Philosophy, Modernity and National Identity: The Quest for a Russian Philosophy at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

KÅRE JOHAN MJØR

NIKOLAI BERTDIAEV opens the final chapter of his *The Russian Idea* by observing that it was only at the beginning of the twentieth century that the 'results' of nineteenth-century Russian philosophy were 'appraised' (*otseneny*) and 'summed up'.¹ While a 'summing-up', quite logically, could hardly have taken place earlier, the increasing 'appraisal' of Russia's philosophical past at this time was, as Berdiaev indicates, new. With the death of Vladimir Solov'ev, whereby his philosophical output became a completed whole, there was undoubtedly more to appraise in Russian philosophy than ever before. But also thinkers of the generations preceding Solov'ev were now seen in a new light. Although there was still no overall consensus that Russia had produced a truly significant philosophy in the past, several Russian intellectuals began to make serious efforts in order to uncover its history.

Why this new interest in past philosophers at this moment? It is not sufficient to refer only to the increasing 'results' themselves, however impressive the heritage of Vladimir Solov'ev, in particular. On the one hand, the greatness of Solov'ev and others still remained disputed; on the other, even among those who celebrated the past achievements of Russian philosophy there was no consensus as to who its most significant

Kåre Johan Mjør is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Uppsala Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University, Sweden.

The author would like to thank Julie Hansen, Susanna Rabow-Edling and the journal's anonymous reviewers for their comments to earlier versions of this article.

¹ N. A. Berdiaev, *Russkaia ideia: Osnovnye problemy russkoi mysli XIX veka i nachala XX veka*, Paris, 1946, p. 220. Here and below, all translations are my own.

representatives were and how to interpret them. Instead, the quest for a national past and a national canon in philosophy is best understood, in my view, in the context of similar tendencies in other academic disciplines at that time, which in turn was part of an overall drive towards national cohesion and modernization in post-reform Russia.² New, or reformed, academic disciplines were intended to contribute not only to science and knowledge as such, but also to the making of a new national Russian culture — professionalization and internationalization were accompanied by the creation of national canons. Literary studies and scholarship, for instance, aspired to be not only *nauka* but also a *rusaskaia nauka* that, according to Andy Byford, situated itself ‘strategically across the boundary between “pure” (Western) science and “living” (Russian) national cultural production’.³ *Rusaskaia nauka*, a term used by significant literary scholars such as Aleksandr Veselovskii, referred to specific research fields, in this case Russian and Slavic literature and literary history, in which Russia was expected to distinguish itself from the West. This knowledge would in turn become of particular importance to the nation.⁴ We also encounter the notion in a seemingly more remote field, Russian oriental studies, which was actually formed and institutionalized in the late imperial period. As Vera Tolz has shown, its creators conceived of it as *rusaskaia nauka*, devoted not to the entire orient, but first and foremost to ‘Russia’s own orient’. It thus combined internationalization with nationalization: the establishment of professional methods and international networks went hand in hand with nation-building.⁵

Professionalization and nation-building — a combination that was by no means unique to Russia — characterize also the academic discipline of philosophy, whose institutional norms in Russia after decades of

² The literature on Russian post-reform nationalism is rapidly growing; I confine my references here to one recent study: Olga Maiorova, *From the Shadow of Empire: Defining the Russian Nation through Cultural Mythology, 1855–1870*, Madison, WI, 2010.

³ Andy Byford, *Literary Scholarship in Late Imperial Russia: Rituals of Academic Institutionalisation*, London, 2007, p. 166. Byford points out that ‘the priority in the study of Russian literature was less the elaboration of a methodology and more the constitution of a stable corpus of canonical texts’ (p. 134). On the emergence of a Russian literary canon, see also Jeffrey Brooks, ‘Russian Nationalism and Russian Literature: The Canonization of the Classics’, in Ivo Banac, John G. Ackerman and Roman Szporluk (eds), *Nation and Ideology: Essays in Honor of Wayne S. Vucinich*, New York, 1981, pp. 315–49.

⁴ Byford, *Literary Scholarship*, pp. 39, 130, 165.

⁵ Vera Tolz, ‘European, National, and (Anti-)Imperial: The Formation of Academic Oriental Studies in Late Tsarist and Early Soviet Russia’, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 9, 2008, 1, pp. 53–81 (pp. 62–63). See also her *Russia’s Own Orient: The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods*, Oxford, 2011.

difficulties stabilized in the 1880s. This process included a more systematic preoccupation in both research and education with the history of philosophy, on the basis of a historical-cultural approach taken over from, among others, Wilhelm Windelband.⁶ And this interest in the history of (general) philosophy was accompanied by an increasing pursuit of Russia's 'own philosophy'.⁷ Although very few courses on Russian philosophy were taught at Russian universities in the imperial period,⁸ it was met with considerable interest in the Moscow Psychological Society (1885–1922) at Moscow University, an organization that became an important venue for philosophical discussion in the late imperial period, and which was responsible for the most significant philosophical journal in imperial Russia, *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii* (1889–1918), where articles on Russian philosophy would figure prominently. Other sites of importance were the Philosophical Society at St Petersburg University (1897–1922) and the religious-philosophical societies in St Petersburg (1907–17) and Moscow (1905–18). The latter was named after Solov'ev and was the cradle of the publishing house 'Put', which became a seminal channel for studies of Russian philosophy in the 1910s.⁹ By implication, various *learned societies*, which in general were very important to Russian academic culture and even to Russian civil society in the late imperial period, were seemingly

⁶ Frances Nethercott, *Russia's Plato: Plato and the Platonic Tradition in Russian Education, Science and Ideology (1840–1930)*, Ashgate, 2000, pp. 27–36. As her study demonstrates, this period saw a translation and publication boom of histories of philosophy. On the institutional development and professionalization of philosophy in Russia, see also Maksim Demin, 'Pisatel' kak filosof: Filosojskaia refleksia nad russkoi literaturoi v kontse XIX–nachale XX veka', *Die Welt der Slaven*, 57, 2012, pp. 59–78.

⁷ Expressions of the new interest in the Russian philosophical past include Evgenii Bobrov's comprehensive and documentative *Filosofiiia v Rossii: Materialy, issledovaniia i zametki*, 6 vols, Kazan', 1899–1902, and M. M. Filippov, *Sud'by russkoi filosofii (Ocherki)*, St Petersburg, 1904 (first published in 1894 in the journal, *Russkoe bogatstvo*). Russian translations of the histories of philosophy by Friedrich Überweg/Max Heinze and Friedrich Kirchner were supplemented with additional chapters on Russian philosophy, written by Ia. N. Kolubovskii (in Iherveg-Geintse, *Istoriia novoi filosofii*, St Petersburg, 1890; a translation of Kolubovskii's text was later included in new German editions), and V. V. Chuiko (in Kirchner, *Istoriia filosofii s drevneishego do nastoiashchego vremeni*, St Petersburg, 1895).

⁸ According to Vladimir Pustarnakov, a course on the 'Philosophy of Religion in Russia', consisting of Khomiakov, Solov'ev, Tolstoi and others, was given at St Petersburg University in the 1910s, but it was exceptional. He also observes that in the early twentieth century the number of texts by Russian authors in the curricula increased, but not by those who are considered the Russian 'philosophical stars' today: Berdiaev, Bulgakov, Florenskii. See V. F. Pustarnakov, *Universitetskaia filosofiiia v Rossii: Idei, personalii, osnovnye tsentry*, St Petersburg, 2003, pp. 216, 225.

⁹ On 'Put', see E. A. Gollerbakh, *K nezrimomu gradu: Religiozno-filosofskaia gruppа 'Put' (1910–1919) v poiskakh novoi russkoi identichnosti*, St Petersburg, 2000.

more central in the creation of a Russian philosophical past than proper academic institutions, and in this respect philosophy differed from literary studies, though learned societies were highly significant there as well.¹⁰ On the other hand, the distinctions between the academic and non-academic sectors in Russia at the turn of the twentieth century were not very clear, and as Vladimir Pustarnakov has pointed out, it is often impossible to define a Russian philosopher of this period exclusively as academic or non-/extra-academic.¹¹ Nevertheless, although several of the writers analysed in this article held academic positions in various periods, their interpretations of Russian philosophy were mostly the result of their engagements in learned societies rather than of university teaching and other academic duties.¹²

This article analyses a set of early twentieth-century readings of Russian philosophy, which aimed to establish its 'foundational texts'. This term refers to texts that 'embody the essentials of a given community's collective self-consciousness, are the indispensable factor by means of which its ethnic, cultural or religious identity is articulated'.¹³ The concept is an alternative to the more common one of 'canon', in the sense of 'authoritative texts', which, while widely used in literary and even cultural studies, has been transferred from the field of religion, in which canons are usually far more closed. For the purposes of this article, moreover, which analyses the debates about which philosophical texts to regard as authoritative, but in which no canon can be said to have been formed, I find the notion of foundational texts to suit the landscape better. At the same time, 'texts' refer in this case not necessarily to specific texts, but rather to a philosopher's *oeuvre*, from which a specific philosophical

¹⁰ Byford defines 'learned societies' (in the Russian context) as a heterogeneous set of loosely organized and fairly non-hierarchical venues for scholarship, some of which were university-based, but 'usually formed around whole groups of related and overlapping disciplines whose boundaries were defined in quite flexible terms' (Byford, *Literary Scholarship*, p. 20). On learned societies and their role in and as Russian civil society, see Joseph Bradley, *Voluntary Associations in Tsarist Russia: Science, Patriotism, Civil Society*, Cambridge, MA, 2009.

¹¹ Pustarnakov, *Universitetskaia filosofii*, p. 192.

