

PHILOSOPHY OF ECONOMY

The World as Household

SERGEI BULGAKOV

Translated, Edited, and with an Introduction by Catherine Evtuhov

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Introduction

CATHERINE EVTUHOV

The end of a century and the beginning of a new one can be a moment of self-consciousness, when people pause in their usual activities to reflect on the direction of their civilization and to wonder what the future might hold. The cities of Europe—from Paris to St. Petersburg, from Berlin and Vienna to Moscow and Kiev—became consumed, in the final years of the nineteenth century, by a passion for introspection and experimentation, by a rejection of old moral norms and a taste for the good life, by a joyful creative energy and a worldly decadence. In Russia the twentieth century was ushered in by a whirlwind of creative activity, a veritable explosion in all spheres of cultural and artistic life from literature, painting, and music to theater and ballet. This movement—the “Silver Age” of Russian culture—was accompanied by an equally intense philosophical search.¹ It was a moment when thinkers and writers reflected on, questioned, and tried to formulate the bases on which their society rested.

Sergei Bulgakov (1871–1944) was one of the major figures of the Silver Age. His complicated and broken intellectual path is symptomatic of the turbulent and wide-ranging spiritual quest of the early twentieth century. A prominent Marxist intellectual in the 1890s (among those known as “legal Marxists”), he was at the forefront of the intelligentsia’s rejection of Marxism and turn to Christianity in the 1900s and 1910s. Author of the leading articles in the seminal publications *Problemy idealizma*

[Problems of idealism] (1902) and the famous *Vekhi* [Landmarks] (1909), Bulgakov also played an important role in the Union of Liberation and in the revolution of 1905. As economist, philosopher, publicist, politician (delegate to the Second Duma), editor, founder of a Christian Socialist party, member of the Moscow Religious-Philosophical Society, and eventually delegate to the 1917 All-Russian Council of the Orthodox Church, Bulgakov combined a deeply serious academic life with equally serious political activity. He was also a close friend and collaborator of such figures as Nikolai Berdiaev and Pavel Florensky, who have since become more familiar in the West. Bulgakov was among the prominent intellectuals exiled from the Soviet Union at the end of 1922; during his “second life” in Paris he became, arguably, the twentieth century’s foremost Orthodox theologian.

Philosophy of Economy (1912) is a work of social theory. On the simplest level it is Bulgakov’s rejection of Marxism. In his youth Bulgakov had reveled in the iron laws of historical materialism, finding pleasure and indeed exaltation in the sense of his own insignificance vis-à-vis the forward march of history, but by 1900, Marxism’s subjugation of individual well-being in the present for the sake of a shining future seemed to him bothersome. Thus *Philosophy of Economy* was also an attempt to formulate an alternative philosophy that preserved what Bulgakov considered Marxism’s main insights yet eliminated its disregard for individual human dignity. In the politics of the 1905 revolution, Bulgakov’s position was easily identifiable as classic liberalism: he advocated freedom of conscience, freedom of speech (glasnost’), national self-determination, the rule of law, a constitution, and the abolition of autocracy. Yet the difficulties of implementing these conditions on Russian soil led Bulgakov, as well as contemporaries such as Semën Frank, Bogdan Kistiakovskiy, Mikhail Gershenzon, Sergei Trubetskoy,

and others, to a deeper articulation of the philosophical and spiritual principles that underlay his quest for a society ordered according to just and legal norms.² *Philosophy of Economy* was the fruit of these searchings.

SERGEI BULGAKOV: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sergei Bulgakov was born in the small town of Livny in Orel province, to a mother of noble background and a father whose family had been provincial priests for six generations. Like many members of his generation, he was to retain a sense of his original social identity in the provincial “middle intelligentsia” even after he became a prominent representative of the rarefied urban elite. An intensely religious and church-oriented childhood was followed by a loss of faith at the age of fourteen or fifteen, partly under the influence of German philosophy. In this respect, Bulgakov’s biography reiterates the trajectory of the preceding generation of radical intelligentsia—Dobroliubov, Chernyshevsky, Shchapov were all seminarians from clerical families who rejected their childhood faith in favor of radical politics. Bulgakov left the seminary and entered the secular *gimnaziia* in nearby Elets.

During his years at Moscow University in the 1890s, Bulgakov established his reputation as one of Russia’s leading Marxist intellectuals. A student of the famous economist, statistician, and teacher Alexander Chuprov, Bulgakov was graduated in 1894 and immediately began teaching statistics and political economy at the Moscow Technical Institute; he also began a publicistic career with reviews and articles in left-leaning “thick journals”—*Mir Bozhii* [The world of God], *Novoe slovo* [The new word], and others. *O rynkakh pri kapitalisticheskom proizvodstve* [On markets in capitalist conditions of production], published in 1897, thrust him into the forefront of politi-

cal debate with its argument that capitalism could be achieved in Russia without recourse to the external markets that had formed an essential element of capitalist development in western Europe. Like his fellow adherents to the philosophy of so-called legal Marxism (a rather awkward label, invented by its critics, that referred to believers in Marxism who did nothing illegal and hence were not subject to police persecution), Bulgakov believed that capitalism was a necessary stage of development for all nations and therefore denied the possibility of a “special path” for Russia.

On the crest of his success, Bulgakov traveled to Berlin (as well as London and Paris) for two years in order to pursue his studies and to make the acquaintance of leaders of the German and Austrian Social Democratic movements—Kautsky, Bebel, Braun, Adler; he plunged, with enthusiasm, into German radical politics and also began a doctoral dissertation, *Kapitalizm i zemledelie* [Capitalism and agriculture]. These two years, however, proved to be an unexpected turning point. Like many Russian intellectuals who traveled to the West for the first time (Herzen in Paris in 1848 is the archetypal example), Bulgakov found the practice of revolutionary politics in Europe disillusioning; the problems, furthermore, of working-class organization in turn-of-the-century Germany were very different from the most pressing political issues in Russia, where, after all, the industrial proletariat was small and weak, and revolutionary debates centered on the transformation of a completely inadequate organization of agriculture resulting, even as late as the 1890s, in frequent famine. European culture, too, had its surprises: Bulgakov described his encounter with the Sistine Madonna in the Zwinger Gallery in Dresden as a spiritual experience that made him, the convinced Marxist, break down in pious tears. Whether as a result of spiritual doubts or of inconsistencies in his scientific results, by 1900 Bulgakov found

it difficult to conclude his dissertation, which he had originally conceived in a Marxist vein. The massive work, which investigated agricultural structures in England, Germany, France, Ireland, and the United States, ended by asserting the inapplicability of Marxist theory to agriculture and, hence, the impossibility of any generalized description of capitalist society. When he returned to Russia in 1900, Bulgakov was in a state of spiritual crisis.

This crisis was to establish the new parameters of Bulgakov's intellectual life for the ensuing two decades; from this moment began an intensive search for a worldview to replace the Marxism that had proved inadequate. The external aspects of Bulgakov's life remained constant: between 1900 and the 1917 revolution he taught political economy, first in Kiev, at the university and also at the Polytechnical Institute, and then (beginning in 1906) in Moscow. He resigned from Moscow University with a group of 120 of the most prominent professors in 1911, in protest at government policy toward the university; but he continued to teach at the Moscow Commercial Institute, which had been founded by Muscovite merchants in 1907. But, more significant, Bulgakov the once-prominent Marxist now became an equally prominent participant in the renewal in art, literature, and philosophy known as the Silver Age. In this capacity he became the inventor of the slogan "From Marxism to Idealism," which described the intellectual trajectory of an entire generation of Russian intellectuals. Bulgakov experienced and gave voice to the period's "discovery" of idealism and eventually of Christianity. He experimented with neo-Kantianism in the early 1900s, but he ultimately found in Orthodoxy a system of beliefs that could replace his Marxist creed of the 1890s. *Philosophy of Economy* was a result of the preceding decade's search and Bulgakov's most important contribution to the philosophy of this immensely fruitful creative period.

At the same time, up to Stolypin's dismissal of the Second Duma in 1907, Bulgakov was an active member of the liberation movement. One of the founding members of the Union of Liberation (to become the core of the Constitutional Democratic ("Kadet") Party) in 1902, he contributed to its radical newspaper, *Osvobozhdenie* [Liberation], and wrote the agrarian program eventually to be adopted by the Kadets. Unsatisfied with Western-style political parties, he tried to found an alternative Christian Socialist party as a Duma delegate, but with limited success. Bulgakov became disillusioned with politics after the failure of the radical Second Duma, whose insistence on the expropriation of gentry lands met with absolute rejection from the government. Bulgakov also became a major figure in a widespread movement for a religious "reformation" of society among the intelligentsia. This movement (similar to contemporary developments in Germany) sought to bring about social reform by instituting changes in the church and by bringing the church and the secular intelligentsia closer together. In this capacity, Bulgakov was a founder of the Moscow Religious-Philosophical Society and editor of a religious publishing house; he also briefly published a religious newspaper, put out the thick journal *Voprosy zhizni* [Questions of life], and became a delegate to the 1917 All-Russian Council of the Orthodox Church.

Bulgakov's evolution away from Marxism and toward Orthodox Christianity culminated in 1918 when, following the Bolshevik victory, he took holy orders and thus, following a long and circuitous journey, returned to the faith of his childhood. Soon afterward he left Moscow for the Crimea; at the end of 1922 he became one of the boatload of prominent intellectuals to be literally shipped out of Russia by the new Soviet regime. After a short while in Prague and Berlin, Bulgakov went to Paris and began his new life as an Orthodox theologian

and rector of the Paris Institute of Orthodox Theology. This final period of Bulgakov's activity continued entirely within the church; it is interesting to note, however, that the central doctrine of his theology, the theory of Sophia, the Divine Wisdom, or "sophiology," was first formulated in *Philosophy of Economy* (see chapter 4), that is, in a secular context. Bulgakov's sophiology was condemned as heresy in 1935 by the Moscow patriarchate. During the years between his emigration and his death in 1944, Bulgakov wrote a number of significant theological works as well as popularizations of Orthodox doctrine; he also became an important figure in the ecumenical movement of the Christian churches.³

INNER SPIRIT VERSUS EXTERNAL FORMS:
PHILOSOPHY OF ECONOMY IN THE
CONTEXT OF TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY EUROPE

Bulgakov's search for a new social philosophy was part of a broader European movement that historians, following H. Stuart Hughes, have come to summarize as the "revolt against positivism."⁴ At the turn of the twentieth century, thinkers throughout Europe questioned the foundations of nineteenth-century attitudes toward science, literature, and society. This intellectual revolution, whose magnitude and intensity surpassed those of any such movement since the Romantic revolt against the Enlightenment, rejected a number of scientific and philosophical attitudes associated, for these thinkers, with positivism's faith in the capacity of science to resolve human problems: positivism's critics revolted with equal force against materialism, mechanism, and naturalism. In social thought, the questioning of dominant nineteenth-century beliefs frequently involved a reevaluation of Marxism (as well as Feuerbach, who was seen as a primary proponent of ma-

terialism) and a dissatisfaction with the application of Darwinian theories to social life. The revolt against positivism took a variety of forms: German neo-Kantianism and neo-idealism, Sorel's rethinking of Marxism as "social poetry," Freud's "discovery" of the unconscious, and Saussure's approach to language as structure (as opposed to the historical researches of nineteenth-century linguists) are a few of the more important examples.

Bulgakov's dramatic transition from Marxism to idealism and, eventually, Christianity, coincided with, and formed a part of, the revolt against positivism that engaged many of his Russian and European contemporaries; Bulgakov might be considered the Russian counterpart of Sorel in France and Croce in Italy. When Bulgakov announced the primacy of ethical values in 1901–1902, he did so because Marxism, with its dialectical world-historical vision of modes of production replacing one another until the ultimate Socialist Golden Age, seemed to him merely a variant or manifestation of a greater evil: positivism. Bulgakov had begun to question the worldview that underlay Marxist economic theory. He did not merely reject one scientific theory to replace it with another; rather, he quite consciously formulated his Marxism as a *Weltanschauung* and saw it as subsumed in a concrete metaphysical system called "positivism," simultaneously submitting the entire system to reevaluation and criticism.

What did Bulgakov mean by "positivism," and why did he consider it an inadequate basis for a vision of society? To a large extent, Bulgakov equated positivism with what he called the "theory of progress." Bulgakov spoke for an entire generation of Russian intellectuals—figures such as Dmitri Merezhkovsky, Nikolai Berdiaev, Petr Struve, and Semën Frank—when he claimed that positivism, as a code of social morality, provided a vision of history as progress toward a perfect earthly

society, sacrificing the good of present generations for that of the future. Belief in science, furthermore, had attained the level of a religion, had become its own moral code; yet, precisely because science did not and could not address the problems of metaphysics and of religion directly, if its essential suppositions were elevated to the level of a religion it would provide false direction for human behavior. Bulgakov argued that at no time could man live by science alone; people needed metaphysics and religion. Given this condition, positivism had become much more than a scientific theory—the theory of progress had become a theodicy; scientificity had swallowed up religion and metaphysics, claiming for itself the rights of both. But, again according to Bulgakov, the attempt of positivism to establish a scientific religion had failed; instead, science had ceased to be science and become a religion. The subject of this religion was humanity, which itself became deified; the goal of the religion of progress was the good of future generations, and therefore it demanded the sacrifice of the present one. Positivism in general and Marxism in particular, in other words, subjugated the needs of individual human beings here and now for the sake of the vaguely defined future well-being of collective humanity.

