Russian philosophy, we were told by Alexander Rybas in the last issue of this journal, is experiencing a new pluralism. Instead of pinning down a singular “essence of Russian philosophy,” various approaches are being moved forward by Russian philosophers today, ranging from the Orthodox nationalist to the Western liberal perspective (Rybas 1). In the present article, I want to look at one approach within this newly found pluralism of philosophies: “synergetic anthropology.” This is an approach that, belonging to the religiously inspired part of contemporary Russian philosophy, might fall under the general suspicion of rehearsing only “the well-known arguments of the Slavophiles” (Rybas 10). Whether this is really the case, or whether “synergetic anthropology” represents an original position in contemporary Russian philosophy, will be the topic of this paper.

“Synergetic anthropology” (sinergicheskaia antropologiia) (further SA) is a topic developed by the philosopher and theoretical physicist Sergei S. Horujy (b. 1941) and brought forward in 2005 with the publication of a book, Ocherki sinergiinoi antropologii (Studies in Synergetic Anthropology, 2005), and with the foundation of an institute, the Institut Sinergiinoi Antropologii (Institute of Synergetic Anthropology). It claims to represent a new
anthropological paradigm based on the study of the spiritual and mystical tradition of Eastern Orthodoxy.

In order to understand what we have in front of us—one more phenomenon of philosophy grounded in Orthodoxy or an original approach in religious philosophy that transcends the standards set by contemporary Russian Orthodox thought—it seems opportune to measure SA against these standards, which we find spelt out in Rybas’ article: Orthodox thinkers conceive of truth ontologically, where truth (istina) is understood as an element of being rather than thinking; the path to truth is not understood as an intellectual, but as an existential process and implies obozhenie (becoming similar to God). Orthodox thinkers claim that the institutional and thematic vagueness of their philosophy is the result of their desire for integral knowledge and is superior to the strict separation between faith and reason in Western philosophy (Rybas 10-11). Another feature of philosophy grounded in Orthodoxy is, according to Rybas, its rejection of individualism and its emphasis on the interrelatedness of man’s singular and communal existence as expressed in the principle of sobornost’ (unity in the many) (11). In summing up these features, Rybas speaks about an “Orthodoxification” (opravoslavlivanie) of Russian philosophy (13) and reports a series of criticisms brought forward against this phenomenon: one of these claims that “Orthodox Russian philosophy” was a result of the limitations imposed by the ideological framework of the Soviet Union, where

philosophers, who had to live in a country where there was no philosophy as an institution and who were forbidden to openly express their thoughts due to their having to conform to ideological parameters, had nothing to do but develop a number of specific lines of inquiry that never really touched upon anything of universal significance. (13)
If this is the image of contemporary “Orthodoxified” Russian philosophy, then what is SA? Let me start from Rybas’ last observation about contemporary religious philosophy in Russia, from his assessment that it is the fruit of an extremely limited and accidental elaboration of specific lines of inquiry. In this context it is important to recall the roots of SA, which are indeed exemplary for consideration as a mode of inquiry along one specific line, but which also demonstrate the strengths of such an approach: the pursuit of one narrowly defined subject allows Horujy to draw clear distinctions between his approach and other philosophical approaches and to express equally clear endorsements of favourable positions.

During an interview I held with Horujy in 2005, he recalled how, in the 1970s, he first found out about new developments in Russian émigré-theology. In the early 1970s, he came across John Meyendorff’s doctoral thesis on the late Byzantine Church Father Gregorios Palamas.\(^2\) The book was in French and had somehow passed the censorship for religious literature unnoticed. Unlike other literature of the genre it was not kept in the reserved sections of the spets-khran (from spetsial’noe khranenie [special storage]), but could simply be ordered. Horujy said that he immediately felt intrigued by this “new way of philosophical and theological reflection” (Stoeckl, Personal Interview). He consequently concentrated his studies on the Church Fathers, on Hesychasm, and especially on Palamas. Neo-Palamism, we shall remember, was a phenomenon of Russian emigration, of which Meyendorff’s book is one example and the work of Vladimir Losskii another. This scholarship reached the Soviet Union only in small doses. The theologian Nikolai Gavriushin has recently recalled a striking episode in Patristic scholarship in Russia. In the end of 1972, he writes, the Moscow intelligentsia was undertaking a particular kind of pilgrimage to the Novodevichnii Monastery, where the publishing house of the Moscow Patriarchate was located. There, in the office of the editor-in-chief, one could find

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the eighth volume of the *Bogoslovskie trudy* (*Theological Works*, 1972). It was dedicated to the work of Vladimir Losskii—an act that was, “[i]n that period,” Gavriushin writes, “an epochal event” (64). Just like the work of Meyendorff, the theology of Losskii represented a hitherto unaccomplished exposition of the Orthodox doctrine, which was convincing both on a scholarly and religious level.