¹² Thus, while Russian universities had separate departments of 'Russian Language and Literature' and 'Slavic Philology', 'Russian philosophy' and its history were in general not covered by the academic 'philosophical disciplines'. See the overview of university courses in philosophy at Moscow University from 1906 onwards in A. T. Pavlov, *Filosofiiia v Moskovskom universitete*, St Petersburg, 2010, pp. 201–04. The 'history of Russian philosophy' became an *academic* subject and course only during the Second World War.

¹³ Margalit Finkelberg and Guy G. Stroumsa (eds), *Homer, the Bible and Beyond: Literary and Religious Canons in the Ancient World*, Leiden, 2003, p. 5.

doctrine is construed. Thus, the notion of 'foundational texts' is here virtually synonymous with 'foundational authors', a conceptual conflation that is in general characteristic of philosophical canons, as made up of 'Plato', 'Kant' — or 'Solov'ev'.

The creation of foundational texts is a process of self-definition, which aims to provide the community with origin and history. It takes place in *commentaries*, in which, as formulated by Aaron Hughes, 'a community manipulates its past in such a way that contextualizes the present'. Thus, the foundational texts (or, eventually, the canon) created in commentaries may be read as a mirror of how a culture sees itself.¹⁴ 'Foundational' (or canonicity) is not an inherent quality of a text, but a discursive quality, created by a community of interpreters. In this article, I will show how Russian society, its self-awareness and visions are reflected in interpretations of allegedly foundational texts by analysing how their various quests for a national past may embody needs in the present and visions of the future. Moreover, this new understanding of the past as leading up to and yet being different from the present (and future) is an experience of *modernity*, in accordance with which the history of Russian philosophy is seen as a dynamically evolving history.¹⁵

As already noted, not only did Russian scholars and writers disagree on which texts to consider as foundational; they even disagreed whether there existed such a thing as a Russian philosophy. This article focuses on those who believed that it did, leaving aside those who argued that national traditions were irrelevant and/or denied the existence of genuine philosophy in Russia's past. Central representatives of the latter position were Gustav Shpet and Boris Iakovenko, who nevertheless wrote extensive accounts of Russia's (quasi-)philosophical past, out of which, however, no foundational texts emerged.¹⁶ By the same token, I focus on discussions of *philosophical* texts, leaving aside the philosophical interpretations of literary texts, such as the Dostoevskii analyses of Vasilii Rozanov, Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, Lev Shestov and others. While Dostoevskii was, along with other writers of fiction, highly influential on philosophical thought in this period, and has often been included in histories of Russian philosophy, the

¹⁴ Aaron Hughes, 'Presenting the Past: The Genre of Commentary in Theoretical Perspective', *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 15, 2003, 2, pp. 148–68 (pp. 149–50).

¹⁵ On 'modernity' as the new understanding of *time*, see Göran Therborn, 'Routes to/through Modernity', in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson (eds), *Global Modernities*, London, 1995, pp. 124–39.

¹⁶ G. G. Shpet, *Ocherk razvitiia russkoi filosofii*, Petrograd, 1922; B. V. Iakovenko, *Ocherki russkoi filosofii*, Berlin, 1922.

authors of such studies used literature for the purpose of discussing and promoting philosophy, whereby the literary text was de-aestheticized and monologized.¹⁷

'Russian Philosophy' in the Nineteenth Century

My claim that the Russian philosophical past became truly appreciated only in the early twentieth century appears to be contradicted by at least one example. Archimandrite Gavriil, who was also professor of philosophy at Kazan' University, published in 1839 a separate part on 'Russian Philosophy' as the sixth volume of his *Istoriia filosofii* (History of Philosophy), in which he provided Russia with a philosophical history going back to the twelfth century. He saw 'Russian philosophy' as a specifically Christian combination of rationalism and empiricism, that is as a 'middle way' between the philosophies of France and England on the one hand, and Germany on the other.¹⁸ Similar conceptions were held also by other Russian philosophers; in fact, Gavriil copied his definition verbatim from a speech by his colleague Orest Novitskii, professor of philosophy at Kiev University. The difference was that Novitskii did not locate this philosophy in the past; it was coming into being *now*.¹⁹ Fedor Sidonskii, who taught at the St Petersburg Spiritual Academy, likewise believed that Russian philosophy would occupy the 'midst shown to us by nature', but he opened his *Vvedenie v nauku filosofii* (Introduction to the Science of Philosophy, 1833) by complaining about the inferior status of philosophy in 'our fatherland' — 'independent works' were 'almost not visible'.²⁰ And while Sidonskii's colleague at the St Petersburg Spiritual Academy, Vasilii Karpov, in his *Vvedenie v filosofiiu* (Introduction to Philosophy, 1840) did speak of a 'native, original philosophy [*filosofiia otechestvennaia, original'naia*]', he did not see it as a fact of the past, but as a task — this is what 'we need'.²¹

¹⁷ Arne Ackermann, 'O Dostoevshchine v russkoi filosofii: Filosofskoe vospriiatie "Brat'ev Karamazovykh" v russkom simvolizme', *Die Welt der Slaven*, 43, 1998, pp. 109–38; M. M. Bakhtin, *Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo*, Moscow, 1963, p. 11. See also Demin, 'Pisatel' kak filosof', pp. 75–76.

¹⁸ Arkhimandrit Gavriil, *Istoriia filosofii*, 6 vols, Kazan', 1840, 6, p. 23.

¹⁹ O. M. Novitskii, 'Ob uprekakh, delaemykh filosofii v teoreticheskom i prakticheskom otnoshenii, ikh sile i vazhnosti', *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia*, 17, 1838, pp. 229–329 (p. 328). See also V. V. Vanchugov, *Ocherk istorii filosofii 'samobytno-russkoi'*, Moscow, 1994, pp. 33–35, 47–53.

²⁰ F. Sidonskii, *Vvedenie v nauku filosofii*, St Petersburg, 1833, p. iii.

²¹ V. A. Karpov, *Vvedenie v filosofiiu*, St Petersburg, 1840, p. 114. See also Shpet, *Ocherki*, p. 268.

Similar views were shared also by non-academic philosophers. The 'Wisdom Lovers' circle, which was active in the 1820s, preferred the term *liubomudrie* for *filosofiia* in order to distinguish their own 'love for wisdom' from the prevailing 'pseudophilosophy' in Russia.²² Petr Chaadaev, in turn, asked in his 'First Philosophical Letter' for 'those who think for us today',²³ while the Slavophiles Ivan Kireevskii and Aleksei Khomiakov tried to develop a new Orthodox philosophy, whose 'germ' (*zarodysh*) was to be patristic thought.²⁴ Their idealization of Russia notwithstanding, they, too, saw philosophy as neglected here.²⁵ They followed Belinskii in believing that 'philosophy has yet to take root with us in Rus'. In Russia, more generally, 'philosophy' had since the late eighteenth century been conceived of as a 'foreign product' that had been recently transferred to Russia. It was an object that still had to be both genuinely appropriated and critically adapted.²⁶

Thus, the various notions of 'Russian philosophy' that had been put forward in the first half of the nineteenth century were, with the exception of Gavriil's history, presented in a future mode; 'Russian philosophy' was what Reinhart Koselleck has called a 'concept of the future' (*Zukunftsbegriff*).²⁷ In such concepts, the expectations are only partly based on past experiences, and the very separation of these two domains has, according to Koselleck, been characteristic of modernity. The lack of a valuable past did not imply the absence of a promising future.

However, Russian intellectuals also continued during the second half of the nineteenth century to conceive of philosophy as a future task without

²² Alexandre Koyré, *La Philosophie et le problème national en Russie au début du XIXe siècle*, Paris, 1929, p. 60; Frances Nethercott, 'The Making of a Russian Philosophical Terminology, 1800–1917', *Intellectual News*, 10, 2002, 1, pp. 44–53 (p. 48). See also Ruth Coates, 'Russia's Two Enlightenments: The *Philokalia* and the Accommodation of Reason in Ivan Kireevskii and Pavel Florenskii', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 91, 2013, 4, pp. 675–702 (p. 690), which argues that this distinction is operative in the writings of Kireevskii.

²³ Peter Chaadaev, *Philosophical Works*, ed. R. T. McNally and R. Tempest, Dordrecht, 1991, p. 24.

²⁴ I. V. Kireevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 2 vols, Moscow, 1911, 1, p. 254.

²⁵ A. S. Khomiakov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 8 vols, Moscow, 1900, 1, p. 288.

²⁶ See Koyré, *La Philosophie*, pp. 66–67, 113–14, and Edith Clowes, *Fiction's Overcoat: Russian Literary Culture and The Question of Philosophy*, Ithaca, NY, 2004, p. 68. Belinskii quoted in Clowes (p. 41).

²⁷ Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*, Frankfurt am Main, 1979, p. 113. On the 'projective' character of Slavophile philosophy, see P. A. Sapronov, *Russkaia filosofiia: Opyt tipologicheskoi kharakteristiki*, St Petersburg, 2000, pp. 82–107, and Susanna Rabow-Edling, *Slavophile Thought and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism*, Albany, NY, 2006, pp. 40–45.

any significant models in the past or even present. In 1872, Konstantin Kavelin complained that in our time 'philosophy is in total decline'.²⁸ Not long after this statement, Vladimir Solov'ev embarked on his philosophical career. According to the latter's article, 'Rossiia i Evropa' ('Russia and Europe', 1888, included in the collection *Natsional'nyi vopros v Rossii*), however, things had not improved during the past two decades either. Commenting on recent philosophical works, Solov'ev complained that:

all that is philosophical in these works is not Russian, and that which is Russian in no way resembles philosophy, at times it resembles nothing at all. No genuine inclinations towards an original Russian philosophy are possible to observe; everything that has appeared as such is nothing but an empty pretension.²⁹

This led him to conclude that 'a great and independent future of Russia in the field of thinking and knowledge' was unlikely.³⁰

After the turn of the twentieth century, Russian intellectuals began to provide more positive results from their quests for a national philosophy in the past. A genuine, significant 'Russian philosophy' was identified above all in studies of individual thinkers such as Skovoroda, Chaadaev and the Slavophiles, to which I shall return below. I shall begin, however, with the posthumous reception of Vladimir Solov'ev. No Russian philosopher attracted more attention in this period. The canonization of him as Russia's greatest philosopher was a project to which many Russian intellectuals contributed after his death in 1900. At the same time, they all saw highly different philosophies in Solov'ev's complex *oeuvre*, and there was no consensus as to what his greatness consisted of.³¹

²⁸ K. D. Kavelin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 4 vols, St Petersburg, 1897–1900, 3, p. 380.

