Sobornost' is commonly associated with the Slavophile Alexei Stepanovich Khomiakov (1804-1860), but has also been elaborated by Sergei Bulgakov (1871-1944) and Nicolai Berdiaev (1874-1948). *Sobornost'* is more than just a "community" linking several individuals together. As a dynamic principle, *sobornost'* does not so much describe the individual's merging with or absorption by collectivity—as would do the *obshchina* (peasant community) so important for the Slavophiles—but rather an *Aufgehen* of the individual in the collectivity. Semyen Frank developed *this* potential of *sobornost'*.

Sobornost' already existed in the Old Russian tradition and is probably the most "original" concept of community that Russians can think of. Its origin is unknown. *Sobornost'* is a politico-religious notion that gives priority neither to Being nor to consciousness but *sobirat'* means simply "to bring together" and *sobor* means "council." The apostles of the Macedonians, Saints Cyril, and Methodius, are believed to have tried to render the meaning of the Greek *katholikos* (universal) through the Macedonian Slavic *sobornajai* (Christoff 1961: 146). Though Berdiaev affirms that in traditional orthodox doctrine one would find *sobornost'* with difficulty, *sobornost'* is certainly representative of Old Slav Russian democracy present in the village community called the *mir*. While in Russian literature allusions to *sobornost'* are rare before 1848 (Christoff: 139), the notion appears relatively frequently in the latter half of the nineteenth century as a philosophical tool helping to metaphysically underpin political, social, economic, and aesthetic positions that are believed to be particular to Russian culture. It has been reevaluated, especially by Khomiakov who described it as a "mystical unity of god and man" (Christoff: 126). After the First Slavic Congress in 1867, religious connotations of the *sobornost'* receded into the background. Through its rootedness in certain Russian *social* conditions, *sobornost'* could become a subject of sociological analysis. As a church of ecumenical councils it could be opposed to a monarchical ecclesiology. As a social principle of the Russian peasant commune and the family providing a vision of integration, peace, and harmony, it could be opposed to authoritarianism and to individualism. As the expression of a purified social consciousness, it could be opposed to the European (that is, "Roman") political consciousness (Christoff: 173) that has always been overdependent on juridical, administrative, and private laws.

Many of the politico-social reflections on *sobornost'* have been justified through substantialist ideas about the cultural difference of "the Slavic race" defined in opposition to the "Germanic race" with its entrenched penchant for limiting personal freedom by means of authority (while Germanic peoples need laws, Slavs manage "to limit the personal freedom of each member of the society through the moral authority of the unanimous will of all of its members"). Paradoxically, while freedom and unanimity were seen as the real essence of Slavic life, in the end, racial, political, and religious conditions of Russia pushed *sobornost'* towards autarky. In the worst case, however, attempts were made to retrospectively impose religious elements upon certain social versions of *sobornost'*. Then *sobornost'* was declared to be a *sanctified* original peasant commune (*obshchina*).

Vladimir Solov'ëv (1853-1900) rationalized *sobornost'* until it became a sort of All-Unity. He questioned especially the Slavophiles' simplistic identification of the Orthodox Church with the Russian people.[14] His critical adoption of this concept tends towards a philosophical

anthropology that contradicts any egoistic self-enclosure of man. When Hegelian language was used, moments of rationalization became even more obvious. Here *sobornost'* could be openly translated as All-Unity (as has been done, for example, by Ivan Il'in) (Christoff: 152). True, already in the Orthodox Church *sobornost'* represented an "organic synthesis of multiplicity and unity." The difference is that the orthodox tradition claimed *sobornost'* as a *spiritual* unity of suprapersonal and atemporal nature that comes closer to a religio-aesthetic consciousness than to a political unity. (TBB)

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SOBORNOST' quotes (by A. Zavaliy)

Alexey Khomyakov: "Sobornost' is an organic, living unity, the origin of which lies in the divine grace of mutual love."

("Соборность – это единство органическое, живое начало которого есть божественная благодать взаимной любви")

(Khomyakov, Alexey. *Complete Works,* Prague, 1867, vol. 2, p. 101. *(in Russian): Хомя-ков А. С.* Полн. собр. соч. Т. 2. Прага, 1867, с.101)

Ivan Kireevsky: "Sobornost' is the wholeness of society, combined with the personal independence and the individual diversity of the citizens, which is possible only on the condition of a free subordination of separate persons to absolute values and in their free creativeness founded on love of the whole, love of the Church, love of their nation and State."

(Lossky, Nikolai, *History of Russian Philosophy,* International Universities Press, New York, 1972, p. 26).

Nikolai Lossky: "*Sobornost' is the combination of freedom and unity of many persons on the basis of their common love for the same absolute values.*"

(Ninian Smart, John Clayton, Patrick Sherry, Steven T. Katz. *Nineteenth-Century Religious Thought in the West*. Cambridge University Press, 1988. Page 183.)