

- Links
- <https://transfiguringtime.com/articles> The 20th century theology of the person
- Friday October 17. IOCS Seminar – Rebooting Ecumenism. 12.30 pm
Ecumenism: Encounter and Outrage
- <https://www.iocs.cam.ac.uk/2025-international-conference-rebooting-ecumenism/>

1. Theologians of the 19th and 20th Century – the Russian and French Traditions

Background

- The 1840s reform of the Russian theological academies: St. Petersburg, Kiev, Moscow (MT), Kazan (KT)
 - Patristic translation and publishing (see Louth, 2015), especially at MT
 - Liturgical translation and mission, Kazan
- The Universities: St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kazan
 - Academic excellence: Law, History, Philology, Mathematics, Engineering
- The Religious-Philosophical Societies: St. Petersburg, Moscow 1890-1914

1. Theologians of the 19th and 20th Century – the Russian Scholars and Theologians

Kireevsky	MT/Optino
Khomiakov	Independent scholar/publicist
Soloviev	MU/ MT/ independent publicist
Fedorov	librarian/ independent scholar
Nesmelev	Kazan Theological Academy (KT)
Bukharev	KT/ MT/ independent scholar
Bulgakov	MU → Institut St.Serge

1. Theologians of the 19th and 20th Century – the Russian milieu

The Cultural context

St Petersburg Religious-Philosophical Society

Silver Age Poets: Akhmatova, Blok

Zenaida Gippius, Merezhovsky → Paris (photo)

Moscow Religious-Philosophical Society

Trubetskoi, Berdiaev, Florensky, Bulgakov, Frank, Arseniev (Morozova)

→ Publishing : Kireevsky, Bukharev, Florensky, Trubetskoi

The next generation university training

St. Petersburg: Lot-Borodine, V. Lossky

Moscow: Nicolai Arseniev

1. Theologians of the 19th and 20th Century – the Russian and French Traditions

The Model of the Theological Academy

Degree Granting

High-level Scholarship

Academic Journal

Publishing House

→ Institut Saint-Serge, Paris 1925 (photo)

→ St. Vladimir's Seminary, New York 1938

1. Theologians of the 19th and 20th Century – the Russian and French Traditions

Paris trained theologians

Myrrha Lot-Borodine, PhD Collège de France

Vladimir Lossky, Sorbonne, Institut St. Denis (PhD thesis published posthumously)

Paul Evdokimov, Institut St. Serge, PhD Aix-en-Provence, PhD Institut St. Serge **

Alexander Schmemmann, Institut St. Serge (BA, PhD)

John Meyendorff, Institut St. Serge, Sorbonne (PhD)

Elizabeth Behr-Sigel, PhD Université de Nancy (on Bukharev), Institut St. Serge

Olivier Clément, Masters, U. Montpellier, Institut St. Denis, Institut St. Serge 6 (PhD)**

**for published work

1. Theologians of the 19th and 20th Century – Institut St. Serge & St. Vladimir's

St. Serge *

Bulgakov F → Evdokimov SF → Clément F

Florovsky F →

Verhovskoy S F

Afanasiev F → Schmemmann S F

Meyendorff S F →

Behr-Sigel F

Clément F

* S – student F - faculty

St. Vladimir's

→ USA (→ Harvard → Zizioulas)

→ USA

→ USA

→ USA

1. Theologians of the 19th and 20th Century – Institut St. Serge & St. Vladimir's Leaders

G. Florovsky (Dean)

S. Verhovskoy (Provost)

A. Schmemmann (Dean)

J. Meyendorff (Dean)

1. Bridge

Bridge Exercise – note cards - persons

2. Theologians of the 19th and 20th Century – the Russian and French Traditions

“Byzantine reflection, shattered by the centuries of Christological controversy and by foreign invasions feared any rationalization of the divine mysteries ...

“Bulgakov lifted the prohibition on logical discourse and probed the relationship of the essence and the energies with the Trinitarian hypostases, thus giving a creative impulse to his intellectual generation.”

Antoine Arjakovsky, *The Way*, p.389

2. Theologians of the 19th and 20th Century – the Russian and French Traditions

Professor: In Wisdom, Sophia, Bulgakov saw the total presence of God. Now, it is true, his thinking was not always clear

Patriarch: Because he was alive and was not exploring the sterile desert. He was exploring the divine fullness, at his own peril. You cannot have productive research without overstatement and imbalance.

We should not condemn mistakes: we should look for balance in a more complete understanding. We should consolidate what we have learned. That is the role of Tradition, which, for Bulgakov, was creative memory....

