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# Transformations of the Slavophile Idea in the Twentieth Century<sup>1</sup>

The Slavophile idea in the broad sense, as the idea of the self-determination of Russian culture, was by no means born together with historical Slavophilism. It has always been an immanent component of the intellectual world and intellectual development of Russia and merely received its name, a rather random and infelicitous one, from Slavophilism. In our century it has a rich history, in which the majority of events have been of a political and polemical character. They have been much discussed, and now we will leave them aside and take up another task: to delimit and examine the *great creative contributions* to the idea. Under the closest scrutiny, we find three such contributions: the idea of a Slavic Renaissance, the Eurasian idea, and the idea of a Neopatristic Synthesis. All of them in their outward appearance diverge quite far from the customary textbook image of Slavophilism: [they are] "a series of magical metamorphoses" that show both the creative force of the idea and its well-known amorphousness. Let us try to see in these metamorphoses interrelated episodes that together trace out a graphic image of the whole. Earlier, people loved to view an idea in graphic form and in action, and they knew how to do so. Faddei Zelinskii was a great master of this, and at the beginning of the century he published in Petersburg a series of studies entitled *From the Life of Ideas* [Iz zhizni idei]. Indeed, it is with Zelinskii that our first episode from the life of the Slavophile idea is associated.

## Episode 1: The idea of a Slavic Renaissance

Various authors (including myself) have written that Russian culture of the Silver Age was or became a typologically new phenomenon, principally in the following aspect: it was of a synthetic, East-West or Russian-European, character. As never before, it was able in this period to effect an organic combination between its own, autochthonous creative tasks and European cultural forms. Of course, the synthesis was achieved to different degrees in the different spheres of culture and had diverse countenances. The most vivid and graphic example is given by Diaghilev's *Russian Seasons*. This phenomenon was synthetic in every imaginable respect: it was a synthesis of the arts, of epochs, of aesthetic and artistic schools—but above all, a synthesis of Russian and European cultures. Diaghilev's ballet achieved the expressiveness of a symbol; for instance, Stravinsky's and Benoit's *Petrushka* can already be fully regarded as a symbol of the Silver Age, as well as a symbol of that synthesis of West and East of which we are speaking. But it is not specific phenomena or particular domains of culture that are important to us. What is important is that here in the type of culture itself there was already "East and West simultaneously," as D.S. Likhachev was one of the first to put it in discussing Belyi's *Petersburg*. It is also, moreover, important to mention one other feature: the unprecedented intensity of cultural creativity, the height of the creative upsurge. Time became extraordinarily replete and capacious; the pace of all processes quickened. "In the interval between the death of VI. Solov'ev [1900] and the present day, we have experienced what others manage to experience in a hundred years," wrote [Aleksandr] Blok in 1910. Taken together, both features signify that in Russia before the deluge, despite the brevity of this period on the eve, a new cultural type and cultural world were being created in earnest; a new phase, a new modification of Russian culture was

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emerging. One could reinforce this thesis with a whole additional series of arguments, but the confines of this text do not permit it.

The new self-awareness needed to correspond to this new world. All the basic ideas and, if you will, all the basic conflicts of Russian culture had to assume a new countenance; and some generalizing cultural-philosophical idea or model had to be formed that would express the essence of the new phase of culture. The emergence of a generalizing conception is a long process, and no such conception had time to be constructed completely within the brief lifetime of the Silver Age. But it was already taking root, and it was already evident that the key word, the key concept in it was *Renaissance*.

In using this word, even in a condensed context, we must clarify its meaning. Then as now, the word was everywhere and frequently stretched, and its various meanings were readily confused. For us it is enough to identify three of the most important of them.

In the scholarly sense, renaissance is a historical-cultural category: it is a phenomenon that occurs when a new culture takes as a model a previous culture or cultural epoch, assimilates its legacy, and accepts its principles, instructions, and typological features.

In the ordinary, lexical sense, a renaissance is a new rebirth or restoration, a revolt made necessary in view of an experienced decline, crisis, or catastrophe.

Finally, there is a third sense, a superficial journalistic sense, in which the word loses its semantically immanent aspect of a return, a repetition, a necessary link with some prototype or protostate; then renaissance is simply a synonym for enthusiasm, animation, and vigorous development.

It is in this third, most time-worn sense that the term 'renaissance' became a generally accepted characterization of the Silver Age. So it is used now, in innumerable standard formulas such as "the Russian religious-philosophical renaissance"; and so was it widely used even then. Fedor Stepun writes that in Russia on the eve [of the Revolution] there "reigned a lively atmosphere of an incipient cultural renaissance," and in the context, his use of the phrase has precisely the same sense as another parallel formula: "the fervent creative enthusiasm that dominated in the capitals." In his *Self-knowledge* [Samopoznanie], Berdyaev constantly uses the expression 'Russian renaissance'. He quite meticulously analyses the Silver Age, tries to show its principal features, but never reveals it *as a renaissance* per se. The second sense also enjoyed currency, especially after the war with Japan and at the beginning of World War I; we see it, for instance, in the title of Rozanov's book *The War of 1914 and the Russian Renaissance* [Voina 1914 goda i russkoe vozrozhdenie].