Although his initial questioning of Marxism and positivism had taken place in the final years of the nineteenth century, Bulgakov finally formulated his own solution—his original theory of society—only in the 1910s. The turn-of-the-century European critics of Marx, depending on the specific reasons for their rejection of Marxism, went about refuting him in various ways, ranging from revisionism to Weber’s powerful counterargument of religious and ethical values as a driving force in history. Bulgakov’s particular answer to Marxism and positivism took the form of a “philosophy of economy.” In his book of this title, Bulgakov replaced Marx’s vision of society as a class struggle based on material interests, in which the mode

of production determined social forms and ideologies, with a view at whose crux stood the relation between man and nature. Like many European social theorists, Bulgakov turned to a way of thinking about society familiar to all eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Christians: he took as his point of departure an imagined original state in which man and nature lived in perfect harmony. To this initial state, analogous to the State of Nature postulated by Locke or Rousseau, Bulgakov gave the name “Edenic economy”—the world as it existed in Paradise, before original sin. Yet, again following the familiar pattern, the world in which we currently live is fatally separated from this harmonious existence by the Fall of man—which Bulgakov saw as a “metaphysical catastrophe” that dragged all of creation into a sinful, empirical state in which man must struggle for survival, eking out a painful existence from an unfriendly, mechanized nature. This is the world in which we live now, prisoners to our material needs; and this is the world, said Bulgakov, that Marx took to be the only real one, basing his doctrine of economic materialism on the “fallen” state of humanity. But whereas the eighteenth-century theorists proposed the idea of a social contract as a way of regulating relations among people, as well as between them and the government, in this imperfect world Bulgakov turned to a biblical notion—Sophia—as a way out of the mere labor “in the sweat of our face” that characterizes our existence in the fallen world. The Divine Wisdom, Sophia, which according to the Old Testament was present with God at the Creation (Prov. 8:22–23) and “shines in the world as the primordial purity and beauty of the universe, in the loveliness of a child and in the gorgeous enchantment of a swaying flower, in the beauty of a starry sky and a flaming sunrise,”⁵ was an elusive concept that Bulgakov took care never to define precisely: Sophia consisted of the totality of eternal ideas that confronted God at the creation; yet the notion of Sophia

is in constant flux, it is joyousness, it is play, it is wisdom, it is love.⁶ Bulgakov's enterprise was to introduce the notion of Sophia into social and economic life. Sophia potentially suffuses the grim world of work and the struggle for survival: in rare moments of revelation, we catch a glimpse of what life was once like in the Garden of Eden. The economy, even if Eden had been irretrievably lost, could once again become "sophic": what we must do is find within ourselves this hidden potential for perfection and work to *resurrect* nature, to endow it once again with the life and meaning that it had in Paradise, and thus to complete the cosmic cycle of Fall and Resurrection. It was in our power to transform the world, to bring it to life, to return it to that perfect harmonious existence in love and labor from which Adam and Eve wrenched it with their sin. In Bulgakov's vision people's relations to each other, furthermore, were defined not by consent or contract but implicitly, by virtue of their common inspiration and participation in the shared task of nature's resurrection.

What gave this vision its power was not simply its iteration of a coherent argument against Marxism but the fact that it rested on a widely accessible cultural and religious foundation. For Bulgakov, this foundation was clearly and unambiguously Christian. The second part of his answer to Marx was formulated in a book originally intended as the second volume of *Philosophy of Economy, Svet nevechernii* [The unfading light] (1917): whereas *Philosophy of Economy* stands alone as an "ontology of economy," or a study of the general foundations of the economic process, it was *Svet nevechernii* that provided the argument advanced in the former with "a particular understanding of the nature of the world and of man, i.e. a particular cosmology and anthropology": "What is the essence of the world? What is the essence of man? How do we understand the world, the 'transcendental object' of economy, and what is man,

its ‘transcendental subject’? A particular system of cosmology and anthropology is implicit in every philosophy of economy, and this is why we must before all else distinguish and establish the corresponding cosmological teachings as we study the world-views which interest us.”⁷

Svet nevechernii set out a religious and specifically Orthodox Christian vision of the world that inspired and supported the philosophical and political-economic enterprise undertaken in *Philosophy of Economy*. Yet if Bulgakov’s own roots were in Orthodox Christianity, his social philosophy potentially had a more universal appeal. The idea of the Divine Wisdom was particularly close to Bulgakov because of its important role in the Orthodox (both Greek and Russian) liturgy and in Orthodox iconography; yet its value as a social-philosophical concept derives, at the same time, from its universality. Sophia was much broader than Christianity; it had roots in Gnosticism and Judaism and parallels in Platonism (the World Soul); indeed, the sense of elusive and beautiful divinity would not be alien to a Muslim or even a Buddhist.

Bulgakov’s “sophic economy” went further than the insistence on “individual rights” of his days in liberal politics: the new social philosophy affirmed human dignity by attributing meaning and creativity to the most prosaic of tasks in our daily life and work. Each furrow plowed, each page written, could potentially bring the individual closer to Sophia. The worth and fulfillment of each individual, moreover, was augmented by the very reassurance that one was not alone but was a participant, along with one’s fellow human beings, in a larger, cosmic, and beautiful process.⁸

A number of striking features in this vision of life in society mark *Philosophy of Economy* as one of the variety of original conceptions that constitute the “modernist” enterprise. Among them is Bulgakov’s substitution of a “resurrective” model of

history—the Christian cycle of Fall and Resurrection—for the linear “theory of progress” that he had so condemned in positivism. For positivism, at least in its unadulterated version, the goal of history lay at the end of a long process in which mankind gradually approached, and finally achieved, a perfect world. This basic model might include a Hegelian element of revolutionary transformation at key moments of historical development. Bulgakov, instead, saw human history as a contingent process, developing in the conditions of a fallen world. Although we must constantly work to reflect the model provided by Sophia in our daily existence, we have no guarantee that this labor will bring us any closer to a perfect existence. The end of the world will come, as we know from Scripture; but the realization of the life of the future age remains ultimately independent of the earthly goals of mankind. Christianity provided Bulgakov with a means for avoiding the construction of but another utopia: a “sophic economy” was not a paradise to be achieved on earth but a constantly present vision inspiring us to work for the restoration of the harmony of nature and culture that humanity had lost in the Fall. This Christian, eschatological philosophy of history anticipates the use of this same resurrective model by the existentialist philosophers, and particularly Heidegger, whose notion of the “thrownness” of *Dasein* corresponds to Bulgakov’s description of history as the result of the Fall.

Another, related, essential characteristic of the sophic economy was its emphasis on process rather than on ends. Bulgakov, despite his rejection of economic materialism as a comprehensive view of the world, believed that it had discovered an essential insight in its emphasis on labor. In other words, apart from being a vision of society, Bulgakov’s sophic economy was also an ethic—but one that prescribed joyful labor “in Sophia” as an antidote to the grim eking out of existence that was so preva-

lent in life and accepted as necessary by Marxism and other economic doctrines. Sophia's constant radiant presence could endow work with meaning and beauty, and the constant, joyful creation of one's own life gave meaning to existence. Here, as well, Bulgakov's theory reminds us of contemporary western European ideas. Specifically, Bulgakov's man, poised for action, "holding a tool in one hand and the flaming torch of knowledge in the other" (chapter 5), recalls nothing so much as Henri Bergson's active and intelligent subject: "Harnessed, like yoked oxen, to a heavy task, we feel the play of our muscles and joints, the weight of the plow and the resistance of the soil. To act and to know that we are acting, to come into touch with reality and even to live it, but only in the measure in which it concerns the work that is being accomplished and the furrow that is being plowed, such is the function of human intelligence. Yet a beneficent fluid bathes us, whence we draw the very force to labor and to live. From this ocean of life, in which we are immersed, we are continually drawing something, and we feel that our being, or at least the intellect that guides it, has been formed therein by a kind of local concentration."⁹ The Bergsonian vision of a theory of knowledge entirely fused with a theory of life betrays a neo-Romantic refutation of positivism shared with Bulgakov. Furthermore, *Creative Evolution* (1907), like *Philosophy of Economy*, builds on the perception of a world constantly in flux, in which not only the creation of an artistic or intellectual genius but also the life and labor of ordinary people acquires creative meaning. The Bergsonian *élan vital*, the profound conviction of a deeper meaning in life than permitted by the "mechanism" of positivist, Darwinian evolutionary theory, coincides with a similar leap in Bulgakov's thought from strictly philosophical argumentation to an affirmation of the meaning and joyousness of life that he calls Sophia.

But most important, Bulgakov's sophic economy includes

what is perhaps the single characteristic that the many variants of the modernist rejection of positivism had in common: a new attention to things beyond the material world, an effort to look beyond physical reality to essences invisible to the naked eye. In keeping with this new recognition of the “disparity between external reality and the internal appreciation of that reality,”¹⁰ the central feature of Bulgakov’s sophic economy, and one that complements its rejection of a linear conception of history and emphasis on process rather than ends, is its replacement of a social theory—Marx’s—that, like most social theories of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, described society in terms of external forms (institutions, classes, forms of government) by a vision that instead stressed the internal content, or “spirit,” of society. Bulgakov, partly as a result of disappointment in the liberation movement’s unsuccessful struggle to throw off autocracy and set up a constitutional form of government in 1905–1907, was by 1911 no longer interested in institutions: *Philosophy of Economy* asserted the socially creative and transformative power of the attitude with which economic life was conducted, rather than the governmental forms it took; Sophia was potentially compatible with different types of institutions. What went on in the mind and soul of the individual social and economic actor—the *khoziain*, or proprietor—was as essential a part of the economic process as its ultimate goals or organizational structure. In this sense, Bulgakov’s theory conformed to the shift of focus of social thought, characteristic of his age, from “objective” and clearly visible forms to the more nebulous area of subjective motivation. The originality of his work, however, lay in his explicit identification of this “only partially conscious area” as Sophia. Not “content to dwell in a twilight zone of suspended judgment—open to metaphysical possibilities, yet wary of dogmatic assertion”¹¹ like his Western counterparts, Bulgakov took the revolt against positivism all the way—

and ended up with a modernist philosophy that was also deeply religious.

Philosophy of Economy was also a contribution to the contemporary Europe-wide debate on the tasks and limitations of social science. In his discussion of freedom and necessity, the status of the social sciences, and the position of economic materialism as a doctrine, Bulgakov made a case for the behavior of social collectivities as distinct from, and governed by different rules than, individual behavior, when Durkheim, LeBon, Sorel, and Pareto were discovering the collective as a result of their particular sociological research. Despite its metaphysical tone, *Philosophy of Economy*, like the writings of the European sociologists, was firmly rooted in concrete social-scientific investigation: the relevant discipline, in the Russian case, was statistics, which, from its inception soon after the emancipation of the peasantry in 1861, had acquired a high degree of sophistication and extremely broad application in the Russian countryside. Bulgakov argued against his fellow political economists and statisticians, who derived prescriptions for individual social action—usually revolutionary or at least radical—from the results of statistical studies: *Philosophy of Economy* was an effort to preserve individual free will while accepting the picture of society yielded by statistical averages and mathematical calculations.

A PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE: BULGAKOV AND
THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY
RUSSIAN PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITION

Bulgakov was particularly well placed for the revolution in social thought at the turn of the twentieth century. When European thinkers revolted against positivism, they were in fact rejecting certain attitudes—rationalism, mechanism, and

so on—that had been targets for attack by a powerful tradition in Russian thought over the course of the nineteenth century. Positivism had, indeed, become an almost religious credo for the Russian intelligentsia in the 1870s (of which Turgenev’s Bazarov serves as the classic emblem), but it was challenged as early as 1874 by Vladimir Soloviev, who perceived a “crisis in Western philosophy,” and specifically a crisis of positivism, twenty years before it actually erupted on the European scene. Following his Romantic predecessors, the Slavophiles, Soloviev argued against the “rationalism” of Western philosophy and proposed that philosophy as abstract, purely theoretical cognition had nothing more to offer. Modernism’s challenge to positivism coincided with the issues raised earlier by Soloviev and other Russian thinkers, many of whom were preoccupied throughout the nineteenth century with the inadequacy of abstract speculation and concerned with the problem of constructing a philosophy that would address life instead of enclosing itself hermetically in an artificial intellectual universe incapable of communication with the outside world. When Bulgakov challenged the positivist theory of progress and its excessive rationalism and intellectualism, he had a rich tradition on which to draw; the terms in which he formulated his notion of the sophic economy depended heavily on the efforts of his Russian predecessors.

Every thinker or philosopher functions within a particular cultural and intellectual tradition whose boundaries are defined both subconsciously—by language, early education, cultural atmosphere—and consciously—by teachers, reading, and so forth. The Russian intellectual tradition of the nineteenth century, although describable in terms familiar from the history of Western thought—Enlightenment, Romanticism, positivism, modernism—remained original and independent in the manner in which it assimilated and combined ideas, in the

questions that it singled out as important, the elements it inserted from more ancient Russian or Byzantine sources, and its approaches to the business of philosophizing itself. By 1900 Russian thought had developed a comprehensive vocabulary of approaches and concepts as essentially and inextricably interwoven with the ideas they expressed as, for example, acceptance and understanding of the terms *sign*, *signifier*, and *signified* are essential to a reading of contemporary structuralist philosophy. Sergei Bulgakov was a Russian thinker in the sense that his ideas inscribed themselves in the intellectual tradition that had taken shape in Russia over the course of the nineteenth century; his work can be meaningfully interpreted only if elements of this inheritance are taken into account.

