

t&tclark

**POLITICAL
THEOLOGIES
IN ORTHODOX
CHRISTIANITY**

Common Challenges
– Divergent Positions

T&T CLARK THEOLOGY

EDITED BY
**KRISTINA STOECKL
INGEBORG GABRIEL
ARISTOTLE PAPANIKOLAOU**

B L O O M S B U R Y

<https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/political-theologies-in-orthodox-christianity-9780567674135/>

‘Revolt against the Modern World’: Theology and the Political in the Thought of Justin Popović

“This anxiety-ridden world is a question which cannot give an answer to itself by itself alone”.

(Justin Popović, *Philosophical Crevasses*, Munich 1957)

Abstract: This paper offers a critical overview of the relation between theology and the political in the opus of Justin Popović, a major Christian churchman, intellectual and saint of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The author endeavours to demonstrate that, in order to procure a sound and balanced evaluation, it is necessary to view his critique of the political from the perspective of fundamental presuppositions of his theology proper. For Justin’s theology does not equate the political with politics in the narrow sense. His approach to the political is neither a religionized (geo)politics nor a theology of politics. Rather, it is a pre-eminently Christological hermeneutic of the life-world of the political, set in a polemical style. In this sense, alongside other interests and concerns, his theology addresses the problems of Europe and Russia, ecumenism and Serbian socio-cultural history. It does so in terms of the predetermining value and criterion of Christ the God-man, set in thoughts which are effects of Popović’s lifelong biblical, spiritual and ascetical experience.

Key words: God-man, all-unity, theohumanism, humanism, ecumenism,
Kulturkritik, Europe, Russia, Serbia.

1. Introduction: maverick saint—challenging theologian. The recently proclaimed saint of the Serbian Orthodox Church, St Justin of Ćelije (Blagoje Popović, 1894–1979) is probably one of the most important theologians of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the 20th Century¹. The significance of his engagement on behalf of the Church stems from his theoretical work as professor and intellectual, and from his work as preacher, liturgist, spiritual father and confessor of faith against the communist government. This in itself recommends a closer analysis of the ways in which his theological thought understands and evaluates the “political”. In the Serbian Christian context in particular, but also in Russia and Greece, his thought remains considerably influential and held in high esteem. In the West his writings are less well known. His thought has occasionally been met with reserve, and in particular his views on the political have instigated diametrically opposed

¹ Note: translations of Popović’s thoughts, except those expounded in *Notes on Ecumenism*, are given by the author = B.L.

conclusions, ranging from outright rejection to total embracement. What I shall try to do in this chapter is to offer an *understanding* of the underlying conditions, presuppositions and guiding motives that are at work in Popović's thematization of the political. I will give a panoramic exposition of his views on the political and will show that these might be misunderstood or misused if they are not seen for what they are, namely: applicative reflections emanating from his theology proper. Shedding light on these elements, critically, may help us to avoid the Scylla of automated apologetic defence on his behalf (panegyric approach) and the Charybdis of a criticizing mannerism devoid of comprehensive insight into the spiritual messages of his thought (disqualifying approach).

2. Christological grounding of existence. Popović's understanding of the political is rooted in his Christology. Every element in his opus is determined, be it positively or negatively, by the grounding character of the idea of Christ the God-man and god-humanhood (theanthropism, bogočoveštvo).

Popović does not embrace Christ on the ground of faith alone. He argues the case of Christ, both directly and indirectly. As regards the major indirect argument, he underpins his endorsement of Christology with a phenomenologically reasoned description of the situation and state of the world. This description leads him to conclude that *death* is a "reality [...] more real than all realities in the world"². Death engulfs all of the natural order and permeates social history, through all ages in all people. However, where philosophy and modern science accept death as a "natural" occurrence, Popović calls the revolt against death a collective *duty* of mankind. But who shall lead this insurrection? — "The greater the plight, the greater the god that is sought"³.

It is only in the revealed reality of the person of Christ⁴, the God-man, that one finds the answer to death. For the Lord, as divine Word, reveals that death is caused by *sin*. Sin is not merely a moral transgression against God; it is the metaphysical root

² Justin Popović, "Progress in the Mill of Death", in idem, *Philosophical Crevasses*, (Belgrade: Monastery Ćelije, 1999), 292.

³ Justin Popović, "European Man at Embered Crossroads", in idem, *Philosophical Crevasses*, 286.

⁴ Justin Popović, "Jesus Christ—true God-man", in idem, *Dogmatics of the Orthodox Church II*, (Belgrade: Monastery Ćelije, 2004), 97-116.

of evil. Christ is the pre-eternal consubstantial Son of the ever living God, untainted by sin. Hence, the only way in which mankind may re-appropriate life without death is by living in the incarnated Christ. This can be achieved through repentance (*metanoia*, pokajanje) and the refusal to ground our being, and understanding of being as such, exclusively on ourselves or outside God the Creator. Popović identifies the ill-fated self-sufficiency of humanity with “humanism”. “The ‘image of God’ is actually the only true image of man. The ‘new Man’ is the God-man: the Lord from heaven (1Cor. 15)”⁵. That is why he promotes a new kind of humanity through the “re-birth, transformation and resurrection”⁶ of mankind in Christ the Son of God. This “theohumanity” can be achieved through “the Church, the sacraments, and all that she contains”⁷. In fact, “... the Church is nothing else but the God-man himself extended into the ages of ages”⁸.

Popović’s vision of resuscitated and renewed humanity (1Cor. 15:54) is not only anthropic; it is also cosmic and historiosophic. The destiny not only of mankind, but also that of created nature in its entirety, depends on whether Christ is recognized and accepted through the Church as the Logos of God: “... the meaning and goal of the existence of the Church: to bring everything into the measure of growth of the fullness of Christ—to god-humanize everything (obogoočovečiti)...”⁹.

3. Humanism and theohumanism. Popović’s interest in the political is pre-determined by this all-encompassing Christological vision. The socio-political drama is a reflection of the *theodrama*, the dialectical relation of what he calls “humanistic” and “theohumanistic” forces¹⁰. Popović thematizes the political on three main planes: **(A)** critique of Europe—the geopolitical-cultural plane **(B)** critique of ecumenism—the ecclesial-ecumenical plane and **(C)** critique of the national—the local-Serbian plane.

⁵ Justin Popović, *Ascetical and Theological Chapters*, in idem, *On the Way of the God-man*, (Belgrade: Monastery Čelije, 1980), 177-178.

⁶ Justin Popović, “Progress in the Mill of Death”, 310.

⁷ Justin Popović, *Ascetical and Theological Chapters*, 143.

⁸ Justin Popović, “Ultimate Value and Infallible Criterion”, in idem, *Philosophical Crevasses*, 324.

