

THEOCRACY AND APOCALYPSE: Political Theology of Artur Mrówczyński-Van Allen

Paweł Rojek

Between the Icon and the Idol. The Human Person and the Modern State in Russian Literature and Thought: Chaadayev, Soloviev, Grossman. By Artur Mrówczyński-Van Allen. Translated by Matthew Philipp Whelan. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books 2013, pp. 164.

The life of Vladimir Soloviev revealed the fundamental dilemma of Christian political theology. Soloviev devoted many a year to developing principles of a Christian political system. In his famous *Lectures on Divine Humanity* he tried to draw political conclusions from Christology, and in *Russia and the Universal Church* he formulated a Trinitarian ideal of society. Shortly before his death, however, he apparently lost confidence in the possibility of implementing a Christian political ideal, and in his last work, *Short Story of the Anti-Christ*, he anticipated a imminent apocalypse.¹ It

¹ See Vladimir Soloviev's *Lectures on Divine Humanity*, trans. Boris Jakim (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press 1995), *Russia and the Universal Church*, trans. Herbert Rees (London: The Centenary Press 1948), and *War, Progress, and the End of History: Three Conversations, Including a Short Story of the Anti-Christ* (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press 1990).

seemed that the state in which he previously saw a means of implementing the kingship of God, he eventually deemed the Antichrist's tool. So, the fundamental alternative is the following: is Christ's kingship related to—as Soloviev thought for many years—making some theocratic political ideal real in history by human efforts, or—as he seemed to maintain at the end of his life—is it only eschatological in nature, and will happen only by God's action and beyond time?

I would like to ponder here the answer to this fundamental question, formulated by Artur Mrówczyński-Van Allen and inspired by the tradition of Russian religious thought, particularly by Soloviev's history. Mrówczyński-Van Allen is one of the most interesting Polish Christian thinkers, and the Granada school of Archbishop Javier Martínez, of which he is a significant member, is one of the most interesting intellectual phenomena in Europe. In his works, Mrówczyński-Van Allen combines modern post-secular philosophy with the tradition of Russian thought in an original manner. The book *Between the Icon and the Idol. The Human Person and the Modern State in Russian Literature and Thought: Chaadayev, Soloviev, Grossman*,² published recently in the U.S., is a summary of his research up to now. In this work, the author not only presents a contemporary interpretation of Russian thought, but also formulates an original idea of political theology, though he distances himself from this term. More precisely, Russian thought is used by him—in the spirit of the late Soloviev—to criticise the modern state, which turns out to be an institution that is by nature totalitarian and impervious to Christian transformation. It seems, however, that despite his reluctance to the modern state, Mrówczyński-Van Allen avoids the passive apocalypticism so characteristic nowadays of a certain circle of Polish

² Artur Mrówczyński-Van Allen, *Between the Icon and the Idol. The Human Person and the Modern State in Russian Literature and Thought: Chaadayev, Soloviev, Grossman*, trans. Matthew Philipp Whelan (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books 2013). Numbers in brackets in the body of the text indicate page numbers of this book.

Catholic intelligentsia.³ This may be noticed especially in his further works, in which he develops some ideas presented in his book. In his recent essay “Eklezjoteja” [Ekklesiotēia], as yet published in Polish only, he points out that the Church is not merely a particular form of political community itself, but that it may also shape the surrounding institutions.⁴ This fact, in turn—as I will try to show—may pose the problem of a Christian state anew.

RUSSIAN IDEA

Mrówczyński-Van Allen's book concerns the relation of man to state in Russian thought. Reference precisely to Russian thought of the 19th and 20th centuries is not incidental. According to the author, although Russian thought is “largely unknown in the West,” it “belongs to the most valuable heritage of human thought ... a heritage that still offers answers to many of the questions before which Western philosophy remains powerless.”⁵ It is so because Russian religious writers and philosophers formulated a Christian alternative to the Western formula of modernity. The so called Russian Idea, says the author, is “nothing more than an attempt to find an alternative to the tendency—so characteristic of contemporary civilization—to build humankind on the basis of the temporal and the finite, leaving behind the religious dimension.”⁶ Russian thought is therefore fundamentally integral. In fact, there has never been either a

³ The intellectual center of the Polish present-day apocalypticism seems to be the journal *Czterdzieści i Cztery*, see its manifesto: Rafał Tichy, “Czas na Apokalipsę,” *Czterdzieści i Cztery* 2 (2008): 4–53.

