

Chapter 10

The Individual and Society

I

We know that the complete sense of the moral good, which also includes the concept of the real good or satisfaction, is ultimately defined as the real moral order. The latter expresses the unconditionally proper and desirable relation of each of us to the whole and of the whole to each of us. This is called the Kingdom of God, and it is quite clear that from the moral point of view only the realization of the Kingdom of God, as¹ the highest good, satisfaction and bliss, can be the ultimate goal of life and of our activity. If we think about this matter precisely and concretely, it is just as clear that the real moral order, or Kingdom of God, is both a quite universal and a quite individual concern. For *each* of us wants it for oneself and for everyone, and only *together with everyone* can we reach it.² Consequently, in essence it is impossible to set the individual against society. It is impossible to ask which of the two is the end and which is merely the means. Such a question would presuppose³ the real⁴ existence of the single individual as a solitary, closed circle, whereas in fact each single individual is merely the center of an infinite number of interrelations with another and with others. To abstract oneself from every actual thing in life would mean to transform the individual into an empty possibility of existence. To present [228]the personal center of one's being as actually distinct from one's surroundings and from the general sphere of life that connects one with other centers is no more than a morbid illusion of self-consciousness.⁵

E] The first version of this chapter consisting of eight sections appeared as (A). In the first edition of the compiled book (B), these sections form the first eight sections of Chap. 8, pp. 250–279, and the chapter bears the same title as in the second edition of the compiled book.

¹ C] as] *Absent in B.*

² C] For *each* of us ... can we reach it.] *Absent in B.*

³ C] would presuppose] presupposes **B.**

⁴ C] real] actual **B.**

⁵ C] We know that ... of self-consciousness.] *Absent in A*

As is well known, when a chalk line is drawn before a rooster's eyes it takes this line as some sort of fatal barrier that absolutely cannot be crossed. Obviously, it is not in a position to understand that the overwhelming significance of the chalk line, which it sees as fatal, arises simply from the fact that it is concerned exclusively with what for it is an unusual and unexpected sight. Consequently, the rooster is *not free* with regard to it. A mistake is rather natural for a rooster, but less natural for a rationally thinking person. However, such a person too often does not understand that the given limitations of his subjectivity are insurmountable and impenetrable solely because one's attention is concentrated exclusively on this limitation, that the fatal separation of one's own "self" from everything else consists only in the fact that he or she pictures it to oneself as fatal. He or she is also a victim of autosuggestion, which, although it certainly has objective bases, is as relative and easily removed as the drawing of the chalk line.

It is by virtue of this self-delusion that an individual person considers him or herself to be a real person even when he or she is separated from everything and presupposes this pseudo isolation to be the genuine basis and even sole possible point of departure for all of the individual's relations. The self-delusion of abstract subjectivism leads to devastation not only in the sphere of metaphysics (which from this point of view is quite simply eliminated), but also in the sphere of moral and political life. From this arise so many complicated theories, irreconcilable contradictions and unanswerable questions! All of this insolubility and fatality would disappear by itself if, without fearing famous names, we would take into account the simple fact that these theories could have been devised and these unanswerable questions could have arisen only from the point of view of the hypnotized rooster.

II

The *human individual*, and, consequently, each individual person, *has the possibility of realizing an unlimited [229]reality, or a unique form of infinite content*. In the human mind, there lies an infinite possibility for an ever truer and truer cognition of the meaning of everything, and the human will contains the same infinite possibility for the ever increasingly complete realization of this meaning encompassing all within a given vital environment. The human individual is infinite: This is an axiom of moral philosophy. However, abstract subjectivism here draws its chalk line in front of the eyes of the careless thinker, and the most fruitful axiom is transformed into a hopeless absurdity. The human individual, as an infinite possibility, is separated from all the actual conditions and the actual results achieved through society⁶ of his or her realization. It is not only separate from them,⁷ but even opposed to them.⁸ An insoluble contradiction turns up between the individual and so-

⁶ C] through society.] by society. **AB**.

⁷ C] them] it **AB**.

⁸ C] them] it **AB**.

ciety, and there appears the “unanswerable question”: Which of the two principles⁹ must be sacrificed? On the one hand, those hypnotized by individualism claim the self-sufficiency of the isolated individual, who has all of his or her relations stemming from oneself. Such people see social ties and the collective order only as an external limit and an arbitrary constraint that must be eliminated no matter what. On the other hand, those hypnotized by collectivism see in the life of humanity only social masses and take the individual as an insignificant and transient element of society who has no rights of one’s own and can be disregarded in favor of the so-called general interest. However, what lies behind a society that consists of impersonal wretches¹⁰ who lack rights, of moral zeros? In any case, would it be a *human* society? Where is its dignity? Where is the inner value of its existence, and where does it get that dignity? What would maintain that dignity? Is it not clear that this is a sad chimera, as unrealizable as it is undesirable? Is not the opposite ideal of the self-sufficient individual the same chimera? Deprive an *actual* human individual of everything that in one way or another is due to one’s connections with social or collective wholes and you get a brutish individual who is nothing but pure possibility alone or an empty form of a person, i.e., something that in reality does not exist at all. Those who happened to descend into hell or rise into heaven, as, for example, Dante and Swedenborg, did not find [230]solitary individuals there, but saw only social groups and circles.

