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FUTURE IN THE PAST:
THE PREDICAMENT OF CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN
INTELLECTUAL CULTURE

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

Future in the Past:
The Predicament of Contemporary Russian Intellectual Culture

by

Alexei Elfimov

On the basis of field and archival research, conducted during the year of 1995 and the summer of 1996 in Russia, this project offers ethnographic and historical accounts of Russian intellectual culture in the transitional post-perestroika period of the last decade of the 20th century. The author argues that within this period of time a crucial shift has occurred in the intellectual climate of Russian society, which consisted principally in the emergence and rapid spreading of the so called “historical/cultural paradigm” in intellectual thinking. Focusing on the academic milieu and two important social discourses in Russia and the Soviet Union, that of history and that of architecture, the author explains how this particular paradigm came to be and what consequences it brought about. A set of interrelated issues, such as ideological and political moods among the academics, Slavophile and Westernizing trends, and the general state of the academy in Russia are analyzed.
Acknowledgements

Research for this project was conducted over the course of my fieldwork in Russia during the year of 1995 and the summer of 1996. I am grateful to Lambros Comitas and the Research Institute for the Study of Man for the support that made two trips to Russia and the fieldwork itself possible. During the period of writing up, I was aided by the generous support of Rice University, which enabled me to complete this project with the least possible hassle.

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Table of Contents

Abstract ii

Acknowledgements iii

Chapter 1: Introduction 1

Chapter 2: The Problem of Modernity, Intellectuals, and the Humanities 16

   I. The Predicament of Modernity 16
   II. Intellectuals and Bureaucracies 24
   III. Categorizing the Intellectuals 32

Chapter 3: Discourses of History, Architecture, and the New Paradigm in Intellectual World-Views 45

   I. Types of Intellectual Discourses 45
   II. Discourse of History 51
   III. Discourse of Architecture 76
   IV. Effects of the New Paradigm 107

Chapter 4: Power, Culture, and Changes in Values and Ideals 118

Chapter 5: Restoring the Humanities 159

Chapter 6: Conclusion 220

Bibliography 226
Chapter 1

Introduction

In September of 1997, Russian journal *Itogi* published in its section on culture and the humanities an article under a telling title, "The Majestic Russian Past Will Surpass the Most Daring Expectations in the Future".\(^1\) The article dealt with the issue of architectural and cultural restoration in the city of Moscow and with the reconstruction of the main exposition in the Russian State Historical Museum. What is remarkable about the title of the article, however, is that it subtly reflected not just the theme of the essay, but the dimensions of the entire paradigm of intellectual discourse on culture and the humanities, as it formed in Russia of the 1990’s. This paradigm, which gradually evolved from the general intellectual moods in the late Soviet Union, being successfully propelled by the efforts of academics in the humanities and later, in the post-perestroika Russia, strengthened and legalized by political authorities, came to represent the major trial of cultural ideology in Russian society of the end of the twentieth century.

Perhaps the most essential feature of this paradigm consisted in the fact that, after more than half a century of persistent socialist ideological utopias of the future, it reverted the cornerstones of social mentality, having directed broad

intellectual and cultural interests primarily toward the past. The future now became addressed in all kinds of cultural discourses almost exclusively through the prism of the past, as if in the specific tense “Futur dans le Passé” (Future in the Past) that exists in the French grammar. There was virtually no sphere in Russian cultural life of the post-perestroika era that remained unaffected by the new paradigm. The area that was, perhaps not surprisingly, most heavily influenced was that of humanities and social sciences and general intellectual discourse. The practices of scholars, their understanding of the object of the scholarly inquiry, and the subject of the humanities and social sciences itself noticeably changed, according to the new principles of intellectual and cultural ideology. Most of the disciplines in the humanities and social sciences assumed a historical genre of inquiry as their disciplinary model and the specificity of that model often consisted in the idea of return to, or revival of, the old and presumably lost or abandoned knowledge. The ideals of research and scholarship in the humanities and social sciences became associated with various 19th-century Russian figures who had been generally neglected in the tradition of Soviet university education. In the discipline of history, for example, the methodological ideals of treating the object of inquiry were all of a sudden seen in the works of renowned 19th-century Russian historians V. O. Kliuchevskii and S. M. Soloviev who had been formally regarded during the Soviet time as “bourgeois or tsarist historians who had no clear understanding of Marxism".
The complete multi-volume hard-covered editions of works by both historians were published by major Russian publishing houses during the late 1980's and 1990's.

Anthropologists started to associate the high points in their discipline with their own intellectual heroes from the pre-revolutionary Russia, such as L. Shternberg, K. Kavelin, or N. Nadezhdin. Similarly, a number of 19th-century ethnographic books were reprinted during the 1980-90's. Even sociologists, who, as one might think, should be primarily interested in the contemporary developments in social theory, revoked old disciplinary authorities of their own. Works by many pre-revolutionary Russian sociologists, such as M. Kovalevskii, V. Khvostov, V. Chernov, B. Kistiakovskii, K. Takhtarev, and others, were included in new sociology textbooks and introduced in university curricula, regardless of the fact that most of them had had no particular theoretical importance already at the end of the last century.

The academic infatuation with the past was a part of a larger cultural trend which from the early perestroika years became an object of active political interest and constant ideological investment. This political interest, which was identified by many scholars and analysts of Gorbachev's and Yeltsin's Russia as

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2 For example, a book by V. V. Radlov, From Siberia (Moscow, 1989, in Russian), and books by D. K. Zelenin, East-Slavic Ethnography (Moscow, 1991, in Russian), and Collected Works (Moscow, 1994, in Russian). Many more editions were planned and
an expressed attempt to appeal to, and, as a matter of fact, revive Orthodox
nationalistic feelings, was highly conducive to the re-emergence in the
intellectual milieu of what had been traditionally known in Russia as a
Slavophile social attitude. The spreading and strengthening of this attitude over
the course of the late 1980’s and 1990’s determined the basic character of
intellectual debates and discourses in the humanities and social sciences, which
thus assumed by and large an ideologically conservative shape.

Although ideological contradictions and scholarly disagreements between
the followers of Slavophile trend and those of the opposing conviction,
frequently called Westernizers, are seen by a large number of intellectuals as a
distinctive mark of the present situation in Russia, I argue in this thesis that it is
not a struggle between the two cultural poles but rather the dominance and
growing influence of the Slavophile one that has actually come to constitute the
essence of the moment at the end of the century. The struggle, to the extent that
it takes place, remains in the most part uncreative and generally occurs at the
level of mutual complaints. Characteristically, the Slavophile side often acts
aggressively, whereas the Westernizers are typically reluctant to respond, and
tend to think that the battle itself is pointless and not worth the trouble.

announced in catalogs, but never came out because of the financial hardships that
academic publishers had to face in the 1990’s.
The discord in intellectual discourse is frequently deepened by the predicament of intellectual identities, which perhaps has troubled the Russian society for over a century in its different manifestations. "Intellectuals," skeptically remarked professor Alexei Nikishenkov in one of the interviews, cited at full length in the following chapters, "are evolving in very strange ways; a revolutionary yesterday is a conservative today and will probably become a religious fanatic tomorrow – that's what the intelligentsia is all about". Indeed, having never quite found their place in the labyrinth of the Soviet society (although having successfully adapted to it in many instances), the intelligentsia have suddenly found themselves in a chaotic social reality of the last decade of the century, in which neither their former roles, nor their imaginary ideals turned out to matter much. The desire of many intellectuals to establish themselves as a significant cultural stratum, to find a prestigious cultural niche in the new social conditions became another distinctive mark of the post-communist Russian reality.

The predicament of identity has become especially salient in the case of academics, and particularly scholars in the humanities who started to feel that they were losing their proper place in the new Russian intellectual culture. One should understand that, unlike the discourse in the West, in which the terms academic and intellectual normally appear firmly associated, in the Russian cultural discourse the association is not so firm and points, perhaps, to one of the
major problems of Russian academics, which is going to be the subject of detailed
discussion in the following chapters. Academics in Russia, and formerly in the
Soviet Union, have not been generally thought to be genuine intellectual
producers, as opposed to, for example, writers, poets, theater directors and
others who belong to the so called creative professions. In fact, academics are
not always at all thought to be intellectuals as such. Their involvement in the
production of what, for the lack of better phrase, could be called an intellectual
discourse of modernity - which always only takes the form of reappraisal of
the past in Russia - remains often unnoticed or neglected. This predicament,
which is deeply rooted in decades, or perhaps centuries of Russian history, is by
no means a new development. It rather represents an old development that has
come to dwarf the attempts at establishing a normal critically oriented discourse
in the humanities in the 1990s. Although the past decade in Russia has surely
witnessed an unprecedented amount of social change, it has also kept much of
the cultural conservatism of the former years in what the Soviet ideolanguage
used to describe as dukhovnaia sfera (“social mentality”, for our purposes; but
literally “spiritual sphere”, an interesting term that could easily extend its
meaning to cover the whole of “culture”, for example).\(^3\) As a result, mainstream

\(^3\) Dukhovnaia sfera was indeed an enormously charged notion that could absorb
evitably all cultural phenomena, magically lifting and separating them from the earthly
ground of material'naia sfera [“material sphere”] which implied a “mundane” realm of
money, work, production, food, actual living conditions, and other things “real”. An
intellectual discourse still reminds one of the first years of perestroika, being more aggressive than critical, predominantly centered on, if not obsessed with, the past, and persistently dismissive of the subject of modernity. At the same time, there might be observed an increasing desire on the part of academics to surmount their traditional intellectual alienation and assume a more important role in the process of broad cultural production, which has been long dominated by writers, artists, and other creative elites that were, as such, thought to be intelligentsia.

It is the encounter of academics and other intellectuals with an array of such cultural and political issues in the 1990’s that largely constitutes the subject of the present thesis. The aim of this work is to present a contextualized account of the major trends that shaped intellectual and academic discourses in Russian, and formerly Soviet, society in the last quarter of the century. It seeks to provide answers to such questions as: Why has in the post-perestroika Russia, a decade

interplay between the two “spheres” was employed by the ideology sometimes to a highest degree of inconsistency. Thus, in the use of Marxist philosophy, the “material” sphere had natural priority over the “spiritual” one (as a matter of priority of being over thinking), so it was usually said that in no society a good “spiritual” sphere could be built without a proper “material” one. But, to justify a more immediate and less philosophical reality, the ideology easily granted the “spiritual” priority over the “material”, asserting that Soviet people were mainly interested in a “spiritual” achievement in life, while the “material” side was for them just something to come along, and that that order of things made their life richer than, for example, life in the West. People in the West, as it was taught perhaps in every school, were actually after the “material” (“low” things like money, careers), which was why their “spiritual” life (literally meaning “culture”) was incomparably poorer and less interesting than life in the Soviet culture.
after the demise of the communist ideological regime, no substantial revitalization in the humanities and broader intellectual discourses taken place and the latter are remaining locked within a paradigm of expressed conservative character? What are the major traits of this paradigm, its cultural grounds and ideological implications, and how it came to dominate over intellectual practices and worldview? What are the particular social conditions that impede the development of critically oriented discourse in the humanities and social sciences after perestroika? How have intellectual identities changed within the past decade, what are the ideological and political preferences of the intelligentsia, particularly academics, their new values and cultural ideals?

The analysis presented in the following chapters is based on the field research, conducted in Russia during the year of 1995 and the summer of 1996. Although the main site of my research was the academic institutional setting of the city of Moscow, particularly (but not exclusively) Moscow State University, Russian State University for the Humanities, and various institutions of the Russian Academy of Sciences, some complementary work was done both outside the academic setting, among different strata of the intellectuals, and outside the limits of the Russian capital. Several interviews involved academics from the cities of Cheliabinsk and Omsk. The academic institutional setting of Moscow itself was rather a virtual site, hardly a traditional field site in the anthropological sense, for due to the character of contemporary academic activity, well portrayed
by David Lodge in his novel *Small World* and sociologically analyzed by Pierre Bourdieu in *Homo Academicus* and elsewhere, it was in too many instances the social space of discourse and relationships, rather than the physical space of location, that could render an explanation of why things were happening the way they were. Indeed, even within a single locality of an academic department, much of what appeared to be a matter of purely internal importance could be in fact determined by the same space of external social network. Methodologically, therefore, I see my field research as adhering to conventions of the emerging genre in ethnographic practice, sometimes called multi-sited ethnography, that is strategically focused upon examining "the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space... and tracing a cultural formation across and within multiple sites of activity".4

Although much of my work focused on the analysis of texts, and in the following chapters I quote extensively from the printed sources, I see my approach to the reading and interpreting of such sources as essentially anthropological, rather than what is understood in sociological methodology as "discourse analysis". I do not engage in the comparison of texts with other texts as a way to discover some patterns of public opinion — instead, as an ethnographer, I reason that the actual patterns of public opinion typically lie

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behind the text and can be more effectively analyzed through the comparison or juxtaposition of texts with the unprinted routine of everyday life. I attempt, therefore, to ground the texts that I use in the more general context of my ethnographic observations, and consider them only as a manifestation of larger structures of cultural reality that define social discourse as a phenomenon.

The present thesis is interpretive and descriptive in character, rather than theoretical, due to the nature of my research task. An extended discussion of literature in social theory is omitted intentionally for reasons of format limitation. Theoretical matters are addressed throughout the course of the thesis in so far as they appear methodologically and conceptually useful. Thus, I specifically address Foucault's discussion of the rules of discursive formation, as it provides a set of analytical categories that help me explicate the difference between what I call the normative discourse of history and the broader cultural historical discourse. On the other hand, for example, I do not specifically address Bourdieu's ideas, as much as they might seem relevant to the subject of intellectuals and academics, primarily because they do not apply well to the context of what is generally defined by socialist cultural order. This point was well taken by Katherine Verdery in her book on Romanian intellectuals, and I do not find it necessary to repeat her argument here.⁵ Similarly, in my discussion of

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architecture and its relation to the ideology of cultural discourse, I do not invoke recent theoretical debates or works, such as Jameson’s *Architecture and the Critique of Ideology*, which might seem obviously related to the subject. The fact is, the common take on the issue that largely characterizes these debates and that is mainly centered around the question of new spatial geographies is heavily influenced by the particular kind of socioeconomic development in the Western culture, generally referred to as “postmodern condition”. Russian culture, which has not witnessed yet this kind of development, again, cannot be effectively analyzed on such grounds. As I argue in the following chapters, the entire dimension of architectural discourse in Russia is different from that in the West and represents primarily the collision of primordialism with modernity, whereas in the West, especially in the United States, the discourse of architecture reflects rather the collision of modernity with postmodernity. For this reason, I find it more appropriate to analyze architectural discourse in Russia within a conceptual scheme, different from that provided by the recent Western debates on culture and space.

Throughout the course of the thesis, particularly in the concluding chapters, I make extensive use of interviews and conversations with various Russian scholars, many of whom are prominent in their fields, as well as with

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graduate students in the humanities and people from other intellectual strata. Following the idea of privileging the voice of the observed at a certain expense of the authorial voice – idea informally encouraged in the anthropological community of Rice University which to a large extent shaped my vision of the project – I allowed some full-length quotations in the text, although in some instances I felt a need to break or cut the interviews and render them in my own words. In some instances, on the other hand, the interviews delivered perhaps an even more consistent view of discussed issues than the one I could have expressed myself.

Although some twenty five interviews were recorded during the course of my fieldwork, not all of them directly appear in the text of the following chapters. Some of the responses were repetitive and I chose the most informative and consistent or otherwise important answers for quotations. The rest of the interviews are rendered in one or another way in my own remarks or indirectly used in my analysis. Apart from the recorded interviews, I drew on many informal conversations with my respondents, that happened in a spontaneous manner. A few people who took a live interest in my project and provided me with long hours of audio tape transcriptions should be perhaps introduced from the beginning, since excerpts from their interviews are used on many occasions in the following text. Olga Vainshtein is a bright professor, currently teaching in the graduate program in the humanities at Russian State
University for the Humanities, and a leading research scholar at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, a very interesting institution that has gathered a group of respected scholars, most of whom came from the interdisciplinary tradition of Moscow-Tartu School of Culture and Semiotics, formerly associated with Yuri Lotman. Alexei Nikishenkov is a professor in anthropology, affiliated with the Faculty of History of Moscow State University, a senior scholar who has been one of the most respected and popular figures among the students ever. Sergei Sokolovsky is a professor of anthropology at the Russian Academy of Sciences, and one of the few scholars in the discipline who have been trying to shift the research to the interdisciplinary frontiers, writing on the subjects of modernity, reflexivity, and reproduction of knowledge. Sergei Cheshko is also a professor of anthropology at the Russian Academy of Sciences, and the editor of the major anthropological journal in Russia, *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie* ["Ethnographic Survey"]. Aleksandr Saltykov is a recent graduate of the Faculty of History of Moscow State University, who currently works for a small Russian-American firm. He was a talented and promising student, and upon his graduation was offered a position of assistant professor, which he chose to decline. I found that his career path and his statement in the interview quite adequately reflected both the attitude of the younger generation towards the academic sphere and the state of the academy in its many aspects.
The organization of the present work is more or less straightforward. The first chapter undertakes a short excursus into the history of the Russian and Soviet intelligentsia. Although much of the following discussion will be focused on academics, they still should be seen as a part of a broader intellectual community, however particular or specific their intellectual status might be. The predicaments of academics, likewise, are a part of more general predicaments to which intelligentsia in the Soviet Union and Russia has been exposed over the course of the century. Furthermore, in Russian culture, which is enigmatically rooted in the past in its every aspect, a little history sometimes explains much about what is going on today. The strategic aim of the chapter, however, is to delineate the contours of the problem of modernity – one of the central problems of Russian culture, as I argue, which is essential for understanding the specificity not just of intellectual life in Russia, but also of many current political and cultural processes in the country.

In the second chapter, I develop my major argument about the specificity and character of intellectual environment in Russia of the last quarter of the twentieth century. Within this period of time a crucial shift has occurred in the intellectual climate of Russian society, which consisted principally in the emergence and rapid spreading of what I identify as a “historical/cultural paradigm” in intellectual thinking. Focusing on two important social discourses in Russia and the Soviet Union, that of history and that of architecture, I explain
how this particular paradigm came to be and what consequences it brought about.

The third chapter elaborates on the question of cultural impact of the new paradigm, concentrating particularly on the intellectual and academic milieu in Russia of the current decade. A set of interrelated issues, such as new values of the intelligentsia and the notorious predicament of power, is discussed in this chapter. Typical examples of the new intellectual rhetoric are presented here and their place in the broader cultural discourse in contemporary Russian society is analyzed.

The final chapter concentrates specifically on the changes in the humanities that have been taking place in the last decade. A variety of interviews with Russian scholars, who discuss current problems of scholarship in their disciplines, the object of the humanities, and the state of the academy in Russia, are presented in this chapter. Special attention is given to the discussion of culturology, a newly forged university discipline, loosely associated with the Western "cultural studies". Several scholars express in the quoted interviews their personal opinion of the trajectory of culturology's institutional development and its promises and failures. Other important issues, such as current ideological and political moods in the academic milieu, Slavophile and Westernizing trends, and an array of related questions are touched upon in this chapter.
Chapter 2

The Problem of Modernity, Intellectuals, and the Humanities

Dear to me is sleep and better to be stone
So long as shame and sorrow is our portion.
Not to see, not to feel is my great fortune;
Hence, do not wake me; hush, leave me alone.
Michelangelo.

I. The Predicament of Modernity

The first and the last problem, at which, one way or another, every other cultural issue in Russia stops, and which is essential for understanding how things work in Russian society, is the problem of modernity. In this chapter, I will start outlining the contours of the issue to lay the ground upon which to rest the discussion in the subsequent chapters. Because of the fundamental gravity of this problem, one has to begin with it right from the start, rather than making it a matter of conclusion.

Modernity is a topic that is generally unpopular among Russian intellectuals and tends to be persistently dismissed in intellectual discussions. The system of discursive rules and cultural practices, which embrace Russian society, whether we choose to see it as Foucauldian discursive formation or Kuhnian paradigm, is deeply embedded in the past, and it shows itself in a variety of cultural details, apart from the mainstream discourse with its
traditional topics and subjects which dictate that the correct understanding of the past is the most essential requirement for being in the present, or for arriving at a better future. If, for instance, one should just watch the public in a bookstore for a while, one will unmistakably notice that the History section will be permanently crowded, while the section where they sell contemporary criticism will see a rare customer and a salesperson will just stand there yawning, if there at all.

The lack of interest in modernity, curiously enough, is characteristically reflected in language. *Sovremennost*, a Russian for *modernity*, is not as loaded a word as its English correlate (or, say, French *modernité*). Although in rare contexts it may be forced to represent a partial, or even the full array of meanings, covered by the term “modernity”; in regular use, or as a standalone word, *sovremennost* conveys little meaning to the ear of a Russian intellectual and points out to a most banal, routine, and uninteresting moment in the life of humankind. Both by origin and its actual meaning, the word stands closer to the English adjective *contemporary*. In fact, the words *sovremennost* and *contemporary* use exactly the same morphological structure, employing an adequate set of morphemes:

\[ [\text{con}] + [\text{temp}] \]

\[ [\text{so}] + [\text{vrem}] \]

(together, with + time).
Thus, while in English, or some other European languages, there is a certain line of distinction, drawn between the notions *contemporary* and *modern*, it is not so in Russian where we find only one term, called into service for all occasions; its counterpart that would stand strictly analogous to *modernity*, as it appears in the Western discourse, is missing. The use Russian language makes of the root “modern” is restricted (with the exception of the recently borrowed term “postmodern”, which means nothing in the realities of Russia, but comes into increasingly frequent use among writers, artists, and some “avant-garde” minded scholars) by and large to two words: *Modérn* (Russian architectural style of the beginning of the 20th century); and *modernizatsiia* (“modernization”, “improvement”). Neither of the words in Russian has a straight temporal connotation, both rather imply a sort of technological advance (one of the peculiarities of the style *Modérn* is indeed its employment of convoluted architectural forms on the basis of elaborated engineering design).

It is interesting why the word “modern”, in its temporal function, was not borrowed from French and incorporated into Russian in the nineteenth or the beginning of the twentieth century, given the persistent Francophile spirits among the Russian intelligentsia (tremendous amounts of French words were brought into Russian during the period). It is even surprising to a degree, considering the fact that Baudelaire, a great French poet who was among the first to praise the experience of modernity, was one of the most adorables figures in
the artistic and literary circles of the Russian Silver Age. His poems and writings were widely read and translated and apparently constituted a "must-know" subject within the intellectual discourse of the day. The curious detail, though, which should not escape the attention of a sensitive literary scholar, is that the interest in Baudelaire's works, that the Silver Age manifested so openly, was not comprehensive and the choice of the poet's writings as such fell apart into two major categories. One contained poems that can be loosely described as eschatological in character; the other represented an array of works that dealt with art and symbols. Both were dictated by the retreat of Silver Age intelligentsia from reality to the realm of "pure art", in which an excessive value was always attached to symbolism and the idea of the return to the past, to the "stones of antiquity" as a source of eternal values.¹ As a result, an essential part of Baudelaire's heritage was dismissed by the Russian intelligentsia, which is also clear from the fact that, in the Silver Age hierarchy, Baudelaire was placed in the same row along with German romanticist Novalis, English symbolist Swinburne, and other French poets of symbolic orientation. Experience of modernity was alien to Russian culture and it did not translate well into it.

¹ Michelangelo's famous sonnet "Sleep", quoted in the beginning of this chapter, served as a condensed expression of Russian intellectual moods at the turn of the century. The reason I placed it in epigraph is that, many years later, the same moods and the same sonnet would reappear in the literary circles of the 1960s-70s in Soviet Russia.
The experience of modernity has never become part of Russian cultural spirit - Russia lives in another temporal dimension. This was rarely well understood by so called "sovietologists" in the West, especially in the United States. The fact is not surprising per se: people in America do not remember any other experience, except that of modernity, because, strictly speaking, every time in American history was modernity. As long ago as in the mid-19th century, Walt Whitman could say things like, "The Modern Man I sing", or "I know that the best time and the best place are mine". If one should search through the vast body of Russian literature, one will fail to find there a similar praise to time. Russian literary thought of all times has been equally sick with the present, haunted by the past, and longing for a better future. This paradigm in thinking has become deeply entwined in the fabric of Russian culture over the centuries. As a consequence, the past and the future have polarized into a major meaningful dualistic opposition, while the meaningfulness of the present has been substantially reduced. In Russian society, therefore, the loaded categories are the past and the future, while the present, sovremennost', possesses a minimal value and it would not be much of an exaggeration to say that it is socially perceived by and large as just an annoying transitional moment on the way from the past to the future.

The paradox is, of course, that Russia has been stuck in this "transitional" moment for several centuries by now. As a matter of fact, the idea of Russian
history being caught in some sort of time loop reappeared fairly frequently in the thoughts of the most insightful Russian thinkers. In the 19th century, Russian state politician and brilliant philosopher Petr Chaadaev criticized Russian culture for its ultimate ignorance of the present. In the beginning of the 20th century, prominent philosopher Nikolai Berdiaev seconded his thoughts and wrote in one of his memoirs, “Among us the intelligentsia could not live in the present; it lived in the future and sometimes in the past”.\(^2\) This was a common perception of time among the liberal intelligentsia who, much like the Silver Age writers and artists, in their thoughts and deeds (which were, again, mostly writings) sought to live for the future, desperately trying to separate and free it from the haunting past, while remaining disdainful of the present moment. Baudelaire’s famous warning, “You have no right to despise the present”, scattered throughout his writings here and there, was again and again dismissed by the same Russian intelligentsia so fond of the poet. It rarely occurred to a mind of the intelligentsia that something was to be changed in the present in order for the future to be rid of the past. So strong and pervasive was this belief that the political system was corrupt to the bones and nothing could be changed in the present, that the only valid course of action, seen by the intelligentsia, was to not collaborate with the bureaucracy, withdraw, and hope that one day clever people would come to power, or maybe, better still, Christ would come down to Earth,

and things would finally change. Berdiaev perhaps meant this intelligentsia’s blindness, saying that he felt they all had hardly lived in the present. In fact, among the intellectuals who survived the revolution in emigration or elsewhere, this feeling eventually grew into the complex of guilt and words of repentance that “we failed to notice the present, and let the Bolsheviks ruin Russia” became a common place in memoirs, written after 1917.

