

# Unification Thought and the Unity of the Sciences from the Viewpoint of the Study of Religions

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Ladies and gentlemen!

The whole history of humankind may be seen as a series of paradoxes, yet, one may come to the conclusion that even these very paradoxes constitute the moving force for social progress, moving humanity away from the primitive norms of the earliest civilizations toward a modern world order and on into the future, ever on toward a new and even more mysterious world order.

In my opinion, the most phenomenal paradox of our history is the fact that humankind, while always striving toward unity, has on the contrary ever continued to split up more and more, becoming "divided into a multitude of mutually alien tribes and nations at war with one another." (1)

Could it perhaps be that this is indeed not a paradox at all, but rather a historical law at work in the process of development of humankind?

In the pre-Christian era, one of the major agents of unification was the "world-wide monarchy" (e.g., Assyrian and Babylonian empire, the empire of the Medes and Persians, and the Macedonian, Hellenistic and Roman empires). However, with the advent of Christianity, as the Russian historical philosopher Vladimir Soloviev observed, "Mankind became inspired with a profound consciousness of the oneness of the human race; there emerged a new, mammoth task: to internally unify humankind in spirit and truth." (2)

Yet in fact we see that history has seen fit to unfold otherwise. The entire 2,000-year course of Christianity to the present is made up of schisms and offshoots, with the ceaseless formation of ever new confessions based on new interpretations of doctrine, which ever further restrict the perimeters of social consciousness and even draw tighter boundaries around the social unit itself.

A.S. Prugavin was right when in 1881 he concluded, based on his investigation of the schism of the Russian Orthodox Church, "In its everlasting search for 'the true faith', for spiritual and intellectual nourishment of the soul, the trend of popular thought vacillates from one side to the other, very often precipitating entirely to one extreme and then quite to the opposite." (3)

And he continues: "The teaching of any given splinter group, emanating directly from the spirit of the people, does not in fact present something immobile, monolithic, or constant, eventually gravitating toward a known and fully determinate form, coagulating into one of these recognizable form. Not at all! Rather, fr actionating off and mutating into ever new forms, the various schismatic teachings through the course of time constantly absorb new influences, swallow new ideas and directions which keep them from settling down, fading away, or dying out, and continuously revitalize them, and they ever bear new strength, energy and life-force."

Soloviev continues, "In all movements of a religious and ethical nature, we observe an earnest and heated striving of the people to obtain the truth or in any case the 'Good Word'. As we may suppose, these quests do not always lead to the genuine and true Way. Often one delusion metamorphoses into another no less vulgar. Yet, we may ask, into whose hands did the truth ever fall in complete and perfect form and all at once?" (4)

One would say it could hardly be expressed more poignantly and completely. In truth, the history of the world-level and national religions is the history of the formation of various currents and schools of religious thought which emerged in distinction to a prior orthodox direction. For example, modern scholars know only those basic branches of Buddhism which have come down to us today. But no one can possibly tell how many sects have emerged only to disappear along the way. Or let us take the example of Islam: Some scholars analyzing the various teachings estimate the figure

e at 40, and others at about 100 different schools and teachings. At about the close of the 19th century or the beginning of the 20th century the degree of schism within Islam even led to mutual condemnations of one another as being non-Muslim. Practically all the branches (with the exception of the Akhmads and perhaps a few others) issued official fatwa's (edicts) declaring their opponents to be non-Muslim ("kafirs"), as witnessed by the authoritative source "Fatwah-i-kufr". We note in this regard that the Prophet Mohammed PBUH H himself condemned such a practice, saying at one point that he who calls another Moslem non-Muslim himself

cannot be a true Moslem. But the hotheads do not cool down even at His word of warning.

In Christianity there are over 1,000 denominations. In fact it is well known that Christianity itself arose as one of the sects of Judaism. And then Christian theology distinguishes several basic types of churches: the visible church vs. the invisible church, the universal church, the local church, and the family home church. Furthermore, the awareness (i.e., mind or spirit) of the individual believer is considered as the "Temple of

God" in Protestant literature.

