THE WORLD AS AN ORGANIC WHOLE:

RUSSIAN PHILOSOPHY IN RUSSIAN LITERATURE

BY

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Introduction

Russian literature is known for its deep philosophical inquiry: *Crime and Punishment* engages rigorously with nihilism, utilitarianism, and rationalism; *War and Peace* reflects seriously on free will and the meaning of life; *Fathers and Children* dramatizes the generational-philosophical divide between Nihilists and Slavophiles. The renown of Russian philosophical literature stands in contrast to the disregard of "actual" Russian philosophy: in contrast to, say, the French and German traditions, which have equally distinguished literary and philosophical canons, the Russian tradition does not have an analogously-renowned philosophical canon to match its literary one.[1] Russian philosophy is basically disregarded within the field of philosophy (Sutton 536), and it is rarely mentioned within literary studies, even though Russian literature itself is deeply philosophical. Why does such an imbalance exist?

Scholars have speculated as to why the Russian philosophical tradition has been overlooked (Horujy, S. Frank, Mjør, Sutton). For one, universities appeared relatively late in Russia, with the first, Moscow University, being founded in 1755 – compare this to the University of Paris being established around 1200, or Heidelberg University being established in 1386 (S. Frank 2). The first century of philosophy produced in these Russian universities contained little of value or originality (S. Frank 3), and it was not until the end of the nineteenth century, in the 80s and 90s, that a more original Russian philosophy began to emerge in universities as part of a religious-philosophical renaissance (Horujy 272).

[1] Give examples of French and German literature and philosophy

This original philosophy, although borrowing much from the systematic philosophy developing in Western Europe, also took seriously the "original motifs" of the Russian national mentality (S. Frank 4). One such motif was Eastern Christian theology, which deeply influenced key Russian philosophers like Vladimir Soloviev, Pavel Florensky, and Nikolai Berdiaev. Unfortunately, government persecution in post-revolutionary Russia would interrupt the development of this nascent philosophy: Florensky was exiled and executed in 1937, Berdiaev was arrested multiple times before being exiled in 1922, and Soloviev would have likely faced a similar fate, had he not died in 1900. The philosophical renaissance was extinguished nearly as quickly as it had been born, with most texts not being rediscovered until after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Horujy 272-3).

In addition to the challenges surrounding the late birth and subsequent repression of philosophy in Russia, there is the fact that contemporary academics may be skeptical of Russian philosophy's ties to religion and nationalism. The former raises questions regarding sound methodology, and the latter raises pressing moral questions, especially in the wake of contemporary Russian nationalism (Sutton 539).[2] This may further explain why there have not been concerted efforts to revive Russian philosophy in the same way that there have been efforts to revive lost Russian literature.

Because of the general obscurity of Russian philosophy, there is a poverty of analysis on the intersection of Russian philosophy and Russian literature, especially in English-language studies. This gap means that the full depth of major Russian literary works is not recognized by many of the top Slavicists in the English-speaking world. Given this state of affairs, the first aim of this project is to draw attention to Russian

[2] Give details of how it's tied to nationalism

philosophy by highlighting some of its unique metaphysical and epistemological contributions. I do so by contextualizing these contributions within the contemporary analytic philosophical tradition, with the intent of neutralizing possible tensions surrounding religion or nationalism. The second aim of this project is to show how Russian philosophy is an indispensable part of fully understanding major works of Russian literature. I argue for this point through case studies of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* and a selection of Daniil Kharms' works. The structure of this paper is as follows:

In §1, I introduce two key ideas in Russian philosophy: organic unity and intellectual intuition. With a focus on Vladimir Solovyov's *Lectures on Divine Humanity*, I consider how these ideas fit into contemporary analytic philosophy. In §2, I illustrate how Russian philosophy is essential to understanding the ecological themes in *The Brothers Karamazov*. In particular, I use the concepts of iconicity, creation, and organic unity to contextualize Father Zosima's ecological teachings. In §3, I analyze selected works of Daniil Kharms through the lens of epistemology. I argue that Kharms's absurdism and humor serve an epistemic purpose, which can be seen as a form of the intellectual intuition outlined by philosophers like Soloviev. Finally, in §4, I conclude with a short discussion on how Russian philosophy has influenced Russian artistic movements, particularly the Russian avant-garde. This serves as a introduction to the musical component of this project.

This paper is only a preliminary examination of how Russian philosophy interacts with Russian literature and art. My hope is that the case studies of *The Brothers*

Karamazov and Kharms will show the value in taking Russian philosophy seriously, and motivate further inquiry into the intersection of Russian philosophy and literature.

1. Organic Unity and Intellectual Intuition in Russian Philosophy

In this section, I outline two key ideas in Russian philosophy – organic unity and intellectual intuition – and make connections to developments in contemporary analytic philosophy. By putting Russian philosophy into conversation with analytic philosophy, I aim to do what Jonathan Sutton, a scholar of religious philosophy, proposed as a promising way to integrate Russian philosophy into the general philosophical tradition:

> It may not be an easy task to establish sound claims for 'religious philosophy' in its known nineteenth-and twentieth-century Russian incarnations to be fully admitted to the body of reflection that we know as 'philosophy'. However, if I were to look anywhere at all for people to embark on such a task with a reasonable measure of success, I would turn specifically to that generation of scholars trained to post-doctoral level and beyond in mathematics and the natural sciences, some of whom have now turned their minds to sustained work in the humanities, including theology, religious studies, and philosophy (Sutton 539-40).