⁴ Artur Mrówczyński-Van Allen, “Eklezjoteja. Wprowadzenie do Patrystycznych Źródeł Unionizmu w Kontekście Unii Horodelskiej,” *Presje* 38 (2014): 76–92. The essay was published together with polemical comments by Paweł Grad, Tomasz Kurzydło, Jan Maciejewski, Paweł Rojek, and Marcin Suskiewicz, as well as the author's replies to them.

⁵ Mrówczyński-Van Allen, *Between the Icon and the Idol*, 80.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 92.

Renaissance or an Enlightenment in Russia, and this is why the Russian tradition, to a great extent, avoided the dualism so characteristic of Western tradition. Russian thinkers, says Mrówczyński-Van Allen, “reject the separation between supernatural and natural, or between religion and politics”⁷ and propose, as he puts it, “the experiment in the return to the union between faith and reason, between theology and philosophy.”⁸ So it seems that in many respects Russian thought anticipated the criticism of modernity formulated by Radical Orthodoxy, a fact that has already been noticed in the West.⁹

The long subtitle of Mrówczyński-Van Allen’s book indicates three authors to whom he devotes the most attention. The first of them is Pyotr Chaadayev, one of the first Russian philocatholics, spiritual father of Westernisers, officially declared insane by Tsar Nicholas I’s regime. Mrówczyński-Van Allen convincingly accounts for the mysterious fact of the sudden change from his radical Westernism into a near Slavophilia. Chaadayev initially believed that Russia could learn from Europe how to build a Christian social and political system. When, in 1830, he realised that Europe had forsaken this task, he started to proclaim that Russia had an independent mission. In the end, however, Russia’s task in both periods of his thought was basically the same—the implementation of the kingdom of God on Earth. Incidentally, Mrówczyński-Van Allen reminds readers about the strong influence of Catholicism on Russian culture; however, the assessment of this impact is not at all unambiguous,

⁷ *Ibid.*, xvi.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁹ Adrian Pabst and Christoph Schneider, “Transfiguring the World through the Word,” in *Encounter Between Eastern Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy*, eds. Adrian Pabst, and Christoph Schneider (Burlington, VT: Ashgate 2009), 1–25.

because, for example, the great influence of Latin scholastics among secular clergy barred the Orthodox from the heritage of Church fathers.¹⁰

Another broadly commented upon author is Vladimir Soloviev. Mrówczyński-Van Allen accentuates the essential theocentricism of his philosophy: "Soloviev's work was characterized by the conviction that the Incarnation of God, Jesus Christ, was the central event in the history of humankind, in the whole cosmic process, and that it comprised the centre of all human *theoria* and *praxis*."¹¹ Theocentricism led Soloviev to the ideal of theocracy, that is, Christian politics.¹² It is noteworthy that Mrówczyński-Van Allen is more interested by Soloviev's apocalyptic turn than by his theocratic search. He remarks that "in his final work, the idea of a Christian state disappeared to give a way to the final design of the United Church as the antithesis of the state."¹³ The impulse for this sudden change was allegedly a deeply personal experience of evil and perception of a dangerous distortion of the Christian ideal in the doctrines of Tolstoy, Marx, and Nietzsche. The author positively assesses the turn from theocracy to eschatology. It is precisely the recognition of the state as Antichrist that "enables us to situate Soloviev's vision within the most genuine Christian tradition,"¹⁴ a tradition that Mrówczyński-Van Allen recognises himself as heir to as well.

The third author referred to is Vasily Grossman. Finding philosophical themes in Russian literature is hardly surprising; indeed, the integral Russian tradition does not clearly distinguish these spheres. However, reaching for a

¹⁰ Mrówczyński-Van Allen, *Between the Icon and the Idol*, 44–5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹² See Paweł Rojek, "Mesjańska teologia polityczna Włodzimierza Sołowjowa," *Presyje* 28 (2012): 160–70.

