In Marx's Shadow

Knowledge, Power, and Intellectuals in Eastern Europe and Russia

Edited by Costica Bradatan and Serguei Alex. Oushakine

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Introduction

Costica Bradatan and Serguei Alex. Oushakine

1

The Communist experiment always had intimate relationships with philosophy. Long before becoming a political project, Communism started out as a philosophical idea, if still a vague and multifacetious one. This idea was about a certain utopian understanding of the human society and human history, of what it means to be human and how to fulfill its potentialities. It was, above all, intellectuals who were the first public advocates of the idea, who vouched for it, and who eventually translated it into a specific political language—at the same time, be it said in passing, depriving it of its original innocence. Once implemented, the Communist project constantly needed intellectuals to remind people, time and again, that there was no point in opposing the Communist regimes as Communism was a matter of "historical necessity," the inevitable outcome of the inner workings of history. According to this Marxist line of thought, the "laws of history" were as real and compelling as the "laws of nature." Communism was "bound to happen" just as a dropped object was bound to go down; there was no way out. To support this crucial claim, Communist ideologists had to advance and maintain an ample theoretical and conceptual apparatus—a whole repertoire of notions, ideas and catchphrases extracted from the works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, and able not just to offer an easily comprehensible philosophy of history, but also to provide specific answers to the many challenges posed by the unfolding of the real life.

Ironically enough, a similar drive to "philosophize" also inspired discourses of those who opposed the Communist experiment. Faced with the intellectually grounded claims of the regime, many dissidents and

anticommunist activists in socialist countries felt compelled to provide similar philosophical frameworks that could explain the unfeasibility of the Communist project and could predict its inevitable collapse. For these people, Communism was simply "bound *not* to happen." And they sought to prove that by grounding their discourses in concepts of human nature, society and history that emphasized authenticity, freedom, human rights, "care for the soul," and so on. As a result, the confrontation between the Communist regimes and their discursive oppositions was structured as an ongoing philosophical exchange between competing social models. The conflict also included a clash over the different claims to truth on which each party based its political and ideological positioning. That the former used sometimes brutal force to silence the latter only testifies to the uttermost significance and intensity of these clashes. Interestingly, the collapse of Communist regimes has not by any means exhausted this philosophical "dialogue." On the contrary, the conversation became even broader, more sophisticated, and more intense.

The idea of the present volume was born out of the need to account for this neglected intellectual "dialogue" that, like a persistent shadow, accompanied the Communist experiment and its collapse. This conversation took place within the space delineated by three main categories of actors: the institutions involved in the production of knowledge, the institutions involved in the practice of power, and—playing the role of a somehow fluid category—the intellectuals as mediators between knowledge and power. If we use Katherine Verdery's definition of the intellectuals as "occupants of a site that is privileged in forming and transmitting discourses, in constituting thereby the means through which society is 'thought' by its members,"[1] it is worth understanding how the intellectuals had to negotiate ways of shaping and disseminating discourses that reflected their different positionings within the relationship knowledge-power under the Communist regime. As producers of knowledge in a highly politicized context, intellectuals were inevitably related to various practices and institutions of power. Some were intimately connected with power institutions, serving as their "brain." Others just happened to be "believers" in whatever these institutions had to proclaim. Some had to be assiduously courted by the Communist regime before agreeing to collaborate; others simply became too infatuated with the benefits and privileges that the regime had to offer. Then, there were those who did not want to have anything to do with the regime and its ideology, and as a consequence had to turn themselves into window cleaners and night porters to make their living. In some cases, it was not even possible to change jobs like that and some dissidents had to pay a high price for their distancing from the regime, being persecuted or even annihilated. This volume maps out, if in a tentative fashion, a vast

territory delineated by the complex web of relationships between power, knowledge, and intellectuals in East Europe and Russia.

2

Despite its key role in the intellectual shaping of state socialism, Communist thought is often dismissed as mere propaganda or as a rhetorical exercise aimed at advancing socialist intellectuals on their way to power.[2] Traditionally framed within the dichotomy "commissars vs. dissidents," the Communist thought and its anticommunist reflection are thus perceived first of all as a political project, narrowly defined.[3] This volume offers a different approach. By drawing attention to unknown and unexplored areas, trends and ways of thinking under the Communist regime, the volume demonstrates how various bodies of theoretical knowledge (philosophical, social, political, aesthetic, even theological) were used not only to justify dominant political views, but also to frame oppositional and nonofficial discourses and practices.

The examination of the underlying structures of Communism as an intellectual project provides convincing evidence for questioning yet another approach that routinely frames the post-Communist intellectual development as a "revival" or, at least, as a "return of the repressed."[4] As the book demonstrates, the logic of a radical break, suggested by this approach, is in contradiction with historical evidence: for instance, genealogies of current explosions of intellectual racism or radical religiosity could be easily traced back to the Communist past. More significantly even, some of the intellectual actors who came to shape the public discourse in Eastern Europe and Russia in the 1990s had in fact been involved in the production of mainstream knowledge under the Communist regime in their respective countries. Certainly, from an ethical standpoint, some may regard this conversion as duplicity or opportunism pure and simple, but the fact remains that the sheer possibility of such a dual involvement points to not so radical a break: some of the issues and topics they were talking about, "before" and "after," must have been rooted in one and the same intellectual, philosophical, or emotional repertoire. To give just an example, an author who in the 1980s would provide the regime in his country with theoretical arguments for, say, an isolationist foreign policy, would have absolutely no problem reinventing himself as a Euroskeptic in the 1990s or the 2000s.

One of the major findings of the book is that a significant number of philosophical, theoretical, and ideological debates in post-Communist world did not appear out of the blue, but had their roots in some of the cultural processes and intellectual projects of the previous period. Many of these

debates are in fact the logical continuation of intellectual conversations and confrontations initiated long before 1989.