In the 1990s, Horujy stepped forward as a prolific scholar of theology, philosophy, and the history of religious thought, his interest ranging from pre-revolutionary Russian religious philosophy, to the theology of the Church Fathers, to modern and post-modern Western philosophy. The works in which he covers this wide range of topics were published in brief succession from 1991 onwards. They testify for decades of intellectual engagement during which Horujy, working as a mathematician and physicist at the Academy of Sciences, developed his theological and philosophical position. Jonathan Sutton has pointed out that for many young intellectuals the pursuit of scientific and technological studies in the Soviet Union was a common escape route from the ideologized humanities and social-science departments, and here Horujy’s career is a case in point. During our interview he himself described his philosophical career as a moving away from the “methodological sloppiness” of the pre-revolutionary religious philosophers to the theological rigour of the Neo-Patristic theologians, which he then sought to translate into his personal philosophical language of “synergetic anthropology.”

His *oeuvre* supports such a self-characterization. He has written extensively about pre-revolutionary Russian religious philosophers, notably about Vladimir Solov'ev, Pavel Florenskii, Lev Karsavin, and Sergei Bulgakov. His approach to the legacy of these authors is critical. In his eyes they do not have much to offer to contemporary philosophy, and he is therefore
dismissive of the attempts to revive them made by some of his contemporaries.\(^5\) He is very clear on this issue in one article with a particular history: namely, the article “O Maroderakh” (“The Looters”), published in 1994 but written, in parts, already by 1988. Horujy recalls how, in the late perestroika-years, he suddenly found himself involved in ideologists’ activities. In 1988, he writes, in the course of negotiations regarding the publication of essays by Lev Karsavin with an official publishing house, he was asked to write a review of a study entitled *Kruzhenie russkogo idealizma* (*The Collapse of Russian Idealism*)—a piece by, as he writes “some bureaucratic fighter on the ideological front” (*Posle pereryva* 254).\(^6\) Hoping that this would further the project of publishing Karsavin’s works (which it did not), he agreed to write the review. In 1994 he published part of this review as an article with the provocative title “The Looters” in order to protest against the superficial re-appropriation of pre-revolutionary religious philosophy during the late-Soviet and Yeltsin period. Horujy’s main point of criticism here, put forward with a remarkable degree of irony, touches on the transformation of communist ideologists into Christian thinkers. Horujy’s publication of this piece in 1994 was a very strong gesture and it must have appeared as an affront to many who cherished the legacy of the Silver Age. It only underlines, however, how decisively Horujy broke with the canon of Russian religious philosophy.

His critical distance from the legacy of pre-revolutionary religious philosophy also determined his relationship with other religious philosophers of his age. Horujy was well acquainted with Sergei Averintsev and Aleksei Losev, and was a friend of Vladimir Bibikhin. He was only loosely part of the circle that had been created around Losev, described in Bibikhin’s memoirs.\(^7\) Horujy has characterized Losev as a “rear-guard soldier”: an individual who promoted his philosophy and religiosity in an utterly hostile environment (*Ar’ergardnyy boi*...*Landshaft* 2 (2008), http://www.pitt.edu/~lands
In an interesting observation on language, Horujy writes that Losev continued the style characteristic of the Russian religious philosophers, the emotionally and mystically charged language of Florenskii, Bulgakov, and Frank, but that in Losev’s writings, addressed to a public that was hostile to his message, this style became aggressive and defensive, addressing the reader as enemy.⁸

In Horujy’s interpretation, Losev’s work is the last stage of the Russian metaphysics of all-unity—a stage to which Bulgakov and Florenskii also belonged, and that goes back to the work of Solov’ev. In Losev’s elaboration of all-unity, the concept of imiaslavie (from imia [name] and slavie [glory]) played an important role.⁹ In order to understand Horujy’s criticism of pre-revolutionary Russian religious philosophy, it is necessary to recall briefly what is at stake in the debate on imiaslavie.

