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Ern and Rosmini: “an unexpected intimate familiarity”

Эрн и Розмини : “неожиданное внутреннее родство”*

Abstract

This work contains two parts, the first of which, *The Unexpected Familiarity and Ern*, includes several paragraphs: *Ern reads Rosmini’s «Teosofia» (Teosophy)*, *A Mention about Sofia Wisdom of God*, *Obscuring of a Metaphysical Branch in Western Thought*, and *Ern’s Cultural Parabola*.

In the second one, *Fundamental Ideas of Rosmini*, I would like to give just some glimpse of his philosophy for a first comparison, namely the following: *The Idea of Being, Cognitive Act: Intellectual Perception and Feeling, Synthesism and the Three Forms of Being, Intellectual Charity, Logos Light of Soul and Church*.

The conclusions underline that this “unexpected great intimate familiarity” between Italian and Russian philosophical thought, according to Ern’s words, has been recently recognized, particularly from John Paul II.

I *The unexpected familiarity and Ern*

I. 1 *Ern reads Rosmini’s «Teosofia» (Teosophy)*

Perhaps not everybody knows that between 1910 and 1916 two volumes and a large number of articles were published in Russia, which contained the assertion and documentation about the necessity of a comparison between the Italian philosophy and the Russian thought. Principal promoter of this initiative, which with particular attention involved Antonio Rosmini, was Vladimir Francevič Ern (1881-1917), who asks himself about “philosophy of knowledge” (философия знания).

Ern first of all published two articles and then in 1914 his «*Essay about Rosmini’s Teosophy*», just on the famous review “*Bogoslowsky Vestnik*” (*Theological Messenger*), which, like everybody knows, from 1911 till 1917 was edited and renewed by Father Pavel Florensky.

Such “intimate familiarity with the remote fraternal spirits” was already underlined in 1956 in the “*Rivista Rosminiana*” (“*Rosminian Review*”), even if this “first attempt to introduce in Russia the Italian philosophical thought” wasn’t “followed by other initiatives in this direction”¹.

* I am very grateful to my assistant Silvia Ciancio Malcotti for all Internet localizations and translations from Italian, Russian and German languages.

¹ N. V. SEMENTOVSKY-KURILO, *Rosmini e la filosofia russa (Rosmini and the Russian Philosophy)*, in “*Rivista Rosminiana*” (“*Rosminian Review*”), 1956, part III, p. 175-183, p.178.

In March 1915 Ern defended his doctorate thesis at the Moscow University with a speech entitled “*The Place of Rosmini in the History of Philosophy*”².

On that occasion he observed: «In the general courses of History of Philosophy the name of Rosmini is not mentioned or (...) just mentioned in order to complete the survey and not as a moment of a certain importance in the history of the paneuropean philosophy. Moreover, Rosmini shares this destiny with all Italian modern thought». (“*The Place of Rosmini in the History of Philosophy*”³, unpublished in Italian language).

In 1991, in the introduction to the critical edition of his works, exactly the same thing was said about Ern: “In the survey of the Russian thinkers of the beginning of the XX century, to Vladimir Ern belongs an important place. Nevertheless, up to now his works roused scarce attention (...) that does not witness a secondary importance of his opinions and works”⁴.

Ern stayed in Italy between 1911 and 1913, as the letters from Rome, published between 1912 and 1913 in the “Theological Messenger” (Bogoslowsky Vestnik) attest⁵: therefore he could contact in person with the lively cultural humus characterising the Italian intelligentsia at the end of the XIX century.

He noticed, «in his native peninsula the name of Rosmini and his philosophical work are given high consideration. Monuments in honour of him were erected in Milan, Stresa and Rovereto. Writings dedicated to him, which include polemics, exegetical and historical-philosophical works, come to be one thousand titles»⁶.

During the last decades questions about Rosminian philosophy were exposed in a great amount of reviews appeared and disappeared one after the other, while beginning from 1906 and uninterruptedly till today a periodical publication entitled “Rivista Rosminiana”(Rosminian Review) still continues to be issued » (the “Rosminian Review” will celebrate in 2006 one hundred years of activity with a special edition, which will contain also an essay about Ern and Rosmini).

«All this let us see - continues Ern – how Rosmini occupies a very solid place in his countrymen’s conscience» and then he asks himself: «Is normal this strange disregard to Italian philosophy of the XIX century in general and particularly towards Rosmini? (...) Maybe are we substantially misunderstanding the situation of development of philosophical thought of the last century by omitting the exploration of Rosmini, Gioberti and Mamiani, who were strong and rich in theoretical creativeness? ».

“Is normal this strange disregard?”, we ask ourselves too. Antonio Rosmini, pillar of western thought of the XIX century, today is not completely ignored in books concerning history of philosophy, and this beginning from advanced schools: but very often he is not studied at all.

Born at Rovereto (Italy) 1797, died at Stresa (Italy) 1855, Rosmini was great philosopher, priest and in 1828 founder of a religious Congregation called *Institute of Charity*, which today is still alive in many countries. It has, as its device, the Pelican, which extracts from its breast that meat by which it feeds its youngs. We incidentally notice a singular coincidence: the same symbol was chosen by Pavel Florensky in 1914 for the *Introduction* to his work *The Pillar and Foundation of Truth*⁷.

² Vladimir ERN, “*The Place of Rosmini in the History of Philosophy*”, speech published in the volume N. 127 (II), March-April 1915 of the Journal “*Questions about Philosophy and Psychology. Edition of Psychological Society of Moscow with the contribution of the Philosophical Society of Petrograd*”.

³ Idem, p. 242.

⁴ Ju. SCHERRER, Vstupitel’ naja stat’ ja in V. F. Ern, *Sočinenija*, ed. by N. V. Kotrelev, E. V. Antonova, Moscow, Pravda 1991.

⁵ V. F. Ern, *Letters on Christian Rome*, Bogoslowsky Vestnik, N.11 (November), 12 (December) of 1912, and N.1 (January) and 9 (September) of 1913 (3rd letter, “The Catacombs of St. Callistus,” 1913 January, p. 106 [Russian]).

⁶ At the moment we have a Rosminian Bibliography in six volumes, ed. by Father Cirillo Bergamaschi, *Rosminian priest*.

⁷ “This work of Pavel Florensky was issued in 1914 in Moscow with the title: *Stolp i utverzdenie istiny*, became very popular and in short time it was impossible to find a copy of it. In 1929 a group of friends of its author edited a photostatic edition in Berlin with a little amount of copies not in sale.

Close to Alessandro Manzoni (who, like everybody knows, is considered the father of modern Italian language and literature), Rosmini was perhaps the main protagonist of the philosophical and theological debate at that time in Italy: first of all for the originality of his thought, worded in a great amount of writings. But also because in 1888 forty propositions, taken from his works, were condemned by the Holy Office: and this in spite of the great esteem that Rosmini enjoyed from the Popes, both as priest and as scholar.

In July 2001, an official “Note” from the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith declared: «The reasons, that determined the Decree of condemnation of the “forty propositions” taken from the works of Rosmini, no longer exist ».

Thus we had a confirmation that Rosmini’s thought did not contain errors against faith, but it was condemned for other reasons⁸.

In the meanwhile Rosmini still continued to be appreciated (writers like Tommaseo and Fogazzaro declared themselves to be Rosminian, as well as many saints and bishops). He continued to be studied particularly in Italy, in particular in the XIX century, due to the philosopher Michele Federico Sciacca. Born in Sicily, he was a young atheist at the University of Rome, as Giovanni Gentile suggested to him to write a dissertation on a thinker who was ignored by the official culture: Antonio Rosmini. Sciacca was fascinated by this figure: he recovered his faith, in 1955 dedicated to Rosmini the First International Conference in Stresa and then became founder of the “Christian spiritualism” in Europe. He called his philosophy “Philosophy of Integrality”.

“Objective Interiority”, “Triadic and Trinitarian Ontology”, “Act of Being”, these are only some of his works, which already in their titles seem to find a particular echo in the Russian culture of the “Silver Age”.

Sciacca was my teacher at the University of Genoa till his untimely death, in 1975. His last work is entitled: «*Perspective on St. Thomas’s Metaphysics*»; the dissertation that he assigned to me, “*The Idea of Creation by St. Thomas Aquinas*”.

Great was my emotion when I found again these words by Ern: “The description of the act of world’s creation, that Rosmini undertook, has not the purpose of raising the curtain over what is mysterious in this process and that exceeds the forces of human intellect; it aims only at approaching what is clear in this process and, through the inspection of this clear element, proving that in the idea of creation, first of all, there is nothing illogical, secondly, that only through this idea we can see the way out of the other points of view, full of internal contradictions”. Ern resumes which are in the Rosminian doctrine “the three principal moments of the divine creation of world”, by adding “Here for the first time is revealed with full evidence that with the triple and unique being Rosmini intends the triple and unique Christian God...”.

