

Cosmic Philosophy by Nikolay Fedorov: Pro et Contra

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ABSTRACT

This article concentrates on works and writings of Nikolay F. Fedorov who was the founder of Russian cosmism and belonged to its religious and philosophical school. The authors of the article analyze key ideas of Fedorov's theory known as The Philosophy of the Common Task and observe the impact produced by this original philosophical system on the development of globalistics.

Keywords: Russian cosmism, autotrophic human being, nature, supramoralism, patrofication, resurrection of ancestors, the philosophy of the common task, globalistics

I. INTRODUCTION

Nikolay F. Fedorov (1828-1903), one of the founders of Russian cosmism, belonged to its religious school of thought. There are some good reasons behind recent revival of interest to Fedorov's personality and ideological heritage. The first space flight by Yury Gagarin in 1961 until now remains one of the greatest events in human history. In this connection it is worth mentioning that N.Fedorov was the illegitimate son of prince P.I. Gagarin, but he was given the surname and patronymic of the man who stood godfather to him. By some amazing coincidence, the two Gagarins left a special personal stamp on the development of human space age.

The term "Russian cosmism" was first used in national philosophy in the late sixties – early seventies of the past century. Russian cosmism philosophy is a unique phenomenon of both national and global culture.

The ideas of Russian cosmism have definitely affected the development of globalistics. Current conditions of modern civilization and the continuing aggravation of global human problems, such as environment protection, population growth, World Ocean pollution, ecological issues, space exploration and others, make academic specialists turn to the history of science and culture in an attempt to find prototype solutions to the present-day challenges. Science is focused on transformation of the real world, and irrational intervention in the laws of nature inevitably leads to disasters.

Cosmism explains human life regularities based on cosmosophy and the idea of natural connection between

space and daily human life and activities. Many ideas of Russian cosmism align with the scientific worldview. Fedorov developed an original religious and philosophic concept of human-nature relationship, anticipated noosphere ideas and raised a lot of environment-related issues.

II. PHILOSOPHY OF COMMON TASK

Nikolay F. Fedorov is considered to be a "unique and the most creative" Russian thinker (as characterized by V.V. Zenkovsky [1]). He was born in Tambov Province and studied at the Richelieu Lyceum in Odessa. In the period from 1854 to 1868 he worked as a teacher in provincial towns, and from 1874 to 1898 – as a librarian in Rumyantsev Museum Library in Moscow. N. Fedorov was the first one to make a classified catalogue of books in Rumyantsev Library and put forward a proposal on international book exchange. He lived a simple, ascetic life and considered any type of property, including ideas and books, to be sinful. In view of this, he published very few of his works. During his lifetime, N. Fedorov wrote mostly for provincial or little-known magazines on an anonymous basis. After he died, his followers immediately initiated the posthumous publication of all N. Fedorov's works entitled *The Philosophy of the Common Task* [2].

The concept of "common task" first emerged in public perception in the 19th century due to a great statement: "One should live not for himself or others, but together with other people and for all of them" [3]. This implies, in particular, that human actions should be judged based on the global, cosmic tasks established for the humankind.

According to N. Fedorov, the key philosophical issue relates to death and life and can be put exactly as follows: "There is no eternal death, and the triumph over temporary death is our task and our goal" [4].

N. Fedorov called his theory supramoralism, which means that all people living on the Earth join efforts to resurrect everyone who lived earlier and died. "Supramoralism is our duty to our fathers and ancestors" [5].

N. Fedorov brings up a question regarding the global division that governs the whole world, that is the division between thoughts and actions, educated and uneducated people. The main defect of "educated people" is viewed by N. Fedorov as passive, contemplative, theoretically perceptive attitude to the world. The utmost result of such attitude is that the world turns into fiction. He believed that "educated people" had encoded and distorted the clear view of life and death, the good and the evil in the world. This clear view was however retained by "uneducated people" who are lacking knowledge but have not lost their feelings and need for action.

The starting point of N. Fedorov's theory is the "must be" concept instead of given facts. To step back from contemplative lifestyle and abstract metaphysics, to focus efforts on identification of values in the natural order of things and to develop a transformation plan for the humankind – these are the key ideas of a radically new change in philosophy according to N. Fedorov.

In fact, the absolute knowledge is possible for N. Fedorov only within the scope of a model created by the mankind. He loved to quote Aristotle saying that we know nothing but the things we created ourselves. The ultimate understanding of any external object is possible only when this object is our own thing of creation.

N. Fedorov points to two fundamental restraints that are typical for people nowadays. The first one is space restraint, the so-called "attachment" to the Earth that may be solved, according to N. Fedorov, through human expansion in space and the new ability of "boundless translocation". The other one is time restraint which implies human mortality. This problem may be solved through the achievement of immortality status and resurrection of our dead ancestors.

