

Excerpt from The Russian Cosmists: The Esoteric Futurism of Nikolai Fedorov and His Followers, pp. 18-20 ¹

By George M. Young, Oxford University Press, 2012

On the positive side of his thought, more consonant with later Cosmism, [Aleksandr Vasilyevich] Sukhovo-Kobylin posits three stages in the development of humanity: telluric, or earthbound man, confined to the planet we inhabit, solar man inhabiting our solar system; and sidereal man, inhabiting all worlds throughout the entire universe. Only the third, sidereal stage of humanity brings the absolute freedom that is the goal and perfection of all human movement and development. Human evolution operates between two extremes: from the lowest, herd-like, bestial state to the human angels fit to inhabit the infinite City of God: “From the horde or ‘mob of savages,’ from the human herd begins that sociological series of steps, i.e., the advance of human society, that advance which is the process of the spiritualization of mankind, and only in infinity does that spiritualization reach its conclusion in the supreme reality of divine reason, i.e. in the Kingdom of God, the *Civitas Dei*.”

Important steps in the process of turning ourselves from human animals into human angels include becoming vegetarians, developing lighter and smaller rather than more massive bodies, and gradually acquiring the ability to fly. And flight for Sukhovo-Kobylin does not mean merely the invention of flying machines but the growth of wings and attainment of birdlike, insectlike skill of aerial self-propulsion. He writes, “The entire theory of humanity and its infinite development, i.e., the philosophy of the history of mankind, is the process of freedom from spatial constraint, in other words, its passing to spirit; the result of spiritualization (or subjectivization) is perfection, pointedness [tocheschnost]. The history of spiritualization is the history of self-propulsion, the autokinesis of mankind.” The steam locomotive and the bicycle were, in his time, the most advanced mechanical expressions of the human wish to fly. The bicycle, especially, represented “horizontal flight.”

Given the many millions of stars that recently had become visible through telescopes at this time, and given the astronomical evidence that the laws and natural processes apparent on earth were also apparent elsewhere in the universe, Sukhovo-Kobylin, writing at a time when the universe still seemed a single, unified field, reasons that our planet cannot be the only one that is habitable or inhabited: “In one word, if a sphere or planet, whose chemical composition of matter is identical with the composition of other planets, finds itself under the same forces, then their [the planets’] processes will also be identical, and their origins and development will be the same. In a word, reason is one and matter is one, and therefore their products will be identical.” But in order to inhabit the entire universe, we must evolve beyond our present, earthbound state. Sukhovo-Kobylin’s unique contribution to pre-Cosmist thought is his idea that the further we evolve, the smaller our bodies should become, and that, as we approach divinity we will also approach a vanishing point of spaceless invisibility. God is invisible, and we shall also become invisible, essentially bodiless, as we approach the goal of perfect, spiritualized, universal humanity.

These pre-Cosmist thinkers then, project several of the lines that Federov, Solovyov, Bulgakov, Vernadsky, Tsiolkovsky and others will extend further. Radishchev’s keen social concern and belief that evolution cannot have ended with man in his present state finds ultimate development in Cosmist projects to reconstitute and thus save all humanity. Odoevsky’s futuristic vision of an advanced technological world culture led by Russia finds its extensions in the scientific Cosmist speculations about control over nature and the reshaping of the universe. Sukhovo-Kobylin’s thoughts about the stages of human evolution and the changes needed in the human body and spirit point toward the Cosmist concepts of the noosphere and emergence of godman.

¹ Citation: This text from the book was found on Google Books, September 27, 2018 from the second page of results for a Google search for “sidereal stage.” It is also available in electronic form through various vendors. Russian Cosmist are considered [esoteric] predecessors to the Transhumanism philosophies of the late 20th Century.