⁹ Justin Popović, *op. cit.*, 325.

¹⁰ Justin Popović, “Man or God-man”, in idem, *The Orthodox Church and Ecumenism*, (Belgrade: Monastery Čelije, 2001), 144.

3.1. The political (A): Europe, Russia, Orthodoxy. Popović holds that Europe is the mother of “our” civilization and culture. He conceives of Europe in the wider sense, as a synthesis of Mediterranean-Hellenic *and* Euro-Russian geopolitical, socio-cultural and spiritual areas. There is a narrower sense as well, to which he only refers polemically, and this sense relates to the geopolitical, socio-cultural and religious reality of Western Europe, i.e. to “westernism” in general. Although the two are inextricably connected, Popović speaks in the name of the “excluded” other, that is, on behalf of the Eastern Orthodox ecumene of nations. Serbia, for him, is at the “embered crossroads”; it stands in a “in between” position, deciding in a seemingly “either-or” situation. However, Popović thinks that the relation of West and East is equally vital to both sides. And, he tries to resolve the predicament for both the West and the East in terms of the idea of “integral Europe”, or, as St Nikolaj of Ohrid and Žiča put it, “beyond East and West”¹¹. However, eventually also Popović’s idea of an integral Europe is problematic, inasmuch as it, as we shall see, appears to exclude western culture and Christianity (which are viewed through critical lenses only) from the synthesis “beyond East and West” conducted in the name of Orthodoxy only.

Popović’s critique of Western Europe runs as follows: Humanism is the architect of modern Europe. Its culture, therefore, rests on *man* as pre-eminent principle of foundation. Man is modern Europe’s programme and goal, its means and content. The age of Man coincides with the modern age of Western Europe. According to Popović, three fatal consequences of this process spring to the fore: (a) man is the measure of all things—this posits the principle of metaphysical relativism, (b) man doesn’t need God, moreover, man excels in trying to systematically dethrone the Creator and gain total independence, anesthetizing the sense of personal immortality¹² along the way—this posits the principle of metaphysical naturalism and (c) man is irreparably mortal—this posits the principle of metaphysical nihilism. Three principles set the basic framework for the ascent of European humanity, that is, they inaugurate modernity, i.e. the age of Man. The ascent is set in terms of

¹¹ Nikolaj Velimirović, *Beyond East and West* (n.d.), in idem, *Collected Works*, vol. 5, (Himmelsthür: Diocese of Western Europe of the Serbian Orthodox Church, 1977), 794-810.

¹² Justin Popović, “Progress in the Mill of Death”, 306.

“progress” pulled by the locomotive of the so called scientific worldview. However, human progress remains ever futile before *death*. This remains the case even if the progress of humanity is self-divinized in Feuerbachian terms¹³, say, in the name of man-godhood (čovekoboštvo). In Popović’s view the whole dynamic of European humanism, its progress is in fact a “masked regress”¹⁴. It cannot be anything else *if* the price is acceptance of the reality of death as everlasting. Spiritually regarded, humanism is not evolution but devolution, argues Popović. If death is to have the last word, as my worst enemy—all socio-cultural effort is essentially meaningless. This spells out *the* reason for Popović’s revolt against a humanism that fails to give ultimate or salvific meaning to life.

Unrestrained humanism inevitably leads to atheism, argues Popović, because, the self-positing of man implies the reduction or elimination of divine agency. Once man is posited in an atheistic way, anarchism, nihilism and destructive strife follow suit. The final word in European culture, then, is “cultured cannibalism”¹⁵: “theocide inevitably leads to suicide”¹⁶—“Wille zur Macht has transmuted itself into Wille zur Nacht”¹⁷.

In this context it is important to note that Popović’s reconstruction of the socio-political and cultural history of Europe follows two basic paths: (a) a linear line of historical time (diachrony) and (b) a non-linear line of meta-historical time (synchrony). From the first perspective, the “beginning of the end” of Europe as a Christian project is placed in the 10th century. In this he closely follows¹⁸ Oswald Spengler’s pessimistic analysis of the birth of European—Faustian—culture, as given in *The Decline of the West* (1918, 1922-23)¹⁹ and also Dostoevsky, who lets his *starets* Zosima say: “And in Rome, well, a thousand years ago instead of the Church

¹³ Justin Popović, “European Man at Embered Crossroads”, 286.

¹⁴ Justin Popović, “Progress in the Mill of Death”, 303.

¹⁵ Justin Popović, “At the Watershed of Cultures”, in idem, *Philosophical Crevasses*, 440.

¹⁶ Justin Popović, op. cit., 446.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Justin Popović, “At the Watershed of Cultures”, 447.

¹⁹ This controversial work was translated into Serbian in 1936 by the religious philosopher Vladimir Vujčić.

the state was there proclaimed”²⁰. From the second perspective, Popović places the “beginning of the end” of Europe within the meta-historic event of the primordial fall of *Adam*. He identifies this event with the self-positing of humanity as self-sufficient, which is “an ontological apostasy from the One and Only thing essentially needed”²¹—the life-giving God. This in itself is the gesture of the “first humanism”. In one way or another, cultured history is the tragic perpetuation of this event. This second path of genealogy of culture is opened-up to Popović by the Church fathers, especially by the works of St Macarius of Egypt and Isaac of Syria²². Their descriptions of human ontology, perverted by passions and sin, serve as evaluative keys for reading European culture-products within a historical time scale. It is crucial to note this because it is in the name of the alternative vision, offered by the Church *fathers*, that Popović persistently attacks what he regards as European social culture. In other words, if we don’t see through Popović’s harsh rhetoric, if we fail to perceive him as *re-presenting* the biblical messages of the Christ-centred vision of the *saints* (set in his own creatively updated and polemically projected terms) then Popović’s affirmation of humanism in the God-man and his hope for Europe will be misread as instances of mere “anti-humanism” and political Europessimism.

Since he does reach a negative result in his description of the *europäische Kulturwelt* in crisis, then what is the prescription? In other words, what is to be done? Again, the answer is set in terms of Orthodox Christian theology. In short, humanistic progress needs to be met and overcome by theohumanistic progress. Because, “the progress which betrays and abandons man in the moment of death—is not progress but a falsification of progress”²³. The God-man has solved the main problem: that of death—through resurrection. That is why the divine-human hypostasis of Christ the God-man is the “ultimate value and absolute criterion”. Namely, it is the foundation of the re-turn into spiritually grounded personhood.

²⁰ Justin Popović, *Philosophy and Religion of F. M. Dostoevsky*, (Belgrade: Monastery Ćelije, 1999), 187 n. 31; idem, *Dostoevsky on Europe and Slavdom*, (Belgrade: Monastery Ćelije, 1999), 451 n. 28.