The issue of imiaslavie had polarized Orthodox theologians and Russian intellectuals between 1911 and 1914, when disagreement erupted over the 1907 publication of a text by the monk Ilarion (ca. 1845-1916), Na gorakh Kavkaza (On the Caucasian Mountains), in which he reports on conversations with a hermit and practitioner of the Jesus-prayer who had retired to the Caucasus from Mount Athos.¹⁰ The theological base-line of the text—“The name of God is God”—sparked a debate among monks, theologians, and lay intellectuals that grew into a major political affair. The fault-line of the conflict ran between Russian monks practicing and advocating the Jesus-prayer on Mount Athos and theologians who found the idea that the Divine should be accessible in its name untenable. The latter accused the former, whom they called imiaslavtsy, of heresy. Under the impact of the rigorous action taken by the Holy Synod and the Russian emperor, whereby in 1913 several hundred monks were forcefully removed from Mount Athos, the clerical defenders of imiaslavie were joined by intellectuals like Bulgakov, Berdiaev,
and Florenskii, who supported their cause, recognizing that the theology of divine names was intrinsically related to their own religious philosophy.

Bulgakov, and with him Florenskii and the young Aleksei Losev, recognized that *imiaslavie* added a new twist to their fundamental idea of all-unity. Solov'ev’s concept of all-unity, however, was lacking a distinction that was fundamental for *imiaslavie*: the distinction between divine and human essence and energy. In order to account for this distinction, some changes to the idea of all-unity were necessary. Horujy’s analysis claims that all three philosophers solved this problem by taking recourse to Neoplatonic philosophy: Bulgakov, for example, interpreted the notion of energy in Neoplatonic terms as the emanation of multitude from a unitary whole and called this energetic multitude “Sophia.”\(^{11}\) The divinization of man would, in Bulgakov’s rendering of the idea, result in the synergy not only of the human and divine energies, but also of their essences. And this, Horujy points out, was exactly what the energy-essence distinction in Palamas was *not* about, because there the essence-energy relation in the divine realm was different from that of the human realm.\(^ {12}\) Divinization from the human perspective meant, in Palamatian theology, not becoming essence, but its opposite: de-essentialization. This was something Neoplatonic theory could not account for. For Horujy, the problem of Bulgakov, and with him Losev, lies in their starting point: in the Solov'evian concept of all-unity, a framework that made it impossible for their theories to grasp the fundamental difference between the human and the divine. In Horujy’s interpretation, who himself draws on émigré Neo-Palamist theology, it is this theorization of difference that becomes the true novelty of Christian thought in Palamas—its “new anthropology” (Horujy, *Imiaslavie* 297).

It is clear that Horujy’s rupture with the canon of Russian religious philosophy was induced by his discovery of Neo-Palamism. His long essay about émigré philosophy and the
theology of the 1920s and 30s bears the title *Shag vpered, sdelannyi v rasseianii* (*A Step Ahead, Taken in Dispersal*, 2005), and in the text he makes it clear that for him the main intellectual achievement of the Russian diaspora was made in the field of theology. Horujy credits the Neo-Patristic theologians with having changed the orientation of Orthodox thought. Their re-appraisal of the dogmatic foundations of Orthodoxy, especially their emphasis on Palamism, has opened up an entirely new field of thought that can also be made to be philosophically productive. It seems that as a matter of such preparation, a large part of Horujý’s work is dedicated to the notion of Hesychasm and asceticism. The Neo-Palamist theologians effected a turn for Orthodox thought that Horujy, with reference to Heidegger, calls *Kehre*: a (re-)turn, or a “modulation of the discourse” (*Opyty* 28). However, this turn was a theological, not a philosophical phenomenon, Horujy writes, and when this thought could finally make its way back to Russia after the fall of communism, its philosophical potential had not yet been explored. To do this is exactly the task that Horujy sets for himself.

By now it is clear that the criticism of the limited range of religious thinking in the Soviet Union voiced by Rybas formally applies to Horujý’s elaboration of SA. However, it seems to me that SA also demonstrates the strengths of such an approach, because it has effectively led to methodological and philosophical criticism of pre-revolutionary religious philosophy and its Soviet and post-Soviet heralds, something much needed in the contemporary philosophical scene in Russia. However, the fact that SA has been developed largely on the basis of theological literature has also come at a price: most of the time it is considered to be theology and its author, Horujy, finds esteem among theologians in Russia and in the West, but hardly among philosophers.