However, little by little an opening to the first sense was also maturing. The Silver Age began to perceive itself as a cultural phenomenon, and this effort of becoming aware led directly to the concept of a Renaissance taken in its full-fledged historical-cultural meaning. The same Fedor Stepun writes: "The philologists Viacheslav Ivanov and S.M. Solov'ev directly linked Russia with Greece and spoke not only of the rebirth [*vozrozhdenie*] of Russian culture but of a genuine Russian renaissance [*renessans*]." In this connection it has rightly been noted that in Russia it was easier for classical philologists to link the concept of the Renaissance with the culture of the Silver Age. Russian philosophy was engaged in another set of problems, and indeed, on the whole, it still at that time did not possess sufficient depth of historical reflection. There were two outstanding classicists in Russia in those years, Viacheslav Ivanov and Faddei Zelinskii. Both of them took this step, each independently of the other.

Viacheslav Ivanov put forth the idea of a Renaissance in regard to Russia and even developed it in part in his 1907 article "Cheerful Craft and Clever Cheer" [O veselom remesle i umnom veselii]. This well-known article posed broader questions than the question of the present day, of the essence of what was then taking place in Russian culture. The answer to this question emerges merely as one particular conclusion from the author's unified paradigm of the development of European culture. In all epochs, at the basis of this development, according to Ivanov, is the interaction of two elements or two worlds, Hellenism [*ellinstvo*] and non-Hellenism, barbarism. Hellenism is the very bosom of culture, the universal source of culture, the same for all and for all times. Barbarism is the world of changing historical organisms, each of which can

transform itself into culture in only one way—by turning to its Hellenic source, by reunification with it. This universal way for culture to come into being through union with the Hellenic source, the cognition and acceptance of this source, is what Renaissance is. Here Renaissance is a synonym for birth in culture, in Logos; and the entire history of culture is a series of Renaissances. "The old tale is again repeated. ... Chaos eternally seeks order and a face, and the Scythian Anacharsis journeys to Hellas for the wisdom of form and measure. A 'renaissance' is accomplished again and again. ... And this for us barbarians constitutes a vital need, like the rhythm of respiration." Russian destiny is hence self-evident. The author finds that Russia has just arrived at its birth into culture: "Is that not what we see in Russia? Never, perhaps, have we listened with such eagerness to the echoes of the Hellenic comprehension and perception of the world." This means that, in the sequence of events begun with the Carolingian Renaissance, the time has come for a Russian Renaissance to appear. The idea is expressed vividly and clearly, and Ivanov's article could have become a manifesto for the idea of a Russian Renaissance and the beginning of its active life. However, it did not. Viacheslav the Magnificent had too many ideas; they swirled and wreathed about<sup>2</sup> and at times took a tempting or fantastic turn, and the article was more renowned not for the idea of a Russian Renaissance but for its remarkable final prophecy: "The country will be covered with orchestras and thymeles, where round dances will be danced." It was not very long ago that Nadezhda Iakovlevna Mandel'shtam, possibly conveying the thoughts of Mandel'shtam himself, waxed sarcastic about Ivanov.

It was not Viacheslav Ivanov but Faddei Frantsevich Zelinskii who became the herald of the idea of the Russian Renaissance. As a good Pole, this idea became for him, of course, the idea of a Slavic Renaissance. He first pronounced it even before Ivanov, in 1905. To the second edition of his lectures *The Ancient World and We* [Drevnii mir i my], he added a digression in a lyrical and confessional style, a kind of Credo. At the end he draws a picture of the breaking dawn and a world frozen in expectation; what the world is waiting for is revealed in the very last words of the book: "The third word of the longed-for freedom is the word of the Slavic Renaissance!" Directly under these words is the date March 6, 1905, so we know precisely the *day the idea was born*. Zelinskii was not a philosopher like Ivanov, and hence he did not so much develop as propagate the idea. His only contributions were putting a certain stress not on a Russian but on a Slavic Renaissance, on the common cultural fate of Slavism, and, moreover, instead of an entire series of Renaissances, as in Ivanov, he sees in history only two, the Italian and the eighteenth-century German. The third edition of the lectures *The Ancient World and We* came out in 1911, with a new article added: "In memory of I.F. Annenskii." Innokentii Annenskii, a third classicist and a great poet, is also presented here as a supporter of the idea. The author writes: "The deceased and I conversed on this theme more than once, and more than once drew for ourselves a picture of the impending 'Slavic renaissance,' as the third in a series of great renaissances after the Roman Renaissance of the fourteenth century and the German Renaissance of the eighteenth century. When will it come?" Thus, in Zelinskii's version the idea takes the form of a Slavic, or Third, Renaissance, and, as in Ivanov, classical Greece is proposed as the prototype to be reborn.