This pattern of treating the present remained essentially the same throughout the Soviet period of Russian history. What once had been the intelligentsia’s dream, was made by the Bolsheviks an ideology. Now life entered a new cultural epoch, the present of which was horrifying to people. So the ideology crossed the present out of history. From now on, people were supposed to forget about the present and work hard to death in order to achieve the future that would liberate them from the evil past (i.e. that of tsarism and imperialism). People worked hard, but the future never came and sixty years later, they were still remaining in the same horrifying present they had started with. Suspicions were rising and new intelligentsia began to guess that “something must have been wrong with the past (this time, the Bolshevik one), that is why we are still here and cannot arrive at a future”. In other words, the cycle repeated itself. The perception of time by new Soviet intellectuals fell into the same trap as the one that the Silver Age intelligentsia failed to avoid. The problems of the present were thought as related to the inability to work out the
right attitude towards the past. A new future was again secretly longed for. But nobody was going to change anything in the present because long decades of exiles, expatriations, and gulags brought back to life the old belief that the political system was totally corrupt, as to not allow of any change in life, or even just tolerate a hint of it for that matter. The intelligentsia became absorbed in moral and spiritual self-searching; reappraisal of the past became one of the ultimate goals of personal development, and symbolic means of expression assumed again utmost importance. Thus, in the sixties, Soviet poet Andrei Voznesensky, then avant-garde minded, opened his collection of poems, symbolically entitled “I am Goya”, with his new translation of the old Michelangelo’s sonnet “Sleep”. The pattern of the Silver Age, with minor deviations, was reproduced in Soviet society almost precisely.

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3 The symbolism of the title “I am Goya”, for example, was obvious to critically minded intellectuals and, at the same time, could hardly be detected by the Communist Party censorship. To Party officials, Goya was known at best as a “poor Spanish painter who criticized the evils of bourgeois society in his paintings”, so Goya’s name was, so to speak, a positive signifier, from the Party’s point of view. The intellectuals, of course, would see a deeper meaning behind the name Goya, meaningfully exposed on the cover of the book, and would unmistakably associate it with the critic who unmasked and bitterly censured the hidden truth of the day. But then again, behind the title, the hidden truth of the day, from the intellectuals’ standpoint, was best depicted in Michelangelo’s sonnet “Sleep”.
II. Intellectuals and Bureaucracies

It should be said that one major difference between the old pattern of the intelligentsia's behavior and the new one lay in the course of action that the intellectuals resorted to. If the old intelligentsia refused to cooperate with the government and chose to either oppose the state or just withdraw from participation in any political activities whatsoever, the new intellectuals, trying to keep an informal image of themselves as some sort of "dissidents", often went into cooperation with the communist state, or one way or another did what the Party wanted them to. Voznesensky, for example, in addition to his "dissident" poetry, wrote a series of procommunist, patriotically oriented poems, in which he praised Lenin, and for which he was eventually awarded the Lenin Komsomol Prize, the second most important state award, after the State Lenin Prize, in the Soviet hierarchy of honorary distinction. Although the image of a "dissident" and the fact of being a recipient of a major communist award did not go along well, this was one of the paradoxes of the new condition, in which intellectuals found themselves under the Soviet regime.

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4 Here, I put "dissident" in a comma because Voznesensky's poems, just like writings by many other Soviet authors, were never really dissident, in the full sense of the word. Nevertheless, there was always this pretense of being a dissident of some sort among the intellectuals, for the idea of cooperating with the state was still a very unpopular one and, like a hundred years before, there was the same strong and unpleasant bad-conscience ring to it.
One important change, related to the intelligentsia’s life, had taken place since the Silver Age. In the new society of workers and peasants, the intelligentsia was debased, declassed, and deprived of all social privileges. If the 19th-century intellectuals constituted a class of a kind, a social group that possessed certain rights and certain wealth (after all most of those people came from aristocratic noble families), under the new regime intelligentsia was purposefully made a poorest group of individuals, which was deliberately opposed to “workers” and “peasants” in the language of the Soviet Constitution.\(^5\) Unlike the intellectuals, who did not learn much from history, the new rulers of the Soviet state learned well that the intelligentsia’s brain, on the

\(^5\) The Soviet Constitution made truly amazing use of language. Instead of referring to all people of the country as to *citizens*, the Constitution made a distinction between a class of *workers*, obviously given a priority in the system and often referred to as “the leading force of the society”, class of *collective-farm peasantry*, allotted equal rights but sort of put in the second place, and what was called a *friendly layer of people’s intelligentsia* ["druzhesivennaia prosloika narodnoi intelligentsii"], an amazingly smart and concise phrase that said everything about the intelligentsia’s status in the society. Thus, the intelligentsia was emphatically denied a class status and reduced to a humiliating word “layer” once and for all. The only comprehensible goal of the adjective “friendly” was to stress that, originally and by definition, the layer was unfriendly and was not really needed in this cake at all; but, since it accepted the friendly terms of serving the cause of the working class, it was allowed to legally stay under some kind of “alien resident” status, for no legal room had been allegedly envisaged for this group from the beginning. Finally, the possessive “people’s” was added to make the clear even clearer, that is to emphasize that the intelligentsia belonged to people, that it was actually in people’s *possession*, simultaneously drawing an astonishing line of opposition between the terms “people” and “intelligentsia” and, therefore, excluding the latter category from the former. The rest of the Constitution by all rhetorical means supported what was laconically stated in this short and sweet phrase. The words “workers”, “peasants”, “collective farmers” would consistently pop up in every chapter of the text, in some tricky
one hand, could pose a threat to the state but, on the other, was needed to it. So they came up with a simple solution - they turned the intelligentsia into a servant with no actual rights, having lowered it, by the power of the Constitution, to a classless status of a "layer" that was supposed to accentuate the marginal grounds, upon which the existence of the intellectuals in a new society was built. The famous novel by Russian writers of the 1920s-30s Ilya Il’f and Evgenii Petrov *Twelve Chairs* ["Dvenadzat’ stuliev"], one of the most popular literary works in Russia ever, drew a sarcastic picture of the proletarian society that made the existence of an intelligent individual an absolute utopia. The intellectuals, in a fine phrase from the novel, were made in this society "proletarians of mental labor".6

The idea of making the intelligentsia the Party’s servant was, in fact, rooted in Lenin’s revolutionary theory. It was one of the most frequently repeated thoughts in Lenin’s works that the point was not to exterminate the intellectuals, but to make them work for the cause of the working class. Shortly after Lenin, as it is known, suspicious rulers of the Communist State worked out a more efficient strategy: to make the intellectuals work for the Party and then exterminate them. During the 1920s, before the beginning of the notorious ________________

ways alternating with the notions “citizen” and “people”, whereas the word “intelligentsia” would be meaningfully dropped out in every case.
Stalinist mass terror, this policy was already pursued, sometimes to a very strange end. Even such personalities as Aleksandr Blok, a famous Russian poet who was married to a daughter of the acclaimed chemist Dmitrii Mendeleev and who was openly against the Tsarist regime, and for that reason welcomed the Revolution, or, for example, Maxim Gorky, a writer who came from the proletarian walks of life and who was highly regarded by Lenin for his literary work, - even these people, who in fact were extremely important in molding a new nation’s cultural consciousness, were confined by the communists to the atmosphere of highest ingratitude, constant poverty and hardships, and were let die under unclear circumstances. Recent inquiries into the matter do not exclude a possibility that both Blok and Gorky could be deliberately poisoned by the doctors who were assigned to “treat” their tuberculosis. Although there is still no conclusive evidence to prove this point, it is a proven fact that both writers were categorically denied permission to go to Europe for treatment. An interesting issue remains the involvement of Lunacharsky, the Head of the State Committee for Education, in this matter.\(^7\) The traditional Soviet version of the

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\(^6\) There is perhaps no single intellectual in Russia who would not know this phrase. We will return to it later, in our discussion of the academic community, because it can tell much about the social perception of academics and intellectuals in Russia.  
\(^7\) “The State Committee for Education” is an accepted translation for Narodny Komissariat Prosveshchenia, also known in Russian as Narkompros (abbreviated form), and it does convey the essential meaning of the phrase. However, the literal meaning of the phrase, which in this case would probably represent a more culturally sensitive translation, reads like “The People’s Commissariat for the Enlightenment” (a truly bizarre
story, as retold in many literature and history textbooks, pictured a half-heroic, half-pathetic episode, according to which Blok, for instance, did not want to inform the government of his illness, being too modest and aware that the whole country was "ill", not just himself, and that the government had more important matters to attend to. When Blok's relatives and friends figured his health was getting worse, they interceded with the authorities for the poet, asking to let him go to Europe for medical treatment, but some bad guys in the bureaucracy allegedly never passed their request to the government, which thus was left again unaware of the illness of the first poet of the nation. It was, as the myth goes, only when the news of Blok's serious condition reached Lunacharsky, that the matter was immediately attended to. Lunacharsky supposedly rushed to the highest government officials and obtained the permission for Blok to leave in a matter of hours, but it was too late, since the poet happened to die the same night.

This mythical story was placed in Soviet school and university textbooks not even as an excuse, but rather as an object lesson that was supposed to show just how many bourgeois saboteurs were there in the young Soviet society, how difficult it was to fight them, and how high sometimes was the price to pay. At the same time, it demonstrated the heroism of communist leaders, such as

combination of words, in which "commissariat" was a military term for "enlistment or registration office", "enlightenment" was still "enlightenment", and all this was embraced
Lunacharsky, who at the drop of a hat were ready to help Soviet people in all their needs and troubles.

Of course, things did not seem quite as heroic in reality, as they were pictured afterwards. Archival research has revealed that Lunacharsky knew about Blok’s illness all along, and that other government officials were kept informed about the state of his health as well. Writers and artists constantly reminded Lunacharsky of the need to send Blok abroad and, in fact, it was only when the state of the poet’s health became apparently hopeless that the measures (or, better say, the appearance of measures) were taken.

This is just a single example of what became a typical practice under the socialist regime. No intellectual was considered worth a penny and anyone, regardless of one’s importance in the eyes of the public or even one’s services to the Party, could be tossed away at any moment. Therefore, the trap was not just that the intelligentsia was given an unambiguous choice - either to serve the Party, or go to the gulag - it was rather that, even serving the Party, it could not be sure it was doing the right thing and its position was secure. A secure position was not envisaged for intelligentsia in the socialist society simply because, by definition, intelligentsia was “bourgeois” in its interests and aspirations. It was let stay and live in this society, so to speak, “on parole” and “until further notice”.

by “people’s”).
That is why the Soviet intelligentsia, which was allowed some freedom of expression at the time of Khrushchev’s “thaw” in the sixties, still could not counterpose itself to the state bureaucracy in the way the 19th-century intelligentsia formerly did. Soviet intelligentsia was unconditionally employed by the bureaucracy, and it had to work for it one way or another, otherwise it would have been “released” to the KGB’s hands. Even during the short Khrushchev’s rule, when the official reevaluation of Stalin’s personality cult and mass terror started and, for the time being, the risk of being thrown to gulag was substantially reduced, intellectuals could not allow themselves much more than several bold words, wrapped in a veil of historical metaphors or symbolically disguised in some other manner. They did not think about assuming an actual oppositional stance and openly standing up to the humiliating bureaucratic system. Unlike the 19th-century intellectuals, they had nothing to stand on, and they were afraid. However, much like the old aristocrats, the idea of struggle with and, more importantly, for the present, was alien to their consciousness, as some impossible and fatally unaccomplishable task. Intellectuals occupied nothing more than isolated cells in the structure, firmly held by the communist bureaucracy. Besides, as a rigid rule, all those places, in which the concentration of intellectuals exceeded a safe level (universities, humanitarian institutions, publishing houses, etc.), were prudently injected with an enforced dose of communist nomenklatura which maintained close surveillance and set, not just the
rules for intellectual discourse, but the standards of intellectual behavior as such. Anyone who displayed a deviant tendency became subject to punishment, and the criteria for “deviant” could be indeed cunningly loose, because they were never written out in black-and-white, being deliberately placed at local nomenklatura’s exclusive disposal and thus made, in essence, a subject to oracular interpretation.

This condition explains why intellectuals would not want to take any risk, related to their jobs or their behavior at work, for being punished at work or losing a job was not the end of the road down, but just the beginning of it, and one could never be sure where exactly it would lead. There is a remarkable episode in Tarkovsky’s film *The Mirror* [“Zerkalo”], which subtly illustrates the point. A woman who works as a journalist in a newspaper publishing house is woken up early in the morning and informed that, due to a type-setting misprint, a line in her article about some government official has acquired an obscure double meaning, and that the issue is about to come out. The woman gets up and, having grabbed some random clothes, rushes to the printing house. What follows is just a long silent scene of her running, which conveys all the profound psychological contents of the moment. Tarkovsky’s camera captures the full measure of this constant fear of a regular Soviet intellectual, showing that the woman is not just scared to lose her job, but is rather experiencing a feeling of the beginning of the end of the world. The universe is about to start falling in her
eyes - and this experience, Tarkovsky means to say, is what constitutes the never-ending pathological horror one can never escape from. An intelligent person was meant to walk a tightrope in this society - one step aside, and you begin a long agonizing descent through the seven circles of hell.8

III. Categorizing the Intellectuals

Pressed by social and economic instability on the one hand, and by constant ideological terror on the other, intellectuals certainly went to work for the communist bureaucracy and they, in the fullest sense, became a part of it. They must have surely felt that, but they were never able to admit, so strong was the persuasion that the union of the intelligentsia with the bureaucracy implied bad conscience on the part of the former. Some people could live with that, some could not, and some chose to dismiss the whole point of the contradiction. This seemingly simple delimitation came to mark three distinctive categories of

8 It is a sad truth, but Tarkovsky’s life exemplified the point he was trying to make in his movies even clearer. The Mirror became one of those films that eventually led to his expulsion from the country. His trying to say a word of truth about the present was an unforgivable step aside. Likewise, the actress Margarita Terekhova, who performed the starring role in the film, after The Mirror was utterly disapproved by the communist censorship, found herself in deep disgrace in the Union of Soviet Filmmakers and was not offered any but unimportant secondary roles for many years ahead, even though she was considered one of the most talented and popular among the public actresses.
intellectuals, which were steadily reproduced through the 1980s, having gone into the process of mutation with the bankruptcy of the communist regime.

To the first category (where “the first” means essentially “the largest”) belonged all those who, one way or another, dismissed the moral implications of the connection with the bureaucracy and, having thus cleared the bad-conscience predicament once and for all, in good conscience assumed the right way of life, prescribed by the communist state. This category surely contained all those who reached, and were allowed in, various positions that involved power, even the slightest amount of it, or some kind of management or control over people and cultural production - that is to say, departmental chairs, deans, section heads in any kinds of organizations, journal and newspaper editors, film and art producers, TV and Radio newscasters and program hosts, secretaries of the central and local artistic unions (i.e. unions of writers, composers, painters, etc.), and others of the sort all came to belong in this group. Side by side with them was an even larger part of the same group, which consisted of the intellectuals who had not reached such prominent positions, but were aspiring to them anyway. And, finally, the rest of the group was inhabited primarily by academics. All these people, as a rule, cared very little whether their image corresponded or not to what was defined by others by that rather demanding term intelligentsia (as a matter of fact, most of them were sure they actually were the intelligentsia, although they were rarely perceived as such by the public, and
never so by other intellectuals) - this question did not trouble them at all in any form. In other words, this group represented that part of intellectuals which achieved some success within the framework of the communist social system and felt comfortable with it. The majority of people forming this group were either members of the Communist Party, or on the way to joining it because Party membership was a prerequisite for virtually any of the positions mentioned above.

The second category embraced a smaller group of intellectuals, most of whom were well educated, in fact often better than those belonging in the first category, but not as successful at moving up the social scale as the representatives of the latter. The reason why they were experiencing social difficulties was in many cases the same. They did cherish some intellectual ideals and adhere to the principle (totally utopian in the communal society) that their success, well-being, rewards, and movement up the social stairs should result from their work and their actual intellectual achievement, not from their place in the communist hierarchy. A tricky way of achieving success by means of joining the Party was not favored among this category of people, and often they saw Party membership as an obstacle that was blocking their professional road. Some of them did join the Party when, upon completion of a certain amount of intellectual work, they came to face membership as a last requirement they had to meet in order to advance their professional status. Others chose not
to compromise their moral principles and remained where they were for ever, considering involvement in ideological structures as a mark of bad conscience, and thus following the old pattern of Russian intelligentsia. These intellectuals could be found occupying many positions in society but those reserved for the first category - i.e. these could be talented writers, whose works were rarely accepted for publication, journalists of a lower rank, all kinds of assistant and associate, rarely full, professors in academia (the rank of full professor almost unconditionally required being a member of the Party), a variety of people in creative arts, and so on. Common to all these individuals was that they believed that the genuine intelligentsia should not be involved with the bureaucracy, and should oppose and criticize it, exposing its oppressive nature. In other words, people in this category were those who, in their beliefs or worldview, maintained a certain standard of what genuine intelligentsia should be like and that standard definitely had a "dissident" ring to it. Furthermore, they were not always sure they conformed to that standard, which was thought to be rather high, and, for that reason, usually did not like to use the word intelligentsia, referring to themselves (they certainly never applied it to intellectuals in power, those composing the first category, for whom they had the greatest disdain, as for ignorant people who pretentiously posed as cultural elites, or people who betrayed their moral principles). Instead, they had a common habit of referring
to themselves as "proletarians of mental labor" in a phrase borrowed from the novel by Il'f and Petrov *Twelve Chairs*.9

To the third, and the smallest, category belonged, as it is perhaps easy to guess, those who not just "believed" that intellectuals should oppose the State and act to expose the oppressive nature of bureaucracy, but who did oppose the State and did act the way they felt they should. These were dissidents without quotation marks, and they could mainly be found abroad or in gulags, although a certain number of them always remained scattered here and there in the social maze of the socialist society.

So, the first group represented an actual intellectual elite, where by "elite" I mean not "intellectually sophisticated", but rather "socially safe". These people occupied the highest positions intellectuals could possibly achieve within the given social system, and they were loyal to the system rather than to their intellectual background in exchange for some power they were let exercise over the rest of the intellectuals. This was, therefore, the group of intellectuals that

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9 Phrase "we are not intelligentsia, but just proletarians of mental labor" indeed enjoyed wide currency among the intellectuals and actually was a modest phrase to reply with. However, it has to be noticed, what was just a popular quotation was at the same time a strategically precise expression that served several tasks simultaneously. First, it was a humble way for an intellectual to refer to his or her social status, emphasizing its inadequacy to the high standard, granted to the word *intelligentsia*. Second, it certainly contained a sad social truth hidden behind the humor. Third, and most interesting, it was a simultaneous excuse for the inability to act the way a *genuine* intelligentsia would have acted, and thus allowed "humble intellectuals" to disclaim the burden of intelligentsia's
most successfully merged with the bureaucracy - or, one may simply say, they were bureaucracy.

The second group essentially represented those who tried to maintain their intellectual identities, their being part of cultural intelligentsia (which unequivocally required to stay away from the bureaucracy), and at the same time tried to find their way in the system by honest means (which unequivocally required them to work for the bureaucracy one way or another). This was the group by and large producing the intellectual discourse of the day.

The third group represented intellectuals who gave up attempts to find their way in the system, being in radical disagreement with the existing social order, and either were engaged in some underground activity, or, if miraculously employed, tried to assume an attitude of defiance towards the bureaucracy, taking advantage of their positions. As was mentioned earlier, these people often were either abroad or, if at home, under KGB's surveillance. They played a very important part in consolidating the self-identity of the Soviet intelligentsia, serving both as "saints" of informal intellectual culture, and certainly as an ideal of a kind for every intellectual unhappy with the oppressive totalitarian system.

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responsibilities at any given moment: "after all, we are not intelligentsia, we are just proletarians of mental labor".
The distinction we have drawn between the groups of intellectuals is an important thing for a researcher to keep in mind, because the layer of intellectuals in the cake of Soviet society was never homogenous. When one speaks of Soviet intelligentsia, it always makes sense to specify which group is being talked about; otherwise, an account may result in a good deal of confusion. Here, as we are going to pay special attention to the academics, we will mainly touch upon the first two groups of intellectuals, the more problematic of which appears certainly the one we have placed in the second category, as a group responsible for the basic production of intellectual discourse in the humanities, and as a group with the most complex relationship with the bureaucratic structure. Indeed, the relationships of the first ("elites") and the third ("dissidents") groups with the bureaucracy were very much fixed and relatively unproblematic, whereas for the intellectuals of the second category that relationship always constituted an awkward (or perhaps one should better say, the basic) predicament, which in many aspects shaped their worldview and social position. This was a curious group of people, who in fact ideally conformed to the type of intellectuals, frequently mentioned by Adorno, and perhaps represented by himself to an equal degree (that is, the type, caught in a double bind between seductive powers of bureaucracy and the vanity of intelligentsia); for, within the realm of intellectual discourse, these people essentially liked to pose as intellectuals from the third ("dissident") category, but in their deeds
often performed what the intellectuals from the first ("bureaucratized") group
did, even without noticing it. So, in a sense, this was a group most successfully
co-opted by the State, because the first group was actually already the State and it
exercised certain power over the second, whereas the latter, being forced to stay
on marginal positions and permanently kept at bay, was at the same time
allowed to pursue some "dissident-looking" discourse and, thus, experience
some excitement of individual freedom - of course, in exchange for some good
work done for the State. Hence the notorious paradox of the totalitarian State
needing the dissidents. It is not just that the State needed the dissidents to satisfy
its paranoia, as a psychoanalytic interpretation would tell us, it is rather that the
State found it a cheap and efficient coin to pay with. The State somehow figured
that the intelligentsia's work could be best paid off, not with money, nor with
career honors or distinctions, but with the mythical experience of freedom. It
was not expensive at all to let intellectuals pronounce a few dissident words and
make them feel proud, if that was what they wanted to. On the contrary, this
price could not suit the State better, for, satisfying dissident desires of
intellectuals, the State simultaneously gathered evidence against them, so that at
any time, should the need arise, the State would have a reason to nail them; and
it was also good because it made intellectuals feel somewhat guilty and insecure,
which meant that the State did not have to exert extra pressure on intellectuals in
a direct way, for now their own feeling of guilt and insecurity would force them
to do what the State expected them to.

This ideological device proved very efficient because, for example, a
writer, having said a dissident word in one novel, would now feel obliged, solely
by power of his or her guilty consciousness, to write three other novels, this time
ideologically correct and expressly loyal, in order to atone for the misdeed. The
State in many instances found the price acceptable, because both on the social
and individual scale expression of loyalty substantially exceeded that of
disloyalty. In this light, it becomes less surprising that such people as
Voznesensky, who was publicly denounced by Khrushchev as a "bourgeois
formalist, slandering the Party", should be made recipients of outstanding Party
awards several years later, under Brezhnev (whose coming to power, absurdly
enough, marked the end of the "thaw" of the sixties and the beginning of much
stricter censorship over cultural production).

The same could be said about another formerly popular, now unpopular,
Soviet/Russian poet Yevtushenko, who had a fairly radical, almost dissident,
public image but at the same time was one of the most publishable and
frequently travelled abroad writers, which again represented a virtually
implausible combination of things that, according to common opinion, could not
go together. Common opinion certainly was not misleading people, but it never
went far enough to reveal the actual roots of what appeared as implausible.
Thus, many people were apt to reason that the poet was just so popular that his public prestige made the government show some formal regard for him and take his authority seriously. This was nothing but another absurdity in Soviet intellectual thinking which, having gone through decades of most disrespectful social oppression, still was able to accept that an intellectual voice could possess such authority that would carry some weight with the ruling power. It was hardly a question of some public authority, which mattered little to the political elite, for, according to a number of recent publications, Yevtushenko simply did some kind of minor spying job for the Party, watching and denouncing his fellows intellectuals, in exchange for the informal permission to look “dissident” and intellectually bold. Some authors even assert that Yevtushenko was actually involved with the KGB; but at this point, it does not really matter whether his activities had to do directly with the KGB or did not go farther than some Party officials, because both Party officials and the KGB were nothing but different hands of a single State machine, and it was all the same in the end. What is remarkable here is, again, the pattern of relationship between the intellectuals (those we have marked under the second category, as the basic cultural producers) and the State. The degree of co-optation that pattern has revealed is indeed impressive. What comes to mind is again Adorno’s statement, “Administration is not simply imposed upon the supposedly productive human being from without; it multiplies within this person himself.”
It is now time to turn to the academic community after this detour into the history of intelligentsia, which had to be taken into account, for everything that has been said above about the intelligentsia, holds pertinent to the academics. Among the intellectuals, academics always held one of the most secure positions in the social maze of society. Journalists and writers might have to live constantly switching places and jobs, whereas an academic, upon taking his or her job at a university, could really relax in a sense (all it took was to accept the rules of the game, and in the end it was not that much - just behave and write and teach, according to an unsophisticated standard, set by the Party officials, and you are set and secured for the rest of your career). That is why professors in the Soviet Union rarely changed their places of work (institutions, departments) - which, for example, has been typical for scholars in the United States where academic mobility is rather high. Getting an assistant professor position at a university in most cases would mean literally that you were secured to spend your entire career at that institution to the day of retirement. As a result, academics became one of the most bureaucratized groups among the intelligentsia. Naturally, they would rarely do anything against the regime. And so, because of all that, because of their being relatively aloof from many common anxieties of the intelligentsia, because of their silence and non-participation, non-involvement in provocative intellectual discussions, but also because of that idea, deeply ingrained in Russian culture, that intellectuals should be writers, poets, or
artists, - academics, in public perception, somehow slipped out of the notion "intelligentsia" (at least, genuine intelligentsia), and were rather thought as some sort of technical workers of science. Academics never felt uncomfortable with that public image - indeed one may wonder if they even noticed it - until the perestroika which ended academic security and privileges. Now academics have been put on equal terms with all other intellectuals, and they are definitely losing in the eyes of the public because journalists, TV newscasters and other popular figures have been able to develop a more salient public image in recent years, leaving academics behind the realm of publicity. The media, accordingly, have lost active interest in academics, especially those in the humanities who are now often thought of as Marxist retrogrades, or as figures incapable of any significant intellectual discussion. Newspapers and public magazines, for instance, now rarely turn to academics for interviews. Strangely, academics still remain conservative in that they still wait for something from the State and think that the State should come to their salvation, while it becomes increasingly apparent that the State does not seem to appreciate their "help" any more, since with the demise of communist ideology silent guardians of the ideological values have apparently become unneeded. What the State now needs is proclamers of new "capitalist" values and old academics are not good for it, as they are not used to such things as proclamations in principle, being largely accustomed to a quiet style of intellectual activity. The State wants those who do proclamations - and
these people are certainly being enrolled from other walks of the population: from the uncompromising (not academics!), desirably rich (again, not academics!), and those with constant public exposure (surely, not academics!). That is to say, those who qualify to be favored by the State may come now from journalists, all kinds of media people, business people - but by no means academics. Academics feel increasingly alienated in this situation, and they want to find a way to join the group of the privileged ones, but at the moment it looks like they are likely to remain in the shadow.
Chapter 3

Discourses of History, Architecture, and the New Paradigm in Intellectual World-Views

Rome makes one feel stifled with sadness... through the gloomy and lifeless museum-atmosphere that it exhales, through the abundance of its pasts, which are brought forth and laboriously held up (pasts on which a tiny present subsists), through the terrible overvaluing, sustained by scholars and philologists and imitated by the ordinary tourist in Italy, of all these disfigured and decaying Things, which, after all, are essentially nothing more than accidental remains from another time and from a life that is not and should not be ours.