We cannot report here a complex doctrine, both from the philosophical and theological point of view, like that stated in the Rosmini’s «*Teosophy*», which was issued among the “Posthumous Works” in 1859 (the edition read and cited by Ern).

This doctrine on Creation in a Trinitarian sense, according to Ern, “must be recognized in the whole ontology of Rosmini as the most important place. Chapters dedicated to this argument perhaps represent the best pages of Rosmini ”⁹.

With great acuteness and firmness of thought, Ern catches the Rosminian fundamental distinction between logical and ontological plane¹⁰, therefore between the divine and God.

“Once again - Ern writes - Rosmini repeats that the distinction between the moments of world’s creation has a merely logical and not chronological character and that by God all acts are eternal

This translation refers to that edition and is the first translation in another language (Translator’s Note)” in: Pavel FLORENSKY, “*The Pillar and Foundation of Truth*”, introduction by Elémire Zolla, p. XXVIII, Rusconi, Milan 1998, pp. 36-663, p. I.

⁸ Cp. «CHARITAS», *Monthly Rosminian Bulletin*, July 2001, Special Issue, p. 196-197.

⁹ V. ERN, *An Essay concerning Rosmini’s Teosofia*, in “*Bogoslowsky Vestnik*”, July-August 1914, p. 566.

¹⁰ A. ROSMINI, *L’idea della Sapienza*, Edizioni Martello Libreria, Milan 1997, p. 8.

and immediate, but this distinction is very important, as it fixes the real logical sequence in the relation of absolute Being to relative being, that is to say, namely, to trace the essential limit between the one and the other¹¹. Our intellect belongs to the relative being, and for this reason the order of moments just fixed for our intellect is substantially different”.

I. 2 *A Mention about Sofia, Wisdom of God*

Ern completely understands the Rosminian distinction between “act of perception” and “order of reflection”¹². “From these positions – he writes by citing Rosmini - with a novel force we can deduce the main distinction between, first of all, the archetype of world and the Word, and, secondly, between the Word and the original being. The archetype of world, that includes all entities and ideas realized during the creation, has not the being in itself and exists exclusively in the divine intellect. The Word of God, on the contrary, has got the subject being, hypostasis being. Moreover, the archetype of world has the character of *creature*. We can identify it with *created* wisdom, to which the following words refer: “He created me from the beginning before the world” (Sir., XXIV, 10); “I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was” (Proverbs, VIII, 23)¹³.

The Word of God, on the contrary, is not created. It is independent both from free God’s will and from the original being and also from the real terms of the latter¹⁴”. These words once again belong to Rosmini, literally cited by Ern, who concludes: “Here Rosmini underlines his consent with the Angel of the Schools [that is St. Thomas]”¹⁵.

Through this last quotation by Ern we can notice that his “fight for logos”, that is also a fight for a “pan-European” Christian philosophy and culture, as he calls that, is not the fruit of a foolish ambition, even if generous. But in him this is the result of a deep philosophical reflection based on a careful analysis of the foundations of Western philosophical culture, both medieval and contemporary, represented here particularly by St. Thomas and Rosmini.

The possible comparison between these words of Rosmini about wisdom and that idea of *sophia* which belongs to Russian philosophical and theological thought from its historical origins, I suppose, came already to minds of experts who are better than I, like you are.

I think, of course, about *Sophia. Eternal Wisdom Mediatrix between God and World* by Vladimir Sergeevich Soloviev¹⁶, and the tenth letter in “Sophia” of *The Pillar and Foundation of Truth* by Pavel Florensky.

In his *Sophia* Soloviev writes: “In actual fact man is not sated by the pleasure which provides for him the satisfaction of his physical lusts and which he shares with animals.

To be happy, he has to satisfy also a need which belongs to him in an exclusive way, that of acting morally and knowing the truth. Acting morally, according to general and universal principles and not under the impulse of animal instincts; knowing the truth, or knowing things in their universality and totality and not in their apparent and transient reality. By pointing out this supreme need as a fact, we have nothing to deal with its historical origin or its genesis...for us it’s enough to know that it exists and that without it man is no longer a man”¹⁷.

¹¹ *Teosofia*, cited by Ern in note: I, 413-414; *ibid.* p. 564.

¹² *Ibidem.*

¹³ *Teosofia*, I, 415-416, *ibid.* cited (p. 564).

¹⁴ *Teosofia*, I, 419-420, *ibid.* cited (p. 564).

¹⁵ V. ERN, *An Essay concerning Rosmini’s Teosofia*, in “*Bogoslowsky Vestnik*”, July-August 1914, p. 564.

¹⁶ Vladimir Sergeevich Soloviev, *Sophia. Eternal Wisdom Mediatrix between God and World* (transl. from Russian into Italian), Edizioni San Paolo, Rome 1997, p.5-135, p. 49-50.

¹⁷ *Ibidem.*

This word UNI-TOTALITY (ВСЕ-ЕДИНСТВО) was coined by Soloviev, but we find it in an extraordinary similar way already in Rosmini's first philosophical work, "*A New Essay concerning the Origin of Ideas*", where we find these words: "The aim of the present work - Rosmini writes - is therefore to trace back as far as possible the source of truth within us, where the springs of the river of life are to be found, and derive from this primary source all human knowledge and certainty. In the process, we discover a single seed from which grows true philosophy - the philosophy essential to mankind's needs. This philosophy exhibits the twin characteristics of UNITY and TOTALITY, characteristics which I have elsewhere detected in philosophy. UNITY endows our cognition with consistency and harmony; TOTALITY provides the immense pasture for which the human spirit longs and without which it cannot function"¹⁸.

On the other side, Florensky, in his *Sophia*, cites Gregory the Theologian, saying that "primary Wisdom of universe contemplated as ideal figures the constitutive archetypes of world" (idem, p.390) and cites Clement of Alexandria: "we already existed before the world's creation...we already existed before in God's mind, we who afterwards became rational creatures of God's Word" (idem, p.391). This is the "idea of Sophia-Wisdom existing before the world (...) with which the whole Scripture and the works of the Fathers are plentifully strewn (idem, p. 394). And of course also Florensky, by citing the doctrine about Sophia of St. Athanasius, replies the passage of Proverbs cited by Rosmini in the *Teosophy*: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old" (*Proverbs*, VIII, 22: idem, p.406).

Russian thought on Sophia-Divine Wisdom is an ocean too much deep and immense for us, I don't say, to plough it entirely, but simply to lower our small ship into it: also because, like everybody knows, it was given such personal and original interpretations of the whole inheritance of teaching of the Church Fathers.

For us it's enough here to underline that these topics are not extraneous to the way of feeling and thinking of Western Church, according to a line, which was not interrupted, rather darkened. It is an...

I.3 *Obscuring of a Metaphysical Branch in Western Thought*

This branch of both philosophical and theological studies was intentionally ignored and put aside by the academic historiography and perhaps also neglected by catholic studies. Nevertheless it held out also in Western countries.

As an example, I would like to mention an explanation of creation of Trinitarian kind, like that of Rosmini, observed by Ern, which was expressed in the XVIII century in Italy by Vincenzo Miceli (1734 - 1783, an unknown Sicilian metaphysician, who was however cited by Rosmini). Miceli wrote several philosophical and theological works, in which he declared himself to be faithful to the teachings of Church Fathers, who, according to him, felt that "true philosophy was never hostile to religion, on the contrary the one wonderfully prepares the minds for the other"¹⁹.

Exactly with the same meaning and with words very similar to Rosmini's ones, this Sicilian metaphysician affirms "Man was created in the image and likeness of God (...) Therefore man had in himself the sacred triad shared, virtue of Father, wisdom of Son, holiness of Spirit (...) All three therefore spread in creating man"²⁰. *Ens* for Miceli is "an interiorly and exteriorly alive Strength; so that the *expected* world is nothing but the extrinsically considered Omnipotence, like the *intelligible* is Wisdom; essential properties of *Ens* *lively real agent in perpetual renewal*". For these ideas of him, still one hundred years after his death Miceli was considered a pantheistic ontological

¹⁸ A. Rosmini, *A New Essay concerning the Origin of Ideas*, vol. I, translated by Robert A. Murphy, Rosmini House, Durham, 2001, p. 5.

¹⁹ Rosalia Azzaro Pulvirenti, *Miceli e Rosmini. Con l'opera inedita di Miceli «Idea di un nuovo sistema»*, (*Miceli and Rosmini. With the unpublished Miceli's «Idea of a New System»*), p. 68, note 36.