Filosofia khoziaistva, or *Philosophy of Economy*, was premised on an interaction of two disciplines: Bulgakov believed that philosophy and political economy existed in artificial isolation and that insights from each discipline could productively be brought to bear on the other. Bulgakov sought simultaneously to construct a theory of society, or political economy, that placed the inner relation and interaction of man and nature, subject and object (a concern of idealist philosophy) at its center, and to introduce a new epistemological principle, borrowed from political economy—namely, labor—into the discipline of philosophy proper. This dual definition of *filosofia khoziaistva* depended in part on language. *Khoziaistvo* in Russian means both “economy” and “household.” *Khoziaistvo* as “economy” refers not merely to attributes of economic life proper—GNP, budget, interest rates, taxes—but to life in society more generally; a nation’s economy has connotations of the life of a giant household. *Khoziaistvo*, furthermore, is not a static term, for it refers equally to the *process* of economic activity or of life in society. The notion of *filosofia khoziaistva*, playing on these various possibilities, evokes an entire field of shifting mean-

ings that Bulgakov articulates in accordance with various specific contexts and that, taken as a whole, comprise a composite conceptual image. We reconstruct the content of *Philosophy of Economy* from Bulgakov's various uses of the term: *filosofia khoziaistva* seeks to understand the world as the object of labor,¹² it addresses the problem of man and nature,¹³ it is "oriented" on the fact of economy,¹⁴ it is an epistemological basis of political economy,¹⁵ it is a continuation of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*;¹⁶ and in a conscious play on the Kantian inquiry into knowledge, it poses the question, "How is economy possible?"¹⁷

The result of these shifting semantic uses is more than a mere rhetorical image. Instead, it is a fully independent concept that reflects a dominant concern of Russian nineteenth-century philosophy: Bulgakov, like many of his predecessors, was concerned above all with constructing a worldview that addressed the real concerns of our life in the world, that treated human beings as active creatures, interacting with the world around them. What Bulgakov termed an interaction of the disciplines of philosophy and political economy was a restatement of Russian philosophy's preoccupation with life, a fear of theories constructed in the comfort of the philosopher's study and having no real application: bringing the concerns of political economy to philosophy was a means of introducing the realities of labor, wealth, and poverty into an otherwise meaninglessly abstract intellectual exercise. Both Bulgakov's emphasis on the inner relation, or "spirit," of the interaction of man and nature—which, as we have seen, refutes Western political economy's (including Marx's) emphasis on external forms of social structure—and his concern with integrating philosophy and political economy in a single theory of society reflected a rejection of rationalism and abstract intellectual activity with deep roots in Russian intellectual history. Specifically, in placing the problem of man and nature at the center of his view of society, Bulgakov gave

voice to a major but sometimes implicit concern of Russian philosophy, which had absorbed a preoccupation with man's relation to the world around him from German Romanticism. At the same time, Bulgakov's focus on the inner spirit followed a Russian tradition of concern with organicism and wholeness. Finally, in seeking to make labor, or activity, into an epistemological principle, Bulgakov continued Russian philosophy's disdain for "armchair philosophers" passively ensconced in the safety of their study: philosophy must engage with life and is of interest only insofar as it helps us understand and eventually transform the world.

When Bulgakov formulated his view of society in terms of a relation between man and nature, he was explicitly reiterating and posing anew a central question of German Romantic philosophy; at the same time he was also following a pattern of Russian thought, established by the Slavophiles, that distrusted excessive rationalism and identified with the Romantic poets and philosophers who had rebelled against the Enlightenment's preoccupation with reason and concentration on the workings of the human mind at the expense of the forces of nature. Bulgakov was bothered by the problem of accounting for the existence of a world outside the thinking self, a problem he expressed sometimes as that of the relation of man and nature and sometimes as that of the relation of subject and object.

Bulgakov's neo-Romanticism, that is, his conscious repetition of the Romantic problem of subject and object, man and nature, appealed above all to the writings of Schelling, specifically to his *System of Transcendental Idealism* coupled with the *Naturphilosophie*. Like his fellow Romantics, Schelling was concerned with the fundamental problem of the relation of the self to the external world. Schelling objected to the narrow limits Kant had imposed on his investigation of knowledge and

sought to expand transcendental idealism until it became what it ought to be—a general system of knowledge. Schelling, unlike his predecessor and teacher Fichte, treated the self and the external world with equal seriousness. Whereas Fichte had “resolved” the problem of subject and object by making the non-I a projection of the I, Schelling approached the same question by constructing two simultaneous and complementary systems. The first, the *Naturphilosophie*, took the object—nature—as a given and sought to explain its relation to the subject. Through reflection, nature ultimately became its own object, as man’s study of it endowed nature with reason. Conversely, transcendental idealism—the second part of Schelling’s philosophical system—began with the subject and sought to explain how it was connected with the object. In other words, transcendental idealism was an effort to justify our basic perception that there are things which exist outside ourselves. The problem of the relation between subject and object permeates Schelling’s writings, for he considered the explanation of the coincidence of subjective and objective as the basic task of philosophy.

The “Romantic attitude” permeated much of nineteenth-century Russian poetry, prose, and philosophy, and even the way of life of many intellectuals, particularly in the second quarter of the century—during the reign of Nicholas I. Russian thinkers did not participate in the initial emergence of Romanticism: Romantic thought and literature flowered late on Russian soil, but intensely and over a very long period. In a famous passage in *My Past and Thoughts*, Alexander Herzen describes an exalted atmosphere in which “people who adored each other became estranged for entire weeks because they could not agree on a definition of ‘transcendental spirit,’ were personally offended by opinions about ‘absolute personality’ and ‘being in itself,’” and “the most worthless tracts of German philosophy that came out of Berlin and other provincial towns and vil-

lages, in which there was any mention of Hegel, were written for and read to shreds—till they came out in yellow stains, till pages dropped out after a few days.”¹⁸ Attitudes from worship of creative genius to love of nature to blissful immersion in moments of insight or sharpened perception had their origin in a Romanticism thoroughly assimilated and become a way of life.

Russian thinkers of the mid-nineteenth century did not, in contrast to Bulgakov, address the subject-object problem explicitly; instead, they absorbed Romanticism’s basic anti-Enlightenment spirit so that, in the teachings of the Slavophiles, it turned into a distrust and antipathy for rationalism in general. For them, the question of the external world was less a philosophical problem than a fundamental attitude: they had no patience for abstract speculation and turned above all to matters with social or practical implications. The critique of rationalism became a dominant theme of Slavophile thought.

Instead of seeing the Enlightenment’s emphasis on the thinking subject as a problem philosophy was able to solve, the Slavophiles perceived undue concentration on the subject as a symptom of a broader “crisis of rationalism” that had struck all of Western thought, including Romanticism. Western philosophy, argued Kireevsky, had exhausted the rational principle. “For, when a man denies any authority except his own abstract reasoning, then can he go beyond a world view in which the entire existence of the world appears to him as a transparent dialectic of his own reason, and his own reason as the self-consciousness of universal being?”¹⁹ Western philosophy was at a dead end, for its excessive rationalism prevented it from addressing the problem of the world outside the thinking self.

This antirationalist frame of mind to a large degree explains the appeal of Schelling, of all Romantic philosophers, to educated Russian society. Schelling could at the very least be credited with having perceived the bankruptcy of Western ratio-

nalism, and if Hegel represented the apogee of rationalism or intellectualism, Schelling was the sole Western thinker to have created a foundation on which Russian thought could build. Schelling's aestheticism and religious sense, and above all his uncomfortableness with a philosophy confined to the realm of reason and purely abstract speculation, made him arguably the most significant Romantic thinker for Russian ideas in the nineteenth century.²⁰ This was a tradition that Bulgakov followed in constructing his indictment of undue "intellectualism" in Western philosophy and in focusing his inquiry on the relation of man and nature—or of man and the world around him.

Bulgakov emphasized the *inner* relation of man and nature, the "spirit" of a particular economic system, in contrast to the external forms of social organization that generally form the substance of Western social theory. In doing so, he adopted a no less deeply rooted attitude of Russian thought. Once again it was the Slavophiles who, in a fusion of the Romantic penchant for organicity with principles of Orthodox Christian theology, stated that inner form and spirit were more essential categories than the abstract, logical, external factors of institutions or types of government—and that it had fallen to Russia, as opposed to the corrupt and rationalized West, to develop this principle and to express it for the benefit of humanity.

For the Slavophiles, external social forms, most particularly the dominant autocratic form of government in the Russia of their time, were of merely secondary importance. The foreign traveler in Russia, for example, would be likely to perceive the bureaucratic and administrative structures that were actually quite superficial and of little import to the manner in which life was actually experienced.²¹ What was important about Russian society, for the Slavophiles, was not its external forms—

most particularly autocracy. Western European societies, they suggested, were based on violence and on a formality of personal relations, and social life was limited to a battle of parties and interests; the essence of Russian life, in contrast, could be found in a deeper community based on true Christianity. The crucial features of Russian society were the organicity and communal agreement that did not necessarily strike a beholder who never looked beyond external structures.

Thus Slavophile thought turned to such matters as family relations, the peasant commune, and the church instead of the questions of administrative organization, types of government, and distribution of power familiar to Western social theory. The distinction—entirely taken for granted, especially in social thought of the Victorian era—between the “private” and the “public” spheres did not exist for the Slavophiles: instead they articulated in their writings the axiom that how one conducted oneself in daily life was an expression of a social and political attitude.

This emphasis on internal social structures took its cue simultaneously from the antihierarchical theological principles of Russian Orthodoxy and from an organicism characteristic of Romanticism. Specifically, it found powerful expression in the concept of *sobornost'*—articulated most influentially by Alexei Khomiakov and adopted by subsequent thinkers including Bulgakov. *Sobornost'*—literally, the “conciliar” principle—stood for “an association in love, freedom, and truth of Christian believers, which Khomiakov considered the essence of Orthodoxy.”²² *Sobornost'* meant, on one hand, community and wholeness; as Bulgakov remarked, emphasis on the collectivity, on humanity as a whole, had become a “distinguishing characteristic” of Russian thought.²³ As summarized concisely in a quotation from Kireevsky that Khomiakov placed in Kireevsky’s obituary, the Slavophiles argued that “rationality and division constitute

the basic character of all of Western civilization. Wholeness and wisdom constitute the character of that civilizing principle which, by God's grace, was laid at the foundation of our [Russian] intellectual life."²⁴ Remarkably, on the other hand, the value of *sobornost'* was that this very sense of community and wholeness actually permitted the full development of an *individual's* integral personality as opposed to the one-sided emphasis encouraged by a rationalistic society preoccupied with external forms, parties, and interests. The Orthodox Church, and consequently a society in which it played a major role, consisted of a community of individual believers, each of whom had a part both in the organizational life of the church and in the formulation of dogma. *Sobornost'*, in other words, implied a participatory vision of church and society, in contrast to one in which an ecclesiastical hierarchy had a monopoly over the population's belief and daily life.²⁵

The fusion and mutual reinforcement of the individual and the community in the notion of *sobornost'* struck a delicate balance. One of the most colorful, and precarious, expressions of the principle belongs to another Slavophile, Konstantin Aksakov, in a description of the village commune that was to captivate and influence many Russian thinkers even after Stolypin abolished the institution in 1909:

A commune is a union of the people who have renounced their egoism, their individuality, and who express their common accord; this is an act of love, a noble Christian act, which expresses itself more or less clearly in its various other manifestations. A commune thus represents a moral choir, and just as in a choir a voice is not lost, but follows the general pattern and is heard in the harmony of all voices: so in the commune the individual is not lost, but

renounces his exclusiveness in favor of a general accord—and there arises the noble phenomenon of a harmonious, joint existence of rational beings (consciousnesses); there arises a brotherhood, a commune—a triumph of the human spirit.²⁶

The lack of tension between the individual and the collective in the notion of *sobornost'*, the sense that the individual personality could find full expression only in interaction with a larger community, marks Bulgakov's philosophy as well: the Slavophile style of thought lies at the basis of his formulations. In Bulgakov's Christian economy, the "transcendental subject" of the economic process is humanity as a whole, rather than individual persons: what is remarkable in Bulgakov's vision is that he seeks to affirm and preserve human dignity precisely by inscribing the daily activity of individual human beings in a process that unites them with their fellows. This coexistence of individual and community is surprising from the perspective of Western social philosophy, in which the opposition of individual rights and the claims of the collectivity are virtually axiomatic. Bulgakov's solution to the "deification" of collective humanity and sacrifice of the individual he had perceived in Marxism was more interesting than a mere proclamation of the primacy of individual values: his Christian economy focused attention on the individual's motivation, yet preserved human beings' belonging and participation in a larger human community.

Yet a third aspect of Bulgakov's philosophy—namely, his effort to introduce labor as an epistemological principle for philosophy—gives expression to a characteristic attitude of Russian thought. Bulgakov argued that, in the labor theory of value, Marxism had discovered a principle that, if applied to

philosophy, could potentially overcome the sterility and undue concentration on the thinking subject that he perceived in contemporary neo-Kantianism. By proposing labor as a philosophical principle, Bulgakov meant that we, as philosophers, must look at the *process* of man's life *in the world* as the starting point of philosophy, and he proposed a fundamental perception of man as an active, working creature.²⁷ At first glance, this approach seems to originate in the Christian tendency to emphasize life as the most fundamental category of thought or experience, and indeed Bulgakov's very formulation of his insistence that "thought is born of life" depends heavily on Christian philosophy and imagery.²⁸ Yet the insistence on the primacy of life also coincides with the attitude of a strong and entirely un-Christian current in Russian thought, formulated most powerfully by Nikolai Chernyshevsky and expressed by numerous followers, that constituted an essential component of the psyche of a thinker who, after all, had begun his career as a member of the radical intelligentsia.