— Rainer Maria Rilke.¹

I. Types of Intellectual Discourses

Although it is well known that the discourse of literature played a very important part in the spectacle of intellectual life, and in many ways broader mass culture, in the Soviet Union, and indeed the conclusion Bruce Grant makes that "members of the elite [Writers'] union had been the main architects of Soviet culture since their profession had been collectivized under Stalin in 1934" is very

much to the point,² - there have always been two interesting parallel social discourses, to which I would like to draw attention in this chapter: that of history, and that of architecture. These discourses were as much subject to ideological scrutiny as was the literary realm and their connection to the state regime was unquestionable, but the ways in which these discourses were employed by the regime were sometimes less obvious - which perhaps accounted for the fact that they survived longer, and actually are still very much in ideological use, several years after the "literary machine" has been dismantled and the discourse of literature has lost its appeal and influence. In fact, not only did they survive, but, as I shall try to show in the course of this chapter, they became the major constituent parts in the shaping of a new paradigm in intellectual thinking, which gradually encompassed and came to dominate the larger structures of social discourse in Russia in the last quarter of the century.

The major difference between the literary discourse and its neighbor discourses under consideration appears to have been, indeed, in the mode of operation (that is in the ways these discourses were technically established and culturally appropriated in the Soviet society). This brings me to think of Foucault's discussion of the rules of discursive formation - which may indeed, as it seems to me, put the subject into an appropriate interpretive analytical

framework, and I shall draw on this discussion as I proceed further. The
discourse of literature came to signify one of the major, or arguably but possibly
the major field of cultural production in the Soviet Union. As such, it rested on
an elaborate institutional infrastructure and an unusually active, for the socialist
system, producer-consumer relationship which, in turn, was successfully
maintained both at the level of fully functioning symbolic market (the “word”
was consumed, produced, and again sought for, i.e. there was a continuous
dialectics of symbolic demand and supply), and at the level of no less functioning
material commodity market (the book, despite the centralized socialist economy,
strangely remained a kind of free-floating commodity, the real value of which
was in most cases determined by that very producer-consumer relationship, not
by the planned economics of book publishing and nominal selling prices). In
short, the discourse of literature had a tangible organizational structure behind it
(the notorious Unions of Writers, famous Gorky Institute of Literature, a network
of prestigious publishing houses, popular literary magazines, including a “must-
read” set of journals, like Novyi Mir ["New World"], Nash Sovremennik ["Our
Contemporary"], and others, known to everyone and subscribed in every family
that had any intellectual interest in life; and so on).

Contrary to this, neither the discourse of history nor that of architecture
did have a clear organizational structure, which would be identifiably
responsible for the production of this or that kind of social conversation. There
were departments of history at the universities, but academics, as we have discussed earlier, were not generally considered intellectuals and very few of them had public exposure in the media. Scholarly journals in history were hardly read outside the history departments, not to mention that only a few of them - in fact, perhaps only one, Voprosy Istorii ("Questions of History", which was largely ignored by most intellectuals anyway, being associated with the dogmatic version of Marxist-Leninist scholarship) - were known to the public at all;\(^3\) the rest were obscure newsletters with minimum circulation and so called Vestniki,\(^4\) published by various divisions of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, and generally even history students found them boring and tried to ignore them in their studies, if that was possible.

Even less could be said about architecture. Architecture was mainly considered a technical discipline (apart from its side connection with the history

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\(^3\) By and large, this was the typical public attitude towards all other academic periodicals in the humanities. A professor in philosophy, whom I interviewed in 1995 in Moscow, reflected on his own discipline: "Yes, we have got journals - but the thing is, they are not popular among the general public. They are simply not known outside the academic community. Stop any person in the streets, who is not an academic, and ask him whether he reads or not Voprosy Filosofii ["Questions of Philosophy"] - he'll just do those scared eyes, because he has never heard of such thing. Or maybe, better still, he has, because fifteen years ago they probably made him learn some Marxist propaganda from that journal in high school. So, at best, public is unaware of these publications - at worst, it is instinctively afraid of them". (The interview is being published in the author's essay "Academics and the Production of Intellectual Discourse of Modernity in Russia", forthcoming in the Late Editions series, vol.7, ed. George E. Marcus. University of Chicago Press, 1999).

\(^4\) Vestnik, in academic language, stands for "newsletter", "periodic news".
of arts, which will be discussed further) and the *disciplinary* discourse of architecture as such was of marginal interest to the broader intellectual public; although it must be noted that however narrow that disciplinary architectural discourse was, it was always directly linked to the highest levels of power, and this is perhaps just another area where Soviet intellectuals overlooked an important target for social criticism. The only serious attempt to analyze the connection between socialist power and disciplinary practices of architecture in cultural terms was undertaken in the late 1970s by a bright young Soviet scholar Vladimir Papernyi in his book *Kul'tura Dva* ["Culture Two"], which was, to no surprise, recognized by Soviet authorities as anti-socialist, never published, and eventually led Papernyi to emigrate to the United States where he decided to abandon his academic career and pursue his graphic designer talents.

In a word, discourses of history and architecture, as they formed in the Soviet intellectual sphere, had no clear referent, unlike the discourse of literature; instead, they assumed fluid omnipresent forms. The literary discourse was salient, it came in tangible "chunks" of journals, books, statements, authors, and events. Discourses of history and architecture were almost intangible, they appeared everywhere inconspicuously as an underlying context, evoking

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unquestionable themes of "cultural heritage" and "humanism" - that is to say, they were thoroughly dissolved in the very fabric of culture, and indeed were targeted to penetrate the realm of taken-for-granted ontological foundations. While the literary discourse was, so to say, in front of intellectual minds, the latter discourses were within the minds.

Speaking of the rules of discursive formation, Foucault distinguishes between discourses based on a program, and those based on what he calls strategies. By program, Foucault means certain projects of power, characterized by the normative logic of social planning, where the ways, or as Foucault calls them, technologies of power intervention are rationally elaborated and the effects of that intervention are calculated in advance. By strategies, in contrast, Foucault defines the fluid realm of unexpected occurrences within the discursive domain, which result, often in a spontaneous manner, from the process of complex interactions and transformations of various discourses, power relations, and social forces, among other things. Some discourses, says Foucault, "give rise to certain organizations of concepts, certain regroupings of objects, certain types of enunciation, which form, according to their degree of coherence, rigour, and stability, themes or theories... Whatever their formal level may be, I shall call these themes and theories 'strategies'. But strategies are also those elusive forms of power exercise that take advantage of what was not envisaged or taken
into account by the normative tactics of control, such as programs. Strategies are essentially those types of power maneuvers that do not seek to produce a discourse, but rather rely on existing discursive currents in their manipulative interests.

This distinction applies to the situation we are dealing with in the Soviet Union. The discourse of literature was indeed a fine example of a program-based discourse: its aims were worked out on the basis of particular needs of the power regime, the forms and methods of its intervention were elaborated, its effects were planned and anticipated, and its fulfillment was controlled. Even the deviant tendencies (i.e. dissident moods) seemed to have been taken into account by that smart program. Discourses of history and architecture, on the other hand, come to exemplify Foucauldian strategy-based discourses which form out of collisions in the discursive realm, regroupings of social forces and objects, and the desire of power to take advantage of all these voluntary and involuntary shifts in one or another manner.

II. Discourse of History

Let us consider first the mechanics of the discourse of history. History, of course, is one of the sacred realms in any national ideology, especially in the

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societies of socialist orientation, and it is a commonly taken point now that "communism as a political institution has exercised the most rigorous and exclusive control over the political utilization of historical knowledge". 7 A good account of such utilization of historiography by the socialist regime was provided, for example, in the often cited Katherine Verdery's work on Romanian intellectual culture. 8 The Soviet Union was certainly no exception in this regard and there functioned the same planned and thoroughly thought out system of ideological control over the production of history. This system embraced an extended structure of institutions, from censorship to libraries and archives to mass media and various cultural organizations, apart from the obvious institutions of historical scholarship and general mass education. Professors and teachers in history were, as a rule, recruited from people who were active in political organizations, that is either Communist Party or Komsomol, the Young Communist League. In case of recent graduates or young candidates, who had not had time to establish their reputation along the political lines, their joining the Party and subsequent participation in its activities was expected. 9 This

9 Cf. Verdery's remarks on the historical profession in Romania: "...various institutions of history... were brought more fully under the control of the Party's Central Committee. Subsequent measures allowed Ph.D.s to be given only to persons acceptable to their municipal Party organization, prescribed the precise content of courses to be taught in
clearly functioned as a pledge of loyalty to the ideological regime. If, upon a
certain “grace” period of time, a teacher or professor failed, or displayed
unwillingness to join the Party, she was normally questioned by the dean,
principal, or other authorities and asked to explain her motives. Subsequently,
she might be either given a choice of joining the Party or leaving the job, or, if the
authorities found that the person was more or less ideologically reliable and her
preference to stay away from political activity was arbitrary, and not dictated by
any kind of ideological motives, she might be left alone for some time, after
which she would be informally questioned again, and so on. If such person,
however, continued to be employed without the Party membership, or continued
to be bespartiinyi (literally, “partiless”), as it was regularly said in the Soviet
Union, her road to promotion, it must be understood, was closed once and for
all. For any promotion, Party membership would serve as a mandatory
condition. This situation explains a fairly large number of middle-aged and

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history, and even fixed by fiat the dates of major events to be celebrated...” (Katherine
Verdery, National Ideology Under Socialism, p.221).

10 Word bespartiinyi, from a colloquialism, forged in the early years of socialism as a
label (surely, somewhat derogatory) for all those who did not belong to the Party,
gradually grew into a major social status line. All job applications and other more or less
important bureaucratic documents in the Soviet Union contained this must-be-filled entry
“Party Membership”, in which one could either indicate that one was a “member of the
CPSU since such and such year”, or write the word “bespartiinyi”. But, of course, the
presence of the word bespartiinyi, from the point of view of the authorities, indicated that
there was something wrong about the person. So, the derogatory sense, once granted to
“partiless”, not only remained but was also administratively legalized as a primary social
stratification element.
older people, working as assistant professors at universities or school teachers who had never been promoted to senior levels.

Such practice, it must be added, constituted a typical mechanism of ideological control, which was widespread in the Soviet society and was employed almost universally as a most elementary form of power exercise and most elementary means of social stratification and differentiation. This mechanism was present and functioning in the historical discipline, just as it was in other humanities and sciences, leave alone other sectors of society. What was distinctive about the discipline of history here is, perhaps, only the amount and enforced doses of such practices put into action. In such fields, as mathematics or physics, for example, social censorship was always less active. An assistant professor in mathematics could safely get a promotion on the basis of her scientific skills and talents alone, without having to worry much about Party matters.11 The ability to understand mathematics was not so clearly linked to the necessity of being "ideologically correct", as the ability to understand history was.12 To understand the true laws of history, one had to develop an ideologically correct world view first, and Party membership, depending on the

11 Although to be promoted to the position of chair in mathematics, one still had to meet the Party membership criteria.
12 This also partly explains the fact that popular science magazines, like Nauka i zhizn' ["Science and Life"], which were less infected with socialist propaganda, had a larger circulation among the intelligentsia than journals in the humanities.
perspective one looked from, was either a prerequisite for developing such world view or an indication that one had already developed it.

The elaborated hierarchy of *rites de passage*, firmly built on the mixture of the moral, the professional, and the political, was not the only evidence of the paramount importance given by the Soviet state to the field of historical production. Another instance of the same social obsession with the field is the fact that the discipline of history, as it has been shaped in universities under socialism, has become the largest division in the humanities, having appropriated a number of subfields and having merged them into its institutional structure. In Moscow State University, which served as a model for all other universities across the country, the Faculty of History came to embrace some dozen departments only half of which represented an initial disciplinary domain of history (Department of Ancient History, Department of History of the Middle Ages, Department of Old Russian History, Department of Soviet History, and some others). The other half included: the Department of History of Arts, Department of Ethnography, Department of Archaeology, Department of History of the Communist Party (which was, in essence, a department of political science), Department of Political Economy (another dose of Marxist-Leninist political science, spiced up with the basics of economics), and even a Department of Foreign Languages. Thus, what was in the beginning of the twentieth century a joint interdisciplinary Faculty of History and Philology, built on general ideals
of Enlightenment and liberal education, was transformed under socialism into a
disciplinary institution of power ("disciplinary" in Foucauldian sense). This
development clearly indicated, on the one hand, the politicization of the
historical field, in the attempts to merge it with the field of political science; and,
on the other hand, the totalitarianization of the field, in the efforts to spread it
over the entire domain of the academic disciplines that might be connected, even
in some remote manner, to the production of historical knowledge. The
appropriation of archaeology, for example, was strategically important because
archaeological data bore a direct relationship to the questions of "origins" and
historical "authenticity" of culture - questions which, as it is now known, were
attached utmost importance under any totalitarian regime.\(^{13}\) The appropriation
of ethnography, by the same token, facilitated the academic "nationalization" of
the question of national identity.\(^{14}\)

\(^{13}\) Not that these questions were unimportant in so-called democratic and other
societies. In fact, they troubled and continue to trouble all societies in one or another
form. Preoccupation with these questions is a typical characteristic of all newly
independent states in the Eastern Europe and former republics of the Soviet Union, which
are looking today for reasons and bases to justify their autonomy and cultural integrity. A
good account of how the issue has emerged in some of the republics of the former USSR

\(^{14}\) For the discussion of the early socialist debates around the concept of nationality and
its ideological importance in the Soviet Union, see: Francine Hirsch, "The Soviet Union
as a Work-in-Progress," *Slavic Review* 56, no.2 (1997). It is a fairly common opinion,
among contemporary Russian ethnographers, that the institutionalization of ethnography
as a part of the discipline of history was a consequence of general degradation of social
sciences under Stalin. Sergei Cheshko, professor at the Russian Academy of Sciences,
responding to my question in an interview, says, "Ethnography in this country
Thus, history has become a major division in the humanities and social sciences. It has to be mentioned that in the Soviet Union the division between the humanities ("gumanitarnye nauki") and the social sciences ("obshchestvennye nauki") was fairly arbitrary. Philosophy, for example, was normally thought of as pertaining to the humanities. But in the official language, where the word "philosophy" typically appeared accompanied by the adjective "Marxist", it was spoken of as a social science, for Marxist philosophy laid claim not only to the discovery of true ontological foundations of human knowledge, but also to the revealing of the fundamental laws of social development. History, likewise, belonged among the humanities, on the one hand. But on the other, it was also considered to be one of the social sciences, since Marxist historical science, as it traditionally belongs in the historical disciplines, due to certain historical and political circumstances. Under Stalin, ethnography, like other sciences, suffered an ideological breakdown. The word ethnology, for example, was expelled from the academic vocabulary, because of associations with "bourgeois comparative science," and the discipline had been given the official title of "ethnography". It was introduced into the history faculties and charged with the task of illustrating Marxist historical materialism through a variety of examples." (Quoted in: Alexei Elfimov, "The State of the Discipline in Russia," American Anthropologist 99, no.4 [1997]: 776). In my opinion, however, this degradation of social sciences can be seen precisely as a sign of the strengthening of the historical discipline (or, in stricter terms, of the socio-political alliance of history with Marxism-Leninism) as an omnipotent ideological structure, responsible for the production of, as well as surveillance over, social "truth". The social sciences were excluded from high school curricula and, according to the statistics, were not taught at all at the secondary-school level between 1934 and 1962 (Janet G. Vaillant, "Reform in History and Social Studies Education in Russian Secondary Schools," in Education and Society in the New Russia, ed. Anthony Jones [Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1994], p.142). Eventually, an introductory social science course (so called Obshchestvoovedenie) was restored at high schools but, as a common practice in the 1970s-80s, it was taught, again, by history teachers.
was officially said, was a "science of society" which was, along with Marxist philosophy, responsible for the discovery of the laws of social development. This sharing of primary responsibilities, again, points out to what I have already mentioned as a socio-political alliance of history with philosophy.

History, therefore, came to cover an unusually wide academic domain. One could defend a dissertation in art criticism or ancient languages, archaeology or ethnography, political science or political economy and be granted the same uniform degree of "Doctor of Historical Sciences" ("Doktor istoricheskikh nauk"). Textbooks in history, written during the Soviet period, often started with the phrase "History is mother of all sciences" ("Istoriia - mat' nauk"), which was in essence just another manifestation of the same ideological tendency to universalize and, so to speak, fundamentalize the discipline. This was precisely that kind of danger upon which, half a century earlier, Nietzsche had reflected in his Untimely Meditations: "Insofar as it stands in the service of life, history stands in the service of an unhistorical power, and, thus subordinate, it can and should never become a pure science such as, for instance, mathematics is". In the Soviet Union, every necessary step was undertaken to promote history to the level of "pure science" and to mask the fact of its connection, or, to use Nietzsche's more appropriate word, service to power.

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15 This tradition has survived and this is still the case in Russian universities today.
This brings us back to the topic of intellectual discourse. Indeed, from what has been said so far, one may conclude that the historical enterprise appears to be in all respects similar to the literary one, being based on an elaborate project of power, in other words, Foucauldian program, and may wonder why I chose to speak of the discourse of history in terms of strategies. This is where the complication starts. The social discourse of history, as it was envisaged by the socialist power, can undoubtedly be categorized as a Foucauldian program-based discourse, insofar as it represented a rational project of power with clear-cut aims and methods. But this program-based, or let us call it normative, discourse never assumed a scale and dimensions it was intended to assume. It never quite made it into the sphere of broader intellectual discourse, having remained confined to the institutional framework of history departments and research institutes, unlike the literary discourse which far overstepped the boundaries of literature departments and became, in a way, the intellectual discourse. What the normative historical discourse really achieved in the broader intellectual sphere came later as a result of its collision with the issue of modernity, which was discussed in the previous chapter, and this achievement essentially consisted in the transformation of historical discourse into a kind of profound fusion of history, ethics, humanism, and cultural heritage, which was

eventually successfully assimilated into the very consciousness of intellectual culture. This development, which was not a part of the initial program but turned out to be reaching even farther ends, became a convenient target for ideological maneuvers and ultimately both an object and medium of power exercise. This is why the broader discourse of history (not the normative historical discourse), as it has formed in the Soviet intellectual culture, is an example of what Foucault defines by strategy-based discourse.

The problem with the normative historical discourse, as it was established by the Soviet ideology, was that it paradoxically turned against the very notion of history. The past before the Revolution was denied, while after the Revolution there was no past anymore, everything turned into a timeless present. The Revolution reversed the whole course of social progress - or, to be more precise, social regress - just like the appearance of Christ on Earth. Everything before the Revolution was "B.C." and time in that remote epoch went in the opposite direction. The questions of historical and cultural continuity were no longer an issue. Furthermore, as Benjamin observed, under the new conditions they become simply inappropriate as a reminder of that "triumphal procession, in which the present rulers step over those who today are lying prostrate... A historical materialist therefore disassociates himself from it as far as possible. He
regards it as his task to brush history against the grain".17 The main preoccupation of that historical materialist became the creation of a new historical narrative, unhistorically placed in a timeless mythological space of the victorious socialist era. The genre of this new historical narrative became typologically similar to that of medieval "chronicle of life and times of such and such king", and here it was fully realized in the form of a "chronicle of life and times of the Communist Party".18 What this genre provided was a detailed, allegedly historically narrated, account of the activities of a powerholder, the relation of which to other historical epochs and events, at the same time, always remained shrouded in a haze of mythological exegesis.

This is to say that the real task of new socialist history became that of establishing a discourse of the Soviet present, rather than that of pursuing investigations into ambiguities of the past. The past was fixed once and for all as

18 Thus, the major treatise on Soviet history, that appeared under Stalin and remained a basic canon for historians for many years after his death, was entitled A Short Course on History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Accounts of Soviet history in school and university textbooks, which were still in use when Gorbachev was carrying out his perestroika reforms, were by and large accounts of various conferences, congresses, and executive decisions of the Communist Party. When I took my entrance examination in history as a Moscow State University applicant in 1987, I was asked to summarize Gorbachev’s speech at the 1985 Communist Party Plenum, for example. So, while perestroika years loosened the limits of historical interpretation, having particularly encouraged the reevaluation of the Stalinist past, the genre of history as "Party chronicle" remained essentially intact (it remained so through the 1980s and the beginning of the
a regressive entity, as an anti-time, whereas the present became an ideological burden and in many ways an awkward subject that required a great deal of justification, interpretation and explanation. That it was precisely the period of Soviet history, from 1917 onwards, which constituted the major predicament in the relationship between socialist power and scholarship, is now a frequently commented fact and I will not elaborate on this theme here. What I would like to emphasize once again, however, is the discrepancy between the idea of history as certain continuity and cultural inheritance, and the aim of (normative) historical discourse to justify discontinuity and cultural autonomy. This discrepancy, which could be half-avoided half-appropriated into the new rhetorical services by theoreticians of Soviet ideology, came to constitute a problem of both mental and moral character for the intellectuals with all their cultural baggage, or as Bourdieu might: call it, cultural capital, in too many ways earned from the past. An attempt to establish an ideological discourse of a culturally autonomous present collided with the whole issue of modernity - that is, with intelligentsia's inherited unpreparedness to speak of the present in culturally autonomous terms and its inherited uninterestedness in the present, 1990s, having been politically, rather than historically, discredited with the defeat of the communist rule under Yeltsin administration).

19 For the discussion, see, for example: Alexander Dallin, “Soviet History,” in Soviet Scholarship Under Gorbachev, ed. Alexaner Dallin and Bertrand M. Patenaude (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988); William B. Husband, “History Education
and ultimately with the absence of spirit of modernity as such on the social scale in the society which in the course of some ten years managed to jump from one authoritarian regime into another. Inconsistencies in the way the dominant ideology itself treated the present contributed to the predicament. Paradoxically, the new timeless era of the Soviet present had to be subdivided and transformed into a transitional moment of the present on the way to the actual timeless era of the Soviet future, and the center of gravity in this subdivision was certainly laid upon the future, thus relieving the present of its actual value and importance. One may only recall Benjamin’s insightful remark, “A historical materialist cannot do without the notion of a present which is not a transition”.

The result of the collision of the normative historical discourse with the issue of modernity was twofold. On the one hand, the discourse never made its way into a broader intellectual conversation and gradually enclosed itself within the guild of bureaucratized academic historians. On the other, it pushed the intelligentsia into a historical quest of its own, which turned, in essence, into a melancholy Proustian recherche du temps perdu and step by step grew into an almost unconditional appropriation of the pre-revolutionary history, that same “anti-time B.C.,” as a basic ethical and cultural point of reference. An array of

and Historiography in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia,” in Education and Society in the New Russia.

various eighteenth and nineteenth century figures, from literary intelligentsia to artists and architects to representatives of political aristocracy were revoked one by one and informally legitimized in the intellectual discourse as founders and builders of the edifice of that authentic Russian culture which, thus, still underlay the culture of the Soviet people, or at any rate remained its heritage and something of a moral conscience.

The growing persistence of this intellectual attitude gradually influenced not only the broader public but also the humanities, including even the guild of academic historians who, following the stream of intellectual fashions, started to increasingly turn in their scholarly studies to the reappreciation of the 18th-19th-century history in a new moral and ethical light. A new discursive paradigm in the studies of history started to be formed: everything in the Old Russia, except the political tsarist regime, was now to become a source of cultural value, cultural lessons, and cultural ideals. The tsars, together with their political administration and secret police, constituted the primary target for both historical and ethical criticism, having assumed the role of "stranglers of culture and suppressers of progress". The rest of the society, from peasants to high aristocracy, were ethically and historically elevated both as the real builders of culture, and as those who suffered under the injustice of the authoritarian social system. Peasants and working class, of course, were no unusual subject for historians, since they primarily occupied the focus of their attention in the
framework of what we called the normative discourse of history, but nobility and aristocracy were undoubtedly brought into the pool of legitimate objects of historical investigation with the tide of the intelligentsia's nostalgic recourse to the past, which started in the 1960's, at the time of Khrushchev's "thaw", and has not ended as of the time of this writing.