Social life is not a condition that accompanies individual life, but is contained in the very definition of the individual, who essentially is both a rationally cognizing and morally active force. Both are possible only in the form of a social being. Rational cognition on its *formal* side is conditioned by *general concepts* that express a unity of meaning in the elusive manifold of appearances. However, the actual and objective commonality (or common meaning) of concepts is revealed in linguistic intercourse, without which rational activity, arrested and deprived of realization, naturally atrophies. Then, the very faculty of understanding disappears or passes into a state of pure possibility. Language—this realized form of reason—could not have been created by a single, isolated individual. Consequently, a single individual would not be a linguistic creature, would not be a person. With respect to the *material*, cognition of the truth is based on *experience*—hereditary, collective and accumulating experience. Even if a single, absolutely isolated creature could exist, its experience would obviously be quite insufficient for cognition of the truth. As for the *moral* determination of the individual, the very idea of the moral good or of a moral evaluation is not merely the consequence of social relations, as many think. It is quite obvious that the *realization* of this idea or the actual development of human morality is possible for a person only in a social setting through interaction with it. In this chief respect, society is nothing other than the objectively realized content of the individual.

Instead of an insoluble contradiction of two mutually exclusive principles, two abstract “isms,” we find in reality two correlative terms that both logically and his-

⁹ E] That is, individualism or collectivism.

¹⁰ C] wretches] beings **AB**.

torically presuppose and demand one another. In terms of its essential significance, society is not the external limit¹¹ of the individual, but is one's inner embodiment. Society is not the arithmetical sum or mechanical aggregate of individual people, but the indivisible whole of their social life. This life has already been partially realized in the past and preserved through the abiding social *tradition*, is partially being realized in [231]the present by means of social *services* and, finally, anticipates its future perfect realization in the best conceptualizations of the social *ideal*.

Corresponding to these three fundamental and abiding moments of the personal-social life—the religious, the political and the prophetic—there are¹² three main concrete stages of human consciousness and levels in life. These stages consistently appear throughout the course of historical development and are: (1) the *gens*, which belongs to the past, although it is still preserved in a modified form in the family; (2) the *nation-state*, which dominates at the present, and finally; (3) *universal* intercourse in life conceived as the future ideal.

In terms of its essential content, society is, at all these stages, the moral *embodiment* or *realization* of the individual in a given sphere of life. However, the size of this sphere is not the same in each case. At the first stage, the sphere is restricted to one's own *gens*; at the second stage, to one's fatherland. Only at the third stage does the human individual, having achieved clear awareness of one's inner infinity, strive, in the corresponding way, to realize this infinity in a *perfect* society with the elimination of all limitations not only in terms of the *content* but also in terms of the extent of interactions in life.

III

Each individual person, as an individual, possesses the possibility of perfection, or positive infinity, namely, the faculty to understand everything with one's own reason and embrace everything with the heart, i.e., to enter into a living unity with everything. This double infinity—the power of representation and the power to aspire and act, which is called in the Bible (according to the interpretation of the Fathers of the Church) the image and likeness of God—is the indispensable possession of each person. Properly speaking, herein lies the unconditional significance, dignity and value of the human individual and the basis of his inalienable rights.¹³ [232]Clearly,

¹¹ C] limit] boundary **AB**.

¹² C] are] appear **AB**.

¹³ F] In terms of the inner connection between, and the relative distinction of, these terms, this sense of the image and likeness of God is in essence the same as that mentioned earlier in Part II. In fact, it is clear that an infinite power of representation and understanding of everything can give us only the *image* (the "schema") of perfection, whereas an infinite aspiration, having as its goal the *actual* realization of perfection, is the beginning of our *likeness* to the living God, who is not only an ideal perfection, but an actual perfection to which we aspire. C] *This entire note absent in AB*.

the realization of this infinity, i.e., the reality of this perfection, is conditioned by the participation of all and cannot be the personal possession of each one *taken separately*, but is assimilated by each through interaction with all. In other words, by remaining in isolation and confinement, the single individual thereby deprives him or herself of the actual full scope of the whole, i.e., deprives oneself of perfection and infinity. Even the consistent assertion of one's individuality or uniqueness would be physically impossible for a person. Everything that in life is held in common necessarily in one way or another influences single individuals. It is assimilated by them, and only in and through them reaches its ultimate reality, or completion. Moreover, if we look at this same matter from another angle, we see that all of the *actual* content of personal life is obtained through the social environment and in one way or another is conditioned by its given state. In this sense, we can say that *society is a supplementary or expanded individual, and the individual is a compressed or concentrated society*.

The task set for the world is not the creation of solidarity between each and all—such already exists by the nature of things—but the full awareness and then spiritual assimilation of this solidarity by all and each, the conversion of this solidarity from being a merely metaphysical and physical solidarity into a morally metaphysical and a morally physical one. Human life already in itself, both from above and from below, is an involuntary participation in the progressive existence of humanity and of the whole world. The *dignity* of this life and the meaning of the entire universe demands only that this involuntary participation of each in the whole become voluntary, be more and more conscious and free, i.e., really *personal*, in order that each more and more understands and embodies the *common concern*,¹⁴ as *one's own*. Obviously, therefore, the infinite significance of the individual is realized only in this manner, or passes from possibility into reality.

However, this very transition—this spiritualization or moralization of solidarity, according to the nature of what exists—is also an inseparable part of the common concern. In terms of its actual progress, the fulfillment of this highest task depends [233]not on personal conditions alone, but is necessarily determined by the general course of world history or by the present state of the social environment in a given historical moment. In this way, the personal perfecting of each human being can never be separated from general perfecting, nor personal morality from social morality.