All the multitudinous efforts throughout the centuries to unite Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Protestantism have met with failure right up to the present date.

One such attempt at unifying all the Christian churches, confessions and denominations was the ecumenical movement. The word "ecumenical" comes from the Greek word "oekumene" meaning "universe" or "the inhabitable world".

As late as the latter half of the 19th century, Vladimir Sergeevich Soloviev promoted this idea, as is well known. The idea of a "free theocracy" or "universal church" was his own idea, and was to be built upon the unity of Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Protestantism. Then the final stage of realization of his ideal was to be "God and humanity in Oneness". To this, the great philosopher himself wrote, "It is not within our power to determine how and when the magnificent work of bringing together God and human beings in oneness will indeed take place. However, it is within our power to set before ourselves this task as our loftiest pursuit, and to devote ourselves to it with all our resources." (5)

And so indeed, with the ecumenical movement, everything certainly seems to be subordinated to this rule.

At the same time, the reality is that, first of all, many Christian denominations utterly refuse to take any part in the ecumenical movement; and secondly, even those churches which nominally are included in the ecumenical movement ever more vociferously announce their opposition to the basic tenets of the movement as such.

In this way, the idea of ecumenism has not been received with the understanding that in itself constituted the basis for great hope once upon a time. The movement has become increasingly amorphous, and the convocations conducted under its auspices have become merely forums for mutual accusations of apostasy.

Even such a very brief historical glimpse attests to the fact that the idea of ecclesiastical union, and even beyond that, the idea of actually achieving spiritual consensus, which so many people talk about these days, what with all its attractiveness, is still only a pipe-dream, remains still but a lofty ideal. The present state of plurality and contradiction, not only among the various confessions, but also even within any one denomination - has always been, and we can only presume that it will continue to be so in the foreseeable future.

And now to another matter. Such conflicts ought to be confined strictly to the realm of theological differences. Yet the fact is that they are attaining more and more the nature of political disputes and even wars between ethnic groups and national sovereignties.

The envisioned universal religion, in whatever form, should unite all the presently existing denominations and confessions, should obviate the need for any further spiritual searching, and should curtail the divergence of thinking. The proponents of the idea of creating such a universal religion refer by analogy to the way in which science has been able to forge a unity among numerous competing theories [theories for the unity of the sciences].

A.P. Ogurtsov remarks, "The quest for unity among the fields of the sciences and the construction of some kind of an overall, unitary, all-embracing science presupposes as its philosophical foundation the disti

action of 'genuine' and 'pseudo' science, a critical evaluation of the modern state of scientific knowledge, and an appeal to some sort of synthetic, direct knowledge which would constitute a final and ultimate stage of 'true' knowledge. This project of evaluating scientific knowledge could be termed a 'romantic project', since the 'alienated' science which in the process sinks down in the counterbalance all the same serves to elevate the ideal of a certain unified, holistic, directly obtained knowledge." (6)

As is well known, a project to seek after such a type of knowledge was proposed by the German romantics. Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg) proclaimed that "All science is one." But his contemporary Friedrich Schlegel considered that what should serve as "God" in the universities ought to be the Encyclopedia, which would emerge in the capacity of a "new Bible", in which the entire body of achievements of the sciences of the arts would be synthesized together. First and foremost this was connected with the fact that, at that time, even in the name itself of the institute of higher learning, 'university', i.e., 'universitas litterarum omnium' or 'the universal body of all learning', there is emphasized the idea of the unity of all scientific knowledge and the existence of a unified body bringing together in oneness all the branches of science and all the specialized activities of scholarly research." (7)

The "Philosophical Prometheus", Friedrich Schelling, believed that, all in all, true science cannot be merely some limited and partial science, but must by necessity be a unitary entity, in the ranks of which he included philosophy. It is this very unitary science, according to his thought, which "stands as the direct and fundamental form of existence itself, whereas science as such is primordial knowledge." He wrote this in 1803 in his manuscript, "Lectures on the methodology of academic knowledge".

