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Out of the Cemetery of the Earth, a Resurrective Commons

Nikolai Fedorov's Common Task against the Biopolitics of Modernity

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Nikolai Fedorov (1829–1903) is an eccentric figure without parallel in the domain of modern thought. His intellectual vision, elaborated across a number of essays and the sprawling unpublished magnum opus written from the 1870s to the 1890s, *The Question of Fraternity*, attempted a novel theorization of the trajectory, meaning, and telos of the human species through the fulcrum of resurrection.[1] For this unorthodox Russian Orthodox thinker, resurrection was neither a transcendent object of faith nor something merely hoped for, but rather the collective duty of the living to the dead that was to be materially realized in what he termed "the common task." In dialogue with the major Russian figures of the time as well as with the central tendencies in nineteenth-century

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European social, philosophical, and scientific thought, Fedorov articulated the common task of resurrection as a "cosmogonic epic" (I/263) that refused to accept death as a natural and historical destiny for humanity. The resulting theoretical framework was uniquely cosmic in scope and made Fedorov the progenitor of what came to be known as Russian Cosmism (Young 2012). More recently, it has made him a minor though recurring genealogical reference in debates around questions of techno-futurism, immortality, active evolution, and geo-engineering.[2]

The speculative dimension of Fedorov's project has garnered the most sustained theoretical interest, but this speculative dimension develops out of a determinate critical diagnosis of the fundamental operations of Western modernity. Reconstructing the elements that make up the diagnostic tendency of Fedorov's project, and then recentering his project around them, allows for the speculative and cosmic elements of his thought to be properly understood. As a result, his project is revealed to be a thinking and acting out of an intimacy with death and with the earth, a thinking and acting grounded in a delegitimating refusal of the colonial, biopolitical, and capitalist foundations of modernity. Only with the delineation of the critical as the internal drive for the cosmically speculative is Fedorov's difference from dominant modes of eco- and geo-constructivist thought sufficiently retained.[3] Our essay pursues this line of thinking to show the decisive significance of Fedorov's critical project, incubated on the margins of Western modernity, for two dominant lines of critical theory—those associated most closely with the names of Karl Marx and Michel Foucault. It does so by reconstructing Fedorov's refusal of the modern biopolitical paradigm, his expansion of the analytics of expropriation, his ambitious reconfiguration of the cartographical imaginary of collective life around the cemetery and the commune, and finally his speculative rewriting of the liturgy as the material enactment of the common task.

ON EXPATRIATION, DEATH IN COMMON, AND THE REFUSAL OF BIOPOLITICS

Ranging across the entire history of the human species and expanding it projectively into a cosmic future, Fedorov's *Question of Fraternity* nevertheless arises

out of a historically specific conjuncture. The determining events that frame its wide-ranging meditations are the great droughts and famines occurring as "the nineteenth century approaches its unhappy and gloomy end" (I/60). The famines and mass death caused by the droughts—the effects of which were exponentially intensified by the violent colonial and capitalist relations that structured the globe—engender for Fedorov not only the ethico-utopian exigency to develop technical solutions through a turning "toward the study of nature as a death-bearing force [*как силы смертоносной*]" (I/40), but also an extended critique of Western modernity as the accelerant of death on a planetary scale. Although often minimized in historical accounts of the nineteenth century, the centrality of these catastrophic events has been irrefutably established by Mike Davis under the rubric of Late Victorian Holocausts. Davis has reconstructed the ways the global subsistence crises brought about by the droughts and famines of 1876–1880 and 1889–1891 must be understood as foundational for the radically asymmetrical global world order that arguably still persists (Davis 2001, 16). This is the point from which Fedorov's speculative thought emerges: catastrophic mass death on a global scale arising out of a climactic or planetary instability intensified by capitalist and colonial relations. The reality of death constitutes humanity's zero point in common—from which all thought and action must incessantly commence—so much so that Fedorov envisions the earth in its entirety as a cemetery formed by natural and human history, a vision that establishes the fundamental ground and orientation of his project.

In orienting thought around death as what is in common and practice around resurrection as the common task, Fedorov should be seen less as formulating a novel biopolitics, as has been suggested by some prominent expositors (Groys 2018; Groys 2020; Prozorov 2016), than as refusing the modern biopolitical paradigm in several significant ways. First, and decisively, his project refuses to accord primacy, theoretical or practical, to the living: It does not ascribe centrality to *bios*. In contrast to modern biopolitical projects, it does not take up life or the human species as an object of power in order to protect it, perfect it, or create conditions for its flourishing (Foucault 2003, 239–64; Foucault 1978, 133–59). Indeed, as we will see, if Fedorov can be said to take up humankind as a species, he does so by means of a radical inversion: The species becomes what it is only from the perspective of the dead (and their

necessary resurrection) and never through delimitation of the living (and their future reproduction). Claiming to manage and forestall death through projects of improvement and amelioration, modern biopolitics brings about the intensification of death via the caesura—first theorized by Foucault in relation to the rise of state racism at the end of the nineteenth century—between power's productivity in making life flourish and power's negativity in exposing to death and letting die. Within the frame of coloniality, the intensification of death is further registered in the production of asymmetrical racialized and colonial thanatopolitics: From the commencement of modernity, some forms of life or genres of the human are allowed to flourish at the expense, often exterminative in intensity, of others (Wynter 2003; Grove 2019).

The lucid diagnosis of the inevitability of this conversion of biopolitics into thanatopolitics, wherein the supposed flourishing of life produces lethal conditions for those expelled beyond the community of the living, forms the second basis of Fedorov's refusal of the biopolitical paradigm. Fedorov detects that the global expansion of thanatopolitics is an essential part of the biopolitical apparatus of modernity's relentless attempt to delimit the realm of the living and make it an object of power. To arrest this conversion requires challenging its fundamental mechanism, its productivity, and its orientation. Against the biopolitical centering on the living, Fedorov asserts the imperative of resurrecting the dead as the only universal project and common task worthy of humanity—a task that remains, however, foreclosed by modernity. The imperative is to commence thought and action not with the living—their interests, their desires, their flourishing—but with the dead, on whose ashes the world and its history have been built. It is an exigency for a thought that remains proximate to the dead, who have been relentlessly sacrificed, across the generational continuum of history and the colonial spatiality of the world, for the benefit of the living.

Modernity, for Fedorov, is not only the epoch of intensification of death. It is also, paradoxically, the epoch of its forgetting. Modernity looks away from the dead, from the victims of history, by devaluating the veneration of ancestors for the sake of an investment in the future and offering itself as a space–time of self-proclaimed progress. Progress as "self-elevation [*самовозвышение*]" (I/50) legitimates the superiority of the present over the past and the future over the

present. As "generational egoism" (I/50), progress proclaims the triumph of a given generation over those past; it "makes fathers and ancestors defendants, and gives sons and descendants the power of judgement over them" (I/52). In severing the bond with the past and devaluating its standing, the unrelenting forward gaze of progress offers another name for centering on the living at the expense of the dead, whose death is naturalized as the necessary historical ground that makes the conditions of the living possible. Progress is a "form of life" that justifies the sacrificial logic in which past generations are superseded for the sake of present life, with humanity experiencing "the greatest amount of suffering, while striving to achieve the greatest amount of pleasures," as a result. "Progress is true hell," reads the crescendo of Fedorov's condemnation, whose theological inflection places it in unexpected proximity to Walter Benjamin's more famous version, "and the truly divine, truly human task consists in saving the victims of progress, in leading them out of hell" (I/51).

