

Is Scholasticism a Pseudomorphosis? A Polemical Note on Georges Florovsky's Political Theology

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Introduction

Father Georges Florovsky (1893–1979) was one of the most influential Orthodox intellectuals in the 20th century.¹ Born in the Russian Empire not long before its collapse in 1917, he spent most of his life in the West as an immigrant. He was associated with the St. Sergius Institute of Orthodox Theology in Paris, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary near New York, and later with Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology near Boston, as well as with Harvard and Princeton. Florovsky was known as a historian and theologian, but he also implicitly propagated a political program, that shaped the ideological profile of modern Eastern Christianity to a significant extent. This paper argues that Florovsky's famous "Neopatristic synthesis"² was also his political theology.

Two Syntheses

The Neopatristic synthesis was based on two concepts, which in Florovsky's interpretation were opposed to each other: "Churchified Hellenism" and "the Western captivity" of Orthodox theology. This "captivity" led to what he called "pseudomorphosis." On the one hand, for Florovsky, "Churchified Hellenism"³ was a phenomenon ultimately beneficial to the church. He spoke rather romantically about the "conversion of Hellenism" to Christianity and counterposed this conversion to the "Hellenization of Christianity." Florovsky thus refuted a thesis that had been articulated and promoted by the German critical school represented by scholars like Adolf von Harnack. Harnack's point was that, after being Hellenized, Christianity became alienated from its original form.

1 On Florovsky, see Andrew Blane, *Georges Florovsky: Russian Intellectual and Orthodox Churchman* (Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994).

2 Paul Ladouceur, *Modern Orthodox Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 95–122.

3 Georges Florovsky, "Christianity and Civilization," *St Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 1 (1952): 13–20, 14.

Florovsky responded to this critique by arguing that it was not Christianity that had changed. Rather, he proposed, Hellenism had changed from its classical version in its “churchified” form. Hellenism had been “dissected with the sword of Christian Revelation, and was utterly polarized thereby.” As a result of its synthesis with Christianity, it turned into a “New Hellenism.”⁴

On the other hand, and on different occasions, Florovsky spoke about the “pseudomorphosis” of Orthodox theology. Paul Gavrilyuk has presented Florovsky’s concept of “pseudomorphosis” as a drama in three acts, with each act corresponding approximately to the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries.⁵ In the 17th century, the pseudomorphosis was caused by Roman Catholic influence. It was imposed upon Russia via Ukraine, which was struggling at that time with uniatism. In the 18th century, the pseudomorphosis was Protestant, based in Protestant scholastic theology, mostly from Germany. Finally, in the 19th century, German philosophical idealism produced a new form of the pseudomorphosis of Orthodox theology. The common denominator of all these forms of pseudomorphosis, according to Florovsky, was their scholastic character. In his main work, *Ways of Russian Theology*, where he tried to identify Eastern theology’s pseudomorphoses, he used the word “scholastic” and its derivatives around seventy times, always with negative connotations. For example, he described Catholic “scholasticism,” which had been introduced to the Russian Orthodox milieu through the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, as follows:

In practically every respect the Kiev collegium represents a radical break with the traditions of earlier schools in West Russia [...].⁶ Its students were hardly initiated into the heritage of the Orthodox East. Scholasticism was the focus of teaching. And it was not simply the ideas of individual scholastics that were expounded and assimilated, but the very spirit of scholasticism.⁷

In the 18th century, according to Florovsky, scholasticism was reintroduced to Russia after the reforms of Tsar Peter Romanov, again by the Ukrainians but now in a Protestant form. Its proponent was a close confederate of Peter in the church hierarchy, the Archbishop of Novgorod Feofan Prokopovych (1725–1736). For Florovsky, “Feofan did not simply borrow from 17th-century Protestant scholasticism, he belonged to it.”⁸ Speaking about Platon Levshin,

4 Florovsky, “Christianity and Civilization,” 14.

5 Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *Georges Florovsky and the Russian Religious Renaissance* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 179.

6 Florovsky saw Ukraine as a part of the “Russian world.”

7 Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, Part One, trans. Robert L. Nichols (Belmont MA: Nordland, 1979), 78.