The idea of the two classicists was a complete synthesis of two eternal Russian ideologies: the Slavic Renaissance could not but satisfy the Slavophiles, and the classical ideal, the Westernizers. The ideal ground for the reconciliation was found in antiquity. The synthesis was symbolized by the fact that one of the fathers of the idea, Ivanov, was (at that time) an incontestable Slavophile, while the other, Zelinskii, was just as incontestable a Westernizer. This idea was a splendid culmination of the entire myth of the Silver Age.

As the idol of university youth, Faddei Frantsevich was able to inflame the next generation with his idea. On the eve of the Revolution, a group of enthusiasts was formed among his pupils who directly called themselves the "Alliance of the Third Renaissance." True, this group was unable to embody in anything its devotion to the idea, and only fleeting recollections of it remain. N.M. Bakhtin, the elder brother of Mikhail Bakhtin, was a member of the Alliance, and he maintained his fidelity to the idea throughout his life. In an article on Zelinskii, written in 1926, he says that his teacher was "above all a prophet and zealot of the imminent Third Renaissance," the essence of which was to be a "fiery, intense immersion in the Hellenic

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<sup>2</sup> In Ivanov's later historiography we no longer see the idea of a Russian or Slavic Renaissance; but there is no rejection of it either. In one of the verses of "Gentle Secret" [Nezhnaia taina] (1912), he makes casual mention of someone, probably Andrei Belyi: "I love him, and it seems he'll be//An aid to Slavic Renaissance." But the idea dissolved and died, to live elsewhere: *Stirb und werde*.

religion." If the Roman Renaissance was an aesthetic assimilation of antiquity and the German Renaissance a philosophical assimilation, the Slavic Renaissance would be religious. In another, later comment, Bakhtin defined this essence somewhat differently, as the "final and highest integration of the Hellenic conception of life by the modern world." Mikhail Bakhtin also took the idea of a Slavic Renaissance very seriously and found it to be one of the leading ideas of the Silver Age. In a lecture on Blok he wrote: "They said that the Third Renaissance was coming. The First Renaissance was Italian, the Second was German ... and the Third Renaissance would be Slavic. That is what one of the world's best experts on antiquity, Zelinskii, said. They awaited this most complete renaissance and expected it to change the whole world. Everyone subscribed to this set of ideas in one way or another." How profoundly right Bakhtin was is evident from the fact that even Gustav Shpet, an extremely skeptical philosopher far removed from historiosophical projects, partook of it. We hear a clear echo of the idea of the Slavic Renaissance in his *Aesthetic Fragments* [Esteticheskie fragmenty]: "Every Renaissance begins with Homer. Europe was conceived over and over again on the shores of the Aegean Sea. We must become Europe. Are we beginning? Will we begin?" And, finally, the last stone in the mosaic is the seemingly fully independent appearance of the idea in Moscow in the young Musagetov philosopher [*filosof-musagetovets*] Aleksei Toporkov. In 1915, under the pseudonym A. Nemov he published a little book, *The Idea of the Slavic Renaissance* [Ideia Slavianskogo Vozrozhdeniia], in which, without referring to either Ivanov or Zelinskii, he develops his own variant of the idea. Here, as in Zelinskii, the Slavic Renaissance is the third in historical sequence, but the prototypes of the three renaissances are now different: for the Italian Renaissance, it is the rebirth of Rome; for the German, the rebirth of Greece; while for the Slavic, it should be the rebirth not of Hellenism [*ellinstvo*] but of Hellenicism [*ellinizm*], of Alexandria. Ideas of this sort were already glimmering in the rich pattern of Ivanov's ideas. Toporkov argues with more detail the thesis of the closeness of modern culture to Alexandrianism, and both Russian authors here clearly anticipate what later became self-evident and a commonplace: the conclusion that the character of modern culture was syncretic and Alexandrian.

Such, in cursory outline, is the idea of the Slavic Renaissance. With the exception of Toporkov's book, it received almost no probing in depth and remained a quite vague project. It is instructive that the idea was developed most actively and found enthusiasts precisely at a time when the collapse of Russia and the Bolshevik terror were already "nigh unto the doors," as was said about the Anti-Christ. This irony of history that was played upon the ideas was remarked and played by ... the idea itself. Among its last upholders, the refined humanitarians who spent the twenties as dessicating makeweights in a dying Petropol, belonged the well-known novelist and poet with the terrible gynecological pseudonym [Konstantin Vaginov.—Ed.]. Another makeweight was the author of the original work *Dostoevskii and Antiquity* [Dostoevskii i antichnost'j], who contributes some not uninteresting turns to the idea. In 1927, the former published his *Song of the Goat* [Kozlinaia pesn'j], where the latter becomes the main character Teptelkin and the idea of a Slavic Renaissance acquires a carnival finale: "Teptelkin longed for the Renaissance. ... The beautiful copses smelled sweet to him in the most stench-filled places." Teptelkin prophesies a flowering, Teptelkin gives a lecture on Viacheslav Ivanov ... The idea is derided with a knowledge of the matter and with taste. "Teptelkin shook himself.— Petersburg is the center of humanism, he interrupted from his seat. It is the center of Hellenicism, interjected the unknown poet." *Sic transit gloria mundi*.