In an innovative recent study, Sergei Prozorov characterizes Fedorov as an anti-naturalist and transformative biopolitical thinker—one who takes life not as an object of protection or regulation, but of radical improvement and transformation—using this characterization to position him, at least in part, as a precursor to Stalinism (Prozorov 2016, 4, 67–68). While Prozorov usefully understands biopolitics in an expanded sense as the rationalities of power over living beings, the specific characterization of Fedorov's project as anti-naturalist and transformative stems from Prozorov's determination of biopolitics, and particularly Stalinist biopolitics, as disjunctively relating the transcendence of the idea to the immanence of life.[4] As we have been arguing, the biopolitical understanding of Fedorov's project is insufficient insofar as it fails to acknowledge his absolute refusal to prioritize the living; it is insufficient also, as we show in the final section, because of the critique of the political entailed in the project of the common task. Furthermore, the fundamental problem does not consist, for Fedorov, in the violent imposition of the transcendent idea on the immanence of life or nature. It consists rather in the very naturalization of nature *as* generational displacement and mutual antagonism, which is only intensified and redoubled when humanity, in enacting progress, makes itself into "tools of the blind force of nature" (I/45). Fedorov's project targets nature understood evolutionarily—in terms of survival, division, and

strife—and legitimated as the realm of violence and struggle that is only intensified and reduplicated in the realm of progress, since "progress equated with development, with evolution, is clearly drawn from blind nature and applied to human life" (I/53). In other words, his thought is anti-naturalist only to the extent that it critiques the view of nature that emerges with the nineteenth-century biologisms that produce "man-as-living-being" and "man-as-species" as objects of biopower (Foucault) and generate the biocentric figure of Man as hierarchically devaluing other genres of the human (Wynter).

This is confirmed by the fact that the question "of the non-kindred relation [*неродственном отношении*] between humans" cannot be resolved for Fedorov without the concomitant resolution of the question "of the non-kindred relation of nature toward humans" (I/40). This nature is not then a primordial realm of immanence, an immanence of life that must be protected from the violations inflicted on it by the transcendent idea. Rather, it is in itself already a realm of transcendence, which by means of division and strife partakes in a sacrificial and justificatory relation to what is dead. The immanence of life is constructed and maintained at the expense of the dead, and nature comes to be what it is with the forgetting of the dead. Indeed, the very division between life and idea arises as a by-product of the same logic that produces the naturalization of nature understood as blind and violent. Against this naturalization, Fedorov affirms a different matrix that itself might be considered "natural": that of the earth and the skies, the ashes of the dead, and the commonness of the disenclosed earth. This is why Fedorov can in a later work claim a transformed naturalism, characterizing the common task as "natural, created in us by nature itself, coming into consciousness through us," or equating it with the "real, natural task" that, however, "has never even begun" (I/388–89). Terms like naturalism and anti-naturalism are equally reductive vis-à-vis Fedorov's ambivalence toward "nature," an ambivalence that indexes at once his refusal of its nineteenth-century naturalization and his revisioning of the earth and the skies through the prism of death and resurrection. Fedorov's thought and project arise from an intimacy with the dead and with the earth as what is in common and, as such, from a zero point below the entire binary between the immanence of life and the transcendence of the idea. The carrier of radical

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immanence and commonness is neither nature, nor world history, nor even life, but the dead—and the project of resurrection arises out of this fact.

Fedorov's diagnosis of the delimitation of the living as the proper and exclusive space of obligation, cut off from any intergenerational obligation to the ancestral past, is tied closely to his critical analysis of capitalism. While with "trade and manufacturing, land dispossession [*обезземеление*][5] begins" (I/246), in the end, industrial manufacturing requires "the making landless [*обезземеление*] of the majority of the population" (I/239). The expropriation of the peasantry lies at the origin of the capitalist relation, producing a class fully severed from the means of subsistence. On this point, Fedorov's insight is not far from Marx's own when the latter wrote, "The expropriation of the great mass of the people from the soil, from the means of subsistence and from the instruments of labour, this terrible and arduously accomplished expropriation of the mass of the people forms the pre-history of capital" (Marx 1976, 928). Fedorov formulates a similar insight in terms of the subordination of the earth to the urban imperatives of industrial capitalism. "The separation of the city from the village, the existence of a manufacturing industry independent from agriculture and even domination over the latter comprise," he asserts, "the main cause of the proletariat" (I/251). Expropriation and dispossession of land are reenacted with the expansion of capitalism into the colonial periphery, which in Fedorov's time was happening on a mass scale in India (Davis 2001). The result is a global unification based in radical inequality, the integration of humanity "into an international organism" via subordination: "All nations will play the role of the lower orders, of the blacklaborers, producing raw materials and semimanufactured goods" (I/239).

Marx's name never explicitly appears in the pages of Fedorov's *Question of Fraternity*.[6] It does so implicitly, however, when Fedorov refers to "a contemporary author, who saw the origin of the proletariat in the agrarian question, in land dispossession" (I/172). To these concerns, already established by Marx under the rubric of *ursprüngliche Akkumulation*, Fedorov adds a unique amendment: Expropriation should be understood more comprehensively as *expatriation*—as "expulsion from or abandonment of native soil [*родной земли*]" (I/172). Expropriation entails not only the stripping of peasants of their means of subsistence, but also their separation from the land of their

ancestors. The fundamental problem is "not only expropriation, but expatriation, the unholy act of excommunicating children from the ashes of ancestors [*от прахa отцов*], depriving them of the ability to fulfill their duty" (I/239). Expatriation forcibly dissolves the material link to the past, producing a forgetting and foreclosure of death, an alienation from the dead resulting in a global order of enclosure and division. The effects of expatriation are felt in multiple registers, including dispossession on the level of aesthetic material, object of thought, and object of love. Expatriation entails "depriving children of the material out of which they, akin to artists, could enact their thought or express their ancestor-like [*отцеподобную*] soul," as well as "depriving the rational being of the object toward which his thought and his knowledge could be directed" (I/239–40).[7] With this, the earth is reduced to a mere resource, a mechanism for the generation of profit and accumulation, while ceasing to be the site for the storage and theoretical exploration of "the scattered particles of ancestral ashes" (I/240). Expatriation forecloses the material site of death in common, thereby constituting the social realm of the living as autonomous and severed from the dead and the earth. One might, as a result, propose the following formulation: *If expropriation negates the earth as what is in common, expatriation negates death as what is in common.*

In a way, situating expropriation within the more fundamental logic of expatriation exemplifies the approach Fedorov takes vis-à-vis socialism more generally: not simply a rejection (even though he does polemically include it among the enemies of the common task), but a radical expansion beyond its declared parameters. This, for example, becomes visible when, in his late essay "Supramoralism," Fedorov considers the constitutive question animating modernity: "only replacing the question of poverty and wealth (of artificial or social pauperism)"—the question taken up by socialism—"with the question of death and life (of natural pauperism) will yield a [sufficiently] extensive object (i.e., the whole of nature) for knowledge and action" (I/391). Yet the latter question is eclipsed in modernity, which "prioritizes the question of poverty and wealth, the social question" (I/426), attempting at most to resolve the inequality among the living but never to critique or undo the biopolitical divisions that separate the living and the dead. Fedorov's polemic against socialism is multifaceted, but it centers on the fact that socialism remains too determined

by the logics of modernity—its locatedness in cities, its focus on industrial manufacturing, its delimitation by the social question, its justification of capitalism as a necessary stage of history. While Fedorov is willing to assert that "artificial pauperism and wealth," the division of society into classes, "serve as the source of all evil" (I/410) and foreclose the enactment of the common task, he nevertheless maintains that the social question cannot be solved without embedding social inequality within the more profound inequality dividing the living from the dead: "As long as there is death, there is likewise poverty, but when there will be immortal life, achieved through great effort, then poverty will be out of the question" (I/407). The resulting standpoint is fundamentally primary and not secondary, such that the expanded question (of life and death) does not build on but *precedes* the narrower social question (of wealth and poverty). In this expansion, or rather the affirmation of the general field restricted by the imposition of the social question—a field that will require a total reorganization of collective life—we see Fedorov elaborating the most expansive communism imaginable, a communism that reaches back to include all the dead and generically in-determines the entirety of the human species through an enactment of a cosmic, resurrective commons.