8 Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, Part One, 124.

who was Metropolitan of Moscow at the turn of the 19th century (1775–1812), Florovsky lamented his theological method: “How greatly his outlook had been restricted by scholastic tradition and how little he sensed the church’s needs.”⁹ Probably the only positive hero in Florovsky’s narrative about the ways of Russian theology, Filaret Drozdov (1821–1867), the Metropolitan of Moscow was – in Florovsky’s eyes – an ardent opponent of scholasticism. He fought against “the captivity or slavery of scholasticism”¹⁰ but could not win this fight. The time for such a victory had not yet come. Florovsky believed that *his* time was the *kairos* put an end to “the slavery of scholasticism.” He personally led an assault against the scholastic windmills. Florovsky fought valiantly against scholasticism in his project of Neopatristic synthesis, which he described as a “return from scholasticism to patristics.”¹¹ There seems to be a contradiction, however, between two syntheses that Florovsky endorsed: “Churchified Hellenism” on the one hand and the anti-scholastic Neopatristics on the other.

Scholasticism

To demonstrate this inconsistency, we have to inquire about the origins of scholasticism. Its roots go back to Aristotle, who suggested identifying commonalities of different individual beings. This became the primary epistemological method during antiquity, including Christian antiquity and the Middle Ages. This method can be called scholastic. In other words, the bottom line of the scholastic method is the differentiation between particularities and generalities, as well as taxonomies that classify generalities.

Aristotle introduced degrees of generalities as species and genera and also established relations between them. He called them “things that are said” (τὰ λεγόμενα) and “predicates” (προσηγορίαι). In the later commentaries on Aristotle’s works, they became known as “voices” (φωναί, *voices*). In modern scholarship, they are usually called “categories” – after the treatise in which Aristotle discussed them most, “Κατηγορίαι.”¹² This treatise constitutes the core of the Aristotelian texts called “the Instrument” (Ὀργανον). Other texts in this

9 Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, Part One, 146.

10 Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, Part One, 211.

11 Discovered by Paul Gavrilyuk in Florovsky’s notes on the congress of Orthodox theologians in Athens in 1936; see Gavrilyuk, *Georges Florovsky*, 177.

12 L. Minio-Paluello, ed., *Aristotelis categoriae et liber de interpretatione* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949), 3–45; Aristotle, *Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, vol. 1, ed. Jonathan Barnes, trans. J. L. Ackrill (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 3–24.

group, also known as dialectical and logical, are *On Interpretation*,¹³ *Prior and Posterior Analytics*,¹⁴ and *Topics*.¹⁵ These texts were grouped in the first century BCE by the publisher of the Aristotelian corpus, Andronicus of Rhodes. Andronicus also commented on the *Categories*, but this commentary has not survived. He boosted interest in the Aristotelian studies in the Hellenistic period and opened doors for numerous commentaries on Aristotle that mushroomed into different philosophical schools.¹⁶

The Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry of Tyre (ca. 234–ca. 305 CE) penned the most famous commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*. The title of Porphyry's work is *Introduction* (Εἰσαγωγή).¹⁷ Porphyry believed that Aristotelian logic could be the best introduction to philosophy, and this applied not only to the Peripatetic but also to the Platonic school. Porphyry also believed that the Aristotelian categories could help reconcile Platonic and Aristotelian branches of philosophy. Such reconciliation became one of the goals of Neoplatonism. Other Neoplatonists after Porphyry followed his line and produced extensive commentaries on the *Categories*, including Dexippus¹⁸ and Simplicius of Cilicia.¹⁹ Simplicius was one of the latest representatives of the pagan school of Neoplatonism. He also wrote commentaries on the *Categories*, and these commentaries have survived.²⁰

The Neoplatonic school had two most important centers of teaching and research: Athens and Alexandria. Athenian Neoplatonism focused on