²⁰ Idem.

philosopher quite similar to Giordano Bruno²¹. He himself postponed the publication of his main work, *Idea of a New System* (which still remained unpublished till 1990), because he was afraid of the rigour of the Inquisition, which was abolished a year after his untimely death.

Vincenzo Miceli plainly speaks in this work of him, written to the end of the XVIII century, about “Immaculate Conception”: “...if nature would change order in generating, doing that without concupiscence (in that case it would be a miracle) and it were the actual practice of Wisdom and Charity, as well as that of nature, the son would be born without over-natural sin, since he would know the origin of all three persons, and he would be born as Saint. And here is the Immaculate Conception conceived without repugnance”²². He is author also of a work entitled “*Vera ac Realis Idea Verae Christi Ecclesiae Tractatus Theologico-Scientifico-Dogmatico* and of an “*Ad Canonicas Institutiones Isagoge*”, in which we can find his biography, which tell us about his devotion to the Mother of God: “*Deiparam Virginem enixe coluit, atque ejus venerationem ale omnium animis imprimere conabatur*”²³.

Vincenzo Miceli is the founder of the so-called “Monrealese School”. A student of him, Saverio Guardi, in a “*Sermon for the Immaculate Conception of Virgin Mary*”, writes: «...if it were ever allowed me to reach up there the throne of the Eternal Creator and to contemplate in the eternal reason the first pure ideas, in which all created things are fixed, I would stare in the middle as first Mary, as the most perfect of creatures»²⁴. Such premise articulates with theological and philosophical arguments, bold but logically unimpeachable.

The Immaculate is seen like the archetype or model of the human creature already *in mente Dei* (*in God's mind*), yet before the act of creation; thus she represents the human perfect specimen of embodied Wisdom, which as uncreated Wisdom is the Word, God's Son and God-Man, but as Wisdom embodied in a *purely* human creature, it realized in Her, Mary, at the most of her intellectual and spiritual potentialities, both as “wideness of mind” and “depth of intellect”.

«...it helps us at least hearing from the Virgin herself the idea, taken from the divine mind, which she expressed about herself. *Ego ex ore Altissimi prodivi primogenita ante omnem creaturam* (*I as firstborn from God's mouth before all creatures*).

We know – says our Sicilian author - very well that here the Essay intends to tell us about the ineffable generation of Eternal Word, which is the first, eternal, unchangeable and alive word of the father; however, who doesn't know yet that Church, and the Fathers, fit the mysterious words to the great mother of eternal Son, as they intended to let us learn that the generation of the Son is nearly a model of Mother's Conception (...) Like the Father created everything through the Word, so in Mary, pre-elected Mother of the Word, human nature had to be recreated and formed again completely (...) And if it is true that Adam represents by himself the power of knowing and acting of the Father... if it is true that a vivid ray of light, derived from eternal Wisdom of Word, illuminates his mind...and a flame of love, shared from the immense source of charity of the divine Spirit, lightens his will and join him in a over-natural way to that unchangeable good which is God...And if it is true that in Adam God from away stared at that Son who should take from him his flesh (*Christus cogitabatur homo futurus=Christ was thought as the future man*)...Then it's quite right to deduce that he thought about the Mother too, if the flesh of Son is the same of Mother's one».

«Nevertheless this should not surprise you – concludes our author – as if man, involved, and impeded, by the corrupted matter, reaches with his thought, faster than a sunray the highest spheres, how much more Mary, whose neither eyes nor feelings delay, shall know both visible, and invisible things? Who shall measure the unvincible strength of her will in being joined to the real good? And who could detach her from all this, if senses, away from being hostile to the reason, by taking pure

²¹ Idem, p. 51, note 1.

²² Idem, p. 148.

²³ Idem, pp. 143-144, note 41.

²⁴ Idem, p.144-145, note 41.

ideas from terrene objects, in these they were represented by nothing else but Omnipotence, Wisdom and Immensity of creator?»²⁵.

In this writing of a neglected Sicilian thinker of the first half of XIX century, scholar of that Vincenzo Miceli, cited by Rosmini, who shares with him an idea of Trinitarian creation – we have, as you can see, words very similar for the same emphasis and meaning to Florensky's ones, used in his letter about "Sophia". As everybody knows, in this masterpiece of him Florensky doesn't stop intoning his chant of admiration and love for that «divine archetype in man», for that «model of virginal purity» which «is the most Pure and more than blessed Mother of Lord», whose "sophianic beauty" is due to the "incomprehensible superiority on the whole creation of God"²⁶.

Nevertheless during centuries this active magma is remaining present as a hidden branch within the Catholic Church; proof of this is the fact that almost in two concrete historical dates this magma powerfully outcropped to the surface. On the occasion of the official proclamation of two dogmas: 1854 that of Immaculate Conception and 1950 that of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Mother of God.

In order to underline this common branch of thought, hidden but permanent, I would like to report the words of Pope Benedict XVI at the Catechism of the 22nd of September 2005:

We conclude by recalling that the beginning of this second part of psalm 131 was often used by the Fathers of the Church to describe the incarnation of the Word in the Womb of the Virgin Mary. Already Saint Ireneus, referring to the prophecy of Isaiah about parturient Virgin, said: «The words: "Listen now, house of David" (Is. 7, 13) mean that the eternal king, whom God promised to David to bear from the "fruit of her womb" (Psalm 131, 11), is the same who was born by the Virgin, coming from David. Therefore he promised a king who would be born from the "fruit of her womb", an expression signifying a pregnant virgin.... As Elisabeth, full of Holy Spirit, attested saying to Mary: "Blessed are thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb" (Lk. 1,42). So the Holy Spirit advices them, who want to listen to him, that by the delivery of the Virgin, that is Mary, the promise made by God to David, bringing forth a king as the fruit of her womb, was fulfilled». ("Adversus Haereses", 3,21,5: Yet and Not Yet, CCCXX, Milan 1997, p. 285). And so we see in the great Ark, which goes from the ancient Psalm till the incarnation of the Lord, the faithfulness of God. In the psalm appears and transpires yet the mystery of a God who lives with us, who becomes one with us in the Incarnation. And this faithfulness of God and our belief in changes of history are our joy" (in the newspaper "Avvenire", September 22, 2005).

These paths of research, and particularly the comparison between metaphysical speculations of Rosmini, Soloviev and Florensky, will be object of a specific study within a larger Project which, with the National Research Council (CNR), we intend to dedicate to these authors beginning from the track traced by Ern.

By means of a comparison between these two representative figurae, Ern and Rosmini, we intend to start a comparative study between Italian and Russian philosophic spiritualism of the second half of the XIX century, who were both critical about Hegelian historicistic rationalism and at the same time believed in the necessity of embodying "Logos" in the alive, even social and historic, reality of populations: "i.e. to follow the right reason, and to live after reason means to live after Christ's teaching"²⁷, after the common root of patristic teaching²⁸.

²⁵ Saverio Guardì, *Alcuni Sermoni e Panegirici del Can. Tesoriere S. Guardì, con un'orazione funebre del Can. Ciro Terzo (Several Sermons and Panegyrics of Can. Treasurer C.T.)*, Reale Stamperia, Palermo 1842, p. 63-76; cit. by R. Azzaro Pulvirenti, *Miceli e Rosmini...*, op. cit. p. 144-145.

²⁶ P. Florensky, *The Pillar and Foundation of Truth*, op. cit. p. 432-433.

²⁷ Cp. Clemente Alessandrino, *Paedagogus*, I,13, PG, VII, 371: «Quae in ipsam Rationem seu Verbum inoboedientia committitur, peccatum generat...»; *Stromata* VII, 16; PG, IX, 538: «Quemadmodum ergo in bello non est ordo deserendus quem dedit imperator militi, ita nec deserendus est ordo quem dedit nobis Logos, quem accepimus principem ac duces cognitionis et vitae»: cited by Reginaldo Pizzorni, *Il diritto naturale dalle origini a S. Tommaso d'Aquino (Natural Law from the Origins to S. Thomas Aquinas)*, Città Nuova Editrice, Rome 1985, page 143, note 25.

Thus a first great merit of Vladimir Ern is quite this: discovering and stressing the “unexpected intimate familiarity” between Russian philosophical thought and foundations of Rosmini’s thought in particular.

I. 4 *Ern’s Cultural Parabola*

In his native town, Tiflis, Ern attended the same gymnasial class as Pavel Florensky.

1900 Ern enters the Moscow University, where he studies philosophy and history. Here Florensky and Ern continued to be friends, they live in the same room at the University hostel.