Nonetheless, in some essential sense, the idea was not dethroned, nor could it be. Its fate says much — about the utopianism of Russian consciousness, about the catastrophic nature of Russian history ... — but it does not exclude the fact that the Silver Age of Russia, although it collapsed, nonetheless in its mission, in its unrealized fullness, had as its essence precisely the Slavic Renaissance. On the contrary, we have no reason today not to believe our great classicists. The Slavic Renaissance is truly an idea of the Silver Age about itself. It is the unincarnated essence of the unrealized future of Russian culture.

## Episode 2: The Eurasian idea

"The Russian cultural renaissance collapsed into a yawning abyss," wrote Berdyaev. The idea of the Slavic Renaissance, of course, collapsed into that same abyss. But Russian thought did not. Surprisingly quickly, the same Slavophile stem began to produce new sprouts. In 1920-21, a new historiosophic strategy for Russia saw the light of day: the Eurasian idea.

I will not repeat general facts about the Eurasian movement: they are generally well known today. In pursuing my topic, I must regard Eurasianism as a noumenon, in the world of ideas. In this world, as in the ordinary world, circumstances of birth are very important: noumenal time and place. The Eurasian idea is the fruit of Russian catastrophe. Moreover, this fruit is immediate, coming hot on the tracks: the idea was born in the very last months of the civil war. Hence it is primarily a *reaction*—the first reaction of consciousness to the catastrophe that had been perpetrated and to the emerging postcatastrophic situation. And the first reaction to a catastrophe, of course, is to discard what had caused it. Eurasianism was not Thesis but Antithesis, and this "anti-" element, an element of denial, of rejection, is very important not only in the genesis of the Movement but also in its mature countenance. The catastrophe was tremendous and cruel, and hence the denial was inevitably affective, mixed with crisis emotions—bitterness, despair, resentment. Compared with the prewar mentality, there was now a completely different atmosphere and a different style, one that was sharper and coarser; there was a typological and psychological rupture. This rupture was expressed in the well-known concept of *postrevolutionism*, and hence everything said so far is only an old commonplace: Eurasianism was a postrevolutionary current. With one small comment: postrevolutionism must be understood as a typological concept.

The object toward which the impulse to reject was directed may be succinctly called the West. The West taken all together, globally: the empirical contemporary West; the historical West—the world of Western civilization in its history; and, finally, the inner West—the principles of the Western world, taken over by Russia and become part of Russian existence and mentality. "We must throw off the European yoke," declared the Eurasian manifesto. This choice of object is explainable from the situation of antithesis and anticlimax. The entire epoch before the brink of catastrophe was a time of maximal proximity and cooperation with the West, maximal integration of Russia into Europe. The tragic emotions born of the catastrophe were largely directed against the West, against the former allies. Moreover, the influence of superficially Slavophile ideas about the mutual alienness of the West and Russia also never disappeared. As a result, it was a natural solution to seek the causes of the catastrophe and the ways out, to seek a new historiosophic strategy for Russia, on an anti-Western basis. It must be acknowledged that the anti-Western attitude pursued in Eurasianism was astonishingly persevering and comprehensive. Essentially it worked as a methodological principle: in each part of the Eurasian theory, the position was built on the principle of a difference from and opposition to Western positions. This gave the theory a unity and a harmoniousness, but at the same time a spirit of intolerant dogmatism.

The Eurasian doctrine revealed itself to be a notable thesis about Russia that gave its name to a movement: Russia is Eurasia, a third, middle land mass, together with Europe and Asia, on the continent of the Old World. As the Eurasians found it, this is a unique historical and ethnographic world, and its uniqueness, its specificity, is a deciding factor in all domains of its life. The connection with an anti-Western attitude is clear: the new thesis was opposed to the Westernizing position, according to which Russia is a part of the European world. The thesis about Russia was supplemented by a thesis about the contemporary moment. The postwar period was a historical juncture, a boundary between epochs. The epoch of the West's cultural and political leadership must be succeeded by another epoch, in which the leadership will belong to Eurasia. "Russia-Eurasia, the nodal point and beginning of a new world culture ... In the future historical epoch, already begun, Eurasianism sees the central and leading significance to be in the Eurasian world," stated one of the declarations of the movement. The West had exhausted its intellectual and historical potential. But Russia, despite the catastrophe, was declared to be "renewed and full of forces bursting to the surface," and once again the term 'renaissance'<sup>1</sup> was applied to its new epoch. But the term had been reconstrued and no longer had the significance of a cultural-philosophical category.