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- 13 Minio-Paluello, ed., *Aristotelis categoriae et liber de interpretatione*, 49–72; Aristotle, *Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 1, 25–38.
- 14 W. D. Ross, ed., *Aristotelis analytica priora et posteriora* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 3–183; Aristotle, *Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 1, trans. A. J. Jenkinson and Jonathan Barnes, 39–166.
- 15 Ross, *Aristotelis topica et sophisticorum elenchi* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 1–189; Aristotle, *Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 1, trans. W. A. Pickard-Cambridge, 167–277.
- 16 See Richard Sorabji, ed., *Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and Their Influence* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).
- 17 A. Busse, ed., *Porphyrii isagogae et in Aristotelis categorias commentarium* (Berlin: Reimer, 1887), 1–22; Porphyry, *Porphyry: Introduction*, trans. Jonathan Barnes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003).
- 18 Flourished in the middle of the 4th century CE, the disciple of Iamblichus (ca. 250–ca. 330 CE).
- 19 Flourished in the middle of the 6th century CE, the disciple of Ammonius (ca. 435/445–517/526) and Damascius (ca. 480–ca. 550).
- 20 A. Busse, ed., *Dexippii in Aristotelis categorias commentarium* (Berlin: Reimer, 1888), 1–71; Dexippus, *Dexippus: On Aristotle Categories*, trans. John Dillon (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); K. Kalbfleisch, ed., *Simplicii in Aristotelis categorias commentarium* (Berlin: Reimer, 1907), 1–438; Simplicius, *Simplicius on Aristotle's "Categories"*, trans. Michael Chase (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).

metaphysics and emphasized polytheism, while Alexandrian Neoplatonism concentrated on the logical categories. In Alexandria, Christians became interested in the *Categories* as well. We know of two Alexandrian Neoplatonic philosophers who lived in the 6th century and were disciples of Olympiodorus the Younger; they also wrote commentaries on the *Categories*.²¹ These two students had Christian names, Elias and David²² and were probably baptized Christians. One can hardly observe any Christian beliefs in their writings, apart from several brief references that the world is not eternal, as Neoplatonism taught, but was created by God.²³ Despite their work's purely scholastic character, it has been appropriated by the Christian theology with appreciation.

David's work was received in the Armenian Christian tradition with particular enthusiasm. He became an intellectual hero in Armenia and received an honorary title, "Invincible." Armenian scholars consider him an Armenian author who made a unique contribution to Armenian culture.²⁴ Indeed, the Armenian translations of David's commentaries on Aristotle's logical treatises and Porphyry's *Introduction*²⁵ became foundational for medieval Armenian philosophy and theology.²⁶

Another Christian Neoplatonic philosopher who studied in Alexandria, John Philoponus (ca. 490–ca. 570), was more consistent than David or Elias in applying Aristotelian categories to Christian theology. In particular, he fervently engaged in polemics against the Neoplatonic idea of the world's eternity

21 A. Busse, ed., *Olympiodori prolegomena et in categorias commentarium* (Berlin: Reimer, 1902); Sebastian Gertz trans., *Elias and David: Introductions to Philosophy Olympiodorus: Introduction to Logic* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

22 See Christian Wildberg, "Three Neoplatonic Introductions to Philosophy: Ammonius, David and Elias," *Hermathena* 149 (1990): 33–51.

23 See, for example, Gohar Muradyan, *David the Invincible: Commentary on Porphyry's Isagoge. Old Armenian Text with the Greek Original, an English Translation, Introduction and Notes* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 117.

24 See V. K. Čalojan, *Filosofija Davida Nepobedimogo* [Philosophy of David the Invincible] (Academy of Sciences of ASSR: Yerevan, 1946), 83. It is noteworthy to mention that the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts in Yerevan (Matenadaran) holds over 300 manuscripts with Armenian translation of David's commentaries on Porphyry's Introduction. See David Anaht (Nepobedimyi) [David the Invincible], *Analiz "Vvedenija" Porfirija* [Analysis of Porphyry's Introduction], trans. S. S. Arevshatjan (Yerevan: Izdatelstvo Akademii Nauk Armyanskoi SSR, 1976), v.