At that time Ern was very close also to V. P. Svencicky, A. V. El’čaninov, but also S. M. Soloviev and Andrei Belyj²⁹.

1905 Florensky met some members of the “Christian Brotherhood of Fight” (Христианское Братство борьбы), among which there were Vladimir Ern and Valentin Svencicky (with whom Ern wrote some articles); still in 1905 Florensky refused to follow the revolution proclaims by Ern and Svencicky against the «tsar-apostate»³⁰.

“From time to time also Sergej Bulgakov and Pavel Florensky engage themselves in individual editorial projects which are in close relation with the “Brotherhood of Fight”. The program of this organisation results to be a particular mix of illuminated theory of State, Russian mysticism of Sophia and scientific belief in the progress (...) After 1907 the “Christian Brotherhood of Fight” is no longer mentioned.

Nevertheless, the reason why this movement suddenly disappeared is to be found firstly not in the official persecution³¹.

It seems to be evident that Ern had a life’s parabola in common with many young Russians of that time, included Soloviev and Dostoevsky: beginning from a vivid political passion, in short time disappointed, they started engaging themselves with the same ardour in other fields such as philosophy, literature and particularly theology. Probably they rapidly became firmly convinced about a common belief of evangelical kind, that “from inside come man’s evils”: that is, men and society can really be improved only from inside, from their own intimate identity, which has its roots in faith and culture. Also in this sense, I think, we can speak about a typical “storiosophic opening” of Russian culture.

Further Ern’s philosophical evolution follows a slavophil tendency.

This position was expressed in a more evident way in several articles, which he published as a collection, entitled “*Fight for Logos*” (Moscow, 1911: this first edition can be found at the Library of Rome University “La Sapienza”)³².

In this work he “ascribes to Russia a vivid religious comprehension of Logos, while the whole Western religion, except Schelling, is a victim to a mechanistic concept of rationalism. It’s indicative that Ern defends his position with extreme passion and polemics: he noticed that

²⁸ Cpr. J. Anthony DEWHIRST, “*Antonio Rosmini and the Fathers of Church*”, Short Run Press, Derryswood, UK, 2005, pp. 211.

²⁹ “If neighbours entered the room, they hastened to go out, with view of the written request on the wall, do not take the “cell” guest’s time up, in order not to interrupt Pavel’s mathematic exercises”. Extracted from: V. I. Kejdan (editor): *Vzyskujusčie grada. Chronika častnoj žizni russkich religioznych filosofov v pis'mach i dnevnikach (The Searchers of the Town. Chronicle of Private Life of Russian Religious Philosophers through Letters and Diaries)*. Moscow 1997, p. 58 and ff.

³⁰ Cp. Pavel FLORENSKIJ, “*The Pillar and Foundation of Truth*”, Introduction by Elémire Zolla p. XXVIII, Rusconi, Milan 1998.

³¹ Cfr. ULRICH SCHMID, *Russische Religionsphilosophen des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Herder, Friburgo, Basilea, Vienna 2003, pp.310; p. 233.

³² “Ern tritt hier als Apologet der Russischen Philosophie auf, die er gegen den Vorwurf der Epigonalität verteidigt – mehr noch: er dreht den Spieß um und wertet das westliche Denken gegenüber den russischen ab. Dass er dabei über sein Ziel hinausschießt, ist bereit von den Zeitgenossen, namentlich S. Frank und S. Gessen, bemerkt und kritisiert worden. Ern arbeitet gerne mit statischen Dichotomien, die einen positiven und einen negativen Pol aufweisen” (“Here Ern rises as an apologist of Russian Philosophy which he shields against the epigonistic model – and more: he retorts the accusations and devalues Western thought in comparison with Russian thought. That he in this occasion exceeded his aim, his contemporaries have already pointed out and criticized, especially S. Frank and S. Gessen. Ern gladly works with static dichotomies, which exhibits a positive and a negative pole”) in Ulrich Schmid, *Russische Religionsphilosophen des 20. Jahrhunderts*, p.233-234.

“Russian culture” was menaced by “Western civilization”. The spiritual tradition of Logos in Russia represents an achievement that should be guarded from the deleterious foreign influence”³³.

This “Fight for Logos” finds an editorial echo also in the Ern’s monography on Gregory Savvich Skovoroda (Moscow 1912), who was studied also in Italy as one of the first representative of typical Russian cultural character³⁴, as you know.

“For Ern the appearance of Skovoroda is the “birth of philosophy in Russia.”³⁵. Ern sees the mainstream of Russian philosophy as flowing from the Fathers of the Eastern Church, not from European rationalism or empiricism. By the time Western philosophical influences came to be felt, Russia already had a well-defined, original philosophical tradition, which he calls “Logism” and Skovoroda is one of its authors. The main characteristics of this tradition are, first, its hostility to pure speculation, to “armchair philosophy.” Secondly, the central interest of Logism lies in man, in the whole man, not in an abstraction. Thirdly, man is viewed in close relation to God. Fourthly, metaphorical language is used extensively to express the secret inner wellsprings of man’s life. These characteristics are prominent in Dostoevsky, Soloviev, and Tolstoy. The stress on natural inclination or personal vocation is central to the Slavophiles who apply this concept to the whole Russian nation. For this reason Ern calls Skovoroda the “secret father of Slavophilism.”³⁶.

On a theoretical level Ern fights for a revenge of spiritual experience on the rationalistic tendency of the contemporary Western thought. Against formal and abstract “logicism” (логизм) he sets his “fight for logos - борьба за логос ...” for the reason considered out any abstraction of it from alive and concrete reality”³⁷, in order to reach an “ontologically comprehensive vision” of life.

The most valid contribution to this realistic, personalistic and Christian conception was given, after Ern’s opinion, by the metaphysics of Vladimir Soloviev.

Vladimir Ern was member to the Moscow “Religious-Philosophical Vladimir Soloviev Society” (RFO: Религиозно-Философское Общество), since its foundation – between the end of 1905 and beginning of 1906 – among the founders of which there were Florensky, also S. N. Bulgakov, E. N. Trubezkoj, V. P. Svencikij, and later V. Ivanov and N. Berdjajev. Such Society exerted a great influence on Ern’s intellectual developing, who published his works by the publishing house *Put’* (*The Way*), which was founded as an editorial organ of the “Soloviev Society”³⁸.

The outbreak of the First World War was indicated by Ern as a sign of the rightness of his cultural-philosophical theses. The opposition “Logos” – “Ratio=Reason” is now extended to a larger contraposition: Germany trusts to dagger as the last remedy, “God himself is for it force, not truth”; on the contrary Russia recognizes the sole cross as supreme power³⁹.

During wartime Ern prepares his university career. His academic writings first of all deal with Italian philosophy (Rosmini, Gioberti), which he had been studying during a long stay in Italy in the years 1911-1913. By reading Rosmini, in particular in that “idea of being” which for Rosmini “is means for knowing all other things”⁴⁰, Ern perhaps finds a confirmation of the same «belief in the transobjective reality of being: being opens directly to knowledge», as Florensky says⁴¹.

³³ Ibidem.

³⁴ Cp. Laura Satta Boschian, *L’Illuminismo e la steppa. Settecento russo (The Illuminism and the Steppe. The XVIII Century in Russia)*, Edizioni Studium Rome 1976 (1994²), p. 94-114.

³⁵ V. ERN, *Gregory Savvich Skovoroda: Zhizn i uchenie* (Gregory Savvich Skovoroda: His Life and Teaching) (Moscow: Put, 1912), pp. 33.

³⁶ Taras Zakydalsky, *The Theory of Man in the Philosophy of Skovoroda*, 1965, cap. VI: “The influence of Skovoroda”.

³⁷ Cit. by L. Gancikov, *Ern V.F.* in: *Enciclopedia filosofica*, Sansoni, Florence 1967, col. 930.

³⁸ Cp. Ju. Scherrer, *Introduction* to critical edition of: V. F. Ern: *Sočinenija (Works)*, Moscow 1991.

³⁹ V. F. Ern: *Sočinenija Works*). Moscow 1991, 298.

⁴⁰ A. Rosmini, *Nuovo saggio sull’origine delle idee (A New Essay concerning the Origin of Ideas)*, National Edition of published and unpublished works of Antonio Rosmini, edited by Enrico Castelli, Rome 1934, vol. III, sect. VI, p. II, c. II: “Dell’idea dell’essere in quanto è mezzo di conoscere tutte le altre cose” (*Of the Idea of Being as means for knowing all other things*).