To situate expropriation within the general frame of expatriation, and the question of wealth and poverty within that of life and death, is to transform the essence of what is to be done. The task cannot be framed merely in terms of nation or class, but only as the common task of undoing expatriation and resurrecting the dead. Only this enactment, rather than the merely subjective use of reason, would mark humanity's full maturity or coming of age. Modernity, however, never inaugurates any enlightened maturity, whatever Enlightenment philosophies of autonomy may claim. Instead, modernity condemns humankind to "perpetual minority [*несовершеннолетие*]" evident in the supercessionist logic of "infinite progress" (I/136) no less than in modernity's conception of the subject as requiring supervision and discipline.[8] As Fedorov notes, "It is impossible to call adult [*совершеннолетним*] a society that cannot make do without surveillance, coercion, and punishment" (I/104). Indeed, if "the unique feature of the West is that it recognizes only external fear and coercion" (I/192) materialized in the state, then this forms the complementary

axis to capitalist production (materialized in the factory) in the global project of restructuring humanity.

The common task—"in which the maturity [of humanity] would be manifested"—emerges out of an attunement to death in common across the natural-historical field, whereas the West has only enacted society "as kinlessness" (I/106), resulting from the processes of expatriation and expropriation. For the common task, Western modernity substitutes partial tasks delimited by the private, the national, and the social. Activities in concert or common activity (Dardot and Laval 2019) are rendered partial and conflictual: "As long as humankind lacks a common task, its forces will be absorbed by the social task, which requires division, parties, struggle" (I/103). One might even say that in modernity the proper has always been substituted for the common: The common task has never yet existed and thus must still be enacted out of the material remains of the dead. An inevitably partial universal—which is to say, less a universal than an imposition of the logic of division, war, and sacrifice—modern universality functions most directly through the caesura between those whose life is to flourish and those who may already be seen as not worthy of life. This caesura is forcefully made universal by the expansion of Western geopolitical domination in what recently has been theorized as the Eurocene (Grove 2019).[9] The common task of resurrection, then, stands in direct opposition to the modern paradigm of immunization elaborated by Roberto Esposito (2008), which offers one account for the necessary presence of death within the logic of biopower. Immunization introduces negativity that delimits the proper and particular, producing thereby coherent and individuated units within a general field of division, strife, and struggle. In direct refusal of this, the common task can be realized only by taking death as the zero point in common, devoid of all appropriation.

By situating thought and action in relation to the dead, Fedorov diagnoses all existing modern logics of the common as too constricted—and ultimately too proper—and modernity itself as the frame of their constriction. Even the most radical modern forms of collective action, revolutions, do not for Fedorov enact the common task insofar as they remain merely social in orientation. Indeed, "revolution can be identified as a replacement of the *common*—paternal or ancestral—task with the *social* one" (I/185). Here we see a particularly acute

version of a substitution that modernity performs more broadly: the erasure of obligations to the dead in favor of the mutual obligations among the living in the form of social and political ties that constitute civil society and the nation-state. And Fedorov never stops delineating the fundamental opposition between individual, right-bearing citizen-subjects and the realm of kinship as the bond between the living and the dead: "Between the popular conception of the human family and world citizenship, there is an immense difference. The latter does not attach any importance to origin—for it, ancestors do not exist—it is universal [*всемирно*] spatially, so to speak, and not temporally; it is, finally, only *citizenship* and not *kinship*" (I/124).

What ultimately emerges from Fedorov's diagnosis is the necessity of jointly co-articulating the biopolitical and the expropriation paradigms. The former paradigm names the delimitation of the realm of the living, whose flourishing and reproduction are premised on a constitutive exclusion of those whose sacrificial death is the ground on which the actuality of the present is built—a constitutive exclusion that is distributed in temporally and spatially asymmetrical ways. The latter paradigm captures the transformed relations to the earth that materially produce and enforce the divisions between industry and agriculture, capital and proletariat, city and country, theoretical and practical reason. All of these divisions partake in the broader logic of expatriation that requires the severance of ancestral ties that bind the living to the dead, a severance that produces at once the modern subject as individuated and autonomous *and* the earth as mere resource for extraction and exploitation (and no longer as the site of ancestral ashes). In turn, the constitutive exclusion of the dead persists and is intensified through these divisions, leading to the continual production of landlessness, dispossession, and alienation on a global scale. The two paradigms operate conjointly to establish the uniform alienated ground of the modern globalized order—in which the people, their labor, and the products of industry are removed from all connection to the earth and to the ancestors other than as resource. This uniform alienated ground serves to cover up the ashes on which it is built and to obscure at once the earth and the skies, a process embodied by those it exploits by sending them beneath the earth's surface to extract the resources needed to maintain the ground's stability, as is captured in Fedorov's striking description of "convict-like [*каторжная*]

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subterranean [*подземная*] toil of miners who extract the coal and iron on which all of contemporary industry is built" (I/40). Not unlike Russia's model Europeanized city, Saint Petersburg, famously built by Peter the Great in the 1700s on a swampy *terra nullius* at the cost of countless displaced and sacrificed peasant workers,[10] modernity *at once displaces and exploits the dead on an unprecedented scale*, building its new world on top of the cemetery of the earth—which likewise expands with modernity's violent colonial expansion. Against modernity's sacrificial visions of progress that forget and foreclose death, the common task "arises out of disasters that are common to all people (death and everything that leads to it)" (I/185)—arises, that is, in intimacy with the catastrophe of history materialized in the cemetery of the earth.

THE CEMETERY AND THE COMMUNE

Behind Fedorov's affirmation of the common task stands a singular yet systematic reconceptualization of collective life necessary for that task's enactment. Indeed, exceeding mere reconceptualization, Fedorov proposes a *radical reorganization of collective life* and a *redistribution of its sites*—making its central nucleus the material site of the dead: the graveyard or cemetery (*кладбище*). In line with the critical diagnosis of modernity outlined in the previous section, Fedorov's concern with sites of collective life follows from his antagonism to the juridico-economic organization of society and the latter's prioritization of atomized individuals who are, in the end, treated less as individuals than as "organs of production" (I/247). Indeed, "humanity organized juridico-economically cannot know itself" (I/284)—can know neither its history nor its ties to the earth—because of its foreclosure and exploitation of death in common. Although radically contravening the dominant institutional imaginary of modernity with his speculative flair, Fedorov must nonetheless be understood as a thinker of institutions. In reimagining the logic and operation of schools, museums, and cathedrals—all assembled around the cemetery as the dwelling place of the ashes of the dead—Fedorov seeks to uncover the common logics of collective life organized not through carceral, disciplinary, or normalizing imperatives, but around a vision of *the resurrective commons*. In Fedorov's writing, institutions become unhinged, out of joint with their

modern use (or disuse), and rewritten with a fancy that is as speculative as it is rigorous.[11] They become conceptual personae that give shape and texture to a collective life opposed to the cartography of enclosure and confinement, to the imperatives of surveillance and biopolitical regulation, no less than to the modern relationship between the state and the citizen-subject. The result is less an abolitionist perspective—although it is present here, too, with Fedorov speaking of his doctrine as one that "tears down the prison walls and frees the captives" (I/64)—than a novel countertopography, a singular imaginary of the disenclosure of collective life.

Ceasing to be the neglected site for storing the remains of the dead that accumulate across the indefinite history of progress, the cemetery is to be "made into a place of assembly, consultation, constant care for reconstitution [*восстановлении*]" (I/72). The living will congregate with the dead, not only to mourn or memorialize them, but to reweave the webs of kinship that modernity has severed. To center the life of the living around the cemetery is to begin to undo the naturalized line of incommensurability between the living and the dead, through the enactment of a resurrective commons, or even a *resurrective communism*, of the living and the dead. This will commence "when no one will distance themselves from the graves of fathers, when cemeteries will become centers for the gathering of sons, when unification in the ancestral task will take place" (I/397). In modernity, however, the cemetery has deteriorated into a space of dereliction, a space for what is to be neglected in the relentless temporality of progress. "The separation of the living from the dead, the cemetery from the dwelling place," Fedorov judges, "is the downfall of society, named progress" (I/67). Remedying this cannot simply be a question of legal injunction and external coercion, of policing "that in general does not tolerate disorder," or of a general tendency "to mask death" (I/74). Instead, a stark opposition must be confronted: Either the cemetery remains merely a site of storage, where to store "is to give over to decay . . . [because] stagnation is destruction" (I/108), or it is transformed into a site for the enactment of the common and the realization of resurrection.

