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Some Parallels between Trilateral Situation Ethics and Sobornost

Abstract: Trilateral situation ethics is still a little-known concept within ethical theory, since it was developed thus far only as an outline of a possible new ethics (Goršak 2019). Its main focus is the relation between two persons, which inherently includes God as the third party; this enables the characterization of trilateral situation ethics in Christian terms. Sobornost is the idea of unity of the Church members who share the same baptism and by that constitute one mystical body with Christ. The foremost evident parallel between the two is the act of kenosis, which was induced by *theophilos* (the love for God) and not *adelfikos* (the love for our neighbor). Hence, the individual readily accepts its subjugation to the God's will and free-willingly restricts its egoistic desires to attain a higher good for the whole community. Accordingly, one does not ascribe any humanly conceived ethical norm to be of the highest social value, since this is always attributed to the Holy Scripture, particularly as defined in the Gospels.

Key words: trilateral situation ethics, sobornost, kenosis.

Nekaj vzporednic med trilateralno situacijsko etiko in sobornostjo

Izveček: Trilateralna situacijska etika je še vedno razmeroma malo znana veja etike, saj je bila do sedaj razvita le kot oris možne nove etike (Goršak 2019). Njen glavni poudarek je odnos med dvema osebama, ki po svoji naravi vključuje Boga kot tretjo osebo, da bi se takšna etika lahko imenovala krščanska etika. Sobornost je ideja o edinosti članov Cerkve, ki so vsi deležni enega krsta in s tem tvorijo eno mistično telo s Kristusom. Najpomembnejša vzporednica med obema je kenoza, ki je posledica *teofilos* (ljubezni do Boga) in ne *adelfikos* (ljubezni do bližnjega). Na tak način posameznik privoli v pokornost božji volji in prostovoljno omeji svoje egoistične želje, da bi dosegel višje dobro za celotno skupnost. Skladno s tem se nobeni človeško zasnovani etični normi ne pripisuje najvišje družbene vrednosti, saj je ta vedno pripisana Svetemu Pismu, zlasti evangelijem.

Ključne besede: trilateralna situacijska etika, sobornost, kenoza.

Sobornost and A. S. Khomiakov

Before anything else, it has to be said that sobornost is not a separate ethical system. The very term roots in Russian language and it means unity. One of the first and most prominent proponents of sobornost was Alexei Stepanovich Khomiakov (1804–1860), who, despite being only a retired cavalry captain, became “one of the most erudite and versatile men of his time.” (Khomiakov 1988, 2) Some fellow countrymen proclaimed him even as the “Doctor of

the Church.” (Khomiakov 1988, 2–3) Khomiakov was also known for his pan-Slavic ideas and strong views on what true Christianity is. Theology was not only his passion, but also serious intellectual commitment. As a result of this, he wrote the manifest *Church is One*, where he delineates what this unity, according to his conviction, is. Hence, his opening statement reads as follows: “The unity of the Church follows of necessity from the unity of God; for the Church is not a multitude of persons in their separate individuality, but a unity of the grace of God, living in a multitude of rational creatures, submitting themselves willingly to grace.” (Khomiakov 1988, 10)

He saw this unity of the Church as true, substantial and absolute, and not merely imaginary or allegorical. Church’s unity being absolute means it is unchangeable, inward holy, without errors, as its Preserver and Head (Christ) does not change. Church is the truth and “by her all mankind and all the earth /... / are sanctified.” (Khomiakov 1988, 13) For Khomiakov the very essence of the Church consists in the agreement and unity, which are the products of the spirit and life of the Church members. He sees in Scripture, tradition and patristic writings manifestations of the Spirit of God, who lives in this very Church. (Khomiakov 1988, 14)

Concerning his writings, one may conclude that under the term “Holy Church” Khomiakov obviously means only Greek Dioceses and Patriarchates (the so-called Orthodox or Eastern Church), since to him the Roman Catholic Church bears little significance as a Christian institution or authority. He stated that the predicates “catholic” and “apostolic” may be exclusively ascribed to the Orthodox Church as the Roman Catholic Church is to be blamed for the great schism in the

eleventh century and leading the western part of Christianity into heathenism, heresy and blasphemy.¹