3

However, this book has not been conceived as a historical study strictly speaking: it is, systematically and deliberately, an *interdisciplinary* project, where scholars from various disciplines and of differing theoretical persuasions engage in a collective multileveled project. That's why, apart from intellectual historians, the project brings together anthropologists, political scientists, literary scholars, philosophers, and religious scientists. The overarching goal of the project is to offer an understanding of this complex set of phenomena: the multifacetious relationship between the practices of power, the production of knowledge, and the role of the public intellectuals as mediators between the two before and after the collapse of Communism. We have deliberately sought to reflect the plurality of Communism-inspired discourses by conceiving this volume as a collection of diverse approaches, methodologies, theoretical and ideological persuasions that could provide different accesses to understanding Communist and post-Communist phenomena. At the same time, this plurality confers on the project as a whole a certain sense of fluid unity, which we hope the readers will not find unattractive.

The argument of the book unfolds in four stages. The first section ("The Sickle, the Hammer, and the Typewriter") takes us into the very heart of our topic: the fundamental "conversation" that took place, virtually everywhere in the Socialist Bloc, between the practitioners of power and various producers of knowledge (philosophers, social scientists, theorists in general). The web of relationships woven by intellectuals between the two spheres is impressive and worth paying attention to in all four cases discussed (Russia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Romania).

First, in his chapter Mikhail Epstein offers an ambitious introduction to the history of Russian philosophy, which not only sets up the general theoretical framework for much of what follows, but also points to some of the more problematic aspects of the relationship between the sphere of knowledge production and that of power practice. In an effort to relate Russian thought to the philosophical tradition of utopian thinking, Epstein undertakes an ample historical journey and traces this tradition back as far as Plato. As Epstein points out, during the Soviet period Russian Platonism asserted itself as the regulative principle of social and political life, turning ideology into a material force. "Metaphysical radicals" and "conceptualists" of the 1980s to early 1990s epitomized the two major movements within the broad field of what Epstein labels as Russian "ideocracy." While rooted

in a similar attempt to treat word and idea as something vital, the two lines of thought significantly differed in their understanding of the role of philosophy in Soviet and post-Soviet societies. For "metaphysical radicals," the goal of practical transformation of the world superseded any aspiration for advancing social knowledge. In turn, for "conceptualists," the practical world emerged as a philosophical reflection, as a mental construction, supported by "the bare skeleton of abstract discourse."

Then, in his contribution Jeffrey Murer proposes a closer look to the dynamic of Marxist thought in political contexts where Marxism-Leninism as the regime's "official philosophy" provided plenty of room for a Marxist critique of the regime itself. Murer brings forth two examples: the Budapest School (mainly Ferenc Fehér, Agnes Heller and György Márkus) and the *Praxis* group in former Yugoslavia (first of all, Mihailo Djurić, Mihailo Marković, and Svetozar Stojanović). In both cases, an insider group of philosophers and social theorists come to initiate a "heretical" movement, directed against what they regarded as a betrayal of the original meaning of Communism. From their point of view, the problem with the regime was not that it was too socialist, but—on the contrary—that it was not socialist enough, not truly socialist. Murer's chapter has the important merit of underlining the paradoxical fact that Communism was not always opposed by anticommunists, but sometimes even by Marxists, in the name of Marxism itself.

In the next chapter Letitia Guran approaches the relationship between knowledge and power from a different angle. Her account is dedicated to what it means—for a philosopher, artist or creative writer—to live and work under a Communist regime on a daily basis, to have to actually face the regime and its many demands. Guran questions the meaning, articulations, social functions, and political dimension (or lack thereof) of what might be considered "aesthetic utopianism." For the most part, she discusses the case of a major Romanian philosopher, Constantin Noica (1909–1987), who advocated a creative form of non-political involvement, also known as "resistance through high-culture." Even though frequently contested (especially after the collapse of communism), Noica's educational utopia, with the refuge it advocated in the realm of the great books, definitely had its quixotic charm. It brought forth, above all, a compensatory mechanism: the aesthetic satisfaction that the creation of a work of philosophy, literature or art can, under certain circumstances, silence a guilty conscience generated by civic indifference and noninvolvement.

What Clemena Antonova offers in her chapter is a case study, highly indicative of a certain type of relationship between the sphere of knowledge and that of power in the Soviet Union. She traces how the legacy of a major Russian thinker (Pavel Florensky) was radically transformed—yet survived—during the Soviet and post-Soviet period. Trained as a physicist,

Florensky became famous as a religious philosopher in the early 1910s. When in 1922 the Bolsheviks expelled over a hundred of Russian philosophers and literary scholars from the country, he managed to stay in Russia. The Soviet regime preferred to see him as a scientist rather as a religious thinker. This did not prevent Florensky from being executed in 1937; however, it did determine significantly the public perception of his work. Rediscovered in the 1960, Florensky was praised first of all for his original contributions to the emerging field of semiotics and cultural analysis; his religious views were neatly bracketed off. In turn, Florensky's post-perestroika reception went in the opposite direction, by framing his scholarship exclusively within the context of religious thought. As Antonova suggests, these attempts to find a "proper" location for Florensky's unorthodox legacy might be missing the point: the revival of Florensky's legacy does not require the revival of old taxonomies and classifications.

The second section of the book ("Heretics") deals with the production of dissident discourses in relation to the practice of power in a communist regime. Thus, in a chapter on "totalitarian language" Veronika Tuckerová discusses the political use of language in a totalitarian context and three distinct responses to it: Václav Havel, Petr Fidelius, and George Orwell. These authors, in their specific ways, are concerned with the linguistic manipulation, disruption, and eventually aggression to which an individual living in a totalitarian state (be it actual or only imagined) is systematically subjected. For there is no better way to get control over people's minds than through the language they speak. Bodies under occupation can still resist, oppose, counterperform, even commit suicide, but minds under (linguistic) occupation are in a much more difficult situation: their subjugation is gradual, insidious and almost unavoidable. Whereas Orwell's analysis of the politics of language in *1984* is well known to the English-language reader, Tuckerová's contribution provides two relatively unknown cases of lucid (insider's) analysis of the type of linguistic aggression one faces in the context of real socialism.