The tendency toward the historical reappropriation of the old Russian aristocratic style of life as a normative cultural value became especially salient in the 1980's. (In fact, in the 1980's, we can speak already of the formed discourse of history of the new type, which was far away from the conventions of the normative historical discourse.) As a result of the general intellectualization of the topic and, therefore, of the intervention of various parties, such as literature, history of arts, cinema and theater, into the conversation, the role of aristocracy was more and more idealized and imperceptibly merged with the domain of "cultural heritage". It was still impossible, nor was it actually anybody's intention, to approve of tsarism and the old Russian political system as a whole, save maybe for a few dissidents, but it became possible to approve of the good ethical and humanistic intentions of each particular representative of that system. The emphasis on humanistic intentions, as opposed to actions, acquired wide currency in the discourse of history. Thus, in several cases of historical scholarship before perestroika, even tsar Alexander I was represented as a positive figure. In some historical studies, he was shown as an educated and
intelligent person who intended to make some good changes to the political system, but was unable to make them because the system was full of reactionary bureaucrats and one tsar could not go against the corruption of the entire state. In other studies, he was shown as a merciful ruler who did not send as many participants of the Decembrists mutiny to Siberia as he actually could. In literary scholarship, Alexander I earned some praise because he supposedly favorably treated Russian poet Pushkin, or at any rate put up with his provocative writings and behavior. Since Pushkin came to be a canonized figure in the Soviet culture, the tsar therefore could be, in a sense, forgiven. This is not to question the validity of such facts, many of which were probably based on careful archival investigations, but to point out a new paradigmatic trait of the social discourse of history - namely, its centeredness on the subject of aristocratic ethics and enlightenment as a foundation of Russian culture and social ideals. Under Gorbachev, with the loosening of the official ideological censorship, the penetration of the discourse of history into intellectual and broader cultural consciousness reached its utmost limits with the inclusion of the last prohibited area, that of the Russian Silver Age, into the domain of the legitimate. The Silver Age period of the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century naturally remained the last restricted area of Russian history because it was temporally too close to the Soviet Revolution and many of the Silver Age intelligentsia were, as it is known, openly against the Bolshevik regime.
This paradigmatic shift in the discourse of history has not received much attention in scholarly works on Russia and the Soviet Union. A few authors do actually remark that in Russia of the 1980’s, “an infatuation with topics of the tsarist past has significantly displaced post-1917 history as the center of public interest”.21 But the majority of scholars, concerned with the subject of history in today’s Russia, focus almost exclusively on the debates around Stalinist, and more broadly, Soviet past. While these debates indeed constituted one of the distinctive social topics of the perestroika years and there is no doubt that “for many in the Soviet Union, Stalin in particular was a quintessentially emotional subject”,22 it is precisely these debates that could be defined by the term “infatuation”, rather than what was mentioned in the quoted essay as interest in the tsarist past. The interest in the pre-revolutionary past did not really come as an infatuation that displaced Soviet history as a focus of attention at the end of the 1980’s. It came much earlier, and it was already firmly built into the intellectual consciousness and the foundations of historical discourse at the moment when the infatuation with the immediate Soviet past started, being to a certain extent ideologically encouraged by Gorbachev himself, and temporarily overflooded, so to speak, the subject area of discourse. It has to be understood that the very intellectual attitude toward the Soviet past was radically different

in nature from the attitude toward the pre-revolutionary Russian past, the former being of explicitly negative ethical character and the latter of explicitly positive one. The Soviet past was something that was sought to be eradicated, whereas the Russian past was something that was sought to be restored. The Russian pre-revolutionary past, no matter how idealized, was the culture that people wanted to identify with, and perhaps unconsciously started to identify with; while the Soviet past, on the contrary, was the source of that unwanted and forced, but nevertheless real and conscious identity that people strove to get rid of. It were monuments of Soviet culture and history that were violently destroyed by the public in Moscow, St. Petersburg and other cities during perestroika on such scale that in the end frightened even intelligentsia who more or less tended to think that cultural heritage was cultural heritage and some things just had to be preserved no matter how bad were the memories that they evoked. Needless to say, not only no more or less important monument of the pre-revolutionary past was ever damaged, but also some of the old monuments

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23 A typical expression of the intellectual and, in a broader sense, cultural moods in the end of the 1980’s-beginning of the 1990’s is summarized in the following passage from an article by a St. Petersburg literary critic Konstantin Azadovskii: “We are settling scores with our history. We are hastening to rid ourselves of the burdensome legacy of the era of the Great Falsification. We are dividing our past into executioners and victims, prison guards and inmates... We are infected with nostalgia for prerevolutionary Russia. We want to immerse ourselves in the age of 1910 as deeply as possible and to bring back - at least in part - the atmosphere and spirit of that era, to transport it to our troubled
that had been destroyed during the first Soviet years were restored (which was essentially a political play on the interests of the public, that very strategic use of the historical discourse by the ruling power, and I will elaborate on it further in the section on architecture).

The debates over the Soviet past therefore constituted a topic in the intellectual discourse of history, whereas the domain of the pre-revolutionary Russian past was laid in the foundation of that discourse as a normative cultural point of reference, as an apriori point of departure in any historical judgment, and, more broadly, as a basic cultural protocol of ethics, morality, and humanism. One of the above-cited articles on history education in Russia quotes, though in a different sense and context, an interesting passage from an essay by some Russian teacher, or possibly professor of history, who says:

“The humanitarian science of history is a means for teaching elevated human qualities. ...A new spirit in the teaching of history is more important to me than the distribution of hours among courses, methods of inquiry and the organization of work with textbooks”.  

24 A. B. Sokolov, “Raskreposhchenie istorii,” Voprosy istorii 9-10 (1991). Quoted in: William B. Husband, “History Education and Historiography in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia,” p.119. Cf. what one history professor at Moscow State University told me in an interview in 1995: “All these years, we had history as a lifeless record of dates and events, that is as a purely mechanical form of knowledge. It was supposed to shape a certain type of personality. I don’t think we need this type of personality anymore. History, therefore, should ultimately come to an ethical form of knowledge, it should inculcate the love for the past in the youth, because the past is that golden cultural fund on which they should learn to draw in their judgment.”
This type of statement, which has become common among the historians, is precisely one of the effects of the paradigmatic shift of historical discourse into the framework of ethics, morality and cultural heritage. And, of course, one could not teach elevated human qualities on the example of the Soviet history, unless one would like to go into another falsification and, even more problematically, go against the whole stream of negativity that has flown over this period of history. On the contrary, the period of pre-revolutionary history makes an exceptional resource for this type of teaching, being already merged in the broader intellectual consciousness with an array of elevated themes, such as humanism and culture itself. The identification of history with culture is undoubtedly another profound effect of this clash of social discourses, although it might be again traced back to the traditions of the 19th-century Russian intelligentsia. Rilke's modernist statement, therefore, that "history is another culture which is not and should not be ours" would appear as something openly hostile to the spirit of the intellectual discourse of history in Russia. In the new paradigm of Russian intellectual discourse, history is culture (in fact, one might go as far as to stress, without fear of falling into extreme overstatement, that there is no culture other than history - this might perhaps be a slight exaggeration, but this adequately describes the general contours of the paradigm of the discourse of history, and of broader intellectual thinking to a large extent).
There is a colloquial expression in Russian, \textit{prikosnut'sia k kul'ture}, which means "to touch upon culture", "to come into contact with culture", and its usage may be considered as just another illustration of this common social identification of history with culture. This expression is regularly used to describe the fact that one went to one or another historical place (be it an old town, a museum, or an archive) and experienced first-hand some remains from the past (be it an architecture, an old painting, or a dusty 17th-century book). What is implied in a sentence, like, "I went to an old Russian town of Rostov and \textit{prikosnulsia k kul'ture} [came into contact with culture]", is ultimately that one got out of the ordinary everyday surroundings of the contemporary and immersed oneself in the (supposedly intact and authentic) atmosphere of the past, which possessed, by the only fact of its indisputable historical value, a transcendent cultural significance. This expression would have been never applied to any place, no matter how interesting and intellectually or emotionally satisfying, if it was not related to cultural achievements of the more or less remote past. The realm of the contemporary lacks a cultural load. What makes objects \textit{culturally loaded} is in the first instance their historical value.

The same attitude may be detected in virtually any sphere of Soviet/Russian culture (now speaking of culture in its anthropological sense). If we take theater, for example, which itself was seen by the intellectuals as a more culturally loaded and consistent genre, than cinema with its immediate interests
and, so to say, profane philosophy, we find a no less salient obsession with historical themes, especially with the 19th-century Russian intelligentsia and, more generally, aristocracy. A classic set of plays by such authors as Chekhov, Ostrovskii, Bulgakov, and a number of new ones, written in a similar historical-literary genre, constituted the most popular part of theatrical repertoire. It is not to diminish the value of works by Chekhov or Bulgakov, since probably nothing better has been written in Russia anyway, but to point out again that it was the historical reference that in most cases made these performances culturally valuable. Contemporary plays and performances, dealing with immediate realities of the Soviet society, did not enjoy popularity among the larger part of the theater public, which certainly included the intelligentsia, because the latter had both no interest in the present realities, and every right to suspect that such plays would contain nothing but ideological propaganda. In other words, here one can observe the same shift in intellectual interests toward the past as a culturally loaded discursive zone. The contemporary was resisted both as a mundane realm of the everyday, and as a realm of ideological propaganda, while the historical was elevated to the transcendent level of pure culture, which thus came to establish itself as a condensed symbolic expression of social ideals of the intelligentsia. I am tempted to employ a Geertzian perspective here and argue that history functioned in the Soviet society as a distinctive "cultural system", that is a powerful integral symbolic realm, capable of shaping individual
experiences and identities in a transcendent way and putting them into a special meaningful framework which was not a part of everyday reality, surrounding the individuals. Much like religion in some societies or dramatic arts of expression, such as wajang, in others, history in the Soviet society came to be that significant symbolic domain which rendered "dramatization of individual subjective experience in terms at once moral and factual".\textsuperscript{25} Furthermore, it acquired a certain function of counter-ideology that stood in opposition to the official ideology of the contemporary. Symbolic cultural systems, as Geertz noted, can be different in character and role. Some symbolic systems, like science, represent a diagnostic or critical dimension of culture; while others, like ideology, are much closer to a justificatory or apologetic dimension which refers "to that part of culture which is actively concerned with the establishment and defense of patterns of belief and value".\textsuperscript{26} History in the Soviet society, if we speak of it in terms of a distinctive cultural system, certainly had a justificatory and apologetic character, that is it essentially played the role of a popular intellectual ideology. There was nothing diagnostic or critical to it, for it was not a sphere where things could be put to test, it was a sphere in which an unconditional "defense of patterns of belief and value" took place.


\textsuperscript{26} Clifford Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System," in \textit{The Interpretation of Cultures}, p.231.
It did not matter much that many of those patterns of belief and value represented what seems to be clear instances of social romanticizing, nor did it matter that they contradicted the way the surrounding reality and social life itself was organized. What mattered was perhaps the meaningfulness with which they were able to fill the individual experience - the meaningfulness which could be no longer located in the official ideology of Soviet culture. Unfortunately, the persistence of this unconditional trust in the meaningfulness of the past still dwarfs the attempts of intelligentsia to think reflexively about their actual place in the actual moment of the contemporary and prolongs this discursive tradition within which the past again and again figures as a blamed and forgiven entity which gives one a license to a correct understanding of things. It is interesting, but even today many intellectuals prove unable to reflexively reproach themselves for all their romantic attractions to the past - as could be shown, for example, in the following citation from a recent essay, entitled "Who Are We?", by a well-known in Russia, and formerly in the Soviet Union, writer Fazil Iskander who writes:

"Romanticizing the past is a false judgment about the past coupled with a false conclusion: life was more interesting and more harmonious then. Romanticism of the future is a false judgment about the future coupled with a false conclusion: life will be more interesting and harmonious. Despite its inaccuracy, romanticizing the past cannot do too much damage. A false estimate of the past is one that does not require us to pay a price. We will pay with our
hides and those of our children, however, for a false calculation about the future. And we are already paying”.27

Thus, even though romanticizing the past may be a false judgment, it does, as the author concludes, no harm as such. It is the future now that is to blame. Curiously, this whole statement is an inversion of the traditional Soviet intellectual motto “the past is to blame for our miscalculations about the future”, and is undoubtedly a mere instance of situational logic, called to provide an excuse for the fact that “having invested so much effort in thinking about the past, the intellectual still managed to miscalculate the future”. Interestingly, the category of the present is, as it always was, omitted in these intellectual meditations on the subject of “who we are and what is to be done”. Actually, to be punctual, the subject, as it were, is never “what is to be done”. It is either “what was to be done” or “what will be done, if...”. So, in a sense, Lenin’s disdain for intelligentsia as an unable group that can neither pose, nor answer the question “what is to be done?” can be partly understood.

History, thus, has assumed the function of universal meaningful framework that embraces or underlies the intellectual discourse in Russia (structurally, in the same way as, for example, modernity has assumed such function in the intellectual discourse in the United States). Whereas in the American culture the present strikingly functions as the ultimate judge, in the

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27 Fazil Iskander, “Who Are We?”, in Remaking Russia, p.42.
Russian culture the ultimate judge is history and one has to properly appeal to it, if one has to validate the present. This is where the issue inevitably becomes ideological, and we will turn now to the discussion of the discourse of architecture to see what kinds of practical applications and power manipulations this historical framework has brought about.

III. Discourse of Architecture

If we speak of the disciplinary discourse of architecture, it has to be said that its development was in many ways analogous to that of the disciplinary or, as we called it, normative discourse of history. After the repression of the brief intellectual outburst, associated with the movement of Russian constructivism of the 1920-30's, and the beginning of the authoritarian era of the so called monumental socialist style, the subject of architecture understandably disappeared from the general intellectual discussions and does not enter the picture until the new paradigm in the intellectual discourse of history begins to emerge. Within this new paradigm, which increasingly starts to blur the distinction between history and culture and to merge the topics of humanism, heritage, and values, architecture acquires the new place and status - that of historical artifact, and therefore cultural artifact, which is ultimately something that is to be studied and preserved, rather than something to be designed and
built. This regression of architectural discourse into the aesthetics of preservation from the aesthetics of creation, which, for instance, unmistakably identified the constructivist intellectual discourse, represents essentially the same fundamental shift toward equating the zone of authentic culture with the prerevolutionary past, that came to constitute the ideology of the so called "intellectual class" in the last quarter of the century.

It is perhaps no surprise that it was departments of art history, rather than schools of architecture, that were responsible for the popularization of architecture in this new quality. Schools of architecture were preparing engineers with immediate objectives; departments of art history, now permeated with the new morality of history and humanism, were raising intellectuals who learned that the immediate objectives of architects-engineers threatened to destroy the golden heritage of Russian culture. The contemporary became once again the subject of rejection and condemnation, as a wrong destructive path leading away from the authentic cultural roots. In this light, it perhaps should become clear why the movement of Russian constructivism, which has attracted so much attention in the West, has gained little popularity in Russian intellectual discourse. Not to mention the obvious reason that it was marked by a clear modernist spirit - a sentiment generally unpopular among Russian intellectuals - this movement, one of the major mottoes of which was "not only construct but
reconstruct", 28 was understood, from the point of view of the new humanistic-historical paradigm, as a violent attack on culture. Constructivists did indeed plan to rearrange and rebuild half of the historic center of the city of Moscow. Several of their projects, as it is known, required the destruction of Kremlin walls to clear the space for new architectural ensembles (which, to an average Russian, would seem as much barbarian an idea, as the idea of demolishing the Westminster Abbey would seem to a normal Englishman, the idea of destroying the Notre Dame to a Frenchman, or the Empire State Building to a contemporary American). These grand projects, which were never realized because of the financial problems of the Soviet state in the interwar period and for this reason came later to be known as the famous paper projects, somehow became imprinted in the consciousness of the Russian intelligentsia as the principal association with the ideals of socialist constructivism. Constructivism therefore came to be seen in more ways as a movement of destruction, than a movement of creation. The fact that the phenomenon of constructivism had happened in the Soviet period of time, that is after the Revolution, not before it, certainly added to the negativity with which it was apprehended. If, hypothetically speaking, it could have taken place before the Revolution, there would have been a good chance for it to be "forgiven" by contemporary Russian intellectuals. There are certainly a number

of mediocre and untalented nineteenth-century architects, like Konstantin Ton, for example, who built tasteless buildings in the historic center of Moscow, having ruined older and perhaps nicer structures, and who nevertheless are never blamed by the intellectuals today (save for a few critically thinking art historians). What had been built before the Revolution falls, according to the rules of the new intellectual discourse, into the category of heritage of culture and history. And the tendency certainly is: the deeper into the history, the closer to the authentic and culturally valuable. Every art historian in Russia, for example, will unquestionably praise the eighteenth-century architect Bazhenov who built a number of famous royal palaces that surround St. Petersburg and Moscow and laid the foundation of the distinctive style that was later called Russian baroque. Bazhenov surely deserves the praise, but the interesting fact here is that his last and unfulfilled project, frequently mentioned by biographers as his grand project, was that of demolishing the old medieval Kremlin wall and constructing a new gorgeous palace for Russian tsars on the banks of Moskva river. Needless to say, Bazhenov is certainly not reproached for his intentions in the way the constructivists are, and in his case the destruction of cultural and historical heritage is not an issue because, in a sense, he himself is already viewed as "culture" and "heritage", whereas the constructivists are still perceived as a part of the contemporary with all its "uncultured" nature and malicious drives in regard to the past.
Architects of the 20th century, or, more precisely, of the Soviet period, are thus automatically out of favor, solely by the conventions of the intellectual discourse, while those of the earlier centuries are automatically praised due to the nature of the same conventions. Interestingly enough, they are praised not only as *architects* per se, but also more generally as figures of national pride, as thinkers and builders of *culture* and *history*, as representatives of what is thought to be that much spoken of Russian organic intelligentsia. 29 A typical example, manifesting the effect of such discursive conventions, is evident in the following passage from an essay by Dmitrii Likhachev, a St. Petersburg historian and philologist and prominent intellectual figure in the Soviet Union, who was and still is regarded by many as an exemplary scholar in the humanities. Trying to summarize high cultural points across the entire period of Russian/Soviet history, he comes up with a curious list:

“...taking into account the entire thousand years of Russian culture, I would say that it is undoubtedly “higher than average”. It suffices to mention a few names [further I quote the names only]: Mikhail Lomonosov, Nikolai Lobachevskii, Dmitrii Mendeleev, V. I. Vernadsky, Pyotr Ilich Tchaikovsky, Modest Mussorgsky, Mikhail Glinka, Aleksandr Scriabin, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Sergei Prokofiev, Dmitri Shostakovich, Gavril Derzhavin, Aleksandr Pushkin,

29 Incidentally, this raises an interesting point in respect to the notion of intelligentsia, as it typically circulates in the Soviet/Russian intellectual discourse. The status of *intelligentsia*, which on the one hand implies a rather high standard, not at all easily reachable, can on the other hand be easily granted to a person, regardless of the degree of conforming to such standard, on the merit of being born in the pre-revolutionary Russia. In other words, the general rule of the thumb is: if you want to be called *intelligentsia*, you had better live in the last century.
Nikolai Karamzin, Nikolai Gogol, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Leo Tolstoy, Anton Chekhov, Sergei Bulgakov, Aleksandr Blok, N. I. Voronikhin, V. I. Bazhenov, V. P. Stasov, I. E. Starov, A. I. Shtakenshneider, Petr Chaadaev, Nikolai Danilevskii, Nikolai Fedorov, Vladimir Solov’ev, Semen Frank, Nikolai Berdiaev".30

What is curious about this list in the first place is that it consists almost entirely of the 19th-century figures, with only three persons strictly belonging to the 18th century and a few who belonged in the so called Silver Age and lived through the beginning of the 20th century but none of whom was obviously born after 1917. Considering the opening statement, “taking into account the entire thousand years of Russian culture”, this list may indeed seem a little narrow and in a way puzzling. However, there is really not much to be puzzled about, for what this list truly represents is not an “entire thousand years of Russian culture”, but rather the paradigm of intellectual discourse in the humanities as it has formed in the last quarter of the 20th century. “Culture” has shifted into the pre-revolutionary past, invisibly merged with “history”, and become predominantly associated with the history of intellectual and aesthetic achievements of the 19th century. Although, in Likhachev’s case, it does surprise me to a degree that such an erudite scholar would not mention at least a few obvious names from the 20th century, like Bakhtin, for example, and a few from the earliest periods of history, it only indicates again and again how profoundly

this paradigm has penetrated the foundations of intellectual discourse in contemporary Russia.\textsuperscript{31}

Along with writers, poets, composers, and other intellectuals in the list, Likhachev mentions five architects (Voronikhin, Bazhenov, Stasov, Starov, Shtakenshneider), all of whom were working in St. Petersburg in the 18th-19th centuries. The choice is, again, too trivial both in the temporal and geographical sense, for he could have mentioned, even if for diversity sake only, one or two of the remarkable Moscow architects of the beginning of the 20th century who created numerous, often cited in architectural books, landmarks of the original style that came to be known as \textit{Russian Modèrn}. But even here, in the exclusion of the architects of \textit{Russian Modèrn}, his choice displays a certain influence of the same general paradigm. One of the distinctive features of the style \textit{Modèrn}, as it has been already mentioned in passing in the previous chapter, was its

\textsuperscript{31} Bakhtin, as a matter of fact, must have been excluded from the list of cultural figures by the power of the same reasoning that separates the constructivists from Russian prerevolutionary architects. In Likhachev's view, Bakhtin must be first of all an ordinary Soviet scholar, just like himself (hence belonging to the "contemporary", and therefore "secondary" to the original which is in any way the past before the Russian-Soviet divide), whose mission was not to construct but rather \textit{reconstruct} and \textit{interpret} the cultural foundation that had been created before. That is to say, Bakhtin must be viewed not as an original creator, but simply as a contemporary philologist and literary critic who studied and interpreted the original creations by real cultural figures, such as Dostoevsky or Rabelais. Furthermore, as Likhachev has been always known as one of the major proponents of so called "language cleansing", i.e. the idea of returning the "littered" language of nowadays to the "distilled" norms of the great old times, it is entirely conceivable that he should see in Bakhtin's own language which abounds in neologisms and linguistic inventions the same violent attack on culture that is generally seen by the new humanistic intelligentsia in the constructivist project.
employment of convoluted forms, based on an elaborate engineering design. It is in many ways for this reason that the image of an architect at this point shifts away from the image of an organic intellectual or creator of culture, which is essential within the discourse of history and humanism, and merges with the image of an engineer, that is a technical worker and, so to say, pragmatician of culture. Of course, the obvious connection with modernism probably plays its negative part too, insofar as it generally evokes a contradictory feeling that does not fit with the morality of the new intellectual discourse.

In a word, old Russian architects are ranked, in an aestheticized image of organic intellectuals, among the "timeless" nobility of culture, that is all those great men: writers, poets, composers, artists, and others who created that significant cultural space which is still supposed to constitute an authentic framework of national life and experience, and which therefore is to be by all means preserved and protected from the destructive influence of modernity. This is ultimately the way the subject of architecture was typically understood and taught in the humanities departments of major Russian universities in the 1980-90's. At the Faculty of History of Moscow State University, for example, two courses, required for all students regardless of their area of specialization, were implemented in the mid-1980's. One was called "The Monuments of
History and Culture”, the other “High Points in Russian Culture”. About two thirds of the content of the courses was devoted to the discussion of the old Russian architecture in the general vein described above. Much of the discussion was later even repeated in the introductory course on the history of Russian arts, which was also required for all students regardless of their majors. Furthermore, these courses were normally supported with excursions to the places of architectural interest around the city, organized every semester, and even with annual bus trips to some faraway places, small towns of the Russian North or historic Russian towns of the so called “Golden Ring” (Rostov, Yaroslavl’, Vladimir, Suzdal’, etc.), which preserved much of the old Russian architecture. Such trips were certainly educating, as probably any field trip is, and as a matter of fact, students enjoyed even the courses themselves because they were different from regular courses in many respects (they were visually oriented, slides and pictures were shown all the time, they constantly touched on some elevated cultural topics and appealed to issues of morality and humanism - i.e. they were not academically boring, unlike regular courses in history with their typical stress on the mechanical memorizing of facts and dates). But it is in many ways for this very reason that they were assimilated much more successfully than other subjects. The cultivation of the new intellectual attitude, permeated with

32 “Pamiatniki istorii i kul’tury”, “Shedevry i dostizhenia russkoj kul’tury”. The titles slightly varied in some years but the structure and the content of the courses remained
the spirit of humanism, history, and culture, was effectively accomplished through all these micro-steps in the system of education in the humanities and architecture undoubtedly became an integral part of that system.

During the trips to old Russian towns, which allowed students, in that magic colloquial Russian phrase, to *come into contact with culture* ("prikosnut’sia k kul’ture"), students effectively learned that culture in its very essence was *history*, and that it was first of all subject to preservation. Students were encouraged to analyze the beauty of decaying constructions of the old ages, to interpret, substantiate, and often simply construe their cultural importance in the term papers that they wrote after such trips, and to publish their papers where possible, and thus to help preserve the heritage of Russian culture. In 1988, when I was a student at the Department of Ethnography of Moscow State University, I went on a trip to Rybinsk, an old town in the north of Russia, with a group of other students from the Faculty of History. We were all permeated with the feeling of importance of the old culture, and in a way with a feeling of responsibility for it. We wrote a passionate article for a local newspaper, in which we tried to point out the attention of municipal authorities to an old church in a deteriorating state, presumably built in the seventeenth or eighteenth century and presumably representing the last example of that particular architectural style in the north of Russia. We heatedly argued that the authorities

essentially the same.
should by all means prevent the "tragedy of possible loss of such an important cultural monument". I do not know whether that article had any actual effect (although it is true that a word coming from the major university of the country to a small provincial town could not be left altogether unnoticed), but eventually we received a formal letter of acknowledgment from some municipal office of cultural affairs, together with five rubles for the publication, and that made us, to the extent that I remember it now, proud and happy.

Years later, I happened to get together with two other persons who had been on that student trip to Rybinsk and we got into some friendly disagreement about the old newspaper article as we recalled that funny event. One person, who had spent some time abroad in Hungary and just returned to Moscow, tended to remember that event indeed as a funny story from our student life and seconded my own thoughts. We laughed and wondered what on Earth had possessed us to so lose common sense as to seriously argue for the restoration of a mediocre construction which, if restored, would be absolutely dysfunctional today even as a church. More importantly, how did we argue for a totally unreasonable investment in such restoration in the town which suffered from a dire lack of cafes and public places and where people had literally nowhere to go? The other person, who became an art historian, did not seem to share our thoughts and called us "westernized pragmaticians", saying that we lost the spirit and faith that we had once had.
The issue that arises from this story is central to the politics of intellectual "community" in Russia in two principal ways. First, the majority of people who have a background in the humanities typically have a wonderful sensibility toward the culture that no longer exists, but have no sense of the actual reality that surrounds them. Secondly, they uniformly talk in abstract terms of spirit and faith where one should talk in concrete terms of problems and decisions. And this is ultimately where the politics starts to learn from the intellectuals and finds one of those Foucauldian strategic resources which open an advantageous space for power maneuvers.