¹³ Mrówczyński-Van Allen, *Between the Icon and the Idol*, 97.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

Soviet writer whose work has not seen many interpretations yet seems, in my opinion, very original. Mrówczyński-Van Allen holds that Grossman “masterfully translates Soloviev’s ontology and eschatology into the language of personal experience,”¹⁵ whereby evidently the ontology and eschatology of Soloviev’s last, apocalyptic period is meant. Grossman was a sharp critic of the modern state, which he saw—no less than the late Soloviev—as a dangerous idol. As the author says, “with absolute mastery and outstanding perspicacity did he interpret the totalitarian nature of contemporary society and identified the idolatric nature of contemporary state.”¹⁶ Mrówczyński-Van Allen notices that the antithesis of the Moloch-state is, in Grossman’s novels, the woman-mother figure, able to sacrifice and to give life; the answer to the banality of evil is the quotidianity of good.

In this way the lineage of Russian thought is concluded. It started from the sentiment of Russia’s great historical mission, then yielded moving theocratic projects, next passed through the piercing experience of eviland, finally, ended in a silent private resistance against the totalitarian state. According to Mrówczyński-Van Allen, the most important message of the Russian Idea concerns exactly the problem of state. “We are not condemned to the slavery of the Antichrist’s ‘kingdom of death,’ of the modern state. We are continually given the possibility of living in freedom. And this freedom can only be given to us by Jesus Christ, and the space of this freedom is the Church.”¹⁷ The alternative to the state is the community of the Church. The originality of Mrówczyński-Van Allen’s interpretation is that this alternative is of a public and not merely private character.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, xvi.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 115.

STATE

Mrówczyński-Van Allen's book is about the "interpretation of totalitarianism from within a tradition of Russian thought" (2013: xvi). According to the author, the living tradition of Eastern Christianity allowed for a much deeper diagnosis of, and more radical response to, totalitarianism than the secularised Western tradition, and Russian society more effectively resisted totalitarianism than, for instance, the German one. The problem of totalitarianism is not, however, a merely historical issue, as for Mrówczyński-Van Allen any modern state is by nature totalitarian. He suggests that the concept of the totalitarian state, likewise of the modern state, is essentially a pleonasm.¹⁸ I will try to briefly reconstruct here the argument that leads to this rather radical and perhaps surprising statement.

Man faces a fundamental choice between idol and icon. This popular distinction is interpreted by Mrówczyński-Van Allen in a rather general yet subtle way. Idol is an image of itself, while icon refers to something other. Hence idol assumes self-deification, does not require transcending itself or giving to others, whereas icon refers to something higher, implies incessant self-transcendence, a giving of itself to others. Man was created as icon and not idol. Being in the mode of idol is based on renunciation of God, and being as icon is accepting Him. Idolatric existence is responsible for individualism, egoism, and, eventually, alienation, while iconic life leads to community, love, and a wholesome life. In the former case, man creates a totalitarian state; in the latter, he lives in a freedom-giving community. Thus, the title of the book *Between the Icon and the Idol* becomes clear.

The idolatric state is based on a completely different principle of action than are iconic communities. Mrówczyński-Van Allen's analyses departs from

¹⁸ Ibid., 122.

Maximus the Confessor's distinction between the difference (*diafora*) and the division (*diairesis*). In a state, unlike in a community, differences between people lead to division between them.¹⁹ Hence, as he asserts next, the state "entices to oppose evil with counter evil,"²⁰ is based on "mutual interests"²¹ and the "logic of accusation,"²² whereas communities do just the opposite; namely, they invite forgiveness, assume gratuitousness, and are based on the logic of gift. The state aims at universalisation of its principle and, gradually, provided that it does not encounter opposition, replacing communities that act in a different way. Spheres of Christian life abandoned by communities are taken over by impersonal state law. Consequently, according to the author, "the ministry of justice stealthily usurps the place of the ministry of forgiveness, conquering us with the logic of accusation and erecting its power upon the structure of institutionalized vengeance."²³ As a result, the contemporary state, exactly like the totalitarian one, leads to the destruction of communities within it. Mrówczyński-Van Allen reiterates: "Paraphrasing St. Augustine, we might describe the modern state as *privatio communitatis*;"²⁴ "The fundamental characteristic of modern society, and therefore of the modern state, is *privatio communitatis*."²⁵ *Privatio communitatis*, or lack of community, is exactly what we call—following Hannah Arendt—totalitarianism.

This argument leads to the conclusion that the liberal state—as basically every state—is by nature no less totalitarian than a Nazi or communist state. All these

¹⁹ Ibid., 125.

²⁰ Ibid., 146.

²¹ Ibid., 125.