Dealing with an even more dramatic situation, Costica Bradatan's chapter is dedicated to a twentieth-century case of philosophical martyrdom: Jan Patočka. Due to his involvement in the Charter 77 movement and the subsequent police interrogation, Patočka found himself in a situation where the most persuasive argument he could make use of was his own dying body. By dying a martyr's death, Patočka helped the cause of the Czechoslovakian dissidence in a much more significant and efficient way than he could have done just by his philosophical writings and underground seminars. Following in the footsteps of Socrates, Hypatia, Giordano Bruno, and Edith Stein, Patočka made his death become not only a significant part of his life, but an important argument in his work, too—that is, a way of testing the validity of his ideas. It is, of course, one of the cruelest ironies of life in a regime

that claims to be based on philosophy that here philosophers, to make their points, have to resort sometimes to philosophy as an art of dying.

In her chapter Natasa Kovacevic's discusses the production of dissident discourses from a particular thematic angle: namely, she talks about the "Orientalization" of East European Communist regimes during the Cold War, with special attention to Joseph Brodsky, Czesław Miłosz, and Milan Kundera. In her reading, the use of Orientalist stereotypes by these authors betrays a certain sense of anxiety to distance themselves from Communist politics and emancipate their homeland from stereotypes of cultural backwardness. To show that what "happened" to their countries is highly "unnatural" and "aberrant," they orientalize Russia and push it eastward as much as they can. Russia thus becomes a strange entity, somehow out of this world, unable to occupy any specific location, rejected by everybody, floating freely, without any firm geographical anchor.

The third major section of the book ("In Search of a [New] Mission") connects some intellectual trends born before the collapse of Communism to a series of post-Communist intellectual developments. As suggested earlier, this is an important aspect of the project as it points to continuities of ideas between "before" and "after" the dismantling of the Communist project. Continuing the theme explored in Kovacevic's chapter, Serguei Oushakine's contribution explores a post-Soviet version of Orientalist discourses. However, in this case, the essay deals with self-orientalizing intellectual models and schemes developed by provincial Russian sociologists. Oushakine discusses two main versions of this post-Soviet "Orientalism." First is the genre of ethnohistories of trauma, in which social scientists address current problems in Russia through the constant rewriting of Russia's past in order to demonstrate the non-Russian character of its national/state institutions, and, correspondingly, the anti-Russian nature of these institutions' politics. Using the genre of "Russian tragedy" as a main organizing frame, historians of ethnotrauma split the Russian ethnos off from available political institutions and present it as an organic body that is routinely attacked by "external" and "alien" forces. While being closely associated with the rhetoric and methods of traumatic ethnohistories, the second category, ethnovitalism, is less preoccupied with the unceasing portrayal of the past harm and sufferings of the nation. Its main goal is to provide the analytics of ethnic survival that could "compensate the loss of cultural genotype" of the Russian nation. The struggle over interpreting the nation's memory of the past, so typical for traumatic ethnohistories, is replaced in ethnovitalism by a similar struggle over constructing and interpreting perceptions of the nation's current experience.

In her chapter, Maria Todorova focuses on a different type of response to Orientalism. By looking at the categories of "Balkan" and "Eastern Europe," Todorova draws attention to the ideological origin of these

"regional" taxonomies. Taken now for granted, both terms, nonetheless, took their current shape only in the twentieth century. As she stresses, this time-bound and place-bound specificity of the region (and its terminology) counts; and it is precisely this specificity that is often neglected or overshadowed by post-socialist attempts to theorize the history of the region within the frame of postcolonial theory. As a result, postcolonialism's anticipatory striving is often used as a "cover" for self-victimizing laments. As Todorova suggests, instead of perpetuating geographical taxonomies left behind by the Cold War scholarship, it might be more productive to pay a close attention to contradictory and incommensurable political, social, and cultural legacies that have been shaping the space called "Eastern Europe."

The third contribution on this topic, by Elena Gapova, similarly explores the postsocialist intersection of knowledge production and national affects. Gapova is less concerned with issues of exclusion of the Other through delimitating the borders of a new nation. Instead, she portrays how the Belarusian intellectuals produced discourses which distanced them from the "people" they claimed to represent. Ideocratic radicals of sorts, Belarusian intellectuals continued the Soviet tradition of didactic preaching by infantilizing the people and by elevating themselves "above" the masses. As Gapova suggests, the intellectuals' adherence to patronizing and self-distancing rhetoric might indicate a particular form of anxiety, produced by a drastic and radical uncoupling of the usual link between power and knowledge that was so common during the Soviet period. Unable to impose their "epistemological hegemony" through political means, intellectuals claimed their moral supremacy as their ultimate ground.

In the last section of the book ("Reinventing Hope"), three contributions discuss how the collapse of Communism had a major impact on the shaping of the post-Communist ideological, political and intellectual landscape in the 1990s. Thus, in an effort to map out the vast ideological space created by the demise of Leninism, Vladimir Tismaneanu comes to identify a series of illiberal discourses and nationalist-salvationist tendencies. These are, for him, symptoms of a political pathology, the by-product of the complex process of dismantling of Communism. Further, Tismaneanu places these discourses and tendencies at the root of many disruptions that occurred in the process of transition to democracy in Eastern Europe and Russia, and insists on the role of civil society as the main vehicle for articulating the ideals of a democratic political community.

Ivars Ijabs's chapter focuses on the importance of the philosophical notion of "civil society" for creating a healthy public sphere in Eastern Europe after the collapse of Communism. In this context, his chapter advances the notion of "politics of authenticity," which he relies on the insight that political involvement of the civil actors must be based on some form of personal "truthfulness" of those involved. To articulate this thesis, Ijabs initiates a

dialogue with Václav Havel's early political works, on the one hand, and with Charles Taylor's works on the ethics of authenticity, on the other. This theoretical excursus helps him advance a series of general considerations on the (re)construction of civil society in Eastern Europe.

Finally, in close connection with the topic of Ijabs's contribution, Aurelian Crăiuţu dedicates the final chapter of the book to the political philosophy developed by a contemporary Romanian philosopher, Mihai Şora. This chapter explores Şora's theory of authenticity and alienation, as well as his philosophy of dialogue and civil society. Crăiuţu finds in Şora's work (itself an example of dialogical thinking as it combines phenomenology, Marxism, neo-Thomism, and Christian existentialism) an exemplary art of dialogical engagement of the philosopher with the public life and its many demands. For Crăiuţu such a work is important not only for its intrinsic speculative qualities, but it also has a crucial merit in terms of the benefits that society can always draw from it: it teaches us what it means to live democratically, as free and autonomous subjects, who know how to enjoy and take pride in their freedom.