I focus particularly on connections with contemporary philosophy of science and logic, in which most philosophers have advanced training in math and the natural sciences. In bringing together Russian philosophy and analytic philosophy, I do not intend for Russian philosophy to be stripped of its religious context, and I do not even want to minimize the

importance of the religious roots of Russian philosophy. I simply hope that by highlighting the philosophical seriousness of the ideas contained in Russian philosophy, it becomes clear that it is a widely applicable and comprehensible tradition beyond the sphere of Eastern Christianity. In fact, I hope that in making this connection, I can help spark interest in the religious context from which Russian philosophy arises.

I focus on Vladimir Soloviev's *Lectures on Divine Humanity* for multiple reasons. Firstly, there is the general view that Soloviev is Russia's most systematic philosopher (Sutton 536, Frank 3, John Mohr 623-24, DeBlasio 20) and that he is the primary source of the core ideas of the Russian religious renaissance (Horujy 272). Furthermore, many prominent participants in the Russian literary and artistic scenes attended Soloviev's Lectures, including Dostoevsky and Tolstoy (Jakim vii), so they are a convenient focal point when considering the intersection of Russian philosophy and literature. Throughout this paper, other key Russian philosophers to whom I refer are Pavel Florensky, Nikolai Losskii, Ivan Kireevsky, Aleksei Khomiakov, and Leonid Ouspensky. Although I do not have space to delve as deeply into their individual philosophies, the work of these philosophers can be seen as an integrated whole; I use Soloviev as a representative of this collective work.

1.a: Organic Unity

The concept of organic unity in Russian philosophy appears in many forms, most commonly *sobornost'* (spiritual unity; associated with Khomiakov) and *vseyedinstvo* (all-unity; all-in-oneness; associated with Soloviev). Nikolai Losskii has a book titled *Mir*

kak organicheskoe tseloe (*The World as an Organic Whole*); Soloviev often mentions the "*absoliutnyi organism*" (absolute organism) as a synonym for all-unity.

Organic unity is primarily a metaphysical understanding of Being (though it of course has ethical and epistemological implications). The key idea of organic unity is that although unity is prior to the parts, the existence of the parts is emphatically reaffirmed. That is, unity does not extinguish the significance of each part of the whole, and it is only by affirming the significance of each part that the life of the whole can be reaffirmed. The alternative, where an absolute unity overrides the existence of any individual part, is a "dead," inorganic, non-dynamic unity.

Vladimir Soloviev, in his *Lectures*, motivates the reasoning for such a metaphysical picture (see Lectures 4-5). He begins by entertaining the possibility of absolute multiplicity, in which all that exists is an aggregate of individual entities. This picture is implausible to Soloviev, since one can infinitely divide individuals, which means there would be no fundamental unit upon which reality could ultimately be recovered. An alternative picture he considers is absolute unity: perhaps all that exists is a single object, which has no parts. This also seems implausible to Soloviev, since life is evidently dynamic and a result of relations between multiple things (consider, for example, the fact that we interact with material surroundings). He concludes:

> If both the postulation of absolute unity and the postulation of the absolute multiplicity of entities lead to negative results and render any intelligent worldview impossible, the truth clearly lies in the unification of the two, in the recognition of a *relative* unity and a *relative* multiplicity.

> From this point of view, the many entities do not have genuine being in their separateness or in absolute particularization. Each can exist in itself and for itself only insofar as it, at the same time, interacts with and interpenetrates other entities as inseparable elements of one whole. For the proper quality or character of each entity in its objectivity consists precisely in its determinate relation to the *all* and, consequently, in its determinate interaction with the *all*. But this is clearly only if these entities share an essential commonality, that is, if they are rooted in one common substance that forms the *essential medium* of their interaction, a medium that embraces all of them but is not contained separately in any one of them.

In this passage, Soloviev articulates ideas that have been recently argued by prominent philosophers of science (Schaffer 2010, 2007; Ismael 2016; Perry 2017). In particular, Soloviev insists that both parts and the whole exist, but that the whole is prior to the parts, and that the parts only exist as "inseparable elements of one whole." This resembles Schaffer's priority monism as articulated in Schaffer 2010 and 2007, in which his view is precisely that "the whole is prior to its parts" (Schaffer 2010, 31). Indeed, Schaffer's main motivation in proposing priority monism is to articulate a monistic tradition that closely resembles the idea of organic unity: "[A] first main thread in the monistic tradition is that of the priority of whole to part…A second main thread in the monistic tradition is that of the organic unity of the whole…A third main thread in the monistic tradition is that of the world as an integrated system" (Schaffer 2010, 66-8). Schaffer literally uses the phrases "organic unity" and "integrated system," which echo

themes of organic unity and integration used by Russian philosophers. A second point of connection is in the idea of entities being rooted in a "common substance" that forms the essential medium of their interaction. This resembles monistic substantivalism as articulated by (e.g.) Perry 2017 and Ismael 2016: Perry defends a "Space-time Globalism," in which the totality of space-time is the fundamental spatio-temporal entity, with points and non-total regions being derivative entities (224); Ismael defends "quantum holism," which aims to explain the inseparability of nature via a common ground. Ismael and Perry are largely motivated by developments in quantum physics, yet arrive at a similar understanding of space-time to Soloviev's.