²² Ibid., 147.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., xxv.

²⁵ Ibid., 141.

forms, Mrówczyński-Van Allen says, "belong to the one and the same tradition. They are human creations, made in the image and likeness of humans."²⁶ The author provides two evocative pieces of evidence of this internal identity. On one hand, he notes that the same company that produced Zyklon-B for the Auschwitz concentration camp today produces the abortion pill RU 486 for the needs of liberal society.²⁷ On the other hand, he notices that the communist *homo sovieticus* once described by Russian writer Alexander Zinoviev does not in essence differ from a representative of a liberal Generation P, depicted nowadays by Victor Pelevin.²⁸ In the systems of modern states there exists a concordance of fundamental principles, a continuity of the most important institutions, and a unity of anthropological types produced.

CHURCH

The opposite of the idolatric state is the iconic Church. While the state is based on impersonal exchanges, the Church postulates gratuitous donations. The Church is the paradigm and source of all communities; hence, it also represents the greatest rival to the modern state and for this reason has been ruthlessly fought by every form of state organisation.

Mrówczyński-Van Allen insightfully remarks, referring to William Cavanaugh, that Church community is based on the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. He says: "Christian participation in the growth of Christ's body itself questions the false order imposed by the state. Christian participation in the Eucharist disables the false theology and the false anthropology of the self's isolated will,"²⁹ and

²⁶ Ibid., 83.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 91–2.

²⁹ Ibid., xxvii.

further, “The event of the Incarnation, renewed at every Eucharist, reminds us of our nature as icons, as sons and daughters of God. It overcomes the alienation in which the idol of the modern state mires us.”³⁰ Therefore, as he writes in one of his Polish works, “there is probably no Christian category more alien to the secular mind than sacrament and sacramental logic.”³¹

The idea of the sacramental basis of community is developed in the essay “Teologia Ciała jako Teologia Oporu” [Theology of Body as Theology of Resistance].³² The author remarks that family is the fundamental form of community; it relies on the unity of bodies and community of blood. The Eucharist allows for the spreading of this special kind of specific community to all the Church created by it. “Ties of blood, which bound classical community, spread among all people. Real and novel Christ-centric community of Church, community of Christ’s body, became attainable.”³³ And further: “the centre of our *politeia* is Eucharist, and its fulfillment—the universal coronation of Christ as the king of universe—its first act is in the spouses’ bedchamber.”³⁴

Mrówczyński-Van Allen emphatically asserts that the Church is a public and political community. In my opinion, this is one of the most significant statements of his political theology. According to the secular view, the state has a monopoly in the public sphere, and the Church may at most deal with the faith of individual citizens and their behaviour in the private sphere. Contrary to that, Mrówczyński-Van Allen claims: “The primary issue, the fundamental issue,

³⁰ Ibid., xvii.

³¹ Artur Mrówczyński-Van Allen, “Wyobrażenia Teo-polityczna (2). Nowa Teologia Polityczna,” *Fronda* 54 (2010): 88–107.

³² Artur Mrówczyński-Van Allen, “Teologia Ciała jako Teologia Oporu,” *Fronda* 61 (2011): 66–99.

³³ Ibid., 84–5.

³⁴ Ibid., 94.

consists in rediscovering the identity of the Christian community as a community that possesses a natural political dimension,"³⁵ though he realises that such a declaration is always perceived by defenders of the state as an illegitimate usurpation.

The political character of Church does not and cannot, however, mean—and this is the second fundamental statement—that it shares the character of the state. Mrówczyński-Van Allen repeats, following Cavanaugh, that the Church “should have no desire for the power of the state.”³⁶ He elucidates: “Communion ... is no flight from politics, but rather a radical break from the false politics of the *civitas terrena*. Its politics are false in the sense that the modern state as such is false, because it is only a degraded and banal copy of the body of Christ.”³⁷ The concept of the political is therefore clearly distinguished from the concept of the state. The Church—contrary to the views of secularists—has to be political, but—counter to the views of theocrats—cannot be state.

Now I will try to bring a level of systematization to Mrówczyński-Van Allen's remarks, relying upon the reconstruction of his ideas on the nature of the state presented above. It appears that his opinions rely on distinguishing two dimensions: the logic of action and the sphere of action. On one hand, people may act according to the logic of interest or the logic of gift. On the other, they may act in the private sphere or public one. Combining these two dimensions gives four possible kinds of human relations.