25 See David Anaht, *Analiz "Vvedenija" Porfirija*; Muradyan, *David the Invincible*.

26 See *Anonimnoje tolkovanie "Kategorii" Aristotela*. Ed. S. P. Lalafarjan and V. K. Čalojan (Yerevan: Izdatelstvo Akademii Nauk Armyanskoi SSR, 1961); Khosrovik Tagmanich, *Dogmatic Writings*, trans. Khachik Grigoryan (Yerevan: Ankyunacar, 2019).

and insisted on the Christian teaching that the world was created by God.²⁷ He also applied Aristotelian categories to explain the Trinity and Incarnation. He arrived at conclusions, however, that were rejected by other theological schools of his time. In particular, he claimed that the Christian God should be regarded as three separate beings and that Christ, as a single being, had only one nature.²⁸ As a result, the ecumenical council held in Constantinople in 680–681 condemned Philoponus posthumously. His interpretation of Christ's singularity was too radical even for the Miaphysites who, like Philoponus, advocated one nature in Christ. In contrast to Philoponus, they admitted the double consubstantiality of Christ, which was a way of saying that he is consubstantial with the Father according to his divinity and with us according to his humanity.

The church condemned Philoponus not because of his scholasticism, i.e., the use of the Aristotelian categories, but because he used them in the wrong way. All prominent theologians in late antiquity relied on these categories. According to Theodore of Raithu (flourished at the end of the 6th century and the beginning of the 7th), Severus of Antioch (ca. 465–538), one of the key participants in the controversies around the Council of Chalcedon (451), used to say that a good theologian has to be “trained in Aristotle's *Categories* and similar texts of outside philosophers.”²⁹

Theodore himself, who belonged to the Chalcedonian camp, which was opposed to the theological school of Severus, produced a handbook on logic called *Preparation* (Προπαρασκευή).³⁰ In this handbook, he systematically elaborated on various categories from the logical nomenclature of Aristotle and Porphyry. It became a popular handbook that has survived in many editions,³¹

27 Philoponus polemicized against the Neoplatonic philosopher Proclus (ca. 410–485); see H. Rabe, ed., Ioannes Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1899); Ioannis Philoponus, *Philoponus: Against Proclus on the Eternity of the World*, trans. Michael Share (London: Bloomsbury, 2014). He also elaborated on arguments in favor of creationism; see W. Reichardt, ed., *Joannis Philoponi de officio mundi libri vii* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1897); See also Richard Sorabji, ed., *Philoponus and the Rejection of Aristotelian Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987).

28 Michael Lang, *John Philoponus and the Controversies Over Chalcedon in the Sixth Century: A Study and Translation of the Arbitrator* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001).

29 Quoted by Theodore of Raithu, *Praeparatio* 10, Franz Diekamp, ed., *Analecta Patristica* (Rome: Pontificum Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1938), 200, 14–6.

30 Franz Diekamp, ed., *Analecta Patristica*. See also a study on this logical treatise by Ἀθανάσιος Νίκας [Athanasios Nikas], *Θεόδωρος τῆς Ραιθίου* [Theodoros of Raithou] (Athens: Holy Monastery of Sina Publications, 1981).

31 At least 24 manuscripts from the 10th through the 17th centuries contain this work; see Nikas, *Θεόδωρος τῆς Ραιθίου*, 17–19.

even though its author was condemned by the councils of Lateran (649) and Constantinople (680–681) for monoenergism. This was a doctrine³² that had emerged within Neochalcedonianism. The latter, in turn, tried to rearticulate the theological points of the Chalcedon in the theological language of Cyril of Alexandria (376–444).³³ Several other handbooks and reflections on the categories emerged to facilitate Christological debates within the same Neochalcedonian framework. A Neochalcedonian theologian who flourished at the end of the seventh century, Anastasius of Sinai, composed a *Guidebook* (Ὁδηγός) to the categories.³⁴ He instrumentalized the Aristotelian-Porphyrian dialectics to defend the teaching of two energies or operations (ἐνέργειαι) and two wills in Christ.

Anastasius' dyothelite approach to Neochalcedonianism was followed by John of Damascus (ca. 675–749) who compiled a summa of theology called *The Fountainhead of Knowledge* (Πηγὴ γνώσεως). This summa was scholastic not only because it sorted out the entire corpus of theology known in John's time in a systematic and almost dull way but also and primarily because it was garnished with a selection of categories: *Dialectica*.³⁵ In his logical introduction to Orthodox theology, John relied on Aristotle's *Categories*.³⁶ A prominent Syrian theologian, Theodore Abū Qurrah (ca. 750–ca. 825), followed in John of Damascus' steps. He summarized the Neochalcedonian dyothelite theology in Arabic, including a detailed exposition of the categories.³⁷ Through Theodore, the Aristotelian categories, having been elaborated by Christian theologians,