¹⁴ E] *common concern*] A reference to the views of Nikolaj F. Federov, with which Solov'ëv became acquainted already in early 1878 through Dostoyevsky. In an undated letter to Federov, though most likely from the mid-1880s, Solov'ëv wrote, "I accept your 'project' unconditionally and without hesitation. . . . For now, I will say only that your 'project' is the first movement forward of the human spirit along Christ's path since the appearance of Christianity." *Pis'ma*, vol. 2, p. 345. Federov's main work was published posthumously by friends under the title *Filosofija obshchego dela* [*Philosophy of the Common Concern*]. See Federov 1906–1913.

IV

Actual morality is the proper interaction between a single individual and the given environment (in the broad sense of the term, embracing all spheres of being, both higher and lower, with which a person practically interacts). Undoubtedly, the actual personal dignity of each individual is expressed and embodied in his or her relations to what surrounds that individual. The infinite possibilities that lay in human nature itself—in each and all of us—is gradually realized in our *personal-social* reality. Historical experience finds the human being to be already supplied with a certain social environment, and all subsequent history is only an elevation and enlargement of this two-sided personal-social life. The three principle stages, or formations, in this process that we have mentioned—the gens, the nation-state and the universal—are, of course, connected by a number of intermediate links. In spite of this, a higher form does not replace and does not entirely eliminate a lower one but, absorbing it into its own sphere, only changes it from an independent whole into a subordinate part. Thus, with the emergence of the state the union of gentes becomes a subordinate, particular element of it, taking the form of the family. In the state, a family's blood ties are not so much eliminated as morally extended, changing only their sociological and legal¹⁵ significance, ceasing to be the foundation of an independent power or serving as a jurisdiction of its own.

With the transition from the lower forms of collective life to the higher, selected representative individuals by virtue of their inherent infinite potential to understand and to aspire for the better appear as the principle of action and progress (the dynamic element in history). On the other hand, the given social environment, as the already attained reality, as the complete objectification of the moral content in its sphere and at its stage,¹⁶ naturally [234]represents the stagnant, protective side (the static element in history). In time, particular individuals who are more gifted and more developed than others begin to be aware that their social environment is *not* the realization and fulfillment of their lives, but only an external restriction and obstacle to their positive moral aspirations. They, then, will become the bearers of a higher social consciousness, which aspires to be embodied in new forms and new orders of life that correspond to it.

Every social environment is an objective manifestation or embodiment of morality (of proper relations) at a certain level of human development. However, the moral individual by virtue of one's aspiration for the unconditional moral good outgrows the given limited form of moral content embodied in the society and begins to take a negative attitude towards it—not towards it in itself,¹⁷ but only towards the given lower stage of its embodiment. Obviously, such a conflict is not a fundamental opposition between the principle of the individual and that of society as such, but only between the earlier and the new stages of personal-social development.

¹⁵ C] and legal] *Absent in AB.*

¹⁶ C] and at its stage] *Absent in AB.*

¹⁷ C] attitude towards it—not towards it in itself,] attitude—not towards this very content, **AB.**

V

Human moral significance and dignity are manifested for the first time in *gentile life*.¹⁸ Here we find a rudimentary embodiment or organization of the whole of morality: religious, altruistic and ascetic. In other words, a gens is the realization of personal human dignity in the most intimate and most fundamental sphere of society. The first condition of actual human dignity—reverence for that which is higher than oneself, for the super-material powers that govern one's life—are realized in the veneration of ancestors or of dead forefathers. The second condition of personal dignity—recognition of the dignity of others—is expressed in the solid interrelations between the members of the gens, in their love and concern. Finally, the third (but, from another point of view, the first) condition of human dignity—freedom from [235]the predominance of carnal desires—is achieved here to a certain extent by means of some obligatory restriction or regulation of sexual intercourse through the various forms of marriage and also by means of the other restraining rules of the community life of the gens, which demanded the *shame* of which the¹⁹ ancient chronicler spoke.

Therefore, in this original circle of human life the moral dignity of the individual is realized in all respects by and in society. Where can we find an expression of the fundamental contradiction and hostility between the individual and society, and why does it appear? The relation between them is direct and positive. The social law is not something foreign to the individual, something imposed on it from outside and contrary to its nature. It merely imparts a definite, objective and constant form on the inner motives of personal morality. Thus, a person's own religious feeling (already encountered in its rudimentary state in individual animals) prompts one to respect the secret causes and conditions of one's existence—the gentile cult of ancestor veneration gives only an objective expression to this aspiration. It is precisely this same peculiar feeling of pity in the human being that inclines us to a just attitude and to a loving attitude towards our relatives. The social law merely strengthens this personal altruism with constant and definite forms and provides it with the means to its true realization (thus, the defense of the weak members of the gens from injury by someone else, which is impossible for a single person is organized by the gens as a whole and by a union of gentes). Finally, the modesty inherent in the human individual is realized in the social commandments concerning specific abstentions. How does one separate here personal from social morality, when the former is the inherent principle of the second, and the second is the objective realization of the first? Once the rules of the community life of the gens—such as veneration of the common ancestors, mutual aid to members of the gens, a limitation of sensuality by marriages—have a moral source and character, then clearly the fulfillment of these social rules leads not to a loss, but to a gain for the individual.

¹⁸ F] I take "gens" in the broad sense to indicate a group of people connected in a single closed community by ties of blood and marriage in whatever fundamental form this connection happens to take—be it "consanguine" or "punaluan," matriarchical or patriarchal.