Holy Spirit, according to Khomiakov, offers three gifts: faith, hope, and love. These gifts “are inseparably united in one holy and living unity.” (Khomiakov 1988, 16) Because Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches do not possess within themselves the Spirit of Truth (who is the precondition for sobornost), their members cannot build true unity, true sobornost—even though they have been baptized.² Through baptism alone, according to Khomiakov, does one enter the sobornost, the Church’s unity. (Khomiakov 1988,16–20)

Such views did not remain unnoticed or unanswered, though analytically coherent response by Western or Catholic theologians came rather late. Plank (1960) has methodically and by many arguments refuted some of the most controversial postulates made by Khomiakov,³ especially those considering definition of the term “catholic.” Plank wrote that the manner in which Khomiakov defines, understands and uses

- 1 This is due to the Roman Catholic teachings of *Filioque*, doctrine of purgatory, baptism of infants, dogma of pope’s infallibility, teachings on the Eucharist with relation to elements and creatures, and teaching that salvation can also be achieved by deeds. This Church has therefore lost the God’s grace and thus inward knowledge. He states: “He who has renounced the spirit of love and divested himself of the gifts of grace cannot any longer possess inward knowledge.” (Khomiakov 1988, 18)
- 2 For Khomiakov only baptism within the Orthodox Church is the valid one and truly sacramental.
- 3 Some other Russian contemporary theologians as well: F. Drozdov, P. M. Ternovskiy, M. Bulgakov, F. Gumilevskiy, A. P. Rudakov, V. I. Dobrotvorskiy, and N. P. Malinovskiy.

the term "sobornaja cerkov"⁴ has no substantiated relation to the term "catholic Church" whatsoever. (Plank 1960, 150)

Khomiakov speaks about the visible and invisible Church,⁵ whereby the visible Church is not that much the society of Christians, as it is more the Spirit of God and His grace, manifest through the sacraments, who lives in this society. (Khomiakov 1988, 19) What is really important, is his statement that in the obliged observance of the Church's rites lies the joy of the holy unity and that "external unity is the unity manifested in the communion of sacraments; while internal unity is unity of spirit." (Khomiakov 1988, 24) Therefore, his strong emphasis on the necessity of knowing and partaking the sacraments, above all the Eucharist, is no surprise.

On the other hand, Berdyaev says that the whole meaning of Khomiakov's thought lies in his assertion of communion which is inseparably connected to freedom. However, according to Berdyaev, Khomiakov failed to develop his idea in its fullness. Namely, the communion cannot be in any circumstances transformed in an external authority, as the absolute primacy belongs to the freedom, which is the bedrock of Christianity and the Church. Berdyaev asserts furthermore that the Russians are typically inclined to collectivism, although not in a strict sociological sense. In Russia there was no individualism as it was characteristic for the European history and European humanism. Khomiakov opposed, as many other Slavophile intellectuals, any individuum-based

4 This term in Russian means the Church having and living in unity.

5 Church is one, not divided; this separation on visible and invisible is only for the narrative's sake and with the aim of being clearer in presenting his ideas.

culture and strived for a collective, organic, and “communal” culture. (Berdyaeu 2019, 76, 179, 189)

Obolevitch makes similar observations regarding the attitude of the Slavophiles to knowledge: for them the knowledge of truth is not something personal or something that can be claimed by an individual, but rather something that belongs to the whole of the Church’s community, as embedded within the catholicity (sobornost). Truth cannot be attained by an individual but only by an assembly of individuals who are united in love. Only within the Orthodox Church higher principle of knowledge is kept and represents “a repository of the requested sobornost.” (Obolevitch 2019, 31–33)

In his paper, Fowler discusses some of Berdyaeu’s thoughts on knowledge and truth. Love is the principle of apprehension of truth. Only love is the true source and a guarantee to attain religious truth. The criterion of apprehension is the corporate experience of love, which is actually sobornost. It is not to say “I think” but “We think,” as only the corporate experience of love thinks. One’s existence is proved by will and love, and not by thought. Fowler further elaborates on Berdyaeu’s definition of sobornost: spiritual life lies in the deepness of the Church manifesting as brotherly community of the living and the dead, by which one mysteriously enters in the communion with Christ. Communion is the place of Christ’s dwelling and Church is the place of freedom filled with grace. Berdyaeu believed this was the true meaning of sobornost to Khomiakov. Man is not subordinate to some collective reality called sobornost, but rather sobornost is the highest spiritual power in men. It is each man’s duty to

assume on himself responsibility, which extents on all men. (Fowler 2008, 4, 12–13)

Even though Khomiakov did not strive to constitute new and separate ethics based on sobornost, one may nonetheless reach some conclusions on what such ethics might be. Firstly, it requires that a person, who wants to claim that he follows such ethics, must be baptized—as only those who are members of the Holy Church can partake in its unity.⁶ Secondly, the only source of the true unity is God, Holy Trinity to be more precise. Hence, members of the Church who want to live sobornost are constantly aware of the God's grace as the hypostasis of this sobornost, and so the Trinity is an intrinsic "third party" who is always present in any given relation between two persons.