32 See Cyril Hovorun, *Will, Action and Freedom: Christological Controversies in the Seventh Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

33 See Charles Moeller, "Le chalcédonisme et le néo-chalcédonisme en Orient de 451 à la fin du VI^e siècle," ed. A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht, *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 1951) 637–720; Patrick Gray, "Neo-Chalcedonianism and the Tradition: From Patristic to Byzantine Theology," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 8 (1982): 61–70; Karl-Heinz Uthemann, "Der Neuchalkedonismus als Vorbereitung des Monotheletismus: Ein Beitrag zum eigentlichen Anliegen des Neuchalkedonismus," *Studia Patristica* 29 (1997): 373–413.

34 Karl-Heinz Uthemann, ed., *Anastasiū Sinaitae Viae Dux* (Turnhout: Leuven University Press, 1981).

35 There are shorter (earlier) and longer (later) editions of the *Dialectica*; see Bonifatius Kotter, ed., *Die Schriften des Iohannes von Damaskos, Band 1: Institutio elementaris: Capita philosophica (Dialectica)* (Patristische Texte und Studien, 7, Berlin, 1969), 51–146; John of Damascus, *John of Damascus: Writings*, trans. Frederic H. Chase (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1958).

36 Andrew Louth, *St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 40.

37 Najib George Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms: A Study of Theodore Abu Qurrah's Theology in Its Islamic Context* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015).

were transmitted to the Arabic language and world. Muslim scholars continued reflecting on them from their perspective. In particular, Abū Qurrah influenced such thinkers as Al-Kindī (d. 870), Jābir Ibn Hayyān (d. 925/35), Ishāq Al-Isrāīli (d. c. 932), Ibn Suwār (d. 1017), and Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037). They also used Syriac compendiums of the categories, which had been composed by Christian authors like Sergius of Resh'aina (d. 536), Ahoudemmah (d. 575), 'Enanishū (flourished around 650), Severus Sebokht (d. 667), Jacob of Edessa (d. 708), Severus bar Shakko (d. 1241), and Yūhannā bar Zo'bi (flourished in the 13th century) and others.³⁸ Arab logicians, in their turn, influenced Western scholastics.

Even more, the posterior Western dialectics was influenced by the systematic expositions of the categories in the Eastern Christian theology, which we have just examined. There were even more Eastern *non-systematic* scholastic reflections in the East, which influenced Western scholasticism. For example, Maximus the Confessor (ca. 580–662) remarked that he preferred to address the categories not in the “book-writing” but the “letter-writing” format.³⁹ Despite his brevity on the categories, Maximus appeared to be among the most insightful logicians in the Eastern Christian tradition.⁴⁰ His take on the categories was particularly innovative. It is also noteworthy that Maximus approached logic within the frame of the Christological controversies, from the perspective of Neochalcedonianism.⁴¹ In his dialectical reflections, Maximus relied on the analytical work of the Neonicæans, who had applied categories to solve the main theological problem of the 4th century: how God can be simultaneously singular and plural. They used the Aristotelian distinction between generality and particularity to address this issue. The first who adopted this distinction was the Neonicæan theologian Apollinaris of Laodicea (ca. 310–ca. 390).⁴² His view was upgraded by the Cappadocians, who suggested calling the former

38 Mossman Rouechè, “A Middle Byzantine Handbook of Logic Terminology,” *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 29 (1980): 71–98, 74–5.

39 *Opera* 21; PG 91, 248.

40 Melchisedec Törönen, *Union and Distinction in the Thought of St Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

41 Cyril Hovorun, “Maximus, a Cautious Neo-Chalcedonian,” eds. Pauline Allen and Neil Bronwen, *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 106–24.

42 Johannes Zachhuber, “Universals in the Greek Church Fathers,” in *Universals in Ancient Philosophy*, eds. Riccardo Chiaradonna and Gabriele Galluzzo (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2014), 428. See also, Kelley McCarthy Spoerl, *A Study of the Κατὰ Μέρος Πίστεως by Apollinaris of Laodicea*, PhD diss. (University of Toronto, 1991).

“essence” (οὐσία) and the latter “hypostasis” (ὑπόστασις).⁴³ The Cappadocian suggestion became a standard in later Christian theology. This standard was scholastic.