For all the seeming strangeness of such a proposal, the desire to gather collective life around the cemetery recalls other traditions. As Huey Newton's brother Melvin reflected on Black life in the South: "That's where we began in

the United States [in the South]. You had families, people who developed their own institutions, churches and schools and businesses. You had cemeteries! Out here, in the West, the graveyards are set aside from the community. But there, the graveyards are *in the community*, in the churchyards! So even in death people aren't separated" (quoted in Hilliard and Cole 1993, 27).[12] Fedorov shares this vision of the intimate inseparability of the dead and the living, rent asunder by urban life and industrialization, and calls for a radical reimagination of the topographical order of collective life that includes a reorientation away from the city toward the country or rural living. This reorientation, however, is hardly an idyllic return to the land. Indeed, it is not a *return* at all, but rather a formation of a novel counterdistribution of sites that might be called social were they not partaking in a speculative imaginary that radically exceeds the social. This speculative imaginary inhabits the domain of life and death, of earth and skies, generating the conditions for collective thought and action arising out of the cemetery, as the location of the ashes of the dead, and projectively extending into the cosmos.

This is made visible in the contrast Fedorov draws to the return to the land and village life preached by his contemporary, Leo Tolstoy. "Tolstoy sees a return only to the land, i.e., a refusal of wealth and riches," Fedorov judges, "rather than a return to the ashes of the ancestors [*к праху предков*], in which consists the solution to the question of life and death, or of the universal restoration of life [*всеобщем возвращении жизни*], *which is what gives life meaning and purpose*" (I/416). At stake is not merely a moral renunciation of civilization, but a thoroughgoing reconstellation of collective life, with theoretical and practical reason being reunited around questions of life and death. This reconstellation, moreover, arises out of an ongoing catastrophe rather than out of an abstract idealist demand: "The turn from the city to the field, to the village . . . will be necessitated by hunger, pestilence, and death in general." The movement of "placing the center of gravity outside the city" (I/74)—Fedorov's decentering of modernity's self-centeredness so as to open it onto a cosmic perspective of the terrestrial and the celestial to be inhabited in common—contains within itself elements of the archaic and of the essentially novel, a disjunctive creation of what has never been, directed against the actuality of modernity. "Cemeteries," writes Fedorov, "moved at present outside the city, [must] become

centers once again, as used to be the case in villages." In this seeming reversion, cemeteries become what they have never been, that is, "centers in which are gathered all institutions, or instruments of knowledge and art, as was not the case in villages." The radical novelty does not stop there but goes further, since "these instruments, instruments of knowledge and art, gain a different purpose [*назначение*] than the one they had in the city; they become instruments of reconstitution and revitalization [*воссоздания и оживления*]" (I/424).

Around the cemetery, an expansive realignment is to take place, one that involves knowledge and aesthetics, education and ethics—a speculative cartography of collective life based on the refusal to naturalize the divide between the living and the dead. Centering on the remains of the dead entails the reorganization of thought and deed, such that it is necessary to "place [the dead] at the very center of every settlement and begin studying the phenomenon utterly unknown as of yet called death" (I/257). We do not yet know what death is. Science, as Federov envisions it, must never depart from this fundamental fact. The "radical upheaval" of making cemeteries "the center of gravity of society" entails a decision for science "between the exhibition and the cemetery, between comfort and a universal call to the work of cognizing [*познавания*] the blind force that carries in itself hunger, pestilence, and death, to the labor of converting it into a life-bearing force" (I/73). Here another logic of antagonism becomes visible, between the commercial exhibition ("the World's Fair"; I/396) that displays commodities, the fruit of industrial production, and the cemetery that enacts the obligation to the dead. Can science be decoupled from its subordination to profit, accumulation, and the commodity, which are premised on the alienation from the earth and the forgetting of the dead? Can it become the resurrective force subverting the boundary, absolutized by modernity, between the living and the dead—a subversion that immanently inhabits the common zero point of the living and the dead, in anteriority to their very division?

Organizing science and the production of knowledge in this way would begin to undo "the greatest disaster" that takes place with "the disintegration of thought and action [*дела*]" (I/41). For Fedorov, the common task requires reinserting science, or theoretical reason, back into the domain of practical reason, understood not as abstract moral imperatives in the Kantian vein but as a practical attunement to common suffering and death. Only in this way can

science become a science of the poor (I/73), a science committed to the cemetery and to the dead. This reinsertion entails neither a return to premodern, pre-Copernican science nor the absolutization of the horizon of everyday, popular life. The unity of the theoretical and the practical entails a reconfiguration of both—hence the central role Fedorov assigns to an all-encompassing, universal education and to transformed educational sites. The people's worldview, as well as religion and art, Fedorov points out, have remained Ptolemaic, whereas for the project of inhabiting the universe in common to be materialized they must become genuinely post-Copernican (III/364)[13]—just as post-Copernican science must be reoriented around the concern for the earth and for the dead. "The factory does not allow [science] the expanse that it necessarily requires [*должного простора*]" (I/252). Put more generally, global capitalism forecloses rather than opens up the post-Copernican cosmic commons. If the common task of resurrection and cosmic inhabitation are to be genuinely *common*, they must be decoupled from the dispossessive, sacrificial, and biopolitical logics of modernity. Fedorov does not consider peasants or the poor to be incapable of scientific education and activity; rather, he sees the fundamental problem in modern science's failure to speak to their practical concerns due to its imbrication with industry, war, and profit. Modern science remains "limited to the production of trifles" (I/252) and abstracted from assembly with the ancestors. The very nature of the common task as a *project* requires the breakdown of the established divide between intellectual and manual labor: "When separation of the intelligentsia from the people is acknowledged as illegitimate, thought will become project" (I/49). The resulting collective ethos inhabits the standpoint of the unrealized anoriginary commons that confronts "what is common to all: mortality" (I/74) in order to undo all thanato-political executions of history.

Fedorov's cemetery-centered resurrective nexus of the school, the museum, the cathedral, and the observatory, alongside more exotic institutions such as the kremlin or the commission,[14] is supposed to provide the institutional matrix for a science of and for the resurrective commons. Situated in proximity to ancestral graves, schools take on new functions. No longer sites of class distinction, of normalization and docility, they become spaces, "within the cemetery" (I/72), for cultivating the obligations of the living to the dead: "To transfer schools to the graves of ancestors, to their common monument, the museum,

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means to recreate schools anew" (I/74). Rather than partaking in the modern disciplinary formation, schools are integrated in a dense web of institutional sites of collective life, in which "schools for sons and daughters cannot be separated from museums as memorials of parents [*отцов*]" (I/95). This education partakes in an antitheodical revisioning of history, such that although history "as fact" has always involved "reciprocal extermination" (I/138), only with the common task can it become real as "a resurrection and not a court of judgment [*суд*], since the subject-matter [*предмет*] of history are not the living but the dead" (I/135). Through this education, history ceases to be theodically justified—refusing the Hegelian dictum that "world history," in its supposed movement toward the end goal of freedom, "is a court of judgment [*Gericht*]" (Hegel 1952, 216). Instead, the sacrifice on which the movement of history is based becomes (theoretically) delegitimated and (practically) undone in the common task of resurrection.