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I will, therefore, now turn to an evaluation of the philosophical potential of SA. “Orthodoxified” Russian philosophy, we remember, is characterized by an ontological conception of truth, access to which is the result of an existential process (oboženie—theosis, or becoming similar to God). It also stands for a rejection of individualism and emphasizes the interrelatedness of man’s singular and communal existence, as expressed in the principle of sobornost’. SA shares all of these characteristics, but I will show that in some important aspects it also goes beyond them.\(^{15}\)

SA wants to put forward an alternative to classical anthropology, in which man is defined by his center—a center in which his being in the world hinges. Horujy attributes the formulation and perfection of this understanding of man to the intellectual legacy of Aristotle, Boethius, and Descartes:

Долгое время в европейской мысли господствовала модель, в которой … идентичность человека трактовалась … на основе субстанциальности. [...] В классической европейской антропологической модели природа человека носила именно характер субстанции: довершая антропологию Аристотеля, представлывшую человека определенной системой сущностей, Боэций в начале VI в. выдвинул знаменитую дефиницию, согласно которой человек — «индивидуальная субстанция разумной природы». Позднее сюда еще прибавилась концепция субъекта (мыслящего субъекта, субъекта познания), и возникла законченная конструкция человека в непроницаемой философской броне: классический европейский человек Аристотеля-Боэция-Декарта есть сущность, субстанция и субъект. И самоидентичность – при нем полностью. (Ocherki, 78-79)\(^{16}\)

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The argument regarding the birth of the classical metaphysical subject out of the Latin Christian appropriation of Greek philosophy and its subsequent development in Western philosophy is spelled out repeatedly in Horujy’s work, as well as in Orthodox historical-philosophical writings. The extremely rapid summary of the entire debate in the abovequoted passage, therefore, is a reference to what is taken to be a thoroughly established argument. Apart from taking the argument for granted, however, there are also clear indications that Horujy does not linger on the problematic of the classical metaphysical subject because he considers it a development that is, in some senses, over and done with. Here he differs from “civilizational” advocates of Orthodox thought, who rely on this argument as proof for culturally and historically grounded differences between the East and the West. What is important for Horujy is the fact that this classical human subject—man as an essence and a substance—has increasingly been put into question since the late nineteenth century. The crisis of modern times lies precisely in the fact that the Aristotelian-Boethian-Cartesian subject is a source of disagreement, and Horujy reads Western philosophy in the twentieth century as a document of this crisis, referring primarily to the Nietzschean critique of Enlightenment rationality and subjectivity, to the Heideggerian dismantling of classical metaphysics, and to what he regards as attempts to go “beyond the subject” by authors such as Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Jean-Luc Nancy. He situates his own contribution, his “new anthropology,” in exactly this postmodern philosophical realm.

At the heart of SA’s attempt to offer an alternative to the Cartesian subject is the realization that the Orthodox tradition in particular (and spiritual traditions in general) is built around an experience that Cartesian metaphysics cannot account for: the experience of theosis, or deification. This experience is described in the ascetic literature of the Fathers of the Desert and...
it is explained in the theology of Hesychasm. Its basic element is the understanding that man exists vis-à-vis another form of being and that a transformation of a human being in view of this “other-being” is possible. Horujy reminds the reader that once we take the anthropological reality of mystical experiences and spiritual practices seriously, we are inevitably led to a reconsideration of the classical anthropological paradigm of man as an autonomous subject.

What Horujy wants to offer is a philosophical anthropology that is open—but not limited—to the reality of mystical experiences. He is putting forward a philosophical anthropology that has a place for religious experience, while not being a religious anthropology itself.