²⁹ V. S. Solov'ev, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 10 vols, St Petersburg, 1911–1914, 5, p. 94.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 5, p. 99.

³¹ For an overview of the reception of Solov'ev, see Wilhelm Goerdts, *Russische Philosophie: Zugänge und Durchblicke*, Freiburg, 1984, pp. 471–76; Jonathan Sutton, 'Vladimir Solov'ev as Reconciler and Polemicist', in Wil van den Bercken, Manon de Courten and Evert van der Zweerde (eds), *Vladimir Solov'ev: Reconciler and Polemicist*, Leuven, 2000, pp. 1–13; Evert van der Zweerde, 'Deconstruction and Normalization: Towards an Assessment of the Philosophical Heritage of Vladimir Solov'ev', *ibid.*, pp. 39–62; Randall A. Poole, 'Utopianism, Idealism, Liberalism: Russian Confrontations with Vladimir Solov'ev', *Modern Greek Yearbook Studies*, 16/17, 2000/2001, pp. 43–88; Pauline Schroyen, 'Professional Intellectual and Zealous Heliotrope: A Study of the Role and Perception of Vladimir Solov'ev in Russian Society', *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies*, 18, 2004, 1–2, pp. 103–28.

The Significance of Solov'ev: Local or Universal?

Although Solov'ev's works had been widely debated while he was still alive,³² the reception of Solov'ev took a new turn as he became a figure of the past, and his appeal now increased significantly. Several biographies were published, first the somewhat rhapsodic *Vladimir Solov'ev: Zhizn' i tvoreniia* (Vladimir Solov'ev: Life and Creation, 1902) by Vladimir Velichko, and later the far more thorough and systematic *O Vl. S. Solov'ev v ego molodye gody: Materialy k biografii* (On Vladimir Solov'ev in his Early Years, 1916–21) by Sergei Luk'ianov.³³ New, complete editions of his works and letters saw the light of day, owing not least to the historian of philosophy (including Russian), librarian and translator Ernest Radlov. Radlov had since the end of the 1890s also published several analyses of Solov'ev's philosophy, the results of which were summed up in his *Vladimir Solov'ev: Zhizn' i uchenie* (Vladimir Solov'ev: Life and Doctrine, 1913). This book aimed at an overview of Solov'ev life and output, but first and foremost to 'understand the philosopher'.³⁴ The correct understanding according to this book is that Solov'ev's philosophy is *mysticism* — not in an 'Eastern' contemplative, but in an active, 'Western' sense: it is a reflection on religious faith (the source of his mysticism) by means of reason.³⁵

Apart from the repeated insistence on Solov'ev's mysticism, however, this is not a book that has a clear agenda with its interpretation; or rather, its agenda is that it is still too early for firm conclusions about Solov'ev: 'There is not and cannot yet be any exhaustive analysis of the life and work of the founder of Russian philosophy'.³⁶ This statement reads like a critique of several other interpretations which by that time had presented a clear-cut version of Solov'ev, often in support of their own philosophical projects. But according to Radlov, Solov'ev is too complex for various camps to claim that 'he is ours'.³⁷ Instead, he follows a more moderate path by providing an overview of Solov'ev and exploring as many separate issues and angles as possible. Although he claims that Solov'ev did not succeed in fulfilling his intention of creating a complete, integral system, Radlov analyses in turn Solov'ev's contribution to the traditional

³² An example of a comprehensive Solov'ev study published during his lifetime is B. N. Chicherin, *Mistitsizm v nauke*, Moscow, 1880.

³³ V. L. Velichko, *Vladimir Solov'ev: Zhizn' i tvoreniia*, St Petersburg, 1902; S. N. Luk'ianov, *O Vl. S. Solov'ev v ego molodye gody: Materialy k biografii*, 2 vols, Moscow, 1916–21.

³⁴ E. L. Radlov, *Vladimir Solov'ev: Zhizn' i uchenie*, St Petersburg, 1913, p. 1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 48. 'Western' and 'Eastern' here are Radlov's own terms.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

subdivisions of philosophy (metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, and so on), providing thereby a systematic and thematic instead of a chronological account. Radlov both contextualizes Solov'ev in relation to Western thinkers (he devotes a separate chapter to this issue) and describes him as the 'founder of Russian philosophy'. At one point, Radlov even calls him 'one of the spiritual leaders of the Russian people', in whom the 'deepest characteristics' of this people's character 'came to expression'.³⁸ Both Solov'ev's achievements in the field of ethics and his mysticism are regarded by Radlov to as characteristic also of Russian thought in general.³⁹

However, Radlov's rather careful approach, in which he often criticized other interpreters for their alleged one-sidedness, was not characteristic of the reception of Solov'ev in early twentieth-century Russia, as can be seen from the volume issued by *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii* in 1901 to the memory of Solov'ev. While this may not be the place where one would expect to find the most critical studies, the publication tells us a great deal about why Solov'ev became important to so many, and it also reveals the *different* reasons why, as I will show by means of two examples.

One of the contributors was the neo-Kantian Aleksandr Vvedenskii. A few years earlier he had written a short history of Russian philosophy, in which he presented the mathematician Nikolai Lobachevskii (1792–1856) as the most outstanding Russian philosopher to date. Lobachevskii's achievements in the 1820s and '30s, however, had been followed by a new wave of repressions of philosophy, which in turn was succeeded by nihilism and positivism — currents highly unfavourable for philosophy. Still, Vvedenskii perceived a renewed interest in philosophy among his contemporaries, as confirmed not least by the new philosophical societies in Moscow and St Petersburg. Combining a linear and cyclical perspective, he firmly believed in the imminent achievements of Russian philosophy, since Russians had already proved in the past that they were capable of philosophical merits.⁴⁰

Judging from his Solov'ev essay of 1901, things looked even better after the turn of the new century, owing above all to Solov'ev himself. Solov'ev

³⁸ Ibid., p. 53. See also his history of Russian philosophy, where he distinguishes between Western, imported philosophy and a philosophy that 'expresses a national worldview corresponding to the spiritual foundations of the Russian people'. E. L. Radlov, *Ocherki istorii russkoi filosofii*, St Petersburg, 1920, p. 8.

³⁹ Radlov, *Solov'ev*, p. 265. See also Radlov, *Ocherki*, p. 4. Radlov emphasized the correspondence between Russian philosophy and the worldview of the Russian people even more in the first edition of his history, published the year before his Solov'ev book (St Petersburg, 1912, p. 4).

⁴⁰ A. I. Vvedenskii, 'Sud'ba filosofii v Rossii', *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii*, 42, 1898.

had restored respect for the philosophical discipline in Russia; Kavelin's 1872 report about a 'total decline' in philosophy (see above) was no longer valid, Vvedenskii concluded. More specifically, Solov'ev had in his texts and activities made a fundamental contribution to the dissemination of 'critical philosophy' and epistemology in the tradition of Kant.⁴¹ He had followed Kant in denying that metaphysics is possible as science, that only epistemology is. Solov'ev's criticism (epistemology) was nevertheless also 'mystic', since he believed that mystic perceptions had a real foundation, which in Solov'ev's thought figured under names such as God, the Absolute or All-Unity. Solov'ev's philosophy was a synthesis of criticism and mysticism, which meant, after all, that also metaphysics, at least as *reliable* knowledge, was also possible, by way of mysticism and faith. And 'only in this', Vvedenskii emphasizes, did Solov'ev differ from Kant, in his view of metaphysics, upon which follows a long list of everything he actually shared with Kant, including his 'main method' for constructing this 'mystical metaphysics': criticism.⁴² Since metaphysics was deduced from the epistemological principle, Vvedenskii concluded that criticism and mysticism, as it came to expression on the basis of Solov'ev's epistemology, rather than metaphysics, were the two most important aspects of his philosophy. The combination of Kantian epistemology with mysticism was, according to Vvedenskii, Solov'ev's 'third merit', the other two being the victory over positivism (he tells of positivists who were converted to Kantianism upon hearing a lecture by Solov'ev) and the dissemination of criticism.⁴³ At the same time, Solov'ev passed on to the next generation the task of founding a 'critically surveyed psychology of mystical perception', which he did not manage himself.⁴⁴

Thus, the overall achievement of Solov'ev that emerges from Vvedenskii's text is that he introduced the most significant current in philosophy — Kantian criticism — in Russia, integrating thereby Russia in the field of philosophy, as developed in Western Europe, which to Vvedenskii is synonymous with philosophy as such, or with universal philosophy. Solov'ev's own contribution to this field (mysticism) is also acknowledged, but it is his propagation of 'critical philosophy' that is at the centre of Vvedenskii's appraisal. The implication is, however, that Solov'ev is significant first and foremost in a Russian context.⁴⁵

⁴¹ A. I. Vvedenskii, 'O mistitsizme i krititsizme v teorii poznaniia V. S. Solov'eva', *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii*, 56, 1901, p. 4.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 16–17.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁴⁵ A similar conclusion was drawn by Aleksandr Nikol'skii in his series of articles on