Karl Marx viewed the unity of the sciences through the prism of the concept of existence as determined on the basis of natural history and social history, i.e., based on historical consciousness, in the process declaring that indeed history itself is the single, universal and all-embracing science.

In the 20th century ideas about "unitary science" gained new advocates and new vitality in the project of the so-called "unified science" centered on the Vienna Circle. This project later came to be called the "standard conception of science". In 1935 the project of compiling the "International Encyclopedia of Unified Science" was submitted for consideration before the International Congress on the Philosophy of Science held in Paris. They decided to produce an encyclopedia consisting of 260 monographs on logic and the methodology of science. The University of Chicago undertook this project, however only 19 volumes were published out of the originally planned 260.

There is no question that philosophical and methodological quests for the unitary principles of scientific knowledge have played a positive role more than anything in the overall perspective of searching for "unifying factors in the ever expanding multiplicity of scientific theories" (8), in terms of fomenting closer connections and mutual relationships among the various scientific disciplines.

However, whether we like it or not, no theory of the unity of the sciences is capable of matching the ever increasing differentiation of the sciences, which has produced "a progressive systematization of scientific activity" (N. Ovchinnikov). Albert Einstein was likewise right when he wrote, "Specialization in all the fields of human endeavor has without question led to unforeseen achievements; while at the same time it has led to the narrowing down of the realm which is accessible to the solitary individual." (9)

As a religionist, I would like refer to the topic of my own scientific interests.

In fact, right from the very beginning, the thought that religion itself is in need of purely scientific and unbiased investigation began to loom in the minds of scientific thinkers even during the middle ages; however, only in the 18th century did this idea receive wide support among scholars, and the idea became embodied as an independent science in its own right. This process only reached completion in the 19th century.

Numerous branches of science have contributed to the appearance and the formation of the science of religion. In the course of this process, interacting with the other sciences while also receiving much helpful material from them, the science of religion has in turn also returned many new insights and material to the fields of science, and has significantly enriched them.

Nowadays historians and anthropologists, philosophers and linguists, scientists in the field of law and

d sociologists, psychologists and culturologists are all engaged in the research of religion from their various points of view, and are each making their respective contributions toward the development of this new branch of science. The science of religion gradually took shape as an independent and autonomous branch of human knowledge, and established a place for itself in the general framework of the human and social sciences. In so doing, this has provided it with the possibility to not only absorb, synthesize and generalize the already mushrooming body of knowledge on the subject of religion, but also to continually augment it with ever new observations.

At present entire scientific collectives are occupied with problems in the science of religion, including scientific research institutes, specialized faculties in the universities. Special regional and international projects have been initiated, which take into consideration the entire compendium of scientific knowledge on religion as a spiritual, social, psychological and cultural phenomenon, as well as the spiritual state of the individual himself.

The main branches of the science of religion are philosophy, sociology, psychology, phenomenology, and history of religions. Further branches have emerged, including legal science of religion, which studies problems that emerge when religion and the law intersect; and linguistic science of religion, which studies the relationship between language and religion.

If we assume the systems-complex approach as our basis, where the science of religion itself appears as a scientific-complex entity, then the branches detailed above constitute rather subsystems of a unified system or complex. However, any one of these subsystems may stand or even become an independent system on its own, or likewise a branch of scientific knowledge. A subsystem, on the other hand, is a narrow specialization (for example: science of religion -> history of religion -> history of Christianity -> history of Orthodoxy -> history of the Russian Orthodox Church).

It is important once again to emphasize that the science of religion is fundamentally distinguished in principle from theology as such.

Theology is characteristic of developed religions and is involved with the elaboration of the doctrine of a certain religion. Science of religion, on the other hand, studies a religion from a neutral and non-biased position in terms of its identity as a complex, including its theology.

