wife at Tea», «The Great Taking the Veil», «Phantoms», and «The Whirlwind» paintings

Point of view

The philosophical conception of the great Russian thinker Vladimir Sergeevich Solovyov (Fig. 1) was constructed by its author in opposition to the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, the most popular German philosopher in Russia of the end of the 19th century. Solovyov's main work «Justification of Good» is aimed against the force destroying morals, which Vladimir Solovyov apprehended in the author of the treatise «Beyond Good and Evil». But that work summing up all the searches of the thinker was preceded by a large

number of other works with the outlined general features of Solovyov's philosophical conception; the basic concepts were worked out.

The base of the constructive moral source, which Solovyov supposed that it was the ontological basis of human existence, is a natural result of the «development» (Losev, 1991). «Development» concept comes to his conception from natural sciences, to be precise, from biology he thoroughly had studied when he had been a first-year student at Moscow University. Development characterizes any

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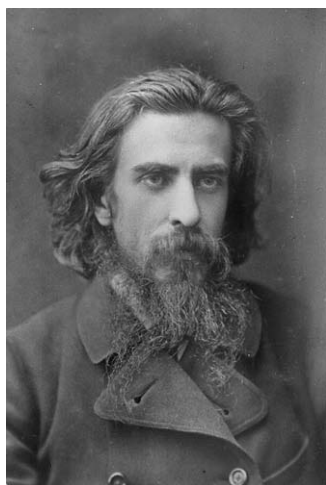


Fig. 1. Solovyov Vladimir Sergeevich (1853 – 1900)

real existence and, first of all, man's real existence, which is far from being perfect and seeks to be more perfect, «happier». Vladimir Solovyov constructs all the following logical system of the philosophy of the Universal unity (Vseedinstvo) proceeding from that simplest aspiration for happiness.

To strive for an aim means permanent motion, and development for constant immobility excludes any aim. «To be in the process of development» means: 1) being something concrete at any moment of development; 2) each level of development brings to a new quality which hasn't been before. But all the levels of development are to be present in developing being in an unbroken state from the very beginning. The mentioned signs of development turn the development into a synonym of «life», and being of every developing existent becomes being of an organism or **essence**.

Thus, the Neoplatonic concept «the World soul», comprehended in some new biological realities of the contemporary science, comes to Vladimir Solovyov's philosophy of the Universal unity (Vseedinstvo). Vladimir Solovyov repeatedly emphasized that his inner problem was justification of «the fathers' faith» at a «new level of rational consciousness», i.e. a combination of

scientific and rational «spirit of the times» with the religious tradition.

Every being as a constant development is a living organism's being. The being is universal and whole, but that wholeness is not reduced to naturalness of physics, chemistry and biology. The extremes of naturalism ignore development of spirit and spiritual wholeness. The extremes of idealism, studying only development of the Spirit, turns philosophy into a dried-up rational scheme and a system of purely logical categories, which is also powerless to cover the whole peculiarity of integral being.

In order to get over the extremes of these two types of cognition, Vladimir Solovyov brings in «mystic philosophy» concept, which he defines as follows: «The mystic philosophy's object is neither the world of phenomena reduced to our perceptions nor the world of ideas reduced to our thoughts, but and the LIVING REALITY of the existent in their INNER VITAL RELATIONS; that kind of philosophy doesn't deal with the external order of phenomena, but it deals with the inner order of essences and their lives, which is determined by their attitude towards the primary essence» (quotation from Losev, 1991, p. 72).

Thus, the term «mysticism» conceals the aspiration for the integral inclusion of all the aspects of being, which can be comprehended neither with the empirical method (perceptions) nor with the method of rational philosophy. As Aleksey Fyodorovich Losev justly remarks, Solovyov's mysticism is a system of categories of classical idealism constructed on the distinction between «existent» and «being» concepts (Losev, 1991, p.74).

The «existent» concept fixes the sign of unity. The existent is superior to any multitude. It reveals the sense of the principle «the whole is greater than the sum of its parts». If we see only the existent or the super-existent, the things

will cease differing from each other, and our real world will turn into incognizable zero, the absolute Nihilism. Therefore, besides the One Existent, it is necessary to assume an equivalent existence of multitude of things, events, and processes, i.e. distinctive and clear multitude far from being zero. For another thing, different things are gathered into relative unities and structures accessible to our comprehension. Solovyov gives a term «being» to those relative unities and real multitude. The intersection of «existent» and «being» concepts engenders the concept «essence».

The second line of the philosophical discourse is constructed from «the Absolute» concept, which takes the central place in Vladimir Solovyov's religious philosophy. The Absolute combines material and ideal realities. Logos is a display of the Absolute in the material and ideal worlds. The minimum unit of display of the Absolute as Logos is an idea.