This last section is not only the concluding part of the book. In a way, it also reveals its openness. The chapters in this section deal with the potentialities of hope one comes across when studying Eastern Europe and Russia today, with the promises of renewal and regeneration one reads in recent developments here. This section is particularly important as it takes forward the conversation that the book proposes. For this volume is not only about the end of an era, but it also about a new beginning, about collective efforts of self-reinvention and repositioning in history and in the present.

4

In many respects, the volume is an effort to begin a "cartographic" exploration of the world of communist ideas. This project is not about giving complete answers; rather its goal is to initiate a larger inquiry, to start mapping out a vast territory of questions and interrogations shaped and/or left behind by decades of state socialism. It is the first attempt of this kind, and as any pioneering endeavor it is bound to be partial and incomplete: the volume does not present a comprehensive overview of Eastern European and Eurasian intellectual traditions during and after Communism. Nor could it cover all the theoretical implications of the topic. We hope, however, that this beginning will stimulate a larger conversation on the relationship between the Communist experiment on one hand, and knowledge, power and intellectuals on the other.

One final word about the history of this volume. It started in October 2005 with an interdisciplinary conference on the state of philosophy in Russia

and Eastern Europe organized by Miami University's Havighurst Center for Russian and Post-Soviet Studies. The conference (entitled "Thinking in/after Utopia") brought together junior and senior scholars from the United States and Europe to discuss the most important trends in Russian and East European philosophy during the Communist regime and after its collapse. A selection of the papers presented at the conference formed the starting point of this volume. All these papers underwent significant subsequent revision. At the same time, a couple of new contributions were invited from scholars in the field (Maria Todorova and Elena Gapova).

We would like to thank the Havighurst Center for Russian and Post-Soviet Studies at Miami University of Ohio for organizing the initial conference and for initiating this editorial project. We are also grateful to the Princeton University Committee on Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences and the Havighurst Center at Miami University for their financial support of this publication. Further assistance from Aurelian Crăiuţu and Clemena Antonova significantly simplified the preparation of the manuscript. Finally, we are indebted to Florian Grond's artistic imagination for his vision of Marx's Shadow.

NOTES

1. Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceauşescu's Romania* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 17.

2. For a classical version of this approach see the influential study: George Konrád and Iván Szelényi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power: A Sociological Study of the Role of the Intelligentsia in Socialism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979).

3. See, for example, Sabrina Petra Ramet, *Social Currents in Eastern Europe: The Sources and Consequences of the Great Transformation* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995).

4. See, for example, Krishan Kumar, *1989: Revolutionary Ideas and Ideals* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2001); Stephen Webber and Ilkka Liikanen, eds., *Education and Civic Culture in Post-Communist Countries* (London: Palgrave, 2001); Anna Wessely, ed., *Intellectuals and the Politics of the Humanities* (Budapest: Collegium Budapest Workshop Series, 2002).

I

THE SICKLE, THE HAMMER, AND THE TYPEWRITER

1

Ideas against Ideocracy: The Platonic Drama of Russian Thought

Mikhail Epstein

> SOCRATES: The ideal society we have described can never grow into a reality or see the light of day, and there will be no end to the troubles of states, or indeed of humanity itself, till philosophers become kings in this world, or till those we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers.
>
> —Plato, *The Republic*, trans. H. D. P. Lee (473 C10)

> That kings should become philosophers, or philosophers kings, is not likely to happen; nor would it be desirable, since the possession of power invariably debases the free judgment of reason. It is, however, indispensable that a king—or a kingly, i.e. self-ruling, people—should not suppress philosophers but leave them the right of public utterance.
>
> —Immanuel Kant, *On Eternal Peace, Second Supplement*, trans. Karl Popper[1]

> It's a property of the Russian people to indulge in philosophy. . . . The fate of the philosopher in Russia is painful and tragic.
>
> —Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*

> The more total society becomes, the greater the reification of the mind and the more paradoxical its effort to escape reification on its own.
>
> —Theodor Adorno, *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (34)

This chapter discusses the relationship between political power and intellectuals under the specific mode of production of ideas in the totalitarian

society. The very phenomenon of totalitarianism is explained as the regime of ideocracy, or "the dictatorship of ideas" that endows intellectuals with the most powerful and at the same time the most vulnerable role in the society, dividing them into orthodox "ideologists" and heterodox "intelligentsia." The struggle in Russia between intelligentsia and ideocracy, or between intellectuals at the service of Reason and the intellectuals at the service of power, constitutes one of the most dramatic episodes in the world history of ideas. The roots of this drama go back to Plato's vision of philosophers-kings and the society ruled by all-powerful ideas. Surprisingly, the Russian revolution, although conducted under Marxist slogans, had inaugurated the political regime that was more reminiscent of Platonic ideocratic state than of economically driven Marxist society. How it became possible that the most radical and militant wing of Russian materialism led by Lenin and Stalin had in fact promoted the most extreme of all idealistic utopias, the Platonic state of ideas, to the rank of world superpowers?

What is usually called "Soviet Marxism" would be more aptly called "Plato-Marxism." The origins of this enigmatic oxymoronic synthesis can be elucidated from the long standing premises of Russian intellectual history and, in its turn, is instrumental for defining further, post-Soviet perspectives of Russian thought.

PLATO-MARXISM

Academic scholarship in the West tends to be suspicious of the very phenomenon of Russian philosophy. At best, it is categorized as "ideology" or "social thought." But what is philosophy?