If the cemetery lies at the heart of Fedorov's speculative reconfiguration of the sites of collective life, its extra-urban character carries a further determination: the commune. The commune no less than the cemetery is a site out of which a counterproject to the intensifying global catastrophe may be articulated—a catastrophe that Fedorov sees as compelling even "the West to turn to those countries where the commune and everyday life in common [*община, общинный быт*] remain" (I/202).[15] The form of "the agricultural commune" is in crisis, but "is far from everywhere destroyed by civilization in its current form" (I/253). Yet at stake is neither merely the preservation of its remains, nor a return to an organic social form in the process of being disrupted by modernity's encroachment, nor an appeal to a (conservative) restoration of a disrupted historical continuity. In Fedorov's thought, the commune exhibits a more complex logic and temporality. It names an archaic site discontinuous with the logic of industrial modernity *and* something that has never fully existed. It indicates at once an archaic institution in crisis and a utopian site out of which an alternative trajectory to modernity's operations of expatriation, expropriation, and biopolitics must be constructed and made real as project. Requiring the unification of the Copernican and the Ptolemaic, the scientific and the popular worldviews, the commune has never existed and cannot simply be identified with the historical peasant commune. Yet it indexes

something deeply real, something that must be enacted and (re)constituted in the common task of resurrection: the commons of the earth and the skies as the antehistorical real that history has served to enclose, exploit, and cover over with blood and ashes. Resulting from Fedorov's thinking of the commune is a wilder and more archaic version of what communism might be: a communism of the living and the dead that breaks with natural and historical teleology by means of thinking and acting out of the utopian site of the agricultural commune. In this process, the multiple functions of the commune—"the historical (or psycho-physiological), the agricultural, and the sanitary—come together in the labor of resurrection" (I/275). What makes the form of the commune decisive is that it "cannot adopt an industrial character" (I/252), naming a non-commodified use of land and generation of provisions, the material site and the alternative mode of material provisioning out of which to confront the ongoing crisis of limitless expatriation and expropriation.[16]

Such a vision of the common task as arising out of the commune against the encroaching global expansion of capitalism recalls another, more famous one. In the early 1880s, a decade in which the peasant commune in Russia is still very much a material reality (albeit one on which the forces of capitalism ever more intensely encroach), Marx, in his now famous letter to Vera Zasulich, proposes the commune as the site from which a counterpath to communism might be formulated. The Russian commune might become, as one of the letter drafts notes, "the direct starting-point" of a new economic and social world (Shanin 1983, 112). In other words, adopting a position first articulated in radical circles by Nikolai Chernyshevsky, Marx held that the commune would not need to be abolished or sublated as part of a supposedly necessary transition from feudalism to capitalism to communism. Instead, with the benefit of modern technology (freed from its submission to the imperatives of capital), it can become the site where something discontinuous with the contemporary global actuality can be constructed. It is this temporal logic that Fedorov shares with the late Marx: A future discontinuous with the historically actualized present might arise from a project for which the anteoriginary point of commencement would be the radically archaic. And if there is no need, in Marx's surprising formulation, "to be frightened by the word 'archaic,'" this is so because the archaic marks an affirmation of the antemodern and anteoriginary nature of the

commune whose material resources are nevertheless extant (e.g., in collective practices of cultivation) as vestiges for assembling a communism envisioned by Fedorov on the scale of a cosmic and resurrective geo-technological commons (Shanin 1983, 107, 104).

Fedorov's evident techno-utopianism should be understood as part of this more complex temporality and not simply as part of capitalist modernity's own techno-utopian trajectory. If there is a shared disjunctive temporality to Marx and Fedorov, there is likewise a shared assertion of the significance of introducing technology into the commune against the actuality of capitalism. Only a planetary commune, Fedorov suggests, can care for the earth *qua* in common, by means of a geo-technology purposed for a regulation without exploitation, with the help of which "the whole atmospheric process of the planet would be regulated, winds and rains would turn into the ventilation and irrigation of the planet as the commons" (I/253). From the outset, Fedorov is exploring technological solutions to droughts and famines—but this can only involve a technics and science freed from their subsumption under the logics of profit, colonialism, and war. "The village," Fedorov goes on to say, "would even be a radical means of universal healing [*всеобщего оздоровления*], if the city helped it with its knowledge, instead of forcing it to turn agriculture into a means of extracting the greatest profit at the cost of the greatest degradation of land" (I/267). Such statements make clear that while Fedorov heavily draws on Russian agrarian life and its communal institutions, he does not affirm them in their given form but seeks to speculatively restructure them no less than their Western counterparts.

Against the temporality of Western colonial imposition and capital accumulation, an alternative temporality bringing together the archaic and the utopian becomes available for the first time.[17] The linking of the radically archaic and the radically utopian characteristic of Fedorov's thought (Young 2012) only appears contradictory when viewed from the perspective of progressive linear time. This peculiar temporality, moreover, returns us to Fedorov's refusal of biopolitics: Instead of an incessant movement of overcoming characteristic of the sacrificial apparatus that gives up the past and the present for a future, Fedorov's thought reaches back to think from death as what is in common and as what allows for the realization of the utopian in the form of the common

task. This is why Fedorov can state that the common task has never taken place, but also that "the common task is primordial: it was born with the human" (I/185). In opposition to the temporality of progress stands *the temporality of project*. Project proceeds from death and catastrophe as what is constitutively foreclosed by world history, from the real nonplace that refuses any incorporation into the joint progression of nature and history. To refuse incorporation into the logics of nature and history, as nineteenth-century natural science and philosophy of history constructed them, may be said to constitute the utopian ground of Fedorov's entire institutional countertopography of the resurrective commons. From this perspective, Fedorov's affirmation of the commune appears as a decolonial gesture, a refusal of expatriation and of the accompanying division, inequality, and strife produced on a global scale.

URBAN QUESTIONS AND THE ANSWER OF UNIVERSAL LITURGY

Reimagining collective life in a novel constellation centering around the cemetery and the commune necessarily entails a move out of the city, because the city names the spatial realm of the juridico-economic society, the autonomous realm of the living separated from the dead and from the commonness of the earth. Moreover, the city "ignores the dependence of the human on nature [and] is indifferent toward harvests and droughts" (I/251). In this disregard, the city names the site for the emergence and intensification of *the question of provisioning or food supply*, the name Fedorov gives to the general problem indexed by catastrophic famine and hunger out of which his thought unfolds. Hardly isolatable, it opens onto a nexus of urban questions that become "ever more pressing" (I/252), intensifying into a general crisis with the continued expansion of capitalist and colonial modernity: "Behind the question of the means of subsistence—the question of hunger or provisioning—arises the sanitation question" (I/250). This *sanitation or hygienic question* is also fundamentally urban, "because the city is essentially anti-hygienic" (I/267). As Fedorov explains, "In terms of sanitation, cities produce only rot and then hardly convert it into vegetal products; consequently, the separated existence of cities must generate a preponderance of processes of rot over processes

of life" (I/252). At the same time, "the broader and denser the interactions [between people in the cities] become, the higher the level of epidemics and infectious diseases" (I/257). More generally, the city could be said to materialize the modern ideal of the autonomy of the human from the earth—in contrast to Fedorov's own vision of unity with the earth and the skies. Everything excluded from modernity's realm of autonomy is devalued and turned into a site for resource extraction and waste disposal, exhausting and contaminating the planetary processes, and eventually coming back to plague the city in the form of infections, illnesses, and food shortages among its ever-increasing population. The city may understand itself as autonomous, but its autonomy is a catastrophic illusion.

The urban problems explored by Fedorov—sanitation, hygiene, provisioning—coincide in part with those that Foucault identified as the cause and occasion of the ever-intensifying biopolitical apparatus of modernity in the second half of the nineteenth century (Foucault 1978, 133–59). Despite a convergent diagnosis, for Fedorov, these questions cannot be solved, at their root, through the increase and intensification of biopolitical operations of planning and management or through biopolitical intervention that takes population and the living as its object (Foucault 2003, 239–64). For Fedorov, urban hygienics necessarily remains "an artificial and palliative means" that falls short of agriculture's "natural hygienic means" of "turning rot into vegetal and animal substance" (I/267). Biopolitical operations only deepen the asymmetrical divide between the living and the dead, concealing the foundational violence of expropriation and expatriation. To solve the question of sanitation and food provisioning requires a radically different relation to the earth within the resurrective commons, an undoing of the earth's subordination to the imperatives of industrial, commercial, and urban life. Indeed, the real resolution of the question of sanitation requires the resurrection of the dead, seeing that a major part of sanitation consists in "the question of burial" (I/250) and the epidemics that arise from the crossings of the boundary between death and life. Ultimately, all these seemingly restricted questions—of sanitation and food provisioning, of reproduction and overpopulation, of life and death—arise, in Fedorov's perspicacious diagnosis, from the same fundamental ground. "Hunger and death originate from the same causes" (I/250): namely, the alienated

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force of nature constructed as blind and external, the expropriation of the earth *qua* in common, and the simultaneous naturalization and forgetting of death. In contrast to modernity's delusions of delimiting the autonomous realm of the human by separating it from the nonhuman, Fedorov's concern with the resurrection of human ancestors always implies an all-encompassing material reconstitution of the planetary and cosmic commons for all beings.