Patriarch: The Russian religious philosophers knew how to take the risks that come with renewal. They combined a sense of mystery with a sense of freedom. This is in fact the way of the future.

Olivier Clément, *Dialogues with Patriarch Athenagoras*, Holy Cross O.P. 2022, p.146

2. Theologians of the 19th and 20th Century – the Russian and French Traditions

Formulating an Orthodox response to the post-Enlightenment intellectual tradition, including the Catholic neo-scholastic response

- Idealism (German - Kant, Schelling)
- Positivism (French – Comte)
- Marxism
- Empiricism (English – Locke)
- Cartesian dualism (Descartes)
- Neo-scholasticism (the denial of the mystical and the transcendent)

2. Some Lines of Development

Kenosis: Bulgakov, N. Gorodetsky, V. Lossky, Archimandrite Sophrony

The transparency of matter and transparency restored: Cabasilas, Evdokimov, Clément

Life as Eucharist and spiritual ascent: Lot-Borodine (on Cabasilas), Evdokimov

The two spiritual paths: through asceticism and through communion

The confrontation with secular society and modern thought

Fedorov – The common task/ divino-humanity

Clément - discovery of divino-humanity at the heart of our daily endeavours

Behr-Sigel - Bukharev and the encounter with daily life, the *hic et nunc*

2. Some Lines of Development

Liturgical theology: Afanasiev, Schmemmann

Symbolic language: Florensky (→ Losev, Khoruzhii), Frank, Yannaras, Clément
engagement with semiotics, psychoanalysis, Wittgenstein, language theory

The theological understanding of the person

person and hypostasis: Lossky, Sophrony → Alexis Torrance

the person as enigma/ indestructible: Nesmelev, Lossky, Clément

spirit/soul/body, *nous*, deification: Lot-Borodine, Lossky, Panayiotis Nellas

the *ek-static* outpouring of the person: Yannaras (trained in Paris), Clément

2. Bridge

Bridge Exercise: matching names and one-word concepts

2. Bridge

What are we doing in the kitchen?

Theology in the 20th century as an attempt to solve problems

Propositional thinking (Euclid, Spinoza, Wittgenstein - of the Tractatus)

Proceed to construct a theology of the person

3. The Theology of the Person

“The Fathers refrain from limiting the image of God to any part of man. In fact, the Biblical narrative gives no precise account of the nature of the image; but it does present the whole creation of man as an act apart, different from the creation of other beings ... man was not formed by a divine command addressed to the earth, Rather God fashioned him from the dust of the earth with His own hands” (Vladimir Lossky).

Themes

1. Creation in the image and likeness of God
2. All humanity becomes one in Christ
3. Transcendence, relational being and Eucharistic encounter

A Theology of Man

Let us take a statement by Clément about man in the image and likeness of God: “Man-Adam is called to rediscover his true image in Christ: which is to be ‘in the image of God.’ It is therefore the hypostatic union of the divine and the human and the revelation of the Trinity that enable us to sense the mystery of the person. To speak of the human person becoming divino-human in Christ is to elaborate a theology of man.”

Man-Adam = *ὁ ἀνθρώπος*

The Indestructibility of the Image

In the Eastern tradition, the image in which Man-Adam is created is indestructible: “By image (ikon) we mean ... the presence of a principle that confers and authenticates a certain resemblance. By contrast, the likeness (*homoiousios*) or ‘disposition to perfect virtue’ (St. John of Damascus) remains precarious, because it is a virtuality yet to be realised.” (Lot-Borodine)

The Unknowable Person

The essence of the human person is unknowable. Lossky tells us that “the image of God in man, insofar as it is perfected, is necessarily unknowable, as St. Gregory of Nyssa tells us, since, in reflecting the fullness of its archetype, it must also possess the unknowability of the divine being.” The person “signifies the irreducibility of Man-Adam to his nature, precisely because it cannot be the case that [being] *something* renders man irreducible, but only [being] *someone*.”

The Unknowable Person

Clément adds two clarifications: “As with the hypostases of the Trinity, this *someone* is to be distinguished from their own nature, they transcend their nature, they give their nature existence in the act of transcending, they pour it out in ek-static love. ... The person is not of this world: an apophatic approach to the person corresponds to the apophatic approach to God: *Deus absconditus, homo absconditus* – the hidden God: the hidden person”

The Unknowable Person

Lossky sums up this discussion: “The human person is not a sub-set of humanity, any more than the persons of the Trinity are sub-sets of God.... The quality of the image of God does not belong to any one part of the composed human being, but refers to the whole nature of the human being... and therefore, Gregory of Nyssa tells us, ‘man is made in the image of God, that is to say the whole human nature is that which bears the divine likeness.’”