There is no simple and universal definition, and many thinkers consider it impossible to formulate one. The most credible attempt seems to be a nominalistic reference: philosophy is what Plato and Aristotle, Kant and Hegel were occupied with. Perhaps, the best-known and most widely cited—if slightly eccentric—definition belongs to A. N. Whitehead: "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of series of footnotes to Plato. I do not mean the systematic scheme of thought which scholars have doubtfully extracted from his writings. I allude to the wealth of general ideas scattered through them . . . European philosophy is a series of footnotes to Plato."[2]

If this is true, then Russian philosophy must be viewed as an indispensable part of the Western intellectual heritage, since it provides perhaps the most elaborate footnotes to Plato's most mature and comprehensive dialogues: the *Republic* and the *Laws*. Questions of social ethics and political philosophy, of an individual's relationship to the state, of adequate knowledge and virtuous behavior, of wisdom and power, of religious and

aesthetic values, of ideas and ideals as guidelines for human life—all of these are central to Russian philosophy and exemplify its continuing relevance to the Western tradition. Moreover, the very status of ideas in Russian philosophy (as represented by Vladimir Solovyov, Pavel Florensky, Nikolai Berdyaev, Sergei Bulgakov, Semyon Frank, Georgy Fedotov, and many others) mirrors Plato's vision of them as ontological entities, "laws," or ideal principles—as opposed to mere epistemological units, the tools of cognition. "Knowledge" and "power," as well as "thinking" and "being," have been always intimately interrelated in Russian intellectual vision.

If we try to single out the central trend of Russian philosophy that can be compared with those of "rationalism" in French philosophy, "idealism" in German philosophy, "empiricism" in English philosophy, and "pragmatism" in American philosophy, this quintessentially Russian "ism" would be "totalism." Such diverse Russian thinkers as Chaadaev and Belinsky, Ivan Kireevsky and Herzen, Vladimir Soloviev and Vasily Rozanov all put forward the category of "integrity," "wholeness," "totality" (*tsel'nost'*, *tselostnost'*) or "total-unity" (*vseedinstvo*), which presupposes, first of all, the unity of knowledge and existence, of reason and faith, intellectual and social life. Gregory Skovoroda (1722–1794) who is often dubbed "the first original Russian-Ukrainian thinker" expressed the following credo in his prayer to God on sending a new Socrates to Russia: "I believe that knowledge should not be limited to the high-priests of science and scholarship, who stuff themselves to overflowing with it, but should enter into the life of the whole people."[3]

Ivan Kireevsky (1806–1856), a founder of Russian Slavophilism, sought to inaugurate "an independent philosophy corresponding to the basic principles of ancient Russian culture and capable of subjecting the divided culture of the West to the integrated consciousness of believing reason."[4] Characteristically, Kireevsky derived this tendency of Russian philosophy from Plato's heritage, as opposed to "the mind of Western man [which] seems to have a special kinship with Aristotle,"[5] that is, with "one-sided abstract rationalism." Invoking the legacy of Eastern Christian thought, Kireevsky asserts that

> in Greek thinkers we do not notice a special predilection for Aristotle, but, on the contrary, the majority of them overtly prefer Plato . . . probably because Plato's very mode of thinking presents more integrity (*tsel'nost'*) in the exercises of mind, more warmth and harmony in the speculative activity of reason. That is why virtually the same relationship that we notice between the two philosophers of antiquity [Aristotle and Plato] existed between the philosophy of the Latin world as it was elaborated in scholasticism, and the spiritual philosophy that we find in the writers of the Eastern Church, the philosophy that was especially clearly expressed by the Holy Fathers who lived after the defection of [Catholic] Rome.[6]

This inclination to relate Russian thought to Plato in contrast to Aristotle became a hallmark of the Russian intellectual tradition, which assumed that "in Plato's teaching, religion and philosophy are in the closest contact, but already in Aristotle's system philosophy breaks off with religion definitively."[7]

This Platonic tendency to integrate philosophical and religious teachings and to implement them politically culminated in twentieth-century Russia. In discussing Russian philosophy, especially the Soviet period, we have inevitably to consider the practical fate of "integrative" Platonic conceptions as we explore the final outcome of an ideocratic utopia, in which philosophy was designated to rule the republic as the supreme religious and political authority. Nowhere have Plato's teachings on the relationship of ideas to the foundation of a state been incarnated so vigorously and on such a grandiose scale as in communist Russia.

One might even say that the philosophy of the Soviet epoch is the final stage of the development and embodiment of Plato's ideas in the Western world. During this stage, the project of ideocracy came to a complete realization and exhausted itself. In a certain sense, *Russian philosophy both summarizes and punctuates more than two thousand years of the Platonic tradition* and points the way for a return to foundations that are not susceptible to ideocratic and ideological perversions.

From the 1920s through the 1940s, the czardom of communist ideas succeeded in equating itself with reality, but beginning in the mid 1950s, stimulated by Khrushchev's denunciations of Stalin in 1956, this "ideal republic" increasingly revealed its illusory quality in a sharp discrepancy with reality. A relatively short period of seventy years sums up a two-millennial adventure of Western thought that followed Plato's search for the world of pure ideas. Among these footnotes to Plato, Soviet philosophy appears to the attentive eye as the final entry, signifying "the End."

What was the role of Marxism in the Platonic drama of Russian philosophy? Marxism, which deduces all ideas from the economic basis of society, would seem to be diametrically opposed to Platonism. But let us remember that Marxism is nothing other than a reversal of Hegelian idealism, the final moment in the self-development of the Absolute Idea. What is principally new in Hegel, as compared with Plato, is the progressive historical development of the idea, but the end of this process is postulated as the universal state, presumably conceived on the model of the Prussian monarchy, which embraces the totality of the self-cognizant mind. Both Platonic and Hegelian idealism culminate with the concept of the ideal State. Although Marx removed this ideal from the causality of the historical process, it remains in his system as a teleological motive and grows into a vision of a future communist society.[8]

Plato, Hegel, and Marx represent three stages in the development of idealism in its progressive symbiosis with social engineering: (1) the supernatural world of ideas, (2) the manifestation of Absolute Idea in history, and (3) the transformation of history by the force of ideas. For Plato, ideas are abstracted to a transcendental realm. For Hegel, the Idea is already ingrained as the alpha and omega of the historical process: it generates, and at the same time consummates, history in the course of its progressive self-awareness. Marx abolishes the idea as the alpha of history in order to emphasize the omega-point: the prospect of a historical culmination of unified humanity in the transparent kingdom of ideas, the self-government of collective reason.