In the 1860s Dmitri Pisarev scandalized public opinion by maintaining that a pair of boots was superior in value to the works of Shakespeare. Chernyshevsky formalized this statement and made it into a creed of the radical intelligentsia. Borrowing from the utilitarianism of Mill and Bentham, as well as from Comtean positivism, the "men of the sixties" postulated the ultimate scientific explicability of man and human society and the possibility, based on this knowledge, of a rational reordering of society to the mutual benefit of its members. Inextricable from this basic approach was the belief that both natural science and art were ultimately subordinate to life. Chernyshevsky's theory of "rational egoism" began by claiming the possibility of understanding man as a whole through understanding him as a physical organism and ended by maintaining that the standard by which human actions must be

judged was the benefit they brought. His complementary aesthetic philosophy posited that “art is life,” in other words, that beauty was that which reflected life most perfectly. His argument concluded with an assertion of the complete dependence of aesthetics on social reality and his complementary evaluation of art solely in terms of its utility. Chernyshevsky’s extremely influential novel *What Is to Be Done?*, which became the handbook of Russian radicals, was a literary model for the total structuring of life according to rational principles of women’s equality and the socialist organization of labor: the transformation of society would take place through the transformation of personal, sexual, and working life, and the emerging “new people” would be its instrument.²⁹

Bulgakov shared with his predecessors among the radical intelligentsia their orientation towards life rather than abstract aesthetic or philosophical contemplation. The positioning of life over art implied a prescriptive stance, fully assimilated by Bulgakov. Like Chernyshevsky’s novel, *Philosophy of Economy* is an answer to the question, What is to be done?, and though Bulgakov’s response differs dramatically from Chernyshevsky’s, and even more from that given by Lenin in his composition of the same title, his thought shares with these two countrymen’s the prescriptive element implicit in any philosophy that places action (or labor) at the very foundation of thought.

Russian philosophy often strikes the Western reader as flawed or at least peculiar: as I have tried to show in Bulgakov’s case, this impression results from Russian thinkers’ use of ideas and concepts familiar in Western thought but discussed in unfamiliar combinations and contexts. Russian intellectual history does not—like, for example, Chinese philosophy—proceed from entirely different assumptions and entirely different sources than Western thought; instead, it is premised on an

interplay of elements from Western philosophy with peculiarly Russian concerns and ideas, with the result that intellectual currents that might be mutually contradictory in some Western countries—for example, Marxism and neo-Kantianism, or Decadence and Christianity—often coexist in a happy symbiosis. *Philosophy of Economy* is constructed, following this pattern, on a fruitful interaction of the concerns of the European revolt against positivism with antirationalist, “life-oriented” elements of a specifically Russian intellectual tradition. The result is an original, Christian, and modernist vision of society that focuses on the inner spirit of life in society rather than on institutions or external forms and that prescribes an ethic of active and joyful labor “in Sophia” as a substitute for the Golden Age, the paradise on earth that was the pathos of the Marxist vision.

Bulgakov’s social philosophy grew out of the same concerns that animated Western liberals: the effort to implement Western-style liberalism and parliamentarism in Russia between 1904 and 1907. For a variety of reasons, however, Bulgakov founded the respect for the individual that he shared with these thinkers on a different basis—religion. Therefore the notion of human dignity became the center of Bulgakov’s philosophy—a concept that might be considered “deeper” or at least different from classic liberalism’s focus on the rights of the individual. The result is potentially productive for the theory of liberalism itself. Bulgakov’s philosophy captures elements missing or lost from Western liberalism: it “re-Christianizes” a tradition that once had roots in evangelical Christianity; it captures a sense of inspiration and creativity as an essential aspect of social and economic life; by appealing to the Russian philosophical tradition, it achieves a comfortable synthesis of the individual and the collectivity (one of the greatest difficulties for Western thought). Bulgakov’s philosophy was formulated within the context of Western thought and Orthodox Chris-

tianity: it needs to be integrated back into these two traditions. Some of the problems with Bulgakov's vision are obvious: a social theory, after all, that does not address social and governmental structures must, taken in isolation, prove inadequate to the task of proposing a viable social system. Yet in the West, where institutions are firmly in place, a coherent philosophical articulation of the role that dignity, creativity, "inner spirit," and community play as factors in economic life can usefully complement liberal social and economic theory.

The history of *Philosophy of Economy* as a text reflects the larger story of Russian religious philosophy. The book was widely read and discussed among educated Russians in the first years after its publication, but it was erased from the public consciousness as the aesthetic and social utopias of the Bolshevik Revolution crowded out such non-Marxist and anti-Marxist philosophies, to be reborn in a wave of popularity that greeted Silver Age philosophy and literature as the Soviet system collapsed. Bulgakov's work has acquired a new immediacy in recent years: the reevaluation and ultimately the complete rejection of Marxism by a significant part of the Russian intelligentsia adumbrated, in microcosm, the similar evolution of Soviet society as a whole that is taking place today. Bulgakov's religious philosophy is representative of a school of thought—one including Berdiaev, Frank, Florensky, Shestov, Gershenzon, and others—that sought to articulate the philosophical bases on which Russian society rested and that has become a crucial point of orientation as Russia redefines its identity. The particular force of Bulgakov's social philosophy, so far as Russia is concerned, is that it brings together religion—in the form of an ethic affirming human dignity—and a theory of *khoziaistvo*, or economic life. His vision of history as a cycle of Fall and Resurrection, death and rebirth, reflects a very deep

theme of the Russian cultural consciousness. Even the specific form taken by this theme in his work—namely, the resurrection of nature through the labor of man as proprietor (*khoziain*)—was an important concern in Russian thought and art not only in his own time³⁰ but well into the 1920s (perhaps the most interesting example is the work of Andrei Platonov). At the same time, his description of economic life as *khoziaistvo*, as the life of a large household, amounts to the clearest philosophical articulation of a mode of economic existence that in the 1990s became characteristic of the management of Russia's cities, farms, and enterprises. Bulgakov's sophic economy is among the ideas that can provide material for discussion in the present reevaluation of ideologies and institutions, a reevaluation that involves philosophical reorientation as well as a restructuring of markets, property rights, legal norms, and political and administrative institutions.

In general, I have been guided by my desire to make this book a text that is *useful* for the contemporary reader. Bulgakov's points of reference include works that have become standard over the past century and those that have receded into oblivion. The former include various texts of Aristotle, Descartes, Leibniz, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Schelling, Marx, and Bergson. In each of these cases I have tried to update Bulgakov's notes by citing easily available modern editions, rather than the originals or obscure Russian translations used by Bulgakov. Other widely read thinkers of the nineteenth century such as Ernest Häckel, Thomas Buckle, Eduard von Hartmann, or Adolphe Quételet—equally a part of Bulgakov's worldview—now need to be explained; I have done so in the glossary of names at the end of the text, while citing, usually, the same editions that were available to Bulgakov.

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Washington, D.C.

PHILOSOPHY OF ECONOMY

The World as Household

PREFACE

I do not intend to justify the topic of the present investigation in these lines, for I believe that it speaks for itself and requires no particular justification. It is not, of course, for the author to judge how well he has come to terms with his task, and the imperfections of its execution are evident enough to me. I have no doubt only of one thing—of the immense significance of the problem itself, to which, I am convinced, the tomorrow if not the today of philosophy must belong. To comprehend the world as the object of labor and economic action is a task to which economism, criticism, pragmatism, and mysticism equally lead us. And I attribute immeasurably more significance to posing this question than to any given effort to resolve it. In the development of philosophical thought the posing of problems and their recognition generally plays a primary role; this is what provides the impulse for philosophical creativity and defines its themes.

For the author, the present study also has special significance, for it draws up the balance of an entire period of life influenced by economic materialism, and it is the debt of the author's philosophical conscience in relation to his own past. The fact of economy always aroused philosophical "surprise" in me, and the problem of the philosophy of economy—of man in nature and nature in man—has in fact never left my spiritual horizon but only turned about to show various aspects.¹ The initial effort to make sense of this fact was for me the theory of economic materialism with various critical amendments. And although this theory quickly ceased satisfying my conscious-

ness, as the perceptions of childhood cease to satisfy it, yet the questions that it answers in its own way have retained all their force. We cannot simply turn away from the problem of economic materialism in the name of abstract “idealism” (as do those who turn “back to Kant,” or those who “combine” Kant with Marx), for such “idealism” does not contain any answer to this problem but merely leaves it outside its attention.

The problem of economy is taken in the present investigation in a triple dimension simultaneously: scientific-empirical, transcendental-critical, and metaphysical. And such a means of investigation is not determined by the whim of the author but suggested by the very essence of the matter. For the same thing that, in the empirical sphere, constitutes the object of “experience” and poses problems for science, constitutes the construction of a “transcendental subject” when regarded from the standpoint of cognitive forms, and, finally, descends deep into the metaphysical soil with its ontological roots. This hierarchy of problems opened before me of itself in the course of investigation, as it grew deeper. Initially, in the effort to make sense of the fact of economy, it was most natural to turn to the *science* about economy (political economy), which constructs a particular branch of scientific “experience” from the phenomena of economic reality. Yet in doing so it remains deaf and blind to everything that transcends the boundaries of this experience. It isolates but one particular side of the problem of economy. It is, of course, correct within the limits of its particular tasks, but it would be terribly myopic, having equated the whole with its part, to limit the theory of economy to its phenomenology. Beyond these boundaries the investigation of our question inevitably falls into the sphere of general philosophy. To sense the boundaries of phenomenology by revealing science’s logical schematism is the task of critical philosophy, of “critical idealism,” which here plays an irreplaceable role,

freeing us from the hypnosis of scientific empiricism; and whoever has once experienced its liberating action will always remain grateful to critical idealism, even if he does not accept the critical Beatrice for the “beautiful lady” of philosophy. But critical idealism remains powerless before the problem of economy in its essence: here the purely theoretical, schematizing nature of critical philosophy, with its incapacity for realism, shows itself most clearly. Hence critical idealism decisively appeals to metaphysics—to ontology and to natural philosophy, where the problem of the philosophy of economy ultimately ends up. Thus, this very action realizes the connection of philosophy and science that is postulated in theory, and it seems to me that this can be mutually beneficial. Social science is undoubtedly in need of a productive tie with philosophy, in order to cope, with its help, with the inner disintegration that threatens it, for the general crisis of scientific consciousness that has imperceptibly crept up on us must here be particularly draining. Philosophy, meanwhile, in confronting such a life problem, is in this measure liberated from that scholastic formalism in which “criticism” increasingly entangles it.

The problem of the philosophy of economy also acquires a peculiar pointedness for the contemporary religious consciousness. In a time of decaying dogmatic self-consciousness, when religion is most frequently reduced to ethics, merely tinged with pietistic “sufferings,” it is particularly important to set out the *ontological and cosmological* side of Christianity, which is partly revealed in the philosophy of economy. But this is entirely impossible using the means of contemporary Kantianized and metaphysically emptied theology; instead, we must turn to the religious ontology, cosmology, and anthropology of Saints Athanasius of Alexandria and Gregory of Nyssus and other fathers of the church. These teachings are at present philosophically dead capital in the field of dogmatics, and, most

frequently, are simply denied, and philosophical and economic materialism on one hand, and idealistic phenomenalism on the other, arise on the ruins of Christian materialism.² Among the tasks of the present investigation is the effort to translate some of these teachings into the language of contemporary philosophical thought and thus to reveal how the truths of religious materialism are distorted and obscured both in materialism and in idealism.

Only a part of this whole project is realized in the present volume: namely, we here examine the general bases of the economic process, or its ontology. To the second part will fall the problem of the *justification of economy*—its axiology and eschatology; in part, the problem of the relation of flesh and spirit (the ethics of economy) and of the meaning of history and culture will be investigated here. But the foundation for these theories is partially contained in the present section, which can, within the limits of its task, be seen as a complete, independent whole.

As a parting word to this book, as the expression of its pathos and aspirations, let us remember Fedor Dostoevsky's prophetic words: "Love all God's creation, the whole and each grain of sand in it. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light! Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things" (from Father Zosima's lessons in *The Brothers Karamazov*).

"'What is the mother of God? What do you think?' 'The great mother,' I answer, 'the hope of the human race.' 'Yes,' she answered, 'the mother of God is the great mother—the damp earth, and therein lies great joy for men'" (the words of the old woman in the Cripple's story, in *The Possessed*).

Moscow, 18 January 1912

I

The Problem of the Philosophy of Economy

I. CONTEMPORARY "ECONOMISM"

One of the most outstanding traits of contemporary humanity's outlook is something we might call the *economism* of our epoch. So-called economic materialism constitutes merely the most radical and perfect formulation of this general attitude and, however questionable this doctrine may seem to us, however shaky its philosophical, scientific, metaphysical, and empirical foundations, this deeper significance makes it something more than just a scientific doctrine that crumbles when it is shown to be inadequate. In a certain sense, economic materialism is actually indestructible, insofar as it describes the immediate reality of a particular experience or apperception of the world that seeks theoretical expression in a scientific or philosophical doctrine. The doctrine may be quite unsuccessful in its execution, but this does not invalidate the mood that created it. That particular, undeniable life truth that our contemporary society has glimpsed and intimately felt with great seriousness and bitter sincerity makes economic materialism in a sense irrefutable. It cannot be simply denied or rejected like any other scientific theory. It must be understood and interpreted, not only in its obvious mistakes and weaknesses, but also in that profound content which shimmers through it. It must be, not denied, but *overcome from within*, explained in its limitations as a philosophical "abstract principle," in which one side of the truth is sold as the whole truth. In a word, the problem of economic

materialism must be investigated, but not only in its contemporary formulation, in which it bears too clearly the traits of the accidental circumstances of its historical origins and the spiritual individuality of its creators. For the unprejudiced thinker it is clear that, apart from its rude and unfortunate current expression, the theory of economic materialism could be worked out much more fully, clearly, relevantly; in general, it leaves much room for improvement. If we abstract ourselves from any possible formal expression of this doctrine, it becomes clear that the essence of economic materialism remains *as a problem* standing inevitably before the philosophizing mind of our time with its strong economism. Our time understands, feels, experiences *the world as a household*, and human power is measured in terms of wealth. In contrast to the voluntary or involuntary asceticism of Franciscan or Buddhist epochs of history, which despise wealth and deny its power over man, our epoch loves wealth—not money, but specifically wealth—and believes in wealth even more than it believes in the individual. This is not merely mammonism, low and selfish (which exists now as it has existed in all times); no—this is economism. *Life is, above all, an economic process*: such is the axiom of this contemporary economism, expressed in most extreme and even provocative form in economic materialism. This is why economic materialism has such survival power, combined with the appeal of ideological radicalism, its sharpness actually increased by its naiveté and immediacy. And this is the secret of the peculiar enchantment of economic materialism, thanks to which it so hypnotizes contemporary minds. I will say even more: not to experience this enchantment at all, not to feel its hypnosis (even if one does not abandon oneself completely), means to have some defect of historical self-consciousness, to be internally alien to contemporary reality, remaining either above it (which is accessible but to a few individuals) or artificially to

fence oneself off from life (which is why I am so little impressed and, frankly, have so little sympathy for armchair “idealism,” ignorant of life).¹

Economic materialism or, let us say more briefly, *economism*, is in fact the reigning worldview among political economists, although, theoretically, many of them do not subscribe to it, perhaps because it has become the party dogma of social democracy and scandalizes many with its ideological radicalism. In practice, for lack of anything better, economism suffuses political economy, in which, in general, the expansion of special investigations, or scientific practice, bears no correlation whatsoever to the development of philosophical self-consciousness or reflection. In its scientific practice, political economy either proceeds on the basis of empirical generalizations and observations of a limited and specialized nature, or, insofar as it appeals to more general points of view, it consciously or unconsciously falls into the framework of economism, usually in its most naively dogmatic form. There is a close, unbreakable tie between political economy and economism as a worldview. In fact, economic materialism is the reigning philosophy of political economy. In practice, economists are Marxists, even if they hate Marxism.