The intersection of the two lines of concepts: 1) existent – being – essence; 2) the Absolute – Logos – idea – gives the system of categories at Vladimir Sergeevich Solovyov's philosophy of the Universal unity (Vseedinstvo).

	Existent	Essence	Being
the Absolute	the Spirit	the Good	Will
Logos	Mind	Truth	Idea
Idea	Soul	Beauty	Sense

Thus, the Good is a synthesis of Spirit and Will and it is the Absolute's essence at the same time (God the Father in the religious tradition); Truth is a synthesis of Mind and Idea and simultaneously it is the essence of Logos (God the Son in the religious tradition); Beauty is a synthesis of Soul and Sense and it is the essence of Idea at the same time (God the Holy Spirit in the religious tradition).

Thus, the idea of truth in Solovyov's philosophy takes the second place, not the first one. Truth is a second stage of the Good's

emanation. Truth is not the Absolute's display in the Being, but its reflection in Mind and Idea.

Vladimir Solovyov makes theoretical philosophy as expression of truth dependent on practical (moral) philosophy in accordance with that conceptual line (Solovyov, 1988, Vol. 2., p. 321). There is a need of theoretical philosophy until the Good in the social reality comes true. The theoretical philosophy is also needed because the social reality does not present the WHOLE reality and it does not include the reality of due («the things that SHOULD be») and the reality of future.

Solovyov defines truth explicitly and categorically clear: «the Existent, the One and all or the Universal Unity (Vseedinstvo) as Existing». «With the Existent predicate taken away, truth turns into an idle subjective idea, which doesn't correspond with anything real; if truth is not the existent, then it becomes fiction and, thus, ceases to be truth. With the predicate «the one» taken away, truth loses its identity and it is destroyed by disintegrating in its inner contradiction. And if we finally take the «all» predicate away, we'll deprive truth of its real content: like the only One deprived of everything, truth will be such a poor principle, from which nothing can be deduced and explained, while the concept of truth has a demand that everything should be deduced from truth and explained, for truth is the truth of everything, and if it had everything outside itself, it would be nihilism» (ibidem, p. 693).

Vladimir Solovyov finds shades of meaning of the difference between the «existent» and «being» concepts in connection with the search after the absolute truth. At first, he defines «being» as the basic element of philosophy: what the real truth is in contrast to the illusory or ephemeral one. It is found out that «being» conception is not of one meaning. «In fact, «being» has two quite different senses, and if one is distracted from that

difference, then every definite sense is lost, the only word is left» (ibidem, p. 698).

The first sense of «being» concept appears when one says «I am», «this essence exists», i.e. when one speaks of essence's being, the being is comprehended as a predicate of some subject. In the second case it is said «This is red», «that is such-and-such a thought», and «there is such a feeling». Here the mentioned thing is a predicate only of the feeling and thinking subject and, consequently, it is not a being as an irrelative predicate. The statements of the second kind in their unconditioned form are false: «One cannot say in a simple or unconditional way: will exists, idea exists, and being exists, for will, idea and being exist only because there is a willing and thinking subject» (ibidem, p. 699-700).

Consequently, a real subject of philosophy and any other knowledge is the existent in its predicates, but not those predicates abstractly taken. The object of philosophy is something to which the being belongs, something expressed in that being, and that subject to which those predicates have a relation. If philosophy has true KNOWLEDGE as its object, but not BEING IN GENERAL, then its true object is «something to which the being always belongs, i.e. the absolute-existent, the existent as the absolute source of any being» (ibidem, p. 700).

The absolute-existent is an absolute primary source bearing positive power of any being. That's why it can be called «super-existent». It is to be cognized through all of its displays, but, while being everything, it is not identical with that everything differing from it as its base and originative source.

The absolute primary source acts through Love. Only love has both self-denial and self-affirmation at the same time. Due to love, the absolute source exists in itself and in accordance with the relative source, without which it also couldn't be. «Thus, when we say that the absolute

primary source in its nature is a unity of itself and its denial, we repeat the great apostle's word, but in a more abstract form: God is Love» (ibidem, p. 705).

Love is a source of plurality while the Absolute source is the Absolute unity. The absolute source in its eternity is divided by Love into two poles, two centres. The first centre is a centre of unity, the absolute unity, and freedom from any forms, from any being. The second centre is creative energy of being and multitude of forms. According to the classical tradition, that second centre of the Absolute is called PRIMARY SUBSTANCE as the Absolute's essence and spontaneous potency of being by Vladimir Solovyov. The substance is a concept of philosophy, but not that one of chemistry or physics. The primary substance is not connected with material and any quantitative or qualitative relation. It has an inner and subjective nature of desire and aspiration for being. The language demonstrates it: «substantial incentives», «substantial mind», «substantial inclinations», etc.