Moreover, Marxism potentially proves more staunchly idealistic than even Platonism. According to the Greek philosopher, the world of ideas exists in and of itself, without necessarily demanding historical embodiment. For Marx, ideas are inseparable from the material process and are greedy for realization and implementation. In his own words, "theory itself becomes a material force when it has seized the masses."[9] Further in his work "Toward the Critique of Hegelian Philosophy of the Right. Introduction," Marx writes: "The revolutionary past of Germany is theoretical, it's Reformation. Then revolution began in the brain of a monk; now it begins in the brain of a philosopher." The same "brain-wise" production of revolution happened in Russia. The message of "militant materialism" (Lenin's term), as realized in Russia by Lenin and his disciples, was that the power of "progressive" ideas should not be *abstracted from* but rather *attracted to* material life, even subordinating and transforming the economic basis. Hence, the institution of five-year plans that subordinated the entire development of the country to ideal projections. Whereas in Plato and Hegel ideas still soared in the clouds, constituting a separate sphere of Supreme Mind or Absolute Spirit, in Soviet Marxism they had to be implemented in the foundation of material life, from heavy industry to everyday reality, and from the rituals of party purges to ceremonial cleansings of neighborhoods. The ruling ideology would not forgive the slightest flaw or deviation from the purity of ideas; because they had descended into the substance of being, they demanded the complete submission of every person at every moment of his or her life. Soviet materialism proved to be an instrument of militant idealism, craving ever newer sacrifices for the altar of sacred ideas. This occurred in strict correspondence with another Marx's statement: "the point is that revolutions (that begin in the brain) need a *passive* element, a *material* basis."

For these reasons, the dominant intellectual movement of the Soviet epoch should be identified not just as Marxism, but as Marxist Platonism, an idealism that asserts itself as the regulative principle of material life. If

Plato, proceeding from idealist assumptions, deduced the system of the communist state, then Marx, proceeding from communist assumptions, deduced a system of severe ideocracy that was realized through the efforts of his most consistent and determined Russian followers. Materialism became an ideology, and the very phrase "materialist ideology" came to sound perfectly natural to Soviet citizens. No less natural is the term "Marxist Platonism."

TWO FACES OF RUSSIAN PLATONISM

Platonism is the underside of Marxism, and the eventual collapse of the Soviet ideocratic state could be viewed as a death sentence for both of them.

But what can come to succeed it? A new idealism that will proceed from the grounds of Russian religious philosophy, from the legacy of Vladimir Soloviev and the Silver Age?

Surprisingly, the heritage of Platonism is common to such ideological antagonists as prerevolutionary idealists and Soviet Marxists and presupposes a kind of division of intellectual labor between them. Russian communism emphasized the material and social aspects of the Platonic utopia, while religious thinkers emphasized its ideal and spiritual aspects. But the ultimate project of Platonism is not separation but unification of both worlds: the full materialization of ideal norms. Therefore, it assumes the complementarity and even fusion of idealism and materialism.

The Russian intelligentsia of the second half of the nineteenth century made its way from old-style idealism to fashionable materialism, and in the early twentieth century strove to return from shallow materialism to religious idealism. Later, these two countermovements were repeated in the same order in the early Soviet obsession with "dialectical materialism" (1920s–1950s) and the disenchantment with materialism (1960s–1980s). But these seemingly opposite directions actually evolved within a single Platonic paradigm of *socially active idealism*. Materialists and Sophiologists unconsciously converge in their adherence to the Platonic ideocratic project and work together to idealize and ideologize human existence, on the one hand, and to materialize these most abstract ideas in social practice, on the other.

It is aptly remarked that Aleksei Losev (1893–1988), considered the last representative of Russian idealism, was also the first to identify the Platonic subtexts of the Soviet ideocracy. As a contemporary commentator remarks, according to Losev "the newly evolving 'materialism' elaborated its own 'kingdom of ideas,' its own mythology and dogmatics. . . . Therefore, Platonism was for Losev the secret hero of political storms in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. . . . Socialist mythology . . . according to Losev, natu-

rally implemented Platonism in its social-political practice."[10] Losev himself was ambivalent about the meaning of Platonism; he criticized its paganism and affiliation with the political system of slavery, but at the same time he interpreted Orthodoxy as a genuinely Christian Platonism.

One can surmise that this ambivalence was inherent not only in Losev's work, but in the entire tradition of Russian philosophy, which aspired to the Christian modification of Platonism, but actually slipped into its pagan version, the ideology of state socialism and, accordingly, the totalitarian system of state slavery. Marxist philosophers used to criticize Russian religious thought ("idealism") as the manifestation of a reactionary, bourgeois or feudalist worldview, incompatible with scientific and social progress. New critics, including Evgenii Barabanov, Sergei Khoruzhii, and Boris Paramonov, on the contrary, blame Russian idealism for its secret or unconscious complicity with the communist Revolution, by supposedly preparing the ground for this social cataclysm through the dissemination of apocalyptic forebodings. In this view, Russian society proved so receptive to the messianic revelations of Marxism and the mystique of the last bloody battle and coming golden age, precisely because Soloviev, Fedorov, Berdyaev, and Merezhkovsky had already tuned the soul of the nation to the key of eschatological expectations that would be fulfilled, or at least precipitated, by their contemporaries and compatriots—by Russia as the vanguard of posthistory. Virtually none of the great Russian philosophers (with a partial exception of Vladimir Soloviev) was an evolutionist, none of them developed a system justifying gradual improvement of existing conditions; rather, all of them were either metaphysical radicals, who valorized cataclysmic solutions for historical problems (like Fedorov and Berdyaev), or existential skeptics (like Shestov or Rozanov) who doubted the bourgeois values of rationality and productivity.

From this critical point of view, Russian philosophy was anti-Marxist and anticommunist only because it was inherently antibourgeois and regarded Marxism and socialism as mere extensions of capitalist, philistine ideals. Thinkers like Fedorov and Berdyaev condemned Marxism not for its revolutionary ambitions but because it seemed insufficiently revolutionary, promising only better modes of production instead of a spiritual transformation of the earth. Therefore, the anticommunist stance of these thinkers expressed even more ardent hatred for the existing world, in that the total eschatological renovation they envisioned threatened to claim even more victims than the metaphysically more moderate and materialistically motivated Marxism of Lenin and his followers.