Lev Lopatin, in the same issue, went decisively further and claimed that Solov'ev's philosophy of All-Unity and Godmanhood represented a peak in philosophy: 'during the last twenty-five years Solov'ev has been the most original philosopher in all Europe.'⁴⁶ His system was an 'indissoluble and organic whole' which unified apparently contradictory components and which was therefore difficult to grasp by means of traditional philosophical categories.⁴⁷ Lopatin agrees with the view of Vvedenskii, Solov'ev himself, and others that Russian philosophy before Solov'ev had been in a poor condition. Philosophers had, with the possible exception of Boris Chicherin, been only imitators. They had been concerned not with the philosophical issues themselves, but only with *opinions* about the issues, a formulation echoing Hegel's description of quasi-philosophy.⁴⁸ Despite this highly unfavourable context, however, 'Solov'ev created his own, independent philosophical system'. Lopatin compares Solov'ev's role in Russian philosophy to that of Pushkin in Russian literature: 'Solov'ev was the first truly original Russian philosopher, just like Pushkin was the first Russian national poet.'⁴⁹ By implication, Solov'ev was, on the one hand, the first 'truly original' philosopher in Russia and, on the other, the most original in all Europe. 'Thanks to its late emergence Solov'ev's system was more mature and comprehensive in its intentions than the creations of his predecessors',⁵⁰ which here means 'German predecessors'. We thus see that Lopatin makes use of the 'privilege of backwardness' figure, taken from Chaadaev's 'Apology of a Madman' and Aleksandr Herzen's 'Russian socialism', in order to explain the greatness of Solov'ev. Slow development is not a disadvantage, but means rather that an apparently backward culture may benefit from and even perfect the achievements of others.⁵¹

Solov'ev published in 1902 in the journal *Vera i razum* (available today as a monograph: *Russkii Origen XIX veka: VI. S. Solov'ev*, St Petersburg, 2000, p. 327). Nikol'skii argues that Solov'ev was the first in Russia to accomplish what was already known to Europe. But he also regards him as the first 'independent philosopher' on Russian soil (see below).

⁴⁶ L. M. Lopatin, 'Filosofskoe mirosozertsanie V. S. Solov'eva', *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii*, 56, 1901, p. 45.

⁴⁷ Lopatin, 'Filosofskoe mirosozertsanie', pp. 86–87.

⁴⁸ See G. W. F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. T. M. Knox and A. V. Miller, Oxford, 1985, p. 17.

⁴⁹ Lopatin, 'Filosofskoe mirosozertsanie', pp. 53–54. The comparison of Solov'ev with Pushkin was frequent; see also, S. N. Trubetskoi, 'Osnovnoe nachalo ucheniia V. Solov'eva', *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii*, 56, 1901, p. 94.

⁵⁰ Lopatin, 'Filosofskoe mirosozertsanie', p. 53.

⁵¹ For an overview, see Manfred Hildermeier, 'Das Privileg der Rückständigkeit: Anmerkungen zum Wandel einer Interpretationsfigur der neueren russischen Geschichte', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 244, 1987, pp. 557–603.

While Lopatin hereby includes Solov'ev in (European) philosophy by comparing him favourably to it, however, he simultaneously draws a line between them. The independence of Solov'ev's system also testifies to the independence of Russian philosophy, which has hereby transcended the level of imitation. Solov'ev became the 'first representative of genuinely Russian philosophical thought, one that did not reflect the foreign'.⁵² So while Vvedenskii praised Solov'ev for having included Russia in a universal philosophical domain by promoting and practising critical Kantian philosophy, Lopatin both relates Solov'ev to a European context, in order to emphasize his universal significance, and subsequently separates him from it.

Bulgakov's Solov'ev as Orthodox Philosophy

The belief in the universal significance of Solov'ev was also shared by Sergei Bulgakov. 'What does Solov'ev offer the contemporary consciousness?' was the question Bulgakov asked in 1903, and his answer was *synthesis*. Solov'ev's philosophy represents an integration of mystical, scientific and philosophical knowledge; of faith, reason and experience, which represents an antidote to the disintegration caused by contemporary thought and science. Bulgakov proclaims that Solov'ev's system is the most 'sonorous chord' ever heard in the history of philosophy,⁵³ and he interprets Solov'ev's place in history by means of a Hegelian model: 'Kant provides the thesis, Hegel the antithesis and Solov'ev the synthesis.'⁵⁴ By implication, Solov'ev's *Aufhebung* also incorporates the positions that he hereby sublates: 'There is not one significant philosophical and scientific idea of the nineteenth century that is not somehow reflected in this construction, that is not taken into consideration.'⁵⁵ The reason why Solov'ev's system supersedes even that of Hegel is that it integrates faith with epistemology, or more generally faith with critical philosophy and science. Thus, this philosophy meets the needs of the contemporary human spirit according to Bulgakov in that it strives for an 'integral and consistently developed Christian worldview'. *This* is what Solov'ev 'offers the contemporary consciousness'.⁵⁶

In his commemorative and rather panegyric essay in the Solov'ev issue of *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii*, Sergei Trubetskoi had declared that Solov'ev

⁵² Lopatin, 'Filosofskoe mirosozertsanie', p. 54

⁵³ S. N. Bulgakov, *Ot marksizma k idealizmu: Sbornik statei (1896–1903)*, St Petersburg, 1903, p. 196. The article was originally published in *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii*, 66 and 67, 1903.

⁵⁴ Bulgakov, *Ot marksizma k idealizmu*, p. 229 (see also p. 197).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

was 'our contemporary'.⁵⁷ Though also highly enthusiastic, two years later Bulgakov spoke of the 'contemporary consciousness' as different from that of Solov'ev himself. By the same token, Solov'ev's own synthesis, or rather his 'search for synthesis', as it is called towards the very end of the article, is first and foremost a template for new projects, rather than the final word.⁵⁸ It also follows from Bulgakov's account that to proclaim the final accomplishment in philosophy or any other field would have been at odds with Solov'ev's philosophy of Godmanhood and the importance it ascribes to the historical *process*.

In 1910, Bulgakov wrote a new essay on Solov'ev — 'Nature in the Philosophy of Vladimir Solov'ev' — which was also included in the first publication of the publishing house 'Put': a miscellany devoted to Solov'ev on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of his death. According to its unsigned foreword, which reads as a manifesto of the 'Put' project, its goal was to overcome the crisis of Russian self-awareness, and outline a new historical task for Russia. 'Our generation' needs to reorient itself and re-evaluate its heritage, it is stated here. 'Put' therefore intended to (re-)introduce the Russian reader to Russian thinkers of the past who had 'served the Russian religious idea', and they began with Solov'ev.⁵⁹

Our historical perspective has changed, Bulgakov declared in 1910. Not only is Solov'ev no longer ignored as he was ten years ago; his significance and relevance have even increased further, in a situation where materialist and rationalist philosophy [*rassudochnaia filosofiia*] is hegemonic and 'nature is dying'.⁶⁰ 'We have entered the epoch of an emergent crisis of rationalist philosophy, which has not yet completed the full circle of its development.'⁶¹ Bulgakov creates a picture of a contemporary world in the midst of a ground-breaking reorientation, adopting a highly future-oriented rhetoric: there is at present a demand for a *new* Christian philosophy of nature; the relationship of man to cosmos is raised *anew*; the completely *new* philosophical problem of 'economy' is introduced to philosophy. While Solov'ev is the central source of inspiration in this context, however, Bulgakov points out that his philosophy of nature remained an intention only. Solov'ev never created a 'complete system'. It must be continued and completed by 'us'.⁶²

⁵⁷ Trubetskoi, 'Osnovnoe nachalo', p. 111.

⁵⁸ Bulgakov, *Ot marksizma k idealizmu*, p. 262.

⁵⁹ 'Ot izdatel'stva "Put"', *O Vladimire Solov'eva*, Moscow, 1911, pp. i–ii.

⁶⁰ 'Priroda v filosofii V. S. Solov'eva', in *ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

From the outset, Bulgakov explicitly situates Solov'ev's philosophy in a universal context, emphasizing his debts to various kinds of Platonism, to Leibniz, Kant, Schopenhauer, Böhme, Baader and above all Schelling — although, Bulgakov assures us, this does not mean that he imitated them. Like Lopatin, Bulgakov similarly makes use of the 'virtue of coming late' figure: in belonging to a 'later historical age [vozrast]', 'our philosopher' could achieve a more comprehensive synthesis than his predecessors. Towards the end of the essay, however, Bulgakov's focus shifts from this universal context to a Russian one. Solov'ev's ideas, we read now, represent a 'precious heritage for Russian philosophical thought, for its creative development'.⁶³ And while the 'task and calling' of Russian philosophy is 'entirely in the future', it nevertheless possesses a 'small, though not rich, past', which Bulgakov celebrates on this anniversary of Solov'ev's death — which he also terms the 'name day of Russian philosophy'.⁶⁴

This past — also described as the 'first independent steps of Russian philosophy' — was first and foremost the systems of Solov'ev and Sergei Trubetskoi. However, the Russian philosophy of nature is also part of a broader, cultural context, made up of Russian folk songs, poetry (Fedor Tiutchev, Afanasii Fet, Aleksei Tolstoi) and Father Zosima's teachings in Dostoevskii's *Brat'ia Karamazovy* (The Brothers Karamazov). Finally, it is said to have a source in Eastern Christianity and its idea of the incarnated word. 'Once triumphantly discovered and defended [*raskryto i zashchishcheno*] by the Greek East', it 'should now be discovered and defended [*raskryvaemo i zashchishchaemo*] once more by the Russian East in philosophical speculation and artistic creativity'.⁶⁵ By contrast, Western philosophy after Schelling has become too infused with the spirit of Protestantism. In other words, an ancient tradition of Eastern and Russian spirituality was now beginning to make itself heard in philosophy.

The framework for the cultural contextualization of Russian (and Western) philosophy in which Bulgakov here engages is his idea of 'national universalism', which he had introduced in the 1903 essay on Solov'ev. There, he praised Solov'ev for having discovered a middle way between cosmopolitanism and nationalism (or 'zoological patriotism'), though this, too, was a project to be continued by contemporary Russian thinkers, whose task was to 'purify the Slavophile doctrine and complete it with the positive elements of Westernism'.⁶⁶ This 'reformed Slavophilism',

⁶³ Ibid., p. 25.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 29–30.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 30.