Indeed, however unreasonable the intellectuals' claims and longings for the return of the past sometimes might seem to the ruling power, in the end they often prove cheaper to satisfy than economic and social needs of the citizens. Furthermore, if handled in the right way, they often prove extraordinarily beneficial to the popular image of the power, for showing how it cares about culture and history, the power achieves results that are both spectacular and immediate, unlike the results of social reforms that always come slow, if come at all, and normally do not stir up such public excitement. Restoring an old church is an act that involves substantially less money and efforts than the repairing of old deteriorating city roads, for example, and that paradoxically attracts more social attention and approval, for people normally tend to take for granted the duties of the government to perform public works or carry out social reforms.
The strategy that the government has successfully learned to adopt under such circumstances is to invest a reasonable effort in the populist play on the elevated status of history and culture in the social discourse, and to ignore its taken-for-granted duties where possible.

An immediate example that comes to mind is the notorious restoration of the Church of Christ the Savior in Moscow in 1996-97, which received a truly immense coverage in the media and earned much glory to Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov, who managed to turn the process of architectural restoration into a national show that evoked the sentiment of faith, spirit, history, and culture so successfully as to even allow Luzhkov to collect some money for the restoration from the public itself. Newspapers and TV news from time to time conveyed touching stories about contributions that came to the restoration fund from the poor and old people. A popular Moscow newspaper Moskovskii komsomolets, for example, placed in one of its weekend editions an article entitled, “Muscovites donate their gold teeth for the sake of the Church”. It cannot be said with a positive degree of certainty how much behind such stories was facts and how much an intention to promote the myth, but what is of interest to us here is a different issue. A truly interesting fact is that not long after the ceremonial opening of the newly restored Church of Christ the Savior, in the Spring of 1998

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a major collapse of a city road occurred in the very center of Moscow, on Dmitrovka street, which had always been a busy pedestrian and city transportation way. The road collapsed more than fifteen feet underground, luckily having trapped only two vehicles and no pedestrians. The connection between the restoration of the Church of Christ the Savior and the Dmitrovka accident indeed may be said to be a direct one, representing priorities in municipal policy (especially considering the fact that there has been much talk in the past years about the necessity of inspecting the state of underground communications and soil depression in Moscow).

Another clear example of this ideological strategy in action is evident in Hedrick Smith's account of his encounter with Vladimir Galitsky, an architect and government administrator who was engaged in the same restoration of old Russian churches in the end of the 1980's. Hedrick Smith, interestingly, connects the rising interest in restoring old churches to the spread of Orthodox nationalist feeling in Gorbachev's Russia, but he does not analyze it in broader terms of power and the politics of intellectual discourse and, in my opinion, misses half of the issue. Galitsky tells Hedrick Smith a passionate story - which is, I would like to emphasize again, just another typical manifestation of this new paradigm in the intelligentsia's thinking - about some eighteenth-century church, allegedly architecturally unique, which is falling into decay, hidden in the midst of regular Moscow housing blocks. He, as is usually the case, resorts in the end to an
interesting argument of counterposing the beauty of the old church to the ugliness of socialist living quarters:

"Look at all those deformities, those ugly boxes... I dislike them intensely... It is important to me personally to restore such beauty, and to know that after our work is done, people can enjoy this beauty... It is important to me because I love history - the history of the Russian people, of other nations. I feel great respect for historic landmarks. So it was very important to me to help restore it. It was created by the people and the people need it back. This history will help people to be educated, to develop their morality, their culture".34

Clearly, what Galitsky fails to acknowledge as a real problem are the ugly living conditions for average people. That is to say, he acknowledges it in a way, but his solution is that of a typical Russian intellectual who reasons that the aesthetics of the past should somehow define the forms of the aesthetics of the future. People who suffer should be given some abstract beauty from the old ages to contemplate, which will fill their souls with harmony, educate them and make them happy. Ultimately, what students in the humanities learn at universities develops here into a conscious practical stance. Social issues are seen through the abstract prism of spirit and morality and common sense appears to be absurdly lost. Indeed, who but a person working as a government administrator and architect can make a real difference and fix the problem of "all those deformities, those ugly boxes"? Why not design and build a new beautiful and aesthetically pleasing apartment complex, which would solve both the
problem of beauty in the city and the problem of living conditions? It seems like an obvious thought, but this obvious thought, as I have been trying to show, contradicts not just the direction and ideals, but the very bases and founding rules of the intellectual discourse in contemporary Russia. It is a sad fact, but people like Galitsky, who have enough power and are actually in position to change things, almost always happen to be, due to the structure of education and employment, those most profoundly infected with the spirit of this intellectual discourse. They either fail to notice the needs of the contemporary moment, or consciously ignore them for ideological reasons.

The conservative ideological aspect of the spreading intelligentsia's attitude toward associating architecture with culture was noticed and encouraged by the Soviet authorities, in fact, before perestroika. The late 1970's and 1980's saw a gradual increase in the number of books, written on the subject of historical architecture in a popularizing manner. In the beginning, most of these books were published by the major State publishing houses, but eventually the popularity of this genre successfully spread to the regional publishers, and one could hardly think of any city in Russia that did not have at least a couple of local publications on the landmarks of its historical architecture by the mid-1980's. Very often, the publishing of such books was sponsored directly by the municipal authorities and had to do with the activities of an organization, known

as VOOPIK, which, strictly speaking, manifested a legalized administrative interest of the authorities in the matter. VOOPIK stood for the "All-Russian Society for the Preservation of Historical and Cultural Monuments", and the very fact of its formation on the national scale indicated that the government decided to place the new cultural interests of the intelligentsia under control.

As a controlling institution, VOOPIK turned to be a success. It effectively bureaucratized the humanitarian discourse of the intelligentsia, having neutralized its critical dimension and having turned it essentially into a reactionary campaign for the conservation of culture. Some left-oriented Russian critics did comment on the conservative nature of VOOPIK in the 1980's, but, surprisingly, their criticisms implied that the conservatism of VOOPIK somehow had to do with its failure to protect enough historical monuments. One may, again, only wonder at the level of penetration of this new historical paradigm into the intellectual consciousness. Boris Kagarlitsky, for example, writes that, "at the end of the Brezhnev era, right-wing Russian nationalists and anti-Semites secured complete control of this society... [which was] more interested in combating Jews and freemasons than in preserving and restoring the heritage".35 He goes on further to counterpose to VOOPIK some progressive unofficial "movement for the defense of monuments which arose in the eighties" and

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which became “a real alternative to the official body”. As an example of the real struggle for the preservation of culture, he describes the following heroic event:

“In 1986, when it was decided in Moscow to demolish the seventeenth-century Shcherbakov Palaces, a group of students and schoolchildren, led by Kirill Parfenov, occupied the building and held it for two months. As a result, not only were the Shcherbakov Palaces saved but they remained in the hands of the ‘invaders’. Parfenov himself appeared on the TV programme Twelfth Floor and spoke of the need to carry on the struggle to preserve the capital’s historic aspect”.

There are several interesting issues that could be pointed out in this passage. One is certainly the involvement of schoolchildren and students in the action, which on the one hand was evidently just a political tool for Parfenov, but on the other, again, tells much about the education in the humanities and reproduction of cultural ideals. Another is the fact that the “invaders” got hold of the building, which is presented as a positive development in the “heroic” context of the passage, but otherwise makes little sense, since it is very unclear what good practical use a group of students and intellectuals can make of an old dysfunctional building. And the last issue, which should be actually the first as a matter of fact, is that the Shcherbakov Palaces is indeed a mediocre and rather unattractive building which aimlessly takes space in the busy district of Moscow, being totally disfunctional within the context of the social life of contemporary metropolis.

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36 Boris Kagarlitsky, The Thinking Reed, p.334.
The fact that VOOPIK was reluctant to protect this particular building, thus, does only certain credit to it, if the matter is to be considered seriously. However, this case has to be viewed as an exception from the rule, and both VOOPIK and the alternative movements in the end represent essentially the same intellectual rejection of modernity on the social scale, that constituted a dominant trend in the Russian culture of the last quarter of the century. The chairman of VOOPIK’s Moscow branch, Aleksandr Trofimov, interviewed by Hedrick Smith, says the same already familiar things:

“Destruction of the old architecture was a terrible thing... Ancient Moscow cannot be restored... This disturbs our people, and so masses of people have come to our organization, because there is a certain instinct for self-preservation in people... If our national culture is alive, we can sleep peacefully. But if it is not, our nation will disappear. If the progress of our cultural restoration remains as slow as it has been, we will risk, if not total disappearance, then the loss of our national cultural face”.

Thus, it is again the process of cultural restoration that is supposed to determine the progress of national life. The idea of creation as a moving force remains totally alien to the intellectual consciousness, for within the paradigm of thinking in which history is fundamentally identified with culture, creation unconditionally equates with re-creation, that is reconstruction, an unacceptable idea implying that something older, and therefore more historically valuable, must be destroyed to give way to something newer which, by definition, is going

to be of less cultural value. The persistence of this axiomatic concept in the intellectual and, to a large extent, broader social thinking may be certainly identified as one of the major predicaments of the late Soviet/new Russian culture, for it actually spread far beyond the particular area of architecture, having saturated all areas of the intellectual discourse to one or another degree. In the discourse of architecture it simply found an extreme expression, perhaps due to the specific tangible quality of the built environment and its dramatic involvement in the everyday. One has only to pick up a random issue of a Sunday metropolitan newspaper in Russia to locate an immediate trace of this omnipresent architectural discourse - there are all chances one would encounter either a nostalgic essay under the title, like "Everyday Charm of the Old Russian Aristocratic Estate", 38 or a "critical" voice of a typical intellectual or scholar in the humanities: "This Terrifying Word Reconstruction - It Is under Its Cover That the Old Moscow Is Being Destroyed". 39

The real issue that has come to characterize the 1990's, however, is that such "critical" statements seem to no longer represent anything but the discourse itself, because in reality the Old Moscow is not being destroyed anymore. On the contrary, it is restored on such overwhelming scale that has never been the case before. If from 1965 to 1972 allocations to the restoration budget slowly grew

from 2 to 4 million rubles, after 1976 they suddenly jumped to 15 million, and reached 25 million rubles already in 1984.\textsuperscript{40} A pedestrian, walking about small streets of the historic center of Moscow, such as Arbat, Volkhonka, and others, may only look around and wonder at the amount of restoration work that is taking place these days. As a result of long and successful activity of organizations, like VOOPIK, thousands of pre-revolutionary buildings came to be marked under the category “monument of history and culture”, which granted them an officially protected status and placed them in that magical area that was usually described in the Soviet ideolanguage as \textit{vsenarodnoe dostoianie} [“property and heritage of all people”].\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{39} Vadim Apenin, “Eto strashnoe slovo \textit{rekonstruktia} - imенно под его прикрытием unichtozhaetsia staraia Moskva,” Nezavisimaiia gazeta, no.151 (16 August 1996).


\textsuperscript{41} The phrase \textit{vsenarodnoe dostoianie}, like many others, employed by the Soviet ideolanguage, is an interesting case. English dictionaries translate the word \textit{dostoinie} solely as “property”, and that was indeed the original meaning of the word in the Russian language of the older centuries. In contemporary Russian, however, a substantial shift in the meaning of the word has occurred, caused most likely by the acceptance of another word, \textit{sobstvennost'}, as a legal term for “property”, and the wider social use of the latter in all situations. \textit{Dostoinie}, when used to imply “property” in its usual sense, sounds old-fashioned and a little awkward today. As is the frequent case with many old-fashioned words, it has acquired a figural and, to an extent, exalted sense, and it is casually used to refer to something in one’s possession in an elevated manner, mostly to something that one is particularly proud of. For example, when a writer refers to her books as her \textit{sobstvennost'}, it means only that her books are her property. When, on the other hand, she refers to them as her \textit{dostoinie}, it means that her books are her spiritual heritage and ultimately something she is proud of. The sense of “property” per se, thus, normally gets lost in \textit{dostoinie}'s modern usage, and replaced by the sense of “heritage”, or an “object of pride”. The choice of the old word \textit{dostoinie} by the Soviet authorities, therefore, was a subtle one. The category \textit{vsenarodnoe dostoianie} clearly meant that the
Although some of the buildings that came under the protected status were unquestionably masterpieces of the old epoch or important landmarks which deserved restoration, a good half of these buildings composed a dull mass of typical nineteenth or eighteenth-century constructions, inelegant, unattractive, and of no apparent architectural value, which were marked as "monuments of history and culture" only because some important figure from the past, like Pushkin or Tolstoy, happened to dine there once as a guest. Needless to say, all buildings where Lenin or other leaders of the communist revolution set their foot were similarly counted as "monuments of history and culture" under the Soviet regime. Curiously, although perestroika years have dramatically changed the attitude towards the Bolsheviks and many of the Soviet memorial boards, saying things like, "V. I. Lenin gave a speech in this building in 1918. Monument of history and culture. Protected by law," were removed during the late 1980's and 1990's, the buildings themselves apparently still remain under the protected status, since one might guess that it were not the boards themselves that actually protected the buildings but rather some bureaucratic municipal records - and it is truly hard to imagine what might cause any change in the latter, except fire or flood. Most of these buildings are slowly decaying today, because the priorities of financing the process of restoration are often ideological and directed to those old Russian architecture was "people's heritage", and that it was ultimately something people should be proud of, but at the same time it did not really imply that it was
landmarks which have an unmistakable architectural value, or otherwise a significant historical importance in the eyes of the larger public (which was evidently the case with the mentioned Church of Christ the Savior, a rather mediocre construction in architectural terms, which nevertheless was for many reasons thought of as a historic landmark of paramount importance). It is also likely that there are an increasing number of private investors who would like to purchase the spot of one of such decaying buildings, clear it up and construct a new properly equipped contemporary building that would attract growing businesses, but who are not allowed to do so simply because the decaying building is still in the roster of protected "monuments". In 1991 Viktor Grishin, a former head of the administration of the city of Moscow, commented on the growing influence and interference of VOOPIK in all kinds of city management matters:

"It was practically impossible to do anything in Moscow with a structure that presented any sort of interest without incurring the active interference of the Society [VOOPIK]. I remember how on one street, Sadovaya-Karetnaya, a stone pedestal stood in the middle of the sidewalk. We thought that we had better tear it down - it was right in the center of the sidewalk, you see, and it was getting in the way. But no way, the Society [VOOPIK] got its dander up and claimed this was a valuable antiquity. And what do you think happened? We had to retreat".  

“people’s property”, since no one said it was sobstvennost’ (i.e. “property” as such).  
The intellectual fight for the preservation of history and the fear of "reconstruction" are, thus, assuming pathological dimensions and becoming both an obstacle to the normal growth of business and a general impediment in the city culture. Most of the "historically" protected buildings are of no interest to a pedestrian, as they are neither aesthetically appealing nor functionally useful in as much as they cannot effectively host even a cafe or a small store. Nevertheless, they are preserved, despite the interests of modern life, solely because the dominant paradigm in the intellectual discourse dictates that "we must preserve the smallest detail of the past we could be proud of". This paradigm dictates, with a surprising degree of authority, that it is only the past that can be an object of cultural pride. The present cannot become such an object because the contemporary has simply no cultural value. One cannot possibly build something to be proud of, for everything one can be proud of has been already built. Culture is given to people and the proper way to treat it is not to change it, not to continue or prolong it, but to preserve it. This principle is the core of the unwritten intellectual doctrine that constitutes the world view and cultural ideology of the Russian society of the last quarter of the 20th century. Vladimir Papernyi in his earlier mentioned book Kul'tura Dva comes essentially to the same conclusion when he says, "Nobody creates in the culture-2 [late Soviet culture], because everybody is only trying to grope for a way to the
already created and given. This explains the fervor of the negative attitude of the
culture-2 toward individual creativity, authorship, and talent".43

The discourse of architecture in Russia obviously reflects the cultural
struggle of tradition against modernity. For the sake of objectivity, it should be
said that such type of discourse is not a specifically Russian phenomenon, but
rather a mainstream aspect of cultural politics in many European states. This is
undoubtedly one of the reasons why continental thinkers, like Baudrillard or
Foucault, devote much attention to the subject of architecture. The case of the
United States is quite different, in the first instance because the architecture in the
United States almost in its entirety is a mirror of modernity. The critical
discourse of architecture has only recently emerged as a distinctive phenomenon
in the American intellectual milieu and this has been related largely to the
apprehension of the coming postmodern age. One could say therefore that the
discourse of architecture in the United States reflects the struggle of modernity
with postmodernity, which is a struggle of a different order than that of tradition
with modernity (where by tradition we imply a certain social primordialism or
medievalism as an encompassing cultural paradigm).

Foucault on several occasions speaks openly against the traditional order
of organized historical architecture, saying that the historical reference often
appears today as one of the principal forms of oppression from which one has to

constantly liberate oneself. This discourse of historicity, says Foucault, is aimed at provoking "an inclination to seek out some cheap form of archaism or some imaginary past forms of happiness that people did not, in fact, have at all".\textsuperscript{44} This side of the historical discourse, pointed out by Foucault, is another important area which attracts the interests of the power, as a convenient strategic resource for ideological manipulations. In the Russian case, it has been perhaps more actively employed in the provinces than in the metropolitan cities, like St. Petersburg or Moscow, in which, as we have seen, the movement for the preservation of history and architecture essentially developed into a large-scale intellectual and administrative campaign. Smaller towns, as a rule, did not have sufficient financial resources to support what could be properly called a restoration "campaign", nor did they have enough intellectual resources to organize a fight for such a campaign. Most of the old architectural landmarks in these towns, thus, remained in a deteriorating condition. Nonetheless, they never ceased to be an object of close attention on the part of the authorities who successfully learned the lessons, or perhaps simply followed the example, of how the metropolitan authorities handled the issue of all these old architectural ruins and decaying churches. Being unable or for some reason reluctant to actually restore them, provincial authorities still invested enough attempts in

popularizing them as some magically important vestiges of "the old Rome that once was". In colleges all across the country, courses and occasionally even departments of local history began to be introduced to cover that area of studies, which suddenly assumed unusual importance. Local historians and art critics were encouraged to write fulsome articles and books about these pre-revolutionary landmarks. Such books were marked by the naive provincial overvaluing, which metropolitan scholars often found comical and amusing.\textsuperscript{45} But, however unreal or overexaggerated these descriptions might be, from the authorities' point of view they served their purpose perfectly - and the purpose was, as Foucault aptly noted, to evoke a "cheap form of archaism or some imaginary past forms of happiness", and a patriotic feeling of pride that should arise in the town inhabitants solely from the presence of those sacred "Roman ruins" in a nearby neighborhood.

Indeed, it is hard to say why the dwellers of typical central Russian towns, such as Rostov, Vladimir, Tula, or Yaroslavl', should be fond or proud of their hometowns, given the fact that their economy has been for long years in the state of profound depression and the living conditions have been constantly

\textsuperscript{45} It is not that the metropolitan scholarship was free of cultural overvaluing - in fact, metropolitan scholars were probably even more prone to it than their provincial colleagues. The difference was, however, that the metropolitan kind of overvaluing was traditionally based on a certain degree of sophistication and the complexity of argument, whereas the provincial kind was typically straightforward and the regular arguments
worsening. But the effect of the ideological hypnosis of “history and culture”
turns out to be so persuasive that, confronted with a question why they are
proud of their towns, a great many of the dwellers will sincerely respond,
“because of the unique old Russian architecture that we have here”. A dweller of
Rostov will unmistakably bring up the Rostov Kremlin which has preserved
constructions “even older than some in the Moscow Kremlin”; and a dweller of
Vladimir will typically point out to the Pokrova na Nerli church which is “the best
in all of Russia”. It is useless to ask how these constructions actually make their
lives better. The fact is, they do not. But the answer one will be given will never
acknowledge this fact - it will be either filled with already familiar words about
cultural heritage and morality, or, in a more reflexive and sincere case, will state
that the sense of cultural importance and presence of such beauty nearby makes
them feel a little better and in a way compensates for the hardships of life.

The issue ultimately is that the imaginary compensation for hardship is an
attractive idea for a government that is unable to compensate for hardship in any
practical way. In the cities and towns, where modern conditions are frustrating
and leave little to be proud of, ideological discourses of history and architecture
are increasingly exploited by the authorities as a means to establish and
strengthen an imaginary spiritual bond between the citizens and their living

involved in it were: “it is good because it is the best”, or “this is unique because even
Moscow does not have it”.

environments. Such discourses are aimed at provoking a false feeling of pride and faith in some idealized facts of history, some bright and happy mythical past that hides behind all these incredibly important architectural landmarks which are supposed to fill people with the sense of awe and beauty and compensate for their life in poverty and slums.

A photo below is an example of how these discourses typically circulate in the media. It is an advertisement page from the popular Russian magazine *Liza,*
which by its content may be roughly equivalent to a magazine like Good Housekeeping in the US. Liza is heavily targeted at the small town population, rather than metropolitan audiences. The page draws the reader’s attention to a small town Khot’kovo, situated in the central Russia, and apparently invites everybody to visit the place. Everything appears in the advertisement according to the prescriptions of historical and architectural discourse. Two thirds of the description is a diligent explanation of Khot’kovo’s historical importance, which presumably lies in the fact that no pilgrim, going in the past from Moscow to Troitse-Sergieva Lavra (a famous monastery that served as an Orthodox “Mecca” in old Russia), could possibly avoid this place on their way. “In the past,” the opening paragraph states, “Khot’kovo was allotted a very important role of a connecting link between Moscow and Troitse-Sergieva Lavra”. The visual image takes on the architectural aspect. In the background of the large picture, one can see a golden dome of some old Russian church, which has become an almost obligatory element within the new system of cultural representation. One of the smaller pictures displays an old monastery wall and, upon a closer look, its decaying condition can be detected even without a magnifying glass. The picture next to it shows a regular railroad bridge, which indicates merely that there was nothing else to show in the town. Finally, the sentimental title line of the page: “Khot’kovo: A Little Corner Dear to Your Heart” and the idyllic image of two little goats at the bottom crown the structure of representation in its entirety,
for what they are supposed to accomplish is certainly that very task, pointed out by Foucault, of evoking in the minds of the reader some forms of cheap archaism, some imaginary forms of happiness, associated with the past, that are never the case in reality. Indeed, the reality of the present is not shown in the picture, for it ultimately consists in the fact that Khot'kovo is just a typical dirty central Russian village which probably suffers from the loss of active working population and is trying to attract the interest of investors by resorting to the appealing cultural trick of history and architecture.

Examples, similar to the one described above, are countless in the Russian press. The approach that they all demonstrate appears surprisingly unambiguous, once one starts analyzing it in the terms of what we have defined here as the general cultural-historical paradigm in the intellectual and broader social discourse. The values of the past persist in the social imaginary, even though the needs of the present seem to come into a substantial disagreement and contradiction with these values. When such contradiction is felt it is usually resolved in favor of the past to the detriment of the interests of modernity. There certainly are some exceptions to this rule, but in the intellectual realm "modernists" continue to be significantly outnumbered by "traditionalists", and in most cultural litigations the past invariably turns out to be a plaintiff with a better attorney and the present traditionally ends up paying for damages.
IV. Effects of the New Paradigm

The effects of the new intellectual paradigm in Russia and its strategic appropriation by the ruling authorities are transparent not only in the restoration of the old architectural landmarks but in the process of contemporary construction in the cities as well. They are especially salient in the case of the elite, but otherwise mediocre, Moscow architect Zurab Tsereteli who, being connected with the municipal authorities (or perhaps one should say, being one of the municipal authorities), has created a large number of monuments in the city in the 1990’s. The succession of these monuments displays an interesting retrograde temporal tendency, synchronous with the rise of populist interest of the authorities in the restoration of cultural heritage. In this case, the tendency points deeper and deeper into the past. First, Tsereteli takes part in the project of constructing a monument to General Zhukov (finally designed by Viacheslav Klykov), a popular hero of the World War II in the public memory. His next project falls two centuries back to the times of Peter the Great whose figure he decides to immortalize on the banks of the Moskva river. Finally, after that he undertakes a journey into the “depths of national memories”, into the archaic times of mythical folk figures whose sculptures he meaningfully arranges in the Aleksandrovskii garden, next to Kremlin, that is to the very center of the Russian empire.
Although some Western critics choose to see in these myth and fairy-tale figures, put next to Kremlin, the "infantilization" or "MacDonaldization" of Russian politics, and some Russian journalists, trying to be original, classify it as the "politics of surrealism",46 I would still argue that the phenomenon, appropriately seen within the Russian context, reflects the natural, and indeed hardly surprising, continuation of the same general move toward the ideological historicizing of culture that can be detected in many other phenomena occurring in the Russian society of nowadays.

