



Loucas Leonkiewicz

The Legacy of Sergey Horuzhy, one of the greatest Russian Orthodox Religious Thinkers

Abstract

The thinker who continued the work of the great Russian religious philosophers died. Sergey Horuzhy developed his own concept of synergistic anthropology, which appeared based on the synthesis of the Orthodox hesychastic tradition with contemporary philosophy and is an attempt to develop a modern Orthodox thought. Synergic anthropology is rooted in the hesychastic tradition, in particular in the thought of St. Gregory Palamas. Sergey Horuzhy used the richness of the anthropological content of hesychasm to show the depth of human existence.



Protodeacon Dr. Loucas Leonkiewicz, Institute of Philosophy of the University of Warsaw, Protodeacon at the Church of St. Jan Klimak in Warsaw, Poland

Keywords

contemporary philosophy, energy, synergistic anthropology, Russian philosophy, Sergey Horuzhy



Sergey Horuzhy (1941-2020)

1 Introduction

Last year (September 22, 2020), the great Orthodox thinker Sergey Horuzhy passed away. He was an outstanding man. To say that he was a philosopher or theologian would limit his personality. He was simply a great man - a doctor of mathematical sciences, a physicist who was close to native Russian thought and Orthodox theology, patristics, and in particular, the hesychastic tradition. On the other hand, he was a scientist, best demonstrated by his translation work. He made a titanic work - he translated James Joyce's novel "Ulysses" from English into Russian. Anyone who has had this book in their hands at least once in their life knows what "large format" it means. And as great was a Joyce so great was also Horuzhy.

Sergey Horuzhy was born in 1941. He quickly lost his mother and was brought up by his aunt. He graduated in physics and mathe-

matics. He came to the Orthodox Church as an adult. He was baptized by Fr. Alexander Men, who had a significant influence on the young man. Horuzhy, when asked about the role of Fr. Men¹ in his life, always answered unequivocally: "He was a clergyman who, with his attitude, was able to attract Russian youth to the temple. He was able to young intelligence around him and pass on to them the religious heritage of Russian culture, which was forbidden in the USSR". In Soviet times, Sergey Horuzhy was active in a samizdat, writing and publishing texts in the underground circulation. In the 90's it started to work officially. It was then that he worked on publishing the collected works of P. Florenski and other religious philosophers. Although in the new philosophical and theological concept that was gradually appearing in his head, there were no places for the concepts of the Silver Age, he nevertheless treated these masters of thinking with great admiration and respect. He could even say that he was one of them, someone who restored to religious thought its proper place in Russian culture. He has also researched the hesychastic tradition. He is the author of the enormous collection "Hezychasmos"², which is still the best source of knowledge about ascetic texts. At the same time, he began to convince himself that a new Russian religious thought should refer to the hesychastic tradition that was reviving in the second half of the 20th. That is why he called his philosophical concept synergistic anthropology, which should be understood as a science about man in the light of his relationship (cooperation) with God. Horuzhy was sure that it is possible to understand man only in the whole of human experience, including religious experience. In fact, the last philosophical question that bothered him the most was Diogenes'

¹ Fr. Alexander Men (1935-1990) - a Russian Orthodox priest who became famous for his pastoral activity in the Soviet era, for which he was repeatedly harassed by the state authorities. He wrote many theological works, he was a man open to dialogue with other faiths. He was murdered under mysterious circumstances in 1990.

² S. Horuzhy (ed.), *ИСИХАЗМ: Аннотированная библиография*, Moscow 2004.

question - "Who is man?" Reading his works allows us to understand that what frightened him the most was the blurring of the concept of "human". Therefore, by creating the Institute of Synergic Anthropology at the Higher School of Economics of the Moscow State University, he tried as a thinker to talk about various anthropological problems, about the need to get to know oneself again, to engage in one's own human being, in his own religious and intellectual tradition. His latest publications, published as part of the "Diogenes Lamp" project, were an attempt by the intellectual to respond to the anthropological crisis in which contemporary culture has found itself.