These connections to contemporary philosophy of science are likely not accidental, as Soloviev himself was deeply concerned with bridging his ideas with contemporary scientific developments. Of course, science has developed massively since Soloviev was writing in the late nineteenth century – quantum mechanics was only substantially developed in the 1920s, while Soloviev died in 1900 – which is perhaps why Sutton believed that Russian philosophy could best be revived by those with advanced training in mathematics and science.

1.b: Intellectual Intuition

As opposed to organic unity, which was a metaphysical view, intellectual intuition (*umstvennoe cozertanie)* is an epistemological idea. It has similarities to Florensky's intuition-discursion (*intuitsiia-diskursia*) (33) and Kireevsky's integral knowledge (*tsel'noe znanie*) (260).

For Soloviev, the crux of intellectual intuition is that it transcends the limitations of both abstract thinking and immediate sense perception: it is "the primordial form of true knowledge, a form that is clearly distinguished from sense perception and experience, as well as from rational, or abstract, thinking." While a full explication of Soloviev's argument is beyond the scope of this paper, the general idea is that abstract thinking is limited by its generality, while sense perception is limited by its individuality. For example, when we think of the abstract concept "human being," we necessarily strip away unique identifying features of individual human beings (e.g. a mole on my right cheek), and are left with only the most general features of human beings (e.g. a vague concept of human anatomy). The result is that abstract concepts leave us with only a "skeleton" of reality, from which the particularities of real entities are abstracted. On the other hand, when we perceive an individual human being, we are only familiar with this immediate individual, and are limited in what we can say about human beings as a universal whole. The goal of intellectual intuition is to transcend both of these limitations, and is thus viewed as the only form of "true," complete knowledge. If the process of intellectual intuition seems vague, Soloviev points to artistic creation as an example of intellectual intuition realized:

> [T]he reality of ideas and of intellectual intuition is indisputably proved by the fact of *artistic creation*. Indeed, those ideal images that artists embody in their works are neither a simple reproduction of observed phenomena in their particular and accidental reality nor general concepts abstracted from that reality…
> Everyone knows that both abstract rationality and the servile imitation of external

> reality are deficiencies in artistic creation. Everyone knows that the truly artistic form or type necessarily requires an inner union of perfect individuality with complete generality or universality. A union of this kind constitutes the essential feature or proper determination of an intellectually intuited idea.

While intellectual intuition is not explicitly represented in contemporary analytic philosophy, many philosophers at least agree with the limitations of both abstract thinking and immediate sense perception. This is particularly apparent in the contemporary revival of panpsychism within philosophy of mind, which has been significantly motivated by the realization that scientific thinking cannot perceive the "inner life" of entities.[3] For example, many eminent philosophers of science like David Chalmers, David Builes, Galen Strawson, and Hedda Mørch subscribe to a kind of Russellian panpsychism, which is motivated by mathematician/philosopher Bertrand Russell's insight that

> although relations of physical objects have all sorts of knowable properties, derived from their correspondence with the relations with sense-data, the physical objects themselves remain unknown in their intrinsic nature, so far at least as can be discovered by means of the senses.

Compare Russell's quote to Soloviev's own take on the matter:

[3] Panpsychism is the idea that fundamental entities are conscious. Soloviev's metaphysical views can plausibly be classified as a kind of panpsychism.

> By their very concept, rational definitions always express only the general and formal, not the essential and material, aspect of being. Rational definitions and categories express only the objectivity or knowability of an entity, not its own inner, subjective being and life.

So, the main motivator for intellectual intuition, which is the limitation of abstract thinking and sense-perception, is also embraced in contemporary philosophy of science. It is not a coincidence that Soloviev's own metaphysical views are highly synergistic with the kind of Russellian panpsychism endorsed by these philosophers.

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Ultimately, the ideas of organic unity and intellectual intuition represent key metaphysical and epistemological stances in Russian philosophy. Although these ideas are tied to religion within Russian philosophy, they can be readily connected to secular developments in contemporary analytic philosophy.

2. Organic Unity in *The Brothers Karamazov*

In the previous section, I focused on putting Russian philosophy into conversation with contemporary analytic philosophy. Here, the ideas discussed (iconicity, Creation, the Church Body) are placed within a more theological context. Despite this shift toward a more explicitly religious focus, the transition from philosophy to theology is a fluid one, as the theological ideas portrayed in this chapter are drawn from the same philosophical works that inspired the previous section: those of Vladmir Soloviev, Pavel Florensky,

Ivan Kireevsky and Leonid Ouspensky. Organic unity and intellectual intuition, although not explicitly discussed in this chapter, implicitly underpin the notions of iconicity, Creation, and the Church Body – for example, the Church Body is most often understood as a spiritual organism, and the theology of the icon has roots in intellectual intuition in the way it recognizes the limits of abstract thinking and immediate sense perception. My general argument is that misunderstandings of environmental themes in *The Brothers Karamazov* stem from a lack of familiarity with Russian philosophy, under which Eastern Christianity has further-encompassing discourse than is typically acknowledged.