⁴¹ P.A. FLORENSKIJ, *Autoreferat in Socinenija v certyrech tomach [= SCT] (Works in four volumes)*, edited by A. Trubachev, M.S. Trubacheva, P.V. Florensky, Ed. Mysl’, Moskva, vol. I, 1994, p.40; vol. II, 1996; vol. IV, 1998; vol. III/1, 1999.

As we saw before, then Ern was fascinated by the *Teosophy*, where “Rosmini tries the definitive passage from gnoseological problem to metaphysical problem, by dealing with the topic of unity and multiplicity of being, which is one and nevertheless articulates in three forms: ideal, real and moral”⁴².

Thus Ern comes to the conclusion that the source of common inspiration, from a speculative point of view can be found in Plato, in an original and new interpretation of the father of Western and Eastern philosophy. At the beginning of 1917 Ern published the first part of a waste work entitled “*Plato’s Supreme Achievement*”. But his death by nephritis, on the 29th of April of the same year, untimely interrupted his research.

In the funeral oration, which Florensky delivered on his friend, he remembers with nostalgic accents the juvenile time spent together:

*We wandered in the forest and mostly in the mountains, we read together Plato on glades and rocks.*⁴³

“The mention of this name is indicative of Ern’s philosophical evolution - notices the German scholar Schmid - near Soloviev Plato exerts the most significant influence on Ern’s thought”⁴⁴.

Everybody knows that Florensky himself, in his work “*The Meaning of Idealism*”, suggested an original interpretation of platonism, and even a new reading of the whole history of philosophy in the light of the tension between one and multiplicity, which, according to him, finds an answer in the Trinitarian dogma.

As known, Florensky drew his inspiration from Soloviev’s grandiose speculative creation, beginning from “*The Crisis of Western Philosophy*” (1874), in order to start a constructive, bold and open comparison with Western thought.

Florensky drew some elements also from the acute reflection of his friend Ern, with whom he had an intense intellectual exchange since they attended together the university:

“Discussions among friends took place mostly after the evening tea or late in the night, as Vladimir went down to take hot water and black bread for himself and Pavel. While the chat friends reached without hurry the far room at the fourth floor, they were talking about Vladimir Soloviev, Trubeckoy’s philosophy lesson, about Merezhkowsky and the review *Vesi (The Balance)*.

We stayed in front of the “cell” door for listening Vladimir’s descriptions about St. Augustin, Origen and the “Three dialogs”⁴⁵.

Still after his friend’s death, Florensky cites him in his works. For instance in “The glorification of name as philosophical presupposition”, and writes: “For this reason the name, as ripe act of knowledge, receives a prevalent nuance either from the real, objective moment or from the formal, subjective one [here Florensky opens a parenthesis and says: I apply the last term on the trace of V. F. Ern, intending to underline the activity and participation of subject of knowledge, but also intending to take this concept out of an evaluation about this participation, as something illusory, accidental, damaging the value of knowledge: what kind of nuance has got now the word subjective!]

⁴² Cp. Dante MORANDO, “Rosmini Serbati Antonio” in : *Enciclopedia filosofica*, Sansoni, Florence 1967, coll. 879-882.

⁴³ P. Florensky” “Pamjati Vladimira Franceviča Erna (Memories about V. F. Ern)”. In: *Christianskaja mysl’ (Christian Thought) 11/12 (1917)*, 69-74, 6); cited by: Ulrich Schmid, *Russische Religionsphilosophen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Russian Religious Philosophers of the XX Century). Freiburg, Basel, Vienna: Herder, 2003. P. 231-247.

⁴⁴ Idem.

⁴⁵ “If neighbours entered the room, they hastened to go out, with view of the written request on the wall, do not take the “cell” guest’s time up, in order not to interrupt Pavel’s mathematic exercises”. Extracted from: V. I. Kejdan (editor): *Vzyskujuschie grada. Chronika častnoj žizni russkich religioznych filozofov v pis’mach i dnevnikach (The Searchers of the Town. Chronicle of Private Life of Russian Religious Philosophers through Letters and Diaries)*. Moscow 1997, p. 58 and ff.

Therefore, by Ern, as by Rosmini, the words subject and subjective has not a negative value: on the base of knowledge and morality there is man, his “objective interiority”, according to the lesson of St. Augustin and St. Thomas.

In his work “*The Renewal of Philosophy in Italy*” Rosmini wrote: “theological school started from meditation on God: I simply started from meditation on man and nevertheless reached the same conclusions”⁴⁶.

II *Fundamental Ideas of Rosmini*

I would like to give you only some suggestions about a first comparison between the great philosophers and a few fundamental ideas of Rosmini’s thought.

II.1 *The Idea of Being*

1850 Antonio Rosmini decided to put in order his published and unpublished writings...He projected a collection of thirty volumes and published the first one: *Introduction to Philosophy*, which collected already published writings and new pages strewn by both autobiographic and theoretical nuances, called: *Concerning Author’s Studies*. The third and last part of them is entitled: *Concerning the Idea of Wisdom*, and it is a little perfect digest of his speculative path”⁴⁷.

Rosmini’s thought is characterized by a platonic-Christian branch under different aspects⁴⁸. First of all, by the theory of “*Idea as knowable being*”: this is the “*idea of being*” which forms “the knowledge, as it is the light of reason”⁴⁹.

This is a matter of dynamics of human rationality itself: the intelligence – a term that comes from *intus legere (to read inside)*, as Michele Federico Sciacca underlined – is such a thing because it is capable of an idea. To “look inside” the reality of things which they are. Human intellect is capable of truth, to think the truth, since its intrinsic object makes it like this: that is, just this “idea of being”, as Rosmini calls it⁵⁰, universal and undetermined idea which is *innate*, however we realize it only later, by a reflected act of intellect.

“The idea of being – according to Rosmini- is the sole idea which can be thought without thinking of other things and which is implicitly included in every thought. It founds the thought, and of course it *forms* the intelligent subject; therefore, it is not a product of the subject, but a *datum* of the latter, which justifies the objectivity of knowledge, being an universal and necessary datum, absolute principle of every intelligibility.

This “idea of being” has got a fundamental importance as a base of an objective knowledge: as it is a question of real possibility to attain the universal, transcendent truth, which becomes intimate law, that is moral engagement of subject. Human mind, according to Rosmini, can approach universal truth, because at the beginning there is a “being in universal” which is “form of mind”: the *idea of being*.

Rosmini’s Platonism comes out from the statement that such idea is «innate» and object of an «intuition» or primitive «vision»: however this is Christian Platonism, because this intuition has a limit offered by God, by decree *ab aeterno (from the eternal)*, to intelligent creatures”⁵¹. But on the

⁴⁶ A. Rosmini,

⁴⁷ A. Rosmini, *L’idea della Sapienza (The idea of Wisdom)*, Edizioni Martello Libreria, Milan 1997, p.1.

⁴⁸ Cp. Dante MORANDO cited.

⁴⁹ Cp. A. Rosmini, *L’idea della Sapienza The Idea of Wisdom*, Edizioni Martello Libreria, Milan 1997, p. 83.

⁵⁰ A. Rosmini, *Nuovo saggio sull’origine delle idee (A New Essay concerning the Origin of Ideas)*, National Edition of published and unpublished works of Antonio Rosmini, edited by Enrico Castelli, Rome 1934, vol. III, sect. VI, p. II, c. II: “*Dell’idea dell’essere in quanto è mezzo di conoscere tutte le altre cose*” (*Of the Idea of Being as means for knowing all other things*).

⁵¹ Ibid.

other side Rosmini gets over the platonic idealism: for him man is not pure intelligence, as the sole idea of being, even if it is innate, is not sufficient.

Innate means immediate, explains Rosmini, we must become *conscious* of every knowledge through *reflection* and *reasoning*. As a matter of fact, knowledge is a *reflected* movement of intellectual activity, which presupposes also another thing: to *recognize* what I know as it is.

Therefore Rosmini can affirm that “if we call order of being the distribution of being itself to different *entes* which can fall in knowledge; then, in this case we will say that an act of will is good if it retains the order of being”⁵².

This is, according to Rosmini, the first moral obligation, of which many try to back out, not only among scientists: that means “the obligation to tell ourselves what we know“, to recognize the truth of things as it appears to the examination by the intelligence, the truth of Other from oneself: here is the moral *primum* (*first thing*). Recognizing the truth is the supremely free act, necessary of a moral not physical necessity, from which morality itself originates.

At this point it seems to be heard an echo of that “*integral knowledge*”, as Soloviev called it. In fact, experience, according to the Russian thinker, has to be preserved in its whole complexity, according to an objectivity which is not the cold indifference, vainly pretended by modern sciences, but as he says: “the authentic and reasonable Objectivism”, which “pretends that, in addition to the facts of reality, must be taken into consideration also its *value*”⁵³.