²¹ Justin Popović, “Diary of Prayer”, in idem, *On the Way of the God-man*, 123.

²² Justin Popović, *The Problem of Personhood and Cognition according to St Macarius of Egypt*, (Belgrade: Manastir Ćelije, 1999); idem, *The Gnoseology of St Isaac of Syria*, (Belgrade: Manastir Ćelije, 1999).

²³ Justin Popović, “Progress in the Mill of Death”, 303.

This allows for the overcoming of individualism, fracturing and instrumental objectification of the human being. More importantly, it enables the person to exist uninterrupted by the destructive strictures of death. Quite radically, “ideas are nothing: the person is the agency which carries ideas. [...] the Person of Christ is everything”²⁴. God-manhood is thus set to counter man-godhood. The resulting alternative offers a perspective of renewal within divine-human all-unity (svejedinstvo). This can be accomplished through a grand process of churchification (ucrkvjenje) of all existence. Affirmation of both personhood (ličnost) and catholicity (sabornost), freedom and service, you and I, stability and creativity, the national and international, the human and divine coincide under the condition that the way of existence of Christ is emulated. This likening to Christ is achieved in and by the Church, as his living Body. Therefore, the Church emerges as Popović’s normative model, ideally, for the orders of culture, society, and education: and, jointly, churchified humanity emerges as the theanthropic telos of history. The full image, reality and presence of the God-man Christ, exclaims Popović, is preserved in the *Orthodox* Church. What is more, it is *Russia* that is currently the pre-eminent keeper of the full image of the living *Christ*, contends Popović embracing Dostoevsky’s views²⁵.

It is exactly here that Popović, in the spirit of his times, follows the second move of Oswald Spengler’s prophecy in *Untergang des Abendlandes* (1922). Namely, the spiritual renewal of the world shall come *ex Oriente*—from the rise of the civilization of Orthodox Russia. Therefore, if it is to recover its spiritual life and proper Christian identity, if it is to avoid a negative apocalyptic outcome, Europe should pay heed to the words, deeds and treasures of Orthodoxy, and in particular to Russian Orthodoxy. “In resistance to the West our Christ should shine forth, whom we have preserved and whom they had never known”²⁶. These are the words of Dostoevsky and Popović endorses them. However, he immediately qualifies these exclusive terms with the following, again from Dostoevsky: “The true essence of Orthodoxy is

²⁴ Justin Popović, *Ascetical and Theological Chapters*, 183.

²⁵ Justin Popović, “Dostoevsky as Prophet and Apostle of Orthodox Realism”, in idem, *Philosophical Crevasses*, 422. He quotes from Dostoevsky’s *Idiot* and from the edition of *Biography, Letters and Notes from Dostoevsky’s Notebook* (St Petersburg, 1883).

²⁶ Justin Popović, op.cit., 422.

comprised in service to all humankind. Orthodoxy is pre-destined for that”²⁷. Hence, despite the seemingly closed sense of the first statement, it is in fact the inclusive, universal, all-embracing dimension of Dostoevsky’s reflections on Orthodoxy, Russia and Europe that move Popović to sanction his thought in complete identification. Needless to say that the concept of inclusiveness both in Dostoevsky and in Popović has certain limits inasmuch as they seem to leave little or no room for the intrinsic goods brought to light and life in the West, and by the history of western culture and spirituality respectively. This limitation may be understood, historically, from within the context of the Westernizers versus Slavophiles controversy, which both authors were part of, and by Popović’s non-comprehensive exposition to western culture as a whole.

For Popović, Orthodox spirituality is the only way out, for it offers a kenotic reversal of the humanistic ways of mankind²⁸. Such a reversal demands nothing less than a radical revolt against sin, that is, against naturalistic self-sufficiency of mankind or, against *modernity*. “What is left for us, sorry prisoners of death? Only—revolt...”²⁹. Revolt and reversal presuppose repentance, which in itself represents an “all-encompassing earthquake”³⁰. Together, the three forge the figure of spiritual counter-revolution, of which Justin Popović is a paradigmatic representative in the mid-war and post-war European context (in fact, Popović depicts this figure as “theohumanistic evolution”). The mentioned three instances, together, are points of orientation. They signal the paths of (re)turning to the Promised Land of “theanthropic eternity incarnated within the borders of time and space”³¹, which is another among his definitions of the Church of the God-man. According to Popović, this is where the resurrection of Christ perpetuated by the Spirit comes to pass (as the “one thing that is needed” [Lk. 10:38-42]).³²

²⁷ Justin Popović, *op.cit.*, 423.

²⁸ In the sense of the self-emptying of mankind of “man” = self-sufficient humanism.

²⁹ Justin Popović, “Progress in the Mill of Death”, 293; *idem*, “Saint-Savian Philosophy of Progress”, in *idem*, *Saint-Savahood as Philosophy of Life*, 194.

³⁰ Justin Popović, *Ascetical and Theological Chapters*, 160.

³¹ Justin Popović, “The Inner Mission of our Church (Realization of Orthodoxy)”, *Christian Life*, II:9 (1923) 386.

³² Justin Popović, “Progress in the Mill of Death”, 301.

3.2. The political (B): Ecumenism and the Orthodox Church. This leads us to view Popović's thematization of the political in terms of his critique of *ecumenism*—as of the ecclesial-ecumenical plane (of the political). To all that was said one might retort, in amazement or protest, that Western Europe *has* Christ. If so, then what is the purpose of the vitriolic attack on a supposedly Christless Europe? To Popović's mind, modern Europe has travestied the essence of Christianity; it has systematically falsified the all-embracing foundational image and meaning of the Person of Christ the God-man, kept in the Church herself—or, in the body of the *Orthodox*³³ Church. The most he is prepared to concede, aligning with Dostoevsky, is the following: “Indeed, in the West, in truth, there is neither Christianity nor Church, although we still find many Christians”³⁴. What are the suppositions for such a point of view? And how does Popović determine what he names the true—Orthodox—Church?

First, on Popović's understanding, the undoing of (western) European Christianity is the consequence of the promotion, and subsequent acceptance of humanistic secular ideals and agendas within the Church of the West. Western humanism entails the fatal reduction—“painful and sad correction”³⁵—of the work and teaching of the incarnate Word, the God-man Christ. And conversely, the reduction of the God-man is the extension of the process of the secularization of the West in terms of its humanistic agenda, which invokes a grave change of its identity. The difference between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism is in fact superficial in this regard. Because, in both “instead of the God-man it is man who is placed as highest value and criterion”³⁶. What is more, according to Popović's logic, both are inherently tied to the proto-protest which came to pass in the fall of Adam³⁷. Instead of abiding in the revealed reality of the living and concrete God-man, giving primacy to God so as to be truly human, the West is ending in the “final glorification of humanism” which, it is stressed, puts on the mask of Christianity in the attempt to give itself divine

³³ Popović regards the Orthodox Church as the only true Church. Therefore, he would say that the syntagma “Orthodox Church” is a pleonasm.