The two centres of the Absolute cannot exist without each other. A MAN is an identity of the two dialectic sources of the Absolute. If West European philosophy comes to philosophical anthropology through philosophical reflection on the acts of thinking self-position and constructs anthropology by solution of the problem of true human being, then Vladimir Solovyov's way is quite different. At first, he comes from truth as an object of philosophy to the true being (God) as the base of truth and then to the being of a human as a bearer of the true being. And a human being as the «SECOND ABSOLUTE» and a necessary form of the World soul always and indispensably has true being. For another thing, the human reality is a dialectical identity of the reality, which has happened («Sophia», divine wisdom), and the reality happening now («a human being in his concrete history»).

The doctrine of human being as the second Absolute brings Vladimir Solovyov out of the bounds of Neo-Platonism. The Neoplatonic base of his philosophy is well-known and, on the whole, it is on the surface: it is a modification of Plotin's famous triad «the One – the Spirit – the Soul», which takes the form of the triads «Existent – Being – Essence», «the Absolute – Logos – Idea» and others in Vladimir Solovyov's philosophy. But Neo-Platonism couldn't have the doctrine of a human being as the second Absolute and the Godmankind, which became a cornerstone in Vladimir Solovyov's philosophy (especially in the work «Readings of the Godmankind»).

Thus, a human being is a dialectic identity of the two sources in Vladimir Solovyov's conception: «if the first source IS the Universal unity, then the second source BECOMES the universal unity; and if the first source always possesses the universal unity, then the second source progressively takes it and, thus, merges with the first source» (Solovyov, 1988, Vol. 1, p. 711). «The second Absolute» is defined as an indispensable base for the modifying and mobile world: «That essence, by which many things, particularity and untruth can really exist, where the existing divinity has a real object distinct from it and, as a result, can be something permanently real in its absoluteness, – that essence, which thus lays down a mutual condition both for the reality of the world of the divine universal unity and the world of material plurality, that essence is in ourselves» (ibidem, p. 712-713).

Solovyov distinguishes three basic elements, three sources in a human being as the second Absolute, the duality of which becomes apparent in each of them. The first source of the human being is connected with the fact that a man is an existing and absolute subject of ALL his actions and states. The second source consists of the fact that it is a qualitatively definite existent, it has characteristics or a quality, with which

THAT CONCRETE subject is distinguished from the others. The second source is an idea of human being, and a man only through this idea, combined with the others, is represented as the Universal unity, for the idea of him is positively made up with the all others, and it is a form of the absolute content. Though that very idea gives a possibility of its affirmation outside of everything as everything is outside, «and then its special quality makes it absolutely impenetrable for all the others and makes it an unconditional bound of everything, and as every creature has its own idea or peculiarity, everything is the same border for all things in that external relation, everything is absolutely impenetrable and, thus, instead of the inner positive unity, the interrelations of all things represent the external negative identity» (ibidem, p. 716).

That mentioned source of a human being is empirical reality or a natural material source of his being. That reality only little by little becomes the one, and a man returns to the Universal unity from his «normal» (non-absolute) state and becomes the absolute out of himself freely and consciously.

Three sources of being determine the two kinds of human being: 1) THE ABSOLUTE – what that subject becomes; 2) NON-ABSOLUTE – what he comes from.

Hence two relatively contrary kinds of order of human being follow: 1) metaphysical and logical order where the absolute takes the first place; 2) genetic or phenomenal order, according to the nature of which the NON-ABSOLUTE, untrue, plural and particular are primary things. The primacy of one order is the last thing for the other. For all that, the genetic order, where the Absolute is only formed, presupposes the metaphysical order where the Absolute exists.

The necessity of the absolutely true being as the base of human being reveals itself in the cognitive process. The problem of truth as a

problem of criterion of our knowledge appears only in the human reality, which is complete neither from the temporal point of view (it doesn't include future) nor from the point of view of completeness of the content (it doesn't contain the perfect good). There is no point of speaking of truth from the point of view of the Absolute, for Will, Idea, Sense, Soul, the Spirit, Mind, Truth, Beauty, and the Good coincide in the Absolute.

What is the form of the human reality where the primary truth is realized? That form is Sophia (Fig. 2. 3. 4), the great image-and-symbol of Vladimir Solovyov and the whole Russian culture of the first third of the 20th century. The very use of the aesthetic image-and-symbol discovers the character of Vladimir Solovyov's philosophy. Sophia is not a rational concept, but a mythological one. The origin of this mythological concept is also clear – it's the Old Testament Biblical text «The Book of Proverbs». The mythological concept's content is wisdom. Sophia tells about herself in the Bible: «The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old... I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning of his way, or ever the earth was... When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: Then I was by him, as one brought up with him...» (in the Russian translation: «... then I was an ARTIST by Him») (Chapter 8: 22-23; 27-30).