Sergey Horuzhy entered the path of religious philosophy and linking his research with the neopatristic trend developed by Vasily Krivoshein, Vladimir Lossky, and John Meyendorff. At the same time, Horuzhy began researching Russian religious philosophy, which he juxtaposed with the hesychastic tradition. His first works were devoted to the comparative analysis of the concept of religious philosophers with the Orthodox tradition (*The Florensky Worldview*, *The Dyptych of Silence*). According to what Vladimir Bibichin writes about him, Horuzhy did not publish his works until the collapse of the USSR, so "he was unable to talk other than with himself and with his own, he simply announced his views while explaining little to anyone"³. These words perfectly reflect the style of Horuzhy, who writes decisively as if he was just announcing and not explaining his concepts to the reader. In the nineties, he started to publish his works, among which the following deserve attention: *Posle pereryva. Puti russkoj filosofii* (1994), *Sinergia. We troubleshoot the asceticism and mystics of the Orthodox Church* (1995), *Fenomenologija askezy* (1998), *About old and new* (2000), *Isichasm. Annotirowannaja bibliografija* (2004), *Oczerki sinergijnoj antropologii* (2005), *Fonar Diogiena* (2010), *Issledowanija po isichastskoj tradicii*

³ V. Bibichin, *Другое начало*, in: *Другое начало*, Saint Petersburg 2003, p. 157.

(2012). These works constitute the core of the thoughts of the Russian thinker.

The hesychastic tradition plays an enormous role in Horuzhy's thought because it proposes a way of looking at man that is not limited to the biological, psychological, social or any other sphere but captures man in the whole of his being. Horuzhy believes that the development of philosophy before Kierkegaard was associated with losing man, with forgetting about him. It was only the Great Dane and F. Nietzsche who began to stand up for the whole human being, becoming for Horuzhy the reference points in his synergistic anthropology. In one of his last works, which shows the fate of the subject of man in the history of philosophy, both parts are related to each other by a common motto: "How to lose sight of yourself (part I) and try to recover (part II)?"⁴. It is this intention that accompanies Horuzhy in all his works. In addition to the task taken over from the Russian religious philosophy, consisting in the philosophical approach to the essence of the Orthodox experience, Horuzhy set itself the task of fitting into the general philosophical, and even general cultural tendency of the present day, consisting in the "struggle" for man, for his integrity and presence in culture. In this respect, Horuzhy is not alone but is part of a broader current of contemporary thought⁵, which he enriches with the Russian, Orthodox tradition.

⁴ S. Horuzhy, *Фонарь Диогена*, Институт философии, теологии и истории св. Фомы, Moscow 2010, p. 3.

⁵ The anthropological question took over the subject of philosophy in the second half of the 20th century and is still relevant today. It is enough to mention the names of thinkers who raised this issue in order to realize its importance in contemporary philosophy. We will mention just a few of them: F. Fukuyama (*The End of History and the Last Man*), J. Huxley (*The Human Crisis*), J. Maritain (*Integral Humanism*), J.P. Sartre (*Existentialism Is a Humanism*), K. Jaspers (*Über Bedingungen Und Möglichkeiten eines neuen Humanismus*), M. Merleau-Ponty (*Humanism and Terror*), M. Heidegger (*Letter on Humanism*), M. Foucault (Or-

2 Searching for the human being

Horuzhy claims that the path of a man getting lost in Western thinking began as early as antiquity, when Plato, and then Aristotle, treated man only in the context of rational cognition, despising his corporeality and emotionality. By tracing the way of a man getting lost, Horuzhy shows step by step what, in his opinion, influenced the de-anthropologization of Western thought, which ended with the fact that in the 20th century, there was no common definition of man. In fact, man was absent in philosophy. Paradoxically, in European philosophy, which began with the anthropological slogan "know yourself", man is lost. He does not know himself as a whole but identifies himself with his highest part - the mind. From Aristotle, through Descartes and Kant to German idealism, there was a process of de-anthropologization of philosophy, which did not pose man as a cognitive task. Man appeared when thinking, then he himself became thinking, and finally, he was no longer even called human, because he was not like a human in anything. European metaphysics has failed in this respect, emphasizes Horuzhy. It is precisely this absence of man in the philosophical discourse that Horuzhy calls a crisis of contemporary philosophy⁶, a way out of which he proposes, among other things, in his attempt to create a hesychastic philosophy. Anthropological themes were present elsewhere, not on a philosophical basis, but on a much more real plane, in spiritual practices. Horuzhy shows that while it is difficult to find a holistic anthropology describing the entirety of the

der and Things), J. Derrida (The Ends of Man), F. Lyotard (The Postmodern Explained to Children), E. Levinas (Difficult Freedom. Essays on Judaism), G. Vattimo (The Crisis of Humanism).