³⁴ Justin Popović, *Dostoevsky on Europe and Slavdom*, 451; idem, “Saint-Savian Philosophy of Society”, 236.

³⁵ Justin Popović, *op. cit.*, 234.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Justin Popović, *The Orthodox Church and Ecumenism*, 138.

sanction. That is why, for Popović, ecumenism in terms of western Christianity is destined to fail even before it has started. Second, the heart of Popović's critique of humanism is his deconstruction of secularized Christianity and especially its project of "ecumenism". Western Christian ecumenism cannot be the solution for a problem it has itself caused, contends Popović. It rests on a double movement, erroneous in its core. On one hand, it affirms humanity at the expense of god-humanity. He qualifies this as "panheresy"³⁸. On the other hand, it affirms the ambition to forge Christian and pan-human unity through a dialogue of love³⁹, regardless of the consequences of the previously mentioned reduction of god-manhood. That is why, as V. Cvetković states succinctly, Fr. Justin "finds the substitute for humanism in the God-humanism, (and) he also replaces the idea of western ecumenism as humanistic project with the evangelical and Orthodox ecumenism as the God-human endeavour"⁴⁰.

There are substantial presuppositions of true—Orthodox—ecumenism, according to Popović, which constitute the precondition for participation in the event of ecclesial ecumenicity (catholicity), and they are (1) repentance, (2) acknowledgment of truth in faith, and finally (3) reintegration to the Church in which the event and reality of the God-man have not been compromised, neither historically or structurally. As Popović continues to say, the unity of the Church as the goal of ecumenism *par excellence* is not a political process, nor should it be. If it is to be effectual in truth, it needs to be a spiritual theohumanistic movement and theanthropic event in Christ and on *his* terms: ecumenism through god-human catholicity⁴¹.

3.3. The political (C): Saint-Savahood and Serbia. I now turn to Popović's thematization of the political in terms of his critique of the *national*—as of the local-

³⁸ All other heresies are dwarfed by it because it springs from the primordial sin of self-affirmation of man against God. Cf. Bishop Atanasije (Jevtić), "Commentary on Father Justin's Notes", in Saint Abba Justin, *Notes on Ecumenism*, (Sebastian Press: Alhambra CA 2013), 11 n. 6, 36.

³⁹ Justin Popović, *The Orthodox Church and Ecumenism*, 146.

⁴⁰ Vladimir Cvetković, "St. Justin the New (Popovic) on the Church of Christ", in Danckaert, Baker et al. (eds.), *The Body of the Living Church: the Patristic Doctrine of the Church* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press: Crestwood, New York: forthcoming).

⁴¹ Justin Popović, *Ascetical and Theological Chapters*, 173; idem, *Notes on Ecumenism*, 10.

Serbian plane (of the political). In offering his criticism of Serbian society between the two world wars, and after, Popović executes an application of his general principles of theological critique to a particular case study of Serbian history, society and culture inasmuch as it has, or should have, Orthodoxy as one of its essential identity constituents. This is realized in his programmatic work *Saint-Savahood as Philosophy of Life* (München 1953). “What is a human being (the visible) without God (the invisible)?” he asks — “A soulless corpse”, he answers⁴². Likewise, if Europe allows itself to have Christ extracted from its heart’s soul, then it shall in due time become a corpse. The same follows for Serbian society and history, extrapolates Popović. Serbian political society and culture betray all the varied symptoms of western humanism, exacerbated in murky times (1919–1939–1944). On top of all the western “evils”, he adds, the Serbian people—Christians and non-Christians—have succumbed to certain failings which, in a way, are characteristically their own “common vetch” (e.g. tribal nationalism and ecclesial ethnophiletism⁴³). That is why an Orthodox Christian critical reaction needs to be conceptualized, propagated and instilled. Accordingly, this should be a critique addressing not only Western Europe, but one set in terms of a *self-critique* of Serbian society as well. The ideal of Saint-Savahood, thus, has two main aspects: (a) its represents a concretization of the idea of theohumanistic progress where, keeping in tune with Popović’s neo-patristic drift of thought, St Sava is taken as a paradigm for the Serbian context and (b) it represents a counter-cultural alternative to both European and Serbian humanistic modernism.

Saint-Savahood as Philosophy of Life covers six main areas of the human life-world: the world (nature), progress, culture, society, values-criteria and education. In the following I limit my exposition to the domains of society and education.

First, according to Popović’s understanding, society is a living whole comprised of individual particulars, that is, of persons⁴⁴. Since he regards the person as of highest value for it is a god-bearing entity (*eikon tou Theou*), Popović thinks that all the aims, questions and problems of society, ultimately, converge in the problem of

⁴² Justin Popović, “Saint-Savian Philosophy of the World”, in idem, *Saint-Savahood as Philosophy of Life*, 184.

⁴³ Justin Popović, “The Inner Mission of our Church (Realization of Orthodoxy)”, 387.

⁴⁴ Justin Popović, “Saint-Savian Philosophy of Society”, 228.

personhood “multiplied by all the individual members comprising a society”⁴⁵. The solution of the problem of personhood, therefore, entails the solution of the problem of society. So far, especially in modern European social history, this problem was tackled through two equally unsuccessful extremes: (a) either man was reduced in favor of society as collective or (b) society was reduced in favor of the individual. What is more, and worse, in both cases the presence of God is ignored or acknowledged, but ceremonially. On Popović’s interpretation, this holds true not only in collectivistic systems such as Nazism or Communism, but, also in capitalistic systems which, by definition, are an epitome of liberal individualism. Moreover, banning God from society as such (Communism) or compressing God into the private sphere (Capitalism) essentially leads to the same: positing the public horizon (*polis*) as god-less. This leaves the public domain of the social at the mercies either of (atomized) individuals or (homogenized) collectives *both* of which, in modern times, generate meaning of society in naturalistic terms, that is, out of human *autarchy* and absolute sovereignty of the people taken as an agency self-sufficient in principle. According to Popović’s maximalist Christian criteria, this in itself undermines the social project. It liquidates the realization of the possibility of a theohumanistically grounded social body. He attacks such a social imaginary, resting as it does on a reductionist description of human personhood and, equally, on the God-is-dead or God-is-absent public consensus. He does this by claiming that society, be it collectivist or individualist, be it more or less socialist or capitalist, needs to evolve from a mere—essentially god-less—organization of functions and systems into an *organism*, one open substantially to the divine.