The concept of culture underwent an even greater rethinking. The rejection of Eurocentrism made this rethinking inevitable. The classical European conception is based on the opposition between culture and barbarism, and this opposition generates a whole series of conjoined concepts and ideas. Above all, an immanent axiological aspect, a scale of values, is associated with it. Culture is superior to barbarism in terms of value, and this superiority is expressed in its inherent element of cultivation, of refinement, even of asceticism in the pre-Christian sense. Hence emerge the concepts of being cultured and of cultural level, along with the concepts of a classic, a classical norm — and hence antiquity acquires a special, distinguished,

or even absolute role. And so on. As we saw above, the idea of a Slavic Renaissance stood firmly on this classical basis; but the Eurasian idea discarded it entirely. An anti-Western attitude required a rejection of value criteria and a switch to relativism in the interpretation of culture. Being cultured ceased to be part of the concept of culture, the concept of barbarism was tossed out, and the thesis of all "cultures," that is, ethnohistorical subjects, being a value in themselves and equal in value was confirmed. Thus the phenomenon of antiquity also lost its significance. The Eurasian idea had nothing to say about antiquity; the classical theme simply disappeared. To justify such a reduction — or resection — Savitskii proposed that culture be understood as a simple set of branches of culture: "Only if we look at culture broken down by branches will we be able to come anywhere near a full understanding of its evolution and character." Eurocentrism fell to pieces at once: one need only point out that on Easter Island the art of sculpture was higher than in England. Criticism is not my purpose here, but I may briefly note that this branch understanding of culture is the fruit of a blatant inability to think things through.

But at the same time, a certain justified and even fruitful side was discernible in the cultural relativism of the Eurasians. For Trubetskoi, this relativism was always associated with protest against forced Europeanization, that is, against leveling and the blurring of ethnocultural uniqueness, which was a danger of the undivided hegemony of the classical European model of culture. This model truly was, to use Bakhtin's expression, monological; it harbored a totalitarian tendency; and paradoxically, the Eurasian Trubetskoi was the one to expose this tendency—in spite of the fact that Eurasianism was always accused of inclining toward totalitarianism. And here Trubetskoi was ahead of his time. In the past few decades, ideas of cultural autonomy and preservation of the ethnocultural uniqueness of all sorts of cultures, however small, have flared up with great force in the West and throughout the entire world. An entire theoretical school, the "ecology of culture," has even formed, in which, as in ecology in general, one of the main principles is the value and importance of diversity. Trubetskoi defended just this principle, and he should rightfully be recognized as one of the predecessors of the ecology of culture.

What we have said in no way annuls the fact that all the Eurasians (with the exception of Florovskii, who for just this reason left the movement) engage in the reduction of culture, in bringing it down to a number of organic categories, forgetting its creative and spiritual essence. This reductionism is a stable generic feature of the Eurasian discourse; everything—religion, social philosophy, history—is subjected to it. The reduction of history takes place with the aid of geography. An entire set of ideas affirming the primacy of geographic factors in ethnic, social, and historical processes arose; sometimes it was called "geosophy." The central concept of this set of ideas is "space-evolution" [*mestorazvitie*], which represented the historical process itself as the evolution of *space* [*mesto*], with spatial phenomena and aspects serving as the cornerstone. In part all this was useful: in the old approaches, such aspects were often completely ignored. In considering the opposition of sedentary and nomadic systems, Savitskii comes quite close to some curious generalizations that very recently were advanced in philosophy. He contrasts the "sensation of the sea" with the "sensation of the continent," which lead to different strategies, different models of activity. He speaks of the special world of a nomadic body social—a "world filled with an elastic mass of nomads." And this resonates directly with the latest science of "nomadology," which the Frenchmen Deleuze and Guattari proposed in the second volume of their famous work *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980). In nomadology, the sedentary-nomadic opposition is described as a set of polar models, *compars-dispars*. The distinctive feature of the nomadic model, *dispars*, is a special type of space and actions in it. The space of nomads is a space of displacements, in which events are acts of contact. Deleuze and Guattari describe it as a "smooth space that is more tactile than visual [compare Savitskii's concept of 'elasticity'—S.Kh.] and is the space of individual events of contact." All this is not merely close to Savitskii but is essentially what he already said.

As applied to Russian history, geosophy, together with an anti-Western attitude, gave rise to the most popular feature of Eurasianism; its notorious mongolophilism and "accent on Asia." This is the most actively discussed theme; but the principal ideas here are few and simple. First, the Tatar rule in Russian history was not destructive but constructive, not a negative but a positive factor. "Great was the good fortune of Rus' that she fell to the Tatars. ... If the West had taken her, it would have wrenched the soul out of her" (Savitskii). Concretely, Russia's fortune was that the Mongols not only did not destroy the forms of Russian life but very usefully supplemented them, giving Russia a school of administration, a financial system, the organization of

a postal system, and much else. Second, the Tatars' contribution was not only in particular areas but also, more generally and more importantly, in the very type of Russian sovereignty, in the Russian state consciousness. Rus' took all this from the empire of Genghis Khan and became its direct historical successor. "The miracle of transforming the Mongol idea of the state into a Russian-Orthodox idea of the state was accomplished. ... Essentially, the Russian state is the basic core of Genghis Khan's monarchy" (Trubetskoi). However, some role of Byzantium was also acknowledged; according to the principles of geosophy, it was interpreted as the "influence of the South." Third, the Turanian (Tatar—Mongol) element became part of the Russian ethnos — and indeed, so much so that we cannot consider ourselves Slavs. "We are neither Slavs nor Turanians but a special ethnic type" (Manifesto of 1926). Diverging on this point from Slavophilism, Eurasianism discarded the idea and strategy of Slavic unity. And finally, the Turanian legacy must determine the contemporary strategy and geopolitical orientation of Russia—the choice of objectives, allies, and so forth. This point, which touches on contemporary reality, was obviously Utopian. As K.G. Mialo demonstrated in recent articles, the project of a Turanophile strategy and the very image of the Turanian world among the Eurasians are very unrealistic.