Scholasticism is often accused of being dry and suffocating for spirituality. But its metaphysical dryness was precisely why Christians extracted it from pagan philosophy to express their theology. The reason why Christian theologians appropriated the dialectical method of Aristotle and his later Neoplatonic commentators was their concentration on logic and not metaphysics. Christian theologians rejected much of classical metaphysics but embraced much of classical dialectics. That was the main reason why Porphyry became so popular in Christian theology. Religiously, he was a practicing polytheist. Porphyry believed in the Greek gods and participated enthusiastically in pagan rites. He was also a convinced anti-Christian. He even took the trouble to compose a long polemical treatise against Christianity.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, when it came to logics, he preferred to adhere to a metaphysical neutrality. He also encouraged his fellow Neoplatonists to keep logics separate from their religion. That is why his *Introduction* became the most popular handbook of logics for generations of the Christian theologians and students, right up until modernity. In the words of Jonathan Barnes, “Other philosophical introductions may have sold more copies: none has had – or is likely to have – a longer career.”⁴⁵

Aristotelian-Porphyrion dialectics, which lies at the foundation of scholasticism, became the treasure of Hellenism, which was valued the most by the Christian theologians. Among all the treasures of classical Greek culture, Christian theologians chose scholastics as the most appropriate for Christianity. Classical scholastics thus constituted the core of what Florovsky called “Churchified Hellenism.” If we apply Florovsky’s claim that Hellenism had been “dissected with the sword of Christian Revelation,” then this dissection

43 See especially letter 38 ascribed to Basil of Caesarea but probably authored by Gregory of Nyssa: Y. Courtonne, ed., *Saint Basile Lettres* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1957–66); Basil of Caesarea, *Basil of Caesarea. The Letters*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1986); see also Johannes Zachhuber, *The Rise of Christian Theology and the End of Ancient Metaphysics: Patristic Philosophy from the Cappadocian Fathers to John of Damascus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

44 Only fragments of Porphyry’s *Contra Christianos* have survived and were first published by Adolf von Hamack, ed., *Porphyrius Gegen die Christen* (Abhandlungen der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosoph.-hist. Kl. 1., Berlin: Reimer, 1916). The most recent publication in a German translation is by Matthias Becker: *Porphyrios, Contra Christianos: Neue Sammlung der Fragmente, Testimonien und Dubia mit Einleitung, Übersetzung und Anmerk* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015). See also Robert M. Berchman, *Porphyry Against the Christians* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

45 Porphyry, *Introduction*, ix.

separated pagan metaphysics from metaphysically neutral dialectics. Fathers of the Church rejected the former and adopted the latter.

In contrast to the patristic appropriation of Neoplatonic dialectics, Florovsky introduced his Neopatristic synthesis as the opposite of scholasticism. He urged the Orthodox Church to leave the scholastics and return to the church fathers. The irony, however, is that when we go back to the fathers, we will inevitably arrive at scholasticism. The most influential fathers were scholastics, including Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Leontius of Byzantium, Maximus the Confessor, Anastasius of Sinai, John of Damascus, and others. They represent the highest points of patristic scholasticism. These points coincided with the theological debates about God and the Incarnation. One cannot imagine how Eastern Christian doctrine, which was articulated as an outcome of these debates, could be possible without scholastics. High Byzantine scholasticism predated Western scholasticism by seven centuries. Eastern scholasticism reached its peak in the Neochalcedonian Christology during the 6th to 8th centuries. In the West, high scholasticism emerged only in the 13th and 14th centuries.

Even if we take the most famous debate in the Western medieval scholasticism, that between nominalists and universalists, we can find its prototype in the East. For example, John Philoponus was a convinced nominalist. For him, only particularities can exist, whereas generalities exist only in one's mind:

Each common thing is constructed by our intellect from particulars. For this reason, the Ancients called such things posterior and intellectual beings. For, correctly speaking, Peter, John and every individual man are animal and substance, and the same goes for this horse and that ox. However, these names passed from these (particulars) to what is called genera and species, that is, from things which subsist in substance to those which are inferred by our intellect.⁴⁶

