Introduction

This article explores the nature and direction of the influence of Max Weber’s sociology on the development of Sophiology through an analysis of Sergei Bulgakov’s implicit and explicit references to Weber in the period from 1904 until 1912. According to Lev Zander, Bulgakov developed his Sophiology first into sociological or monistic Sophiology, and later toward a theological and mono-dualistic Sophiology. This development consisted largely of a change in the ontological status of Sophia from a person or hypostasis of God to the nature or energy of God. Bulgakov, however, continued to express the ontic or sociological content of Sophiology in similar terms in L’Orthodoxie in 1932.

In Bulgakov’s implicit and explicit references to Weber, his opposition to abstract Rationalism as the methodology of sociology, and as the presumed foundation or relating force of social life and organization, as well as his positive appreciation of Weber’s Protestant ethic as an inner-worldly praxis are apparent. Bulgakov developed a similar praxis in Orthodox podvizhnichestvo. Bulgakov identified the core mistake in both Western and Russian abstract Rationalism, as the confusion of means and ends, or as Heroism and Man-godhood. In contradistinction to sociology, which, as social politics, can only...
contribute to the negative freedom of the individual, Sophiology contributes to positive human freedom in sobornost’.\(^5\)

**Sergei Bulgakov’s postponed reaction to Max Weber**

Iurii Davydov’s careful study of Max Weber’s influence on Sergei Bulgakov’s work\(^6\) could not detect a response by Bulgakov to Weber’s *Protestant Ethic and the ‘Spirit’ of Capitalism* when it appeared in 1904 and 1905 in the *Archive for Social Sciences and Social Politics*.\(^7\) According to Davydov, Bulgakov furthermore never reacted to Weber’s articles on the Russian Revolution of 1905. This was even more astonishing, as the articles simultaneously appeared in Russian translation in 1906.\(^8\) Apparently, Bulgakov also paid no attention to Weber’s methodological articles of this period, notably “Objectivity in Social Science” (1904), “Roscher and Knies” (1905/1906), and “Stammler” (1907).\(^9\) Nevertheless, it seems impossible that Bulgakov failed to read these articles, as he had a subscription and contributed himself to the *ASS*.\(^10\) Furthermore, the subjects of capitalism, the Russian revolution and the methodology of political economy were in the center of Bulgakov’s interest.

Davydov put forward several explanations for Bulgakov’s postponed reaction to Weber. First, Bulgakov was heavily involved in political and Christian socialist activities. Second, Bulgakov disagreed with Weber’s evaluation of

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7. Weber was co-editor of the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaften und Sozialpolitik* (further referred to as *ASS*) and most of his work from 1904-1917 was first published in the *ASS*.

8. All references to Max Weber are from Max Weber, *Gesammelte Werke*, Mohr Siebeck, digitale Bibliothek, CD-ROM, further referred to as *GW*. This involves also his “Russia-articles” – “Zur Lage der bürgerlichen Demokratie in Rußland” (*ASS*, 1905) and “Rußlands Übergang zum Scheinkonstitutionalismus” (*ASS*, 1906) that were also published as *Istoricheskii ocherk oboboditel’nogo dvizheniia v Rossii i polozenie burzhuaznoi demokratii* (Moscow, 1906).