³⁵ Mrówczyński-Van Allen, *Between the Icon and the Idol*, xxvi–xxvii.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, xxvii.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

	<i>private sphere</i>	<i>public sphere</i>
<i>logic of interest</i>	market	state
<i>logic of gift</i>	family	church

The market is an example of logic of interest in the private sphere. In the economic game, at least as it is understood in modern times, there is no place for gift and mercy. It is supposed to be likewise in the case of the state, which acts on the principle of logic of interest in the public sphere. The difference between the market and the state would rely only on the fact that private consumers attend to their own interests only, while the public state is guided by common good, understood as the sum of the individual interests of citizens.

An obvious example of logic of gift is the family. Family life is founded on gift and forgiveness, and not on equivalent exchanges or, God forbid, vengeance. Family, however, has a private character, and this means that it limits its rules to a more or less narrow circle of kinship or affinity. The Church is a public community based on the principle of gift, understood—as has been discussed—as a sacramental extension of family. The proposed classification of human actions and institutions illustrates a continuity between the contemporary market and the state, on the one hand, and between the family and the Church on the other. It also shows what the influences of the logic of interest and the logic of gift may look like in both spheres. Family life may be permeated with the rules of the market, though the family may also shape economic behaviours by modifying the concept of exchange and gain. The market that succumbed to the logic of

family would cease to be a market in the usual modern understanding. Similarly with the Church: on one hand, it is at risk of yielding its logic to the secular logic of state and must therefore be careful not to turn into a group based on a common interest; on the other, it may try to shape the life of political communities. If, however, the sacramental logic of gift encompassed the state it would cease to be the state in the sense we know from modern history.

In the book *Between the Icon and the Idol* Mrówczyński-Van Allen mainly discusses the threats that are connected with the colonisation of the Church by the secular logic of state. Especially, and paradoxically, striving to have influence over the state may lead to the obliteration of the Church's independence. "The Church is therefore not sent into world to be assimilated and diluted by the 'open society.' The liturgy and the sacraments do not simply generate interior individual principles or 'values' (purportedly) necessary to carry out public functions in a (purportedly) neutral and autonomous public sphere. Much too often, the contemporary search for the so-called 'presence of Christians in public life' means, in practice, the abandonment of the public space of the Church, the public space that she is herself."³⁸ This is, I think, a very apt critique of the liberal reading of the Church's social teaching, which leads indeed to the radical separation of the private sphere from the public, and to the privatisation of religion.

The subsequent essay "Eklezjoteja" is an important complement to these analyses. It deals with the nature of the political community of the Church, for the Church itself is a political community and may expand the logic of its action into the surrounding institutions. This is a reversal process in which the pre- or post-secular logic of the Church colonises the political sphere. The *Ecclesia* creates its own ideal of the *polis* that is a *politeia*, called by Mrówczyński-Van

³⁸ Ibid.

Allen a *ekklesioteia*. He says: “the independence of the Church from other political communities enabled it to influence the formation of these communities. Naturally, these influences have been mutual, nevertheless [...] it was possible to launch a thoroughly thought out vision of the Church as a reality that transforms political communities, which in consequence was to foster the development of small and big communities, the political nature of which was obvious.”³⁹ A historical example of a sizeable political community influenced in that way by the Church was the Polish-Lithuanian Union of Horodło in 1413. The document of Union, which was a direct consequence of the marriage of the Polish queen Saint Hedwig and the Lithuanian prince Jogaila, started with a solemn religious preamble and led to the adoption of Lithuanian noble stock by their Polish counterparts. In the act of the union, like in the Church community, the familial and sacramental logic of gift was extended into the public sphere. Hence, as Mrówczyński-Van Allen says, “the Union of Horodło, and with it perhaps the whole history of Poland, is of exceptional significance to contemporary Christian thought.”⁴⁰ It is worth noting that he shares this interest in the old Polish political system as an alternative to modernity with Polish messianists, for whom precisely the union between Poland and Lithuania was to be the model of the future world order. He differs from them, however, in saying that there is a limit to the process of turning the secular *politeia* into a religious *ecclesioteia*. The limit is a modern state. To him, a “Christian state” is apparently a contradiction, for the same reason that a “totalitarian state” is a tautology.