⁶⁶ Bulgakov, *Ot marksizma k idealizmu*, p. 259.

then, would bring about the 'transition to a new world-view' of 'national universalism'. Proclaiming the equality of all nationalities, the idea of national universalism implies that even philosophy is made up of national units. Bulgakov's interpretation is nevertheless ambiguous, since it is unclear whether the task of a new philosophy of nature is a specifically Russian task or a universal one. By the same token, the metaphilosophy of national universalism appears to be a Russian project, since it is identical with 'reformed Slavophilism'. It is thus implicitly suggested that the philosophical hegemony will in the future belong to Russia.

Trubetskoi's Solov'ev as the Abandonment of Utopianism

In contrast to the affirmative interpretations of Radlov, Vvedenskii and in particular Lopatin and Bulgakov, Evgenii Trubetskoi's comprehensive, two-volume *Mirosozertsanie Vl. S. Solov'eva* (The World-View of Vladimir Solov'ev, 1913) is a highly critical study, as foreshadowed by its epigraph taken from 1 Corinthians (15, 36): 'What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.' Trubetskoi sets out to distinguish what is alive from what is dead in Solov'ev's philosophy. What is alive are the ideals of integral knowledge, All-Unity, and in particular the idea of Godmanhood — defined by Trubetskoi as the 'centre of his philosophical and religious doctrine, the main content of his entire preaching'.⁶⁷ What is dead are the gnostic and pantheistic features inherited from Schelling, the philosophy of 'the meaning of love', but above all his utopian thinking, which comes to expression in particular in his idea of theocracy. Trubetskoi makes use of what he calls 'immanent criticism', whereby he confronts Solov'ev's utopianism and theocracy with the idea of Godmanhood.⁶⁸ However, not even the latter notion as used by Trubetskoi is identical to how Solov'ev conceived it; Trubetskoi applies his own, revised version, purified of Solov'ev's utopian elements (which could even be found there), in order to refute the very idea of utopianism. Due to his 'optical deceits', which had been a recurrent feature of his metaphysics, epistemology as well as theocratic speculations, Solov'ev had failed to distinguish properly between the earthly and the heavenly spheres.

Trubetskoi's story of Solov'ev reads, in Randall Poole's apt formulation, like a 'microcosm' of Russian philosophy: dividing Solov'ev's life and works into three periods (preparatory, utopian and final), Trubetskoi presents Solov'ev's worldview as 'one developing whole' — towards the

⁶⁷ E. N. Trubetskoi, *Mirosozertsanie Vl. S. Solov'eva*, 2 vols, Moscow, 1913, 1, p. 325.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 1, p. x.

abandonment of utopianism.⁶⁹ Utopian thinking in Russia has a long history, which Trubetskoi traces back to the idea of 'Moscow the Third Rome', and which was continued by the Slavophiles. Despite Solov'ev's criticism of the latter, he remained in many ways a Slavophile, Trubetskoi argues, since he believed in the realization of the ideal of 'integral life' here on earth. Although Solov'ev projected onto the future what the Slavophiles believed had already been realized in the Russian past, they both fell prey to a false idealization of earthly life. This makes up the tradition of Russian national messianism, and Trubetskoi's book is a combative confrontation with this current. 'Integral life' is a correct *ideal* — this is the 'truth of Slavophilism' — but Trubetskoi denies that it can be fulfilled by human efforts.

However, as he notes several times, Trubetskoi aims also at a positive re-evaluation of Eastern Christianity. His critique of Russian messianist and nationalist thinking is coupled with the attempt to introduce the readers to an alternative Orthodox tradition. Like Bulgakov, Trubetskoi rejects nationalism (and cosmopolitanism) in favour of a pluralistic theory of 'nationality' (*narodnost'*), which he grounds in the Bible, and more specifically in, on the one hand, the Great Commission — 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28, 19) — and, on the other, in the story of Pentecost, according to which every nation provides a 'necessary contribution to the common Christian body'.⁷⁰ What follows from these two stories, according to Trubetskoi, is that nations do exist, they are all equal, and each of them has a task.

In addition, this theory of nationality is drawn also from Solov'ev himself — from his discussion of the 'national question', which according to Trubetskoi makes up the 'best pages' of his main work on ethics, *Opravdanie dobra* (Justification of the Good, 1894),⁷¹ and not least from his final text, *Tri razgovora* (Three Conversations). The latter is apparently the work by Solov'ev that Trubetskoi appreciates the most and accepts without reservations and alterations, because it substitutes the utopian quest for God's kingdom on earth with a defence of pluralism within Christianity.

⁶⁹ Randall A. Poole, 'Religion, War, and Revolution: E. N. Trubetskoi's Liberal Construction of Russian National Identity, 1912–20', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 7, 2006, 2, pp. 195–240 (p. 200). In a long footnote, Trubetskoi criticized Radlov for not having recognized the evolutionary character of Solov'ev's thinking (Trubetskoi, *Mirosozertsanie*, 2, pp. 37–38). It should be added that the three-fold division of Solov'ev's life and works itself was not Trubetskoi's invention; it can be found for instance in Nikol'skii's study published a decade earlier (see note 45).

⁷⁰ Trubetskoi, *Mirosozertsanie*, 2, p. 328.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 2, pp. 113, 156.

In *Tri razgovora*, the idea of one God-bearing people is replaced by a celebration of the 'three branches of a unified Christian trunk'.⁷² Eastern Christianity represents the mystical version of Christianity, while Catholicism is one of practical life, which together with Protestantism make up Christianity as such: 'The truth of Orthodoxy does not exclude the truth of Catholicism.'⁷³ Trubetskoi admits that Orthodoxy has also fostered nationalism,⁷⁴ but when properly understood as the mystical interpretation of Christianity it may become the sound foundation for a new Russian national identity. Utopianism, by the same token, while a defining feature of Russian thought in the past, is not specifically Russian or Eastern; it is a universal phenomenon that, according to Trubetskoi, is declining all over the world.⁷⁵

Eastern Christianity is, however, not philosophy, and there are few if any attempts here to relate them as explicitly as Bulgakov did. Trubetskoi promotes instead a philosophy of human, individual creativity and perfection, based on his revised, anti-utopian version of Godmanhood. It emphasizes the relativity of earthly life, defined by freedom, heroic feats and suffering. Human life is a *preparation* for the Kingdom of God, but not its realization.

The literature on Solov'ev repeatedly refers to him as 'our philosopher',⁷⁶ and, interestingly, no more so than in Trubetskoi's writing. But as we have seen, Solov'ev is not represented as an object of national pride, and Trubetskoi uses 'our' even in his most critical passages. To Trubetskoi, 'our philosopher' means also 'our past', which should be reflected upon critically and with historical distance, however close Solov'ev still is in time. Indeed, parts of it must even 'die'. Trubetskoi presents Solov'ev's *oeuvre* as a foundational text of Russian philosophy, but only when approached critically and interpreted as a gradual abandonment of utopianism, as finally realized in *Tri razgovora*. Solov'ev embodies both the problematic features of Russian thinking and their solution. Trubetskoi seeks to capture this movement as it takes place in time, and this is also why he, somewhat surprisingly, at the outset claims that this is 'not a historical study'. His critique of Solov'ev is, for biographical reasons, a personal matter, but more importantly, to fix the 'historical Solov'ev' is incompatible with the philosophy of Godmanhood and its idea of historical evolution. His goal

⁷² Ibid., 2, p. 326.

⁷³ Ibid., 1, p. 487.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 1, p. 430.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 2, p. 388.

⁷⁶ Schrooyen, 'Professional Intellectual and Zealous Heliotrope', p. 109.

is to follow Solov'ev's spirit, not his letter, and he admits at the outset that his study will be provocative, even to his 'Put'' colleagues. Nevertheless, he believes that divergences in opinion — which he visualizes as branches of trees — are signs of growth. Solov'ev, too, represented a new stage in the development of a tradition, and 'we' should likewise contribute to its further 'ramification' (*razvetvlenie*).⁷⁷ History is a process of differentiation and diversification.

Does this mean, then, that Trubetskoi regards Solov'ev first and foremost as a *Russian* philosopher? On the one hand, he sees Solov'ev's early diagnosis of the 'crisis in Western philosophy' as a continuation of *Western* self-criticism, as previously formulated by Schelling and German mystics, and not as a specifically Russian critique of the West. More generally, he holds the opposition of Russia and the West to be a 'false antithesis', and to identify Russia with true Christianity is likewise unacceptable. The Slavophile (but also Byzantine) tendency of 'exaggerating one's own' and mistaking Christian virtues for Russian ones is also a recurrent target.⁷⁸ On the other hand, to Trubetskoi the plurality of nations is a fact, and the story he tells is first and foremost one about Russia — about what it should leave behind and to what it should turn. He compares his own relationship with Solov'ev to that between Kant and the German idealists: 'Kant verstehen heisst über Kant hinausgehen.'⁷⁹ Thus, whereas Lopatin and Bulgakov saw Solov'ev's philosophy as a peak in the history of philosophy in general — a 'synthesis' of Kant and Hegel — Trubetskoi sees Western and Russian philosophy as *parallel* lines of development.