¹⁹ C] the] our **AB**.

The more a single member of a gens enters in fact into the spirit of the order of that gens, which demands reverence for the unseen, solidarity with one's neighbors and moderation of carnal passions, the more moral this person obviously becomes, and the more moral, the higher his or her inner worth or [236]personal dignity. Therefore, *submission to society is an elevation of the individual*. On the other hand, the freer this submission, i.e., the more independently the single individual follows the inner inducements of his moral nature, which agree with the demands of social morality, the more such an individual can serve as a reliable and firm support for society. That is, *the independence of the individual is the basis of the social union's strength*. In other words, there is a direct, and not an inverse, relationship between the actual significance of the individual and the actual power of society.

So, how, in fact, can the fundamental revolt of the individual against society and his superiority to it be expressed in the gentile way of life? Would this supposed fighter for the rights of the individual perhaps desecrate the tombs of his ancestors, outrage his father, disgrace his mother, kill his brothers and marry the sisters of his gens? Just as it is clear, however, that such actions are below the lowest social level, so it is also clear that the actual realization of unconditional individual dignity is impossible through a simple rejection of the given social order.

VI

The moral content of gentile life is eternal; the historical process with the active participation of the individual inevitably severs the limited form of the gentile way of life. The original expansion of this primitive life is certainly caused by the natural pace²⁰ of reproduction. Even within the limits of a single gens, the more distant degrees of kinship follow right behind the nearest, but moral obligations extend to them as well. This is why similar to the progressive division of the living organic cell there occurs a division of the social cell—one gens into many gentes, which, however, preserve the connection between themselves and the memory of their common origin. From a gens is formed a new social group—the tribe, which embraces several close gentes. For example, the North American red-skinned Seneca tribe, whose organization and way of life were studied and described by the well-known sociologist Morgan,²¹ consisted of eight independent gentes, which evidently arose from the division of a single original gens, because of which they preserved a definite relation to one another. Each gens was based on [237]a recognized blood kinship, and marriages within a gens were unconditionally forbidden as incestuous. Each such gens was treated as autonomous. However, this autonomy was in certain

²⁰ C] pace] process AB.

²¹ E] Lewis Henry Morgan (1818–1881), an American anthropologist whose studies of the gens organization of American Indian tribes led him to the claim that all human cultures develop along a single or unilinear path. Morgan's 1864 work *Ancient Society* was to prove highly influential in comparative anthropology in subsequent decades.

respects subordinate to the general authority of the entire tribe, namely, to the tribal council, which consisted of representatives of all eight gentes. In addition to this military-political institution, the unity of the tribe was expressed in a common language and in common religious festivals. The transitional stage between the gens and the tribe were those groups that Morgan, adopting a classical term, designated as *phratries*. Thus, the Seneca tribe was divided into two phratries with the same number of gentes in each. The first contained the Wolf, Bear, Turtle and Beaver gentes; the second contained the Deer, Snipe, Heron and Hawk gentes. The gentes in each group considered each other as *brother-gentes*, and the gentes in the other group as *cousins*. Clearly, the original gens from which the Seneca tribe descended was first divided into two new gentes and each of them divided later into four, and this gradual division has been retained in the common memory.²²

There is no reason why the dissemination of social solidarity to the entire group of gentes should be limited to tribes. The enlargement of the moral horizon, on the one hand, and the known advantages of aggregate action, on the other, prompt many tribes to proceed at first into temporary and then enter into permanent unions with each other. Thus, the Seneca tribe along with many others enters into a tribal union, bearing the general designation Iroquois. In such tribal unions, common distant ancestors are a usual assumption, though not a necessary condition. In many, if not the majority of cases several tribes, whose ancestors separated in times immemorial and which then multiplied and developed independently, outside any connection with each other, coming together under new conditions, form a union by means of *treaties* for the sake of mutual defense and joint undertakings. Treaties here have, in any case, incomparably greater significance than blood kinship, which cannot be at all assumed.

The union of tribes, in particular those that have achieved a certain measure of culture²³ and occupy a specific territory, is already a transition to a state, the embryo of a nation. The Iroquois, like the majority of other Indian tribes, who stayed in [238] the wild forests and prairies of North America, did not advance this embryo of the nation and state. However, other representatives of the same race, who moved to the south, rather quickly passed from a military union of tribes to a permanent political order. The Aztecs in Mexico and the Incas in Peru established genuine nation-states of the same type as the great theocratic monarchies of the Old World. The inner, essential connection between the original social cell—the gens—and the broad political organization is clearly expressed in the word *fatherland*, which designates in almost all languages the union of a nation-state. Expressing a blood relationship, the term “fatherland” (*patria*, *Vaterland*, etc.) thereby points out not that the unity of the state is just an extended gens—that would be contrary to the truth—but that the moral principle of this great new union must be, in essence, the same as the principle of a smaller union, viz., that of the gens. In reality, states are a product of wars and treaties, but this precludes that the goal or reason why they were formed was to establish the same solidarity or peaceful co-existence of peoples in the broad circle

²² E] Morgan 1877: 90.

²³ C] culture] civilization **AB**.

of national and even international relations that had existed from time immemorial within the limits of the gens.