³⁹ Mrówczyński-Van Allen, “Eklezjoteja”, 185

⁴⁰ Ibid., 174.

CAN A STATE BE SAVED?

Mrówczyński-Van Allen protests vehemently against using the term “state” as the equivalent of the Greek *polis* and Latin *civitas*. Speaking of the “state of God” in St. Augustine—he says, for example—is ridiculous.⁴¹ The practice against which he protests is deeply rooted in contemporary literature; it even penetrated—he states with horror—Church documents.⁴² “So, this apparently small detail, he says, indicates a basic problem of contemporary political thought, the problem of mystification hidden in the concept of state.”⁴³

I think that this seemingly minute detail also points to a fundamental problem with Mrówczyński-Van Allen's proposition. Naturally, it is not merely the terminology that is at stake. The objection to using the concept of the state for designating pre- and post-modern political communities harbours a conviction about the fundamental non-continuity between community and state. This discontinuity—as I will now try to show by referring to the case of Soloviev—seems, however, of certain inconsequence; it is surely the last trace of dualism in Mrówczyński-Van Allen's proposal. Fortunately, it also seems that his own concept of the state and community—as I will soon try to prove—allows this to be avoided.

The turning point in the history of the Russian Idea was to be—as Mrówczyński-Van Allen suggests—Soloviev's shift from theocracy to apocalypticism. The dream of the Christian state in history yielded to the vision of a united Church in opposition to the state at the day of reckoning. But does not this transition mean undermining theocentrism and returning to the well-known Western dualism? It is hard to dismiss the impression that numerous

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 179; “The State of God” is the usual Polish translation of “Civitas Dei”

⁴² *Ibid.*, 175.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 176.

commentators appreciated the last phase of Soloviev's work precisely because they think he resigned from what they believed was a dangerous utopian monism. For example, the Polish scholar Jan Krasicki says that "the fact that our philosopher finally renounced the hope ... of transforming the idea into history ... may be seen as the most happy ending of the idea of his life,"⁴⁴ and, evidently with relief, he states that in the last stage of his work, Soloviev was "thinking in the categories of *diastasis*, historical discontinuity, radical break between what is historical and eternal, between what is earthly, immanent and what is transcendent."⁴⁵ If Krasicki is right, this means that Soloviev simply abandoned theocentrism and resigned himself to the dualism of the idea and the history of the transcendent and the immanent.⁴⁶

Personally, I think that there has been no real shift in Soloviev's philosophy. I am ready to agree with another Polish commentator, Janusz Dobieszewski, who wrote that in his later works Soloviev "discredited not theocracy but—in his language—theocracy as 'an abstract principle,' theocracy as the product of pure, schematising thought, theocracy that is prone to degeneration (and not realisation) into the form that may be found in *A Short Story of the Anti-Christ*."⁴⁷ Since there has been no turn, there is no problem with its possible dualistic implications.

The story of Soloviev's alleged shift from theocracy to apocalypse shows, in my opinion, that it is impossible to stick to theocentrism while simultaneously maintaining that some sphere of reality (for instance, a state) is impervious to

⁴⁴ Jan Krasicki, *Bóg, Człowiek i Zło: Studium Filozofii Włodzimierza Sołowjowa* (Wrocław: FNP 2003), 248, see also Russian translation: Yan Krasitskiy, *Bog, Chelovek i Zlo: Issledovaniye Filozofii Vladimira Solov'yeva*, (Moscow: Progress-Traditsiya 2009), 260.

⁴⁵ Krasicki, *Bóg, Człowiek i Zło*, 268, Krasitskiy, *Bog, chelovek i zlo*, 278-9.

⁴⁶ See Paweł Rojek, "Sołowjow i Tajemnica Zła," *Przegląd Filozoficzny* 54 (2005): 340-5.

⁴⁷ Janusz Dobieszewski, *Włodzimierz Sołowjow: Studium Osobowości Filozoficznej* (Warszawa: Scholar 2002), 426-7.

Christian transformation. Mrówczyński-Van Allen certainly avoids the worst kind of dualism (namely, the allocation of the private sphere to religion and the public one to the state), as he accepts the essentially political character of Church and its power to transform political communities. However, a dualism of communities and the state, in my opinion, remains in force.