Popović opposes the separation of Church and the public square *if* this entails an exclusive, non-cooperative segregation of the Church (as bearer of the *kerygma*) from the state and political society. Instead, he is in favour of a society seen as guilds, crafts and estates of rank cooperating in and for the common good (viz Christ’s legacy): a society envisaged in terms of the ideal of “sobornicity” (social catholicity), rather than as a domain set adrift due to rampant party strife, partitocracy and self-serving egotism.

⁴⁵ Justin Popović, op. cit., 228-229.

He applies the analogy of *body* and its parts in order to illustrate his point. In an organism harmony and health are vouchsafed not only by functional coordination of parts amongst themselves or in relation to the whole, but, more importantly, by cooperative mutual *service*. “The greater the organ the more responsible service does it officiate, and it is as servant to everything which is smaller than it”⁴⁶. Now, modern societies function not like healthy bodies, they are sick. This is so, continues Popović, because a body cannot function properly if its “soul” is missing or negated. As implied in the body-organism analogy, the soul of society is God, because society is comprised of *persons* (not of automatons or bio-human functions or ID card numbers): and, persons are bearers of God by virtue of their constitutive filial god-likeness. Therefore, viewed from this perspective, social organization (no matter how efficient, no matter what kind) is made fully meaningful only if it accommodates a living God. Otherwise, it doesn’t serve its principle entelechy which, according to Popović, is to nurture, protect, educate and open its members to God Creator of all life.

Not even “religion” is welcome, if it jeopardizes either human or divine personhood. It is here that Christological ecclesiology is reintroduced. Namely, only unity in essential goals allows for “the ideal solution of the problem both of man and of mankind, and of the problem of person and society”⁴⁷. We should note that Popović, ultimately, has in mind a maximalist *vision* set within the meta-political reality of what he calls “ecclesial patriotism”⁴⁸. “What kind of goal? [...]. Certainly not some ephemeral, opportunist, circumstantial, utilitarian (goal), but, rather, an impassable, immortal, fateful goal [...]. This immortal goal was set by the God-man, drawing from the god-like essence of human nature. What is the goal, then? This is it: to incarnate God and all divine perfections in man and mankind, in person and society”⁴⁹. The only place where Popović finds the societal body functioning like a healthy organism, at least in terms of accepted principle or as the ideal norm, is in yet another body—the Body of Christ or *Church*.

⁴⁶ Justin Popović, “Saint-Savian Philosophy of Society”, 229.

⁴⁷ Justin Popović, *op. cit.*, 230.

⁴⁸ Justin Popović, *Ascetical and Theological Chapters*, 139.

⁴⁹ Justin Popović, “Saint-Savian Philosophy of Society”, 230-231.

In general, society as it is needs to keep traversing the path from organisation (institutionalism, bureaucratism, technocratism etc) to organism, as much as the Church needs to resist traversing the path from organism to organisation (clericalism⁵⁰, ethnophiletism etc). This is what Popović advocates. However, it would be a mistake to qualify his viewpoint as a type of Christian fundamentalism which, by definition, encroaches upon the state–Church divide as set by the principle of (hopefully) inclusive separation, that is, of neutrality. Although his organistic Christian social philosophy, projected in an ecclesial key, might come under criticism leveled against “organicism”, due to concerns about the “whole” (Party, Synod, Tzar etc) negating the parts cooptively, this does not necessarily undermine Popović’s position. There are at least two reasons for this: (a) his is a personalistically patented organicism and (b) he sets the Church vis-à-vis state and society in terms of a relation of *mediation* which, in virtue of remaining on a spiritual-ethical level, protects all sides. (However, the next question to answer is whether his maximalist vision has, or should have, enough “potential” to include non-Orthodox others, and how. For, such otherness is not conceptualized as part of the postulated ideal of all-unity). The Church has the right to *address*, not to impose. That is why it may traverse the public domain, but, as long as it refrains from substantial encroachments upon the will of subjects constituting the socio-political body. His vision is that of two bodies in *symbiosis*: not of a devouring of the social-political state by the Church. In a nutshell, the Church is to be emulated *freely*.⁵¹

Second, the domain of education is the locus of the political in which Popović is most interested. At first glance, it seems that he is prepared to dissolve the principle of neutrality in favour of an “intégriste” conception of the ecclesial in relation to the secular social realm, especially when focusing education. This reversal is indicated in metaphors left in his discourses on the relation of Saint-Savian philosophy and education. The school and the Church, he suggests, are in fact “inseparable twins”⁵²,

⁵⁰ Popović speaks out in the name of Christian *laity* as well, not only in favour of the hierarchical sacred orders. For instance, he encourages the movement of the *bogomoljci*: i.e. “asceticism in the masses”. Cf. Justin Popović, “The Inner Mission of our Church (Realization of Orthodoxy)”, 390.

⁵¹ Justin Popović, “Saint-Savian Philosophy of Society”, 237-238.

⁵² Justin Popović, “Saint-Savian Philosophy of Education”, 259.

or: “The school is the second half of the God-man’s heart, the Church is the first”⁵³. Is this a turnaround of sorts in regard to what was previously suggested to be the case (viz neutrality)?

The answer needs to be qualified carefully. At the time, catechism was a compulsory subject in the gymnasia of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, regulated under law by the state. It seems, however, that Popović wants more: namely, “a realization of Saint-Savian education in all (levels) of schools: those folkish and those of the state...”⁵⁴. As we might have anticipated, this is due to his view that European humanistic ideology, with its secular agenda, is infiltrating all the pores of the educational system. In terms of its political programme, this is bound to usher an *expulsion* of religious knowledge and values from the corpus of state educational curricula. This in fact came to pass immediately after WWII, in 1951 (catechetical education was reintroduced as an *optional* subject as late as 2001, half a century later). Having in mind the rise of the socialist Left movement in Serbia during the WWII period, it is expected to find Popović reacting against what he sees as negative consequences of an upcoming militant Communism which, according to Marxist precepts, claims that religion is the “opium for the people”⁵⁵.

4. Popović’s ecclesial legacy and the political. I will now address, firstly, the basic types of *objections* which, variably, have been raised as regards Popović’s thought inasmuch as it relates to the political. The objections have been voiced in various quarters, western and eastern. I present them in a summary way. After laying out the objections, I will offer explanative clarifications. These aim to show that the listed objections (although some point to neuralgic aspects of Popović’s which cannot be dismissed), if left on their own, might be erroneously misleading or simply products of misunderstanding.

(1) “Anti-humanism”. Admittedly, Popović is an anti-humanist *if* this entails resistance to grounding human nature in self-sufficient autarchy of the human

⁵³ Justin Popović, *op. cit.*, 265.