Every individual human life is built on the bones of other persons who lived before or are still living, and finally turns into humus.

N. Fedorov's view of the world was significantly affected by the Chinese culture which believes that people do not pass away to another world after death and separation of the dead from those who are still living is formal. The ancient Chinese assumed that their well-being was fully dependent on the protection

provided by the deceased ancestors. In view of this, obsequies in China were highly exuberant and decoration of tombs was of great importance. It is certain that N. Fedorov's ideology was deeply influenced by Confucianism and its ideas regarding the true morals emerging from the cult of ancestors. The body-and-spirit relationship issue is solved by N. Fedorov in the spirit of Daoism. According to it, a human body is a microcosm that is similar to the Universe as a macrocosm.

The Society for Universal Immortalism operates now in the United States of America. It is a scientific and religious association that supports N. Fedorov's ideas. Its core mission is to protect and promote the idea of triumph over death and intentional creation of the future after death with the help of reasonable scientific means. One of the targets established by this society is to raise up the dead in the future using methods based on modern physics (quantum and relativistic) and information theory.

N. Fedorov thought that it was realistic to resurrect everyone who had already died, but to do so first in our searching memory. He called for total memory conservation and creation of universal libraries and museums in all areas of science, art, technology and production. By doing this, the mankind would eventually master "patrofication" methods that enable reconstruction of ancestral generations by the human. N. Fedorov proposed that special centers created for that purpose should study scientific and technical ways to control all the molecules and atoms of the external world. According to him, reanimation of the deceased generations would be carried out on a new advanced electromagnetic basis and humans would be able to live as long as necessary. N. Fedorov was sure that people in the future would be autotrophic creatures that can live on non-organic substances and use sunrays to maintain their bodies. This would be a fundamentally new type of energy and information exchange with the environment. Current nanotechnologies may be viewed as the potential step to creation of an autotrophic human being.

The philosopher identified several major types of human attitude to the world. For instance, the attitude to history and the whole world may be objective, which means that nature and society are viewed as some facts of life and may be studied, investigated, described and shown in formulas or laws. In N. Fedorov's opinion, the objective attitude reduces humans to the level of slaves. This type of world view implies compliance with the existing standards (both natural and social). It is exactly this type of mindset that is characterized by naturalism as idolization of anything that is natural.

III. THE CURRENT STATE OF MANKIND AND ITS FUTURE

The *Philosophy of the Common Task* describes two issues related to regulation: food and sanitary [6].

The key idea of the sanitary issue lies in rehabilitation of body and mind of the entire human race and the ability to get rid not only of chronic and epidemic diseases, but also of inherited, organic defects. The food issue is solved through control over atmospheric effects coupled with meteoric processes regulation that "turns winds and rains in ventilation and irrigation of the Earth as common property", makes it possible to control the Earth's motion, search for new energy sources and use the benefits of solar energy. Already in the end of the 19th century N. Fedorov realized that the only way for the mankind, that would sooner or later face the inevitable resource depletion due to population growth or a space disaster, was to gain control over new means of living and transform the Solar system followed by the deep space.

The founder of space biology Aleksandr L. Chizhevsky emphasized that the periods of natural disasters, epidemic and infectious diseases typically coincide with solar activity cycles; biological and mental aspects of life on the Earth are connected with space physics [7]. N. Fedorov assumed that sciences should center on astronomy and proposed the idea that is now known as cosmisation of science (space research).

The basic ideas put forward by Nikolay F. Fedorov are listed below:

- God endowed Humans with Intellect to control the Nature and overcome its spontaneous development;
- The reason for imperfections of the Nature lies in human refusal to "possess" (control) the Earth ("the original sin"). Being deprived of human Intellect, the Nature started degrading;
- The mankind which is currently in a state of decay is not ready to save the Nature.

According to N. Fedorov, the main reasons for the downfall of the mankind are as follows: "cult of woman" supported, in particular, with the continuous eagerness to give birth; "cannibalism" – circulation of elements results in the fact that we consume the remains of our ancestors; culture is an obvious demonstration of degeneration processes. The human society split up into educated and uneducated people, which supported the division between town and countryside and later between the rich and the poor.

N. Fedorov believed that the future of the humankind is connected with our ultimate goal and common task – to resurrect everyone who died:

- Resurrection is both a physical and chemical process, because human body is a machine, while human soul is a product of brain activity.
- Resurrection process is impossible unless the birth process stops. In order to become immortal, one should not be born ("make oneself unborn") and refuse any type of sensual attraction.
- Resurrection is a long and staged process.
- A resurrected person becomes both spiritual and material, but lacks some physical parameters and is able to move freely in the interstellar space.
- Outer space exploration is essential, because there the Earth will not be able to accommodate all generations of our ancestors in case they are brought back to life. Moreover, some of the ancestors' particles fly away to the outer space and should be searched for. The fact that parts bear the features of a whole explains the possibility of finding them.