The process by which states are formed and the changes in the external life of peoples connected with this process are beyond the scope of the present study. Our concern is merely the moral status of the individual with respect to this new social environment. As long as the only rudiments and attempts at constituting higher forms above the gens were manifested as tribes and tribal unions, the status of the individual did not essentially change or changed, so to speak, only quantitatively. Moral awareness received greater satisfaction and was more fully realized thanks to an enlargement of the sphere of practical interaction, and that was all. The divine ancestor of a given gens found brothers in the same gods of the other gentes, and there arose a mutual recognition of the gods. The religions of the individual nations were combined and in part received a collective meaning (periodically, at the time of common tribal festivals), but the character of the worship services remained the same. In the same way, the expression of human solidarity—the defense of one’s own gentile brothers and an obligation to avenge an injury done to them—remained inviolable even with the formation of tribes and the tribal union.²⁴ An essential change took place with [239]the emergence of the fatherland and the state. However the national religion may have arisen from a developed ancestor cult, its origin was forgotten by the nation itself. In the same way, the impassive justice of the state is something essentially different from a blood feud. We already see here not only an expansion of the earlier (gentile) order, but the creation of a new one. Here in connection with the emergence of this new order of the nation-state there appears and actually has appeared a moral conflict of principle between the formative social forces that at a superficial level can be taken as a conflict between the individual and society as such.

VII

Neither the tribe nor the tribal union, nor even the organization of the nation-state—the fatherland—destroys the original social cell, but merely changes its significance. This change can be expressed in the short but quite precise formula: *The state order transforms the gens into a family*. In fact, before the formation of the state family life, strictly speaking, does not exist. The elementary group of people connected more or less by close blood kinship that at the time forms²⁵ a social organization is not at all like a genuine family at present in a very essential respect. The distinguishing attribute of the family is that it represents a form of private life as distinguished from public life. A “public family” is a contradiction in terms. However, this distinction between the public and the private could have arisen only with the forma-

²⁴ C] —the defense of one’s own ... and the tribal union.] (the gens or blood revenge), remained unaltered with the formation of tribes and the tribal union. **AB**.

²⁵ C] forms] is **AB**.

tion and development of the state, which precisely represents the (for the most part) public side of community life. Earlier, before the separation of the juridical and political functions of social life from the domestic, when judgment and punishment, war and peace were still the private matter of the elementary groups connected by blood, such groups, even the tightest of them, clearly had no distinctive attribute of the family or of the domestic society. These groups received this new character only when the mentioned functions passed to the state as a unique public or nation-wide organization.

However, this transformation of the early gens, i.e., of the political and [240]domestic union, into a family, i.e., into an exclusively domestic, private, or household, union could be understood in two ways: one with respect to the purification and internal elevation of the gentile connection and the second with respect to its external belittling and debasement.²⁶ Since for a long time an individual's obligation to his gens was the sole expression of one's morality, those with a stagnant and passive nature could regard as immoral the subordination of the gens to a new, higher unity—one's fatherland or state. For the personal consciousness, the earlier question is unprecedented. On which side should it stand with regard to the two social unions: on the side of the narrower and closer or the wider and remote? Regardless of how this question is decided by this or that person, it is clear in any case that this is not a dispute over the individual and society, nor even over the two types of social ties—that of the gens and of the nation, but only a dispute between whether human life should stop at the stage of the gentile way of life or progress by means of the state.

The human individual can better realize his or her intrinsic dignity in the gentile union, in its moral conditions and institutions, than in a state of savage isolation. Already, historical experience shows that the individual's further development and perfecting demands the more complex conditions of life that arise only in civilized states. Let the immature phantasy of the budding poet glorify the half-savage way of life of the nomadic gypsies. An uncontestable appraisal of this phantasy is contained in the simple fact that the offspring of our civilized society, Pushkin, could create his "Gypsies,"²⁷ whereas the gypsies themselves despite their supposed advantages²⁸ could not create their own Pushkin.²⁹

²⁶ F] We can clarify this twofold point of view by an analogous example from a quite different sphere of relations. Even sincere and good Catholics can see the elimination of the Roman pope's secular power and the abolition of the church as a state in different and frankly contradictory ways: either as a favorable condition for an *increase* of the inner moral authority of the pope, or as the deplorable belittling and *debasement* of his political role.

²⁷ E] A reference to one of Pushkin's poems. "Gypsies" was written in 1824. In that year, Pushkin was banished for an indefinite period to his mother's country estate for his alleged atheism. There, he was placed under police surveillance for 2 years.

²⁸ C] despite their supposed advantages] *Absent in AB.*

²⁹ F] Moreover, the same poet dedicates one of his more mature works "with respect" to *the historian of the Russian state*. E] Pushkin's play *Boris Godunov*, written in 1825 and published in 1831 was dedicated to N. M. Karamzin (1766–1826), the author of the multi-volume *History of the Russian State*.

Everything that nourishes our spiritual nature, everything that gives beauty and dignity to our life in the sphere of religion, science and [241]art, all³⁰ arose based on civilized community life, conditioned by the state—all were created not by the gens, but by the fatherland. This is why the people who, while the gentile way of life still predominated, supported the then just emerging or even only just envisioned fatherland, which they had founded, were bearers of a higher consciousness, of a better personal-social morality. They were benefactors of humanity and historical zealots. It was not in vain that the grateful citizens of the Greek communities and of other lands esteemed such people as their heroes—the eponyms.³¹

Societal progress is not an impersonal matter. The conflict between the enterprising individual and one's immediate social environment led to the establishment of a wider and more significant unit—the fatherland. The bearers of this *super-gentile* consciousness or, more precisely, of this semi-conscious aspiration for a broader morality and community, who felt confined in the gentile way of life, broke their connection with it, gathered around themselves a *free band* of like-minded individuals and established cities and states. The arbitrary domination of a pseudo-scientific critique has hastily converted into a myth³² the fugitive Dido, who founded Carthage,³³ and the banished brothers who founded Rome.³⁴ However, in historical times there appear an ample number of examples that instill in us warranted confidence in these ancient tales. An individual exploit that severs the given social frontiers in order to create new and higher cultural and political formations is a phenomenon so fundamental that it cannot help but be encountered in every era of humanity.³⁵

³⁰ C] in the sphere of religion, science and art, all] *Absent in AB*.