Sobornost and C. Doherty

Both above mentioned characteristics are in coherence with the trilateral situation ethics. For a deeper understanding of the many parallels between the trilateral situation ethics and sobornost one has to, above all, be acquainted with sobornost in its daily practice. Thus, to know what sobornost means one should look for someone who did not just wrote about it *ex cathedra* (as Khomiakov did), but someone who actually lived it for a longer period of his life and was still able to formulate in words what the main features of sobornost are. Such authority is Catherine Doherty (2011), a Russian-

6 Leaving aside for the moment the question if baptism of various Christian denominations is valid or not, one can conclude that such ethics would be Christian ethics (in a broader sense).

born who had lived for the most of her life in the West. In her book about sobornost, one element that immediately separates her from Khomiakov is her broader understanding of baptism. She was born in an Orthodox family but later adopted the Catholic faith. That did not diminish her love for Orthodoxy nor her belief that both faiths share the same baptism.

Doherty opens her book with the statement what sobornost is: “A unity that has been effected through the word of the Gospel.” (Doherty 2011, 3) Etymologically, sobornost originates from “sobor,” which means cathedral, and “sobranie,” which means gathering. Its motto is a known proverb, although reversed: *Vox Dei, vox populi*. For Doherty, sobornost is a holy word and the Holy Trinity is the best way to approach its true meaning. Namely, members of whatever group, who love God and follow him, will think alike only by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and as a result of a deep prayer and contemplation. The unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the perfection of sobornost;⁷ that statement Doherty repeats frequently throughout of her book. (Doherty 2011, 12, 16, 27, 58) Prerequisite for sobornost is that we live the Gospel and, in order to do so, one has to freely submit himself to abandonment, rejection, crucifixion—as only pain acquires deeper knowledge, which is the foundation of true unity. (Doherty 2011, 3–5). This is what she calls

7 The next best examples of perfect sobornost are Mary’s answer to the angel: “Be it done unto me according to your word;” (Doherty 2011, 28), and the Holy Family. (Doherty 2011, 29, 35) In both cases we observe, once again, perfect triangle: God – angel messenger – Mary; and Joseph – Mary – Jesus. This can be compared to the statement: “This perfection is in the unity of her heart with the heart of God the Father, and with ours.” (Doherty 2011, 61)

also the inner unity, meaning total and complete unity of mind, heart and soul. (Doherty 2011, 58)

There are several passages in the Scripture, which can serve as the theological foundation for sobornost. Doherty cites John 17:12 “that we might all be one.” (Doherty 2011, 6)⁸ All these excerpts underline the importance of the Church’s community and the profound (ontological) interdependence among its members. Doherty admits that she is neither capable nor willing to write about sobornost only in a strict theological or scientific manner, but she feels that she needs to express her views on sobornost in a more poetic language, which is being the only language capable of encompassing its true meaning. She claims that sobornost is not merely a word but it is more like a concept, a concept of all those who are a part of the Mystical Body of Christ, where He is the Head. Oneness is only possible within this Body. (Doherty 2011, 7–9) At this point her statement is not only parallel to the trilateral situation ethics, but even identical: “We are always united with other human beings. We are integral part of one another. What binds us together is love, and only love. For love is a Person, Love is God.” (Doherty 2011, 9)

Here, we could substitute the word love with *agape* and we would get almost a precise definition of trilateral situation ethics. Doherty postulates triangle within this Mystical Body: God–other–I. The next of her many descriptions what sobornost is, is “love in action,” as one can never think of himself, but one puts himself in the third place: “God comes first; your neighbour is second; then yourself.” (Doherty 2011, 9)

8 Other such passages are: Ph 2, Ep 4, 1 Cor 10, 1 Cor 12.

That means God must come first in our lives, and our neighbour is second. We are in last place. (Doherty 2011, 67)⁹ As we see, she clearly affirms the trilateral nature of sobornost. In respect to the Christian trilateral situation ethics, we would add only that this triangularity is ontological and not just a kind of psychological or religious perception—as one might conclude based on Doherty's citation. This may even be so if she remained there; but Doherty extrapolates this relation on all humans: "If we are one with God, then we are one with all human beings." (Doherty 2011, 9) With that statement in mind, we can come to the conclusion that Doherty sees this relation not merely as something psychological or religious, but ontological, even though she does not use this word explicitly.