Horujy starts from the assumption that man should not be regarded as having a “center,” but, alternatively, should be characterized by his “border.” What Horujy calls for is a reorientation in anthropology away from the study of the human essence, or “center” (antropologiia tsentry), which has turned out to be a source of fiction, to the study of the border (antropologiia granitsy). This reorientation implies a shift from focusing exclusively on the human subject itself to comprehending man in relation with his “Other.” The nature of the “Other” (Inobytiia) and, consequently, the nature of the relationship between man and his “Other,” depends on the way in which man is conceptualized. Horujy distinguishes two principled ways of conceptualizing man: in terms of being and in terms of consciousness. If man is conceptualized as a specific mode of being, then the “Other” is a different mode of being—a distinction that Horujy underpins with Heidegger’s ontologischer Differenz between Dasein and Sein. If, by contrast, man is conceptualized in terms of consciousness, then the “Other” represents the Unconscious. Since Being is not at stake in this case, Horujy speaks about an ontic perspective. These two perspectives, the ontological and the ontic, constitute two different topics that relate to the anthropology of the border. Horujy eventually adds a third topic, the
virtual, which is another form of “Other-being.” Together, these three topics map the anthropology of the border and bring man into view as a polyphone being (Horujy, Ocherki 23). They are not hierarchical or complementary features of human nature, but spell out different potentialities of what it means to be human.

What holds these three topics together is that the relationship between man and his “Other” is, in all three cases, conceptualized in terms of “manifestations” (proiavlenie). Human manifestations, Horujy writes, are not only acts in an empirical or behavioralist sense, but are also thoughts and sentiments, or impulses that may or may not develop or be turned into full-scale acts. Horujy conceptualizes these human manifestations in terms of “energies,” basing his views on Orthodox theology and a distinction that is central to it—that between essence and energy. The mystical-ascetic tradition of Hesychasm, which lies at the foundation of Horujy’s anthropology, has developed a sensibility to understanding human manifestations in this way. Energies, however, are not only properties of human beings; the three modes of Other-being are themselves conceptualized as energetic manifestations. The heuristic parallel that Horujy uses at this point is taken from physics: synergetic processes in physical systems. The most important of the effects that the interaction of energetic systems produces is the re-structuring of the relevant systems. In physics, this is called a “synergetic” (sinergeticheskii) process. It is structurally comparable to how Horujy interprets the interaction that takes place at the anthropological border, where human manifestations may be transformed in the face of an energetic “Other.” Horujy calls this the anthropological phenomenon of synergy (sinergiia).

Reading Ocherki sinergiinoi antropologii, one notes that the anthropological phenomenon of synergy is clearly rooted in the first concern—the ontological topic of the border. At the same time, however, the other two topics, the ontic and the virtual, are equally
taken into account as options for human existence. It seems to me that this triple vision of human potential, in which truth as an existential quality is only one option among many, distinguishes SA from the general assessment of Orthodox philosophy as professing its one and only conception of truth (*istina*).

Even where truth is indeed discussed as a transcendental issue, at the ontological border it is not limited to an Orthodox Christian understanding of truth. Horujy’s work on Hesychasm can be read as an exemplary discussion of the ontological border of man, but he could just as well be interpreted as exploring other traditions of spiritual practices. Yoga, Zen Buddhism, or Sufi practices are all comparable methods in SA. In Hesychasm, the practitioner treats himself as an energetic formation, in the sense that through a series of ascetic and spiritual practices (“the ladder”) he experiences a *trans*-formation. Notably, this energetic transformation cannot emanate from the human self alone; it must rely on an interaction with the “Other.” From the Christian perspective, this “Other” is the triune God, and transformation (*theosis*) takes place in view of Divine grace (*blagodat’*). In short, it is at the ontological border where the individual makes a “religious” experience an experience of existential transformation. It is important to note, however, that Horujy does not think of this experience as “belonging” to any one confession or religious tradition. SA is not a confessional discourse in the sense that it does not make a specific religious postulate—it does not advocate Orthodoxy in confrontation with other theological and philosophical traditions. Nor is it a religious anthropology derived directly from a specific religion. Notwithstanding the fact that Horujy comes from the study of Hesychasm, his conclusions are not restricted to Orthodox spirituality. As a matter of fact, it is nothing more (and nothing less) than an anthropology that preserves an independent place for religious experience in anthropological discourse. At a time when religion is becoming an increasingly
burning issue for politics and philosophy, it seems to me that Horujy’s non-confessional and practical take on the meaning of religious tradition deserves our attention.