⁶ S. Horuzhy, *Кризис европейского человека и ресурсы христианской антропологии*, http://synergia-isa.ru/?page_id=4301#H, online, 26.05.2021.

reality in which man lives in European philosophy, it is much easier to find it precisely in the spiritual practices of various religions.

The anthropological crisis did not concern only the formal absence of man in philosophy. It mainly concerned the lack of an anthropological philosophical language with which to describe the entire anthropological reality. Not paying attention to the phenomenon of the body and psyche for a long time caused that these spheres of human existence were forgotten and neglected. The anthropological theme has been preserved in the spiritual practices of various religions, which, speaking of man, present him in his entirety. Thus, we can find there an extensive dictionary of anthropological terms, which is very important for Horuzhy⁷ because describing anthropological reality requires an appropriate language, which philosophy has not provided.

The analysis of various spiritual traditions allows Horuzhy to conclude that in various spiritual practices, one can find a common denominator, which is the general "paradigm of spiritual practice". The Russian thinker, describing this paradigm, states that its main feature is energy. The main role in spiritual practice is played by energy, not essence (ουσία), and the practice itself does not take place in a closed being but is directed towards an extreme experience towards which it takes a person out of his closure and opens him up to a different kind of experience, to an extreme experience which is precisely ecstasy or deification. In addition, spiritual practice opens a person to a different way of experiencing himself, which is done through spiritual exercises, psychotechnics that intensify the senses, feelings and even allow the emergence of other senses, feelings, experiences. In the characteristics of the paradigm of spiritual practice, Horuzhy distinguishes several features: experiencing the anthropological boundary, the hierarchical nature of the spiritual practice, catharsis, prayer or meditation, and the presence of the Other -

⁷ S. Horuzhy, *О старом и новом*, Saint Petersburg 2000, pp. 353-354.

"practice in itself is not able to guarantee the full achievement of the goal, i.e., higher spiritual states, the fullness of this it is achievable only through the action of certain factors that do not belong to man and are not directed by him. " Without this external source of energy, spiritual practice loses its ontological value and becomes purely psychotechnics⁸.

3 Synergic anthropology

Synergic anthropology is the concept of Horuzhy, which is defined as the science of man, "in which the anthropological reality is described as comprehensively as possible", and its starting point is the experience of spiritual practices as a human experience in relation to being⁹. The theme of versatility underlines the openness of Horuzhy concept to various experiences, and in principle, to all human experiences. Having noticed the loss of man in the history of European thought, he connects it precisely with man's closing himself to possible experiences and imposing on him one kind of experience, which was associated with man's closing in the sphere of pure reason. Paraphrasing Lacan's words, Horuzhy ironically states that "the cult of reason leads to the realm of thoughtlessness"¹⁰, in which we can see that the new anthropology will not be grounded in a philosophy that has lost man. Synergic anthropology arises from one foundation, which is the spiritual practice of Orthodoxy - hesychasm. All other connections of synergistic anthropology with contempo-

⁸ Ibidem, p. 384.

⁹ S. Horuzhy, *Синергийная антропология*, http://synergia-isa.ru/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/sin_anthrop_enciklopedia.pdf, online: 28.05.2021.

¹⁰ S. Horuzhy, *Синергийная антропология как новый подход к методологии гуманитарного знания*, http://synergia-isa.ru/?page_id=4301#H, online: 28.05.2021.

rary philosophy are secondary and result from Horuzhy's thoughts on the philosophical interpretation of the Orthodox content, which could inspire and inspire contemporary thought, directing it towards the integral man lost by it. The anthropology of the Russian thinker is, in fact, based on the anthropology of Grzegorz Palamas, which the author himself emphasizes many times, saying that he only interprets the science of energies contained in the works of the last Church Father.