If we confront these statements with one of the most notable critics of Christianity as elaborated by Feuerbach (1982) in his work *The Essence of Christianity*, we see how profoundly such critics failed to grasp the very core of Christianity. In his book we read: "Faith is the opposite of love. /... / Therefore, love is identical only with the reason and not with faith. /... / Only where is the reason overall love can reign; reason on itself is not else than universal love." (Feuerbach 1982, 319) Feuerbach claims that love, the power of love to be more precise, is independent from the faith and that the law of love originates not from the faith but outside of it. Feuerbach also believes that love be limited by faith is complete contradiction. (Feuerbach 1982, 323, 327) We can only assume what Doherty's reply would be to the next Feuerbach's claim, namely that the Christian maxim "love your enemies"

9 Desire to be last in this triangle is the result of the true understanding of the Eucharist. (Doherty 2011, 67)

relates only to personal enemies and not to enemies of God, enemies of the faith. He claims that the one who loves a man, who denies Christ, actually denies his Lord and God by that; and what is more, he claims that faith means the abolishment of natural ties of humankind. (Feuerbach 1982, 316–317) Feuerbach tried to substantiate his beliefs with a solely logic-based deduction that the main contradiction of (Christian) faith and love lies in its first dogma: God is love. God is the subject and love is only its predicate. A predicate is not a subject, a subject is something different, distinct from a predicate. (Feuerbach 1982, 325)

As if God is subordinated to the laws of logic and deduction! God is not just any love. God is the Love; there is no true love outside Him. (Kierkegaard 2012, 27–28, 78–79, 50–57, 141–145, 160) We can approach the notion of God-Love only through faith. Christians love and do not wish any harm to any humans as they all are bearers of the image of God. There is no human on earth who would not be the bearer of the image of Christ: “And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” (Gen 1:26) When I approach any man, woman or child I have to realize at the same time a two-folded nature of that person—his/her human uniqueness and their common god-likeness. Baptism makes this person an integral part of the mystical body of Christ and thus with the capacity to build sobornost with me and other parts of this body in joint effort;¹⁰ and if a person remains unbaptized, he or she still carries the image of the same Creator, making him or her my brother or sister. I may even hate

10 “His face reflects the face of the Father. /... / But now his face also reflects your face and my face. This is truly a mystery!” (Doherty 2011, 21)

the sin and the stubborn intellectual “blindness” of those who do not wish to be baptized and become Christians. (Rom 1:18-32). However, as a true Christian I could never hate the bearer of the image of my Creator, of his/her Father who is the personified Love and who gracefully bestowed free will to each of us (the ability to reject baptism and faith is thus the sign of the God’s grace).

All this is, so we believe, in accordance with the ideas of C. Doherty, who could never hate her neighbour.¹¹ Only in the second half of her book we find the definite answer to the question whether or not baptism is the precondition for sobornost. The answer is undoubtedly positive: “Yes, this is the task of the baptized, the goal of the baptized. It is to find oneness in the Trinity, and oneness in the way that leads to the Trinity, oneness with Jesus Christ who said, ‘I am the way.’” (Doherty 2011, 61) Similarly: “Always baptism. Always our death in him and resurrection in him. Only the baptized approach the mysteries.” (Doherty 2011, 64) Doherty’s statements confirm the same views as Khomiakov’s about baptism as the first and basic precondition for sobornost, yet Doherty does not limit the validity of such baptism only to the Orthodox Church, but without doubt ascribes the same validity to the Roman Catholic baptism.¹²

11 “In such a sobornost, you cannot be ‘against’ any other person.” (Doherty 2011, 58)

12 From her writings in this book it is not clear how she values baptism within the Protestant Church.

Kenosis as the way to sobornost and trilateral situation ethics

Doherty states that Christ's incarnation made it possible for us to be re-admitted into the community of the Trinity, "the Community of Love," by which one totally empties oneself and lives no more by himself, but in Christ. (Doherty 2011, 10; Gal 2:20) Here we meet the concept of kenosis. Doherty writes in this respect: "Sobornost is deeper and holier; sobornost is total kenosis (self-emptying) and surrender to God, and through God to other person." (Doherty 2011, 15) This is totally in line with trilateral situation ethics which entails one's self-limitation, restriction of one's own egoism and desires. (Goršak 2019) The statement makes it more evident that kenosis means complete surrender to the will of God, which in consequence is "forcing" me to embrace the other one (my neighbour). Here again we notice a clear confirmation of trilateral nature of such relation: I (who surrender) – (to) God – (and consequently to my) neighbour.