The new criticism offered by Evgenii Barabanov, Sergei Khoruzhii, Boris Paramonov, and others, of course, does not attempt to justify Marxism as such, but demonstrates that the Russian version of Marxism proved to be a much more dangerous and destructive doctrine precisely because of its

synthesis with the eschatological "Russian Idea" as professed by idealist and anti-Marxist thought. The paradox of this critical examination of Russian religious philosophy is that it now comes from religious thinkers themselves, who regard the very phenomenon of *religious philosophy* with suspicion, both from religious and philosophical points of view. Soloviev advanced as the task of his philosophy a "justification of the faith of the Fathers," but does faith need rational justification? And should reason pursue the same truth that is already given in revelation?

The question is: Now that Platonism, in its Marxist guise, has been overcome by Russian thought, is it still possible to find inspiration in Platonism as such, in its most sublime idealistic and religious interpretations? Or does the experience of Russian history convincingly argue that Platonism has exhausted itself as a spiritual resource for humanity and that all attempts to Christianize it are just wishful illusions?

Whatever the answer may be, it is indisputable that the ongoing relevance of Platonism for Russian thought can provide the ground for its intensive dialogue with the Western philosophy also rooted in Plato's heritage.

PHILOSOPHICAL STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE

What then is the task of contemporary Russian philosophy? On this point, the projections of critics diverge. It is argued, on the one hand, that Russian philosophy should secularize itself, abandoning both the theological claims of prerevolutionary idealism and the ideological claims of Marxism. Hence Russian philosophy needs to undergo the same process of epistemological self-criticism and analytical self-limitation that Western philosophy has undertaken in a variety of distinct movements over the last two centuries, with Kant, Husserl, Wittgenstein, and Derrida. In other words, intellectuals have to desacralize their labor, to produce knowledge rather than ideas, to abandon any claims for spiritual power and relinquish even the ambitious and pathetic title of intelligentsia that was fraught with so many delusions of self-aggrandizement.

An additional measure may also be required, according to such authors as Evgenii Barabanov and Boris Groys. Since Russian philosophy has long been immersed in its neurosis of distinctiveness, these thinkers believe it must submit to psychoanalytic treatment in order to demystify its metaphysical pretensions, to expose the inferiority complex behind them and heal the birth trauma caused in the eighteenth century by medieval Russia's abrupt exposure to the Enlightenment. In this context, the most compelling part of the Russian intellectual legacy is not its celebrated achievements, whether those of the religious idealists (like Soloviev) or of the revolutionary materialists (like Chernyshevsky), but the work

of the academic philosophers—neo-Kantians, positivists, intuitivists, phenomenologists—who may have lacked original theoretical constructions but were more modest, sober, and accurate in their epistemological analyses.

Another point of view, most persistently elaborated by Sergei Khoruzhii, is that Russian religious idealism was not purely Orthodox at all, was not even Christian, but essentially idealistic in a Platonic sense. According to Khoruzhii, the "false" notion that Platonism prepared the ground for Christianity and remains its most authentic philosophical foundation, has haunted European thought for centuries, pervading neo-Platonism, Rationalism, German Idealism, and other major systems. Khoruzhii states that Russian thought is not the sole victim of the Platonic distortion of Christianity, but may well be the most sorely afflicted. Thus Vladimir Soloviev's philosophy of pan-unity, which was the source of inspiration for practically all other trends in Russian religious thought, is based on Plato's vision of ideal unity, progressively incorporated into the diversity of earthly entities, which reveals the closeness of Soloviev's theocratic utopia to Plato's ideocratic republic.

It is true that Soloviev and his philosophical followers (sometimes strongly critical about their teacher), such as Sergei Bulgakov, Pavel Florensky, and Aleksei Losev, tried to overcome or improve the one-sided idealism of Plato with notions of "religious materialism," "concrete idealism," or "Sophiology." These improvements presupposed that the world of ideas must manifest and embody itself materially in the same way that Christ-God became Christ-Man. Khoruzhii points out, however, that the relationship between God and man in Christianity is not the same as the relationship between ideas and objects in Plato. According to the teachings of Eastern Church Fathers, God and man are absolutely different by essence (idea), but communicate through energies (existence, volition). Therefore, genuinely Christian philosophy would abandon such Platonic and neo-Platonic conceptions as the total unity of an ideal world and would focus instead on existential intercourse between man and God, meditating on such spiritual processes as prayer, repentance, grace, introspection, silence, the unification of mind and heart—those acts of free will that truly mediate between the human and divine as distinct entities. The Platonization of Christianity resulted in the loss of these existential truths and in utopian temptations of Russian thought: since the idea is a principle of abstraction and generalization, it was believed that the entire world should be united on the basis of universal ideas.

One cannot but agree with Khoruzhii's exposure of the Platonic origins of Russian religious idealism, though he seems to underestimate the Platonic and neo-Platonic influences even in those Eastern Church Fathers who are presented in his conception as the staunchest Christian opponents

of Platonism.[11] According to Sergei Khoruzhii, genuinely Christian philosophy would abandon such Platonic and Neo-Platonic conceptions as the "total unity" and "divine essence of man." It would focus instead on existential intercourse between man and God, meditating on such spiritual processes as prayer, repentance, grace, introspection, silence, the unification of mind and heart—those acts of free will that truly mediate between the human and divine as distinct entities. Thus, Christian energetism will take the place of Platonic idealism.

Christianity, in opposition to Platonism, does not impose such universal goals as "Godmanhood" (Soloviev's basic concept) on all of humankind, but rather is concerned with the unique dynamic of personal volition and the acquisition of grace. For this reason Khoruzhii believes that the "energetical" or existential core of the Orthodox tradition must still be reexamined and restored, as the premise on which the future of Russian religious philosophy can be built.

Thus, two distinct and evidently incompatible projects are advanced for the reform of Russian philosophy: one (Barabanov's) calls for its complete secularization, its differentiation from theology and ideology; the other (Khoruzhii's) suggests an even closer, deeper alliance with the doctrinal and ascetic core of Orthodox Christianity. What both solutions have in common is their rejection of the Platonic dominance in the Russian philosophical tradition, both in its explicit form (religious idealism) and in its undercurrents (Marxist ideology).