³¹ E] A reference to, e.g., Hellen, the eponym of all the Greek tribes and himself the father of Dorus, the eponym of the Dorians, to Achæus, the eponym of the Achæans, and to Ion, the eponym of the Ionians.

³² E] A reference to the work of Theodor Mommsen (1817–1903), who wrote, “The story of the foundation of Rome by refugees from Alba under the leadership of the sons of an Alban prince, Romulus and Remus, is nothing but a naïve attempt of primitive quasi-history. ... Such tales, which profess to be historical but are merely improvised explanations of no very ingenious character, it is the first duty of history to dismiss.” Mommsen 1911: 45.

³³ E] In his *Aeneid*, Virgil tells of Dido, a princess of Tyre in Phoenicia. Escaping tyranny in her own land, she ventured to Libya where she founded Carthage, a great city which Aeneas and his comrades, who survived the sack of Troy, visited seven years after the end of the Trojan War. Dido received the Trojans with hospitality. Having loved Aeneas, she felt betrayed when he left for Italy and committed suicide.

³⁴ E] A reference, of course, to Romulus and Remus, the central characters in the legend of Rome's establishment.

³⁵ F] The absurdity of the points of view that negative historical criticism usually adopts avoids the general ridicule only thanks to the “gloom of time” in which the objects of its concern are hidden. If its favorite techniques and considerations were applied, for example, to Mohammad or to Peter the Great, there would be as little left of these historical heroes as there is of Dido or Romulus. Anyone who has read Whateley's excellent little book on Napoleon has to agree that the biting significance of this mythological hero is revealed by the book's use of the critical school's rigorous principles. The book has a level of consistency, clarity and completeness that we find lacking in the more or less famous works of negative criticism, even though they were written not in jest but

On the basis of historical experience as well as experience drawn from natural history, it is impossible to suppose that [242]a given organized group breaks down or undergoes any essential transformation (for example, become parts of another larger whole) except with the participation of the ultimate units that form it. The ultimate unit of human society is the individual, and the individual has always been the active principle³⁶ of historical progress, i.e., of the transition from the narrowly limited and scanty forms of life to wider and more substantial social formations.³⁷

VIII

A given narrow social group (let us say, a gens) has rights over the individual person, since only in it and through it can a person begin to realize one's inner dignity. However, these social rights over the individual can in no way be³⁸ *unconditional*. For a given, isolated group represents³⁹ only one of the relative stages of historical progress, whereas the human individual can pass through all these stages in aspiring to infinite perfection, which obviously is neither conclusively exhausted nor satisfied by any limited social order.⁴⁰ In other words, *by virtue of one's intrinsic infinity the individual can be definitively and unconditionally in solidarity with and inseparable from the social environment not with its given limitations, but only with it as an infinite whole. This whole is gradually manifested whereas in interacting with single individuals its general forms are*⁴¹ widened, raised and *perfected*. A personal *accomplishment* is fruitful only in society, but only in a society that is *moving along*. Not only is a person not obligated to surrender oneself *unselfishly* to any limited and fixed form of social life, but he or she also *has no right* to do so, for that could be done only by damaging one's human dignity.⁴²

with the most serious of intentions. E] See Whateley 1985. This work originally published in 1819 was an attack on Hume's position on miracles by showing that there is no evidence that Napoleon ever existed.

³⁶ C] with the participation of the ultimate units ... the individual has always been the active principle] through the activity of the single elements that form it. The single element of human society is the individual, and the individual always was the dynamic principle A] with the participation of the single elements that form it. The single element of human society is the individual, who always was the active principle B.

³⁷ C] formations] *footnote added here in AB*: This important truth concerning the significance of the individual in history, which is rejected by certain popular theories, forms the dominant idea in many works of Professor N. I. Kareev, who from this point of view must be recognized as one of the nice and comforting phenomena of our contemporary literature. AB E] Regarding Kareev, see, for example, Kareev 1890. As for the other view, Solov'ëv had in mind at least the position expounded in L. Tolstoy's *War and Peace*.

³⁸ C] can in no way be] in no way is AB.

³⁹ C] isolated group represents] group, as an independent whole, represents AB

⁴⁰ C] order.] organization. A.

⁴¹ C] *its general forms are*] this very sphere is A.

⁴² C] A personal *accomplishment* ... human dignity.] *Absent in AB*.