An element of Utopia is also to be noted in the religious positions of the movement. In the Manifesto of 1926, these positions are defined by the idea of "potential Orthodoxy," according to which non-Christian religions (faiths other than Christianity) are closer to Orthodoxy than are other Christian faiths (non-Orthodox faiths), for the latter consciously reject Orthodoxy, while the former have not yet been fully revealed and contain the potential, future chance of becoming Orthodoxy. "Paganism is potential Orthodoxy. ... As it does not consciously and stubbornly deny Orthodoxy, paganism submits more quickly and more easily to the appeals of Orthodoxy than does the Western Christian world. ... The future and possible orthodoxy of our paganism is closer and more akin to us than Christian heterodoxy." The utter utopianism, not to say demagoguery, of this idea, crafted by Lev Platonovich Karsavin in his spare time, is completely clear. But it is remarkable that in the next manifesto, in 1927, the section on religion not only contains no traces of this ultra-orthodox idea, the word 'Orthodoxy' does not even appear! Another idea defines the Eurasian position here: the so-called creed of everyday life [*bytovoe ispovednichestvo*], by which is meant the "penetration of religion into everyday life, animating and ordering everyday life with ritual." Of course, the two ideas are diametrically opposed: whereas the first attaches supreme importance to the details of dogma separating the Christian confessions, in the latter, there is no reason at all for an Orthodox person even to know the very word 'dogma'. It is just as understandable that here improvisation reigned in the Movement in place of a serious platform. Only one point was firm: Eurasians were undoubtedly and sincerely rabid anti-Catholics.

Social and state questions were thought through more thoroughly. In the theory of state and society, Eurasianism put forth its own scheme, oriented toward the type of social order in Fascist Italy and Communist Russia. The scheme had two basic conceptions, "demotia" and "ideo-cracy." As the 1927 manifesto stated, demotia is a "state order in which power belongs to an organized, cohesive, and strictly disciplined group that exercises this power in the name of satisfying the needs of the broadest popular masses and of realizing their aspirations." This "power group" must be held together by some ideology, so that the type of power under a demotia is the power of an idea, ideocracy. The scheme clearly affirmed the primacy of principles of collectivism over individualism, and hence demotia was counterposed to bourgeois democracy, reflecting again the inevitable anti-Western attitude.

Such a social theory in large measure already predetermined political positions. As we know, Eurasianism underwent an evolution in the political domain. Usually a distinction is drawn between early Eurasianism and later Eurasianism, after 1927-28, when it split into a right-wing and a left-wing tendency. It is believed that left-wing or Clamart Eurasianism, grouped around the newspaper *Eurasia*, perverted the original principles of the Movement, began to pursue a pro-Bolshevik line, and got bogged down in cooperation with the Bolsheviks and the GPU. But some corrections to this picture are necessary. The gravitation of Eurasianism toward the Communist regime was deeply rooted, and the activity of the Clamartians only reinforced it but certainly did not create it. On the strength of the principles of demotia and ideo-cracy, Eurasianism fully accepted the state system introduced by the Bolsheviks: unlimited power of one party standing on a specific ideology and on rigid discipline. It was only asserted that Communist

ideology was mistaken (incidentally, precisely because it was an ideology that came from the West), and that the correct ideology was Eurasian. Hence a direct line of action was followed: a Eurasian party of the same type—that is, in Soviet language, of the Leninist type—must be created and the Eurasian Party [*evpartiia*] must replace the Communist Party [*kompartiia*]. In the pre-Clamart period, by 1926, the movement had already firmly adopted this Utopian strategy, which brought about its deterioration and death.

Coming to the surface after the initial sophic stage, Eurasianism almost immediately began to transform itself into a total ideology, a rigid intellectual schema with oversimplified and categorical positions on all questions. It is too easy to criticize such a theory today; but we should remember that the style of the times then was precisely that. The era of Eurasianism was the era of the ideologies of fascism, nazism, Marxism, and Freudianism. Even Florenskii, an extremely independent and apolitical thinker, fell subject to the influence of the atmosphere at that time. During the same period, in his texts "Notes on Christianity and Culture" [*Zapiska o khristianstve i kul'ture*] (1923) and especially "Lecture on Blok" [*Doklad o Bloke*] (1926?) there appeared the same idea as the Eurasians had: fight fire with fire; it was necessary to respond to the challenge of the times with the creation of a rigorous ideology on a Russian-Orthodox basis. But Russian thought was also able to provide a quite timely criticism of these tendencies. It is usually said that G.V. Florovskii, who left the movement in 1923 and in 1928 published his famous article "The Eurasian Temptation" [*Evraziiskii soblazn*], presented the most weighty critique of Eurasianism. This view is fair, and Florovskii's article is incontestably the most thorough critical text. However, it must be noted that the whole of the core of this criticism had already been expressed ... before the appearance of Eurasianism! In 1915 Viacheslav Ivanov, the father of the preceding embodiment of the Slavophile idea, published his article "A Living Legend" [*Zhivoe predanie*]. In it we read the following: "A moment of reaction in favor of pure phenomenology may be observed: the representatives of this reaction (like Danilevskii) are apostates from the inner sanctum of Slavophilism, insofar as by forgetting the ecclesiastical and universal sense of the Russian idea they place themselves at the service of a biological nationalism and see in the Russian cause a struggle for the historical predominance of a specific 'cultural type'." Viacheslav the Magnificent examined the Eurasian idea in its intra-uterine period and handed down his verdict on it before its birth. But Florovskii, in addition to his criticism, also put forth the next idea.