The limitations of the horizons of economic thought, thus revealed, find expression not so much in the prevalence of the philosophy of economism (though this, too, is symptomatic) but in its naive dogmatism. It is as though the dogma of economism were the only possible, and moreover the self-evident, philosophy of economy generally. For this reason, the primary task of philosophical criticism is to shatter this naive dogmatism and, by questioning it, to make it the object of a special philosophical investigation.

We cannot reproach political economy for depending on particular philosophical presuppositions that it takes as apodictic

truths or axioms. All scientific knowledge is partial and fragmentary and therefore is never constructed without such axiomatic presuppositions. It adheres to them as to an anchor thrown into the shoreless sea of discursive knowledge, into the infinity of possible problems and objects of science. No specialized investigation is conducted *ab ovo*; rather it begins, so to speak, in the middle, for it always depends on an entire series of contingent or certain axiomatic principles, that is, it is always *dogmatically* conditioned. Such is the inevitable dogmatism of our scientific thought, and no "criticism" can free us of it, although there is a tendency to forget about this dogmatism too easily and to present the results of such contingent knowledge as knowledge *quand même*, as absolute truth. Only that scientific inquiry can be acknowledged as "critical" that is conscious of its dogmatic contingency and takes it into account in determining the critical mass or theoretical value of its propositions.

Thus the science of economy, or political economy, is also a dogmatically conditioned branch of human knowledge. It is contingent both in its empirical dimension (here, too, there is greater awareness of this contingency, for example, the connection of political economy with technology) and in its general philosophical underpinnings. One or another philosophy of economy, establishing the presuppositions of political economy, is decidedly not created within itself, is not the result of scientific investigation, as is sometimes thought, but is incorporated in science a priori, although it predetermines the character of its conclusions. Economic materialism (in statistics, radical Quételetism) had the courage to extract these presuppositions and mold them into an independent philosophical system; in so doing, it revealed the secret of political economy, which had used its principles silently and under cover, naively considering them to be the fruit of its own scientific work. At

the same time economic materialism, by extracting and dogmatizing what had merely been assumed by scientific practice, made these presuppositions into an independent problem, thus ultimately aiding in the awakening of critical thought in this field. The discipline of economics currently finds itself in a severe philosophical crisis: the rejection of a conscious adherence to economic materialism has left economics completely devoid of any philosophical basis and turned it into an abstract manipulation of empirical facts and observations, so that it can barely be taken seriously as a science. For this reason the problem of the *philosophy of economy* or, better, the totality of these problems is now of interest not just to philosophy but also to specialized economic investigations.

What seems self-evident in practice often poses the greatest problems for the philosophical mind. Such, for example, is the entire theory of knowledge that, essentially, investigates self-evident forms of cognition and perceives in them the most difficult and complicated philosophical problems. This deceptive obviousness results in the common acceptance of such propositions as immutable and apodictic, so that to deny them seems absurd; or, as is frequent in specialized sciences, they are taken as proven within the realm of that particular science; the outcome, in our time of scientific specialization, is a peculiar but characteristic dogmatism of specialized sciences. We require the effort of philosophical analysis to free ourselves of this. We must begin to doubt that which it is unusual or improper to question, we must look with the naive eyes of a foreigner or a savage, for whom starched collars and white cuffs, self-evident for us, seem peculiar, and who asks about their true purpose.

Matters are just about thus with political economy. It, too, takes for granted too much that it received at its birth and has therefore become accustomed to treat as its organic attribute, its constant baggage. If we grant free reign to philosophical

doubt while reading a current political-economic tract, we immediately see how deeply this dogmatism of presuppositions penetrates its construction and how divinely innocent of this it remains.

The science of economics belongs to the most contingent and philosophically least independent of disciplines; yet it has accepted the dominant role assigned to it by our wealth-conscious epoch, striving to become the regal legislator of thought and expanding its influence far beyond its own horizons. Insofar as it succeeds, it does determine the general economism of our epoch—the distinguishing characteristic of its historical self-consciousness. Political economy with its economism is particularly in need of a reevaluation and deepening of its principles, of renewal through philosophical doubt. The philosophical examination of the basic principles of economic action and economic thought has become imperative; such is the task of the philosophy of economy, which evaluates not only the philosophical a priori of political economy but of the economic worldview generally. Naturally, however, its own problematic lies deeper than the simple service to political economy would require. The philosophy of economy belongs to philosophy generally, constitutes a significant part of it, and is not merely the illegitimate child of political economy. What, then, is the philosophy of economy as a philosophical teaching?

II. PHILOSOPHY AND LIFE

The definition of the task of the philosophy of economy is, to a significant extent, connected with one's understanding of the tasks of philosophy generally; yet what these should be is at present the subject of much disagreement. One might say, however, that the answer to this basic, apparently preliminary question—what is philosophy?—generally contains the essence

of a particular philosophical system and reveals its central assumptions. If we look at any one of the philosophical orientations of the past and present, we can see that they differ first of all in their understanding of this initial question. Apparently, there is no generally valid solution to this question; moreover, it cannot be resolved by specialized argumentation within a given philosophical system. On the contrary, this question poses itself outside any single philosophical system, which indeed is then constructed around this already existing question. What does philosophy *want* to be, what is the topic of interest toward which it is “oriented,” what is the ultimate immediate given standing before it? This is what predetermines a philosophical system. This manner of posing the problem intentionally uncovers this central nerve of the philosophical system. For many contemporary philosophers, even the combination of the concepts—the *philosophy of economy*—seems unacceptable or shocking, not so much because the combination of these two words in a single title sounds odd but because philosophy is here definitely and openly given a particular predicate; for philosophy likes to think of itself as “pure” and independent contemplation and balks at the idea of a philosophy *of* anything. It is true, the contemporary ear has begun to accustom itself to such expressions as, for example, the philosophy of culture, or of art, of law, and so on (even “philosophy of money,” circulated by the skeptical philosophical impressionist Simmel), yet these phrases are rarely used with any degree of self-consciousness and “critical self-evaluation” and, in any case, still await philosophical explication. On the other hand, it is true that the greatest representatives of absolute, independent philosophy such as Fichte or Hegel developed systems of the philosophy of law, culture, history, but for them these were merely particular parts of a general system, with no independent value. For them as well, a philosophy *of* economy or of something else, that is, proceed-

ing from this given reality, would have been a debasement and betrayal of philosophy. The dogma of the independence of philosophy, in the sense of its closedness and self-sufficiency and thus its absoluteness, was for them not subject to doubt; such is Hegel's grand system in its Luciferian pride, such is Fichte's first system (the 1794 *Theory of Science*).

I deny this independence and self-sufficiency of the philosophy of the self-styled absolute spirit, which generates both pure nothingness and pure everythingness and thus equates itself with the Creator. Philosophizing is always about something that stands before us as an immediate and uncontingent given, or, to use a current phrase, philosophy is always *oriented toward something* outside itself. And this also determines the more general and fundamental question of the *relation of philosophy to life*, which never leaves the field of philosophical consciousness and becomes particularly acute in periods of exaggerated, one-sided intellectualism such as post-Kantian absolute idealism or recently in neo-Kantian rationalism.² Life is more immediate than, and prior to, any philosophical reflection or self-reflection. Life is ultimately undefinable, though constantly in the process of definition; it fills our judgments with content but is never exhausted by them. It fills all the twists and turns of our existence and, more particularly, of our thought; it is the maternal womb, the inexhaustible source, the immeasurable depth. Life is simultaneously everything and nothing, for it cannot be attributed to any particular *something* and thus be categorized and defined. It is outside time and space, for, although it is expressed in spatial and temporal phenomena, it is never fully exhausted by them and remains prior to them. It is not life that exists in space and time, but spatiality and temporality that are manifestations of life. Life cannot be reduced to anything simpler than itself, although it proceeds from the Source of life, the God of the living but not of the dead. Philosophical self-

consciousness inevitably runs up against life as its primordial principle. Life cannot be deduced from any reasons and is in this sense miraculous, it is freedom, reigning over necessity. In relation to life, all aspects of being are but partial definitions: will, thought, instinct, consciousness, the subconscious spheres, even being itself, the copula *is* and the predicate of existence have meaning only in relation to the essential, which is life, supposing its particular manifestations or states as particular definitions. There is no being *in abstracto*; there is only concrete being for itself, self-determining life. And this miraculous source of life is reflected in a myriad of individual consciousnesses while retaining its identity and unity. Life is the mystery of world being, accessible to experience but unfathomable to the mind; it is that primordial light in which both consciousness and difference are born. It is into this shoreless ocean that philosophy throws its anchor, seeking that point where the Archimedes trigger of a philosophical system can be applied, weighing the entire universe on its scales; philosophy inevitably requires a point of reference *outside* itself that is immediately given and inalienable, in order for the possibility itself of philosophizing not to be destroyed. Creation from nothing is given to man neither in the field of philosophy nor in other things. The content of philosophy depends to a significant extent on where and how this anchor is thrown, on what impresses or “surprises” (*θαυμάζει*) the thinker, or on the *orientation* of philosophy; so we could write the history of philosophical systems as the history of various philosophical orientations.

Life is the maternal womb that gives birth to all of its manifestations: both dreamy nighttime consciousness full of endless possibilities and hopes, and the daytime, waking consciousness that generates philosophical and scientific thought—both Apollo and Dionysus. It is of foremost importance to keep in mind that thought is born of life and that in this sense philo-

sophical reflection is life's own self-reflection; in other words, the logical principle, the *logos* of life, originates in that concrete and indivisible whole in which what is logically impenetrable and transcendent to thought unites indivisibly and yet discretely with the logical principle. Life, as the concrete unity of the logical and the alogical, remains of course supralogical, cannot be accounted for by any logical definition, which would necessarily be concerned only with schemas and boundaries rather than with its living texture; yet this does not make life alogical or logically indifferent. Life gives birth to thought, it thinks and has its own self-consciousness, it reflects on itself. The logical principle has boundaries that it cannot cross, but within them it reigns unchallenged. The alogical is impenetrable to the logical; yet it is itself constrained by the logical. The logical and the alogical are connected and interdependent. Thus light presumes an ever-present darkness (*καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει*—“And the light shineth in darkness,” John 1:5) and joy ever-conquered sadness (Schelling), while the warmth of love is generated by a muted flame that has ceased to scorch (Jakob Böhme). Only such a view makes the possibility of apprehending and knowing being intelligible, explains the possibility of philosophy, of science, even of simple common sense and generally of any kind of thought that rises above simple automatic instinct. Thought is born in life and of life; it is a necessary hypostasis of life. For this reason it is not outside life; it is not transcendent but immanent, although not in the sense of contemporary immanentism, which equates being with (logical) consciousness and therefore puts an equality sign between the logical and the essential and which, consequently, denies the alogical root of being.