If one should touch on the realm of political symbolism, the first example that comes to mind is Yeltsin’s abolishing of the old Soviet coat of arms in 1993 and introducing of the "new" one which represented a medieval Russian (copied from the still older Byzantine) golden eagle with two heads and three crowns. In Kagarlitsky’s subtle phrase, "The medieval bird was plucked out of three hundred years of oblivion because the country’s coat of arms was supposed to be ‘brought into accordance with the present-day conception of Russian statehood’."47 Further, it became widespread and fashionable among the former communist nomenklatura and government authorities of lower levels to dress in the outfit of old Russian nobility and wear all kinds of ancient regalia that made

no sense in the contemporary social environment and only looked comic and
grotesque. This show was typically justified in terms of a necessity to return at
last to the national traditions, repressed by the Soviets, but ironically it were the
same former "Soviets" that had used to repress the traditions a decade earlier
who now heatedly argued for their return. And, of course, the only trivial
reason to all that was, as Kagarlitsky noted, that "the barbaric Russian official
and the semi-criminal entrepreneur dreamed of at last securing their power and
privilege with the help of the well-tried traditional symbols of Russian
autocracy". The interest in all things aristocratic and historical that emerged by
the mid-1980's as an intellectual infatuation, thus, was again strategically picked
up by the ruling authorities at the appropriate moment:

"The whole point about tradition is its continuity. Understanding
this, the nomenklatura sought assiduously to depict itself as the
legitimate heir of the old ruling classes. 'Councils of the nobility',
'Cossack circles' and 'unions of descendants of merchants' began
appearing everywhere; here former Komsomol functionaries, local
heads of administration and young careerists sat in state,
pantomime actors in frock coats and old uniforms".49

The development of Russian business in the late 1980's and the 1990's
manifested the same preoccupation with the historical themes. Private
companies tried their best to demonstrate the pre-revolutionary origins of their
enterprises, although in most cases the common sense alone should have been

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48 Boris Kagarlitsky, *Restoration in Russia*, p.25.
49 Ibid., p.25.
enough to disclose the absurd nature of their statements. At the risk of overquoting, I would like to cite a paragraph from Kagarlitsky’s account, because it presents what should be considered the most typical example of how new independent companies handle the issue of their origins:

“The Sviridoff company in its advertising clips reported with pride on its ‘five hundred years of prosperity’. After the revolution the Sviridoff merchants had supposedly fled from Russia to Australia, had set up in business there, and were now repatriating their operations. And indeed, in Australia and the US there are firms with this name, though people there would be astonished to learn from Russian television broadcasts that the Sviridoff company was ‘a leader of the Australian financial market’. In their newspaper advertisements the newly appeared Australians could not even manage the correct spelling for the city of ‘Melbourne’. Moreover, the firm had been established not in the aftermath of the Russian revolution, but towards the end of perestroika. The family behind it was undoubtedly influential; however, it was not a family of old-time merchants, but of thoroughly modern Soviet industrial managers. One Sviridoff had been Minister of Heavy Machine Building of Ukraine, while the other had been the director of the Novokramatorskiy Metallurgical Combine”.

Other companies that could not forge a successful proof of their prerevolutionary origins tried at least to invent a name for themselves that would sound reminiscent of the old Russia. Such was, for example, the case with the new Russian bank Imperial which was constantly advertised in TV and other media commercials through a series of historical sujetts associated with the old Russian empire. One of the gas and auto-repair stations in Moscow was named Sorokin i K., which was a pre-revolutionary way of naming companies (it meant
"Sorokin and company") and which fell out of use during the years of the Soviet regime. Scrolling through the magazines, one might come across even a web-designing company (one might think that younger people in the computer industry would not fall into the historical trap!) with the name Kalita - which is the last name of the Russian tsar of medieval times Ivan Kalita.51 A great number of cafes and small shops have changed their names in various ways, from normal contemporary Chainaia ("tea-room") to Chaikhana (same meaning, but with an old-fashioned exotic ring), or from Kofeinaia ("cafe") to Kofeinia (again, the same word but with the pre-revolutionary spelling), and so on.

As of this date, the strategic political investment in the past and history continues. Naturally, it will continue as long as the intellectual and broader social discourse remains locked within the framework of "history as culture". Needless to say, the authorities are interested not just in using this framework to their advantage, but also in strengthening it to a certain degree. The indications of that might be detected in various "humanitarian campaigns" of the government authorities, which are often loudly advertised, but in reality rarely seem to serve other purposes than the strengthening of the ideological framework of the social discourse and the authorities' own public image. For instance, in 1997, Moscow mayor Luzhkov decided to give 500 million rubles from the budget to support

50 Boris Kagarlitsky, Restoration in Russia, p.26.
the search for the allegedly lost library of Russian tsar Ivan the Terrible. The
decision, to a little surprise, has been praised in the media as an exemplary
humanitarian action. A curious thing about the coverage, though, was that it
remained unclear to whom exactly Luzhkov gave the money; it was only said
that it was given to a "search committee" which was also provided with an
appropriate office space and equipment. But that aside, the major question that
arises here is, why at the time when the city universities, especially the
humanities departments, suffer from a dire lack of resources, computers, and
office space, the mayor should allocate 500 million rubles, office space, and these
much needed computers for the search of some fifteenth-century manuscripts
that in the first instance have not been even proven to exist, and that, secondly,
even if miraculously found, no historian would be able to study anyway for the
lack of normal working conditions? This question was unsurprisingly avoided in
the press, with the exception of one critical article that appeared in the Itogi
magazine and commented on the suspicious nature of this "humanitarian
action", pointing out that the search for the lost library looked actually more like
a search for symbolic roots which could help legitimize the power in the eyes of
the public.\footnote{Sergei Ivanov, “Pod flagom Liberei,” Itogi, no.39 (7 October 1997), p.53.}

These questions remain unanswered in Russian discourse. But how can
one properly criticize the government for its reasoning that the lost library is
more important than the needs of living people, if the same kind of reasoning paradoxically continues to permeate most of the educated intelligentsia who hold on to their humanistic conviction that the lost library is precisely what constitutes the needs of the people? When professor Dmitrii Likhachev, already mentioned authority in the humanities in Russia, and his interviewer Sergei Bychkov discuss on the pages of a popular Moscow newspaper the issue of depressing conditions in historic small towns of Moscow region, they come to remarkably similar conclusions. They reason that the contemporary depression in these towns is caused by the loss of intellectual culture that had been formerly, in the pre-revolutionary Russia, spread around by aristocratic estates, located in these towns. They pick on one of such estates, Muranovo, and talk about its educational role. "Russian culture," says Likhachev, "was library-oriented. This had been inherited from the ancient ages of Russia when there had not been universities, but had been great monastery and church libraries. Russia was not just a literate country, but was a country that liked to read. Aristocratic estates were spreading religious culture, for there was a church at every estate, as was the case with Muranovo." Sergei Bychkov concludes the thought, saying that unfortunately the building of the former church in Muranovo "still functions as a public storage today... [and] the destiny of the richest Muranovo library remains
unknown... With the death of Muranovo, the neighboring population grows wilder too".53

So, the underlying theme, as is usually the case in most intellectual speculations on the subject of history, is that the old aristocratic Russia embodied the ideal of enlightenment, education, and culture, and since then people have been growing wilder and wilder. The return to the ideas of the past, accordingly, is seen as the road of salvation. It might be interesting to note, though, that even the return to the ideals of the past as a cultural goal might be accomplished in different ways, and might imply different approaches. Thus, one might think about creating some new educational or cultural institutions in those small towns, which could successfully perform the role, presumably successfully performed by the aristocratic estates in the past. In fact, this seems to be a reasonable approach. This approach, however, is not what the intelligentsia have in mind, for it probably involves too much dirty and boring bureaucratic work in the first instance, but, more importantly, does not resolve the issue as the intelligentsia see it. The issue, one should understand that, is not that “people grow wilder”, but rather that church libraries are lost and ultimately that the old estates that had once belonged to the aristocratic intelligentsia of the past are no more in possession of the intelligentsia of nowadays. The fact that “people grow wilder” is just a side effect of the real issue, and is usually brought up merely as

an argument in support of the importance of restoring old estates and churches. This is clearly detectable in the above-cited Sergei Bychkov's interview in which the center of attention is naturally the Muranovo estate, where the death of the monument maps onto the way in which "the neighboring population grows still wilder". By and large, the intelligentsia are just pursuing their recurrent dream of getting hold of old aristocratic living quarters and spending their time there in relaxation, reading interesting books from the nearby church library and having a pleasant evening tea on the porch - that is to say, pursuing what in their imagination constitutes a life of a good old enlightened intellectual. It is a curious episode, but the end of Bychkov's interview with Likhachev is indeed a moving sentimental description of how after the conversation they went to Likhachev's dacha and, in the company of some other intellectuals, had pleasant evening tea.

The problem of typical dreams and ideals of the intelligentsia is an interesting topic per se, and I will discuss it briefly in the following chapter, but here I would like to emphasize again that it appears culturally important because it is directly connected with the larger structures of the social discourse. The intelligentsia was responsible for the substantial transformation of the social discourse in Russia of the last quarter of the 20th century in such a way that it reversed the ideological grounds of the traditional Soviet discourse with its emphasis on the utopias of the future, and powerfully restructured them around
the utopias of the past. The traditional ideology of the Soviet discourse, dictating that "the bright future will come as a redemption or atonement for some unclear past", gave way to the new cultural ideology, preaching that "the bright past will atone for the uncertainties of the future". Indeed, where but in the cultural discourse of the late 20th-century Russia can one encounter magazine headlines with such paradoxical titles as "The Majestic Russian Past Will Surpass the Most Daring Expectations in the Future".54

The efforts of the intellectuals have resulted in the formation of a specific discursive paradigm within which, in Foucault's words, history becomes not just one of the human sciences but rather a favorable environment, both privileged and dangerous, where other human sciences can exist. It is privileged insofar as it is empowered to impose its own regulations and determine "the cultural area in which [this or] that branch of knowledge can be recognized as having validity". It is dangerous because it "surrounds the sciences of man with a frontier that limits them and destroys, from the outset, their claim to validity".55

The effects of this development were apparent in that a number of the humanities and social sciences in Russia fell in their status and became subordinate to the discipline of history. The connection with the moral quest for

values and ethical struggle for cultural heritage turned to be the final factor which, in Michel de Certeau’s phrase, put history “in the vanguard of the sciences as the present fiction of what they are only partially able to achieve”.\textsuperscript{56} The pedagogical superiority of history, thus established in the intellectual discourse, gradually influenced the direction and ideals of public education on all levels. The interaction with neighboring discourses of history of arts and architecture was instrumental in producing a fusion of categories “history”, “culture”, and “humanism” as an integral paradigm of intellectual and in many ways broader social thinking. The strategic ideological appropriation of this paradigm by the ruling power has completed the establishment of a powerful cultural-ideological framework which, interestingly, is reminiscent of what three decades ago sir Karl Popper criticized as “the social order of moral historicism”, that is that kind of encompassing positivist cultural-historical morality which makes “a moral criticism of the existing state of affairs impossible, since this state itself determines the moral standard of things”.\textsuperscript{57} However different might have been the society at which he aimed his criticism, the contemporary Russian culture, maybe in an inverse, strange, and paradoxical way, still illustrates his theoretical insight.

Chapter 4

Power, Culture, and Changes in Values and Ideals

The subject of values and ideals, it should be perhaps noted from the outset, is too broad a topic to treat thoroughly within the format of a dissertation chapter for various reasons. First of all, in no modern developed society is there a single given set of values and ideals that could be unquestionably generalized, except maybe for the circle of so called universal human values, but even that has been the subject of heated discussions in anthropology throughout the century. There are values of different social classes and values of different ethnic groups, there are imaginary values and immediate real-life ones, there are normative values, imposed by ideologies, and alternative ones that stand in opposition to the normative social ideals, and so forth. For this reason, it is necessary to stress that the discussion in this chapter will be limited to the cultural environment of the late Soviet/new Russian intelligentsia, and ultimately to what I believe constituted the typical, not universal or the only, paradigm of values and ideals within that environment. Furthermore, within that paradigm, I will limit myself to the discussion of the two major aspects which, in my opinion, constitute the core of value orientations of the intelligentsia as a hypothetical whole. One of these aspects is the notorious relationship of the intelligentsia with power, which is discussed rather frequently. The other is the relationship between culture and
the intelligentsia's lifestyle ideals, which is a peculiar topic in contemporary Russia and it is not just rarely discussed, but rather rarely approached or viewed from the right perspective.

I

If we speak of a society as a simplified and standardized whole for a moment, we should acknowledge the existence of two principal layers of social values: that of ideologically promoted normative values, and that of actual mundane values pursued by and large. These layers may overlap to an extent, but they certainly do not coincide - otherwise, there would be obviously no need to promote anything. This incongruence, which is usually more or less apparent at the national or state level, appears to be the case, if only more or less hidden, at smaller social levels, such as the intellectual milieu under consideration. The simple reason why it is hidden here is in the fact that the intelligentsia is not a political organization which has to establish clear-cut and written out social policies. It is a loose group which, on the contrary, generally holds on to the idea that no one should dictate its policies (although, for the sake of fairness, one might say that it is a group in which everyone likes to dictate policies, but no one likes to be dictated). Nevertheless, even this seemingly anarchic "group" habitually adopts certain policies which, though never pass through any formal
process of ratification, become gradually legitimized through the intellectual discourse. The incongruence of values consists in the fact that the policies, worked out within the intellectual discourse, generally reflect the normative set of values (which in a sense might be considered as imposed on the individuals by the discourse to a certain extent), while the set of actual life values remains largely outside the discourse; and where such mundane values do make their way into the discourse, they are normally justified in terms of the prescribed normative values, so that the ideological contradiction is neutralized.

One of the salient manifestations of such discrepancy between normative values, pursued in the discourse, and actual values, pursued in real life, might be seen in the already discussed relationship of the Soviet intelligentsia with the bureaucracy. Intellectual discourse, as we have seen, informally but firmly held it that the connection with the state or bureaucracy was a mark of the corruption of one’s conscience. In reality, every intellectual, with few exceptions, aspired to a nice prestigious bureaucratic position. These real-life aspirations were not allowed to enter the discourse, and in occasional cases when they did, they were camouflaged by something more or less agreeable to the discursive conventions. Thus, if an intellectual was appointed to a prominent bureaucratic position, the discursive policies required that she should at least cry all the way to the bank, pretend that she was not really happy about that appointment, or make some
specious excuse, like: "I never aspired to that position, but they offered it to me and I reasoned that if I did not take it, some ignorant bureaucrat would instead."

In a word, if one was to judge on the basis of the intellectual discourse alone, one would come to the clear conclusion that the Soviet intellectuals were not interested in power. The persistence of this idea in the Soviet intellectual milieu is indeed known, as is now known the fact that the first years of perestroika revealed quite the opposite and the late 1980's witnessed literally an invasion of the intelligentsia into all kinds of government structures, which, to a little surprise, resulted in nothing but numerous political failures for all the same reasons that I have already discussed (i.e. the intelligentsia's centeredness on the themes of abstract moral order, inability to see concrete issues and make effective decisions, inherited disrespect for modernity, and mere lack of competence in political and legal matters). The sudden outburst of the repressed desire of the intelligentsia for power shocked for a moment not only the intellectual community itself, a part of which was still permeated with the norms of the traditional Soviet "anti-bureaucratic" discourse, but even some foreign visitors, such as Jacques Derrida who happened to come to Russia during perestroika years. Derrida was greatly surprised to know that a number of prominent scholars, like Academician Sakharov or Professor Averintsev, a recognized
authority in religious and Byzantine studies, stood for election to the deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in the 1989-90's.¹

Indeed, the unexpected appearance in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of such people as Averintsev, who was regarded almost as a living saint of Russian culture in the intellectual circles, or Vyacheslav Ivanov, a popular writer, respected linguist, and public figure with a dissident image, left an unpleasant aftertaste in many of the intelligentsia, especially in the students in the humanities who just a year or two before enthusiastically crowded their immensely popular lectures at Moscow State University and listened to their anti-government (or at any rate socially oppositional) and critical speeches. Students felt that their intellectual heroes suddenly betrayed the ideals they preached. The feeling of disappointment soon intensified when the intelligentsia's affair with the government ended in a fiasco and some of the participants in that affair simply left the country shortly after. Thus, Averintsev left for Vienna and Ivanov was invited to teach at the Slavic Department of UCLA. Whatever their reasons for leaving were, from within the context of those turbulent years in Russia, to many it looked like they just fled from the scene of their embarrassment. All this undoubtedly did considerable harm to

¹ Jacques Derrida, "Back from Moscow, in the USSR," in Zhak Derrida v Moskve, sost. M. Ryklin (Moscow: RIK “Kul’tura”, 1993), p.28. One may ponder on the nature of Derrida's surprise, though; for the trajectory of his own interests through the 1990s seems to display a visible leaning toward politics as well.
their image. In the beginning of the 1990’s, newly released books by Averintsev were lying on the shelves of Moscow State University bookstore, without attracting special attention.\(^2\) This situation would be absolutely unimaginable in the 1980’s; were the books published at that time, the entire stock would have been swept out by the students and professors probably in a matter of hours.

The public disclosure of the intelligentsia’s political aspirations and their subsequent inability to cope with bureaucratic matters significantly undermined the traditional Russian faith, invested in the nostalgic ideal of organic intelligentsia, and noticeably cooled down the interest in the intellectual discourse as such on the part of many of the intellectuals themselves, who

\(^2\) I think, in the year 1995, when I was doing my field research in Russia, I stopped by the Moscow State University bookstore and found two books by Averintsev on display. I was about to purchase them, but was upset to discover that I did not have any cash with me, so I asked a salesperson if he would be so kind to keep the books for me for a couple of hours. He replied, “Don’t worry, go get your money, these are not in big demand, and I got a bunch in stock anyway”. I was truly surprised.

The reason why I was worried about the books would be obvious to perhaps any Russian. Book publishing in Russia has always been one of the best examples of what they call the “economy of shortage” - a book is published in minimum quantities and never gets republished afterwards; if it happens to be a good and popular book, you have all chances to never come across it, once you have missed it; for it is sold out in several days, after which it becomes a rarity and can be only found in the “black market”, that is in the suitcases of so called lotoshniki [“street-vendors”], three-days-out-of-jail looking people who fill the central streets of Moscow in hope of robbing some foreigner or a New Russian, charging them about twenty to thirty times the nominal values for the books they offer. Some of such vendors now legally rent spaces in Moscow universities, although it is quite puzzling to imagine the profit they expect to make at the expense of Russian students, considering that their prices would be shocking even for a professor from the West. For example, they ask $100 for a Russian edition of Structural Anthropology by Lévi-Strauss, that was published at some 2 rubles in the mid-1980’s (which could be roughly converted to an $8 worth within the present economy of life in Russia).
stopped buying and reading new publications, typically expressing their
disappointment with words like, “I don’t care what they have to say any more,
I’ve seen and heard enough of them lately, it’s probably nothing but another
hypocrisy”. Although the feeling of dissatisfaction with the intellectual discourse
somehow never came to be properly reflected in the formal discourse itself (by
formal discourse, I mean that associated with the press, media, and other official
channels of information), toward the middle of the 1990’s it became apparently
widespread on the informal level, that is in the realm of the everyday. In private
conversations, one could detect much discontent, sarcasm, or anger, directed at
the subject of intelligentsia. Professor Alexei Nikishenkov, one of the most
popular and truly intelligent figures in the humanities at Moscow State
University, liked to joke, “I don’t want to be associated with intellectuals
anymore. An intellectual of yesterday in Russia was shaved to the deep blue and
occasionally drunk; whereas an intellectual of today is drunk to the deep blue
and occasionally shaved”.

Jokes about the falling moral standards of the intelligentsia were indeed
numerous. Aleksandr Saltykov, a former graduate and undergraduate student
in history at Moscow State University, now working for a private Russian-
American firm, told me in an interview in 1995, “I’d rather be associated with the

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3 Expression “shaved to the deep blue” [“vybrit do sinevy”] in Russian is a
metaphorical way of saying “shaved very close” (it derives simply from the fact that the
New Russians today, than with the intellectuals; the former say little but at least get some work done, while the latter say much and do nothing. Besides, all they say is baloney anyway, so there is not even an aesthetic pleasure, a pure aesthetic profit that could be derived from their words. And by the way, you never know, tomorrow they might actually decide to send the intelligentsia to Siberia, so you’d better stay the hell away from this weird group”.

The negative feeling toward the intelligentsia may as well be detected in informal conversations, taking place in various discussion groups, otherwise known as “newsgroups”, on the Internet, which started to rise in popularity since about the mid-1990’s. For example, in the newsgroup <soc.culture.russian> that deals exclusively with the topics of Russia and the former Soviet Union, it is common to come across a message, like the one below, posted in August of 1997, under a telling title “Intelligentsia is not the brain of the nation, but crap” (this phrase is commonly ascribed to Lenin):

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4 The comparison with the New Russians is, of course, more sarcastic here than serious, for the jokes about the stupidity of the New Russians perhaps outnumber jokes on any other subject in contemporary Russia and the image of a “New Russian” has absorbed nearly all marks of cultural vulgarity there may be. The “Siberia” joke is also hardly accidental, for it evokes frequent public attacks “I’ll send you all to Siberia!” by ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky, and several statements against the intelligentsia by Boris Yeltsin. The Yeltsin’s attitude, as a matter of fact, was reflected in a widely known in public joke: “One night when Yeltsin is asleep, Stalin comes to him in a dream and says, ‘Well, comrade Yeltsin, I think it’s time to send the intelligentsia to Siberia and paint the Kremlin walls green’. Yeltsin is bewildered, ‘The Kremlin in what color?
... In fact, as the Russian sociologist Yuri Levada observed some time ago, the intelligentsia -- in the sense of an independent, free-thinking force defining itself in opposition to the country's rulers -- had vanished already before the birth of the Soviet Union. Of course not all were lured, either then or now, onto the slippery road to power, and some who embody the old pre-revolutionary values of the intelligentsia endure...

However, behind all that negativity one should probably notice the beginnings of a positive development as well - i.e. the forming of a normal critical attitude toward the subject of intelligentsia. Some of the scholars in the humanities, especially those of younger generation, seem to be very conscious of the need and importance of establishing such critical attitude in the intellectual discourse on broader levels. Olga Vainstein, professor at the Russian State University for the Humanities, who was kind enough to give me an extended interview on a broad range of topics in the Fall of 1995, commented on this particular subject as one of the major issues that the intellectuals, and in the first instance academics in the humanities, have to face today:

“Our humanities people should finally abandon that idea, long cultivated in this society, of striving after the position of the genuine organic intelligentsia, some omni-competent teachers of the nation, and just learn to pursue a normal critically oriented academic discourse. This complex of intelligentsia is an old Russian tradition that comes back to the nineteenth century, when Russian philosophers, such as Berdiaev, Soloviev, Chaadaev, or Rozanov,

Green?” Stalin answers, ‘All right, we can discuss that, but I am glad we did not have disagreements over the first issue’.”
indeed occupied the informal position of teachers of the nation, of figures with an aura of knowledge and spirituality around them. This tradition, one must say, did persist throughout the twentieth century. Just think of such figures as Bakhtin or Averintsev - they actually were regarded as some spiritual genius of Russian scholarly thought. But now that Bakhtin is not with us and Averintsev has left for Vienna, many feel that the sacred place is vacant. And, surely, many would like to see themselves in that place. But, in my opinion, the major issue is: do we need that place? How long can this state of things last when each historian or philologist will feel obliged to teach people how to live or explain them how to distinguish between good and evil? I think that we are entering a different time now, when people can tell things apart very well and no longer need a sacred guidance of intelligentsia for that. What our time requires of an academic is not some universal moral empathy of an intellectual, but a critical reflexion of a scholar".5

Unfortunately, this view does not seem to be shared by the majority of the intellectuals, especially by those of older generations who were enjoying some official or unofficial recognition in the end of the Soviet regime and who, having lost that recognition after perestroika, by and large still manage to occupy prominent, if not dominant, positions in the structure of various institutions in the humanities and arts, educational institutions, cultural institutions, like museums and creative unions, and so on. Typically, most of these intellectuals still pursue (even if they no longer believe in it) the old culturally raised myth of "superior individuals" who were meant to play a unique social role, and continue to strive either after an informal position of "spiritual teachers of the

5 Quoted from the author's forthcoming essay, "Academics and the Production of Intellectual Discourse of Modernity in Russia," in Late Editions series, vol.7, ed. George
people” or, when they feel that this particular goal is not attainable, after a formal position in the bureaucratic structures that would involve maximum power and control. The combination of the two, obviously, would constitute an ultimate ideal of the intelligentsia. It is no surprise, then, that most of the intellectuals who rushed in the late 1980’s to all kinds of government structures, eager to realize their newly developed ambitions of social and political managers, were those who already had a public recognition above the average and ambitions of, so to say, purely intellectual character. Thus, among the deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in the late 1980’s, we find above-mentioned academics Averintsev, Sakharov, and Ivanov, much praised professors and incredibly popular cultural figures in the Soviet/Russian intellectual circles; several writers, such as Daniil Granin and Ales Adamovich, well known and also fairly popular (at least, before perestroika) figures; theater and movie actors Basilashvili and Lavrov, one of the most popular stars of the 1970-80’s. Another popular Soviet actor, Yuri Solomin, made it even farther and was elected the Head of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation. Although his lack of expertise in managing affairs on the national stage soon became evident and newspapers started criticizing him not just for “bad cultural policy” but rather for the lack of any policy to be criticized, his successor, Nikolai Gubenko, was recruited again from the same cultural milieu. He was a theater

director working at the popular Taganka theater in Moscow. Writer Chingiz Aitmatov who gained popularity with the publication of his novels about Stalinist past decided to complement his literary ambitions with a diplomatic career. A former political dissident Sergei Kovalev, who had been working for samizdat (underground press) during the Soviet regime, in the 1990's ended up in the State Committee for Human Rights, an organization which was known and frequently criticized for its conservative policy, and which not only did not change in any conspicuous way but also, as some critics noted, benefited from the employment of such publicly renowned person as Kovalev.  