N. Fedorov formulated the basic idea of Russian cosmism: the World (including life and the humankind) is a law-governed, evolutionary system [8]. N. Fedorov's philosophy is a synthesis of Orthodox religion, metaphysics and theoretical ideas of natural science. He believed that the very deep implication of Orthodox religion was resurrection of dead ancestors carried out by God using people and modern science that comes from God. But since there will not be enough space on our planet for millions of the newly resurrected people, N. Fedorov suggested that we should colonize other planets. This is how the idea of conquering outer space appeared.

The main ideas of Russian cosmism include the following:

- An important and distinctive segment of Russian culture (works of philosophers, scientists, theologians, writers, poets, artists).
- View of the world rooted in mythology, a fusion of the Christian religion and paganism.
- Search for balance between the traditional social values and civilization development dynamics.
- Special mode of thinking: there is knowledge that we obtain not by thinking or by force of our conscience and will, but beyond our will in the process of survival together with other people.
- Faith in human nature and humanity.

The position described above gives reasons to think that cosmism as a naturalistic and religious trend has

paved the way for global ideas in Russian philosophy [9].

IV. CONCLUSION

Russian cosmism reflects new understanding of the human status globally, when the environment is no longer viewed as an object and people are willing to undertake responsibility for their own behavior in the world [10].

The ideas of Konstantin E. Tsiolkovsky [11], one of the greatest Russian scientists, stem directly from N. Fedorov's works. The *Philosophy of the Common Task* [12] had predetermined many of the issues that were later elaborated by K. Tsiolkovsky. It is worth mentioning his work called *The Future of the Earth and Humanity* [13]. It provides a vivid description of future transformation of our planet, including a great number of N. Fedorov's projects, such as meteoric regulation, using solar energy, vegetation improvement and others.

K. Tsiolkovsky admitted that N. Fedorov's role was comparable with that of the university professors for him. In just three years he completed the gymnasium education plan and most part of the university program. K. Tsiolkovsky wrote that already at that time he was thinking about the Universe [14]. Russian philosophy gave way to space exploration and technological progress.

K. Tsiolkovsky put forward an assumption that human Intellect would reach its highest development level on a non-biological basis, by using electromagnetic fields. In this connection, he developed the concept of a "radiant human" and "radiant humanity". According to it, the new type of a human being would excel us in terms of brain development to the same extent as we now excel a single-celled organism. Having reached this status, the humanity will enjoy "eternity and salvation" [15].

Russian cosmists drew attention to problems that are now called global [16]. The solution of these problems depends greatly on humans and their moral qualities. It is important to change the morals of an outside space onlooker and put an end to human neglectful attitude to nature. N. Fedorov wrote that the world is coming to its end, and humans are bringing it even closer with their actions, because the civilization that merely exploits nature without rehabilitating it cannot achieve any other result except for the soon end.

Another great Russian scientist Vladimir I. Vernadsky, who was the follower of N. Fedorov and K. Tsiolkovsky, used facts and observations to prove that it is unwise and useless to work against evolution, against its new, objective, inevitable, conscious and rational stage that transforms the world and human nature [17].

The last quarter of the 20th century saw the emergence of a fundamentally new idea of world unity, the new "global reality" characterized by creation of common economic and information space, availability of any resources for human activity, as well as interconnection and interdependence of all processes going on in the world. This way of thinking will necessarily mean interest in studying the cultural stereotypes of different ethnic groups or communities, expanding the cognitive base of specific ethos and greater respect to other cultures and religions. Ideas of the world unity have created the basis for new technological picture of educational interaction [18], [19], [20], [21].

But the interests of different states may often be totally opposite to each other, and access to the benefits of globalization is not equal for everyone. This leads to the growth of disproportions in economic, demographic, cultural, educational, nanotechnological and other types of development in various geographic areas of our planet and highlights the critical importance of a new mindset that would enable perceptual unity of main problems and contradictions that are now experienced by the society. Cosmism does not offer any ready projects for creation of a new-type civilization. Its concepts are full of utopian ideas without any answers to the urgent problems of today's world. At the same time, cosmists put forward a great many of good ideas and projects and in this way made valuable contribution to the continuous search for potential ways out of the global civilization crisis [22], [23].

This work describes in the first place N. Fedorov's ideas that are directly linked to our modern world. His views and concepts may be supported or refused, but it seems likely that N. Fedorov scholars will long be surprised at how clearly and intelligibly the philosopher formulated the key problems of today's world. And who knows, maybe some of the boldest projects of this original Russian thinker that seem impossible now will come true in the future.

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