Universal resurrection, as the radical resolution of the sanitation question, entails "the return of decomposed particles to those creatures to whom these particles originally belonged" (I/250). At such utopian moments, Fedorov's vision mutates into a kind of science fiction, in which a resurrected humanity becomes seemingly shape-shifting, capable of reconstituting matter at the particle level and materially one with the movement of the planets it regulates as its own "organs" (I/280–281). Throughout, Fedorov's cosmic imagination arises out of his fundamental concern with hunger and death in common and his critique of the catastrophic logics of colonial and capitalist modernity. This is registered in his particular formulation that "three specific questions—concerning the regulation of atmospheric phenomena, concerning the control of earth's movement, and concerning the search for 'new lands'—comprise one general question concerning security against hunger, the question of provisioning, or, more precisely, the question concerning the restoration of ancestral life" (I/256). This entwinement of the catastrophic and the cosmic through the common task of resurrection requires precisely the radical transformation of science delineated above, such that those with vocations of theoretical reason—the intelligentsia, scholars, and scientists—come to "contribute to the communo-agricultural labor research that will lead to the resolution of the provisioning and sanitation question into universal resurrection" (I/260). In their return to the common task, the intellectuals will fully inhabit the "estateless [*всесословной*] agrarian commune" (I/254), in which all become collective experimenters and researchers.

Fedorov's scientific orientation is not an expression of a positivist cult of science. Nowhere is this more clearly registered than in the fact that Fedorov imagines science not as an autonomous technical process but as part of the general process of *liturgy*, understood as the polyphonic enactment of the common task. Indeed, Fedorov writes vis-à-vis the required transformation

of science and knowledge: "Every type of knowledge will receive its sacred significance and its role in the task of universal resurrection, in the liturgical task" (I/260). Like resurrection, liturgy partakes in a theological imaginary on both conceptual and lexical levels, but both are submitted by Fedorov to a rigorous speculative rewriting. The traditional theological form of resurrection—to be awaited piously and faithfully, and occurring in the beyond—is programmatically transmuted into a projective "immanent resurrection" (I/46). Fedorov's operation is dual: construing cult and ritual as forms of "mythical" or "imaginary" action, without however rejecting this "fictive" action, as Enlightenment critiques of religion would, seeking instead to convert it into "real [*действительное*]" action, to render it realizable in the common task by means of a transformed science and a radically reorganized collective life (I/47). Though opposed to theological transcendence, the immanence of immanent resurrection must not be reduced to the matrix of nature-progress (as the conjoined domains of divisions and strife, which are themselves carriers of transcendence). Rather, it indexes what is to be enacted in the utopian project of the common task out of what is anteoriginary and in common (namely, death and the earth).

Through a parallel speculative rewriting, liturgy comes to name in Fedorov the day-to-day process of enacting the common task—not unlike the way that, in the Russian Orthodox calendar, every day in the year has a liturgical significance. However, liturgy can name the common task only if it is "no longer restricted to the cathedral" (I/237). In Christian liturgy, the church or cathedral (*храм*) serves "as an image of the universe [*мироздания*]" where the dead are thought to be "as if resurrected [*ожившими*]" (I/399). The liturgy must be understood cosmically, but it cannot in truth be so understood unless it ceases to merely represent the heavens and resurrection ideally and becomes *really* universal and resurrective—enacted through the planetary and cosmic commons. The cathedral as an enclosed space for Christian service and church art as adhering to the closed and hierarchical image of heaven are still essentially Ptolemaic and not post-Copernican (I/399). Just as the factory was too restrictive for the post-Copernican science of the common task, so too is the church for a post-Copernican liturgy that sees in the earth a celestial body.

A post-Copernican understanding of liturgy entails a move beyond the delimited theological domain and a real collective dissolution of "the mythical geography" that had space "for heaven and hell" (I/114).[18] As a result, liturgy ceases to indicate merely a ritualistic practice connecting symbolically the here below to the beyond or the here and now with the eschatological thereafter. To understand "universal resurrection [as] liturgy" is to regard it as "an extra-cathedral [*внехрамовая*] liturgy, an extra-cathedral transubstantiation," which is "not mysterious but manifest and real" (I/263). Liturgy incorporates into itself the scientific practices of reconstitution, with the result that even electricity "must be transformed into an instrument of liturgy" (I/253). As such, liturgy names the continuous and all-encompassing process of transubstantiating collective life into the common task, to such an extent that Fedorov writes that "the extra-cathedral liturgy of the faithful" is nothing but "a continuous convergence and cooperation in questions such as the provisioning-sanitary" (I/247) or "the transformation of the nutritional and birthing processes into re-creation [*воссоздание*], or Universal Resurrection" (I/279).[19] Education forms a central part of this as well, since the individual must be able to move swiftly within the complex and closely interconnected institutional topography of the common task. That is why "the examination [of the pupil in matters of liturgy] is not limited to the cathedral and culminates in the observatory, the hospital, the cemetery, the field" (I/269).[20] The theological idiom of liturgy operates in excess of a restricted theological context so much so that liturgy becomes intimately intertwined with the resolution to the provisioning and sanitation questions:

> The unification of peoples will take place in the common task, in liturgy, which prepares a meal for all (the provisioning question) for the healing of the soul and body of all (the sanitation question), and this liturgy, performed by all humankind, will be a prayer transitioning into action; the communion table [*престолом*] of this liturgy will be the entire earth, *qua* the ashes of the dead [*прах умерших*], the 'celestial forces'—light, heat—will visibly (rather than mysteriously) serve for the conversion [*обращения*] of the ashes into the body and blood of the dead. (I/265)

Such a vision could be charged at once as an illegitimate secularization in which liturgy ceases to be a clearly delimited ritual of the Christian community centered around the death and resurrection of Christ and an illegitimate resacralization in which the agrarian commune and the modern urban questions of provisioning and sanitation are folded into the conceptual lexicon of liturgy. Real liturgy takes place outside of the cathedral, because it no longer names a delimited religious activity in opposition to a profane activity in the world; instead, its logic of real immanence refuses not only Christian transcendence but also the divisions of modernity, including the separation between the secular and the religious.

The "extra-cathedral liturgy" must constitute "the (meteoric, telluric) task throughout the day and throughout the year," and until that is the case, "resurrection will remain merely a rite and there will be no agreement between the intra- and the extra-cathedral task" (I/89). Yet not only does liturgy at present not "correspond to its name or definition of serving the common task" (I/264), one may say that it never has—because it has never been truly in common and universal—being, on one side, foreclosed by modernity and, on the other, rendered merely fictive and mythological in Christianity. If liturgy has always remained unreal in Christianity, it has been foreclosed in modernity precisely through the logics of expropriation and expatriation—since "the commercial-manufacturing industry not only does not pose itself the task of solving the provisioning-sanitation question, which constitutes the essence of agriculture [*земледелия*][21] and liturgy, but it acts directly contrary to the solution of this question, i.e., it is the conversion of the living into the dead" (I/264). As such, it is directly antagonistic to the resurrective commons and the latter's (material and scientific) liturgical enactment.