The quests for unitary principles in scientific knowledge could not help but lead, and indeed they have, to the idea of the study as a complex of the entirety of the problems of humanity. Namely, as Fyodor Dostoevsky said, man was, is, and remains a mystery; and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin added: "The human being is the composite and summation of all that we know..." (10)

This idea emerged in Russia in the first third of the 20th century, initially in the writings of the psychologist and doctor Vladimir Bekhterev, and later the writer Maxim Gorky came up with this idea.

In the mid-1930s M. Gorky gathered scientists, philosophers, medical doctors and writers with the idea of organizing an Institute of Man. But it was only in the 1950s, namely, during the period of thaw under Khrushchev, that this idea could be concretely substantiated. At this time the Council for Scientific Complex Studies of Philosophical Issues in the Natural Sciences was created under the direction of P. Fedoseev, in which questions regarding the human being naturally occupied a central place. In 1988 the World Congress on the Understanding of the Human Being was held, at which the Soviet school of research in the field attained prominent worldwide recognition. This was a very meaningful event. It was then that the Center for the Science of Man was created, and, under its auspices, the Institute of Man. A general academic project was launched entitled "Man, Science, and Society: Scientific Complex Investigations", in which academic institutions of the Soviet republics were actively engaged. Following this, with the demise of the USSR, this program unfortunately was not able to continue in its growth and development.

For the sake of objectivity, it must be stated that among the scientists there were not a few who were opposed in principle to the idea of complexity. Likewise the conclusions they issued were pronouncedly argumentative. In one case in particular, P. Gurievich, the author of "Philosophical Anthropology", writes: "It would seem at the outset to be altogether simple: We unite the efforts of philosophers, biologists, psychologists,

sts, sociologists - and all together we come up with an entirely new, unified compendium of knowledge about the human being... However, by no means do these complex efforts always lead to a profound and significant accomplishment. Already many of our native Russian specialists have already noted this, and in course have lost interest in synthesizing the accumulated research.

"What is actually at the root of this problem is that the premises and the conclusions of the various concrete disciplines are not completely compatible. If, for example, economics on the one hand assumes that human beings are capable of rational choice, then psychology in contrast assumes that the motives for human behavior are for the most part irrational. Sociology regards the human as an exceedingly supple being capable of adapting to a very wide range of social environments. Psychology, as a counterbalance in this overall conception, seeks the stable characteristics of the human psyche, such as enable uniformity and constancy in the behavior of the individual within the context of any age. Biology attempts to demonstrate the unchanging nature of the human as a physical being. Historians, on the other hand, are interested in how the essence of the human state is transformed under the influence of cultural factors." (11)

We ought to add that what we call "Man" is a multiplicity of beings, consisting of a myriad of minor and major beings each of which constitutes an "I" unto itself (G. Gudzhiev), and for this reason there is a plethora of interpretations.

And likewise for this reason, it would seem rather more expedient to speak of a "unitary methodological base". So, without a doubt, the field of philosophical anthropology, as a separate sphere of philosophical knowledge, can serve to provide the methodological basis for the Science of Man, by offering a basis for the philosophical conception of "Man", the Human Being.

However, if "Man" as such is after all unknown (A. Karrel), an enormous Mystery, the most mysterious being, the object which escapes our grasp (P. Teilhard de Chardin), then how can we make any definite statement with confidence as to what is "faith" and what is "religion"? Moreover, in the words of the religious writer and saint Tikhon of Zadonsk, what we call "faith" is something that we can neither see nor grasp with our mind, yet we believe that it exists." (12)

The path of the genesis of human faith is a difficult and thorny one. Faith in the broad sense, as in the case of "religious" faith, undergoes and historically has passed through four stages, as expressed in the famous pronouncements or maxims of great philosophers:

1. "I believe, because namely it is absurd"; "I believe, in spite of the outcries of reason." (A maxim set down by Tertullian);
2. "I believe, in order that I may understand what it is you believe in." (Augustine and Anselm of Canterbury);
3. "I understand, in order that I may believe." (Pierre Abelard);
4. "I not only believe, but also understand." (N. Florensky).