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> "Love all God's creation, the whole and every grain of sand in it. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things. Once you perceive it, you will begin to comprehend it better every day." (Dostoevsky 275)

In Jane Costlow's *Heart-pine Russia*, a seminal text in the environmentalist approach to Slavic studies, she writes that it is "almost surprising, or naive" that an anonymous 19th-century author would claim that poetry and science are not opposed to each other (82-3). Later in the same chapter, when analyzing "Dream of a Ridiculous Man," Costlow attributes Dostoevsky's thoughts on science and the Fall of Man to influences of "European romanticism" and "local animosities between poetic idealism and scientific

materialism" (114). In both instances, Costlow fails to acknowledge the theological influence behind these environmental perspectives. While this omission sometimes leads to only simple misunderstandings (e.g. viewing the anonymous author as naive), at other times it significantly impoverishes her analysis (e.g. speaking on Dostoevsky's thoughts about science and the Fall without acknowledging theology).

This omission of the theological perspective leads to confusion particularly when analyzing environmental themes in Dostoevsky. For example, most scholarship describes Father Zosima's views on nature as decidedly "un-Christian"; scholars characterize his teachings as "pantheistic" (Leontiev, quoted in Pattison 6), "pagan earth worship" (Cassedy xiii), and "myth" (Anderson 736). Slavicists as prominent as Gary Saul Morson, Joseph Frank, and George Gibian have all questioned the Christian-ness of Father Zosima's teachings (Morson 787; Frank 635; Anderson 733). Costlow herself contributes to this perception of "earth worship" in Dostoevsky's works by suggesting that the imperative contained in "Dream of Ridiculous Man" is to "return to the trees themselves" and that this will somehow restore our fallen state (113). Scholars are aware that the non-Christianness of Dostoevsky's most religious characters can pose problems for interpretation, hence Anderson's view that "unity [in Zosima's teachings] is clearest when we depart from a traditional Christian focus" (742), or Morson's attempt to reconcile paradoxical views in his notion of the "mythic prosaic" (787).

While there is nothing wrong with seeing similarities between Zosima's views on nature and pantheism, earth worship, or myth, it becomes problematic when the ultimate theological basis of these ideas is omitted. Zosima's teachings are not "clearer when we view [them] from the perspective of myth" (Anderson 734), but are most clarified when

highlighting their ties to the Eastern Christian theology; this also resolves the apparent paradox of non-Christian elements in Zosima. To draw attention to theology is not an arbitrary or ideological move; it the natural direction of inquiry when acknowledging that Dostoevsky grew up in an Eastern Christian environment, professed a deep devotion to Christ, and drew inspiration for Zosima from trips to the Optina Pustyn monastery. Indeed, it is shocking to notice the evident lack of research into the Eastern patrisitic tradition by scholars writing explicitly about Dostoevsky's religious characters (e.g. Cassedy's *Dostoevsky's Religion*).

Father Zosima's meditations on nature are not "pagan" or "pantheistic"; they are some of the clearest and most succinct illustrations of Orthodox theology in Dostoevsky's oeuvre. Nature, for Dostoevsky, illuminates theology, and in turn theology illuminates nature. In particular, the theological concepts of iconicity, creation, and the Body of the Church are essential to understanding environmental themes in Dostoevsky.

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One argument used to show the ambiguity of Zosima's Christianity is the fact that he "worship[s] the earth and all forms of creation as being endowed with holy meaning" (Anderson 733). However, the idea that all forms of creation are endowed with holy meaning falls firmly within the patrisitic tradition of the Orthodox Church. Take, for example, this narrative from St. Isaac the Syrian, a seventh-century monk who is mentioned several times in *The Brothers Karamazov* and was one of Dostoevsky's favorite writers:

An elder was once asked, "What is a compassionate heart?" He replied:

> "It is a heart on fire for the whole of creation, for humanity, for the birds, for the animals, for demons and for all that exists. At the recollection and at the sight of them such a person's eyes overflow with tears owing to the vehemence of the compassion which grips his heart; as a result of his deep mercy his heart shrinks and cannot bear to hear or look on any injury or the slightest suffering of anything in creation." (Foltz 188; 190)

So, Zosima's imperative to "love all God's creation" has religious precedent in the writings of St. Isaac the Syrian and need not immediately be tied to earth worship. St. Isaac's description of a "heart on fire" and "eyes overflow(ing) with tears" also recalls the scene in which Alyosha kisses the earth after Zosima's death – a scene interpreted as earth worship by Cassedy (157): "...he kissed it weeping, sobbing and watering it with his tears, and rapturously vowed to love it, to love it forever and ever" (Dostoevsky 312).

Sanctity of all created matter is not just a peripheral idea in Orthodox theology, but a central tenet, elucidated in the theology of the icon. The characterization of Zosima's teaching as "pagan" reflects similar logic to the iconoclasts during the iconoclasm controversy of the eight and ninth centuries (Ouspensky 121). In responding to the iconoclasts, the Church Fathers carefully explicated the precise nature of the sanctity of matter in order to distinguish the worship of icons from idolatry. While the full extent of their argument is beyond the scope of this paper, one primary argument was that the Incarnation resulted in the sanctification of the "visible, material world," and that to

deny the sanctity of matter was to deny the reality of the Incarnation (146). The other main argument was to emphasize that created matter's sanctity derived from the divine mystery, not from materiality itself. For example, St. John of Damascus clarified to the iconoclasts, "I do not worship matter, I worship the Creator of matter who became matter for my sake, who willed to take His abode in matter, who worked out my salvation through matter" (129). Similarly, St. Theodore the Studite explained that divine objects are divine "not by virtue of identity of nature, for these objects are not the flesh of God, but by virtue of their relative participation in divinity, for they participate in the grace and in the honor" (130). So, we see that Costlow's interpretation that Dostoevsky's imperative is to "return to the trees themselves" fails to take into account that from a theological perspective, it is not the trees in and of themselves that spark transformation, but rather the divinity that they point to.