The strivings of all these people to fulfill their ambitions to become competent social and political managers or theorists and, thus, complete their imaginary ideal of organic intelligentsia, unfortunately or fortunately, resulted in a double failure. On the one hand, it was a failure to cope with power, which was noticed early both by the general public in Russia and some of the critics in the West, such as, for instance, Ivan Szelenyi who stated in 1991, “The power of intellectuals may only be a transitory phenomenon - like their predecessors during the French Revolution, they may only lay the foundations of a new type

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6 Kagarlitsky argues that people, like Kovalev, in fact, “have always supported the government in every way, calling on it to use ‘the policy of the heavy hand’, and as a result the authorities value them highly. It is very opportune for Russia’s new rulers to have such human rights defenders, who speak out in favour of limiting the civil rights of people who do not share their views”. (Boris Kagarlitsky, Restoration in Russia, p.11).
of domination for a class other than their own." On the other hand, it was a purely intellectual failure which consisted in the degradation of the elevated image of the intelligentsia in the eyes of the public, and which came as a result of that unsuccessful affair of the best representatives of the intelligentsia with power. Frequent cases of corruption and bribery, which started to be revealed in the 1990's almost on a regular basis, undoubtedly contributed to the degradation of the intelligentsia's prestige. Such, for example, was the case with Sergei Stankevich, a young historian coming from Moscow State University, who was appointed to the Office of Moscow Mayor Gavriil Popov and who received solid, nearly wholehearted support from various people in the humanities as an honest person with progressive ideas. He further stood for election to a number of state government committees, proclaiming in his public speeches that the old corrupted bureaucrats should be replaced with honest working people like himself. He succeeded in winning one of such elections, and subsequently he was appointed to serve as political adviser to president Yeltsin. A couple of years after his career success, however, he suddenly disappeared from public

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7 George Konrad and Ivan Szelenyi, "Intellectuals and Domination in Post-Communist Societies," in Social Theory for a Changing Society, ed. Pierre Bourdieu and James S. Coleman (Boulder, etc.: Westview Press, 1991), p.338. It is interesting to note, though, that in another article, published simultaneously, Szelenyi did not want to take the risk of predicting the failure of the intelligentsia's affair with power. Having posed the question, "Is the newly won power of the intellectuals a lasting phenomenon or just a brief era of transition?", he chose to answer it, "I do not know". (Ivan Szelenyi, "The Intellectuals in Power?", in After the Fall, ed. Robin Blackburn [London, etc.: Verso, 1991], p.271.)
view, and soon it turned out that a major criminal lawsuit was instituted against him by government officials. According to some sources, he was accused of bribery that involved large amounts of money, presumably ten thousand dollars. Other sources stated that the money was actually stolen by him from the federal funds. Simultaneously, another story was revealed in the newspapers - namely, that Stankevich, who had been in charge of organizing a trip to Australia for the children of Chernobyl, had actually used that trip for his private purposes. Knowing that the humanitarian mission would eliminate the problem of customs inspection, he himself joined the group of the children and their parents, although he evidently was not supposed to, and brought back from Australia computers and other electronics for reselling them in Russia. This story disgusted many in Russia, but at that point Stankevich was nowhere to be found. According to unofficial information, he fled the country and settled down in California, but the actual attempts to locate him have been so far unsuccessful. In the recent years, many messages have been posted on the Internet by the Russian nationals residing in the United States, who have been trying to help find Stankevich. Below is one of such messages, which expresses a common disappointment with the subject of "intellectuals and democracy" in Russia of the 1990's:

> From: adomrin <adomrin@dolphin.upenn.edu> (Alexander Domrin)
> Subject: Where is Sergei Stankevich?
>
> I would like to ask multiple recipients of Johnson's Russia
> List: does any of you know anything about Sergei Stankevich and
According to a rumor circulating in Moscow in the last several months, Stankevich fled the country through Byelorussia and -- settled down in California.

I have a reason to believe that it's not just a rumor, but rather an inevitable end of yet another prominent Russian DEMOCRAD (a Russian neologism for a "democratic thief").

Alexander Domrin

Johnson's Russia List
24 October 1996
<djohnson@cdi.org>

I have quoted this message because it displays a typical mood of the general Russian public in the middle of the 1990's, who are indeed no longer surprised at the failures of the intellectuals in power, but see in cases, like that of Stankevich, nothing more but "an inevitable end of yet another prominent Russian" intellectual who promised to bring democracy to the people.

The promise to bring democracy, and the belief that they would actually bring democracy as enlightened individuals, to the masses of people which were not capable of comprehending the complexities of social governance, thus, came once again to mark the character of the intelligentsia's self-perception, with all its traditional recurrent themes of humanistic duty or debt to the people that could be traced back to the original Russian intelligentsia of the aristocratic age. It is true that until the last quarter of the 19th century the aristocratic intelligentsia had remained virtually the only educated group in Russia, and the cultural gap between that small group and the rest of the population had been at the time indeed unbridgeable (so the origins of the moral duty to the people in the
intelligentsia’s consciousness are understandable). But starting with the last decades of the 19th century, which witnessed the beginning of social modernization and emergence of all kinds of professionally educated lower middle-class groups of people in Russian cities, that gap began growing narrower. Paradoxically, the paradigm of the intelligentsia’s self-perception seemed only to grow stronger. The concept of the moral debt to the people that had been developed in the environment of enlightened aristocracy was now successfully transferred to the environment of emerging educated middle classes, so called raznochinskaia intelligentsia.  

Absurdly enough, the concept survived even the socialist revolution and was inherited in its intact integrity by the deprived and proletarianized group of Soviet intelligentsia which, according to all logic of the new situation, should have by all means reversed its judgment and started to think that finally the time came when it was the people who were to assume the duty to the intelligentsia, for now it were the workers and the peasants who found themselves in a socially privileged position. It is indeed surprising that the social inversion that took

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8 The term raznochinskaia intelligentsia (literally meaning “intelligentsia from different ranks”) came to signify a growing group of people in Russia of the second half of the 19th century, who got access to the higher education but originated from lower, gentrified classes and did not have an aristocratic background. Most of these people remained poor and did not move up the social ladder even if they completed their university studies with success, for the social order in tsarist Russia was not flexible in that regard. Typically, such people had to work as free-lance journalists, translators, private tutors, and so forth.
place after the Revolution did not affect the intelligentsia's understanding of the "duty" which had originated under entirely different social circumstances, but one might reason that a change in this particular idea would not be possible without altering the entire paradigm of the intelligentsia's self-perception, which had already acquired too much of a heroic and culturally prophetic quality to be too easily repudiated. The desire to preserve that self-image, which was torn out of the context of different reality and no longer corresponded to anything in the existing social order, reversed, as it actually should, the very dimension of initial ideals and strivings. As the Soviet society was rapidly going through the process of industrialization, the concept of duty to the people was increasingly turning into the concept of duty to the disappearing traditionalism, and was in fact assuming a regressive character. The ideal was no longer that of bringing enlightenment to the people, but rather that of saving the people from being deprived of what supposedly constituted their "true" cultural identity - that old patriarchal traditional culture which came under destruction in the face of the 20th-century modernization. Walter Benjamin, once again, had the unusual insight to capture that shift in the world view of the post-revolutionary intelligentsia as early as in the end of the 1920's. "It is typical of these [Russian] intellectuals," he wrote, "...that their positive function derives entirely from a
feeling of obligation, not to the Revolution, but to traditional culture. Their collective achievement, as far as it is positive, approximates conservation".9

This conservative attitude of the intelligentsia, contained in the notion of "duty" or "debt", survived through the entire course of the 20th century and did not change with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, being only further propelled by the spreading of state nationalism in new Russia and the strengthening of the general historical paradigm in the cultural consciousness, that was discussed in the previous chapter. It became apparent in the debates over the subject of humanities and social sciences, which sprang in the air with the coming of perestroika, and which will be discussed in the following chapters. It is apparent in the mainstream intellectual discourse and sometimes one can only wonder at the lack of cultural reflexivity that prominent intellectual figures continue to display. In 1997, Daniil Granin, a writer whose novels were assigned for reading in high schools in the Soviet time, says in his nostalgic essay "The Russian Intelligentsia Is Leaving":

"The intelligentsia, famous Russian intelligentsia, is leaving... Born with the Peter the Great, it became incompatible already in the 19th century and was cast from tsarist palaces. Since then, its incompatibility with power became its distinctive mark... The intelligentsia had shouldered the cross of unpayable debt to the people well before the Revolution. The communists turned that debt into yoke... Our intelligentsia, both metropolitan and especially provincial, generation after generation, in spite of

anything, kept its notions of honor, kindness, painstaking work, decency and, finally, honesty. Its spiritual merits in the face of history are beyond any doubt... The intelligentsia was incompatible with power - and that’s where its own power was... Today, educated people, scientists, and scholars in the humanities have fallen in prestige. Other people have become elite; it is the notorious “new Russians” and bureaucracy. The first place is taken by the cult of money and people who can make money”.10

No special commentary is needed on the above passage, for it speaks well for itself. Every kind of the intellectual self-idealization, from heroic “incompatibility” with power to the “cross of unpayable debt to the people” to “painstaking work, decency and honesty”, is reflected in Granin’s essay in its full measure. It is interesting to note the phrase, “the communists turned that debt into yoke”, which is a typical rhetorical move that many intellectuals, especially writers, resort to these days. Instead of simply saying that the communists made the life of the intelligentsia a yoke, they prefer to speak in terms of the debt to the people, which somehow creates an impression that what really mattered was not the intelligentsia’s personal life, but rather its mission (which is also evident in Granin’s use of such metaphors as “cross of unpayable debt”, for instance).

It is curious that even the intellectuals who have been in power under the socialist regime do not think differently when it comes to the intelligentsia’s social identity. Anatolii Grebnev, who was the head of the Union of Filmmakers under Gorbachev, effectively at the top of cultural bureaucracy in the Soviet

10 Daniil Granin, “Russkii intelligent ukhodit,” in Russika-Izvestiia electronic journal
Union, said in a recent interview for the Moscow newspaper Moskovskii komsomolets, "The Russian intelligentsia should regain the understanding of its debt to the people, which has been violated, and, through public enlightenment, press, culture, and arts, awaken positive sentiments in the people".\footnote{Natalia Bobrova, "Anatolii Grebnev: 'Svoboda prikhodit liubaia'," Moskovskii komsomolets, no.149 (10 August 1996), p.2.}

One could go on with the examples like these, since they are literally countless. The principal point behind all this is that the ideal of the intelligentsia's social self-identification remains largely confined to the same framework that had been developed in the aristocratic Russia of the 19th century and later insignificantly modified with the coming of the political regime of socialism. This ideal assumed a regressive and culturally reactionary character, being centered around the idea of heroic mission of the intelligentsia, which could be maintained in the social conditions of modernity only at the expense of preserving traditionalism and, in a way, cultural backwardness in the society. Ideals of social progress were discounted, and gave way to the ideals of moral self-perception. The intellectual pedagogy became based on the principle that had been vividly expressed at the end of the 19th century in the words of a populist Russian writer Mikhaylovsky who stated, "Freedom is a great and tempting thing, but we do not want freedom if, as happened in Europe, it will

(November 5, 1997).
only increase our agelong debt to the people".12 The fact that the intellectuals were not actually after freedom was painfully revealed, to much of a public disappointment, within the decade after perestroika which, in Kagarlitsky’s words, resulted in the "total and final defeat of the dissidents", that is in the situation when the intellectuals, starting to lose their informal authority and influence “under the onslaught of the old and new nomenklatura, willingly surrendered the role of a spiritual opposition".13

II

The second important feature of the intelligentsia’s value orientations, as it has formed in the last quarter of the twentieth century, is related to the issue of cultural lifestyle and it stands in the direct connection with the historical/cultural paradigm in the intellectual discourse, which has been previously discussed. As I have been trying to show, the major shift in the intellectual discourse that took place in the late Soviet/new Russian society was largely characterized by the unconditional acceptance of the pre-revolutionary aristocratic values as a normative dimension of contemporary lifestyle.

13 Boris Kagarlitsky, Restoration in Russia, p.11-13.
Everything in the present was routinely judged against the norms of the aristocratic past which, thus, became the embodiment of the ideals of progress, enlightenment and humanism, and the mainstream point of reference in intellectual conversations. It is interesting to mention that Foucault, discussing some recurrent topics in social discourses, made a distinction between the topic of enlightenment, as representative of the specific project of modernity, and the topic of humanism which, in his opinion, represented a different dimension in the social discourses. The idea of enlightenment became an integral part of the spirit of modernity because it constituted, says Foucault, “the mode of reflective relation to the present”, while the idea of humanism constituted “a set of themes that have reappeared on several occasions, over time, in European societies”, and have been equally picked up by Christianity and the critique of Christianity, by scientific humanism of the 19th century and anti-scientific humanism of the same century, by Marxism, existentialism, personalism, National Socialism, and Stalinism.14

This distinction applies rather well to intellectual discourse in Russia, for it is a general tendency, typical of this discourse, that the themes of enlightenment and progress appear subordinate to, when not totally replaced by, the theme of humanism. It is the constant stress on the humanistic inclinations of

the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia that dominates the historical reference. The true nobility of the intelligentsia derives from their humanism, not from their place in the social hierarchy. This emphasis, of course, is advantageous in multiple ways - it suggests a resolution to the predicament of class structure, as well as that of relations to power, and, perhaps more importantly, puts the Soviet or new Russian intellectuals on equal grounds with their pre-revolutionary ancestors. Indeed, the interplay between the ideals of the 19th-century bourgeois intelligentsia and their proletarianized heirs of nowaday is effectively employed within the framework of humanism as an apologetic and pedagogical tool. It is common of history or literature teachers in high schools to bring up some figures from the past as an example of proper behavior and reproach pupils, saying things like, “Pushkin would never behave like that when he was a litsei student”,\(^{15}\) or “Chekhov never treated his friends like that”, and so on. Or, for example, the typical attitude expressed toward Lev Tolstoy by teachers in literature classes was, “Yes, Tolstoy was a count and landlord with serfs and peasants in his estate, but first of all he was a great humanist”. Of course, in the discourse of grown up intellectuals the argument becomes more sophisticated, but still it is not unusual occasionally to come across a reference as trivial as those employed in school classrooms.

\(^{15}\) Litsei stood for “college” in tsarist Russia. The name fell out of use in the Soviet time, but again, in the last decade of the 20th century, it has been recalled and come into
The main issue here is that the themes and examples from the bourgeois life of the past centuries are interpolated into the present environment without alterations and no reservations are made. Aristocratic salons, poetic circles and various clubs of nobility are seen as ideals of culture and enlightenment. Numerous attempts have been made to revive such clubs and circles in the recent years, and they naturally have failed for different reasons. Many of them have been dispelled already at the stage of conceiving because the intellectuals "unexpectedly" have had to face their own poverty, that is the lack of resources necessary to maintain such clubs or simply rent an appropriate space for them (needless to mention, it is not any space that is considered by the intellectuals as appropriate for their cultural meetings, but positively some fashionable place of residence of the old aristocracy in the historic center of a city, for the humanistic intellectuals of today do not care about the ideals of enlightenment, if they have to meet somewhere in the suburbs in a friend's apartment). Most of the old and fashionable places, especially in capital cities, are undoubtedly so expensive to rent that only new business elite and government authorities can afford and claim them, unless, of course, a place is in the roster of "monuments of history and culture". This, incidentally, explains the eagerness with which the intellectuals sometimes rush to defend the buildings, such as the aforementioned Shcherbakov Palaces, for the idea that they might actually get hold of some fashion. A fairly large number of schools in Russian cities were actually renamed litsei.
prominent in the past aristocratic estate is precisely what appeals to their new humanistic ideals.

The second scenario that the attempts to revive the "circles of culture and enlightenment" typically follow is a little different. In some cases, intellectuals manage to find a sponsor who agrees to pay the expenses. The problem here is that such sponsors usually can be found only among the infamous New Russians or various rich but bored mafia-minded groups that Kagarlitsky calls "lumpenbourgeois sub-elite".16 This is the kind of people who do not really have the ideals of promoting culture or enlightenment on their minds, but who are rather interested solely in entertaining themselves. The tradition of sponsorship which, one has to admit, had existed in tsarist Russia and played a very important role in advancing the arts and sciences, has been totally erased from the social consciousness during the century of socialist regime with its unconditional rejection of private enterprises. A typical New Russian is a personality that reminds one of whimsical Dostoevsky’s characters, morally devastated bourgeoisie who invest all their profit in gambling and drinking and do not care about tomorrow. The consequences of inviting such a sponsor are predictable. What is conceived as an intellectual salon very soon turns into a local mafia club with bouncers at the doors where the "organizers-intellectuals" end up serving as bartenders or at best accountants, if the club goes as far as to open a position
of actual “accountant”. That is all the enlightenment there is. In Moscow and St. Petersburg these clubs are now widespread, and very often they keep the name that might actually prompt one to think that there should be some intellectual activity afoot (“Artistic Cafe”, “At Margarita’s”, and so on).\textsuperscript{17} If one decides to enter a place like that, however, one would be most likely stopped by a bouncer at the entrance and, sometimes politely sometimes not, inspected on the subject of purpose of the visit. The idea behind this inquiry is in most cases simply to figure out if a visitor has enough money that he or she could spend in their club or cafe. Thus, if you indicate that you only want to relax and have a cup of coffee, you would not interest them as a potential customer, and you would not be let in on some grounds (you might be told that all tables are taken and given a delicate hint that it is no use to wait; or, if the bouncer happens to be in a bad mood or simply a rude person, you could receive a straight direction out, accompanied with a short clarification “Not for your pocket, pal” or something of the sort).\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{16} Boris Kagarlitsky, \textit{Restoration in Russia}, p.19.
\textsuperscript{17} Name “At Margarita’s” is culturally loaded in the milieu of Moscow intelligentsia, for it is unmistakably associated with one of the major literary characters from an immensely popular in Russia novel by Mikhail Bulgakov “Master and Margarita”.
\textsuperscript{18} In 1995, when I was doing my field research in Moscow, I scheduled one of my interviews with two university students for a weekend. Since the university was closed and we could not meet there, we went to look for a quiet cafe. One place attracted our attention with an appealing name. At the door we were stopped by a yuppie looking young man, quite friendly, who asked, “How are you all today! What do you guys have in mind?” I answered that we would like merely to have a conversation over coffee. The
Thus, not only have the intelligentsia's ideals of reviving old high-culture literary or artistic clubs failed, but even their more modest and up-to-date strivings after such essentially democratic thing as a "French cafe" where people could hang out and chat over a cup of coffee have been destined to failure. "Cafes" have become the privilege of the new business elite, and coffee and intellectual chat are the things that these cafes are the least meant for. Their purpose is to entertain the *nouveaux riches*, bored individuals with low intellectual demands who find it fun to waste hundreds dollars a night on vodka and gambling.\(^{19}\) Some cafes, by and large those opened on popular tourist

person estimated our student appearances with a meaningful glance and smiled, "If you are only going to order coffee, it will be 5-6 bucks per cup". We understood that it was not the place we were looking for and I said, "Well, I think we'll find another place then, but thanks anyway". To which the door man, surprisingly, responded with some sympathy, "No problem - see, I spared you the trouble of going through the menu and awkwardness of having to leave immediately after that".

(I ascribe the sympathy to the fact that most likely the door man was one of the former intellectuals or those enthusiastic university students who once had dreamed about creating a culturally oriented coffee-place that would attract the intellectual public.)

\(^{19}\) Incidentally, this touches upon one of the major issues of Russian economy in the 1990s - namely, the lack of much needed financial investment, caused in many ways by the morals of those who possess finances. The so called "businesses" of the new elite do not do much good to the economy partly because a typical New Russian is not interested in investing his enormous profits in the growth of his enterprise, but mainly interested in wasting them in a showing way. This is ultimately a matter of self-fashioning of the new elite, among whom prestige and respect - if only there is such thing as "respect" - are determined not by hard or successful work, but rather by the style of consumption which implies that spending much for nothing is "cool". The money they spend certainly might benefit the society under different circumstances, but a part of the issue is that they leave their profits at the clubs that they own themselves, so the financial circulation is purely internal, i.e. precisely that of a closed mafia structure. These cultural morals of the new Russian elite stand as a serious impediment to the economic growth and general social improvement in the country.
streets, like Arbat in Moscow, do actually offer coffee and cozy tables for conversation, but they are specifically meant to attract a foreign tourist who, for the lack of a choice, will have to pay from five to seven dollars for a cup of espresso, which regular Russian citizens from the intellectual strata, let alone students, could not possibly afford. Cheaper cafes, not large in numbers, occasionally open, but they typically try to attract public attention not by coffee or clean tables, but by alcohol (traditionally vodka) and cheap snacks or badly cooked food. Such cafes gather working class people who drink much, as it has always been the case in Russia. Both by their rude service and public environment, these cafes, again, cannot appeal not just to intellectuals, but to many people from all walks of life as well. Paradoxically, about the only place where the intellectuals, students, and many other people, under the circumstance, can and actually prefer to go is the McDonald’s, which, since the moment of its introduction in Gorbachev’s Russia, remains perhaps the most crowded public place in Moscow and selected urban centers. To a visitor from the West, it would appear strange to see neatly dressed public, standing in long lines at huge two-storey Moscow McDonald’s buildings, but from the discussion above, one should understand that it is about the only democratic public place in Russia, free of alcoholics, heavy cigarette smoke, annoying mafia-like New Russians, and shocking prices. If you want to go out in Russia and have an
intellectual chat, all roads lead to McDonald’s. Such is the strange transformation of cultural values that Russia of the 1990’s has experienced.

The failure of the intellectuals to open their own salons or cafes, as well as to take possession of the property of old Russian aristocrats and, more generally, establish a lifestyle of their dreams has been characteristically reflected in the intellectual discourse. Numerous articles discussing the treasures of the pre-revolutionary past were gradually assuming a nostalgic mood and in a way becoming increasingly defensive in their tone and character. This tendency could be traced perfectly on the example of half-scholarly half-popular journal Nashe nasledie [“Our Heritage”] which was initiated in the first years of perestroika, along with some other magazines of the sort. As an example here, however, I would like to discuss an article by Moscow art critic Liudmila Lunina “Everyday Charm of the Old Russian Aristocratic Estate” that appeared as a full-page essay in the newspaper Segodnia in 1996, and that reflects the paradigm of the intelligentsia’s lifestyle ideals in a condensed form, displaying a variety of typical rhetorical devices that are scattered through the majority of publications of this kind.20

The article, appearing in a newspaper section under a telling rubric “style”, focused on the discussion of three of the most famous old Russian

aristocratic estates, Ostankino, Kuskovo, and Arkhangel’skoe, which are situated in the suburbs of Moscow. In tsarist Russia, the estates belonged to the Sheremetiev (otherwise often spelled as “Sheremeteff”) family, one of the wealthiest and most renowned noble lineages. In the Soviet period, Ostankino and Kuskovo became state museums and the fate of Arkhangel’skoe remained somehow unclear (for years it was officially told that it was under the process of architectural restoration, but it was informally known to be occupied by some bureaucratic structures which were not named). The history of these estates has been literally overstudied and the article by Lunina does not add anything interesting to the subject in this regard. Nor is it, in fact, her intention to add anything to the historical or art studies. It is rather to express the repressed ideals and broken dreams of the intelligentsia in regard to their unfulfilled lifestyle, under the guise of what appears to be a historical study.

From beginning to the end the article portrays an idealized reality of nice and cozy life in the aristocratic estate of the 18th-19th centuries. It starts with an unambiguous rhetorical move, aimed at disguising the difference between the old Russian aristocrats and contemporary intellectuals and equating the lifestyles of the former with the latter by appealing to the traditional archaic image of nature.

“The [Russian estate] has long been a universal scheme for spending summer leisure time in Moscow... The high ideal of noble families and modest academics is by and large still the same: to get away from the noisy, dusty, and unbearable city, and create with
whatever is available at hand a peasant’s paradise; to merge with nature. ...The style of Moscow summer life perhaps has lost its former dimensions, but in essence little has changed”.

The hidden fact, of course, is that the style of life has changed substantially - what has changed little is ultimately the ideals of the intelligentsia. And that these ideals cannot be fulfilled in any sense causes unpleasant aftertaste and sad feelings in the “modest academics” - which is, unsurprisingly, expressed in the immediately following paragraph:

“It is natural to write about the Russian estate at the end of the summer because sadness is already spread in the cold air... And sadness is the necessary seasoning for all the talks about the Russian estate. Without nostalgia, it would not be a Russian estate at all, but rather a regular English one”.

The comparison with the “regular” English estate seems to be indeed absurd, especially considering that in the tradition of English literature nostalgic sentiment appears as a frequent attribute of all those misty lands and castles. But this is certainly not the point. The point is that the English have never lost their estates and they have nothing to be sad about, while the modest Russian intelligentsia, naturally, can only be sad about what it never had. The arousal of all this mixed atmosphere of romance and sorrow points only to the deep inner dissatisfaction of the intelligentsia who try to soften with the nostalgic sentiment what cannot be softened with ownership. But since the real causes cannot be revealed, the sorrows are ascribed to the old and well-tried magic of “Russian soul”: 
“Grieving over the gone landscape of life at the Russian estate became one of the manifestations of the Russian soul, one of its most trivially obvious attributes”.

It is thus, probably accidentally and unwillingly, acknowledged that the landscape is after all gone. But again, it is curious that the intelligentsia should ascribe its recurrent dreams to the “Russian soul”, an old invention of its own. Everything in the above passage would be absolutely correct, if “Russian soul” were replaced with “Russian intelligentsia”. Because the people that once was and still continues to be endowed by the indebted intelligentsia with this mysterious soul has stopped grieving long time ago, and is rather trying to find its way in the complex reality of nowadays by means that, true, may be sometimes mysterious but not in a romantic or nostalgic way. In fact, with the legalization of private property during perestroika, a great number of people from government officials to new businessmen and wealthier walks of the working class rushed to build suburb estates of their own, notorious dachas, all over Russia. This process, being a part of a larger process of social privatization in Russia, was marked by much of an agony, rivalry, corruption and social manipulation, and the last thing that could ever come to people’s minds in that situation was a “romanticism of the Russian soul” or some pathetic sorrows and nostalgia for the past. Everyone who had money and connections tried to make every effort to grab a piece of suburban land by honest or dishonest means, while the intellectuals were lost in meditations over the good old times and life
forgotten. The process of redistribution of social wealth, therefore, has passed by the intellectuals once again. But if it was the Bolsheviks who were to blame for the original deprivation, now the object of the intelligentsia’s anger has become associated primarily with the New Russians who apparently represent the most successful social stratum since perestroika. This anger is explicitly reflected in the concluding section of the essay, in which Lunina writes:

“Having completed another cycle, the end of this century has put us again in the position of barbarians, mimicking the civilized way of life. Today, the suburbs of Moscow are crowded with vault-looking three-storey houses - a bizarre realization of the Russian idea of rich Western suburban estates”.

What is unambiguously implied in this passage is that the intelligentsia supposedly would have brought a truly civilized way of life to the suburban estate, while New Russians only awkwardly imitate Western houses in their three-storey dachas, being nothing more than uncultured barbarians. Although it is true that the aesthetic style of the New Russians’ dachas could be criticized, it is equally true that the intelligentsia would be more than glad to get hold of those barbarian dachas, if only they had the opportunity. But since they do not, they try to hide their envy by exposing “barbarism” of those who do have opportunities and appealing to the nostalgic romance of the Russian soul and golden Russian past.