All Human Nature Becomes One in Christ

Clément states that “Man-Adam created in the image is also summoned to an existence in relationship.... In its participation in the grace of the Trinity, nature is revealed to be one for all humankind. There is only one nature that is common to all humankind, even though it appears to us to be fragmented by sin and divided into many individuals.”¹ “This primordial unity of nature that is established in the Church struck St. Paul so powerfully that he designated it as ‘the Body of Christ.’”

This establishes our relatedness not just to the sacramentality of matter but to our fellow humans, as beings-in-relation.

¹In his essay on Lossky’s theology of the person

Body, Soul and Spirit

According to Lossky, human nature may be understood to be in three parts—spirit, soul and body—or in two parts—soul and body, according to the understanding of the spirit. ... The difference, in brief, comes down to a question of terminology: those who find two parts see the *nous* as the superior part of the reasonable soul, the faculty by which man enters into communion with God.

In the ascetic literature we find the spirit, in the tripartite definition, or the *nous*, in the two-part definition, becoming the locus of transparency or divinisation. This, Clément says, is “the transparency of the spirit that Apollinaris rightly understood to be replaced [in the divine-humanity of Christ] by the Logos.”

Person and Hypostasis

Clément tells us: “If the person is a secret, the person is also a presence that communicates itself as a personal universe, or more precisely as hypostasis.” Paul Evdokimov makes the crucial distinction between the *prosopon*, as the potential to become a person, and the *hypostasis*:

The person (*hypostasis*) is a mode of existence that penetrates the whole being and renders it personal....” On the analogy of the hypostasis of the person of Christ, “every existing [human] being should be hypostasized as a person....”¹

¹In his chapter on anthropology in *La Femme et le Salut du Monde*

Person and Hypostasis

“The person is the principle of integration at every level, through the communication of idioms, a *circumcession* or *perichoresis* (thus the body is spiritualized and the soul becomes embodied). ...

The hypostasis is the transcendence of self, of the solitary human existence: in this sense one becomes a person in the act of transcending. The mystery of the person as hypostasis is contained in the act of self-transcendence towards the other.” (Evdokimov, *La femme et le salut du monde*)

The human being can be fully human only in God

Clément concludes with a citation: “Being made in the image of God, we also possess the grace of that image, so if we follow our true nature we shall be working in the direction of that grace.” The resulting person is “supranaturally natural, more nature than nature.”

By beginning his study with an ‘anthropology,’ Evdokimov emphasizes that Christianity is the revelation of the divino-human.”

Clément, Preface

Uncreated Grace

“This uncreated grace, which is the outpouring of glory, life and light, abounds in the mystical Body of Christ and gives us more than salvation—the enlivening of our whole being: the ‘deification’ which is not the obliteration of humanity but its fulfilment, for the human being can be human only in God.”

Clément, Preface

Essence and Energies

On the analogy of the Eastern tradition's understanding of the unknowability of God, Lossky adds that the person is unknowable in their essence and is known in and through their energies.

Further citing St. Gregory of Nyssa, Lossky clarifies the difference between the Divine and the human who strives for resemblance: The Divine is uncreated, whereas the human is created.

Nesmelov

Nesmelov's masterpiece, *Nauka o Cheloveke* (*The Science of the Person*, Kazan 1905, 1906), was reprinted in 1971 with an introduction by Georges Florovsky. Florovsky explains Nesmelov's importance for our discussion:

“Man discovers that he is both no more than part of the material world, and an imperishable substance, a ‘person.’ In himself, he discovers the Divine.”

According to Nesmelov: ‘man is not divine in himself, he is rather a living image of the divine person, which is reflected in the personal being of man, as discovered by introspection.’”

Personhood that transcends

The person transcends the world because they are bound to a *Presence* whose *summons* has constituted them.” Citing Nesmelov, Clément states that Man-Adam discovers a personhood that transcends “the conditions, the interests and the goals of his physical existence.”

This leads us towards the next frontier of this exploration of the human person.

“This duality is expressed, in particular, by those gestures of truth and kindness of which a person is capable even at the risk of their own self-preservation: this was confirmed in the atrocious laboratories that were the prison camps experienced by Solzhenitsyn.”

God's Creation of Another, in Love

God is love. The absolute freedom of the human person rests on the proposition that, in love, God creates Another who would seek Him in reciprocal love.
(Berdiaev)

In Clément's words, "The living God, the personal God establishes Adam as a free and responsible person. He blows the breath of life into his nostrils. He summons him to become what he is, the dynamic image of God." (the Summons)

God's Creation of Another, in Love,

Clément further defines this freedom in *On Human Being*: “The human being, the personal being, is the pinnacle of creation. With the human being, God in His omnipotence gives rise to something radically new. Not a lifeless reflection or a puppet, but a freedom that can oppose God, that can exclude Him from His creation. In the supreme achievement of God's creative omnipotence—for only life-giving Love can create a free living being—there is an inherent risk. Omnipotence finds fulfilment in self-limitation.”