This idea of the value of nature deriving from its link to divine mystery is emphasized in Zosima's teachings, as shown in the epigraph to this paper and in the following passage:

> Much on earth is hidden from us, but to make up for that we have been given a precious mystic sense of our living bond with the other world…what lives is alive only through the feeling of its contact with other mysterious worlds. If that feeling grows weak or is destroyed in you, the heavenly growth will die away in you. Then you will be indifferent to life and even grow to hate it." (Dostoevsky 276)

Once again, the idea of our environment as a point of contact with divine mystery is a central tenet in the theology of the icon. For example, theologian Pavel Florensky describes the iconostasis as "a boundary between the visible and invisible worlds" (62), mirroring the language of "contact with mysterious worlds" in Zosima. Florensky likens an icon to a window, defined by its ability to let in the divine light, not from its physical materiality alone (64-5). A window that does not let in light is "mere wood and glass" (65), and thus the "life" of a thing only exists through its contact with other mysterious worlds, just as Zosima (and the aforementioned Church Fathers) say. Florensky also warns against the destruction of this contact with other worlds: he writes, "As sin possesses a personality, and as the face ceases to be a window through which God's radiance shines…[it] loses its vitality…becoming a chilling mask of possession by the passions" (56). Again mirroring Zosima, the importance of the connection with divine mystery (symbolized in Florensky by the light shining through the window of the face) is emphasized.

In addition to the theology of the icon, the theology of creation also reaffirms the sanctity of all created things. St. Maximos the Confessor's ideas on creation illustrate its connection to the theology of the icon, as he writes, "Every created thing has its point of contact with the Godhead; and this point of contact is its idea, reason or logos which is at the same time the end towards which it tends. (...) everything in the created world… the intelligible as well as the sensible…[is] in a perpetual state of becoming" (Lossky 98). This idea of "everything in the created world" being in a "perpetual state of becoming" evokes Zosima's words that "Every blade of grass, every insect, ant, and golden bee, all so amazingly know their path…they bear witness to the mystery of God and continually

accomplish it themselves" (Dostoevsky 254-5). Parallels between Zosima's conception of nature and that of the Church Tradition show that Zosima's reverence of created matter, far from being incompatible with Christianity, reflects the theology of Church Fathers.

Finally, a general understanding of how Russian philosophy conceives the Body of the Church can clarify how the theological content of Dostoevsky's environmentalism fits in with its mythological and philosophical aspects. The Church is seen as a living organism, with particular emphasis on dialogue with the early Fathers, though no voice is singled out as absolute: as Kireevsky explains, "The sum total of all Christians of all ages, past and present, comprises one indivisible, eternal, living assembly of the faithful" (258). This idea of "unity in diversity", or "all-in-oneness" (expressed commonly by the terms *sobornost'* or *vseyedinstvo*), is influential in Kireevsy's idea of *tsel'noe znanie* ("integral knowledge"), in which truth is comprehended not solely via abstract logical capacity, nor from aesthetic sense, love, or rapture, but from the place where "all [these] separate forces merge into one living and integral vision of the mind" (260). Thus, he explains that Christian philosophy contains within itself pagan philosophy and science (263), and that the dichotomy between faith and reason does not exist for Orthodox theology (257) — all these modes of knowledge are integrated into a whole to represent Christian knowledge. So, from an Orthodox theological perspective, it would not be surprising that Costlow's anonymous author wrote that poetry and science don't hinder one another. Furthermore, this means that yes, there *are* elements of myth and paganism in Dostoevsky's writings, but they should not be taken as the sole understandings of his work, especially without considering the theological context. The result of this all-inclusivity is that the theology of the Orthodox Church "never acquires the character

of a system" (Lossky 104) — that is, the character of a purely rational system — which is seen as a major defining difference between the Eastern Church and the Western Church. Scholarship that sees Zosima's teachings on nature as incongruent or separate from "the more organized teachings of Orthodoxy" (Anderson 736) fail to see how the diversity of thought within Zosima is the essence of *vseyedinstvo* and *tsel'noe znanie*, or the fact that "Orthodox doctrine" is not a static, clearly definable thing.

Ultimately, theological context is essential when analyzing environmental themes in Dostoevsky's work. Familiarity with the Church Fathers spells the difference between interpreting Zosima's nature teachings as pagan or wholly Christian. The intention behind showing the connections between Zosima and the Church Fathers is not to provide proof of Zosima's pure Orthodoxy, but rather to show his position within the life of the patrisitic tradition, as one voice in dialogue with those who came before him. The application of iconicity, creation, and *vseyedinstvo* to Dostoevsky's works elucidates their environmental relevance, explaining the Christian origins of the sanctity of nature and aspiring toward an "integral knowledge" of the text.