The essence of synergic anthropology is the "paradigm of anthropological openness"¹¹, about which the thinker writes that "this" openness "of man, I, consciousness, existence is understood literally, without any special meaning, and therefore it is an act go outside one's own limits, to do oneself open, uncovered. In the sphere of anthropology, opening is the most general concept, which indicates the nature of a person's relationship with the surrounding reality"¹². Opening up is also going beyond yourself. Already in the very concept of "openness" Horuzhy refers to Heidegger and his "Erschlossenheit", which he understands after Bibikhin as: "Openness of presence and what it is in, that is the world. It is openness, open possibility... erschliesst, it opens... something that was previously closed, deaf"¹³. In connection with the resignation from the essentialism of classical European metaphysics, Horuzhy refers to this "openness" not to essence or substantia, but to energy, which makes openness a non-classical paradigm. He writes that "openness does not depend on the essence and may have an unrelated sphere of realization. Another important fact is that when openness has a constitutive power and is not related to the essence, it constitutes a

¹¹ S. Horuzhy, *Введение: проект и контекст*, in: *Фонарь Диогена. Проект синергической антропологии в современном гуманитарном контексте*. Edited by: S. Horuzhy, Moscow 2010, p. 21.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 22.

¹³ V. Bibikhin, *Ранний Хайдеггер*, Институт философии, теологии и истории Святого Фомы, Moscow 2009, p. 381.

man of a non-classical character"¹⁴. For the first time, this non-classical "discourse of openness", as Horuzhy called it, appeared in spiritual practices that developed strategies for opening oneself to God, nothingness, emptiness, to one's own body, to the world, etc. Among spiritual practices, the most similar in terms of culture and linguistic is Orthodox spiritual practice. "It is in hesychasm and Orthodox theology, writes Horuzhy, that for the first time appeared (gradually, with the decisive contribution of St. Maxim the Confessor [7th century]) a precise concept of the constitutive paradigm of openness - in the form of the idea of synergy, harmonious unification energies of human and energies of God, who is other towards him in the ontological horizon"¹⁵. It is from the idea of synergy that the name of the synergic anthropology proposed by Horuzhy comes from. At this point, mention should also be made of Grzegorz Palamas and his influence on the concept of the Russian thinker. The image of the open man in Horuzhy thought and the image of the distracted man in writes of Palamas look exactly the same. In both cases, the point is that human being occurs within the horizon of energy, not being. Energies are transcendence beyond the essence, so when it comes to openness, it should be understood as the splitting of man. The splitting of various human energies, and even not the human energy, but the splitting of a human being, because the human is defined as "energetic configuration". The split man realizes himself only in the ontic sphere, while the ontological horizon is entered only by the one who has reintegrated himself and has responded to being. This aspect is developed in spiritual practices in general, among which Horuzhy chooses hesychasm and the related human experience as the foundation of his anthropology. In openness, a person experiences himself through the prism of his abilities. An open person can be more than a closed man, and

¹⁴ S. Horuzhy, *Введение: проект и контекст*, in: *Фонарь Диогена. Проект синергической антропологии в современном гуманитарном контексте*, edited by: S. Horuzhy, Moscow 2010, p. 24.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 25.

therefore can be something more. The splitting of man opens the field of possibilities through which man is defined.

4 The anthropological boundary

After openness, another constitutive element of synergic anthropology is the anthropological boundary. We found that openness frees a person to be. However, if man is outward, an energetic configuration, he cannot be non-energetic. In this statement, Horuzhy ultimately departs from the concept of man as a subject or pure reason, in general, from an essential approach in which man is something, has its essence. Man cannot be described by his essential center, so "it remains to be described by his periphery, and more precisely by the border"¹⁶. Horuzhy thus emphasizes that "anthropological openness as a paradigm of human constitution becomes a universal, non-classical paradigm. It captures the entire field of anthropological experience, realizing itself in three ways: ontological openness (towards the Other), ontic openness, virtual openness (in non-updated virtual events)"¹⁷. In connection with these three ways of human openness, we can also distinguish three corresponding boundaries - ontological, ontical, and virtual. Openness makes it possible to experience the border as an end in which a person meets what is different towards himself. The synergic anthropology thus becomes diverse because it is a two-way concept that combines active-passive, "synergic" openness to the outside, towards the external Source, with the activity transforming the internal reality of man,

¹⁶ S. Horuzhy, *Man's three far-away kingdoms: ascetic experience as a ground for a new anthropology*, <https://synergia-isa.ru/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/hor-man-s-3-kingdom-eng.pdf>, online: 28.05.2021.