This is the *kenosis* of Creation – the Jewish drawing back of God, or *tsimtsum*

God's Creation of Another, in Love

And further, on the love without limits, a phrase that Father Lev Gillet so often used, “The love of God is this space in which I am free. If God is not, I am no more than a particle of society and the universe, subject to their determinism, and ultimately to death. But if God is crucified love, I am offered freedom without limits, and participation in the freedom of God himself.”

The “Kenosis” of the Person Leading to Ek-stasis

In “La Thème de la Personne dans la Pensée Russe,” Clément brings the exploration of the irreducibility of the person into dialogue with Sergei Bulgakov’s “negative anthropology.”

Earlier, Clément had surveyed the question of the “I” and the “not-I” in German nineteenth-century philosophy. Now he applies this analysis to his reading of Bulgakov... Clément comments on the antinomic nature of the person:

The “Kenosis” of the Person Leading to Ek-stasis

“The person is entered into the order of kenosis, of non-possession. The word “I” (*moi*) is to some extent a sign, a symbol that points us towards “an ineffable abyss,” “a darkness from which ceaselessly pour forth sparks of light.” Bulgakov tells us that the psychological subject, the “I” who is aware (*connaît*), loves and desires, is, to some degree, the “predicate” of this ineffable abyss. On the one hand the person is a “none,” an “is not” ... However the person cannot be reduced to a void, a zero: the person is a supra-existence that gives meaning to everything and that reveals itself in everything. Because everything can become its “predicate.”

Bulgakov’s discussion of I and Not-I is part of his complex discussion of personhood in *The Tragedy of Philosophy*, Part 2: “Philosophy of Triadicity.”

The “Kenosis” of the Person Leading to Ek-stasis

Subject and predicate

The divine I am that I am

The human *cogito ergo sum*

or

Sum ut intelligere

The Irreducibility of the Person

Bulgakov says that “The human spirit cannot comprehend itself: it demands an explanation for itself.” This explanation comes in the encounter with “the other.” Clément sums this up: “The other gives me the paradisaical newness of the world that is illuminated by Sophia.”

Clément again cites Lossky: “the person signifies the irreducibility of the person to their nature.” Clément comments: “ what is at issue is not ‘something’ distinct, of ‘another nature,’ but ‘someone’ who is not coterminous with their own nature, who transcends their nature even while embodying it, who gives their nature human existence by this act of transcending and yet who does not exist apart from this nature that they ‘hypostasize’ and that they transcend ceaselessly—this nature that to some degree they *ek-stasie*.”

The Ek-stasis of the Person

Clément continues: this *ek-static* going-out of the person is the counterpart to God's *ek-static* seeking of the other in His *manikos eros*:

“They *ek-stasie*, one might say, in the encounter with God who *ek-stasies* Himself in the beauty of the world and finally in the Incarnation. They also *ek-stasie* in the encounter with the other, whose neighbour they become. Because, if the person... is a secret, the person is also a presence that communicates itself as a personal universe, or more precisely as hypostasis.... This is why one can only know a person ‘as in a revelation,’ through respect and attention that, by grace, opens onto ‘a direct intuition’.”

This *ek-stasis* is what Christos Yannaras explored in *Person and Eros*: “The personal energy is the locus of the existential creation of the person, the non-dimensional locus of the relationship in which the singularity and the uniqueness of the person is revealed as an experiential nearness.”

Existence in Communion

When we come to consider Dumitru Staniloae's understanding of the person and existence in communion, we can look back on these two statements: “ They *ek-stasie* in the encounter with God who *ek-stasies* Himself,” and “This personal energy is the locus of the existential creation of the person, the non-dimensional locus of the relationship in which the... uniqueness of the person is revealed as an experiential nearness.”

These are descriptions of the interpersonal encounter. They also describe the Eucharistic encounter and communion.

Existence in Communion

The Next Frontier

The person as the metaxu, the methorion (meth' horos),
the space-in-between as
the a-dimensional space of encounter and space of communion

Myrrha Lot-Borodine, Christos Yannaras, Olivier Clément, Andrew Louth,
William Desmond.

4. Research and Academic Writing

- Propositional thinking – Euclid, Spinoza, Wittgenstein/tractatus
- Levels of academic writing
- Tools for research
- Take your notecard and begin to add parallel instances