The existence of the world as a permanent creation of a work of art was reflected more than once by Plato, Plotin, Dionysus Areopagite, and much later by F.W.J. Schelling and F. Nietzsche in history of philosophy. Vladimir Solovyov's innovation consists of the fact that he brings in

a concrete image of ARTIST, and not that one of God, but quite different. The content of Sophia is to be a border between the positive Nihilism of the Absolute's world and the concrete plurality of the world of human reality.

Sophia is a total creative energy, which combines a real creative work (including the artificial creative work) and the aim embodied in the real creative work.

Solovyov solves the poignant problem of theodicy in religious philosophy by bringing in the image of Sophia – justification of God for the existence of the evil in the world. Sophia is not the only creative energy and the aim of creative work, but it is also an ideal world, what it should be according to its supreme purport, the world of God's conception. The human creative work gets its energy by joining to the world of Sophia, which is destined for giving it away. Sophia gets its energy from God and gives it to the created world, therefore the other mythological concept of Vladimir Solovyov's philosophy, which has fundamental importance for the Russian Silver Age, is the Eternal Fecundity, having given that century multivarious impulses for the cultural development.

In this context, truth is a coincidence of human creative work with Sophia and realization of aspiration for the perfect Good in all its displays – logical, ethical and artificial ones in human creative work. A cognizing subject is in his inner connections with the world owing to the being rooted state in the Absolute as the Universal unity.

The comprehension of philosophy as WHOLE KNOWLEDGE, as a matter of life and not that one of school becomes stronger in the Russian tradition starting with Vladimir Solovyov. Abstract knowledge is necessary as for any man so for the whole mankind – it is impossible to achieve logical lucidity and systematic character of thinking. But



Fig. 2. Sophia



Fig. 3. Sophia



Fig. 4. Sophia

its transformation into some principle and absolutization brings philosophy to a deadlock. That's why Vladimir Solovyov criticizes G.W.F. Hegel's philosophical system as the end of New-European idealism. Solovyov says that, in Hegel's view, all the philosophical concepts are self-development of the Absolute Nihilism. While to the great Russian thinker a philosophical idea is a form of whole truth given in the intellectual contemplation identical with the artistic content of an artist. «Undoubtedly, the ideal intuition's existence is always proved by the fact of artistic creative work... Those, who have any idea of the process of creative work, know very well that artistic ideas and images are not complex products of observation and reflection, but they come to the inner eye in their inner wholeness all at once, and an artist's work is reduced to their development and embodiment into material details» (quotation: Davydov, 1988, p. 53).

Undoubtedly, we have another tradition coming from F.W.J. Schelling's philosophy of identity of intellectual intuition and creative work. But, in contrast to the philosophy of I. Kant and F.W.J. Schelling, Vladimir Solovyov's philosophy states that the very creativity is not a product of ability for imagination, but a product of inspiration combining three different abilities: ability for imagination supposing subject's certain activity, and at the same time it doesn't reach that level of reality as the object of mind (practical mind in the first place); intellectual intuition as the supreme form of mind revealing the eternal truths or ideas; the ability for breakthrough in the transcendental world, which can be achieved neither by imagination nor even by mind.

Thus, truth in Vladimir Solovyov's philosophy is a form of whole knowledge dialectically taking off the contrasts of naturalism and rationalism in itself.

This conception had a considerable influence on the Russian art of the 19th – 20th centuries. It is reflected in a large number of aesthetic Utopias characteristic of the Russian culture of that time and proceeding from the principle of the world's change by the way of aesthetic transformation. The creators of that epoch conceive a work of art as the only true form of embodiment of whole knowledge of the artist and, therefore, able to transform the world external to the artist and the human Universe according to God's conception of it.

Thus, Vladimir Solovyov's philosophical point of view is divided into many examples characteristic of history of the native artistic culture, which follows after his lifetime (like Friedrich Nietzsche, Vladimir Solovyov died in 1900). Those examples are to be considered in the next part of this article.

Example

Dichotomies in interpretation of the image of woman in Russian culture in the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th centuries

The variety of woman's images represented in the pieces of painting in the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th centuries discovers the whole plenitude of Sophia's many-sidedness. The divine artist appears to be a border between the plurality embodied in the diversity of the World and the Absolute's Positive Nihilism. Representation of different measures of correlation between carnal and spiritual sources of female characters of the Russian painting conveys the frontier nature of Sophia's position, combination of maximal spirituality and utmost embodiment, and displaying of one source through the other.

«The Merchant's Wife at Tea» (1918, canvas, oil. 120cm x 120cm) painted by B.M. Kustodiev (Fig. 5) is an example of visualization of

correlation of carnal and spiritual sources where the former prevails over the latter.

The painting represents a fleshy woman, a portly merchant's wife on the balcony at tea-time against a background of a town.

There are some signs pointing out the spiritual and carnal sources. These are the signs revealing the spiritual source in the painting: the space of the sky and churches. The signs pointing at the carnal source: the fleshy and portly Merchant's Wife, a table lavishly set, a caracoling horse under the balcony.