Yet, upon the framework of these words, can we encompass the entire depth of the process of genesis of human faith? Can it really be that we already know all there is to know? In the experience of each of us, does not our faith in the broadest sense of the term "exceed all powers, transcend all external factors, and evade formal logical proof"?

It is not coincidental that the German philosopher Karl Jaspers, setting before himself the task of constructing a framework of understanding philosophical "faith", came to the unambiguous conclusion that faith constitutes, not an instrument for seeking truth nor a "survival tool", but rather the one and only correct and right method for philosophical thinking on the whole.

Max Weber, whom his contemporaries called the "anti-Marx", directed his attention to the complexity of the procedure itself for defining "religion". "The determination of what constitutes 'religion' as such can not be established at the outset of observation; in extreme cases it may only be established at the very end, as something which emerges out of the process being observed." (13) In his investigation of religion, the chief task, as M. Weber saw it, is "to detect and discover those psychological stimuli, generated in the process of religious belief and practice in the religious life, which exert influence on the behavior and tend to retain th

the individual within a certain way of faith." (14)

There is no doubt that each person, what's more, the so-called (as the American researcher K. Dubois so lightly put it) "model individual", concentrates within himself the overall cultural values of whatever society to which he pertains. However, when we attempt to understand the process of the religious formation of the individual, then we encounter highly specialized systems and subsystems of intramodal, intermodal, and personal-mode interactions. We may detail as follows:

1. In the first place there is the social supramode (the entirety of social relationships and social institutes, internal and external conflicts and antagonisms, which constitute the objective and subjective conditions for the emergence of the religious and quasi-religious mode in the life and activities of the human being, and the condition for the formation of the human being as a transcendently oriented individual);
2. Secondly, there is the religious and quasi-religious micromode (the general and specific sources and "roots" of both traditional and modernized, mass, group and individual, group and individual, denominational and nondenominational religiosity; the entirety of tradition and customs, religious and quasi-religious, worldview- and values-orientation of the individual; control upon the consciousness, behavior and interaction of members of the faith community; management of the process of child education in the family and the correction of the mindset of youth; the formation of religious stereotypes, etc.)

It is necessary in particular to distinguish those means of preservation and transmission of faith in the religious micromode which are socially determined but which differ essentially between different confessions, denominations and communities.

3. There are mechanisms of micromodal and intramodal integration and differentiation (processes of spiritual and practical integration and differentiation; unification and generalization of the religious, secularized and secular micromodes; assimilation and utilization; the de-objectification and objectification of information, moral and psychological, artistic and esthetic, political, sociocultural, productive, economic, technical, ethnic, professional modes of activities of life; interpersonal relationships among the believers, the non-committed, agnostics, free-thinkers, administrative, partially administrative or dependent individuals);
4. Of course there are internal mechanisms of personalization and depersonalization (i.e., the entirety of basic types and forms of assimilation of individuals into the religious mode, their adaptation and de-adaptation, and likewise the mechanisms of orientation and de-orientation of adherents to the worldview and the values-orientation; confessional and intraconfessional activation, individualization and universalization);
5. And finally there are the dominant tendencies and intentions in the genesis of the persona of the religious adherent (factors of opposition and interaction, tendencies and processes tending toward stabilization or destabilization, renewal and conservation, stagnation and self-destruction of the religious, secularized and secular mode in the life and activities of the faithful individual; and the most important thing of all - toward his or her spiritual self-determination).

In conducting research along these lines, even "Man" as a whole must also be considered as a system, together with the essential characteristics and criteria of genuineness referring to this entity as a "system". Only a dialectically concrete, complex-systems investigation of this problem will enable us to interpret the process of coming into being of the social, cognitive, moral and psychological self-determination of the individual as a multilevel, nonlinear, discreet process whose historical roots are found in the distant past.

It is of especial importance to clearly point out the fact that, when we speak of "Man", we must not blindly apply the natively rationalistic statement, "To understand an object means to build it." (Spinoza), "To understand means to express in concepts" (Hegel), and other formulations of the kind.