⁵⁴ Justin Popović, *op. cit.*, 264.

⁵⁵ Karl Marx, “Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechts-Philosophie”, *Deutsch-Französischen Jahrbücher*, (1844) 71-72.

element. — However, he targets “homomonism” (D. Nikolić), not the well-being of humanity (*humanitas*) as such. Thus, he can be seen as a humanist *par excellence* under the condition that we accept his concept of theohumanistic transformation as a manifold expansion of what the generic human being is called to become in Christ. But, what does this mean for non-Orthodox Christians, that is, for their irreducibly invaluable humanity? What is left of Popović’s vision, and experience, to offer to others, *if* non-Orthodox Christians chose to remain as such? Perhaps his answer would be, or should be twofold: (a) a non-imposing witness of an alternative Christian life style, i.e. the transformational effects of Orthodox way of life in Christ, and, on the basis of his ascetical approach to prayer (b) a life of wholehearted “representational” prayer for one’s others welfare which, due to the integral nature of prayer, translates into pragmatic-caritative acts as well. However, his tendency to reject western humanism *en bloc* is not helpful, and tends to generate misunderstanding if not mistrust.

(2) “Anti-intellectualism”. Popović is an anti-intellectualist *if* this entails resistance to hypostatizing reason (*dianoia, ratio*) as self-legitimizing instance which arbitrates in all fields of meaning, with an explicit derogation of the illuminating agency of grace as of the spiritual mind (*nous, intellectus*). — However, he in fact develops a comprehensive theory of logosality (logosnost), which attempts to address this issue in terms of opening reason to higher modes of rationality in and of the Logos (grace-imbued mind, blagodatni um).

(3) “Anti-ecumenism”. Popović is an anti-ecumenist *if* ecumenism entails insistence on love-discourse at the expense of truth-discourse which, inevitably, poses the question of how can there be many Churches and, necessarily, the question of the fundamental identity of the One Church in one Christ. He would insist that the dichotomy between love-discourse and truth-discourse is a pseudo-distinction, for speaking the truth is an act of love. Still, it remains true that his critique of western non-Orthodox Christianity concentrates almost exclusively on what he thinks are its failings. Hence, an appraisal of its positive sides is missing. What is more, the mentioned imbalance generates dubitation and some misunderstanding which, in

turn, leads some readers in the West to prematurely depart from his oeuvre. This puts additional strain upon his Orthodox maximalism in matters ecumenical.

(4) “Orthodox fundamentalism and either-or disjunctivism”. Popović has the tendency to draw stiff lines of demarcation between the proposals of modernity and what he perceives of as principles of traditional Christianity. However, this doesn’t automatically translate into “fundamentalism”. This term is usually used in the pejorative sense and sometimes as a semantic tool for disqualification of the other’s position (ironically, sometimes this is done “fundamentalistically”, say, by groups which endorse militant atheism or even secular liberalism). In terms of a recursive formal definition, fundamentalism signifies an uncompromising allegiance to a set of principles that one finds true, and that one claims to have been tested by one’s own experience. Of course, this begs the question of explicating fully what exactly is this kind of “experience”. As minimum, Popović refers to the official mind of the Church in terms of the decisions of the Ecumenical councils, certain referential texts of the church fathers, dogmatic compendia and, alongside, to the practice of the Church, that is, the transformative spiritual effects of strictly following the liturgical-ascetical method of the church fathers. In this sense Popović’s thought might be regarded as fundamentally grounded. Popović in no place invokes violence, as is the case in some of the contemporary fundamentalist movements. Actually, one of the terms he uses to describe his position is “Theanthropic conservatism”. It is used in order to describe the active protection of essential precepts (“fundamentals”) handed down in the tradition of the Orthodox Church. The same term is used by him to warn against undiscerning permissiveness exhibited by “church modernists” who, lured by the *Zeitgeist*, accept novelties uncritically. Popović distinguishes between novelty and creativity. Keeping tradition in such a way that it allows the “logosality” of reality, *hic et nunc*, to be brought to light in the Logos of God, Christ, is the creative happening *par excellence*, according to Popović. That is the test of what is truly new. Keeping tradition and keeping a discerningly creative—synthetic—approach to reality are not divorced in his thinking (in many instances his opus shows that Christian tradition is creative and that creativity has a tradition in Tradition). Still, it remains true that Popović’s negative criticism of the West as such, including its non-Orthodox ecclesial structures, might invite a disqualifying approach. If this is not addressed in pre-

emptive terms, say, through the kind of careful hermeneutical understanding I try to lay out in this article, then it might encourage confrontational frames of mind and action, despite the fact that this never was Popović's intention.

(5) "Reductionism and generalization". In his sweeping criticisms, Popović tends to conflate Western Europe with its darker side. — However, is it not true that there is a darker side to consider? Alongside, he somehow fails to give a voice to those Christians of the West who have not a few points of agreement with some of his views, at least in terms of their culture-critique of secularism, uncurbed rationalism, re-paganization and totalitarianism. One reason for his silence on such western theologians, possibly, is his limited exposure to their works as such. The second is that it is the words of the Gospel, explicated in words of the Church fathers old and new, which have the first and last word in all matters that Fr Justin's theology aims to address. This does not mean that he makes no reference to contemporary theologians, Orthodox and non-Orthodox. Additionally, one has to allow for the context of his life's circumstances in order to understand that he was exposed to apocalyptic events first hand, that his education was successively interrupted by exile and imprisonment, and, perhaps decisively, that the sense of the urgency of salvation was exacerbated by the *prophetic* trait of his person, spiritually and psychologically regarded.

(6) "Simplification of diversity and subsumption of otherness". In a way, it is true that the binary terms of humanism (West) "either-or" theohumanism (East Orthodoxy) tend to reduce the super-complexity of the socio-historical and cultural European *Lebenswelt* into just two parties antagonized in one ideologically conceptualized dialectic. Another related objection states that non-Christian religious or social identities are not given comprehensive attention, and the same follows for non-European cultures. Rather than understanding religious-social identities in the plural, and rather than viewing cultural differences and even conflicts as culturally inherent to the European life-world (hence seeing that delicate *understanding* of irreducibly concrete specificities needs to precede polemic as well as possible agreement), Popović views these other identities as mere consequences of the lack of knowledge of one thing—the Orthodox Church, or, as wilful negations of what is understood to be the one Truth. Instead, an ideal of homogenous society in