The disposition of painted signs in the painting allows to observe the construction of consecutive movement from the heart of pictorial space towards a spectator: from the sky to the churches, then to the space of the balcony, and to the well-dressed, richly-dressed Merchant's Wife, and to the richly-laid table. Thus, an emanation is represented, the layers' movement is from the depth to the surface, from inside to outside.

The given representation can be characterized with the following notions: abundance, solidity, wealth, good quality, and prosperity. The painting visualizes the earthly wealth given to a human being by God. And the Merchant's Wife is in the centre of that wealth and she appears to be endowed with God's mercy.

The portrayal of the Merchant's Wife has something in common with the saucer in her hand: the outline of the saucer is correlated with the contour of her low-necked dress. Therefore, the very Merchant's Wife is represented as some cup or vessel receiving its filling.

What can that filling be? Two ways determining the essence of filling of the Merchant's Wife as «vessel» can be represented in the painting.

In the first place, the blueness of the sky and roofs of the churches correlates with the colour of the head-dress and eyes of the Merchant's Wife, and with the colour of the saucer's inner side.



Fig. 5. Kustodiev Boris Michaylovich «The Merchant's Wife at Tea» (1918, canvas, oil, 120x120)

The eyes as a reflection of a soul reveal the inner filling of the Merchant's Wife and her connection with the blueness of the sky. Thus, the Merchant's Wife is presented to be filled with celestial, divine and spiritual source.

In the second place, the Merchant's Wife is represented at her tea-time; there are apples, grapes, a water-melon, jam, honey, and buns in front of her on the table. That is all the nature gives to a man for his satiety and life. In that case, the dishes on the table appear to be the gifts of Nature and *God* to a man. Thus, the Merchant's Wife accepts the divine source by partaking of those gifts.

Except for the plentiful supply of food on the table, a casket covered with a diaper cloth is presented in front of the Merchant's Wife. The very casket as a separate sign-and-index points at some treasures, wealth, and gifts. There is a sum of signs: the casket and the diaper cloth – the

covered casket – a sign of concealment, reticence, some sacrament.

It turns out to be the following after synthesizing the casket's meaning with the meanings of the other things of the sill life: there is a representation of the sacrament of accepting of *God's* gifts presented as fruits, bread and grapes in particular – the Sacrament's symbols. Therefore, the tea-drinking process as taking food transfigures into the Sacrament – accepting the divine source.

Such a specific feature of the work of art should be noted: the Merchant's Wife is represented sitting at the table at tea-time, but her gaze is turned to the spectator's space, out of the painting's frames. There is also the table coming to the spectator's space and an apple rolling out to a spectator and suggesting that he should join to the tea-party, take the Sacrament, accept the divine gifts and be filled with spirituality through them.

It is possible that we should draw the following general conclusion: the work of art «The Merchant's Wife at Tea» represents a Merchant's Wife *divitem* (Lat.), who has a healthy body and splendid flesh. In that case, «*dives*» (Lat.) is to be conceived as endowed by Divinity, and the abundance is God's gift. Hence it follows that there is a representation of wealth (*divitiarum*) – the magnificent and solid house, the smart dress, the table lavishly set (and the very body of the Merchant's Wife) conceived as God's gift – that representation reveals itself as a form taken by the eternal Absolute source in the process of emanation. The representation of the earthly and carnal source appears to be an expression of the divine and spiritual source.

Actually, the represented tea-drinking is a process of satiation of flesh, but conceived as acceptance of the divine gifts endowed by God, transfigures into the Sacrament – acceptance of the divine source, filling of flesh with spirituality. Thus, flesh is represented as a sign of the spiritual source.

The Merchant's Wife is one of those separate plural and various forms, into which the One Absolute is emanated. The image of the Merchant's Wife visualizes such a correlation of carnal and spiritual sources, where the carnal source prevails, but it is an expression of the spiritual source at the same time.

The piece of art «The Merchant's Wife at Tea» painted by B.M. Kustodiev represents embodiment of the spiritual source visualizing one of the contradictions harmoniously combined in Sophia.

Like B.M. Kustodiev's «The Merchant's Wife at Tea», the work of art «The Great Taking the Veil» (1898, canvas, oil. 178 x 195) painted by M.V. Nesterov (Fig. 6) is an example of representation of predominance of the carnal source over the spiritual one. But there is a visualization of correlation between the carnal

and spiritual sources of quite another character in the painting «The Great Taking the Veil».

A solemn procession of women of different ages is represented in the work of art «The Great Taking the Veil»: young girls going to the ceremony of taking the veil and nuns of elder age accompanying them are depicted.