Trubetskoi firmly proclaims that Solov'ev and his utopian philosophy belong to the past. This bears the clear mark of the liberal atmosphere of Tsar Alexander II, but critical events such as the devastating famine of 1891 were a major blow to Solov'ev's nationalist utopianism, since Russia had not been capable of preventing this tragedy. But even the 1890s are different from Trubetskoi's present: since Solov'ev's death Russia had experienced a failed war that led to a failed revolution, followed in turn by unsuccessful democratization. Russia had a chance, Trubetskoi argues, but misused it. In the current 'critical epoch', the remedy is a non-utopian philosophy of national pluralism, political liberalism and individual creativity. Against this background, Solov'ev's philosophy can be fulfilled only in the future: 'The entire significance of Solov'ev's philosophy to our

⁷⁷ Trubetskoi, *Mirosozertsanie*, 1, pp. iii, x–xi; 2, p. 367.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 1, pp. 58, 61.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1, p. viii.

religious-philosophical thought of the future is dependent upon whether this shoot develops into a mighty and vital tree.'⁸⁰ By implication, Russian identity should be founded on a rediscovered Eastern-Christian tradition, a future-oriented philosophy, and a rejection of its philosophical past.

Gershenzon's Chaadaev: Universalist or Messianist?

When the intellectual historian Mikhail Gershenzon published his monograph, *Petr Chaadaev: Zhizn' i myshlenie* (Petr Chaadaev: Life and Thought), in 1908, Petr Chaadaev was mainly known for his (in)famous 'First Philosophical Letter' (1829), a text in which he appeared as a severe critic of Russian civilization (or rather the lack of it) and a Westernizer. Gershenzon's goal was, as he writes in the foreword, to correct this version and 'restore the genuine image of Chaadaev'. He toned down the explicit political message of this text — or what was regarded as such — while reintroducing Chaadaev to the Russian audience as a *philosopher* by focusing on 'the general spirit of his doctrine' and providing a synthesis of his writings. What Chaadaev practised in his philosophical letters was not journalism (*publitsistika*) but philosophy. His philosophy of history tells of mankind's 'gradual upbringing under God's Providence, whose final goal is the establishment of God's kingdom on earth, accomplished under the full freedom of human reason'.⁸¹ This idea was presented in a genuinely philosophical style, repeatedly described by Gershenzon as 'systematic', 'logically built', 'centralized' and even 'syllogistic' — epithets that emphasize the *philosophical* character of his writings.

Gershenzon defined this philosophy also as 'social mysticism', where 'social' meant not so much social commitment, although he interpreted it also as a transformation of his former Decembrist worldview, as an anti-individualistic interest in the role of peoples and mankind as such in Christian world history.⁸² A major concern for Gershenzon was to refute Aleksandr Herzen's view of Chaadaev as a pioneer in the history of the Russian liberation movement, which had become a central component in the 'legend of Chaadaev'. In order to understand the 'First Letter' properly, it should be related instead to Chaadaev's overall, universal philosophy of history — a doctrine of the 'immanent acting of God's spirit in mankind and mankind's merging with God as the final goal of the historical process'.⁸³ This is the philosophical foundation for Chaadaev's critique of

⁸⁰ Ibid., 2, p. 401.

⁸¹ M. O. Gershenzon, *Petr Chaadaev: Zhizn' i myshlenie*, Moscow, 1908, p. 76.

⁸² Ibid., pp. 64, 93.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 89.

Russia in the 'First Letter' (lost in 1836 when it was published separately from the others).⁸⁴ When contextualized properly, however, it becomes evident, Gershenzon maintains, that its main message was simply that Russia had *not yet* contributed to the realization of God's kingdom on earth. By implication, the 'First Letter' is only a 'deduction (*vyvod*) from his religious-philosophical dogma'. And Gershenzon goes on: 'Almost nobody understood this; almost nobody noticed his premise. Everyone, those who applauded just as much as those who became enraged, saw only the conclusion about Russia.'⁸⁵

However, Gershenzon's historical-intentional approach is somewhat undermined by his presentation of the positive visions of Russia's future that Chaadaev had put forward in the 1830s in several letters and in the 'Apology of a Madman'. Often seen as a break with the negative view of the 'First Letter', this new idea of Russia, according to Gershenzon, is not a break but a logical continuation — the 'last link in a strict and logical chain'.⁸⁶ Although Russia had not yet let itself be governed by Providence, it was highly capable of doing so in the future. In contrast to his de-emphasizing of Chaadaev's critique of Russia in the 'First Letter', Gershenzon's presentation of Russia's glorious future according to Chaadaev is conspicuously affirmative. He expands heavily on Chaadaev's scattered visions, apparently making use of Dostoevskii's messianic ideas of Russia. In particular Gershenzon's reference to Russia's 'receptivity' (*vospriimchivost'*) brings to mind Dostoevskii's idea of Pushkin as having revealed the distinctive Russian ability of responsiveness (*otzyvchivost'*).⁸⁷ While Russia will benefit from the achievements and experiences of European civilization and play a significant role in the 'spiritual life of Europe', Gershenzon also assures his readers, with reference to Chaadaev, that 'we will leave the historical and progressive Europe far behind'.⁸⁸

It is not clear, though, in what ways and domains Europe will be 'left behind', and Chaadaev emerges from Gershenzon's account as a highly ambiguous thinker, fluctuating between exclusive, messianist and inclusive, universalistic positions. What nevertheless remains imperative

⁸⁴ All letters known at that time were included as an appendix to the book. Some years later, Gershenzon undertook the publication of a new edition of Chaadaev's works and letters (Moscow, 1913).

⁸⁵ Gershenzon, *Chaadaev*, p. 142.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁸⁷ F. M. Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*, 30 vols, Leningrad, 1972–90, 24, pp. 129–49.

⁸⁸ Gershenzon, *Chaadaev*, p. 156.

for Russia is to develop its national self-awareness and avoid an imitation of the West.⁸⁹ Moreover, Gershenzon describes a set of Russian philosophical traditions that Chaadaev is said to have inaugurated: one centred on religion, which was transmitted by the Slavophiles to Solov'ev, Dostoevskii and the contemporary Christian thinkers, and one preoccupied with Russia's privilege of civilizational backwardness, which was represented first and foremost by the otherwise so mistaken Herzen.⁹⁰ In both cases, Gershenzon creates a *continuity* from Chaadaev to the present.

In other words, Gershenzon's purpose is two-fold. On the one hand, he maintains the existence in Chaadaev's texts of universal philosophy. Russian readers of the past had not been able to understand, acknowledge or even recognize a genuine philosophical work, but in his historical studies Gershenzon attempted to re-educate his audience to become more receptive towards philosophy, including its hitherto unknown history in Russia. In a shorter study of Ivan Kireevskii written at the same time, Gershenzon argued that Kireevskii was a profound philosopher of 'integral knowledge', and not mainly a cultural historian reflecting on the differences between Russia and Europe. Kireevskii's mistake, however, was that he projected his 'universal revelation' onto Russia, and even onto its past, finished manifestations, while presenting a reductionist image of the West. 'This mistake made Kireevskii one of the most influential Russian thinkers.'⁹¹

On the other hand, Gershenzon presents Chaadaev also as the originator of utopian thinking in Russia. Russia possesses not only the universal asset called philosophy, but also a philosophical tradition of its own, as founded by Chaadaev. By presenting Chaadaev's *oeuvre* as a foundational text of Russian philosophy, Russia's philosophical past, in which Russia itself was a central theme, is actively involved in a process of identity formation and the development of national self-awareness. However, several of Gershenzon's contemporaries, from Petr Struve to Georgii Plekhanov, found that his idiosyncratic works were not historically accurate, but created rather in accordance with his own outlook.⁹²

⁸⁹ See Brian Horowitz, *The Myth of A.S. Pushkin in Russia's Silver Age: M. O. Gershenzon, Pushkinist*, Evanston, IL, 1996, p. 33.

⁹⁰ Gershenzon, *Chaadaev*, p. 170.

⁹¹ M. O. Gershenzon, *Istoricheskie zapiski*, Moscow, 1910, pp. 35–36. See also Vera Proskurina, *Techenie Gol'fstrema: Mikhail Gershenzon, ego zhizn' i mif*, St Petersburg, 1998, pp. 202–03.

⁹² See Brian Horowitz, 'Unity and Disunity on Landmarks: The Rivalry between Petr Struve and Mikhail Gershenzon', *Studies in East European Thought*, 51, 1999, pp. 61–78 (p. 68); 'M. O. Gershenzon and the Perception of a Leader in Russia's Silver Age Culture',

Ern's Skovoroda and Logos Philosophy

The ambiguities discernible in Gershenzon's historiographical project — is Chaadaev a Russian *philosopher* or a *Russian philosopher*? — appear to be less troublesome to Vladimir Ern. In *Grigorii Savvich Skovoroda: Zhizn' i uchenie* (Grigorii Savvich Skovoroda: Life and Doctrine, 1912), Ern continues his 'struggle' for 'Logos philosophy', which he by then had been voicing for some years. In the introduction to his book, *Bor'ba za logos* (The Struggle for Logos), published the year before, Ern described 'Logos philosophy' as a non-abstract and non-schematic Christian philosophy, which is inherent in human life and reality, and which postulates a deep unity of the comprehending and the comprehended. By implication, 'Logos philosophy' both philosophizes about this unity (world, life, reality) and is a reflection of it. This all-encompassing unity was first discovered by Plato and the Neo-Platonists, from whom it was taken over by Christianity and the Church Fathers.⁹³ It is firmly opposed — by an abyss (*bezdna*), Ern proclaims⁹⁴ — to the philosophy of Ratio, which is the dominant principle of modern West-European philosophy from Bruno and Descartes up to contemporary neo-Kantianism. Ern's 'struggle for Logos' had been especially provoked by the establishment in Russia of a secular, universalist journal of German and neo-Kantian origin (1910) and the attempt to hereby include Russia in West-European philosophy — under the very name of *Logos*. According to Ern, this was nothing but a falsification. Semen Frank, who was not a member of the *Logos* journal and is otherwise categorised as a representative of 'Russian religious philosophy', responded to Ern's critique by accusing him of 'nationalism in philosophy' and of constructing a fictive opposition. All philosophy is Ratio, Frank objected. In addition, Ern had come to erase the genuine opposition between philosophy and religion.⁹⁵

In his book on the eighteenth-century Ukrainian thinker Skovoroda, Ern nevertheless seeks to demonstrate that genuine Russian philosophy, too, belongs to the tradition, as constructed by Ern himself, of 'Logos philosophy', which Skovoroda was the first on Russian soil to rediscover

Wiener Slavistischer Almanach, 29, 1992, pp. 45–73 (p. 60). These and other essays on Gershenzon are included in Horowitz's most recent monograph (*Russian Idea — Jewish Presence: Essays on Russian-Jewish Intellectual Life*, Boston, MA, 2013), but the discussion of his reception has been omitted.