### **Episode 3: The idea of neopatristic synthesis<sup>3</sup>**

Florovskii's departure from Eurasianism was caused above all by his rejection of Eurasian reductionism or, in other words, of aggressive empiricism in the philosophy of history and culture (it is this that Ivanov called "pure phenomenology"). Florovskii tried to restore a spiritual content to cultural-philosophical concepts; and, in rejecting the Eurasian temptation, he formulated the *organic—historical* opposition, one of the core principles of his thought. He contrasted the world of nature and organic development, where determinism reigns, with the world of history, where creativity and freedom operate. This opposition has long been known to European philosophy (it was developed, for example, by Rickert), and on its basis it is quite natural to return to classical cultural-philosophical models, in particular, to the ideal of antiquity and the concept of the Renaissance. But Florovskii's path was different. Guided by Christian intuitions, he saw history as a domain of personal being; and a rethinking of the category of personality [*lichnost'*] as a specifically Christian category, not compatible with classical cultural studies, led him to deepen the initial opposition. He concluded that the element not only of the historical but also of the *sacred historical* was associated with personality, with personal being, and he assiduously analyzed the difference between these two levels. As a result, the cultural-philosophical idea he formulated is constructed in the discourse of ecclesiastical-Orthodox thought and not of secularized philosophy and belongs not so much to cultural studies as to the *theology of culture*. This is what the idea of neopatristic synthesis is. As is already evident, the linkage of all our three ideas corresponds to the Hegelian triad—so that the neopatristic synthesis is a synthesis also in the canonical Hegelian sense, which is hardly something to which the anti-Hegelian Florovskii aspired.

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<sup>3</sup> The philosophical and historical-philosophical implications of the interpretation of Neopatristic Synthesis we present here are examined in our work "Neopatristicheskii sintez i russkaia filosofii," *Voprosy filosofii*, 1994, no. 5.



The core of the idea of neopatristic synthesis is the thesis of the necessity of turning to patristics, the Greek Church Fathers, for every epoch of Christian consciousness. The origin in Slavophile roots is here evident—we see before us the direct development of Ivan Kireevskii's principle: "Conform all questions of contemporary learning with the tradition of the Holy Fathers." On the other hand, the idea may be regarded as a Christian analog, a Christianization of the Renaissance model, a model of continually renewed reversions to the ideal of antiquity. At its basis lies the same postulate of the existence in history of some "absolute element" that has a nontransitory value and a normative significance for all epochs. But it is now not pagan but Christian, "churchified" Hellenism that is invested with the status of an absolute element, and the connection with the absolute element assumes a fundamentally different character. The ascription of absolute status to the creative works of the Fathers is easy to understand if we look at the idea in a narrow sense, as a paradigm of development of the theological tradition. The conciliar [*sobornaia*] work of the Fathers created the dogmas of the Church and the language and method of Christian speculation. The Fathers were the founders of Christian theology as the Tradition; their principles and ideas formed the canon of the Tradition, and every further movement forward in the Tradition had to be collated with and measured against the canon (just as we remember from such a pseudotradition as Soviet Marxism).

Such is the first, superficial sense of neopatristic synthesis, and, as we see, it contains nothing new. To discover the real meaning, it is necessary to recall that in Orthodoxy, theology is not at all understood as a scholastic discipline but is a synonym for "Theoria" [*Feoriia*], the highest stage of intellectual experience, signifying the mystical, supra-sensory contemplation of God. Theologizing [*bogoslovstvovanie*] is the highest form of participation in the mystical and charismatic life of the body of the church. The distinctiveness and essence of this life lies in the fact that persons [*lichnosti*] enter into the body of the church and the connection among them is a personal and living communion. And this connection is possible as a result of the fact that in the Church, in addition to normal individual and historical memory, there is also a special kind, *the charismatic memory of faith*, as Florovskii puts it, which provides the person doing the remembering not with dead information and not with a recollected image of the remembered but a personal communion with it. This charismatic memory is the Tradition of the Church. Thus, turning to the Fathers signifies not a reference to a canon but a living link with the Tradition. This link does not require the repetition of ready-made formulas and theses but conveys the spirit and standpoint of the Fathers, which was the standpoint of the creative disclosure of revealed Truth. "One can fully follow the Fathers only in creativity, not in imitation," writes Florovskii. The neopatristic synthesis, too, should be understood as a principle of creativity nurtured from Patristic sources through a personal and charismatic link to the Tradition of the Church.