Taking the Veil is a rite of taking the monastic vows expressed in cutting off hair on the top of the head crosswise as a sign of devotion oneself to Christ and conversion into a servant of God. That rite's essence is denial of one's self-affirmation, earthly weaknesses, all the mundane affairs, and devotion oneself to God. A mundane man transfigures into a monk striving for subjection of his flesh to the Spirit and his Spirit to Christ.

Taking the Veil is a rite of consecration, which is carried out for those, who are completely ready to devote themselves to God and refuse the mundane life for ascetic deeds in order the spiritual source would prevail over the carnal source.

The main motif of the painting «The Great Taking the Veil» is a theme of procession, motion, departure, and a way. According to the plot, the scene is presented as a ceremonial appearance and procession of the women accompanying the young girls to the Taking the Veil rite.

The represented theme as a fixation of some model of relation of finite and infinite visualizes the Absolute's motion, coming out and emanation.

It is developed by the signs of the work of art. There is a blooming pussy-willow branch in the foreground. According to the Russian Orthodox tradition, pussy-willow is a symbol of the palm branches laid under Christ's feet when he was entering Jerusalem. Christ came to Jerusalem though he knew that people sought for his death there, for the death of his body. Jesus Christ is an example and ideal of harmonious combination of the divine and human, carnal and spiritual



Fig. 6. Nesterov Mikhail Vasilyevich «The Great Taking the Veil» (1898, canvas, oil, 178x195)

sources. Although while his entering Jerusalem, he has the spiritual source prevailing – he went to meet his death of his own free will; and that was the death of flesh for the sake of the Spirit's victory. That is also a moment of revelation of submission to God's will, acceptance and precise following to the dictate directions.

The girl going to the rite of taking the veil, listening to the dictate directions of the Absolute source and carrying them out is ready to renounce the earthly blessing, all the mundane and carnal things. As a matter of fact, she «goes to meet her death» of her own will for the sake of spirituality's victory.

Hence a specificity of correlation between the carnal and spiritual sources visualized in the painting «The Great Taking the Veil» is displayed by drawing a parallel with Christ's entrance to Jerusalem. The represented moment shows

prevalence of the spiritual source over the carnal one in the depicted women's characters and, in the first place, in those ones of the girls going to the rite of taking the veil.

The represented girls can be compared with the thin and slim young birches. There is also a possibility to draw an analogy with the women and the wood as many elderly trees. Thus, there is a following correlation: the girls and the women, the young birches and the wood. As a matter of fact, the young saplings mean the process of wood's renewal, continuation of its life and preservation. The young girls are the same continuation and form of preservation of the women of elder age: the monastic traditions are given to the girls and, thus, they are saved. That's why taking the veil is a «great» rite, for there is a great importance of that event for conservation of the tradition and continuity of monasticism.

Monasticism in the Orthodox tradition is comprehended as something that brings divine light to the world and to all people living on earth. The wax candles in the girls' hands are a sign of that divine light, which comes to the world through them. The girls also seem to be like candles, all their lives are to be consecrated to giving the light to others and bringing God's grace to the world. The girls' inner light of spirituality is visualized in the flame of the candles in their hands. The girls as receptacles of the divine light appear to be Church – «the house of God on Earth», the place of meeting and connection of the divine and human sources.

Like birches, the girls unite the earth and divine worlds: their roots are in the earth and the branches extend themselves to the sky. Descending motion from the sky down the slopes of the mountains and roofs of the churches and cells to the hermitage's dwellers and further through them to the whole earth is visualized in the work of art.

M.V. Nesterov's painting «The Great Taking the Veil» reveals Sophia's nature as a mediator bringing the divine energy to the World through the correlation of the carnal and spiritual sources represented in the women's characters.

On the one hand, the very women's characters represented in the painting appears to be mediators bringing the divine light to the world, i.e. they make their way to the finite world. But on the other hand, they are maximally turned to the Absolute, and they approximate to the Absolute as much as possible for a human being. There is a representation of women and girls in their flesh and blood but they are maximally filled with spirituality, and their flesh is subjected to the spiritual source.

The women's characters of «The Great Taking the Veil» demonstrate a correlation of the carnal and spiritual sources, where spirituality predominates over flesh.

The work of art visualizes the Absolute's appearance and aspiration of the infinite source for its embodiment in the world of the finite source, for finding its bounds, and incarnation of the spiritual source in flesh. But, at the same time, there is a *prevalence of the spiritual source over the carnal source*, and it is conveyed in such a way: there is a representation of maximum display of the Absolute in the work of art. The finite form is filled with spirituality so much that its own boundaries and frames become small. The Absolute source has received its maximum display in the finite form, and the carnal nature is maximally filled with spirituality.

Thus, M.V. Nesterov's painting «The Great Taking the Veil» «de-picts» an emanative motion – display of the Divine nature in the variety of forms of the earthly world, having approached its limit, the bifurcation point – turning of the emanative motion into its contrast, immanative motion, into interrelation of the carnal and spiritual sources and a necessity of one of them for another as the determinative condition of their own existence.