In Fedorov, liturgy is best understood as a polyphonic unfolding of the common task that weaves together the multitude of threads, sites, and roles within a reconstituted common life. Through the material texture and rituals of the day-to-day life of the planetary commune in its communion with the earth, the skies, and the ashes of the ancestors, liturgy unites in a cosmic resonance the smallest particles and the movements of planets, the mourning of the dead and the joy of resurrection, the duty to the ancestors and the prospect of hitherto unseen, nonreproductive futures. It constitutes a careful and vigilant

communal assembling (*собирание*), a term that in Russian shares a common root with *собор*, which carries the meaning of cathedral as well as council. Liturgy *qua* assembling operates across all scales, across the subjective and the objective, enacting the project of the common task out of the negative universality of death and catastrophe. In formulating liturgy as "the one, universal, and yet unfinished task—the task of universal resurrection" (I/171), Fedorov names a polyphonic and assembling activity that brings into itself the ethical, the technical, the aesthetic or *poietic*, and the social, without allowing for their separation. "In this, science and art unified will become ethics and aesthetics, they will become the natural world-technics of this artwork, the cosmos; science and art unified will then constitute the ethico-aesthetic divine activity [*богодейством*], no longer mystical, but real" (I/401).[22] As such, liturgy comes to name a uniquely ambitious utopian post-Copernican vision of collective knowledge and action, without distinction between governing and governed.

Fedorov's articulation of the liturgy should thus be seen as refusing the logic of liturgical power that, as Nicholas Heron (2018) has shown in detail, constituted Christianity's essential modality of power and its inheritance to modernity. On Heron's account, liturgical power is premised on the enactment of hierarchy, arising out of the divide between clergy and laity, or between those who perform liturgy and those who are its object—to the extent that the "history of the laity coincides with the history of the governed" (Heron 2018, 63). This hierarchical division essential to Christian liturgical power remains in a transformed state fundamental to the modern logic of governance, such that, for Heron, "the affirmation of the classless society thus distinctly passes through the deactivation of liturgical power" (88). It is against this view of liturgy that the speculative originality of Fedorov's cosmic liturgy comes to the light. Liturgy as universal assembly renders everyone a subject in a common project, with no one being rendered mere object (of power), as the common task cannot be common if it is divided between those whose activity enacts power and those on whom it is enacted. Rather, liturgy for Fedorov is what undoes the very distinction between the governing and governed, between lay and clergy, and thus all hierarchy.[23] Even as it retains etymologically the dimension of service as "public service" (I/264), it is no longer performed *for*, but *with*. As a universal activity, it arises out of the earth without distinction, out

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of the ashes of the dead, immanently enacting a resurrective commons—and including even the dead in its enactment, since, as Fedorov warns, "the task of liturgy cannot be limited solely to the unification of the living in the common task" (I/122). Rather than being a Russian Orthodox idiosyncrasy or signaling a Christian traditionalism, Fedorov's speculative redeployment of the liturgy at once registers the centrality of the logic of liturgy for the Christian-modern trajectory and seeks antagonistically to expand and invert it against that trajectory's dominant hierarchical logic of governance into a common activity of *not being governed*.

Liturgy, as real and cosmic, names a collective enactment that refuses to ascribe primacy to the political or be exhaustively determined by it. Through the imposition of the friend/enemy distinction and the partition of *nomos* on which it is premised, the political always remains too entangled with the violence of individuation and subjection, of immunity and security, rendering the common task impossible and unthinkable. Moreover, in line with the complex temporality at the heart of Fedorov's project analyzed earlier, the common task precedes the political: It directly enacts the antehistorical real that ungrounds the absolutization of the political and its divisions. The common task proceeds immanently not from the geopolitical, but from the geo-utopian nonplace that erupts from *below* world politics and world history, out of the deep oneness of the earth, the skies, and the sun, rekindling what has been sacrificed and extinguished—and liturgy is, as it were, the utopian unfolding of this eruption and rekindling.[24] For Fedorov, the enactment of the common task transforms "the question of the state" into "the physical or astrophysical [question], the celestial-terrestrial question [*небесно-земной*]" (I/43). Or, as he declares, "Once we consider the earth as a cemetery and nature as a death-bearing force, then the political question will be replaced by the physical, and moreover the latter will not be separated from the astronomical, i.e., the earth will be acknowledged as a celestial body, and stars as earths" (I/43).

In this reading, Fedorov's is a cosmo-ethical project of a resurrective communism—one that out of the planetary catastrophe understands "the significance of the earth as a heavenly body and the significance of heavenly bodies as earthly forces" (I/76). In many ways this is a modern post-Copernican understanding, yet one that is, importantly, positioned *against* the

juridico-economic and political world of modernity. This confirms the final way in which Fedorov's project breaks with the biopolitical frame: Not only does it not center on life, it also does not attempt to make life the object of state power. At stake is replacing the political appropriation of life, in which life is claimed by and for the realm of sovereignty—a claim that produces in its wake endless thanato-political conversions—with a praxis of collective resurrection, in a resurrective refusal of the accumulation of death. Thus, although Prozorov (2016, 117) is right to say that Fedorov's vision "was never taken on as a political project and thus remained devoid of biopower," one might add that it is *essentially* incommensurable with the logic of the political as a realm of violence, division, and the proper. Instead of ascribing primacy to *bios* and the political, it calls for a resurrective cosmic commons—and it is from this antepolitical perspective that Fedorov insists that "the project of resurrection is at the same time the project of liberation" (I/286), a tearing-down of the prison walls of modernity, a liturgy in common against the planetary and astral factory (cf. Sloterdijk 2020, 59).

CONCLUSION

Fedorov's resurrective communism offers a distinctive speculative rewriting of the planetary and cosmic commons out of and for catastrophic times. Even if questions of famine have been momentarily forestalled with the rise of industrial agriculture, the catastrophes and violences of global modernity have only intensified, suffusing the past, present, and possible futures of the contemporary epoch, regardless of whether we understand it as the Anthropocene, the Capitalocene, or the Eurocene. The instability of the very ground beneath humanity's feet and beneath capitalism's planetary infrastructure makes Fedorov's speculations reverberate ever more powerfully. Even as global capitalism is forcefully pushing beyond the planetary (in such projects as asteroid mining or the colonization of Mars), contemporary critical theory has remained slow in articulating concepts and visions sufficiently cosmic in scope. It is precisely for this task that Fedorov must be reactivated as a decisive speculative and genealogical resource. With planetary-scale technology possibly forming an integral part of climate restoration (Buck 2019), it is important that Fedorov

offers his vision of the commons from a post-Copernican vantage without rejecting science and technology, in contrast to any post-Heideggerian suspicion toward modern science. But although contemporary techno-utopian proponents of modernity and geo-engineering continue to ask, "What future would make the past worth it?" (Bratton 2021), Fedorov crucially resists—and critical theory must resist with him—the logic of a redemptive future, together with all attempts to justify or naturalize (always unequally distributed) exploitation, death, and violence as they are continuously scaled-up by the sacrificial and reproductive machine of modernity.

If one were to ask what Fedorov's cosmism can offer for our own critical time and for our understanding of the planetary present and possible postplanetary future, it is, most fundamentally, the insight that the cosmic prospect does not necessarily have to be the prospect of outer space becoming a new colonial frontier or the prospect of global modernity's biopolitical logics extending over the entire solar system. All too often, capitalist modernity asserts itself as necessary and inevitable, so that the only course of action is to push forward, without regard to the exacerbation of death that this will entail. Perhaps, however, it is the logic of futurity that is the problem, seeing as it only reproduces and intensifies the negativity of the present. To think in a genuinely post-Copernican manner *against* capitalist modernity is not to abandon the earth for Mars, or to convert or terraform Mars into an image of the present world; from a Fedorovian perspective, doing so would not assemble the cosmic commons but only foreclose it ever more intensely. It is necessary, first and foremost, to inhabit the earth itself as a heavenly body and cemetery, without concealing the dark ground of modernity with quasi-Enlightenment visions of a brighter future. One must, in other words, begin immanently *with* this darkness as one with the darkness of the universe and reassemble the commons resurrectively in a oneness with the earth and the ashes of the ancestors. This reassembling, if we are to follow Fedorov's line of thinking, should be critical theory's central concern.