⁹³ V. F. Ern, *Sochineniia*, Moscow, 1989, p. 11.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁹⁵ Ern's two articles on the journal *Logos* were included in *The Struggle for Logos* (*ibid.*, pp. 71–126), while Frank's two responses, originally published in *Russkaia mysl'*, can be found in S. L. Frank, *Russkoe mirovozzrenie*, St Petersburg, 1996, pp. 103–18.

and actively relate to. (Hellenistic and Christian Platonism was his favourite reading, Ern repeatedly notes.) Ignoring the cultural and intellectual differences between Ukrainian and Muscovite culture and seamlessly absorbing the former into his notion of 'Russia', Ern opens his book by presenting his own account of Skovoroda as a contribution to the writing of the history of Russian philosophy, beginning with Skovoroda.⁹⁶ Ern describes Russian philosophical thought from Skovoroda up to his own contemporaries as 'an *integral* and unified philosophical task',⁹⁷ yet Russians have so far ignored their national past: 'To this day, however, we do not have one single book on the history of Russian philosophy and very few studies and articles on individual Russian thinkers.'⁹⁸

Ern's own account of Skovoroda and Russian philosophy begins with a very negative presentation of European philosophy, which repeats much of what he had stated in his critique of the *Logos* project. Modern European philosophy is characterized by rationalism, atheism, a lack of mysticism, 'meonism' (a doctrine of 'non-existence') and impersonalism. 'Logos philosophy', by contrast, is defined by three counter-concepts: 'logism', ontology and personalism. Of these, 'personalism' is probably the one that receives the most unexpected definition. While usually describing a (religious) philosophy centred on the idea of a person, personalism as Ern uses it refers to the significance of the personality of the philosopher and thus to the interdependency of life and thought. In Ern's account, as Nikolai Plotnikov has pointed out, 'the semantic and existential dimensions merge to the extent that they become inseparable'.⁹⁹

However, Ern's notion of personalism is, in fact, quite consistent with his overall idea of 'Logos philosophy', which appears to have been considerably influenced by, again, Dostoevskii's 'Pushkin Speech', according to which Russianness was not only something Pushkin described, for instance in his portrayal of Tatiana in *Evgenii Onegin*, but also performed by his own 'responsiveness'.¹⁰⁰ 'Logos philosophy' is likewise a performance, where

⁹⁶ See the book's introduction, entitled 'Osnovnoi kharakter russkoi filosofskoi mysli i metod ee izucheniia'. V. F. Ern, *Grigorii Savvich Skovoroda: Zhizn' i uchenie*, Moscow, 1912, pp. 1–29. Ern's general view of Ukraine, or 'Little Russia' (*Malorossiiia*), is that its annexation by Russia represented the transition from a 'remote, wild, heroic past' to a more civilized state of being (p. 44).

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁹⁹ N. S. Plotnikov, 'Ot "individual'nosti" k "identichnosti": Istoriia poniatii personal'nosti v russkoi kul'ture', *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 91, 2008, pp. 64–83 (p. 74).

¹⁰⁰ In a vein similar to Dostoevskii, Ern praised Solov'ev for his ability to embody other philosophers (Ern, *Sochineniia*, p. 84).

form and content are inseparable. Consequently, Ern's study of Skovoroda is divided into two equal parts: 'Personality' (*Lichnost'*) and 'World-view' (*Mirovozzrenie*). The kernel of Skovoroda's philosophy is first and foremost his philosophical way of life. 'As a genuine philosopher, he did with his *life* what Descartes wanted to do with his *thinking*.'¹⁰¹

By the same token, this philosophy, again in contrast to the philosophy of Ratio, does not produce philosophical systems. Paradoxically, however, the second part of Ern's book organizes Skovoroda's ideas into subdivisions, such as anthropology, symbolism, doctrine on the world and God, ethics, pedagogy, a categorizing that bears an undeniable system-like character.¹⁰² On the other hand, even Skovoroda's most important idea, the 'doctrine on the inner man', is dependent on his 'personalism'. 'His thoughts always emerge [*vsegda rozhdaiutsia*] from his soul's *experiences*', at the same time as 'his entire life is a remarkable realization of his philosophical thoughts'.¹⁰³

Skovoroda's 'metaphysical experiment' is observable above all in the wanderings (*strannichestvo*) that he undertook during the last thirty years of his life. According to Ern, these 'outer', concrete wanderings through Ukraine correspond to his 'inner wanderings' and reflect his own inner nature; Skovoroda himself becomes an expression of what he described in his works as *srodnost'* — the ability to follow one's own nature.¹⁰⁴ Skovoroda's 'inner wanderings', furthermore, made him the ancestor of Russian philosophy, whose subsequent representatives — Gogol', Dostoevskii and Solov'ev — were equally penetrated by the same 'philosophical anxiety' (*trevozhnost' mysli*). In their own wanderings they all sensed the 'wanderings' of this world — the temporal character of earthly life and the forthcoming Apocalypse. With the metaphor of *strannichestvo* Ern seeks to capture both the style and thematic orientation of Russian philosophy. Although he admits that Skovoroda had no direct influence on subsequent Russian thinkers, the absence of empirical connections only serves to strengthen the spiritual ones, as he puts it, introducing his own myth of a philosophical 'subsoil':

Russian philosophical thought possesses a native subsoil [*podpochva*], which is in direct contiguity with the Logos philosophy of the Church

¹⁰¹ Ern, *Skovoroda*, p. 99.

¹⁰² Brian Horowitz, 'Vladimir Ern and Hryhorii Skovoroda: A Historian and His Philosophical Antithesis', *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, 22, 1997, 1–2, pp. 97–104 (p. 100).

¹⁰³ Ern, *Skovoroda*, p. 211–12.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 301, 310–11. Ern uses also *prirodnost'* as fairly synonymous to *srodnost'*.

Fathers, and which has almost no relation to the rationalist philosophy of Modern Europe.¹⁰⁵

Despite his affirmative, categorical and binary rhetoric, however, Ern cannot avoid also situating Skovoroda and Russian philosophy in a European context. His repeated and positive comparisons of Skovoroda to Descartes, Rousseau and Kant not only serve to depict them as antagonists, but also as different solutions to the same problems. Skovoroda is even said to have anticipated Kant in several fields, a suggestion that softens Ern's binarisms. So does his praise of the openness of Russian philosophy, which inevitably presupposes contact and impact. And while the task for Russian philosophy in the future will be a continuation of the struggle for Logos against Ratio, Ern describes it nevertheless as situated on a 'middle ground' between Logos and Ratio.¹⁰⁶ The reason for this is that Russian philosophy, in contrast to classical Logos philosophy, has been confronted with Ratio. Skovoroda himself is an example of this: as a young traveller in the West he made an enthusiastic encounter with rationalism, but then returned — at his own wish, as Ern emphasizes — to his homeland in a double sense: Ukraine and Logos philosophy. Russian philosophy from Skovoroda onwards thus bears the mark of Modern Europe, which in turn means that it can help European philosophy out of its blind alleys. The goal is not a return to classical 'Logos philosophy' but a creative development of this tradition.¹⁰⁷

Berdiaev's Slavophile Philosophy

Nikolai Berdiaev also saw 'Russian philosophy' as a distinct tradition, though of a far more recent origin than Ern's 'Logos philosophy'. Berdiaev's contribution to the famous *Vekhi* (Landmarks) collection of 1909, 'Philosophical Verity and Intelligentsia Truth', is not only a critique of the utilitarian attitude of the Russian (radical) intelligentsia towards philosophy, whereby he advocated the 'common platform' of the collection, defined by Gershenzon in the Preface as the 'primacy of spiritual life over external forms of community'.¹⁰⁸ Berdiaev's essay also

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 331.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 119–20, 23.

¹⁰⁷ Dieter Stäglich, *Vladimir F. Ern, 1882–1917: Sein Philosophisches und Publizistisches Werk. Ein Beitrag zur russischen Geistesgeschichte des Beginnenden 20. Jahrhunderts*, Bonn, 1967, p. 110.