At the very minimum, it deserves our attention in light of other trends in contemporary philosophy that want to focus on religion as “experience.” In the West, Charles Taylor has recently inaugurated such a phenomenological approach to religion in his book *A Secular Age* (2007). He argues that the conditions for experiencing religion in our secular times have changed. Nowadays, the perceiving of one’s life *vis-à-vis* some transcendental power has become one option among others. It has become a matter of conscious decision. A similar argument has been put forward by Alasdair MacIntyre, who argues that modern man is confronted with three possible knowledge-regimes: encyclopedia, genealogy, and tradition. These three terms stand for Enlightenment rationalism, post-modern deconstructivism, and “integrated systems of intellectual inquiry,” respectively (MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions* 65). According to MacIntyre, intellectual traditions are ways of understanding the world and relating to the world; they are bodies of shared theoretical premises and of practices that have been spelt out coherently and cooperatively over time (150). MacIntyre himself has singled out Neo-Thomism as the one intellectual tradition that he finds convincing\(^\text{20}\); Horujy, I would say, decides on a specific elaboration of Neo-Palamism.

Comparing Horujy’s elaboration of SA to Taylor’s phenomenological approach to religion and MacIntyre’s neo-traditionalism is useful in order to understand which conception of community can be derived from SA. “Orthodoxified” philosophy, we are told, seeks to replace individualism with a regime of personal freedom and communal existence, summed up in the term *sobornost’*. This term does not occur in any place of Horujy’s writings about SA. The reason for this, in my opinion, lies in Horujy’s conscious detachment from the legacy of Russian

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religious philosophy and from Slavophile rhetoric, in which the term sobornost’ has frequently become nothing more than a catch-word used to express anti-Westernism. At the same time, however, SA’s conception of the relationship between personal freedom and communal existence does come close to the original idea of sobornost’. SA is first and foremost a theory of human freedom. It is grounded in the freedom of man to choose whether to perceive himself vis-à-vis a transcendent “Other-being.” Secondly, SA is a theory of community, as a human being can perceive his or her potential for entering into a synergetic relation with an “Other-being” only on the basis of knowledge (a specific understanding of the world and the transcendent) and of method (a specific way of relating to the world and the transcendent), both of which cannot be the product of a singular human being, but only of a community. Shared theoretical premises and shared practices are spelt out coherently and cooperatively over time by a community. MacIntyre does not use the term community, but rather speaks about tradition; Horujy does not speak about community either, nor, as already noted, about sobornost’, using instead the Aristotelian term “organon.” I would argue that this procedural, rather than essential, definition of community is another important aspect for the interpretation of Horujy’s philosophy as one that goes beyond the standards of “Orthodoxified” philosophy.

In A Secular Age, Taylor describes the philosophical approach of MacIntyre as an example of an “intellectual deviation story”—a narrative about intellectual deviations from “true” Christianity (773-776). It seems to me that Horujy’s SA could just as easily be described as such an “intellectual deviation story,” as the account of a vision of man that was present in the Christian tradition in the East and in the West, but has been lost with the onset of the modern subject—lost, notably, both in the East and in the West, because in Orthodox thought the re-discovery of Palamism was also an event of the twentieth century. Instead of emphasizing the
continuity of the Orthodox tradition, Horujy acknowledges the breaks that this intellectual
tradition has undergone. This refusal to adhere to a myth of continuity is an important point that
distinguishes Horujy from a large part of “Orthodoxified” philosophy in Russia today.

Given the similarity of Horujy to authors like MacIntyre, or, even more obviously, to
John Milbank and his “radical orthodoxy” (Taylor 773-776), it comes almost as a surprise that
Horujy links himself with poststructuralist philosophy, locating his work within postmodern
discourse. What is even more puzzling is that he talks about this postmodern philosophy as if it
were the status-quo of Western philosophy. This, I think, is indeed a point of criticism that can
be raised against Horujy, as well as against other exponents of Russian philosophy: they base
their conceptions of Western philosophy on a short-hand reading of the post-Nietzschean crisis
of the modern subject. They suggest that this crisis can only result in poststructuralism and
deconstructivism, ignoring the entire range of alternative approaches present in Western
philosophy. The reason for this is probably their limited exposure to, but maybe also their
limited interest in, the range of Western philosophy.