3. Intellectual Intuition in Kharms

Dostoevsky is well-known for the religious-philosophical nature of his works, so the connection to Russian philosophy is perhaps unsurprising. A less immediately obvious connection to Russian philosophy can be found in Daniil Kharms' works, which are generally known for their absurdity rather than profundity.

As with Dostoevsky, this connection is under-studied within the English-language literature. Collections of Kharms scholarship typically do not include any essays that

mention Russian philosophy (e.g. Cornwell 1991), and scholarship that mentions religious connections (e.g. Neil Carrick's *Daniil Kharms: Theologian of the Absurd*) approach this connection from a Western Christian perspective. While these alternative perspectives are certainly valuable, it is a disservice to neglect the fundamental inspiration that Kharms draws from Russian philosophy. An acknowledgement of this influence is necessary to fully understand the significance of Kharms' works.

Like with Dostoevsky, this appeal to Russian philosophy is not an arbitrary one. Kharms's spirituality is well-documented in his personal notebooks and in his wife's autobiography.[4] For example, there is evidence that Kharms viewed his creative works as God-given: in a piece called "Prayer before Sleep," Kharms writes, "Lord, enlighten me / Through my verses" (*provesti menia Gospodi / Putem stikhov moikh*) and "Let my heart drink from the source of Your wondrous words" *(Napoi serdtse moe istochnikom divnykh slov Tvoikh)*. Here is a another entry that displays Kharms' religiosity, further motivating my reading of Russian philosophy into his work:

> 1. Every human life has but one goal: immortality.
>
> 1-a. Every human life has but one goal: the attainment of immortality.
>
> 2. One person strives towards immortality by continuing his family, another undertakes great deeds on earth to immortalize his name, and only the third leads a righteous and holy life in order to attain immortality as life eternal.
>
> 3. Man has only 2 interests: the earthly— food, drink, warmth, women, rest; and the heavenly, that is, immortality.
>
> 4. Everything earthly bears witness to death.

[4] Insert quote about how he reacted to the opera

> 5. There is a single line along which all that is earthly lies. And only that which does not lie along this line bears witness to immortality.
> 6. And therefore man looks for that which diverges from this earthly line and calls it "the beautiful" or a "thing of genius" (Kharms 498-9).

From entries like these, we have good reason to believe that Kharms saw a tight connection between his writing and religious-philosophical ideas. In this latter entry in particular, we see similarities between Kharms's thought and the idea of intellectual intuition: he denotes an "earthly line" (which we can associate with rational thinking and immediate sense perception), and he claims that the things that diverge from the earthly line (i.e. those things accessible via intellectual intuition) are "beautiful" and "genius." This is similar to how Soloviev views artistic creation as transcendence from the limitations of rational thinking and sense perception.

Beyond these personal diary entries, another reason to connect Kharms with the Russian philosophical tradition is the activity of the *OBERIU* (Union of Real Art) or *chinari*, a group of artists and philosophers of which Kharms was an active member. One of the core philosophical principles of this group was that it is better to "not construct a system" of philosophy; they spent much of their time attempting to articulate a philosophical method that violated the rational rules of mathematics (Ostashevsky 29). Such thoughts echo the theme of "never acquiring a system" that appears in Russian philosophy (e.g. Losskii 104) and the desire to transcend rational thinking as expressed in the idea of intellectual intuition. Kharms was particularly interested in "creative logics," or that which is "logically senseless and incongruous" (Ostashevsky 32-3): his notebooks are filled with musings on numbers and order, and in one entry he reminds himself to

"invent a law or a table where numbers would increase by inexplicable nonperiodic intervals" (Ostashevsky 32). As Ostashevsky writes, when Kharms proposes such endeavors, he is “performing something that looks like mathematics at first glance, but that evades the logical necessity and universality of mathematical structure” (33). This idea of using apparent logical structure to transcend rationality is reflected in his prose works, which I will argue below.

With this context in mind, we are open to a new interpretation of Kharms’s works: Kharms's humor is a “deviation from the earthly line,” or at least a way of showing the absurdity of the earthly line. He does this by developing a “creative logic” within his stories that at face value has the appearance of logic and structure, but eventually disintegrates into absurdity. In doing so, his works point toward something transcendent, “beautiful,” “genius.” To illustrate how Kharms does this, it is helpful to examine how his works interact with logic and form. “*O Pushkine*,” or “About Pushkin,” is a good example of logic in his stories:

> It’s hard to say anything about Pushkin to someone who doesn’t know anything about him.
>
> Pushkin is a great poet. Napoleon is not as great as Pushkin. Even Bismarck in comparison to Pushkin is nothing. And Alexanders the First, Second, and Third – simply little kids compared to Pushkin. In fact, all people are little kids compared to Pushkin; except compared to Gogol, Pushkin himself is a little kid.
>
> Therefore, instead of writing about Pushkin, it would be better for me to write about Gogol.
>
> However, Gogol is so great, that it’s impossible to write anything about him, so I will nevertheless write about Pushkin.