However, an enterprising member of a gens, then, is morally right in rising up against the conservatism of a gens and assisting in the formation of a state, by virtue of which previously independent social groups are transformed into elementary cells of the new larger whole. It follows from this that the new state has no *unconditional* rights over [243]the former gens (which are from then on only *family*) connections. Representing a *comparatively* higher, but in no way an absolute form of human life in the community, the state has only a *relative* primacy over the gentile way of life. Being only a transitional stage of social development, it includes also, however, a certain unconditional moral element, which retains its power in the state and must be sacred to it. In fact, we clearly distinguish the two-fold structure of gentile morality: (1) that which is connected with the idea of the gens as a completely independent, or autonomous, form of community life which it was at one time, but which it ceased to be with the formation of the state. That is, it is a transitional, expendable element in gentile morality; and (2) natural obligations, which follow from the close, blood tie and constant cohabitation, which obviously retain all their significance even with the transition to a way of life in the state, or, what amounts to the same thing, with the transformation of the gens into a family. The hard shell of the gentile organization has burst open and broken apart, but the moral kernel of the family remained and still remains until the end of history. Meanwhile, when the transition from one way of life to another is only just completed, the representatives of the newly formed state, aware of its recently discovered advantages over the gentile union, could easily ascribe to the new system an absolute significance that does not belong to it and set state law above natural law. In the conflicts that originate from this,⁴³ moral righteousness belongs not to these representatives of the *relatively* higher social order, but to the defenders of *what is unconditional* in the old,⁴⁴ i.e., what must be held equally sacred under *any* social order. Here, conservatism ceases to be blind or selfish stagnation and becomes a pure awareness of a higher duty. Here the embodiment of the protective principle⁴⁵—the female—the usual bulwark of low routine—becomes the bearer of moral heroism. Sophocles' Antigone is the personification of what is unconditionally valuable in the gentile way of life that remained and forever will remain after the transformation of the gens into the family with the coming of the state. She has no thought at all of the political⁴⁶ autonomy of the gens, of the right of blood feuding, etc.—she defends only her unconditional right to fulfill her unconditional obligation [244]of piety and brotherly love: to give an honorable burial to her closest relative, who can obtain it from no one else except her. In her, there is no enmity towards the moral foundations of the state but only an awareness—quite correctly—that outside these foundations the demands of positive law are not unconditional but have their limits in natural law, which is consecrated by religion and protects family obligations even against the state if necessary when it confers on itself what it should not. The conflict between Antigone and Creon is not a collision of two moral forces—the personal and the social. It is

⁴³ C] In the conflicts that originate from this,] In cases of such a conflict, **AB**.

⁴⁴ C] in the old] *Absent in AB*.

⁴⁵ C] the embodiment of the protective principle—] *Absent in AB*.

⁴⁶ C] political] *Absent in AB*

a conflict of the moral force, as such, with an anti-moral force. It is impossible to agree with the generally accepted view of Antigone as⁴⁷ the bearer and champion of personal feeling against the common law embodied in Creon, the representative of the fatherland. The genuine sense of tragedy is quite different. A religious attitude towards the dead is a moral obligation, the fulfillment of which is the basis of any society, but personal feeling expresses only the subjective side of the matter. In our own day, the funeral of and respect paid to dead relatives is not the result of personal feeling alone, and this was even more so in ancient times. It is possible that the feeling is not there, yet the obligation still remains. Antigone had a heartfelt attachment to both brothers, but her sacred obligation connected her to the one who needed her religious help. Being the epitome of a moral individual, Antigone is thereby at the same time the representative of true social life, which is preserved only by the fulfillment of one's obligation. Without hiding her feelings at all, she, nevertheless, bases her actions not on them, but on her sacred obligation, which has to be fulfilled to the end (*φιλη μετ αυτου χειρισμαι, φιλου μετα,—όσια πανουργήσασα*).⁴⁸ Of course, this obligation is not an abstract duty, but an expression of the eternal real order:

Since I must longer please
Those who are below before the living.
For *there I will dwell forever*. Well, if you
Want to neglect what *the gods have revered*.⁴⁹

Indeed, to Creon's question: "You dared to break the proclaimed laws?"⁵⁰ She refers not to her personal feeling, but to [245]the absolute right of the eternal moral order, which cannot be abrogated by civil laws:

For it was not Zeus who announced them to me
Nor Justice, the friend of the gods below
Who gave such Laws to people.
And your decrees cannot have such power,
That place the dead will above
The unwritten and indelible divine statutes.⁵¹

For his part, Creon is not a representative of the state system, the moral foundation of which is the same as that of the gens, albeit with the advantage of a more complete realization. He is the representative of a state system that is distorted or that has put itself in a false position, a state system *that has put on airs*.⁵² However, where does this distortion originate, a distortion that lies not in the essence and purpose of the state, if it does not come from the personal evil passions of its representatives, in the present case of Creon? In other words, in direct opposition

⁴⁷ C] It is impossible to agree ... of Antigone as] Only a superficial and sentimental critique can see in Antigone **AB**.

⁴⁸ E] Greek: "I will stay with him, my brother; and my crime will be devotion" Sophocles 1973: 23, lines 72–73.

⁴⁹ E] Cf. Sophocles 1973: 24, lines 75–79.

⁵⁰ E] Cf. Sophocles 1973: 39, line 449. Here, Solov'ev is clearly quoting from *Antigone*, but he omits in his text the quotation marks.

⁵¹ E] Cf. Sophocles 1973: 39, lines 450–458.