perfect harmony is postulated in the Logos. But, this seems to entail an *a priori* overstepping of irreducible particularity of the life-world *hic et nunc* as well as, paradoxically, repeating the figure of humanistic Enlightenment itself, formally, i.e. the gesture of reducing reality to one absolute Reason. — All these observations hold true to a significant extent, thus, they do warrant criticism. But, we must not forget that Popović is writing in non-globalized times: before the reality of multiculturalism was inaugurated, before the resurgence of questions such as Islamization or incessant immigration, and before the promotion of sensitivities in regard to identity politics, differentiation of rights, deconstructive rationality etc. Hence, we should not ask him to hand out ready-made answers to all of our current questions (nor should we expect of him to anticipate or know everything we know). Rather, we should ponder his *vision* of God in Christ, and listen to his *Orthodox* experience-based understanding of how God works our salvation in synergy with the freely consenting will. And surely, as minimum, his vision of Truth emanates from Christ as concrete love in person. It springs from a deeply accommodating Love crucified for the other, for each and for all. One shouldn't forget that Popović—equipped with the knowing of saving truths, saving instruments and saving experiences—calls for the integration of sin-ridden, mortalized and suffering humankind into *such* a love—a love true, divine and salvific. It is on these grounds that Popović is not prepared to surrender the normative concept of god-manhood in Christ, nor abandon the call for theanthropization of human history, to relativism (religious or secular), to reticent forms of “isms” which, as he intuits, seem to be warring against the Spirit of Christ—Truth. Be that as it may, despite heated diatribes, he doesn't invoke heartless judgment on particular otherness *per se*. He views each created being through the eyes of Christ's unfathomable love by the Spirit. Perhaps this encourages him to be harsh for love's sake. It is he who wrote: “the soul of every ailing creature should be approached on pigeon's feet of prayer”⁵⁶. Therefore, his vision does allow for an accommodation of otherness (in terms of an empathetic praying-for), even if the other chooses to resist the call of the Spirit abiding in Christ of the Orthodox Church.

⁵⁶ Justin Popović, *Letter 1: The Christ-like heart of the world*, in idem, *On the Way of the God-man*, 190.

Still, the question remains: why these precious thoughts, of which there are many, remain on the threshold of the “conceptual”? Why are they confined in the spiritual-practical domain (in lines of spiritual meditation which, through unfathomable gestures of divinely inspired charity, address individual souls near and far, East and West)? Why is this Philokalic dimension not developed on the level of theological *doctrine*, where and when it comes out to address *otherness*, culturally regarded? Is this an indication of a non-superficial internal rift in the thought of Popović: a hiatus between love and understanding for western Christians and hostile suspicion to western Christianity, to which they willingly belong by reasoned free decision?

(7) “Deficit of socio-cultural constructivism”. It is true that Popović did not venture to produce detailed accounts, or concrete protocols for application of what the alternatives should be in the immediate reality of the political. — However, this never was his primary goal. His priority was to alarm the public prophetically, and to offer the essential reasons which, like standing stars, explain why the cardinal modernistic tendencies are potentially very harmful for the full, all-encompassing and uninterrupted reception of the revealed truths of Orthodox faith in a contemporary world. His maximalism, which goes hand in hand with a lack of socio-political gradualism, then, is not necessarily an effect of intellectual weakness, nor is his broad scope of condemnations an “easy way out”. Again, voicing prophetic alarm and offering eschatological orientation are to be accepted as his priorities *modo audi Israël* (Deut. 6:4).

(8) “pan-Slavism and nationalism”. His alleged pan-Slavism is not an ideology of race, nor is it a racially universalized nationalism. Rather, it issues forth as a consequence of his historical-cultural embeddedness in the Slav side of Orthodox culture. Moreover, he is a Slavophile not a pan-Slavist. Coinjointly, he was explicit in his critique of ethnophiletism. He always makes sure that his love of Slavdom is measured by his admiration for the image of the Orthodox *God-man* (which, as he finds, is there preserved in remarkable fullness).

(9) “anti-Europeanism”. His anti-Europeanism is nothing more than his reaction to self-sufficient humanism. As such, it is a reaction to a reaction, a revolt against a revolt. Alongside, it is an affirmation of faith, hope and love for a Europe which, as

he states, “boasts of her Christ” rather than “of herself”⁵⁷. As early as 1923, he endorses Zenkovsky’s statement in regard to the critique laid out by Russian intelligentsia: “It is with sorrow that they love Europe, and it is with love that they criticise her”⁵⁸. Popović’s critique of Europe, nevertheless, seems to be negative. And, the problem here is that he does not allow for positive potentials of alternative kinds of humanism, Christian notwithstanding, to enter into the picture. That is to say, for him *all* western humanism is identical to a god-denying or at least seriously flawed human-ism. Still, to an extent, this may be balanced by having in mind several corrective moments. His critique of Europe encompasses both the South-East of Europe (South Slav culture) as well as Russia. For instance, he fervidly supported the critique of Soviet Communism. Moreover, reacting to Josef Pieper’s counter-critique, Popović conceded that it was in Orthodox historical lands that Communism spread most convincingly. But, he added two qualifications. First, the reason for this is the fact that reducing everything onto man, i.e. “hominization”, is the “atmosphere which is inhaled by human nature in general”. Second, Popović goes on to claim: “However, the Orthodox Church has never ecclesiologically endorsed any humanism in dogmatic terms”⁵⁹. The point is this: Popović’s critique of Europe is not solely anti-western. On a level, it may be regarded as comprehensive. There is undeniable proof on record that Eastern European failings are noted very critically by him, including Serbian ones. He does find “eastern” brands and strands of the human element displacing the theohuman reality (eg cesaropapism, ethnophiletism, non-personalist collectivism). Popović is also very critical in regard to many symptoms of the hierarchy’s conformism and self-indulgence, as well as failings of the members of the Church at large. Therefore, to an extent, Popović’s critique of Europe does include *self-critique*. It is a self-critique, note, of both the westernism and easternism of Serbia (for instance, as mentioned before, he criticizes the rather idiosyncratic Balkan ethnophiletisms, etc.). It certainly is not a projection of nationalist or geopolitical resentment onto the other, under a supposedly religionized guise. His Slavophile traits, again, are to be seen as effects of legitimate in-rootedness in Slav

⁵⁷ Justin Popović, *The Orthodox Church and Ecumenism*, 159.

⁵⁸ Justin Popović, “V. Zenkovsky: *Russian Thinkers and Europe*”, *Christian Life*, II:12 (1923) 571.