What stands in striking contrast to Horujy’s subscription to postmodern philosophizing
and what motivates my situating him closer to someone like MacIntyre, than to, for example,
Jean-Luc Nancy, is the positive character of Horujy’s assertion of the end of the classical subject
and the need to move on from there. What I call positive here is meant as a counter-term to the
searching and fragmented language of most of postmodern thinking about the human subject.
There, language is an indicator of the difficulty to think “beyond the subject”—an idiom that is
profoundly determined by a subjectivist metaphysics. Contemporary philosophers have
continued to struggle with this problem and their texts are strategies for its solution.²⁴ Horujy
quite clearly does not conceive of this as his problem, because he does not see himself as

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speaking from within this body of thought. He takes his language from a completely different reservoir: namely, Byzantine theology (and, partly, from quantum physics).

A last noteworthy point, one that distinguishes Horujy’s anthropology grounded in Orthodoxy from most other trends in contemporary Orthodox thought, is that his conclusions are not conservative. It sounds paradoxical, but Horujy’s retrieval of an ancient ascetic and monastic tradition has “liberal” consequences: it leads to an emphasis of personal freedom, to a prioritization of individual practice over institutional arrangements, and to an ecumenical appreciation of religious spiritual traditions in general—these are “liberal” consequences only in the peculiar Russian sense of the term, where a religious philosopher need not be anti-Western, fundamentalist, nor collectivist, but where it seems to be enough to take a critical distance from clerical hierarchies in order to be considered “liberal.”

Coming to a conclusion, I would like to recall the image of “Orthodoxified” philosophy with which I began. It is characterized by an ontological conception of truth, by a vision of man’s vocation to *theosis*, and by the rejection of individualism. It is methodologically vague and limited in its range, but this does not prevent it from making universal claims. If this is the image of contemporary “Orthodoxified” Russian philosophy, then, I asked, what is SA? It should have become clear that SA is all of this—and in important respects more than this. Its ontological conception of truth does not claim to be the only valid conception possible, its vision of man’s potential to *theosis* is grounded in a study of spiritual practices that is not limited to Orthodox Christianity, and its rejection of individualism comes hand in hand with a theory of personal freedom. “Synergetic anthropology” is more than just another phenomenon of philosophy grounded in Orthodoxy, because it confronts us with a critical reflection of such a philosophy, and does so by offering a challenging re-elaboration. One may find Horujy’s
maximalist claim of advancing a new anthropological paradigm unconvincing, but as a
phenomenological approach to religion based on the study of Orthodox spiritual experience, it is
certainly an original contribution to contemporary Russian philosophy.
Notes

1 See: http://www.synergia-isa.ru/


3 In the first half of 2006, Horujy and other members of the section for Science and Theology at the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences (RANS) renounced their Academy membership in protest against the abusive behavior of some Academy members. In particular, they denounced the “charlatanism” and “para-scientific activities” of figures like G. Grabovoi, A. Akimov, and T. Shipov (members of the RANS), and the inexplicable conferring of an honorary membership on P. Kadyrov, the pro-Russian Chechen president. The protesters concluded that the activity of the RANS was no longer guided by scientific considerations. They announced that, in light of these events—events that “underline how important a firm voice in scientific reasoning, philosophy and theology is in our days”—the section Science and Theology would cease to exist and that they would pursue their activities as an independent group of experts (Institut Sinergiiinoi antropologii). For this declaration, see Institut Sinergiiinoi antropologii. All translations are my own.

4 See Horujy, Posle pereryva and O starom i novom.

5 See Horujy, “Filosofskii protsess v Rossii kak vstrecha filosofii i pravoslaviia,” “Transformatsii slavianofil'skoi idei v XX veke,” and “Putem zerna: russkaia religioznaia filosofiiia segodnia.”

6 “Меня попросили написать внутреннюю рецензию на толстую рукопись «Крушение русского идеализма», труд некого чиновного борца идеологического фронта. Зажавши нос, я исполнил работу золотаря – ради появления в свет Карсавина надо было побороть брезливость. [...] Сегодня борцы не без успеха осваивают новые формы мародерства, став
пылкими апологетами русской мысли ... .” (Posle pereryva 254). [“I was asked to write an internal review of a long manuscript entitled ‘The Collapse of Russian Idealism,’ the work of some bureaucratic fighter on the ideological front. Holding my breath, I did the work—for the publication of Karsavin one could also overcome one’s disgust. […] Today the fighters have rather successfully developed new forms of looting, having become fierce apologetics of Russian thought.”]

“Зачем же писать сотни страниц про одно недомыслие и обман? когда в стране нет бумаги?” (Posle pereryva 256). [“Why would one write hundreds of pages based of stupidities and lies? when there is a shortage of paper in the country?”]