But this ecclesiastical-mystical interpretation of the absolute element of history raises a question: Should not the "event of Christ" itself, His Person and the time of His earthly journey, be considered such an element? The answer can only be affirmative; but, as it is not difficult to see, the idea of neopatristic synthesis does not contradict it. The "norm of Christ" (the appeal to Him and the mystical personal link with Him) and the "patristic norm" (the appeal to the Fathers and the mystical personal link with them as witnesses of the Truth of Christ) are not two different norms: the latter is only an aspect or a projection of the former, its disclosure in speculative forms. Florovskii singles out just this explicating, "cultural" aspect because his conception does not belong to the mysticism of Communion with God [*Bogoobshchenie*] but to the theology of culture; if the "norm of Christ" is a universal paradigm of the whole of the life of the Mystical Body, then the "patristic norm"—and with it neopatristic synthesis—is a universal paradigm of the creative life of Christian speculation. One need only add that the ecclesiastical acknowledgement of a total correspondence between the "patristic norm" and the "norm of Christ" contains a historiosophical thesis: spiritual effort and the epoch of the Fathers come together, as it were, and link up with the apostolic epoch and the appearance of Christ, forming a single Time of Good Tidings—a Charismatic Time, or a Time of Synergy.

As we see, there is a profound religious-mystical aspect to Florovskii's idea. Father Georgii does not at all replace one ideal with another, classical antiquity with the Christian Hellenism of the Church Fathers. The concept of an ideal is here totally rejected, and in its place appears the concept of personality, and the entire model is constructed in the discourse of personal being, which signifies the communion of persons in

Christ and in the Spirit. Neopatristic synthesis presupposes a special internal structure of personality, a mystical partaking of the charismatic element of the Church (*tserkovnost'*). In contrast to the model of the Renaissance, what is here affirmed is not a discrete chain of reincarnations of the absolute element in History but an immersion and incorporation in a supremely tranquil life that is continuously enduring and always identical with itself. But, for all the differences, this is still a model of the existence of culture, and it shares many values of the classical European model. In the context of the Orthodox tradition, it is distinguished precisely by its proximity to these values, by its "culturalness." The Fathers were theologians, and neopatristic synthesis is an affirmation of the primacy of theology, of spiritual and intellectual labor. Florovskii sharply criticizes Orthodox obscurantism, the habit of extolling the primitive in religion and doing dishonor to reason (we need only recall here the "creed of everyday life" of the Eurasians). According to its definitions, neopatristic synthesis is a "restoration of the patristic style" and "entry into the reason of the Fathers"; but the reason of the Fathers is the fruit of high culture, and patristic style means above all the capacity to interpret and comprehend one's epoch in all the complexity of its problems. After Eurasian nihilism, here once again we have the affirmation of culture in its classical guise—as a cultivation and an education, as creative labor, the moral and intellectual effort of man and society. Only, in contrast to the modern European model and, in particular, the idea of the Slavic Renaissance, here what is affirmed is not a secularized but a religious culture. Once again we have before us the Hegelian triad.

Of course, Florovskii could not but apply his idea to Russian culture. The link between Russia and Orthodoxy inevitably formed the basis of that application; but Father Georgii saw this connection in his own way. The view according to which Orthodoxy is unshakably and wholly a Russian possession that need only be safeguarded from its enemies has always been the most customary in Russia. But Florovskii wrote: "By no means everything — and indeed infinitesimally little — is Orthodox in the Russian soul"; he saw Orthodoxy as the mission and calling of Russia, the goal of historical creativity. Neopatristic synthesis, understood as a model of development of Russian culture, is what should serve the attainment of this goal. This is a unique model, bearing the mark of an infrequent combination of properties. It includes no propositions about the state, politics, or society. It is religious, even mystical—but at the same time alien to clericalism. It insists on strict fidelity to Orthodoxy and denies compromises on dogma—but it rejects isolationism and demands a "free meeting with the West" and a working through and an experiencing of the problems posed by the West. It does not regard the nation [*natsiia*], taken as a simple ethnic unit, to be the subject of history or the bearer of spiritual principles, and it affirms that the people [*narod*] and the popular spirit do not come ready-made but should be produced creatively. It sees in contemporary Russian life a "tragedy of spiritual slavery and affliction," which was engendered primarily by the "irresponsibility of the national spirit" and not by the intrigues of enemies. It sees the way to overcoming the crisis in spiritual creativity, in the effort of reason, which organically includes ascetic feats and repentance. "The Russian soul is poisoned, agitated, and torn. And this soul can be healed and fortified only ... with the light of the Reason of Christ." In all this one can once again see Utopian features and find but meager concrete guidelines. Still, it must be acknowledged that in its essence this idea, unlike others, has not yet been refuted by either criticism or history. It still has a chance today.

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