⁵⁹ Justin Popović, *The Orthodox Church and Ecumenism*, 119.

culture of which he was an integral part. The same is true of his Russophile streak. Namely, he received the Christian-Hellenic gifts from Russian hands as well: especially during his formative years in St Petersburg and Sremski Karlovci. In this sense, he was part of the project of forging an alternative—“supra-modern”—way for Christian self-understanding: an understanding set in terms of a critical synthesis of Orthodox Christianity, Slav tradition and pan-European culture values. It is true that he does endorse the rather strict, and sometimes over-generalised, critique of Western Europe as given by the Russian and Serbian Orthodox Christian intelligentsia (from Dostoevsky to Velimirović and others). Still more, suchlike Russian and Serbian thinkers represent one facet of the many-faceted *pan-European* movement of critical re-assessment of the fruits of European modernity, Enlightenment and culture as such: a movement in which many of the prominent critics were of *western* origin (from K. Jöel to M. Maeterlinck or O. Spengler, not to mention many others to whom Popović recurs as well). Lastly, Popović experienced the horrors of WWI and WWII first hand. It was armies invading from the *West* that left his nation destroyed and butchered. Over 1.8 million Serbian souls perished in two wars. In other words, in terms of historical explanation, it is not surprising that this might have textured his critique of Western Europe, to a degree⁶⁰.

Conclusion: In Popović’s mind, the “political” includes the integrated system of human socio-cultural institutions and domains as they appear in the horizon of the historical life-world. His thought is not to be regarded as a religionized politicology, or, as a function of romantic nationalism. Nor is it to be regarded as a systematic theology of politics in the strict sense. Rather, it is to be viewed as a polemical hermeneutic of the political set within a comprehensive Orthodox Christology. Concretely, his critique of the political is grounded in an ascetically realized Christology firmly tied to biblical roots⁶¹. Such a theology posits theohumanism as the regulative ideal for theory and practice. Accordingly, this is applied as the primary criterion of assessment of the socio-historical dynamic of the political. Self-sufficient humanism, including its founding principles (naturalism, rationalism,

⁶⁰ Justin Popović, *op. cit.*, 152.

⁶¹ Justin Popović, “The Inner Mission of our Church (Realization of Orthodoxy)”, 389.

autarchy of the *animal rationale*, etc.) is taken to be the cause of distortion and spiritual decline of humanity, universalized *ex Occidente*. The paradoxical apotheosis of this process is the dogmatization of infallibility of human agency, as of the Roman Catholic Church (this principle, he claims, is subsequently universalized by Protestantism). Such humanism, argues Popović, falsifies the proper goal and scope of human nature, revealed in the living fullness of Christ the God-man, and, by extension, it undermines the project of theanthropization in Christ, offered by the (Orthodox) Church. According to Popović's general viewpoint, this warrants the theologian to undertake a consistent critique of the humanistic closure of divine-human potential revealed to mankind as divine gift, through (a) criticism, (b) furnishing an alternative model and (c) giving biblical-ecclesial witness to Christ by virtue of one's own life in the God-man, that is, by sainthood *in vivo*.

The consequences of this vision have been spelt out by Popović especially in terms of a reflection on church-state relations and education; namely, through (a) the question of borders and modes of relation between the Church and the state and, as extended, (b) the question of the right to give witness to God in the public square, finally (c) the question whether, and in what capacity, is theological education to leave the confines of instituted religion. The Church needs to respect the order of the Church-state divide, allowing for freedom of conscience and individual freedom of choice as of social agents. Popović does not advocate a theocratic model of society (though he seems to be trying to unite opposition to disestablishment of the Church with approval of toleration of other confessions or religions). The role of the Church is to give witness to the extended presence of Christ, for he is her real Body and Head, wherein instruments of healing, illumination and salvation abide. That is why he is not content to see the Church as passive or marginalized in regard to the social state. Rather, he proposes the model of *symbiosis* of two bodies—ecclesial polity and that of the social state. These two should, ideally, synchronize. For it is reasonable to have human personhood in God postulated and accepted, by both sides, as the highest regulating value of socio-cultural and economical-political life. An organic social philosophy is advocated. But it is equipped with theanthropic personalism as corrective instance. As minimum, the Church has the right, like other parties mediating the social order, to speak within the public square.

However, at the level of *education*, it seem as if Popović makes a step further, or in reverse direction, by declaring that Church and school are two parts of “one heart”. If so, the principle of neutrality seems to be violated. However, this is not the case. What he has in mind is (a) introducing Christian education into all levels of the academia and (b) counterbalancing naturalistic self-interpretations of humanistic science (especially in the wake of political neo-paganism and idolatry, viz the perspectives Nazism and Communism). He wants *more* Christian knowledge introduced into the realm of education, through debate and dialogue. This does not necessarily entail an invasive creationist reduction of the curricula of education in the state-secular domain. He pleads for enlightenment through Tradition (*paradosis*, predanje) to balance the tradition of Enlightenment (Dositejism), as an alternative or as a possible corrective. That is, he wants spiritual illumination (delivered through theological truths [Saint-Savianism]) to keep the sciences, both social and natural, open at least in principle to the possibility of an integrative ecclesial vision of all-unity in Christ the Logos of God (Popović reads the Logos as the constitutive under-laying Principle, all-encompassing Meaning, the Good, Beauty and Truth of all creation). All manner of knowledge needs to be kept open-ended in relation to the spiritual world. The human mind, individually and generically, needs to be illuminated by the Spirit of Christ. Therefore, a wider and deeper presence of theology in and through the academia seems in order. If this is opposed, then it needs to be countered by argument, albeit clothed in a rhetoric suffused with lament, warning and protest.

Finally, his critique of the political, and of politics in the strict sense, remains primarily a *spiritual* critique of things secular and humanistic. Political radicalism, Left or Right, devoid of a spiritual radicalism, executed ascetically in Christ, is undermined by its initial *conformism*. This is betrayed by the fact that it doesn't call into question the “ontological” *status quo* of human autarchy in relation to divine origins of all existence. Therefore, it is no less retrograde than that which it purports to overcome. Living and acting in Christ the God-man by the Spirit is necessary as a pre-conditioning critique of the political inasmuch as the political tends to self-enclose in naturalistic terms thus instigating the European and pan-human theodrama, or, as Popović would have it, thus derailing the movement of

theohumanist transformation of fallen humanity. Revolution from “outside” must commence from the “inside”⁶². It needs to be preceded by revolutionizing humanity’s spiritual inside in terms of a re-turn into communion with the God who in Jesus Christ, crucified and resurrected, calls humanity to realize its potential in filial trust, creative cooperation and mutual adoration, according to divine intention. In the midst of the catastrophe that befell Europe in 1914, the Serbian saint-to-be writes in witness of this as follows:

“The extremes part more and more [...] a vast evil, a vast good, man in the abyss in between [...] and desperation grows [...] nothingness—oh, a desperation clad in light, oh, an illness with acute sight, oh, deep death—helplessness, nothingness, brother of the worm. [...] Christ, it is only he who unites the disunited...” (Justin Popović, *Notes from Oxford*, 10 May 1917).

⁶² Justin Popović, “Saint-Savian Philosophy of Education”, 220.