⁵² C] *that has put on airs.*] that has put on airs and become presumptuous. **AB**.

to the popular⁵³ idea it could just as rightly be said that Antigone is the bearer of the social principle and Creon of the individual. However, both would be imprecise and inadequate. It is clear that the very opposition of the individual to society, of the principle of the individual to that of society is, in this case, as in all others, not in agreement with the true situation. The actual opposition and conflict here is not sociological, but purely moral—between good and evil, each of which is manifested as a whole, both in the personal and in the social sphere. Cain killed Abel not because he was the representative of the principle of the individual as against the congeneric union—because all developed “individuals” would certainly have to kill their brothers. He killed, because he was the representative of the principle of *evil*, which can manifest itself both individually and collectively, both privately and publicly. In turn, Creon forbade the citizens from fulfilling certain religious and moral obligations not because he was the head of state, but because he was evil and followed the same principle that was active in Cain before there was any state. Certainly, every law is a state act, but Creon’s position is determined not by the fact that he issued a law, but by the fact that he issued a *profane* law. In this what was at fault was not the state system, but Creon’s own moral worthlessness. For hardly anyone would dare to assert that the permanent [246]function of the state consists in enacting nothing else but profane and inhuman laws.

Thus, Creon is not the bearer of the state principle but of the evil principle, which is rooted in an individual’s will, though it is manifested and embodied in social life. In the present case, it takes the form of a bad state law. In turn, Antigone, who sacrifices her life in order to fulfill a religious, moral obligation that underlies community life, is only a representative of the moral good, which is also rooted in an individual’s will but realized in true social life.

Every conflict in the life of humanity is *ultimately* reducible not to relative sociological opposites, but to the unconditional opposition of the moral good with a self-asserting evil. Therefore, however, if the most profound essence of the problem is always the same, it does not follow that the various historical circumstances in which it turns up again and again are devoid—even from an ethical point of view—of an interest and significance of their own. The inner essence of the moral good and evil is known with complete clarity only in its typical manifestations. The evil that is manifested in a distortion of the idea of the state, or in an exaltation of a state law over the moral law, is a quite specific evil, or a unique, higher stage of evil, than, for example, a simple murder or even fratricide. However, precisely owing to its greater subtlety and complexity, it is subjectively more excusable and less offensive than these crude crimes. Therefore, although socially more harmful, Creon is, for example, personally less guilty than Cain.

There is yet another important nuance of the theme in this most profound drama. The state in general is a higher stage of historical development than the gentile order. This higher stage had just been reached in Hellas. In the representatives of the new order, there are still fresh memories of its origin, struggle and creation. This recent victory of the new over the old, the higher over the lower, is not something

⁵³ C] popular] generally accepted AB.

accidental. In view of the obvious advantages of the unifying state system over gentile discord, its creation is recognized as a progressive, necessary and proper phenomenon. Hence, Creon's self-confidence at the beginning of the drama. [247] The bad law he issues setting allegiance to the new fatherland above the original religious obligations is not only an abuse of state power, but also an abuse of the *victory*—not the local victory of the Thebians over the Argives, but the general victory of the state—the fatherland and city—over the gens. This is why it is impossible to look on Creon—and in antiquity he was not looked on that way—as just a tyrant, in the sense of a representative of personal arbitrariness and real power.⁵⁴ The expression of the general will of the citizenry is assumed to be in the law he issued. The short preface of Aristophanes the grammarian,⁵⁵ usually inserted before the drama, begins in this way: Antigone, who buried Polynices *contrary to the order of the city* (or state)—*παρα τήν πρόσταξιν της πόλεως*. In Sophocles himself, Ismene justifies her refusal to help Antigone, saying that she cannot violate the will of her fellow citizens. Creon also speaks out not in the name of autocracy, but in the name of the unconditional significance of patriotism:

Indeed, anyone who puts a friend above
his fatherland is as good as nothing.⁵⁶

The ethical and psychological basis of the bad law, certainly, lies in Creon's bad will. However, this will is not only absurd and personally arbitrary, but is connected with a general, though nevertheless false, idea by virtue of which the power of the state and its laws are above the moral law. Creon formulates this false idea with complete clarity:

Whoever the city proclaims should be obeyed
Both in small matters and in just ones, *as well as their opposite*.⁵⁷

This idea, despite being a flagrant lie, has inspired and continues to inspire people who do not have the excuse that Creon had and who was carried away by the recent progress, namely the victory of the state over the lack of principles in the gens and the tribe. On the other hand, perhaps in these semi-historical times, [248] clear protests, such as those Sophocles puts into the mouth of Antigone, were not raised by a better consciousness against this false idea. However, in Sophocles' own time the best minds already understood well enough that historical progress, which creates new forms of society, cannot in any way have an advantage over the fundamental bases of *any* social life. Although historical progress is a necessary and important phenomenon, it is, nevertheless, relative and subordinate to a higher idea, and it

⁵⁴ F] As is well known, the Greek word *τύραννος* did not originally have a bad meaning, but was used to designate any monarch. Thus, in the same trilogy of Sophocles the first drama is called *οιδίπουζ τύραννος*, which is not incorrectly translated as "Oedipus the King." We should not translate this word differently in the *Antigone* in reference to Creon.

⁵⁵ E] This "Aristophanes" is commonly referred to in English-language literature as "Aristophanes of Byzantium."

⁵⁶ E] Cf. Sophocles 1973: 28, lines 182–183.

⁵⁷ E] Cf. Sophocles 1973: 47, lines 667–668.

loses all justification when it is turned against the unconditional moral good, for the realization of which all historical movement takes place. However highly we value those who manifest the triumph of progress, the highest dignity of a human person, who evokes complete approval and sympathy, lies not in temporal vanquishing, but in preserving the *eternal limits* that were sacred in the past and will be in the future.