«Phantoms» (1903, canvas, tempera. 117x144,5) painted by V.E. Borisov-Musatov (Fig. 7) is an example of visualization of the spiritual source's prevalence over the carnal source.

The painting represents a young girl strolling not far from the estate in the autumn park.

The distribution of light and dark colours relatively allows to divide the picture in two spaces: the space of the earth and that one of the heaven; the earth is represented as something darker, and the heaven, accordingly, is something much lighter.

The staircase leading from the park to the house is a connecting link with the frontier space. The image of staircase combines the signs of earth and heaven – light and dark colours: dark stairs and light railings. The ascending wave of railings smoothly turns into the representation of



Fig. 7. Borisov-Musatov Victor Elpidiphorovich «Phantoms» (1903, canvas, tempera, 117x144,5)

the building's columns ascending further to the dome with a spire melting in the sky.

The tree painted in the left part of the picture is also a link connecting the spaces of earth and sky. The tree's roots are in the earth, but its branches are painted as though stretching to the sky. The massive curved tree's trunk transforms into its branches gradually getting thinner, and, consequently, there is a visualization of dissolution of mass, form and bodies as there is ascension and approach to the heavens – the sign of divinity.

The main heroine is represented in such a way that a greater part of her is in the space of earth, but this personage shows her craving for penetrating into the space of heavens: aspiration for moving upwards is disclosed in the girl's S-shaped posture, the manner she holds her hands hidden under the clothes, which is possible to compare with the folded wings that are about to unfold and make a flight.

The clothes and space of the sky are correlates with each other in colours – the girl is

like a cloud, and she doesn't stroll, but she glides and smoothly rises up to the sky.

The conditional character of the image of the girl, her figure, features of her face, hair-do – her body as a whole is an evidence of unimportance of all these things. And as the carnal source is of minimal importance, consequently, the other component, spirituality, is accentuated in the girl's image.

The fragment of cloth in the left part of the picture can be interpreted as a sigh of external appearance, form, and body disappearing, melting and fading away, from which the girl's soul frees itself filled with spirituality and directed to the Absolute Spirit. So the main heroine's image is a sign of only the spiritual nature of the girl becoming free from flesh and losing distinctness and definiteness of the form stipulated by the frames of flesh.

On the whole, the girl's image can be characterized with such notions as ephemeral being, illusiveness, lightness, mystique, and unreality. The synthesis of meanings of these

notions and consideration of the girl's image in the sum with the fragment of cloth represented in the left part of the painting's space allow to conclude – there is a representation of the girl's *soul* in the painting.

As far as the soul is a new quality formed in the relation of the Spirit and flesh, then, as a consequence, it has features of the both «parents». Hence, the soul's image takes the form of flesh in the painting.

The work of art is named «Phantoms». A phantom is a notion pointing at display of something unrevealed, unreal, ephemeral, and illusive; a phantom is often a display of some event of the past, it's a restless soul. A phantom is a sign of past, some memory.

And there appears a question: what memory is represented in «Phantoms» of V.E. Borisov-Musatov? What makes the soul be uneasy? And what makes impossible to find its peace?

If the girl's image is to be interpreted as a sign of soul, then the following answer to the raised questions is formed.

Like flesh, a soul is a framing of the Spirit. On the one hand, a soul is connected with some concrete flesh and displays itself or becomes existent only being joint with flesh. On the other hand, a soul doesn't lose its connection with the Spirit. Only soul of a finite human being keeps its memory of the original harmonious state before incarnation and being in the infinite. Having a memory of its belonging to the Eternity, a soul seeks to restore its relation with the Absolute Spirit.

Hence, a soul seeks to be reunited with the Spirit. But it's possible only in the case of rupture between a soul and flesh, and achievement of the spiritual sphere is possible by dissolution of flesh.

As a result, V.E. Borisov-Musatov's piece of art «Phantoms» represents a ghost looking for its peace – it's a *soul* of a girl becoming free from

flesh and making its way to the Spirit as its source and origin. In that case, a phantom is a soul, which almost left its body, and it seeks to find peace in unity with the Absolute Spirit.

The depicted woman's personage represents such a correlation of the carnal and spiritual sources, where the spiritual sphere predominates. In that case, the woman's image as a visualization of the eternal femality reveals Sophia's mediatory function. Sophia, as a guide of a finite human being to the sphere of infinite, shows the way making the enthusiastic aspiration of finite being be realized, get rid from its limited nature and achieve the unity with the infinite.

F.A. Malyavin's piece of art «The Whirlwind» (1906, canvas, oil, 223x410) (Fig. 8) also visualizes prevalence of the spiritual source over the carnal one, but the women's images of this painting suggest entirely contrary way directing a finite human being to the divine energy.