> But to write about Pushkin after Gogol is somehow offensive. But it's impossible to write about Gogol. So I'd rather not write anything about anyone.[5]

The text consists of short sentences that read like a mathematical treatise: they are connected by words such as *poetomu* and *potomu*, meaning "therefore," "thus," "so." Such words indicate some kind of logical sequence. In fact, we can deconstruct the text into facts and logical connections between them: on the one hand, we have facts such as "Pushkin is a great poet" and "compared to Gogol, Pushkin is a little kid." From these facts, we have logical formulas: since Pushkin is a little kid compared to Gogol, it is better to write about Gogol; since Gogol is so great, nothing can be written about him; and so on. Although the facts and their logical connections are a little funny, and the conclusion ("I'd rather not write anything about anyone") seems absurd, the text nevertheless strictly follows its logic.

In addition to logical structure, many of Kharms' works follow a strict form, as in the poem "Ivan Toporyshkin went on a hunt":[6]

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[5] Russian text:
Трудно сказать что-нибудь о Пушкине тому, кто ничего о нем не знает.
Пушкин великий поэт. Наполеон менее велик, чем Пушкин. И Бисмарк по сравнению с Пушкиным ничто. И Александр I, и II, и III — просто пузыри по сравнению с Пушкиным. Да и все люди по сравнению с Пушкиным пузыри, только по сравнению с Гоголем Пушкин сам пузырь.
А потому вместо того, чтобы писать о Пушкине, я лучше напишу вам о Гоголе.
Хотя Гоголь так велик, что о нем и писать-то ничего нельзя, поэтому я буду все-таки писать о Пушкине.
Но после Гоголя писать о Пушкине как-то обидно. А о Гоголе писать нельзя. Поэтому я уж лучше ни о ком ничего не напишу.

[6] The following is a hastily done original translation. Although the meaning is not perfectly preserved (in the Russian, Ivan goes on a *hunt*, and the poodle jumps over a *fence*), I prioritized preserving the meter, rhyme scheme, and cycle of last words.

Иван Топорышкин пошел на охоту,	Ivan Toporyshkin went on a jog,
С ним пудель пошел, перепрыгнув забор,	A poodle with him jumped over the tracks,
Иван, как бревно провалился в болото,	Ivan, like a tree, fell into the bog,
А пудель в реке утонул, как топор.	The poodle then drowned in the lake like an ax.
Иван Топорышкин пошел на охоту,	Ivan Toporyshkin went on a jog,
С ним пудель вприпрыжку пошел, как топор.	A poodle with him was skipping like an ax.
Иван повалился бревном на болото,	Ivan then fell like a tree into the bog,
А пудель в реке перепрыгнул забор.	And the poodle in the lake jumped over the tracks.
Иван Топорышкин пошел на охоту,	Ivan Toporyshkin went on a jog,
С ним пудель в реке провалился в забор.	A poodle in the lake fell into the tracks,
Иван как бревно перепрыгнул болото,	Ivan, like a tree, jumped over the bog,
А пудель вприпрыжку попал на топор.	And the poodle skipped and fell on an ax.

This poem starts out normally enough, but by the last stanza, it devolves into complete absurdity. Even throughout its descent into absurdity, however, the poem maintains a strict form: the last words of each line follow the pattern ABCD/ADCB/ABCD; the rhyme scheme is ABAB/ABAB/ABAB; and the poetic meter is consistently iambic tetrameter. These patterns are similar to forms such as villanelles (systematic repetition of lines), sestinas (systematic repetition of last words), ballads (ABAB rhyme scheme), and so on. Of course, in ordinary poetry, strict form poses a challenge for the poet, since it is difficult to follow a strict form and at the same time construct something poetic and meaningful. So, the humor of this poem comes from the fact that Kharms follows strict form, but does not even try to preserve meaning. Just like in “About Pushkin,” humor appears when Kharms follows strict form or logic; these works can be considered parodies of form and logic.

As outlined in the above two examples, many of Kharms's works follow strict logic and form, and nearly all of them devolve into absurdity. Logic, form, and language—these lie on the "earthly line," from which it is impossible to observe the true purpose of human life (according to Kharms). Through the use of logic and form, Kharms shows how when we strictly follow the earthly line, we come to the point of emptiness ("I'd rather not write anything about anyone") and absurdity. At the same time, absurdity itself is a kind of deviation from the earthly line. Thus, Kharms's humor simultaneously shows the insignificance of the earthly line and itself goes beyond the boundaries of the earthly line.

It is worth noting that Kharms's use of absurdity can also be compared to the more-often-discussed idea of "holy foolishness" (*iurodstvo*) in Russian culture. The general idea of *iurodstvo* is that earthly foolishness can point to heavenly wisdom, since our earthly understanding is so limited. An oft-quoted line from St. Athanasius is that "God wants us to become foolish in earthly matters and wise in heavenly matters" (Бог хочет, чтобы люди стали глупы в земных делах и умны в небесных). This theme of "foolishness for Christ's sake" appears plenty in Russian literature, such as in Dostoevsky (Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot*) and Gogol (Akakii Akakievich in *The Overcoat*), and thus Kharms continues the religious-philosophical tradition inherited from Father Athanasius to Dostoevsky. Ultimately, this Russian philosophical context lends an indispensable layer of meaning to Kharms's works. While it is true that Kharms's absurdity and humor can be meaningful on their own, an understanding of their spiritual significance gives a deeper appreciation of his artistic vision.