But the history of philosophy has produced two interpretations of this dual nature of life, logical and alogical. One of them considers the logical principle as the fundamental prin-

principle of being, perceiving being as self-developing thought, thinking itself, generating itself and turning in on itself in a closed philosophical system; this is *intellectualism*. The second interpretation emphasizes the reverse side of the dilemma and pronounces the priority of the allogical over the logical, of instinct over reason, unconscious over conscious; this is *anti-intellectualism*, a-logism taken to the extreme of anti-logism.³

Intellectualism represents an extraordinarily powerful current in contemporary European philosophy and might even be called a hereditary illness that first appeared in its forefather Descartes with his ultra-intellectualist *Cogito ergo sum*. Despite all the ambiguity and lack of clarity of this statement as it was developed by Descartes,⁴ history has interpreted it in the most intellectualist sense possible, that is, that being and ultimately life, as well as the individual personality (*sum*), require a rational basis and can receive it from philosophy. Philosophy is then torn from its roots and inevitably falls into a delusion of grandeur, immersing itself in a world of dreams and shadows, sometimes grand and fascinating, but ultimately lifeless. In other words, an epoch of dreamy idealism opens, for which *cogitare = essere = vivere*—the “Copernican” pretensions of the armchair know-it-all. European philosophy is still in the throes of this illness. In the course of further development, intellectualism has taken two courses: *absolute idealism*, which with its inevitable panlogism proclaims the boundless universality of the logical principle, self-conscious thought, which achieves its ultimate expression in philosophy (according to which philosophy is higher than life, is its goal and product); and *critical rationalism*, in which metaphysical panlogism gives way to “scientific idealism,” and the role of world wisdom is assumed by formal schemas of scientific cognition. The boldest representatives of intellectualism in contemporary metaphysics are, of course, Fichte in his first system⁵ of *Ich-philosophie* (developed

in the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* [Foundations of a general theory of science] and the *Grundriss der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* [Basics of the general theory of science], 1794, and also in two *Einleitungen in die Wissenschaftslehre* [Introductions to the theory of science], 1797), and particularly Hegel, who reaches the ultimate extreme of intellectualism. Hegel's general significance in this context is well known; a specific explication of his system from this point of view lies outside the scope of the present work.⁶

Scientific rationalism, the other form of contemporary intellectualism, is represented by scientific positivism but also finds conscious and "critical" expression in neo-Kantian idealism, with its pancategorialism and panmethodism, and in contemporary methodologies of science or so-called scientific philosophy. This trait is more or less characteristic of all neo-Kantianism in its most influential branches, but it finds its most complete and radical expression in the teachings of the so-called Marburg school headed by Cohen, that Hegel of scientific rationalism.⁷ Here philosophy is openly and clearly oriented toward science, and above all towards mathematics, and the concepts of specialized sciences with their abstract categories are interpreted as the single, higher, thoroughly rational reality, generated from meonic nothingness by scientific reason. Science is the $\delta\nu\tau\omega\varsigma \delta\nu$ of reality, whereas philosophy, as a system of categories, as the self-consciousness of scientific reason, is the $\delta\nu\tau\omega\varsigma \delta\nu$ of science. The alogical is ignored, whereas the irrational is acknowledged only as a possible problem, as an "ewige Aufgabe" [eternal task], that is, it is merely inserted into the system of categories and thus rationalized.

The true founder of the contemporary philosophy of intellectualism is, of course, Kant. Both of its branches—panlogism and pancategorialism, Hegelianism and Cohenism—are bound to Kant by inheritance. Schopenhauer, and Schelling,

and Fichte of the second period have in one or another manner also been connected with him, however; this shows that Kant's works conceal in themselves various possibilities but in themselves are devoid of sufficient definition (thanks to the lack of clarity in the theory of the role of "Empfindung" [sensation] in the theory of knowledge and the ambiguity of the metaphysical theory of the *Ding an sich* [thing in itself]).

On the opposite pole to intellectualism is contemporary anti-intellectualism, which is however simultaneously generated by intellectualism as a reaction to it and is therefore incapable of overcoming it. The distinguishing characteristic of anti-intellectualism is skepticism concerning the independence of the logical principle. This skepticism originates in the tendency to view reason as nothing but a tool of life, guided by blind, alogical, almost antilogical instinct. Reason acquires the status of an instrument, valuable only insofar as it is useful. Thus reason is not only deprived of the autonomous sovereignty of self-generating thought attributed to it by intellectualism but is actually seen as a product, or as a means. Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel all sought to understand the *history* of reason in its self-consciousness and development, but their task was limited to an analysis only of the development, not of the genesis of reason, and therefore has nothing in common with anti-intellectualism's contemporary effort to explain the very origin of reason, for it acknowledged the rights of reason and assumed it to be primordially given. Anti-intellectualism, in contrast, proceeds on the silent, or even half-consciously articulated, presupposition that *reason originated in time*, that is, that there could have been a time when there was no reason. In this case we must go farther and admit that reason could have not been at all, and life might have remained blind and instinctive. We do not find this even in Schopenhauer, the philosopher of blind will who comes closest to anti-intellectualism; even

for him, reason necessarily originates together with the beginning of the world-historical process: the world as will is necessarily *also* representation. The irrationalism combined with instrumentalism of the effort to reduce reason to evolutionary accident (not, of course, in the sense of lack of empirical reasons, but in that of the absence of ideal inevitability) unquestionably degrades reason and questions the very possibility of cognition, that is, by the same token, the possibility of its own self. This irrationalism suffers from self-destructive skepticism—the lot of every radical skepticism that advances any sort of positive statement. At present, the most different thinkers, with varying degrees of philosophical consciousness and for different philosophical motives, rally around the flag of anti-intellectualism: Darwinists in epistemology—including, on one hand, Feuerbach, Nietzsche, and Simmel, and on the other the economic materialists and some philosophical materialists (hylozoists such as Hackel); then Bergson and his followers, moving the significance of instinct to the forefront; and, finally, contemporary pragmatists. For some this is the flag of rebellion against Kant and neo-Kantianism and the discovery of metaphysics and religion (Bergson and some of the pragmatists); for others, “pre-Kantians after Kant,” on the contrary, this is a means of shielding themselves from any metaphysics or religion and decisively affirming themselves in the zoological calling of human apes, while simultaneously appropriating the throne of the superman. Reason cannot be desecrated by reason itself, however, and *la raison toujours finira par la raison*. The fundamental and inalienable flaw of anti-intellectualism striving to be philosophy, that is, a logical system, is the impossibility of justifying its own existence and goals by its own principles.⁸ Here the classic example of a self-contradictory judgment, falling into a vicious circle, inevitably repeats itself: one Cretan said that all Cretans were liars, therefore, as a Cretan, he must

have lied, and his own statement contradicts the truth; however, in this particular case it turns out that he said the truth and Cretans are really liars, but then he, too, lied, and so on. Anti-intellectualism justly and powerfully emphasizes the boundaries of intellectualist rationalism. Life is broader and deeper than rational consciousness, and this consciousness has its own history, for below and behind it lie “subliminal,” subconscious, or pre-conscious spheres. Although the rational-discursive daytime I is the sharpest expression or symptom of life, it *grows out of* the depths and has roots in the darkness of the nighttime, dreaming I; the personality is immeasurably deeper and broader than its consciousness at any given moment. Life in nature acquires consciousness by a long and roundabout path, not immediately. This truth was felt with great immediacy by the “historian of reason,” Schelling, before any Darwinism or evolutionism. If we limit ourselves merely to correcting the perversities of presumptuous scholastic rationalism, then we still don’t have anti-intellectualism, which consists precisely in the destruction of the necessary, primordial, and ideal connection of logical and alogical and immerses the light of reason in the dark elements of the alogical. By doing so, it in fact carries out a sentence on itself as a philosophical teaching. Only the basic mood of anti-intellectualism, the rebellion against deadening rationalism, is valuable; but “we cannot live by rebellion alone” (Dostoevsky) even in philosophy, for here too rebellion is that same slavery, but in reverse, making us the spiritual prisoners of rationalism instead of overcoming it.

Thus life is the concrete and indissoluble unity of the logical and the alogical, and only this proposition makes the fact of knowledge comprehensible; in philosophy, in science, and even in our self-consciousness we find this same living synthesis of logical and alogical. Life is not antilogical, is not alien to the logos; logos is the connection of things, necessarily having

transsubjective⁹ or objective meaning—this axiom is constantly presupposed by thought and lies at the foundation of our logical self-consciousness. But at the same time thought is necessarily tied to the allogical principle and is constantly reflected from it (as the I in Fichte's system depends on continuous points of non-I for its expression); thought has a substratum outside itself, or, in other words, life is not exhausted by thought, and thought is not yet being, although all that which exists can be thought. The general relation between thought (both scientific and philosophical) and its object is characterized by the possibility of thinking all that exists, but also by its allogical nature. All of living reality is ideal-real in all of its dimensions; it is allogical-logical. By itself this synthesis evidently represents something supralogical, not quite accessible to thought—a wall that logical thought encounters as its ultimate limit. And this living and mysterious synthesis of two different yet not contradictory principles—the logical and the allogical—takes place in every act of thought.

Logical thought, *abstracted* from the concrete unity of logical and allogical, is based on the possibility of reflection, which re-creates reality as an ideal series (or, rather, many ideal series) of logical concepts, symbols, or schemas of living, concrete unities. This construction of ideal series of reality, based on the abstraction of the logical principle and the symbolic expression of concrete, supralogical reality through concepts—this symbolism of logic or “algebra of thought” (Couture's expression)—does not, in itself, transcend the boundaries of life and in this sense is also a concrete living act, from which the odor of life, the aftertaste of “psychologism,” cannot be removed by any epistemological disinfectant. (In general the “cleanness” that attracts contemporary epistemologists, the distance from any kind of “psychologism,” that is, from life that is supralogical and inexhaustible by logical thought, is of course un-

attainable, and even the effort to achieve it is the product of the malady of intellectualism, which equates thought and being.) But this ideal, purely logical reflection of concrete ideal-real reality is actually a sort of extraction of the logical principle; and if we examine life only in the light of this principle, we are convinced by the illusion that we really have understood life in all its depth, and, for this limited and contingent point of view, thought really is equivalent to being. The intellect is capable of constructing an abstract world, wholly rational and “transparent,” or intelligible, alongside the concrete world, and a luminous edifice is erected on a dark and impenetrable foundation. The ideal power and light of the logos is revealed in its perception of itself as the beginning of being.

Ideal reality—the construct of logical thought—is thoroughly logical and rational; it can contain no dark, hidden nooks and crannies; it is entirely accessible to logical criticism and subject to “critical self-accountability.” In it everything is connected and continuous (*Kontinuität* is the basic law of thought, as Cohen so vehemently insists), and there is no room for hiatuses or omissions. Such is the nature of thought as it is revealed through analysis of its activity in its ideal expression, in the science of logic, and in the analysis of cognition, that is, epistemology. Thought is self-sufficient in its development, in its dialectics, in its tasks and problems; it is held together by a system of categories that, in turn, are inextricably bound to each other, and to this extent even pancategorialism holds (for its monstrous lies begin only where it imparts ontological significance to its epistemological propositions and explicates them as intellectualistic metaphysics). But we must never forget that thought, based on abstraction from life, is the product of the reflective activity of reason, the self-reflection of life. Thought operates through judgments and concepts that are something like agglutinations of thought, crystallic formations

that are then substituted for whole, supralogical life. These logical symbols and symbols of symbols, concepts and categories, are in fact the columns that support the suspended, lacy bridges of scientific and philosophical thought and on which the idealistic *fata morgana* stumbles. Even so they cannot be considered to be hanging in the air, for their mass grows into the ground. Concepts remain symbols or schemes of living reality. They are *given* by life, and they in turn *set up* problems for thought. Contemporary intellectualism has become too accustomed to play with postulates, obscuring the givens on whose basis they have been set up. But one cannot solve a problem without data; this would be like trying to solve an equation consisting only of unknowns.

It is the givens that serve as the point of departure for one or another mental construction and admit of no proof; they possess apodictic certainty and are obligatory for thought, and they must be accepted as a self-evident axiom certified in the process of life. But, of course, the act of reflection itself, the concentration on one or another manifestation of life, is a free act (as deeply felt in Fichte's system), an act of creation of life. This arbitrary concentration on one or another point or "fact" of life is precisely what I call *orientation* on this fact. For example, so-called scientific philosophy is actually the philosophy of science, oriented on the fact of scientific cognition (as is made clear in Cohen's system), whereas epistemology is in the same sense the philosophy of thought and cognition. General philosophy (the metaphysics of being) reflects on being (life) as a unity in its most general and abstract definition, in its total continuity and contingency (Plotinus, Hegel). Of course, we could reserve the title of philosophy for only this last type of philosophizing, thus removing all the other, more particular themes or motifs of philosophical systems from the field. But this would be merely a terminological distinction. In its essence,

philosophy remains pluralistic, and it has different themes and orientations. Thought can cover a more or less wide circle of problems as it begins at a particular point of departure and eventually returns to it. In the end, these testimonies of life are the “*Empfindung*” [sensation] that lies as a dead weight at the bottom of Kant’s *Erfahrung* [experience], they are the “external impulse” (*äußerer Anstoß*) that remained impenetrable for Fichte’s idealistic system. This is the “otherness of spirit” that even Hegel was compelled to introduce into his system. Finally, this is the $\mu\eta\ \delta\upsilon$ (and not $\omicron\nu\kappa\ \delta\upsilon$) that is by no means nothing, but only uncertainty in Mr. Cohen’s teaching of *reiner Ursprung* [pure origins]. Life inevitably intrudes into the realm of the logical, becomes immanent to the knowing consciousness, while remaining simultaneously transcendent to it in its concrete, supralogical unity. This is the *Ding an sich* that, though transcendent with respect to rational systems, inevitably penetrates even the most self-contained idealistic philosophical construction. Life is not transcendent for the living being with its whole living experience, but it is transcendent for its faculties of cognition, reflection, and thought. Life is the *Ding an sich* in its immediate mystical depths of phenomenal experience; this is how it comes to the surface of thought and knowledge, as foam or reflections appear on the surface of a bottomless body of water.

The idea of the concrete synthesis of the alogical and the logical in the supralogical unity of life lies deep in the Christian teachings of God’s three hypostases and of the creation of the world from the earth “without form, and void” through the word. In contemporary philosophy, this idea is developed with one or another variation in a series of philosophical systems; here we can include Schelling, particularly in the last period, Schopenhauer, Hartmann (who defends this idea with particular energy both against Hegelianism and against materi-

alism), Vladimir Soloviev, and Prince S. N. Trubetskoy.¹⁰ Different thinkers have arrived at similar solutions of the question of the nature of thought, though approaching it from various angles.

III. PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE

Thought is intrinsically “oriented” rather than independent, it is thought *about something*; and this something is determined somewhat arbitrarily, for reflection is an act of freedom. But, similarly to the way in which paths covering an entire sphere may be drawn through any point on its surface, or to the way in which an infinite multiplicity of curves or lines may intersect in a single point, so, in principle, any one specific orientation may hold the key to a whole series of philosophical problems and, consequently, holds the possibility for their resolution. Obviously, not all orientations are in practice convenient and accessible for the thinking being, who in this sense is subject to spatial and temporal, personal and historical limitations; hence, practically, we must speak not of all possible orientations but only of the few that are the most practical and therefore natural (just as geometers deal not with all theoretically possible geometries but only with those that contribute to the understanding of our three-dimensional space, that is, mostly with Euclidean geometry). There are not set boundaries here, however, owing to the unity and connectedness of life and the law of continuity of thought: everything is in everything else and everything can be found in everything else. But, precisely for this reason, there can be no single, “royal” path for thought; rather, given a multiplicity of initial orientations, we must also acknowledge a multiplicity of paths for thought and therefore the objective “significance” of various constructions. In other words, there can be no single *total* philosophical system like that

in which Hegel and the idealists believed, confusing abstractness with general applicability and taking the most abstract system for the most universal.¹¹ To perceive a reality in which *everything* is rational and inevitable and there are no accidents, to find everything in everything else in a single unified whole, immediately to apprehend the entire dialectic of world being—this means to look on the world with God’s eye, to transcend discursive thought, to step outside of time. This would really be that concrete idealism, that thinking of reality, to which Hegel pretended, whereas discursive thought is capable of finding everything in everything else only by moving from one thing to another, proceeding from the particular to the particular and finding the general only in the process of transition. For this reason, discursive thought, that is, philosophy, and to an even greater extent science, is *pluralistic by nature*; the single truth is the *Ding an sich*, transcendent for cognition as a given but immanent as a goal, as the ideal of cognition (Kant’s “idea”). Therefore philosophical systems can *justifiably* differ among themselves depending on their initial orientation or, in other words, one can construct different scientific and philosophical systems by proceeding from different points of orientation to arrive at equally valid assessments of a particular object; this is analogous to measuring the same mountain from different sides and standpoints in different light and still arriving at uncontradictory projections of the same object. Different points of view can, to a point, coexist peacefully, while the mutually contradictory ones eliminate each other. (This thought forms the basis of the history of philosophy for Hegel and his successors, including S. N. Trubetskoy.)

It is difficult to refrain from comparing philosophical creativity to art, for a philosophical system is also a type of artistic creation, a “poetry of concepts”; it contains inner necessity and logical order, as a work of art contains a necessary consistency

and harmony in the relation of parts to the whole, self-evident to “artistic reason” if logically unprovable. Yet the planning of the composition gives free rein to creative freedom, and the initial orientation requires artistic tact: here philosophical-artistic talent demonstrates itself most.

The point of view advanced here, following necessarily from our general understanding of the relation of philosophy and life, has nothing in common with skepticism, which undermines any possibility of objective cognition; it is, rather, aesthetic relativism in philosophy, acknowledging in principle the possibility of a plurality of philosophical paths and transforming philosophy into philosophies, as well as science into sciences. The progress of philosophy and science, then, depends not on unity of direction (which we decidedly do not observe in the history of ideas) but on the unity of the functions of thought and cognition, as the self-reflection of life, single and continuous. I presume that faith in absolute systems has been undermined forever—by the crazy pretensions of Hegel’s absolute idealism, by the efforts of recent criticism with its refined and corrupting relativism, and, finally, by the progress of scientific knowledge in its multiplicity and complexity. The need for a system, for architectonics lies too deep in reason for us to free ourselves of it; not only every philosophical doctrine but also science strives to build itself into a closed system of concepts and to connect ends with beginnings. In constructing such a system, however, the contemporary thinker (if he does not fall into delusions of grandeur or naive dogmatism) does not claim to present a single, absolute philosophy. In this fact the well-being of contemporary individualism finds satisfaction, as it seeks to express itself in the individualization of philosophical creativity. The meaning of the history of philosophy, too, is determined according to this understanding of the nature of philosophy. The history of philosophy becomes not only the history of “the dis-

covery of ideas of the absolute," as Hegel justly saw it,¹² but also a survey of the various *motives* of philosophical creativity or, what is the same, its various initial orientations. In any case I suppose that these definitions, in practice, coincide, for the discovery of new ideas of the absolute comes about thanks to the discovery of new ways of thinking about it. The absolute is of course unique, although it appears many-faceted for those who approach it by different paths. The above, in principle, also justifies the task of the present investigation. The proposed understanding of philosophy removes the objections to an effort to construct a philosophical system oriented on economy as a fact of life. This task, of course, cannot be understood in the absolutistic spirit of the claims, inherited from the Enlightenment and Hegel, of absolute idealism or economic materialism; the philosophy of economy does not aspire to be an absolute system, containing in itself *all* philosophical truth in pure form, possessing the key to open all locks. My posited problem pretends to less: I wish to say only that we can approach a general philosophy of life by proceeding also from this aspect of life, and therefore perceive some hitherto unexplored aspects, that is, that a philosophical system can also be constructed as a philosophy of economy. There can be as little objection to a philosophy of economy as to a science of economy, at least unless we fall into skepticism with regard to knowledge generally.

But where, then, does the dividing line between philosophy and science lie? What distinguishes one from the other? First of all, it is clear that it *cannot* be the object of investigation, for both have a single object, which is life in its self-reflection and, moreover, only the aspects of life that can be studied both by scientific investigation and philosophical analysis. The distinction between philosophy and science lies not in their object but in their cognitive orientation, the methods by which they, respectively, approach the object. They also perceive the object

differently and ask different questions about it. Science is specialized by nature. Scientific study proceeds by isolating its object; it is intentionally one-sided. Science cuts little pieces out of reality and studies them as if they were, in fact, all of reality. Science fragments life, divides up reality into separate parts that it then proceeds to put together again in a new mechanism; in its theories, science gives us the schema of this constructed mechanism. What is adjacent to or outside the boundaries of the given science is either a matter of absolute indifference to it or exists only insofar as it intrudes into its specific investigations.¹³ In contrast, philosophy is little inclined toward the detail that distinguishes science. Philosophy is interested in that which is of least concern to science—the connection of given phenomena with the general, the place they occupy with respect to life as a whole. It examines the world and its various aspects as a whole and in the light of the construction of this whole. We might, perhaps, say that philosophy seeks the explanation of the living meaning of phenomena studied by science in their individuality. This is why adjacent fields of inquiry are outside the reach of science: its tacit assumptions are precisely the proper task of philosophy. Thus political economy and the philosophy of economy, for example, both study the economic process, but one engages in detailed analysis, whereas the other looks for its general meaning. The first asks, *what?*, the second asks, *how?*

Philosophical reflection is always directed toward the whole of life, whereas scientific reflection looks at separate parts of it. For this reason, it turns out that philosophical concepts, although larger in scope than scientific concepts, are inevitably poorer in content; they are more general and abstract, for they serve as cognitive instruments in the resolution of problems broader than scientific ones. We can therefore define philosophy as a theory of life as a whole in its most general definition

(actually, S. N. Trubetskoy's definition of metaphysics as a science of being approaches this understanding).¹⁴ In fact, the terminological question of whether we must call philosophy science, or whether this title should belong to specialized sciences alone, is really of secondary importance. Of course, formally speaking, we could call philosophy science, insofar as it is, like science, a methodically constructed system of concepts, but the difference between the cognitive interests of philosophy and science would remain unmarked if we were to adopt this terminological identity of the two. Therefore I feel that, instead of equating philosophy and science, we should see them as two different directions of our thought and cognition.

IV. CRITICISM AND DOGMATISM

At the present time it is impossible to speak about philosophical questions without paying at least minimal tribute to the "theory of cognition" and without kowtowing before the Chinese dragon of "criticism" that currently embellishes the portals of the philosophical academy. Criticism or dogmatism? "That is the question." In my opinion—neither one nor the other. First of all, true philosophical criticism and "criticism" are not only not identical but differ from each other in varying degrees. "Criticism" can, and does, in contemporary scholasticism, suffer from dogmatism no less than the dogmatics of times past, and among the "criticists" who consider themselves critical philosophers there are, as always, few who really deserve the title. The most ambitious and influential criticistic constructions of our time (those of the so-called Freiburg and Marburg schools: Windelband's and Rickert's teleological idealism and Cohen's and Natorp's logic of pure cognition) suffer from the unabashed dogmatism of their fundamental propositions: in one, the fragile and unstable apparatus of contemporary scientific thought

is automatically accepted as the absolute foundation of philosophy; in the other, certain patterns of cognition are mistakenly thought to be absolute, and transformed by a series of sophistical reasoning into an ethereal “object of cognition.” And yet each of these schools considers itself to be the true heir of Kantian criticism. Of course, coherence and self-accountability, strict logic and conceptual clarity, in other words, critical self-control are desirable for all, and who would refuse to be a critical philosopher in this sense!—in fact we all like to consider ourselves as such.¹⁵ All creative philosophical minds have undoubtedly been truly critical philosophers, for they clarified one or another question and introduced new problems; it would be naive to think that there was no philosophical criticism before Kant. Actually, this assumption bears no relation to historical fact. At the same time, there is no particular “inventor’s secret” that holds the key to all philosophical criticism. Contemporary “criticism” is merely a scholastic orientation based on a terribly exaggerated evaluation of Kant and his (supposed) “Copernican philosophical achievement.” We can see the philosophical illness of modernity in neo-Kantian criticism, that “alchemy of cognition”¹⁶ of our day; perhaps it represents the twilight of philosophy.

The contemporary argument between dogmatism and criticism can be reduced to the question of establishing normal relations between the practice of life in its *immediacy*, its immersion in the object of knowledge,¹⁷ with its concomitant indistinguishability of subject and object, or form and content, a priori and a posteriori, on one hand, and, on the other, criticism, which expresses *reflection* with respect to the given act of knowledge and is already a secondary potential, to use Fichte’s expression.¹⁸ The critical investigation of knowledge is always a second story erected on a given foundation; it is reflection with respect to a fact of knowledge that has already taken place.

As Fichte says about his *Wissenschaftslehre* [Theory of science], and as can be applied to all *Erkenntnislehre* [theories of cognition], “not one of its thoughts, statements, or declarations is taken from real life, nor does it correspond to real life. These are properly thoughts about thoughts which one has or ought to have, statements about statements . . . , declarations about declarations.”¹⁹ Every act of knowledge, as an act of life, is in this sense necessarily dogmatic, that is, distinguished by its immediacy, self-absorption, and unreflective self-sufficiency. Such also was, of course, the *Critique of Pure Reason* as it was conceived in the mind of its author, before, as a ready product, it became a touchstone on which the critical mice could sharpen their teeth. Thought and knowledge are creative acts, and creativity is immediate: creative notions and ideas are conceived in the consciousness, not fabricated in a critical laboratory like a homuncule. So there can be no critical guidelines that would really teach us how to wield the instruments of knowledge, for criticism arrives only post factum and is a reflection on an already completed act of cognition. For this reason it is impossible to learn criticism, and professional “criticism” is an empty pretension. Thought and knowledge cannot be based on or justified by criticism, for they themselves are facts, existing before any criticism and independent of it. Criticism engages in the analysis and description of givens of knowledge, but it is not its legislator. Here it is appropriate to remember Hegel’s words, born of the immediacy of philosophical power, of the very depth of thought’s self-consciousness.

Critical philosophy’s main point is that, before proceeding to knowledge of God, the essence of things and so on, we must first investigate the *possibility of cognition* and whether it is applicable to such tasks; first we must study the *instrument* we

intend to use to accomplish our task; if it is no good, all of our labor will have been in vain. This thought seemed so plausible that it provoked much surprise and sympathy, and diverted the attention of cognition from objects to its own self, i.e., to formal principles. If, however, we are not deceived by words, we can see that other instruments can be investigated and evaluated only upon their performance of the task for which they are intended. But the investigation of knowledge cannot be undertaken otherwise than through *cognition* itself; to investigate such a “tool” means nothing other than to engage in cognition. But to wish to know before knowledge is just as ridiculous [*ungereimt*] as the scholastic’s wise rule—to learn to swim before jumping in the water.²⁰

There is no movement, said the bearded elder,
The other was silent and began to walk before him . . .
Alexander Pushkin

Criticism, which would like to be logical and to leave nothing without critical reflection, moves in a circle and resembles a snake trying to catch its own tail. For as it critically investigates immediate, “dogmatic,” unreflective knowledge—knowledge, so to speak, of the first potential—it promotes this knowledge to the second potential and recreates the same first potential in a new cognitive act—that is, it knows immediately, unreflectively, immersing itself in the object of its knowledge. To put it in contemporary language, it commits the mortal sin of “psychologism,” and therefore a criticism of criticism becomes necessary, that is, knowledge of a third potential, which in turn requires knowledge of a fourth, fifth, . . . n , $n + 1$. . . potential. In other words, we have here a *regressus in infinitum*²¹—evil

infinity precisely where we need a finite quantity, all of which shows the falseness of the problem itself.

Knowledge is rational by nature; it is, or at least strives to become, an organism of concepts and judgments. In relation to the alogical-logical fullness of life it is abstract and mediated, but, at the same time, as living action, it is immediate and “dogmatic,” and this living dogmatism of knowledge cannot be dissolved by any criticism. On the contrary, we must admit that it is this dogmatism that makes criticism possible and is tacitly acknowledged by criticism. Consequently, dogmatism and criticism are connected and interrelated, not opposed and hostile to each other. The practice of knowledge, which originates in the depths of life, is immediate, naive, dogmatic; knowledge reflecting on itself, checking itself, testing itself, is critical.

This is how I perceive the problem of the critique of knowledge.