¹⁷ С. Хоружий, *Введение: проект и контекст*, in: *Фонарь Диогена. Проект синергийной антропологии в современном гуманитарном контексте*, edited by: S. Horuzhy, Moscow 2010, p. 59.

constructing energetic anthropofoms or degrees of striving towards the goal of spiritual practice.

5 The ontological openness and the ontological boundary

The ontological openness and the ontological boundary relate to the relationship of man to the ontological Other, to God. In Horuzhy's anthropology, this openness is actualized in synergy, that is, cooperation between man and being, or otherwise, in the mutual belonging of man and being. The synergy paradigm does not only belong to hesychasm, because such a relationship also appears in the late Heidegger. In the context of the synergy of man and God deification, transformation takes place through the encountered energies of God; the same is true of Heidegger, in whom man has to respond to the call of being. The ontological boundary is the horizon of a human being on which the human fully experiences being himself. In the tradition of Hesychasm, this state consists in the theosis of man who, by finding his truest being, becomes in the image of God, that is, he becomes a true hypostasis. From this perspective, man in ontological openness actualizes himself to be himself most properly.

6 The ontic openness and the ontic boundary

This way of realizing man takes place when the unconscious influences man: "science has long discovered that man can be constituted in the process of the unconsciousness influencing him"¹⁸. Horuzhy, of course, alludes to Freud's psychoanalysis,

¹⁸ S. Horuzhy, *Синергическая антропология как новый подход к методологии гуманитарного знания*, http://synergia-isa.ru/?page_id=4301#H, online: 28.05.2021; S. Horuzhy, *Man's three far-away kingdoms: ascetic experience as a ground for a new anthropology*,

which he describes in some detail in his works. We only emphasize that "ontic openness is realized in the states of consciousness and human behavior induced by the unconscious, such as neuroses, manias, phobias, etc. Their main feature is passivity, perceiving it by the human-consciousness"¹⁹. In this case, man does not experience an ontological transformation, but only internal changes, which he himself is not aware of, because they occur through the action of the unconscious on the consciousness. The Unconscious, in this case, acts as the Other, as the Outer Source, openness to which means allowing it to act within the consciousness.

7 The virtual openness and the virtual boundary

Virtual openness is realized in the cooperation of human energy with something like energy. "Virtual phenomena," as Horuzhy calls them, are always underrealized. They are, but as if they are not there. The relationship with them can, therefore, never be realized, and there is no update in existence. At the same time, on the virtual border, there is a border experience through which man is constituted. This constitution, however, is completely different than in the two previous cases because it does not, of course, change a person either from an ontological or ontical perspective. Man is constituted by entering the virtual sphere, but in this entering, there is no one anthropological type because "man

https://synergia-isa.ru/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/hor_man-s-3-kingdom_eng.pdf, online: 28.05.2021.

¹⁹ S. Horuzhy, *Введение: проект и контекст*, in: *Фонарь Диогена. Проект синергичной антропологии в современном гуманитарном контексте*, edited by: S. Horuzhy, Moscow 2010, p. 63; S. Horuzhy, *Man's three far-away kingdoms: ascetic experience as a ground for a new anthropology*, https://synergia-isa.ru/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/hor_man-s-3-kingdom_eng.pdf, online: 28.05.2021.

stays there in a decomposed state, he is not updated, which includes his entire constitution. The virtual type of constitution is the most ordinary everyday state of human existence every time a person enters an anthropological virtual reality²⁰.

The anthropological boundary allows us to see man as the horizon of existence, from the perspective of existence and not from the perspective of being. It is a natural consequence of the openness paradigm, which, when realized, ends at the border. Horuzhy puts vigorous human activity into the paradigm of the anthropological border, which intensifies even more at the border in order to consolidate the border experience of being oneself. Man on the border meets the ultimate experience that affects his way of existence.