Thus, this is not a matter of a division, but a distinction between logical and ontological level of speech. Such distinction – which, as we saw, Ern stresses by reading *Teosophy* – is on the base of the persuasive criticism which Rosmini delivers on the ontological and gnoseological formulation of Kant, Schelling and Hegel, by denouncing abuse of abstraction and foreseeing long before materialistic, nihilist and atheist results⁵⁴.

Also Ern and Florensky, as everybody knows, attempt a close theoretical comparison with Kantian gnoseology⁵⁵ and the abstractions of arid Hegelian idealism, which Rosmini calls “false idealism”.

II. 2 *The Cognitive Act: Intellectual Perception and Feeling*

Vincenzo Gioberti criticized the Rosminian theory about intuition of ideal being: according to him, from it we could never deduce the reality. But he did not take into consideration the doctrine of «*intellective perception*» from Rosmini himself, who “appealing once again to the experience, finds that man is a sentient and intelligent being at the same time. Reality is known concretely only if it breaks into intelligence through sensation. Therefore cognitive act is not pure sensation or simple idea, but a synthetic act, characterizing element of man’s constitution, which Rosmini just calls: «*intellective perception*»”.

Florensky is in the same way determined in denying «any form of merely abstract logical thinking»; he catches the value of thought «in its concrete manifestation»⁵⁶, as revelation of person and value of his interiority. The reference to St. Augustin is evident. But also for him, the more authentic, scientific cognitive act consists in the «*intimate perception*», as he calls it, of natural reality, as synthesis or «*a whole*» of unity and multiplicity in their specific correlation.

⁵² Rosmini, *Compendio di Etica (Compendium of Ethics)*, cit., n. 32, p. 40

⁵³ V. Soloviev, *Ob’ektivizm (Objectivism)*, in *Sobranie Sočinenij (Works)*. Edit. S.M. Soloviev - E.L. Radlov, II ed., Sankt Peterburg 1911-1914 (photostastical copy by “Zizn’ s Bogom” of the Foyer Oriental chrétien of Brussel, 1966 -19699, XII, p. 609-610 (translated into It. *Principi [Principles]*, p.235).

⁵⁴ As it was also remembered recently in an international Conference concerning “Rosmini and the German Philosophy”, organized by Prof. Marcus Krienke (Como, Italy, 27th April-1st Mai 2005).

⁵⁵ The Russian thinker kept up a close theoretical confrontation with Kantian gnoseology, about which many writings of his entirely witness, particularly *Cosmologic Antinomies of I. Kant (Kosmologičeskije antinomii I. Kanta)*, 1909) and first of all *Limits of Gnoseology. Fundamental Antinomy of the Theory of Knowledge (Predely gnoseologii. Osnovanja antinomija teorij znanija)*, 1913, in SCT, vol. II), however he thinks that speculative system can be considered as a model of shattering of real unity, of a “metaphysical dualism”, which leads to an irretrievable split between transcendent and immanent, both intelligible and empirical. Cp. Natalino VALENTINI (edited by), *Cristianesimo e bellezza. Tra Oriente e occidente (Christianity and Beauty. Between East and West)*, Edizioni Paoline, Milan, 2002.

⁵⁶ P. Florensky, *Avtoreferat*, SCT, I, p.41

Rosmini, Soloviev, Florensky and Ern have in common a clear conscience of the indissoluble link between idealism and realism, in every branch of knowledge, the “cognitive uni-totally” or “integral knowledge”, open to the mystery of infinite, a knowledge which the whole man shares.

«All scientific ideas which I care, originate from my *feeling the mystery...*», writes Florensky to his wife from lagers⁵⁷.

Also by Rosmini we can find a similar expression, when he speaks about a mysterious «*fundamental feeling*», which for him permits to man to self-identify compared with the other one from himself, and then to recognize any sensation or mental act as belonging to himself. On the other side, “*man cannot apply a vocal sign, a name, to anything else, but what he knows. Now man could not know what falls into his feeling, if he did not refer sensible to ideas, therefore making it intelligible. On the contrary the idea doesn't need the presence of sensible reality to be intended...*”⁵⁸. Therefore, “*these postulates given to philosophy by human nature as condition for its birth are two: the natural and immediate information about being (the act which delivers information is called intuition) and feeling*”

II.3 *Synthesism and the Three Forms of Being*

The «invisible substantial correlation», which, according to Florensky, includes different fields, and joins man to world, by Rosmini has a logical explanation and a name too: it's called «*synthesism of being*». “The principle on which the whole *Teosophy* as total speech about being is supported, is that of «*being as pure and absolute idea*»”⁵⁹. Being as dynamic unity: quite in this consists his essential synthesism. “Hegel recognized, according to Rosmini, the circularity of being and thought, but he at the end identified them. The circle on the contrary consists in the synthesism of real being and ideal being...Rosmini tries to explain that any form of being could exist by itself, away from the other ones, without participating in the whole organism of being...and everyone is *first* under a particular aspect. This is the law of synthesism and of *circuminsession* of forms”⁶⁰.

Three forms form human being himself: real form, ideal form and moral form, which are distinct but unified in a reciprocity, which reflects God One and Trine, who created him in his own image and likeness. The existence of God corresponds, according to Rosmini, to a need not only of soul but of human intelligence: “Ideal being which is condition of intelligibility of the whole, is infinite, while human mind is finite: the ideal therefore requires an Absolute Real, God, as its own metaphysical correspondent”⁶¹.

II.4 *Word Light of Soul*

“Rosmini calls «*theosophical abstraction*» the act with which God, who is absolute, perfect and synthetical reality-ideality-morality, distinguishes in himself ideality from reality and illuminates every man who comes into this world, by making him to be born with intelligibility, that is, with the primary knowledge of the sole ideal being, which like that, in God, is God, but in human knowledge it is nothing else but natural man's capacity of knowing indeterminate being. The creation is deduced from the observation that the sole God, Real being of excellence, *is* the being who he *is* (*Ego sum Qui sum - I am who I am*)”⁶².

⁵⁷ P. Florensky, *Non dimenticatemi (Do not forget me)*, Mondadori, Milan 2000, p. 385.

⁵⁸ Rosmini, *Idea della Sapienza (Idea of Wisdom)*, p. 15.

⁵⁹ Maria A. Raschini, *Studi sulla «Teosofia» (Studies about «Teosofia»)*, Marsilio, Venice 2000, p. 49.

⁶⁰ Cp. Morando cit., coll. 883, 885.

⁶¹ Ibidem.

⁶² Cp. Morando, “Rosmini” in *Enciclopedia Filosofica* cit., coll. 883, 885

From a more theological point of view, it is common knowledge that the idea of being by Rosmini comes from the presence of Word (Dei Verbum) as Light of Soul, by the man made in God's own image and likeness and therefore part of the Infinity.

However, whereas man understands Truth as an idea, by God Truth identifies with its reality.

“And as the light of invisible world comes from the sun, so that light which characterizes intelligence and makes things intelligible, is immediate son of *essential good*, which Plato often calls idea of good, since in the idea there is the essence”. Here in a note Rosmini adds: “The misunderstanding which remains at the bottom of Plato's philosophy (...) is that confusion between *idea* and *reality*”⁶³.

“The first light which makes soul intelligent is the indeterminate and *ideal being*: the other first light is once again *being*, but not merely ideal, but also subsistent and living. Subsistent being is God: He himself said: «I am the BEING». By using the personal pronoun “I”, he reveals himself as a *person*, the being as object is the Word, and this object being is person, about which it was written: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God Thus, the *idea* is the being known by man's intuition; but it is not the Word; as not the first one, but the latter is subsistence;... Man is a *real* subject: thus he cannot limit himself to the idea, he aims to join the real⁶⁴. In order not to fall in pantheism, and first of all intending to take into consideration the experience, finite things *are* not the being which they are, but they *have* it, that is, they don't give it to themselves, but they receive it”⁶⁵.

But the synthesis between theology, philosophy and science deserves anyway a separate context, even by the comparison between Russian philosophers and Rosmini, for whom “Ontology, (rational) Theology and Cosmology are three parts of a unique science, each of them lacks the whole and its own existence: by coming continuously one into the other, they stir, I could nearly say, their water in the sea of being”.⁶⁶ According to Rosmini we cannot speak about Being in an universal meaning without going back to the cause for that it exists or without speaking about Absolute Being: therefore “middle point and substance of the whole treatment is still the Doctrine of God, without that neither we can thoroughly know the doctrine of being nor we can explain the world”⁶⁷.