The above in no way denies the problems of the theory of knowledge, nor does it diminish its importance as a scientific or philosophical discipline; rather, I wish only to refute its significance as a legislator of knowledge and the assumption that a theory of knowledge must precede knowledge itself. Two types of problem remain for the theory of cognition: the scientific and the philosophical or, if you will, the metaphysical. The scientific task reduces to an analysis of knowledge from the standpoint of its general forms, or a critique of knowledge in the proper sense. The philosophical task consists in the explanation of the fact of knowledge, the explication of its life meaning. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, as in the contemporary theory of cognition, these two tasks are frequently confused or insufficiently distinguished despite their differences, and this confusion is intentional, for it is in keeping with the spirit of Kant’s entire system. The philosophy of knowledge generally and the philosophy of science in particular are necessary and important

divisions of philosophy, although they may have a very different significance from that now attributed to them by “scientific philosophy.”

V. A PRELIMINARY DEFINITION OF ECONOMY

In the current empirical world, “life lives” only in a constant struggle with death. The “organic” world, the kingdom of life in its various forms, is surrounded by a hostile atmosphere of death, of the deadened and mechanistic, of stifling necessity. Under “the heavy shroud of graying skies,” under this leaden sky, on a poisoned, plague-ridden earth, life seems a sort of accident, an oversight or indulgence of the part of death. Encircled by a ring of death, constantly threatened by the yawning abyss of nonbeing, life timidly and stingily huddles in the corners of the universe, saving itself from final extermination only through a terrible struggle. For if it cannot be completely exterminated, life is constantly in the process of being destroyed as it becomes the prey of nonbeing, waiting to strike from all sides and in all guises. Life is not separated from nonbeing by an impenetrable wall that would make these attempts futile. It is imperfect in itself, for it is fragile, temporary, mortal.

The coexistence of life with death, the living with the non-living, the material, is one of reality’s greatest paradoxes and an eternal riddle for the mind. There is only life, and all that exists, exists only in the light of life. *Things*, so-called dead nature, that is, everything in which the signs of life are apparently absent, are only a minus of life, its negative coefficient, but outside of this definition, which, though negative, is expressed in terms of life, things turn into phantoms and disappear. They are visible only in the light of life, as objects emerge from the meonic darkness of nonbeing (potential being) when the sun rises and disappear again into nonbeing in the dark of night.

Even death exists only thanks to life and in its light; death is *nonlife*, for it is defined only as the negation of life; it is but the shadow of life, and outside of life it is nothing, it does not exist—“God made not death” (Wisd. of Sol. 1:13), it does not have an independent strength of being. We cannot say that the absolute nothing ($\sigma\upsilon\kappa \acute{\omicron}\nu$, in contrast to the positive if indefinite $\mu\grave{\eta} \acute{\omicron}\nu$) is; it drags along its contingent existence as a shadow of being, or its mirror image, requiring some kind of true being for its phantom existence. Still, the struggle between life and death, light and darkness, the living and the thing-like, penetrates our entire life, rendering it imperfect, limited, nonabsolute.

If the struggle of life and death is so irresolvable on the surface of world being, then this is only because this struggle takes place also inside being, in the very heart of the world, which is capable of supporting only *mortal life*, that is, life that, although absolute and extratemporal in its metaphysical character, yet, in full contradiction to its essence, is not absolute in its factual existence. Metaphysically, the death of the living is not only unnatural but self-contradictory, and hence logically inconceivable; we cannot think through this concept because of its inner inconsistency, and yet empirically this has become the most general and profound law of existence. This paradox holds a riddle for thought. We have become so accustomed to death, to the very idea of mortal life, that we are no longer amazed by this contradiction, which is however much deeper and more radical than in such juxtapositions as, for example, hot ice, cold heat, black whiteness.

Nonetheless, however we may explain it, at present only mortal life exists in the world, and this is so widespread that death has become an attribute and sign of life—for only the living can die. Consequently, life is affirmed in the kingdom of death that surrounds it on all sides and penetrates into all of its pores. Life

can therefore be only an unceasing struggle with death; it is achieved not passively but in the constant tension of battle. The struggle for life against the powers of death—in an ontological as well as a biological sense—is the most general definition of existence. Death constrains life to the point of mutual self-destruction: the Darwinian struggle for survival! Death uses the life of some as a tool for the death of others; the victory of life in one point actually becomes the victory of death in another.

We experience the struggle for life as imprisonment by necessity, by the deadened mechanism of nature, by the “empty and bustling elements” of the world, all of which threaten one thing: death. Cold and heat, fog, rain, drought, a hurricane, a river, an ocean—all are hostile, and all threaten life. Blind necessity, unintelligible raging elements, deadened mechanism, iron fate—these are all guises in which the spirit of nonbeing, “the prince of this world,” Death, appears.

The dead mask of thingness, alienation, impenetrability for man lies upon nature, and only the chosen seers know that, in reality,

Nature is not what you think,
Not an empty, soulless face,
It has a soul, it has freedom,
It has love, it has a language.

Fedor Tiutchev

But even they receive this revelation only in moments of poetic inspiration; even for them, the same world of things, a dead desert under a leaden sky, where death and destruction wait on every step, exists in everyday reality. The living being feels itself the slave of necessity and mechanism. Life, in contrast to the iron necessity of mechanism, is the principle of freedom and organicism, that is, free intentionality.

The struggle of the teleological with the mechanical principle, of the organism with the mechanism, is the struggle of life and death. The organism conquers the mechanism, although without eliminating it as causality. The law of the organism is Schelling's causality through freedom (*Kausalität durch die Freiheit*), or aseism. We can say that the entire world-historical process proceeds from the contradiction between mechanism, or thingness, and organism, or life, and from nature's effort to transcend mechanism—the principle of necessity—within itself in order to transform itself into an organism—the principle of cosmic freedom, the victory of life, or *panzoism*.

The immediate expression of this subjugation of being to the prince of darkness, to the spirit of death and nonbeing, is man's fateful dependence on the satisfaction of his lower, animal, so-called material needs, without which life cannot exist. The struggle for life is therefore first of all the struggle for food, and in this man resembles all the rest of the animal world. Insofar as this resemblance exists, the entire human economy can be seen as a particular case of the biological struggle for existence.

Thus every living being, including man, must defend its existence, protect life from death. But this defensive relation does not exhaust the struggle for life, for it seizes the first possible opportunity to become an offensive battle, striving to confirm and broaden life, to tame the antagonistic elements of nature and to subjugate nature's forces to its aims. The territories of freedom and necessity are in constant flux with respect to each other; life—freedom—seeks to expand its acquisitions and to surround itself with a sphere of ever-increasing radius. This struggle to broaden the sphere of life and freedom at the expense of necessity, in which life transforms the conquered pieces of mechanism into parts of its organism and melts the cold metal of thingness in the fire of life, can take various forms; it can proceed with primitive instruments or with all the tools

of knowledge, but its content remains the same: the defense of life and the broadening of its sphere, the transcension of the dead mechanism through the forces of life, in other words—the creation of life. The two aspects of this activity—the defensive and the offensive, the protection and the broadening of life—are inextricably connected, are but different sides of the same process. However successful this struggle may be, it still cannot be stopped at will; it is forced rather than voluntary.

The struggle against the antagonistic forces of nature for the purpose of defending, affirming, and broadening life, with the aim of conquering and taming these forces, becoming their *master*, or *proprietor*, is in fact what—in the broadest and most preliminary fashion—we call *economy*. Economy in this sense is characteristic of all living things, of the animal as well as the human world: Why can't we speak of the economy of bees or ants, or of the economic meaning and content of the animal struggle for existence? Yet in the precise sense of the word, economic activity is characteristic only of man, and it includes, as particular and subordinate elements, aspects of the economy of the animal world. The traits distinguishing human from animal economy will be clarified at a later point.

Thus economy is the struggle of humanity with the elemental forces of nature with the aim of protecting and widening life, conquering and humanizing nature, transforming it into a potential human organism. The economic process can therefore be described also as follows: it expresses the striving to transform dead material, acting in accordance with mechanical necessity, into a living body with its organic coherence; in the end, the aim of this process can be defined as the transformation of the entire cosmic mechanism into a potential or actual organism, the transcension of necessity through freedom, mechanism through organism, causality through intentionality—that is, as the *humanization of nature*. The task of economy is determined

precisely by this disintegration of being, the contradiction and mutual limitation of freedom and necessity, life and death: if absolute, immortal life reigned in the world (and, consequently, the universe were a universal organism), if there were no room in the world for mechanism with the threat of death, then the only form of causality would be causality through freedom or teleology; likewise, if life were completely destroyed, and the kingdom of dead mechanism knew no bounds, the world would find itself in the dark night of nonbeing, lacking the illumination of life and freedom. The actual state of being is an unfinished, transitional stage, a precarious balance, which seeks to acquire stability in the very process of struggle. Economy is the expression of the struggle of these two metaphysical principles—life and death, freedom and necessity, mechanism and organism. The progress of economy is the victory of the organizing forces of life over the disintegrating forces and deeds of death, but is it really a victory over its metaphysical essence? Economy is the struggle with the mortal forces of the prince of darkness, but is it capable of standing up to the prince himself? Is economy capable of chasing death from the world and, by conquering death, to transcend its own condition? Or, instead, is it impossible to cure the illness of the heart of the world, poisoned by death, through economic activity? Is a new creative act of the Divinity, through the force of Him who “conquered death” required to “destroy the final enemy—death”? This final question we pose here simply as a logical boundary; its discussion belongs to the eschatology of economy (in the second part of this work).

But if economy is a form of the struggle of life and death, and is a tool of life’s self-affirmation, then we say with as much certainty that *economy is a function of death*, induced by the necessity to defend life. In its most basic motivation it is unfree activity, for this motivation is the fear of death, characteris-

tic of all living things. However far man goes in his economic progress, he remains a slave, subject to death, even as he becomes a master.

In defining economy as the actual defensive-offensive relation of man to nature, we expand its boundaries, apparently farther than accepted in political economy, which is limited by the aims and possibilities of specialized investigation.²²

The characteristic distinguishing economic activity is the presence of *effort, labor*, directed toward a particular goal. *Economy is the activity of labor*. Labor, and particularly involuntary labor, defines economy. In this sense economy can be defined as the struggle, through labor, for life and its expansion; labor is the basis of life from an economic point of view. Life arises naturally through birth, that is, without the conscious application of labor, but maintaining it through economy already requires work. Labor is that value that brings life-supporting goods. This truth lies like a dark anticipation at the basis of the so-called labor theory of value in political economy.

“All economic goods are the product of labor.”²³ Rodbertus’s formula, which reflects perfectly the general worldview of political economy, retains its accuracy and meaning outside the limits of the discipline. Within political economy, particularly in the “theory of value,” it receives an excessively narrow, materialistic, and mercantile definition; it bears the stamp of economic materialism, as well as of the conscious one-sidedness of our field of specialization. Already from its conception—in mercantilism, in the writings of the Physiocrats as well as of Adam Smith and other representative of the classical school, and, finally, in socialism—political economy strives to define more exactly the concept of “productive,” that is, economic labor, in order to delimit the field of specific investigation, which would otherwise expand infinitely to include all cultural sciences. In political economy this intentional narrowness leads

to a one-sidedness and vulgarity in its conclusions; for the philosophy of economy this intentional narrowing of perspective would be not only unnecessary but even harmful. Economy in its essence includes human labor in all its applications, from the worker to Kant, from the sower to the astronomer. The distinguishing trait of economy is the re-creation or acquisition of goods, material or spiritual, *through labor*, as opposed to receiving them as a gift. This human activity is the fulfillment of God's word—*In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread*—and this includes all bread, that is, spiritual as well as material food: it is through economic labor, in the sweat of our face, that we must not only produce material goods but create all of culture.

The world as household is the world as the object of labor, and to this degree also the product of labor. Labor is the trademark of economy; in this the labor theory of value is correct, as is political economy, which accurately feels the universal, cosmic significance of labor, although it is incapable of expressing it properly.

Is labor definable? There are efforts to define labor in political economy, but they pursue specific goals in conjunction with the theory of value and are unsuccessful even in their limited aims; furthermore, they are too materialistic to satisfy us. Labor is the expenditure of nervous-muscular energy—such, for example, is Marx's widespread and influential definition. But, the insufficiency of such a definition for mental labor aside, it is not difficult to see that this expenditure of energy is only the expression of labor. Labor in its inner basis, as a feeling of outwardly directed effort, is not subject to any definition, although experience and observation reveal its manifestation to be active will, an active effort to come out of oneself. The capacity for labor is one of the characteristics of a living being; it expresses the flame and sharpness of life. Only he lives fully who is capable of labor and who actually engages in labor.

The principle of labor is related, and, in a sense contradictory, to the natural or “given” principle. *Economy*, as the re-creation and expansion of life through labor, is opposite to *nature*, as the totality of what is given (to man), the “natural” forces of life and its growth. Man is born not through an economic act; he develops in his mother’s womb and grows after birth, gaining physical and spiritual strength, finding spiritual forces within himself. All sorts of processes in nature take place independently of economic activity, and the universe, in the end, is not created through an economic act. Rather, only the universe’s existence establishes the subjective and objective possibility of economic activity, including both the capacity and possibility for labor. Economic activity is in this sense but a part of the life of the universe, a moment in its growth. But at the same time it is a necessary moment, included in the plan of the universe as the empirical manifestation of self-conscious life. Culture—the expansion of life through realized labor—requires nature as a precondition (in the sense of its precultural or extracultural, extra-economic state). Nature without labor, without a working culture, is incapable of revealing all of its forces, at least in man; it cannot abandon its dreamy state. On the other hand, culture has no creative powers that are not already given in nature. And even through all of our efforts (that is, through all the powers of culture) we cannot add so much as an extra cubit to our height, in the words of the Savior. Nature is thus the natural basis of culture; it is the material for economic activity; outside of nature, economic activity is as inconceivable and impossible as concrete experience is impossible outside of life.