As mentioned above, one of the key Scriptural passages, where foundations for the biblical sobornost can be found, is the Philippians 2. Here we can also find the well-known line¹³ about self-emptying of the Christ himself (Ph 2:7), and that with only one purpose: to "make-a-room" for the salvation of humankind. This way He set the example for us how we too have to "make-a-room" for others. Kenosis, as described here, comes as the result of recognizing the God-Father as the living Love first, and not as a natural love, which would

13 In such context, this is actually the only place in Scripture, but nonetheless an exceptionally important one.

exist by natural law and as a reference to itself only.¹⁴ This personified and not-created Love is the first Mover, first Cause of my self-emptying.

Doherty speaks also about “community conscience,” which can become the foundation for sobornost (Doherty 2011, 11, 17), but with an important distinction. Such community conscience can indeed manifest great amount of love among its members, with a lot of sacrifice for others and personal unselfishness. Nonetheless, such unselfishness is most likely motivated by the love of the fellow comrade (*adelfikos*) and not by the love of God (*theophilos*). It should be self-evident that the latter reaches farther, deeper into the relation. If I step out from the first one, I have abandoned my fellow comrade only, but if I step out from the second, I have directly disobeyed God himself. In trilateral situation ethics (Goršak 2019) and sobornost I can approach my neighbour only through God. That means both are grounded in *theophilos* and thus exhibit, in opposite to *adelfikos*, significant difference on the level of demand, placed before every Christian, to do only good to one’s neighbour. Surely, *adelfikos*-based ethic is morally correct, yet optional and subject of my own will, but then *theophilos*-based ethic is not only morally correct, but ontological, commanded by God and hence the subject of His will—which I as a Christian am obliged to recognize and internalize.

Decision-making process within sobornost calls for unanimous decisions—not in case of ordinary daily issues, but as Doherty says, the really important ones (the spiritual matters). In order to attain this level of intercommunal coher-

14 As Feuerbach claims in his work.

ence, this thinking-alike, every member of the community is expected to pray frequently, intensely, and deeply. Only in this way the community will come to comprehension of what is God's will for her, and not of what is the will of the community. Sobornost without prayer simply cannot function. (Doherty 2011, 12–13, 25, 36) On several occasions, Doherty reaffirms that sobornost is established through baptism¹⁵ and nourished by the Eucharist. (Doherty 2011, 16, 63) Yet more importantly, she repeatedly explains the need for a deeper understanding of sobornost. Being truly one with God, being “melted” into him, leaves me with no option but to look upon the other person as my own life. She says: “Sobornost is a state of being.” (Doherty 2011, 20) Similarly: “This unity transcends our emotions, our individualism /... /, because it is rooted in God.” (Doherty 2011, 61) This can be understood even as Doherty's confirmation of the ontological nature of sobornost, which in turn has concrete practical ethical implications: for once, impossibility for me to steal from another person, even if there were no separate moral law about stealing, if I am truly one in God, I simply cannot steal. (Doherty 2011, 20) This is another proof of many similarities between sobornost and trilateral situation ethics.

She also touches the question of egoism, which is one of the main topics within trilateral situation ethics. She clearly speaks in favour of “eliminating the self” as a condition for sobornost to grow; and this is because the self is the enemy of God. (Doherty 2011, 23) No wonder then that she dedicates large parts of her writings to the matters of human heart, since one cannot enter the mystery of sobornost with the