8 Conclusions

Synergic anthropology is a project aimed at creating the science of human sciences. It includes in its concept not only the religious aspect but all sciences, the subject of which is man. An important fact is that even in the religious context, Horuzhy does not only refer to the Orthodox tradition but looks for a common anthropological sphere in the spiritual practices of various religions. For the paradigm of openness, religious openness of an ontological nature is the most important. However, Horuzhy aims to anthropologize the entire humanities and does not intend to focus solely on its religious aspect. Those mentioned above threefold anthropological boundary also touches upon the

²⁰ S. Horuzhy, *Введение: проект и контекст*, in: *Фонарь Диогена. Проект синергийной антропологии в современном гуманитарном контексте*, edited by: S. Horuzhy, Moscow 2010, p. 64; S. Horuzhy, *Man's three far-away kingdoms: ascetic experience as a ground for a new anthropology*, https://synergia-isa.ru/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/hor_man-s-3-kingdom_eng.pdf, online: 28.05.2021.

theme of the splitting of man in psychoanalysis in the virtual world but is not limited solely to them. The topic of the ontic boundary points to the entire spectrum of human experience, analyzed by psychology and psychotherapy. The virtual world, as a child of technology, refers to the anthropological image in the exact sciences, which is also not an anthropology of the center, but an anthropology of the border. Through the sciences and humanities, man is perceived as a "man on the way", realizing himself, constantly crossing borders, and not closing himself within his limits. The contemporary tendency to eliminate the boundaries between states, nations, religions, and cultures is a kind of a resultant of the contemporary tendency in European philosophy, to which Horuzhy joins his synergistic anthropology. At the same time, the thought about a man on the border, described above in the anthropological discourse, is an attempt to answer the question faced by contemporary philosophy: "Who comes after the Subject?" In the very attempt to find an answer, Horuzhy stands on the same level as the most outstanding philosophers, so to speak "non-classical": S. Kierkegaard, F. Nietzsche, M. Heidegger, M. Foucault, G. Deleuz, J. Derrida. He makes a specific proposal but does not follow any of these philosophers directly. He drew many ideas from each of them, learned terminology from each of them, and found a common language in the critique of European metaphysics with each of them, but none of these languages was fully assimilated by him. The only intellectual tradition from which the synergic anthropology directly grows is palamism. Along with synergic anthropology in Russian philosophy, there appears the first such serious attempt to collate what is indigenously Russian, orthodox, i.e., the hesychastic tradition, with European philosophy.

Bibliography

- Bibikhin V., *Другое начало*, [in:] *Другое начало*, Saint Petersburg 2003.
- Bibikhin V., *Ранний Хайдеггер*, Институт философии, теологии и истории Святого Фомы, Moscow 2009.
- Horuzhy S., *Введение: проект и контекст*, in: *Фонарь Диогена. Проект синергийной антропологии в современном гуманитарном контексте*. Edited by: S. Horuzhy, Moscow 2010.
- Horuzhy S. (ed.), *ИСИХАЗМ: Аннотированная библиография*. Moscow 2004.
- Horuzhy, *Кризис европейского человека и ресурсы христианской антропологии*,
http://synergia-isa.ru/?page_id=4301#H, online, 26.05.2021.
- Horuzhy S., *Man's three far-away kingdoms: ascetic experience as a ground for a new anthropology*,
https://synergia-isa.ru/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/hor-man-s-3-kingdom_eng.pdf, online: 28.05.2021.
- Horuzhy S., *О старом и новом*, Saint Petersburg 2000
- Horuzhy S., *Синергийная антропология*,
<http://synergia-isa.ru/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/sin-anthrop-enciklopedia.pdf>,
online: 28.05.2021.
- Horuzhy S., *Синергийная антропология как новый подход к методологии гуманитарного знания*,
http://synergia-isa.ru/?page_id=4301#H, online: 28.05.2021.
- Horuzhy S., *Фонарь Диогена*, Институт философии, теологии и истории св. Фомы, Moscow 2010.