Is this dualism inescapable? One of the most valuable elements of Mrówczyński-Van Allen's analysis is the comparison of principles on which the state and community are based—the state is founded on interest, while community is based on gift. The concepts of interest and gift, however, appear not only in political philosophy and phenomenology but also in social anthropology. I think that precisely such an anthropological analysis may help the distinction analysed by the author to be viewed in a new way. For the theory of exchange shows that pure interest and pure gift comprise only the extreme points between what is more or less interested and gratuitous. Taking this into account, there can be no dichotomy, but rather a continuum between the state and community.

Besides, human actions typically combine the logic of gift and the logic of interest. The same act may be treated both as a fulfillment of community obligation as well as of duty to the state. For instance, care for one's family, a paradigmatic example of gift, is also—though not everyone realises this—required by family law. Military service, and even taxes, too, may be recognised as acts of free offering, and not only burdensome duties one owes to the state. Hence it appears that gift and law are not mutually exclusive, for it is not the possible sanctions, but the real intentions, that decide the nature of an act.

Mrówczyński-Van Allen's analysis shows also that the problem of a Christian state is tightly connected with the idea of Christian economy. If “divine

economy”⁴⁸—as Stephen Long puts it—is possible, then “divine politics” should also be, for the market and the state are founded on the same principle of interest, which nevertheless may be limited and modified in many ways. In one of the recent issues of *Presyje* journal we investigated the possibility of institutional solutions that would increase the number of more gratuitous exchanges and diminish the number of more interested exchanges in the overall sum of transactions. We argued that this would be a way of Christian transformation, modelled on the image of the Holy Trinity, of economic life.⁴⁹ The title of this particular journal issue was therefore “Ekonomia Trynitarna” [Trinitarian Economy]. Solutions increasing the proportion of gratuitousness in politics can also be imagined on a similar principle. The equivalent of cooperatives in economics could be, for example, local participatory communities being part of the ideal of the “self-governing republic” formulated in the eighties by the Polish Solidarity movement.

It seems that analysis of the underlying principles of the state and community presented by Mrówczyński-Van Allen leads to the conclusion that the difference between them is quantitative, rather than qualitative. This statement leads, in my opinion, to concrete practical postulates. Christians should not renounce their possible influence on existing states, but rather try to expand the range of the principle of community that they know from family and Church life. Ideally, sacramental principles could encompass all spheres of political life. In such a case, the Christian state would simply emerge. Mrówczyński-Van Allen perhaps

⁴⁸ Stephen D. Long, *Divine Economy: Theology and the Market* (London: Routledge 2000).

⁴⁹ Marcin Kędziński, “Ekonomia trynitarna,” *Presyje* 29 (2012): 26–39, cf. Paweł Rojek, “Ekonomia, Wzajemność i Trójca Święta. W Obronie Ekonomii Trynitarnej,” *Presyje* 32–33 (2013): 260–8; we were inspired to some extent by Wolfgang Grassl’s brilliant paper “Civil Economy: The Trinitarian Key to Papal Economics” delivered at Panel Session “Economic Justice and the Encyclical Caritas in Veritate,” Association for the Study of the Grants Economy, Allied Social Science Associations Conference, 8 January, 2011, Denver, CO.

would not call it “state,” but it seems to me a mere terminological issue. The possibility of Christian influence on state should not be nevertheless excluded in advance by terminological decisions.

Mrówczyński-Van Allen's book is “a proposal for the interpretation of totalitarianism from within a tradition of Russian thought.”⁵⁰ Eventually, he concludes that the Russian tradition is essentially a radical form of Christian tradition, while a totalitarian state is fundamentally a radical form of a modern state. On this basis, his book is not so much an analysis of historical phenomenon from the point of view of local tradition, but rather a Christian interpretation of the modern state in general.

It seems that Mrówczyński-Van Allen ultimately goes beyond the alternative attributed to Soloviev. Christians should not build a top-down state theocracy—as Soloviev seemed to think early on—nor passively await the Second Coming, as he later appeared to believe. Christians must live in the community of the Church, which by nature is of a public and political nature. This community, relying on the sacraments, may influence and transform, according to its own logic, the surrounding groups and institutions. Perhaps this is what Soloviev really meant himself. In principle, as I have tried to show, this process may also pertain to the state. If this is so, *ekklesioteia* seems to be the third way between theocracy and apocalypse.

⁵⁰ Mrówczyński-Van Allen, *Between the Icon and the Idol*, xvi.