In contrast to Philoponus, Maximus the Confessor believed that generalities have some objective existence outside of human imagination. He called them *logoi* and traced them back to the creation of the world. God created the world using these *logoi* as blueprints for particular things, which would come to existence through the act of creation:

From all eternity, He (the Logos) contained within Himself the pre-existing *logoi* of created beings. When, in His goodwill, He formed out of nothing the

46 Fragment 1 in A. van Roey, "Les fragments trithéites de Jean Philopon," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 11 (1980): 148; see also the English translation in Christophe Erismann, "John Philoponus on Individuality and Particularity," in *Individuality in Late Antiquity*, ed. Johannes Zachhuber and Alexis Torrance (London: Routledge, 2014), 148.

substance of the visible and invisible worlds, He did so on the basis of these logoi. By his *word (logos) and His wisdom He created* and continues to create *all things* (see Wis 9:1–2) – universals as well as particulars – at the appropriate time. We believe, for example, that a logos of angels preceded and guided their creation; and the same holds true for each of the *beings and powers* (see 1 Pet 3:22) that fill the world above us. A logos of human beings likewise preceded their creation, and – in order not to speak of particulars – a logos preceded the creation of everything that has received its being from God.⁴⁷

Now we can see the contradiction within the project of Neopatristic synthesis suggested by Georges Florovsky better. On the one hand, he praises “Christian Hellenism,” whose best fruit, as we have demonstrated, was Byzantine scholasticism. On the other hand, he considers scholasticism the most dangerous threat to Orthodox theology, the reason for its pseudomorphosis. The same thing is a blessing and a curse for him – depending on where it comes from: East or West.

Eurasian Temptation

It becomes clear that the idea of pseudomorphosis in Florovsky is not just a theological or historical concept. It is also a political program, a key term in his political theology. Florovsky’s political theology was shaped by Eurasian doctrine that advocated and still advocates a distinct Eurasian civilization. The spiritual ancestors of the Eurasian movement were Slavophiles. Both groups believed that Russia constitutes the core of a self-sufficient civilization with Orthodox Christianity shaping its distinctiveness from the West above all. Both the Slavophile and Eurasian movements were anti-Western; they regarded the West as another civilization that claims to be universal. In this role, so Eurasians believed, the West has imposed on Russia civilizational patterns that are alien to its unique standing in history. The Eurasian view of the West is dystopian. To the Eurasians, Russia appears as a utopia. In the words of the co-founder of Eurasianism, Nikolai Trubeckoi (1890–1938), “While Russia was budding a culture which was crowned with the Byzantine cupola, the structure endured; when the roof was replaced with the Romano-Germanic culture, the whole edifice crumbled.”⁴⁸

47 Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum ad Johannem* 7, 15–6; idem, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, vol. 1, trans. Nicholas Constas (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 95–7.

48 Nikolai Trubeckoi, “Verhi i nizey russkoi kul'tury,” [Highs and Lows of Russian Culture] *Iskhod k Vostoku: Predčuvstviya I sveršenija* [Exodus to the East: Anticipations and Accomplishments] (Sofia, 1921), 101; see also the English translation: Gavriilyuk, *Georges Florovsky*, 65.

The Eurasian movement's political program consisted of building a powerful state that would protect and enhance the unique Eurasian civilization. But the attitude to the role of the state differentiated the Slavophile movement from the Eurasian movement. For the Eurasians – unlike the Slavophile – the state plays a crucial role in maintaining the civilization, which is supposed to include not only Slavs but also various peoples of Asia. The Eurasians acknowledged a constructive role played by the Mongolian invasion of Rus' in shaping Russian civilization.

In his early years, from his mid-twenties through his mid-thirties, Georges Florovsky was under the spell of Eurasianism. He contributed to the three collections of Eurasianist essays: *Exodus to the East* (1921), *On the Ways* (1922) and *Russia and Latinity* (1923). When he claimed a greater role for himself in the movement, he was denied.⁴⁹ This upset him. Some ideological developments within the movement also alarmed Florovsky. In particular, he disagreed with the state's outsized role, which other Eurasians supported. Florovsky distanced himself from the Eurasians' readiness to endorse dictatorships if the latter would help them achieve their political ideals. Florovsky eventually broke up with the Eurasian movement and marked this by publishing an article "Temptation by Eurasianism."⁵⁰ Later on, Florovsky tried to downplay his involvement in the Eurasian movement.