II. 5 *Intellectual Charity*

As we already said, they have in common a criticism of rationalism and the aim to affirm a new model of reason, a “new Trinitarian thinking” which aims at the whole Truth and is connected with the “first” truth (*istina*), as Florensky calls it.

A model of “integral” philosophy, faithful to Truth, which is Christ, but open to contemporary cultural models, even if these could appear far and hostile. Therefore, a way of thinking open to Charity, and more than that, a way of thinking that is «*intellectual charity*», using a beautiful expression of Rosmini.

⁶³ A. Rosmini, *Idea della Sapienza (Idea of Wisdom)*, p. 55, note 34.

⁶⁴ A. Rosmini, *Idea della Sapienza (Idea of Wisdom)*, p. 83-84: ...He himself said: «I am the BEING». By using personal pronoun “I”, he revealed himself as a person, the being as object is the Word, and this object being is person, about which it was also written: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This is that, who elsewhere called himself beginning: beginning of every intelligence, and of every knowledge. Thus, the beginning of knowledge is the first object, and the first and essential object, which contains all other objects, is the being: the other objects of thought are objects for the being, the being is object for himself. Thus, the idea is the being known by man's intuition; but it is not the Word; as not the first one, but the latter is subsistence; the first one is the being, which conceals his personality, and betrays only its indeterminate and impersonal objectivity: neither the personality of being nor the subsistence come into our mind, which knows the idea by intuition, and thus it doesn't see God; however, who sees the Word, even if like through a mirror and as an enigma, he sees God. Therefore, if natural science ends, in a certain way, in that, which Boetius calls: sola rerum PRIMAeva RATIO: the supernatural science comes to that, which is at the same time nullius indigens VIVAX MENS. Man is a real subject: thus he cannot limit himself to the idea, he aims to join the real.”

⁶⁵ Cp. Morando, “Rosmini” in *Enciclopedia Filosofica* cit., coll. 883, 885.

⁶⁶ Rosmini, *Teosofia*, vol I, *Preface*, National Ed. of published and unpublished works edited by C. Gray, Rome 1938-1939, p.18.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Charity is thought by him on the analogy with being and its three forms: real being, ideal being, moral being.

Again, charity that is one in essence is threefold in exercise, and according as good things regard the bodily and sentient life or the intellectual or the moral, the charity, which bestows them, is divided in the institute into temporal, intellectual, and spiritual. The temporal is the lowest and gives the lowest kind of good. Inconceivably far above it stands that which seeks to increase the life of the understanding by the knowledge of truth (intellectual charity); and above both there is the spiritual charity, which tends to make men good and happy by loving the known truth.

Hence we see that the topmost point of the institute's activity is the cure of souls. Its whole theory leads to the religious and the pastoral life wedded together, as the crowning achievement of charity.⁶⁸

As Being is thought and felt like unique and trine, charity too is unique in its essence and trine in its forms. We could say that the first great work of intellectual charity which Rosmini and these philosophers achieve, is the following: to restore the concrete connection existing between reality, truth and charity.

“Philosophy deals with the first causes”, it originates at the moment when “man asks himself the question: Which are the first causes of the whole knowledge?»⁶⁹, then, according to Rosmini, besides knowledge a vision of world and men is conveyed. Hence the necessity of intellectual charity, that means forming man according to that eternal Being which he aims to: there will be never education of mind without education of hearth”⁷⁰.

II.5 *Logos and Church*

Ern, in his main work, *The Fight for Logos*, “ascribes to Russia a vivid religious comprehension of Logos”⁷¹.

A new system, which conciliates nature and over-nature, foreboded by our Russian thinkers as well as by Rosmini e St. Thomas, represents rather an incentive than an obstacle to intellectual laicality. As “human to much human” goes against man, human nature appears as incomplete and “perverted” (says Rosmini) without that which surpasses it.

Their conviction is that if word, both philosophical and literary, is really human, it is capable to embody in men’s life.

If Word, the Truth in Person, embodied in men’s history, then we need to aim “to the research of the deep meaning of history intended as reality to be lived and built, that is, of history as value”⁷².

This “bold storiosophic opening”, by Rosmini too, is fundamental, it’s present in the idea of “Providence”, celebrated in *“The Betrothed”* by Alessandro Manzoni: in the Providence human intelligence sees the deep laws of God’s acting, writes Rosmini in his *Teodicea*.

But Logos, embodied Word, acts in men’s history through His Body, through the Church. Therefore loving Truth and loving men means “*To tend the whole of one’s own thoughts and acts to the increase and glory of the Church of Jesus Christ*”, as tell us the second of the six “*Principles of Perfection*”⁷³ by Rosmini. He, as well as Florensky, witnessed this faith to the Church of Jesus Christ with his words and life.

⁶⁸ “Offices of charity are of a threefold kind when considered relatively to the good of our neighbour which is their direct purpose. The first kind are those offices which purpose to help our neighbour directly in matters pertaining to this temporal life. This can be called temporal charity. The second kind are those offices which purpose to help our neighbour directly to cultivate his mind and develop his intellectual faculties. This can be called intellectual charity. The third kind are those offices of charity which purpose to help our neighbour in matters pertaining to the salvation of souls. This can be called moral and spiritual (E. 1) charity (E. 2) (CSC, 593-595 - EC, 50, 466-469)”.

⁶⁹ Rosmini, *Idea di Sapienza (Idea of Wisdom)*, cit. p. 38.

⁷⁰ Cp. Markus Krienke, *Wahrheit und Liebe bei Antonio Rosmini*, Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 2004

⁷¹ Ulrich Schmid, *Russische Religionsphilosophen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Russian Religious Philosophers of the XX Century). Freiburg, Basel, Vienna: Herder, 2003, p.234.

⁷² This bold broad-mindedness towards Reason as Logos, which becomes incarnate in the History, “faces problems of double nature. We can say that we see such a spirit “first of all engaged in an explanation of itself as an historic reality, of its own situation in the world and of its rather paradoxal destiny”: Leonid GANCIKOV, *Orientamenti dello spirito russo (Trends of Russian Thought)*, ERI ed. 1958, p. 220.

⁷³ A Rosmini, *Maxims of Perfection for Christians*.

According to Rosmini “embodied Word is the centre of over-natural theology, which permits the formulation of an over-natural anthropology, with a participation of Christians in the life of the Holy Trinity in a society of shared nature...

Through the Word man can see, as in an enigma, many truths of the intimate life of the three divine Persons, towards which human intelligence analogically rises from the three forms of being...

The Word founds a religious institution, the Church, which finds its ideal anticipation in the «natural theocratic society» and its actual embodiment in the «over-natural theocratic society, in which believers, through Christ, participate in the divine Trinitarian ecclesial society of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit...

Sacraments are divine-human means of salvation and sanctification of human person. Christ’s humanity is the first efficacious sacrament of the grace...

The Church in its visible aspect is subject to limits and troubles proper to men who form it, therefore it is always necessary an internal renewal of it.

In particular, suggested Rosmini, the Church of modern time would carry out a real renewal by removing «five plagues»: 1. social remoteness of the clergy from the people; 2. low standard of education of priests; 3. disunity and acrimony among bishops; 4. dependence of lay appointments upon secular authorities; 5. church ownership of property and enslavement to wealth”⁷⁴.

«Of the Five Plagues of the Church»⁷⁵, is the sole Rosmini’s work translated in Russian, at this moment (on the contrary, there are several translated in English).

II. 6 *A new Platonism?*

This is the same research of a cognitive unity which Pavel Florensky consciously makes, who reaches a quite original theoretical conscience, just through the same way: an attentive reinterpretation of platonic idealism, through the meditation about the indissoluble link existing between idealism and realism.

It seems to me, that from these mentions we could outline a triple inspiration for the Russian philosophical thought: beside that, more original and autochthonous, represented as “fantastic universal” of Skovoroda, there is the patristic line and the platonic inheritance: the last two are the common base which, I think, from an historical and storiographical point of view, can explain that “unexpected intimate familiarity” with Rosmini’s thought, stressed by Ern.

Among other things, also Michele Federico Sciacca, the most important expert of Rosmini, dedicated to Plato several period of his parabola of thought, “by showing the aporias of platonic cosmology, coming from the inadequacy of that theology”⁷⁶.

Our work hypothesis is quite that:

Concrete prospects for activating common synergisms between science, politics and philosophy appear on the basis of the finding of a common notion about an “integral knowledge”. A notion which goes back to the authentic platonic idealism, as read by the Church Fathers up to St. Thomas, and then reviewed by both Italian and Russian philosophers in order to fight the nihilist results of modern and contemporary rationalism. That means to begin from the acknowledgment of the existence of the truth and of the possibility of knowing it, even in an objective way, or to be more exact, in an omnicomprehensive way. Integral knowledge as “discovery” of truth, which is inherent in the reality from those “sensible experiences” – which can attest as valid for everyone, and therefore as “objective”, some feature of reality – and at the same time of that "entire and

⁷⁴ Morando, cit.