7 See Bibikhin, Aleksei Fedorovich Losev.

8 See Ar’ergardnyy boi.

9 See Horujy, Imiaslavie i kul’tury serebrianogo veka. For a translation of this text see Horujy, “The Idea of Energy in the Moscow School of Christian Neoplatonism.”

10 For a complete account of the events, see Alfeev.

11 See Bibikhin’s essay “Pravoslavie i vlast” on Bulgakov's sophiological interpretation of Palamas.

12 “Твёрдое обоживаемое бытие характеризуется иным соотношением между энергией и сущностью, нежели бытие Божественное” (Imiaslavie i kul’tury serebrianogo veka 297). [“The created and deified being is characterized by a different relationship between energy and essence than the divine being.”]

13 See Horujy, Sinergiia and K fenomenologii askezy.

14 “Русская мысль произвела смену своего языка и способа, кругой поворот, который я прежде охарактеризовал хайдеггеровским понятием Kehre, поворот-возврат, несущий...” (Posle pereryva 256).
tem не менее приближение к цели. В данном тексте я даю ему более ясное и прямое называние: модуляция дискурса” (Opyty 28). [“Russian thought underwent a change in its language and its method, a radical turn, which I have characterized earlier as similar to the Heideggerian notion of ‘Kehre,’ a turn-return, bringing one closer to the goal. In this text I use a more precise expression: modulation of discourse.”]

15 See also: Stoeckl, “A new anthropology: Sergej S. Khoruzhij’s search for an alternative to the Cartesian subject in Očerki sinergijnoj antropologii” (Russian trans.: Shtekl’, “Novaia antropologiiia: poisk al'ternativy kartezianskomu sub'ektu v «Ocherkakh sinergiinoi antropologii» Sergeia Khoruzhego”) and Shtekl’, “Sinergiinaia antropologiia i svoboda.”

16 [“For a long time, a model [of the human subject] dominated European thought in which […] the identity of a person was understood […] as founded on substantiality. In the classical European anthropological model, human nature bore the character of a substance: completing the anthropology of Aristotle, which understood man as a definite system of substances, Boethius, at the beginning of the sixth century, advanced the famous definition according to which man is an ‘individual substance of rational nature.’ Later on the concept of subject (a thinking subject, the subject of reason) was added to this definition, and from here emerged the perfect construction of man in its impenetrable philosophical armour: the classical European man of Aristotle, Boethius, and Descartes as an essence, a substance and a subject. And as self-identity.”]

17 “Если человека нельзя более характеризовать ‘центром’—его остается характеризовать ‘периферией,’ а точнее—‘границей’ (Ocherki 15). [“If man can no longer be characterized as ‘center’—he is to be characterized as ‘periphery,’ or—more precisely—as ‘border.’”]
18 “При подобном описании феноменов Границы возникает явная параллель антропологии
Границы с теорией физически открытых систем. Для таких систем главную роль в их
поведении играет взаимодействие их внутренних энергий с внешними, которые могут
проходить через данную систему с силу его открытости. [...] Для физических открытых
сistem существуют различные механизмы взаимодействия их энергий с внешней
энергией, принадлежащей некоторому неположному источнику, и среди таких
механизмов играет особую роль синергетический механизм, или синергетическая
прадигма” (Ocherki 20). [“The phenomenon of the border can be adequately described as a
parallel between the anthropology of the border and open-system theory in physics. […] Open
systems in physics have different mechanisms how their energy interacts with another energy
that derives from some outlying source; among these mechanisms the synergetic mechanism, or
the synergetic paradigm, occupies a special place.”]

19 The Russian language allows for a clear distinction between synergetic processes in physics
(sinergeticheskii) and synergetic processes in an anthropological and spiritual sense (sinergiiniii).
Unless clearly specified, Horujy always refers to synergy in the latter sense.

20 See MacIntyre, Whose Justice?

21 See Bibikhin, Revolutsiia malo chemu nauchila.

22 See Horujy, Aleksei Khomiakov i ego delo.


24 The problem of language in the critique of classical metaphysics is described in Heidegger's
“Brief über den Humanismus“ [“Letter on Humanism”].

25 For many years, Horujy was a follower of the liberal priest Aleksander Men’, and during our
interview he found very aggrieved words about the fact that Fr. Men’ was murdered in 1991.
Works Cited


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