15 “Let the baptized be one, as one as the Trinity is one.” (Doherty 2011, 59)

head (i.e. with reason). (Doherty 2011, 25, 33) We must pray with our hearts, frequently and deeply, and prayers¹⁶ are the keys to silence. She cherishes silence so much because it “enables us to enter the Trinity.” (Doherty 2011, 27) This is entirely in line with contemporary views of cardinal R. Sarah (Diat and Sarah 2019), who speaks throughout his book-length interview about the power and significance of silence as the antidote against the “dictatorship of noise.” In one place Sarah states: “The question of silence is the question of love. One cannot express love by words.” (Diat and Sarah 2019, 127) He continues: “Silence is an important part of the apophatic way of approaching toward God, so dear to the Church Fathers, especially Greek.” (Diat and Sarah 2019, 173) It is impossible to imagine that these two great Godfearing thinkers would not feel their deepest sympathy for one another. The following words by Sarah could easily be Doherty’s: “True Christian silence becomes foremost holy, and then it can become commune.” (Diat and Sarah 2019, 146)

Another close-similarity between the thinking of Sarah and Doherty (and thus trilateral situation ethics) is the need for ascetism in our lives, for experiencing our own desert (*poustinia*). Sarah says that we have to help the modern world to experience the desert—as this is the place, where one can meet with his Creator and God, and that ascetism helps us to remove from our lives all that makes him heavy. (Diat and Sarah 2019, 78, 171) How strong this resonates with the Doherty’s appeal for the inner pilgrimage of each of us to the

16 In her book Doherty gives great value particularly to two prayers: The Prayer of the Presence of God (more present in the West) and The Jesus Prayer (more present in the East), both leading to sobornost.

poustinia—and from there to a deep union with God (Trinity), who will only make our hearts open to sobornost, and make us be “absorbed by God.” (Doherty 2011, 41–42, 49, 55) This way we emerge in the ultimate unity, in grace and love that flow from Divine Persons who are one in Love: Lover-Beloved-Love (Father-Son-Spirit). Selfishness dissolves; life which abundantly springs from the Divine Unity can now be discovered and recognized everywhere: within the souls, among persons, within all Creation.

Discussion

In her descriptions of sobornost, Doherty uses many other phrases and comparisons: sobornost is the song of God, the unity of each human being with the Trinity, love, us being new creation, as going through fire of the Holy Spirit, a love affair, style of life, an obedience of everybody to the will of God, total joy, incarnation, a chain of hearts which are sealed to God and to one another. (Doherty 2011, 35, 37, 39, 43, 44, 54, 59, 60) Despite the various and poetic descriptions sobornost is still revealed to us by her as something very unambiguous: as the state-of-being where the mind, heart and soul are in total unity with God.

We believe that sobornost as a concept and the way-of-life will constantly gain in its importance. The increasing moral decay on global scale, which presents itself outwards in relativism of all sorts, the increasing gap between poor and rich nations and persons within the nation, the increasing pollution and environmental problems, and many more issues are the reasons why we urgently need some viable economic and at the same time ethical alternatives—alter-

natives, where honesty goes hand in hand with unselfishness and voluntary self-limitation regarding consumption and acquiring material wealth. In this light, bright and loud mega cities seem to be a direct antithesis to such alternative. Yet, sobornost is one of the few feasible alternatives, if not for multireligious inhabitants of mega cities then for the inhabitants of smaller ones and those who live in the country. Today it is not important anymore if sobornost was born in the nineteenth century as the reaction to the contemporary spreading of ideas of modernism, liberalism, Westernization, etc. The very idea of sobornost lies in the core of the Gospel and for the world of today, so deeply troubled and challenged in so many ways, it represents at least a feasible way into which it is worth searching for some answers. Many are getting aware of this and just recently a comprehensive study on this and other subjects was published in the book on Alexei Khomiakov: *The Mystery of Sobornost*. (Mrowczynski-Van Allen et. al. 2019) Many aspects of what sobornost is have been covered by this book, yet many still remain open, as for instance the relation between sobornost and “pochvennichestvo” (i.e. return to the native soil) and sobornost and “vseedinstvo” (i.e. unity-of-all).

Conclusion

Our intention was to compare trilateral situation ethics to sobornost in its ethical components and thus the case of sobornost, as presented especially by Catherine Doherty, who lived sobornost, and not just wrote about it, almost all her life, served our purpose best. Sobornost can, as any other idea, be misused for purely narrow political goals. Nonethe-

less, this does not diminish in any way, shape or form its unique contribution to this world in the search for a *modus vivendi*, which would include high ethical standards and would have no or only very low negative impact on spiritual and natural environment we live in. All these issues being a top priority within the trilateral situation ethics, as well.

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