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in Robin Aizlewood and Ruth Coates (eds), *Landmarks Revisited: The Vekhi Symposium 100 Years On*, Boston, MA, 2013, p. 12, where we find a broad discussion of the 'common platform' of this collection.

contains a short history of an alternative Russian philosophical tradition — a philosophy of ‘concrete idealism’, which emerged with the Slavophile critique of Hegel’s ‘abstract idealism’ and was continued by Solov’ev. In this article, however, Berdiaev describes it in conditional mood: concrete idealism ‘could have become [*mog by stat*] the foundation for our national philosophical creativity and could have created [*mog by sozdat*] a national philosophical tradition, in which we are of so much need’.¹⁰⁹ So far, Russia and its intelligentsia have neglected philosophy: the reception of European philosophy in Russia has been weak, and so has the development of its own philosophy. ‘Poor Nietzsche and poor Russian thought!’¹¹⁰

In *Khomiakov* (1912), this national philosophical tradition is no longer represented in conditional mood; it is now firmly pronounced. The book is devoted not only to Aleksei Khomiakov, but to Slavophilism in general. Berdiaev regards Khomiakov and Kireevskii to be the ‘founders of Slavophile philosophy, which also can be called a national Russian philosophy, reflecting the entire originality [*svoeobrazie*] of our national thinking’.¹¹¹ As noted earlier, however, Kireevskii’s main project towards the end of his life was the ‘necessity and possibility of new foundations for philosophy’, or as Berdiaev paraphrases him, ‘Russian philosophy should be [*dolzhna byt*] a continuation of patristic philosophy’. At the same time, Berdiaev presents this project as *already accomplished* in the Slavophile critique of Hegelianism: ‘Khomiakov *had already* overcome all kinds of abstract rationalism and abstractness in the philosophy of integral knowledge, the knowledge of integral spirit’.¹¹² In describing concrete idealism as the ‘original fruit of Russian thought’,¹¹³ Berdiaev, too, sees the semantic dimension (concrete idealism) as a reflection of the existential one (Plotnikov) — not of philosophical personalities as Ern argued, but of Russian thought in general. It follows from Berdiaev’s account that the Slavophile preparatory critique of German idealism was an expression of Russian mentality. Or as he wrote in his *Vekhi* article, a Russian national philosophical tradition ‘cannot be formed around Cohen, Windelband or any other German, alien to the Russian soul’.¹¹⁴

In contrast to modern Western philosophy, Russian philosophy, in the interpretation of Berdiaev (but also of Ern and many others), grounds

¹⁰⁹ N. A. Berdiaev, ‘Filosofskaia istina i intelligentskaia pravda’, in *Vekhi: Sbornik statei o russkoi intelligentsia*, Moscow, 1909, pp. 5–26 (p. 23).

¹¹⁰ Berdiaev, ‘Filosofskaia istina’, p. 20.

¹¹¹ N. A. Berdiaev, *Khomiakov*, Moscow, 1912, p. 114.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 138 (my emphasis).

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹¹⁴ Berdiaev, ‘Filosofskaia istina’, p. 21.

epistemology in ontology; it is a philosophy that 'proclaims the concrete and integral spirit as the real [*sushchee*]'.¹¹⁵ Hegel, in contrast, mistook logic for ontology. While Berdiaev admits that the 'philosophical verity [*istina*]' cannot be national, he believes that different national traditions are called to reveal different aspects of this verity, as Russia has already done with its concrete idealism.¹¹⁶ Although it also represents a continuation of the achievements of Greek philosophy and German idealism, concrete idealism was born with Russia's active separation in the works of the Slavophiles from the mainstream tendencies of European philosophy. This is the origin of Russian philosophy according to Berdiaev.

However, Berdiaev operates simultaneously with several, and in my view potentially conflicting models of the relationship between Russian and European philosophy. Russian philosophy as it appears in Slavophilism is a critique of European philosophy and thus an outgrowth of it, which may be of subsequent benefit even to Europe itself: 'Russian philosophy could and should direct Western philosophy out of its blind alleys, save it from meonism and illusionism.'¹¹⁷ Here we may discern even a belief in a Russian philosophical hegemony in the future. In keeping with the culturalist explanation he also makes use of, however, concrete idealism, which is a deeply religious philosophy, is a reflection of the 'Russian soul'. By implication, Russian and European philosophies are also parallel and therefore different phenomena. And just as Khomaikov and Kireevskii were faced with the task of overcoming Kant and Hegel, so do 'we' need to overcome its most recent forms: neo-Kantianism and neo-Hegelianism, and for this goal the relevant 'equipment' (*vooruzhenie*) has been provided by Khomiakov. Thus, Berdiaev appears to waver between a dialectical and parallel understanding of the relationship between Russian and European philosophy and, correspondingly, between a linear and cyclical idea of history.

Both these models assign Russian philosophy crucial tasks for the future.¹¹⁸ According to Berdiaev, in Russian intellectual history, Slavophilism represents the moment of *self-awareness*. It made Russia conscious of itself as religious (Christian) and different from the West. While Russia had been unique and individual throughout its existence,

¹¹⁵ Berdiaev, *Khomiakov*, p. 123.

¹¹⁶ Berdiaev, 'Filosofskaia istina', p. 23 (n.).

¹¹⁷ Berdiaev, *Khomiakov*, p. 143.

¹¹⁸ In the *Vekhi* essay, Berdiaev described the Russian philosophical past in terms of 'embryos' (*zachatki*) and 'dispositions' (*zadatki*) mainly (Berdiaev, 'Filosofskaia istina', p. 22), but, as noted, a Russian philosophical tradition became far more firmly pronounced in his Khomiakov book.

it had up until this point existed only on the non-reflexive level of 'being' (*bytie*). The present is of a third kind, characterized by Berdiaev as 'tragic', 'fearsome' and 'apocalyptic', but also permeated by creativity: 'We are now living in the times of earthquakes. Khomiakov, however, did not know earthquakes, he did not expect them, the soil below him had not yet begun shaking.'¹¹⁹ In contrast to the Slavophiles, the present and previous generation (Solov'ev and Dostoevskii) have been far more oriented towards the future. However, we cannot fail to note that Berdiaev's view of his own age as much more future-oriented and even apocalyptic than that of the Slavophiles was in many ways the opposite of what Trubetskoi proclaimed in his critique of utopianism, and Berdiaev's understanding of Russian thought and mentality was very far from the latter's appreciation of 'the relative'. Common to both Berdiaev and Trubetskoi, however, is an idea of Russian philosophy as a dynamically evolving history.

The Modernity of Russian Philosophy

In Berdiaev's account, concrete idealism serves as an identity marker that draws a boundary between 'us and them', between Russia and Europe. At the same time, it expresses a common ground across this boundary, since it grew out of a critique of German idealism. Thus, this boundary is one that 'both separates and unites'.¹²⁰ Berdiaev's belief in philosophy as a self-legitimizing discipline likewise serves to depict philosophy as a universal discipline. However, he concludes his analysis of Khomiakov's philosophy by maintaining the importance of national traditions and self-awareness for the further development of a 'creative culture'.¹²¹ His critique of the intelligentsia's utilitarian attitudes towards philosophy thus risks being undermined by a different kind of purposeful philosophizing: the wish to adhere to a group and its traditions and to express a national self. In fact, several other Russian philosophers of this period found such projects rather unphilosophical — not only the editors of the *Logos* journal (including Boris Iakovenko) and Gustav Shpet, but also, as we have seen, Semen Frank, who in fact was one of the contributors to the *Vekhi* collection.

Such ambiguities were not unique to Berdiaev, but characterize all the texts analysed in this article. It is the 'West' that provides the model for that which counts as philosophy and its history. However, except for a

¹¹⁹ Berdiaev, *Khomiakov*, p. 77.

¹²⁰ Yuri M. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*, trans. Ann Shukman, London, 1990, p. 136

¹²¹ Berdiaev, *Khomiakov*, p. 143.

neo-Kantian like Vvedenskii, who first and foremost praised Solov'ev for having included Russia in the global philosophical club, they present us also with an attempt to demonstrate the existence of an alternative and indigenous philosophical tradition. But this also means that the philosophical texts under discussion are converted into foundational texts used to articulate national identity.

The universal significance of Russian philosophy and its relationship to Western philosophy is a matter more of identity-formation than traditional philosophical questions, although as presented here they certainly have historico-philosophical implications. Such questions feature in all the texts discussed above, but are answered differently — from including Russia in (Western) philosophical discourse (Vvedenskii), via Russia generating the most significant moment in the history of philosophy (Lopatin, Ern), to a pluralistic understanding of both philosophy and history (Trubetskoi). Gershenzon wavers between the first and the third positions; Bulgakov and Berdiaev between the second and the third. Taken together, they present us with what Shmuel Eisenstadt describes as the most critical ideological and political rift in the 'modern programme' (or modernity); a tension between universalist and pluralistic visions, in which the existence of different values and rationalities are either accepted or conflated.¹²² In the case of Bulgakov and Berdiaev, this tension can even be observed in one and the same thinker. But even in its universalist version, we are presented with a universalism that looks different from how it would appear in the West, since it includes Russia and contests West-European hegemony.

As the material discussed in this article demonstrates, Russia's rediscovered philosophical past represents a point of departure for new projects, mostly with a strong religious focus on metaphysics and ethics, but also on Russia itself as a centre of future philosophy. We thus see that future-oriented philosophy (philosophy of history included) in early twentieth-century Russia was not only secular, materialist and/or Marxist, but could also be centred on religion, metaphysics and ethics. In regarding past efforts as essential to the philosophical tasks of the future, however, the religious currents differ markedly from 'God-Builders' such as Maksim Gor'kii and Anatolii Lunacharskii and their one-sided emphasis on the future.¹²³

¹²² S. N. Eisenstadt, 'Multiple Modernities', *Daedalus*, 129, 2000, 1, pp. 1–29 (p. 7).

¹²³ See George L. Kline, *Religious and Anti-Religious Thought in Russia*, Chicago, IL and London, 1968, chapter 4.

By implication, 'Russian philosophy' in the early twentieth century remained a *Zukunftsbegriff* (Koselleck), just as it had in the previous century, except that the differences between the past, present and future were now much more clearly defined. The specificity of the present was conceptualized through a reflection on its past. The debates analysed in this article testify to a new and more acute experience of the accelerating time of modernity, or to the 'dynamization and temporalization of the experiential world'.¹²⁴ The history of Russian philosophy was written for a purpose: to formulate new philosophical projects on the basis of a set of foundational philosophers attributed with a particular authority, and to reconceptualize, on the basis of this heritage, Russian identity. However, there was no consensus as to which texts were the most important or how to interpret them, just as there was no consensus as to what Russian identity really was, for instance to what extent it included or excluded (Western) Europe. Hence, it would be misleading to speak of a canon of Russian philosophy at this stage; what we have is a series of interpretations that suggested *which* philosophers were foundational and *how* they should be understood.

¹²⁴ Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Presner, Kerstin Behnke and Jobst Welge, Stanford, CA, 2002, p. 168.