⁷⁵ The work *Of the Five Plagues of the Church* by Rosmini (Morcelliana, Brescia, 1979⁶, p.9 – 436) for political reasons 1849 was put into the Index together with another work, the «*Constitution according to Social Justice*». The evaluation of these works, ordered by Pope Pius IX, ended in 1854 with the formula *Dimittantur*, let them be pardoned and returned to believers.

⁷⁶ Michele F. Sciacca, *Platone*, Milan, Marzorati 1967², 2 vol.

comprehensive thinking" – a Rosmini's expression in opposition to "abstract thinking"⁷⁷ – which includes other "objective" notions, that is, related to other dimensions of reality, that we can know through an experience of the intelligent reason, but not in an "experimental" way.

Therefore it is possible an objective "integral knowledge" from the human *intelligere*, which doesn't refuse an approach to the Other distinct from oneself: this is Sophia or integral Wisdom, a "complete thinking" as Rosmini⁷⁸ says or "unitotal" (*всеединый*) after an expression that Soloviev liked very much, as you know.

Also in this fundamental conception of Sophia as integral Wisdom, we can see an evident platonic inheritance. Diotima's myth, appearing in the Symposium, outlines knowledge at the height of its expression; this is knowledge, an attraction that enjoys the object to which it is addressed, therefore this is affective impulse, love.

In the previous dialogs this thesis is expressed in a negative way: reason is not enough for knowledge and virtue. However, by Plato Eros represents the condition of human knowledge, in any case this is philosophy – loving knowledge, love which "sees"... but this is not *sophia*, divine knowledge. Perhaps Dante's intellect of love is the idea which getting over Plato is however more similar also to the idea of Sophia as expressed for instance by Florensky. Platonic inspiration however comes out from that fundamental intuition caught by all these philosophers: there is a unique act of spirit, which is at the same time *manifold*: this is feeling, knowing, loving (desiring).

Conclusions

Rosmini in 1829 received a precise order from the Pope Pius VIII: «God's will is that you deal with writing books: this is your vocation. Present Church needs very much writers: I would say, solid writers, whom we have a great lack of at the present time. In order to influence men usefully, today we have nothing else but to win their esteem with reasoning, and through the latter to bring them to religion»⁷⁹.

As a conclusion, I couldn't help mentioning with pleasure, that this extraordinary similarity between features of Rosmini's thought and that of several Russian philosophers, which we noticed regarding both expressive forms and substance of ideas, in a certain sense was already officially recognized.

Rosmini, Soloviev and Florensky were mentioned together in the Encyclical letter *FIDES ET RATIO* of Pope John Paul II: "74. *The fruitfulness of this relationship is confirmed by the experience of great Christian theologians who also distinguished themselves as great philosophers, bequeathing to us writings of such high speculative value as to warrant comparison with the masters of ancient philosophy. This is true of both the Fathers of the Church, among whom at least Saint Gregory of Nazianzus and Saint Augustine should be mentioned, and the Medieval Doctors with the great triad of Saint Anselm, Saint Bonaventure and Saint Thomas Aquinas. We see the same fruitful relationship between philosophy and the word of God in the courageous research pursued by more recent thinkers, among whom I gladly mention, in a Western context, figures such as John Henry Newman, Antonio Rosmini, Jacques Maritain, Étienne Gilson and Edith Stein and, in an Eastern context, eminent scholars such as Vladimir Soloviev, Pavel A. Florensky, Petr Chaadaev and Vladimir N. Lossky. Obviously other names could be cited; and in referring to these I intend not to endorse every aspect of their thought, but simply to offer significant examples of a process of philosophical enquiry which was enriched by engaging the data of faith. One thing is certain: attention to the spiritual journey of these masters can only give greater momentum to both*

⁷⁷ A. Rosmini, *Psychology*, Critical edition ed. by Vincenzo Sala, Città Nuova 1988-1989, §§ 1407 and ff.

⁷⁸ A. Rosmini, *Filosofia del Diritto*, edited by R. Orecchia, Vol. I, Padua 1967, pp. 30-33.

⁷⁹ *Introduzione alla filosofia (Introduction to Philosophy)*, edited by Pier Paolo Ottonello, Città Nuova, Rome 1979, n.11, p.30.

the search for truth and the effort to apply the results of that search to the service of humanity. It is to be hoped that now and in the future there will be those who continue to cultivate this great philosophical and theological tradition for the good of both the Church and humanity”.

But at this point I would like to mention also a document of 1980:

“It is through culture that man as a human being becomes more human, “exists” more fully and has more “being”...It is impossible to conceive of a culture without human subjectivity or human causality; but in the field of culture man is always the prime factor: he is the primordial and fundamental element of culture. And man is always such in his wholeness: in the entirety of his spiritual and material subjectivity. While there is a real distinction between spiritual and material culture in terms of the nature and content of the products in which culture is expressed, it must also be noted that, on the one hand, works of material culture always reveal a “spiritualization” of matter, a subjection of the material element to the spiritual powers of man, in other words to his intelligence and his will; and, on the other, works of spiritual culture specifically show a “materialization” of the spirit, an incarnation of what is spiritual. This dual characteristic appears to be both primordial and permanent in works of culture. Here then, by way of theoretical conclusion, we have a sufficient basis for understanding culture through man in his wholeness, through the entire reality of his subjectivity” (John Paul II at UNESCO, 1980).

It’s quite impossible not to see in these words exactly the same mental base of the aforementioned authors.

By tracing out his autobiography Florensky says about himself: «By denying any form of merely abstract logical way of thinking, Florensky catches the value of thought in its concrete manifestation, as revelation of person» (*Avtoreferat*, SCT, I, p. 41).

If real knowledge is essential knowledge of truth, which occurs through ontological participation of truth itself, by a live personal subject, as they affirm and try to demonstrate...here then comes again a new way of creating culture, but also a new model of “integral man”, a new model of saintliness, which is characterized by “the intellectual light full of love”, that is proper, since its origins, both of Eastern Church and Western Church.

Here we must see a providential occasion of mutual enrichment by a deep comparison on this concrete level: between theological, philosophical and metaphysical speculation of Rosmini (in particular his doctrine of knowledge) and that of Soloviev, Florensky and Ern. A mutual enrichment which I could call as almost necessary, because all these thinkers attempted to climb unapproachable summits and as a result of this they share a common destiny: to be misunderstood, persecuted, forgotten.

So we have just returned to the starting point of our work, that is the reading and exploitation, from the point of view of the Rosminian philosophy, of that great deal of works, in which Ern himself affirms: “At the end, I can’t forget to say that during my work, often heavy and unpleasant, the consciousness that the study about Rosmini and Gioberti was organically necessary for Russian philosophical thought, gave me an extraordinary help. It is absolutely out of any doubt that between Italian ontologism and the original currents of Russian philosophical thought there are features of great intimate similarity. Here it’s important particularly the meeting through the identical affirmations of two philosophers, so different one from the other and unknown one to the other, as Khomyakov* and Gioberti. Features of an unexpected intimate familiarity once again confirm the idea that in spite of national peculiarities, the paths of the spirit are the same for the whole humanity, and the different nationalities, in order to meet each other in a superior union, follow a unique way: that of deepening in a metaphysical way one’s own conscience and going back to the living ontological roots of its own existence” (The Place of Rosmini in the History of Philosophy, 1915)⁸⁰. To conclude, for my presence here I would like to thank you and, first of all, the Divine Providence.

⁸⁰ Не могу не сказать в заключение, что при исполнении работы, под час тяжелой и неблагодарной, меня чрезвычайно поддерживала мысль, что изучение Розмини и Джоберти является делом органической необходимости для русской философской мысли. Совершенно

Moscow, 29th September 2005

Rosalia Azzaro Pulvirenti

несомненно, что между итальянским онтологизмом и между оригинальными течениями русской философской мысли есть черты большого внутреннего сродства. Особенно замечательна встреча на одних и тех же утверждениях таких различных и совершенно друг друга не знавших мыслителей, как Хомяков и Джоберти. Черты неожиданного внутреннего родства лишний раз подтверждают мысль о том, что пути духа, несмотря на национальные особенности, у всего человечества одни, и что для того, чтобы различным народностям встретиться в высшем единстве, есть один путь: метафизически углублять свое сознание и восходить к живым онтологическим корням своего бытия" (Место Розмини в истории философии, 1915).