More applicable, in our opinion, is the approach of "ascertaining", one example of which is the approach of Mikhail Bakhtin: "The human being cannot be a concept." Behind this approach is the understanding that logical and conceptual discourses bear a formalistic character, and they can encompass a "thing" or an "object" in the realm of "knowledge" - yet they cannot do so for a "subject", for the main feature of a "subject" is not that which it manifests in common with other subjects, but that in which it differs from them. Therefore, in the words of M. Bakhtin, the field of the study of "Man" is open-ended, inquisitive, communicative,

candid and personal. And the element of the mysterious is important here.

Hence we can derive the absolute necessity for pluralism in worldviews, in the sense of the free coexistence in the society of diverse religious and nonreligious views, schools, ideologies and organizations. And from this we also come to the conclusion that the prospect of spiritual consensus, popularized in our day as a wonderful ideal, is altogether doubtful, even though that idea in and of itself may appear splendid and attractive.

Nevertheless, under circumstances of the ever more distinct menace of global catastrophe threatening all mankind, more and more people, including scientists, politicians, and the clergy, are pondering the question of how to achieve unification, how to overcome alienation, how to counter the opposition of certain people including the religiously motivated.

Certain scholars, for example, in Kazakhstan Akramkhan Kapyshev and Sergei Kolchigin are ever more vociferously expressing that "the era of tolerant pluralism ought to be considered in principle as bygone, finished and concluded." They write, "Tolerant pluralism intrinsically cannot stand as the utmost entirety, ideal and truth of human interaction, for it does not offer and by its very nature does not presume to offer any developmental model of human relations to mankind and the world. Moreover, pluralism, being a principal transition phase on the path of progress toward its own contradiction, supposes itself to be the sole and unitary truth.

"Pluralism cannot and should not stand as the ideal for human relationships, interactions and mutual understanding, because Truth is monistic, i.e., Truth is one and all-encompassing." (15)

However, in that case, the question emerges: How is it possible to come to know this Truth, if we approach it by one only one single path? Where is there a guarantee that exactly that way is the one and only one which leads us to the ideal of our quest for the one monolithic Truth?

Who in our present day beside the Lord God Himself is in the position to issue a pronouncement, for example, as to which religious faith is true and which is false? It is in fact the case that every religious confession and denomination proclaims that they themselves are the only ones who know the path to the Truth, and that they themselves are leading people in the exactly correct direction.

Therefore, it stands to reason; we can only find the way toward the ideal of our quest through unification, and not through confrontation, through a pluralism of approaches in our united striving toward the truth.

So, in this regard, in my opinion as a scientist of religion and an extremely worldly-minded person, the so-called "Headwing Thought", constituting a major portion of "Unification Philosophy," particularly impresses me in that it indicates that it belongs to neither the right nor the left, but unites and reconciles both sides, giving sanction and recognition to both of these, as well as to other currents of thought.

Beyond doubt it is a right and timely thesis that modern society needs an entirely new and different level of consciousness to correspond to the character of its spiritual quest.

It can perhaps be added to this that the Unitary Truth of our quest shall never open its gates to humanity as long as we assail it along the path of confrontation. It is more likely that mankind as a whole could be annihilated in the inferno of interreligious and international warfare, and all the same not attain the summit of Truth, for the complete and genuine Truth of the existence of Humanity and the World will only reveal itself when conditions of freedom of speech, freedom of religion, tolerance toward other faiths, and plurality of worldviews dominate everywhere, and these will not only be desiderata, but realized in actuality on a global, planetary level. (16)

Fortunately, both religious leaders and politicians are coming to understand this more and more, and, most important of all - ordinary people everywhere on our planet.

Therefore, notwithstanding all the discord in our world, I look toward the future with great optimism!

1. Citation from: "Philosophical Dictionary", Vladimir Soloviev, Phoenix Press, Rostov-na-Donu, 1997. p. 43.
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16. See: S.Y. Kolchigin, "Pluralism and Tolerance in the System of Truth Coordinators", Izvestiya MON, N AN RK, "Series on the Social Sciences", No. 5, 2002. p. 53.