Although he publicly denounced Eurasianism, it seems Florovsky could not get rid of it completely. I agree on this account with the conclusions of Paul Gavrilyuk. On the one hand, "Florovsky eventually left the movement," and "his association with the Eurasians is commonly viewed as having had little impact on his subsequent historical and theological work." On the other hand, "he remained attracted to some aspects of the Eurasian teaching, as he understood it, to the end of his life."⁵¹ An example of such a lasting impact of Eurasianism on Florovsky's mind is the concept of the exodus from captivity. It was a Eurasian concept by which the Eurasians expressed their desire to exit the civilizational captivity of the West. Florovsky effectively extrapolated this concept to theology. As Gavrilyuk remarked, "in essence, in *The Ways of Russian Theology*, Florovsky offered his own religious-historiographic version of the Eurasian 'exodus to the East.'⁵²

In my judgment, Florovsky's concept of the Western pseudomorphosis of Eastern theology became a sublimation of his earlier Eurasian views. The

49 Trubeckoi, "Verhi i nizy russkoi kultury," 76–7.

50 G. V. Florovsky, "Iskušenie evraziistvom" [The Eurasian Temptation] *Sovremennye zapiski* 34 (1928): 312–46.

51 Gavrilyuk, *Georges Florovsky and the Russian Religious Renaissance*, 60.

52 Florovsky, "Iskušenie evraziistvom," 66.

link between them is Occidentalism – the fear and mistrust of the West.⁵³ Occidentalism is the first article in the Eurasian creed. It remained deeply rooted in Florovsky's thought even after he rejected Eurasianism. It is difficult otherwise to explain how the same scholasticism is acceptable for Florovsky when it is a part of the Eastern Hellenism, and a pseudomorphosis when it is a result of Western influences.

It is noteworthy that Florovsky's concept of pseudomorphosis comes from the work of Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*.⁵⁴ This work was also one of the main inspirations for the Eurasian movement. Spengler's definition of pseudomorphosis covers that of Florovsky:

By the term "historical pseudomorphosis" I propose to designate those cases in which an older alien Culture lies so massively over the land that a young Culture cannot get its breath and fails not only to achieve pure and specific expression-forms, but even to develop fully its own self-consciousness.⁵⁵

Moreover, Spengler applied the concept of pseudomorphosis to early modern Russia in a way similar to what we find in the *Ways of Russian Theology*:

This Muscovite period of the great Boyar families and Patriarchs, in which a constant element is the resistance of an Old Russia party to the friends of Western culture, is followed, from the founding of Petersburg in 1703 by the pseudomorphosis which forced the primitive Russian soul into the alien mould, first of full Baroque, then of the Enlightenment and then of the nineteenth century. The fate-figure in Russian history is Peter the Great.⁵⁶

In conclusion, I believe, Florovsky's idea of the pseudomorphosis of Orthodox theology became a pseudomorphosis in his own theology. It is a euphemism that indirectly promotes the hidden Eurasian agenda. This agenda, which remained somewhere deep in his mind even though he had publicly rejected it, led him to a logical inconsistency in evaluating scholasticism. Florovsky's attitude to scholasticism was quite dualistic. He rejected its every form as evil and counterposed an idealized Patristic thought. But he overlooked the fact that this thought was imbued with scholasticism in its original sense. Moreover, the most prominent theologians of the early church, whom Florovsky brought as

53 Cyril Hovorun, *Political Orthodoxies: The Unorthodoxies of the Church Coerced* (Minneapolis MN: Fortress, 2018) 96–7.

54 Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2017).

55 Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, trans. George Allen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 268.

56 Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, 271.

theological standards, had deliberately chosen classical scholasticism to serve them as a logical apparatus to express Christian doctrine. Among the variety of philosophical ideas that ancient philosophy could offer, Christian theologians opted for scholastic/logical categories. The dryness and metaphysical neutrality of these categories was not a disadvantage but an advantage – from the perspective of the Christian metaphysics. Classical scholasticism became that part of Hellenism that was appropriated by the church after it had been dissected from classical metaphysics. Scholasticism is the core of the “Churchified Hellenism” that Florovsky appreciated so much.