

Cosmism, *космизм* (Russian). A metaphysical and religious outlook, originated in the 19th century Russia, which presents a unique blend of futuristic speculations, materialistic science, religious mysticism and esoteric practices. Russian Cosmism has never developed into a distinct philosophical school with the clear-cut criteria for membership, but is rather a loose compilation of themes and values, which are found in the writings of some Russian philosophers, scientists, theologians and historians. The central themes include the active human role in human and cosmic development, the creation of new life forms, the gradual extension of human life with the ultimate goal of immortality, the physical resurrection of the dead ancestors, the belief in the unlimited possibilities of human intellectual capacities, and the speculations about the possible colonization of other planets. The idea of “active evolution” of human nature and the shifting of the perspective from an earth-centered to a cosmos-centered view are two distinctive marks of this movement.

The unofficial founder of Cosmism was an eccentric Russian philosopher and mystic Nikolai Fedorov (1829-1903), who spent most of his life working as a research librarian in Moscow, and who published but few short excerpts during his lifetime. Fedorov’s main idea was that humanity should concentrate all its efforts and all its technological resources on one grand “common task” – the fight against death as our main enemy and the resurrection of the dead forefathers. Fedorov’s fame grew rapidly with the postmortem publication of his main works, even though the utopian project of physical restoration of ancestors did not get much direct support from many of Fedorov’s immediate followers. It was often creatively re-interpreted instead as a task to improve the human nature by re-appropriating the core values of the previous generations, but always with the forward-looking futuristic view towards a new humanity. Interestingly enough, some of the central ideas of Cosmism were pursued both by the religious philosophers, such as Solovyov (1853-1900), Florensky (1882-1937) and Berdyaev (1874-1948) (with the heavy mystical element added), and also in the context of the materialistic worldview (stripped of any religious overtones), by such prominent scientists as Tsiolkovsky (1857-1935), Vernadsky (1863-1964) and Chizhevsky (1897-1964).

While Fedorov’s name was largely ignored during the Soviet period of the Russian history, Fedorov’s philosophy (and with it, the philosophy and values of Cosmism in general) has witnessed a new Renaissance since 1990s, and received the widest possible application from the

current politics to the scientific experiments. For example, one of the most active offshoots of Cosmism today is the movement of scientific immortalism, also known as cryonicism and scientific anabiosis, which seeks technological solutions to the problem of death. The Fedorov museum in Moscow became the center of study and propagation of Russian Cosmism since 1993, hosting annual international conferences, panels, round tables and video presentations on the topics that range from problems of the future space exploration missions and the search for extraterrestrial civilizations to the influence of “cosmization” on the scientific progress and modern political thinking.

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