Peasant girls seized by motion of a rapid dance are represented in the piece of art «The Whirlwind».

The representation of the girls brightly displays the carnal source; the warm of flesh and its vital power are expressed by volume, vividness and richness of colours. There is a representation of the personages full of health, sunburnt, rosy, merry, and active.

Bright and variegated dresses with fluffy skirts, splendid shawls and beads are the attributes showing the national features in the girls' images and emphasizing not everyday and ordinary, but festival character of the represented scene.

The girls are painted in complicated foreshortenings with expressive gestures of their hands visualizing an active motion; the fluttering dresses accentuate rapidity of that motion. Pulsation of colours fixes a certain rhythm of the motion. The red colour spread on the whole painting is to intensify the expression of action, activity, passion, and unrestraint.



Fig. 8. Malyavin Philip Andreyevich «The Whirlwind» (1906, canvas, oil, 223x410)

As a result, the rapid and active motion represented in the piece of art can be defined with such a notion as *dance*.

A dance is a system of some regulated actions, which are to express something. In the folk Russian tradition preserving the features of heathenism as indigenous Russian religiosity, a dance is a rite, and its carrying out is directed to realization of a human being's aspiration for restoration of the relation with the Absolute source.

On the one hand, the whirlwind expressed through the wild character of colours and complication of foreshortenings and gestures can be comprehended as an instant rush of the wind, which flapped the heroines' skirts and inflated the sleeves of their dresses. The «whirlwind» can also be considered as something more generalized – as the eternal element, powerful energy of nature.

A whirlwind is a storm and dynamic rapid and unrestrained dance as display of elemental force in a man; the girls are in ecstatic rush bringing them out of the everyday life and breaking them away from the profane state.

Thus, the dance visualized in the painting «The Whirlwind» reveals the enthusiastic

aspiration of the finite source for breaking out the limits of its own finiteness in order to achieve the unity with the infinite.

The rapid rhythm of the dance entirely seizes the girls and, like a whirlwind, raises them out of the limits of definiteness and finiteness. The personages' big figures, formed by the wild motion of bright colours overflowing the whole surface of the canvas, break out the frames of the painting and limited space, too narrow for them in their rushing motion.

Like bacchantes seek to reach the limits in unrestrained ritual actions of Dionysian mysteries, the dancing girls seek to the brink of the carnal source in order to overcome it and break out to the space of the Spirit, to tear and overwhelm flesh for the sake of the Spirit's victory.

Thus, F.A. Malyavin's piece of art «The Whirlwind» represents women's characters expressing the wild nature of the element and wild display of the carnal source reaching ecstasy. At the same time, the aim of such «whirlwind of flesh» is transformation into its contrast – that is the victory of spirituality. The piece of art visualizes the enthusiastic aspiration for reaching the limit of the carnal and finite source and break out to the space of the infinite Spirit.

Conclusion

The image of femality in the Russian painting of the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries has a large variety of its aspects – starting with the images maximally expressing the victory of flesh and the earthly nature of the Eternal femality, and to the images maximally expressing the aspiration for freedom from flesh for the sake of the victory of the Spirit, Sophia's unity with Divinity.

The women's images in the paintings reveal the dichotomy of Sophia as Divine artist – that is embodiment of the Spirit and spiritualizing of flesh.

On the one hand, the women's personages are depicted as expression of the way of the Spirit's motion to flesh when the **maximum display of spirituality** brings to the Spirit's embodiment in the end and turns to be a prevalence of the carnal source and **victory of flesh**.

On the other hand, the women's images are represented as expression of the contrary way of motion of flesh to the Spirit when the **maximum display of the carnal source** brings to rupture with flesh and turns into a predominance of the Spirit and **victory of the Spirit**.

The mutual necessity of the contrary notions, excluding each other, is a necessity of the carnal and spiritual sources as the determinative condition of their existence.

On the one hand, the spiritual source has a possibility to display itself only through the carnal source while the carnal source is subjected by the spiritual source. On the other hand, the carnal source is able to exist only in the aspiration for spirituality, and, at the same time, the carnal source seeks to dominate over the spiritual source.

These contradictions and mutual craving of the spiritual and carnal sources for each other predetermine Sophia's being as being of the Eternal femality in dialectic interrelation of the carnal and spiritual sources.

The variety of the image of woman is represented in all its magnificence in the painting of the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. The whole contradictoriness of the image of woman, combination of uncombined things – the Mother of God and fatal woman, a close earthly and fleshy beauty and a distant mysterious stranger, the Soul of the World, – are expressed in the pieces of painting. All that splendid variety of the women depicted in the paintings maximally expresses Sophia's contradictoriness and suggests a human being the only comfortable way eliminating the experience of tragedies and breaking of hopes, the way which brings to comprehension of Truth.

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