4. Russian philosophy and Russian art

Russian philosophy often explicitly addresses the role of art within its framework: as we saw earlier, Soloviev views artistic creation as the epitome of intellectual intuition; Pavel Florensky similarly ties art to intellectual intuition in "Reverse Perspective." The connection between Russian philosophy and art goes deeper than these philosophers' individual theories of art, however: Russian philosophy influenced early 20th-century artistic movements that spanned across music, visual art, theater, and poetry, inspiring radical works that may have broken from the "letter" of Russian philosophy but nevertheless reflected major spiritual themes developed within this philosophy. This influence is most easily traced in the Russian Symbolist and Futurist movements (for the latter, specifically within OBERIU).

The Russian Symbolist movement emerged at the tail end of the 19th century, around the same time Russian philosophy was flourishing. The movement was characterized by a transcendental worldview, in which ordinary descriptive language was not enough to capture reality, which instead required a careful construction of imagery and symbols (von Mohrenschildt 1193). While Soloviev himself remained neutral on whether he wanted to be associated with the movement (Stone 374), his influence on key figures of the Symbolist movement is undeniable. He was a direct mentor to Symbolist poets Vyacheslav Ivanov and Aleksandr Blok (Wachtel 387, von Mohrenschildt 1201), the latter of whom is widely regarded as the greatest Symbolist poet. Soloviev himself published a collection of poems in the 90s about his mystical experiences with Sophia, the Divine Wisdom, which is seen by many as a kind of proto-Symbolist poetry (Wachtel

387, von Mohrenschildt 1199). In addition to poets, some other Symbolist artists that may be tied to Russian philosophy are painter Mikhail Nesterov and musician Alexander Scriabin. Nesterov's paintings were primarily religious in subject matter; one of his paintings is a portrait of Pavel Florensky and Sergei Bulgakov. Scriabin was known for his radical compositions and grand, mystical synesthetic performances, the latter of which reflects the idea of transcendence through an "integral" experience.

The connection between Russian philosophy and Russian Futurism may not be as clear, especially since one of the core ideas of Futurism was a complete rejection of the past. However, within the *OBERIU* (Union of Real Art), of which Kharms was a part, there is a more clear connection. This group was a short-lived (1928-30) collective of avant-garde artists, known for bizarre performances of poetry and theater (Cardullo 389). As mentioned in the chapter on Kharms, one of *OBERIU*'s core philosophical principles was the rejection of systematic thought and mathematical rationality. This reflects a general mindset found in nearly every Russian philosopher discussed so far, ranging from Soloviev to Florensky to Losskii. *OBERIU*'s general interest in transcending mathematics, as documented in Eugene Ostashevky's article "Numbers are not Bound By Order," has roots in philosophers like Pavel Florensky, who popularized mathematical developments in Russia (Ostashevsky 37). Finally, there was direct participation of philosophers within the *OBERIU* through Leonid Lipavsky and Yakov Druskin.

Given this deep connection between Russian philosophy and art, I thought it would be natural to create a work of art inspired by Russian philosophy as part of this thesis. Since Soloviev views artistic creation as the key to "true" knowledge, it felt like creating art would be a good way to deepen my intimacy with these philosophical works.

At the same time, in the spirit of other artists who have been inspired by Russian philosophy, I am not over-concerned with sticking to the "letter" of Russian philosophy (if one can even identify a "letter" to go against). Although I draw inspiration from Soloviev and others' views on aesthetic principles, I do not take any one perspective as gospel.

I have recently been drawn to electronic music, so I have chosen electronic music as the medium. Conceptually, I am inspired by the three modes of Being as outlined in Lecture 6 of Soloviev's *Lectures*:

> We thus have *three relations* or *three positings* of that which absolutely "is" as determining itself with respect to its own content. First, it is posited as possessing this content in immediate, substantial unity, or nondifferentiation, with itself. It is posited as a single substance, which essentially includes all in its absolute power. Second, it is posited as manifesting or actualizing its own absolute content, opposing the latter to itself or separating it from itself, by an act of self-determination. Third and last, it is posited as maintaining and asserting itself in its own content or as realizing itself in an actual, mediated, or differentiated unity with this content, or essence, that is, with the all — in other words, as finding itself, as eternally returning to itself and remaining "at home with itself."

I have chosen this passage for its fundamentality in Soloviev's metaphysical worldview: this passage captures what it means for anything to exist at all, and I am drawn to this

fundamental importance. In addition, Soloviev views artistic creation itself as a display of these three modes of Being, so the connection to art comes easily.

Corresponding to the three modes of Being that Soloviev outlines, the composition is divided into three tracks, titled *substance*, *manifestation*, and *return*. I have attempted to capture the essential features of each mode within their corresponding track: *substance* is meant to capture possibility and nondifferentiation; *manifestation* is meant to capture actuality, separation, and pure act; *return* is meant to capture realization and return to oneself. Similarly to how these modes of Being are intended to be understood as a single way of Being, these three tracks join together to form a single continuous track that loops back into itself at the end. This, of course, is also inspired by the three-in-one imagery of the Trinity. Finally, in the spirit of organic unity, I have tried to capture an "organic" sound in the synthesizers I have used.

While I am sure I have fallen short of Soloviev's standard of true "intellectual intuition" in creating this music, it has been fruitful to keep his philosophy in mind while creating this composition. I am excited to continue creating art in the future that is inspired by his philosophy.

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ДАНИИЛ ХАРМС И РУССКАЯ СМЕХОВАЯ ТРАДИЦИЯ