

Ways of Romanian Theology. A Critical Inquiry of the Use of Oswald Spengler's Concept of „Pseudomorphosis” in the Orthodox Theology

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Abstract

The title of this study paraphrases the title of the famous book of Georges Florovsky „Ways of Russian Theology” (1937) in which he articulates his doctrine about pseudomorphosis as main pathology of the Russian theology. The fundamental thesis of Florovsky's work has become famous and has been shared by much of Orthodox theology in the twentieth century. According to it, the Orthodox theology has been alienated by the assumption of foreign Western models. This is the reason why the Orthodox theology should return to its genuine patristic sources. In fact, the doctrine about pseudomorphosis as cultural phenomenon is not Georges Florovsky's own idea, but an aspect of the philosophy of culture of the German thinker Oswald Spengler (1890-1936). Twelve years before Florovsky, the Romanian theologian Nichifor Crainic (1889-1972) received and adapted Spengler's doctrine about pseudomorphosis regarding the condition of the Romanian theology at the beginning of the twentieth century. But there are differences between the understanding of pseudomorphosis by Florovsky and by Crainic. While Florovsky understands the overcoming of pseudomorphosis as a historical process that involves returning to an ideal stage in the past (the period of the ancient Greek Church fathers), Crainic considers that the native cultural fund opposes resistance to the pseudomorphosis. Consequently, overcoming pseudomorphosis is not a problem of restauration but a problem of orientation, in which the unaltered native fund plays an important role. Florovsky's understanding of pseudomorphosis corresponds to the specificity of Russian theology, whereas the outlook of Nichifor Crainic is specific to the reality of Romanian theology.