Fedorov characterized his time as decisive—for the commune, for humanity, and for the common task. He noted of the commune that "those who have separated themselves from the commune must come back to it, or else the commune cannot but be destroyed" (I/259). In the latter case he prophesied

that "our fate is known: the West's present is our future" (I/259). This leaves us with the question of whether Fedorov's theorization remains a utopian future of a past that has receded or been missed, left unrealized.[25] In this case, we might listen to what Fedorov thought would remain were that to happen, were the common task fail to be enacted: "In a suffering contemplation [of] the gradual destruction of our habitat and cemetery [i.e., the earth]" (I/256), humanity "has only this choice: either total solitary confinement [*полное одиночное заключение*] or the universal resurrection coinciding with full mutual knowledge [*взаимознание*]. In other words: no God, no world, and no humans—or all of this in perfect fullness" (I/270). A cosmic pessimism at this point threatens to take over the cosmic commons engulfed by the endless void of the universe and the inevitable death of the sun and the stars. However, it is perhaps this kind of pessimism, and not modernity's theodical optimism, that forms the precondition for the cosmic commons to be assembled in the common task—a thinking proceeding immanently from the memory and ashes of the dead, from the refusal to justify the sacrifice of the ancestors, and from their immanent resurrection.

NOTES

1. The full title of Fedorov's work is no less sprawling than the text itself: *The Question of Fraternity, or Kinship, of the Causes of the Non-Fraternal and Non-Kindred, i.e. Non-Peaceful, State of the World, and of the Means Towards Reconstituting Kinship: A Note from the Unlearned to the Learned, to Clergy and Laymen, to Believers and Non-Believers.* Citations from Fedorov are taken from his collected works in Russian (Fedorov 1995a; Fedorov 1995b; Fedorov 1997; Fedorov 2005) and are cited in text by volume and page number. All translations are our own.
2. For a spectrum of contemporary references to Fedorov, see, e.g., Bratton (2017), Moynihan (2020), and Nadis (2020).
3. For a critique of the dominant versions of eco- and geo-constructivism, see Neyrat (2019).
4. Prozorov is rightfully adamant that the anti-naturalist and transformative biopolitics of Stalinism be read not as a uniquely Russian phenomenon, but as a modality of Western biopower equal in importance to the liberal and fascist paradigms elaborated by Foucault and Esposito. Missing from Prozorov's genealogy, however, are precisely those elements that would explicitly link Stalinism to the West. These could be established, for example, by tracing an anti-naturalist and transformative drive in modernity (via Baconian science) or in Christianity (via its theological imaginaries of the New Man or

radical transformative asceticisms of the desert). By contrast, situating Fedorov as the key precursor has the double effect of making Stalinism appear genealogically Russian despite stated intent, while also imposing on Fedorov a conceptual paradigm foreign to him, a fact that Prozorov himself at times acknowledges (e.g., 126).

5. Literally, delandification or de-earthing, since *земля*—the root of *обезземеление*—means both land and earth, with *родная земля*, for example, meaning native soil.
6. It appears only in his correspondence and shorter fragments, the dating of which is not always clear. See, e.g., II/258, 316; III/282, 527; IV/154, 444.
7. The cumulative effect is a specific intensification of death that produces a kind of soul death: "the atrophy of all the soul's faculties, of reason, feeling, and will, of the cognizing, feeling, and acting faculties—i.e., these deprivations amount to a complete extraction [*вынимание*] of the soul" (I/240).
8. Fedorov continues the thought by stating: "History as mere education, and not as resurrection, is the surest proof that the human will remain forever only a student" (I/136). Fedorov's critique of perpetual minority should be read as a polemic against Kant's "What Is Enlightenment?" and the entire Enlightenment idea of the progressive education of humankind from Lessing onward.
9. The universal projects arising out of the Eurocene act as covers for the Western geopolitical expansion. Fedorov also seeks a universality, but one that is constructed out of death in common, against the *nomos* of the earth imposed by the European colonial and capitalist matrix.
10. Saint Petersburg, Fedorov writes, "suppresses our souls instead of . . . educating them" (I/78), i.e., instead of educating them in the common task.
11. The museum is arguably the only Fedorovian institution that has received sufficient theoretical attention: Groys (2018).
12. We thank Jesse Montgomery for bringing this quote to our attention.
13. They can only become post-Copernican, however, as part of the real project of resurrection *qua* the common task—for otherwise the contradiction between the people's and the scientific worldview, and the separation between the theoretical and the practical, are bound to persist (cf. I/399–401, III/149). We intend to explore the post-Copernican dimension of Fedorov's thinking in our future work.
14. In part, the commission names for Fedorov the transitional scholarly institution working toward the return of scientists and intellectuals back to the people and the earth ("turning the scholarly estate [*ученое сословие*] into a commission for the purpose of unification or assembling [*собирания*]") and calling or drafting (*призывая*) everyone to the common task, which will replace "progress with resurrection" (I/46).
15. It should be noted that, just like in English, in Russian, the word "commune" (*община*) shares a root with "common"—and thus with "the common task" (*общее дело*).
16. Fedorov would fully agree with Sylvia Wynter that capitalist modernity enacts "the systemic repression of all other alternative modes of material provisioning" (Wynter and McKittrick 2015, 22).
17. For a recent theorization of the imposition of modern temporality and of forms of chronotopic refusal, see Tomba (2019).

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18. On post-Copernican and global modernity as premised on the dissolution of a sacred geography, see Wynter (2003).
19. Fedorov's critique of reproduction and the birthing process goes hand in hand with his critique of reproductive futurism more generally—since reproduction is part of the natural-historical logic that involves death and sacrifice ("the birth of the sons is the death of the fathers," I/159)—with the consequence that the resurrective commons is, for Fedorov, fundamentally nonreproductive. "Resurrection, not reproduction!" could be Fedorov's complementary formula to Donna Haraway's "Make kin, not babies!"
20. In a gesture reminiscent of the theoretical explorations of the late Foucault, although with a distinctively theological inflection, Fedorov also writes about "the sacred duty of each to keep a psycho-physiological journal" (I/283–84). This practice is meant not only as a kind of writing of the self, but as a kind of self-transforming activity of the resurrective subject in the context of the liturgy of the common task, where the participants "must conduct psycho-physiological experiments on their own characters [*над своими собственными личностями*]" (I/269).
21. Significantly, although agriculture in English is etymologically connected to the cultivation of fields, in Russian *земледелие* means literally "earth-doing"—from the same root as *дело* ("task" in "the common task").
22. The "cosmogonic epic" of the common task fully encompasses the aesthetic dimension and is thus a truly universal work of art, a cosmic *Gesamtkunstwerk* no longer restricted to an enclosed religious or secular space. In this, Fedorov must be read as part of the modernist trajectory in philosophy of art.
23. Moreover, Heron notes, "hierarchy is the organ, not of salvation itself, but only of its promise. It institutes a paradoxical form of salvation without end, of salvation without deliverance—something like an infinite *oikonomia*" (86). That is, liturgical power, classically conceived, is a power of deferral, of transcendent waiting, which Fedorov explicitly refuses in his articulation of resurrection as immanent co-activity.
24. Fedorov calls for "converting [the forces of combustion] into the means of rekindling what has been extinguished" (I/106). Additionally, he is fascinated by contemporary experiments in which the power of fire (*qua* literal firepower—"artillery fire" and "explosives") is used to produce rain (I/75; cf. I/380). These experiments symbolize for him the reorientation of science from matters of war to the common task. Electricity, too, which we saw Fedorov declare an "instrument of liturgy," is compared by him, in a mutation of Christian symbolism, to the "tongues of fire" with which to preach the common task (I/130).
25. For an account of the Fedorovian movement in contemporary Russia, see Bernstein (2019).

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