NEW METAPHYSICAL RADICALS

The development of Russian thought from the 1950s to the 1980s clearly testified against materialist ideology and communist ideocracy. However, the years following the collapse of the Soviet system witnessed a resurgence of the Platonic type of ideocratic discourse, which expresses even more radical tendencies than did Russian philosophy of the early twentieth century. We use here the term "radicalism" in the same sense that allowed Karl Popper to apply it equally to Plato and Marx: "[U]ncompromising *radicalism*. . . . Both Plato and Marx are dreaming of the apocalyptic revolution which will radically transfigure the whole social world."[12] The material substance of Russian historical existence is now so exhausted by ideocratic experiment, so rarefied that the kingdom of absolute ideas again rises up beneath its translucent surface, tempting thinkers to construct new systems of panunity, to accommodate heaven on earth. Evgenii Barabanov observes: "[I]n a situation of an acute identity crisis, in the anguished attempts to restore the torn threads of forgotten traditions, the *ideological* and *utopian* paradigms of Russian philosophical thought are acquiring a second life. Again

the 'Russian idea'! Again the 'special way,' again 'originality,' again doctrinal preaching instead of the pupil's desk."[13]

Indeed, if we attempt to summarize the most recent developments in Russian thought, we discover a general tendency for the radicalization of its metaphysical ambitions. This tendency may be identified in such diverse movements as Marxism, with the eschatological communism of Sergei Kurginyan; nationalism, with the radical traditionalism of Aleksandr Dugin; religious philosophy, with the increasing popularity of Nikolai Fedorov's Cosmism and Daniil Andreev's "interreligious" teaching of The *Rose of the World*. Even the movements that would seem to be the most resistant to metaphysical assumptions, such as Structuralism, culturology, and conceptualism, reveal a growing propensity for universalist claims. For example, the later works of Yuri Lotman and Vasily Nalimov are rife with a metaphysics of chance, contiguity, indeterminism. Georgy Gachev builds much more ambitious cosmosophical constructions than did his predecessors in culturology, Bakhtin and Likhachev. The conceptualist group "Medical Hermeneutics" is much more concerned with metaphysical generalizations than were the conceptualists of the 1970s and 1980s. Is it a coincidence that this proliferation of new, radical metaphysical discourses has arisen with the degradation and collapse of the ideocratic system of Soviet power?

I must reiterate that the Soviet system was not merely a political and legislative entity but was founded on a metaphysical, even eschatological, vision, officially called Marxism but stemming also from the prophetic philosophizing of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Hence the collapse of the Soviet regime left something more than just a need for governmental reform: it left a metaphysical vacuum, eager to be filled. If the prevailing mood among intellectuals in the late Soviet period was to challenge and demystify ideocracy, then the collapse of that ideocracy generated numerous emulations and simulations among various intellectual groups, which attempted, at least in theory, to build a new ideocratic regime on a more firm, nationalistic, technological, and/or religious foundation. Traditionally in Russia, political platforms have been constructed on a framework of the most general, "filosofical" ideas; in the early 1990s, competing metaphysical theories were rushing in to fill the demolished and excavated site with a foundation for a new political architecture. The death of one "big" totalitarianism gave birth to a number of smaller ones. Many politicians, of both leftist and rightist orientation, including the leaders of the most powerful Parliament parties, such as Vladimir Zhirinovsky of "Liberal-Democratic Party," Dmitry Ragozin of "Rodina," and even the communist leader Gennady Zyuganov more or less consistently wielded metaphysical ideas to justify their ambitions for intellectual leadership.

This overall tendency, characteristic of the Russian mentality in general but aggravated in the 1990s by increasing political instability, can be called

"metaphysical radicalism." Political radicalism flows from the very core of this type of metaphysics, which, following Marxist paradigm does not limit itself to explaining the world but attempts to change it. At the same time, any politics with pretensions to radically transforming the world cannot limit itself to the social, economic, and legislative dimensions, but must entail metaphysical assumptions. In the contemporary West, politics usually pursues less expansive goals of partially improving existing systems, and therefore, it is divorced from metaphysical considerations, or at least pretends to be. Since Russia's historical dynamics are not evolutionary but disruptive and catastrophic, each break in political continuity necessitates renewed metaphysical speculation and indoctrination designed to justify the entirely new social order. It is the privilege of metaphysics to address the world as a whole, as it is the objective of political radicalism to transform this whole completely. Thus metaphysical and political radicalism are mutually dependent, as the totalitarian experiments of the twentieth century have shown: both communist and fascist radicalism advanced strong metaphysical claims and implications. Russian philosophy, which during the 1950s to 1980s had resisted the stranglehold of Soviet ideocracy, may now be preparing the foundation for a new type of ideocracy, potentially based on the ideas of Cosmism, universal theocracy, radical traditionalism, or eschatological communism. The options are varied.

Metaphysical radicalism is a specific type of philosophical discourse that ignores the Kantian critique of metaphysics and claims to "transcend" the epistemological limits imposed on human cognitive capacities. It relies on "revealed," "self-evident," or "generally accepted" truth or values that are directly accessible for human mind. However, this philosophical mode cannot be identified with the naive metaphysics that Kant criticized; it aspires not to adequate knowledge but to the practical transformation of the world, not to truth but to power. For metaphysical radicalism, epistemological limits remain effective, but irrelevant, since they can be transcended politically, volitionally, as the projection of a different world is implemented by the forces of social, national, and technological revolution. This is not a precritical, descriptive but a postcritical, prescriptive metaphysics, one that draws on suppressed desires and taps the collective unconscious. Western intellectuals are familiar with this type of fiery speculation through the works of New Left thinkers such as Herbert Marcuse, but the principal distinction of the majority of contemporary Russian "New Right" thinkers is their appeal to the absolute past, to the resurrection of ancestors or the restoration of tradition.

It is known that sentences in the imperative mood cannot be subjected to the criteria of verification. As Roman Jakobson puts it, "The imperative sentences cardinally differ from declarative sentences: the latter are and the former are not liable to a truth test."[14] "Do this!" as distinct from "She or he