The inner psychological suppression that marks the narrative of the article is evident in the very title “Everyday Charm of the Old Russian Aristocratic
Estate”. A title of the kind would be indeed more appropriate for the discussion of something mundane in which charming qualities usually go unnoticed. For example, a title like “Everyday Charm of the Old Russian Peasant House” would make more sense, as it would prompt the reader, so to say, to discover charm where it is normally neither seen, nor ever looked for. In the case of the aristocratic estate, the phrase becomes essentially nonsensical, for it tells the reader to find an everyday charm in that which is unquestionably charming without any second thought, and not just in an everyday sense. It idealizes what does not have to be idealized at all - it idealizes the ideal itself. The interesting move, however, is that the idealization is inverted in its logic. The ultimate ideal here is idealized in regressive terms of something “everyday”, “mundane”, because the object is indeed psychologically suppressed and the intelligentsia do not seem comfortable talking about their broken dreams openly. The stress on “everyday” is meant to create an impression of disinterestedness, an impression that the aristocratic estate is not really what the intelligentsia want and that they only see in it something nice and charming in its “everyday” sense. The article’s title, thus, is artificially defensive (as would be a title like, “Gold and Diamonds, Such Boring Things, Turn Out to Have Their Own Charm”) and once again indicative of what, in the beginning of this chapter, I marked as an incongruency of values - that is, discrepancy between values pursued in the intellectual discourse and those pursued in actual life. Values, pursued in actual life, are
always masked in the discourse or, if not masked, justified in alternative terms, more or less suitable for the discursive conventions.

In Russian society, this discrepancy is a particular cultural feature, for the intellectuals, both by the system of their inherited idealistic philosophical ideals and by their position within the Soviet social structure, were made into a “class” that was not supposed to be interested in material privileges such as real estate and other goods. The pursuit of materiality, which constitutes a natural need, desire, and motivation in the lives of all people, became a censured subject among the intellectuals, and as such was expelled from the discourse. Needless to say, however, it could not be expelled from the lives of actual people, so the two categories of values, material and ideal, started to diverge and eventually did diverge to a substantial degree, having grown into a predicament of serious dimensions.21 Thus, a revelation that an intellectual, who, for example, was considered an advocate of human values, got a fashionable apartment in a prestigious city district might substantially damage his or her reputation among the intelligentsia (acquiring a fashionable apartment by honest means was known to be impossible and the picture of dishonest strivings after some personal accommodations could not possibly fit the image of “advocate of human values”).
One of the professors in the humanities whom I interviewed in 1995 in Moscow expressed, for instance, a characteristic disapproval of the matter, speaking about the Soviet intelligentsia, and particularly about Soviet writers who had dominated the intellectual scene for long decades:

"After perestroika, it all became too clear. For, when one got allowed to openly say what one wanted, it became obvious, astonishingly obvious, that writers had simply nothing to say. Once they were good at fooling people, playing the game of half-uttered words and pretending they were after the truth, while most of them really were after dachas in Peredelkino. It was all unveiled in a matter of a few years". 22

Thus, it is taken almost as an offence to know that someone who pretends to be after the sublime subject of "truth" is actually after a much more mundane subject, such as dacha. I have to repeat that it is not the striving for a fashionable suburban dacha itself that appears offensive, but rather that very discrepancy between the value orientations in the discourse and actual life. Intellectuals in many cases are normal people who want what other normal people want and do what others do, but who at the same time are judged not according to the logic of everyday realities, but according to the logic of idealistic intellectual discourse which has different rules and different regulations.

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22 Quoted in: Alexei Eltsov, "Academics and the Production of Intellectual Discourse of Modernity in Russia" (forthcoming in Late Editions, vol.7).
Speaking of Soviet writers and their dachas in Peredelkino, it must be incidentally noted that here we have, in fact, one of the few rare examples when the intelligentsia actually managed to get hold of a prestigious estate in Moscow suburbs. Writers did their best to incarnate in that estate their recurrent dream of "philosophical leisure in contemplation of nature and evening tea over relaxed conversation", which is still expressed in such telling essay titles as "By Candlelight, Near My Beloved" that occasionally appear in today's press.\textsuperscript{23} What annoyed other intellectuals was precisely the fact that the writers had been posing as those performing the role of "spiritual conscience of the intelligentsia" (that is those who should not care about such personal luxuries as dachas or philosophical leisure), while in reality they had been easily selling their "conscience" to the communist bureaucracy in exchange for fashionable suburban properties. For example, it was known that popular movie actors or directors had fashionable apartments in Moscow or St. Petersburg and often dachas in the suburbs, but that fact did not seem to annoy the intellectuals because the actors did not pursue a highly morally charged discourse in which they would pose as some "saints of pure truth"; accordingly, they were taken for who they were. Where there was no discrepancy between the self-fashioning in

the public discourse and that in the mundane realities of actual life, there seemed to be no intellectual censure.

In the reality of the 1990’s, however, even Peredelkino - the last suburban citadel of the intelligentsia - has suffered both an economic and ideological decline, due to the intelligentsia’s inability to maintain their dream of “aristocratic” life, which is so naively and obviously expressed in the discussed publication by Lunina and many other essays of that type. The writers enjoyed the pleasures of their utopic suburbia only as long as the latter was directly supported and taken care of by the state. After perestroika, when state ownership ended and much of Peredelkino came to be the property of several impoverished literary organizations, such as formerly famous Litfond (“Literary Foundation”), and various private persons, the living conditions began to deteriorate and it became obvious that the intelligentsia, having grown accustomed to the privilege of free state support, was neither willing nor able to fix the problems on their own. In a sense, the desired lifestyle in the imaginations of the literary intelligentsia was indeed “aristocratic”; it was their understanding that philosophical meditations and tea drinking should be their only business, while taking care of their actual estate should be the business of someone else. Characteristically, journalist and writer Anna Kovaleva, commenting on the deterioration of Peredelkino, blames not the intelligentsia, but the infamous New Russians who have started to invade Peredelkino and
build their luxurious dachas with pools and winter heat systems (that supposedly cause electricity surges and problems with the water supply). In a typical nostalgic tone, quite similar to the one employed in Lunina’s essay, Kovaleva tells the reader:

“Our little town [Peredelkino] is not quite ours now... The roads, trees, houses and, more importantly, residents are completely different. But if the roads are simply damaged and trees and houses dilapidated, the ‘residents’ are new. The New Russians, so much ‘loved’ by people, have started to settle in the old literary dacha town... We have been told that with the appearance of [their] houses, for the first time in its history the town has begun to experience problems with electricity and water... However, the issue is not that there is no electricity or water and the quality of roads is far from being civilized. After all, people have learned to put up with that during the long years of Soviet rule. The issue is that the charm of the town disappears because of the nouveaux riches who are attracted here by this very charm... People who were the heart and personality of the town, as well as its pride, are gradually leaving, taking with them the charm of intellectualism and the life that once was: evening tea meetings, walks and talks, in which something more than kitchen tiles or another million bucks was discussed”.

It is truly amazing how illogical sometimes such intellectual statements are. They begin with complaints about the worsening life conditions and end with absurd arguments that what really matters is not life conditions, with which people somehow have learned to “put up”, but “the life that once was”, some imaginary lost lifestyle, nostalgic landscape of the things gone. In the world of the 1990’s, with all its turbulent changes, the intelligentsia do not want to let go
their old imaginaries and cultural ideals. Even when given a chance to start a new life, most of them keep on dreaming about the life old and show no excitement about the possibilities that the world of modernity, however imperfect, opens to an enthusiastic intellectual mind. The figure of the enthusiast of modernity remains firmly associated with a kind of immoral uncultured business undertaker 25 whose image is often traced back to Ivan Lopakhin, one of the major characters of Chekhov’s play “The Cherry Orchard”. Lopakhin buys and cuts down that very orchard (the symbol of nostalgic aristocratic ideals) and old mismanaged Russian aristocratic estate, thus embodying the coming of the new capitalist bourgeoisie to the Russian society. The character of Lopakhin has always been a target of criticism and, at the same time, an awkward predicament in the Soviet literary discourse because Chekhov himself did not portray Lopakhin as an entirely negative or immoral figure. In the perception of the Soviet and late Russian intelligentsia, however, it remained as such. As Anatolii Grebnev, Head of the Union of Filmmakers under Gorbachev, exclaimed in his interview, “The New Russian - he is the same old Lopakhin!”26

25 The Russian word predprinimatel’ (“the one who undertakes a business”, “the one who starts an enterprise”, “undertaker”, “entrepreneur”) has traditionally had a negative connotation in the intellectual milieu. To say that someone was a predprinimatel’ meant in most cases to deny that person any intellectuality.
To sum up, the ideals of the intelligentsia remain by and large marked by the fear of the process of social modernization, and by the aesthetics of cultural conservation which finds its core expression in the recurrent concept of debt to the people - that is, in the regressive desire to preserve encompassing cultural traditionalism in order for the intelligentsia to secure its imaginary role of a heroic group with a prophetic enlightening mission. The persistence of these ideals heavily influenced the academic discourse in the humanities, which will be the subject of the following chapter, and we will see on particular examples how the object of the humanities has shifted toward the primordial social themes in the last quarter of the century.
Chapter 5

Restoring the Humanities

Since the beginning of perestroika the Russian media and broader academic discourse have declared that the humanities in Russia have been undergoing the rapid process of revitalization. Although it is true that the end of the 1980's and the 1990's have been marked by the continuous series of attempts at reforming the shape of the humanities both at the level of institutional bureaucracy and that of academic discourse, people more and more often acknowledge that the reforms at the bureaucratic level have failed as such, while the reformation at the level of scholarly discourse, though has taken place, has gone in an unexpected direction.

This uneasy feeling is not unfounded. First of all, ever since the end of communist censorship over the structure of education in the humanities, there has been a growing divergence between the interests of academic discourse and the manner in which bureaucratic changes in the academia were implemented. With a very few exceptions, represented best of all by the newly organized Russian State University for the Humanities in Moscow, the “revival” of the

1 For a typical article discussing this ‘revival’, see, for example, a recently translated into English essay by Yuri Afanasiev, rector of the Russian State University for the Humanities: Iurii Afanas’ev, “Reviving the Humanities in Modern Russia,” in Remaking Russia, ed. Heyward Isham (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), p.255-270.
humanities proved to be more of a predicament than a successful reform in any sense. One of the major reasons to this, which is typically suppressed in the official discourse that tends to ascribe all failures to technical problems, such as the lack of financing, is understood by many thinking scholars and students today: the bureaucracy has never changed. The major posts in university administration are by and large occupied by the same personnel who composed the conservative body of communist *nomenklatura* before perestroika. These people are reluctant to change, and they continue to resist the implementation of new flexible educational mechanisms that would be appropriate to the changing historical reality of the 1990's.

The idea of expelling the old bureaucracy from the educational system in the humanities was actually seen by democratic-minded people in the beginning of the 1990's as a natural prerequisite for a good start in the building of a new liberal edifice of education and knowledge. However, President Yeltsin somehow found it too radical and disapproved of it. Some analysts suppose that “in rejecting the proposal for a purge of the *apparatchiks* and *nomenklatura* from the educational establishment, Yeltsin agreed to preserve the national territorial integrity of the Federation and to orchestrate a peaceful transition to a democratic form of government and education”.

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decade has shown, of course, the transition did not turn out to be entirely peaceful, nor did it result in any acceptable democratic form of social management. The sphere of education, just like the rest of major state sectors, has turned into a terrain, endlessly contested between weaker democratic and stronger reactionary forces. Eduard Dneprov, one of the defenders of radical democratic reforms, who was appointed Minister of Education under Yeltsin, spent many years trying to implement a progressive educational system and a new state law on education, but in the end was not even given a chance to complete his reforms, which were successfully blocked by the conservative opposition. Since Dneprov was in position properly to see all the obstacles, created by the presence of the old bureaucracy in power structures, he chose to follow a political strategy of isolating, as much as possible, "those who stood in the way of overcoming the remnants of totalitarian structures and practices".\(^3\) This strategy caused a particularly strong negative reaction among the opposition who united their efforts to provoke a scandal and eventually remove Dneprov from the office.

The old socialist bureaucracy, thus, continues to play a major part in the debates over the destiny of the humanities. Today, this is felt by an increasing number of academics who understand the need for new scholarly practices both

\(^3\) Brian Holmes, Gerald H. Read, and Natalya Voskresenskaya, *Russian Education*, p.298.
in the sense of a more flexible system of university teaching, and in the sense of a more critical scholarly discourse in general. Many of the professors whom I interviewed in 1995-96 in Russia commented on this point as a major problem of the current state of the humanities and social sciences. As Olga Vainstein of the Russian State University for the Humanities said:

"Institutionally, we are clearly lagging behind. It seems to me that we still have that nineteenth-century institutional model aimed at the classic disciplinary accumulation of data, where one is supposed to read and examine everything that has been written within a given discipline and then, having done with it, to add another little brick of data to the top of the pile. It is such division of "academic majors" that still characterizes both the system of teaching and the broader academic structure in this country. I know, for example, that our brilliant historian of art Raisa Kirsanova, who has just finished her new interdisciplinary study of public clothing through art and literature, is experiencing problems with the academic bureaucracy. This work was supposed to be her post-doctoral thesis, necessary for her tenure, but VAK [State Tenure Committee] say there is no discipline in terms of which the work could be properly defended and subsequently registered. Similarly, Elena Novik who is going to defend her doctoral dissertation on Siberian folklore at RGGU has come to face the same problem of finding a proper committee for her defense, because she studied folklore as a complex genre that involved texts, rituals, symbolisms of material culture, and other components".

The issue of non-adequacy of the bureaucratic norms in the humanities and social sciences in the face of the changing interests and practices of scholarship, expressed by Vainstein, was literally seconded by professors from different institutions and different disciplines. For example, Sergei Sokolovsky, research scholar at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences, says in his interview:
"...contemporary science is organized around issues rather than around disciplines. It is only the structure of university education, together with the system of tenure to some extent, that reproduces old disciplinary barriers... If one should try to find something specific in our disciplines and name it a "paradigm", then that would certainly be the degenerate German romanticism that came to us through Marx and Hegel, having been propelled in its own day by the ideas of enlightenment and positive knowledge... But what is interesting is that a positivistic science is admittedly supposed to reconstruct the whole from the fragments. We have not even followed this model. What we have is surprisingly parcellled out, because of the typical idea that every scholar should get hold of a little piece, should bring a small brick, and that's how the wall of knowledge will be composed. In fact, this wall of knowledge, the vision of the whole, always remains virtual. This is some sort of virtual holism".4

Another Russian anthropologist, Alexei Nikishenkov of Moscow State University, in a separately recorded interview, tells similar things:

"Sadly, I too have to state that our academy... is highly compartmentalized. The disciplinary partitions are very strong, and this affects everything. At Moscow State University, where I work, for example, every single soul is attached to some department, like a serf. Especially students. One may be interested in a variety of subjects, but in the end, one remains formally bound to the courses taught in one's own department. The idea of letting students register for classes outside the department has been talked about much but has never come true... If you look for institutionalized mechanisms that would allow for a broad interdisciplinary education, there are none... A specific disease of this educational system is the fact that it was based on the old German canon. It is typical to have a professor talk endlessly while students just listen along. In the end, students lose the habit of speaking... [Our courses have] half-German, half-Oriental forms: listen to the professor and then report what you managed to hear.

Or read the Talmud and, if you do not understand it, just learn it by heart.\(^5\)

It has to be noted, though, that despite the fact that the general dissatisfaction with the state of the humanities has been in the air during the 1990’s, critical assessments or self-conscious reflections on the practice of teaching and research, such as those given in the interviews above, are far from being common. Most of the professors, especially those of older generations who enjoyed some prestige under the socialist regime, remain more apologetic than critical, continuing to insist on, as well as carry out in their practice, the conservative dogmatic pattern of educational process which no longer appeals to the students. This state of affairs makes students increasingly indifferent, for they feel that the knowledge offered to them is artificial and has little value in the reality of the life that they are about to enter.\(^6\) Alexei Nikishenkov commented on this fact as one of the primary drawbacks of the conservative philosophy of teaching in the humanities:

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\(^6\) The role of the ‘old guard’ in producing such indifference among the students has been recently commented upon by other authors. Cf., for example: “An unusual phenomenon compared to other countries’ experience is that, during profound social transformation in the countries of the former USSR, the teenage and student community to a large extent is inactive and invisible... [because] during the first stages of post-totalitarianism, certain state structures are renewed, but only at the top, while underneath, bureaucracies are preserved. Political apathy is encouraged by the old structures and residual nomenklatura”. (Igor V. Kitaev, “The Labor Market and Education in the Post-Soviet Era,” in *Education and Society in the New Russia*, p.317-318.)
“[Most professors] instinctively fear and try to avoid by all means possible troublemaking words and concepts... This has to be overcome. We have to make students active, thinking, reflective. We have to respect what is troubling or interesting to them, instead of trying to form their intellectual baggage without asking them... I was trying to introduce a more lively style in my own seminars, but as for what came out of it, it is not my place to judge”.7

Furthermore, it appears that the indifference toward learning in the humanities, which students seem to have absorbed in the 1990’s as a result of such teaching policies and practices, is not easy to heal. Sergei Sokolovsky remarks that the persistence of the conservative attitude, which has been also firmly associated in the Russian discourse with the nationalistic Slavophile trend, has in fact deeply “hurt the young generation of scholars and students”. “They,” observes Sokolovsky, “have not been encouraged to study the disciplinary achievements of the West, and they have not been excited by the study of those at home. They have a consumer attitude: ‘So what? Nothing Works. The postmodern debate is said to have failed. Now give us the next theory to consider. What else do you have to say?’ I ask them, ‘Just what do you mean, What else?’ It is you who should have something else to say! What do you mean, ‘The debate has failed?’ All theories fail one day; that’s not the point. The point is you have to learn something from them.”8

8 Ibid., p.783-784.
For the purpose of comparison, I found it interesting to interview several graduate students in the humanities to hear what their own opinion of the issue was. The responses were by and large similar in that they expressed the same feeling that the material offered to them was outdated and boring. Students typically complained that professors were "imposing the ideals of their old life on the new generation" without respect to the radically changed nature of political and social reality surrounding people. Some said that they indeed felt indifferent toward the subjects they were taught and wanted just to get the degree so that they could go on with their lives. The mainstream attitude, however, was best of all summarized in the response, given to me by Aleksandr Saltykov, a former graduate student in history at Moscow State University who shortly after the graduation in the beginning of the 1990's left the academy and went to work for a private joint Russian-American firm:

"You ask me why I quit the academy? Basically, for two reasons. First, I am married now, and have to take care of my family, which would be a rather utopian project with those $30 per month that my assistant professorship provided me with (it is, if you need this comparison, three times as less as my wife makes as a secretary, and probably about fifteen times so, compared to what a poorly qualified bus driver gets these days). Second, I think I had the same reason as many other intellectually curious and talented scholars who have recently left the university walls. Not that I am that talented - it's not what I meant to say - but it is a telling tendency, indeed quite obvious, if you are not completely blind, that every creative person should sooner or later quit the academy, because our academy is an outstandingly boring and terribly bureaucratized place. It is a gathering of the most uncreative and unexciting people who engage in thoughtless compilations and have an inflated opinion of themselves - well, like all small
bureaucrats do. They are very inert, afraid of any change, and usually try to avoid far-reaching proposals by all costs. Besides, they always expect something from the government, and also want to gain some glory by silently sticking to their little spots. It is a dream of every bureaucrat, isn’t it?.. It is, of course, a shame that academic salaries have gone so miserable lately - just no excuse! - but, on the other hand, I can understand why the state does not want to pay academics more. Why pay them at all? These people are totally useless. What they do is of no benefit to anybody. Well, as a result, creative people have to leave both because they are bored in that environment and because that environment tends to reject them as aliens. I can name literally three or four, no more, broadly educated, intelligent and creative professors among the entire staff of the faculties in the humanities departments at Moscow State University. The rest are just sitting there and enjoying the opportunity to exercise power over students, because that is the only place on earth where they could show any power and influence. And outside the classroom, who cares about them?"

Saltykov’s response indeed raises many questions. It is apparent that those whom he identifies as a “gathering of the most uncreative and unexciting people who engage in thoughtless compilations and have an inflated opinion of themselves” are precisely the representatives of the old conservative bloc who care more about their own authority, which they feel has been shaken, than about the interests of the students or, more broadly, of the contemporary moment. One of the larger problems that marked the style of teaching in the humanities at the time when students like Saltykov were taking classes (i.e. the late 1980’s - early 1990’s) was the attitude toward Marxism, which had been for

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long time and remained in the view of many professors (at least, before the final
demise of the Communist Party as a political authority) an indisputable
methodological and ideological doctrine. The readings that were assigned to
students - often the books by those very professors - had not only lost their
appeal among most of the intellectually oriented students, but were at that time
largely ignored altogether. Many of such students consciously refused to read
those books, trying to learn the required information from other sources, even
though they unambiguously risked getting lower grades. Cases of the lower
grades received at one's own risk were not uncommon. On the one hand,
professors never hesitated to lower the grade when they detected that students
had not read an assigned book, even if examination answers were excellent and
displayed enough knowledge for an "A". On the other hand, students who took
such risks perfectly understood that the purpose of many examinations was
precisely to detect whether one particular book had been read, not really to
examine the actual knowledge of studied material. That situation symbolically
devalued both the meaning of the grade as such and the sanctity of examination
ritual which was seen merely as an indecent game with no fair solution.

In his earlier works on education, Bourdieu paid much attention to the
institute of examination, which he saw as one of paramount importance in the
system of university education, in so far as it performed the ritual of legitimizing
knowledge and converting it from a profane to the sacred form. "The
examination,” reasoned Bourdieu, “is not only the clearest expression of academic values and of the educational system’s implicit choices: in imposing as worthy of university sanction a social definition of knowledge and the way to show it, it provides one of the most efficacious tools for the enterprise of inculcating the dominant culture and the value of that culture”.10 Perhaps the most unfortunate effect of the spreading of that defensive reactionary attitude among the professors in Russian universities was the desacralization of examination ritual and destabilization of the authority of the system. The examination was no longer felt by most of the intelligent students as an important rite of passage in any sense, and it essentially failed to function as an efficient tool of imposing the true definition of knowledge. A strange and indeed socially painful situation (which in fact had started to form long before perestroika) ensued. Many of the best students were thus getting lower grades, while less able and intellectually curious students who continued scrupulously to learn from the required textbooks were awarded by the insecure teachers the highest ones. This unfairness unquestionably added to the social and moral apathy that was forming in the student milieu.

A typical case of such practices might be exemplified with the story, told to me by Liubomir Zekhirev and Julia Stepanova who graduated in the early

1990’s from Moscow State University, majoring at the Department of American History. Despite the formal defeat of the communist bureaucracy and several years of “perestroika cleansing” (which, as we have seen, has not proved to be very successful in the case of institutions of higher learning), the body of the Department in the beginning of the 1990’s remained largely composed of the same professors who had been associated before perestroika both with the higher levels of the Communist Party officials, and with the most dogmatic version of ideological Marxist scholarship. The chair of the Department, professor Yazkov, who was also the author of a required textbook for a number of departmental courses, became one of the most unpopular figures among the students in the 1990’s. Many of the students distinctly felt that Yazkov suppressed their desire for knowledge of the American history from a new fresh perspective, free of the Cold War mentality, and continued to confine them to the old socialist style of formalized and politicized history. As a result, the situation at the Department turned out to be very similar to what was described above, since many students refused to read Yazkov’s textbook and preferred to learn the material from alternative sources. Examinations at the Department, as Julia recalled, “were depressing and frustrating”.

Julia, who was writing her thesis in 20th-century American history, had a good command of English, and she was fortunate to be invited for a year of research and practical studies in the United States. During that year, she
managed to collect important data and, naturally, to learn a number of different concepts and views regarding her project from American scholars. Upon her return, she completed her thesis, having framed it conceptually in terms of the new concepts she came to know. Both at the thesis defense, and at the final examination she was deliberately overscrutinized by the departmental committee, headed by Yazkov, and given a "B" grade ("4" in the Russian grade system) on a charge of "not having sufficient understanding of some basic concepts that were clearly explicated in the required textbook". "Even though friends of mine warned me that something like this could happen," Julia told me, "I somehow did not believe they would have a nerve to do such an obvious foul thing. You know, they did not ask me even a single question about the concept I was trying to develop. All their questions were centered on that darn textbook, as if it were an ultimate authority on all matters. Of course I did not read it too closely - who could take much of that old garbage without going nuts..." It certainly appeared offensive to the students that neither their actual work nor the interests of knowledge as such should be taken into consideration, and the judgment should be pronounced on the basis of some ridiculous and irrelevant personal obsessions of professors who had lost all their authority and prestige. "When I left the exam," Julia remembered, "I really wanted to cry. But the next day, I calmed down. You know, who cares? Then again, when I got my diploma with the inscription Good, and the other guy who based his whole thesis on
Yazkov's textbook alone and did not read a single monograph in English got his with the Excellent, I felt somehow offended. But, you know, I was not the only one who felt that way."

Liubomir's story was a little different in shape but very much similar in content and results. He was writing his thesis on the problems of American Civil War. Having a good knowledge of English, he also invested much time in reading untranslated sources. Not many of them were available in Moscow libraries but, being enthusiastic about his project, he managed to buy some American-published books through rarity bookstores and informal book retailers, having spent a good fortune on them, for such editions were always extremely expensive to get in Russia. He also corresponded with a number of professors from the United States, who kindly provided him with articles important to his project. Liubomir's thesis was advancing successfully and the faculty at the Department were aware of that. Professor Yazkov, however, intensely disliked Liubomir, since they had already met at term examinations which, apparently, had revealed incompatibilities in their worldview and scholarly interests. The fact that Liubomir's thesis was advancing now with success and beyond the scope of the traditional added to that dislike. "From the way they informally treated me," says Liubomir, "I could tell that the defense was not going to be fun. I mean, I expected a low blow of some kind". The low blow in question came three months before the defense and caught him off
guard, despite all his expectations. One of Liubomir's committee members told him to bring his thesis draft for the final reviewing. Liubomir brought his manuscript, which was the only copy he had. (The early 1990's had not yet made computers or xerox machines available to students in Russia - furthermore, not many students could afford even a typewriter because of its cost, and often they worked on their theses in a handwritten manner, typing them only prior to the defense. In any case, a student normally did not and could not have more than one copy of his or her draft work.)

The process of reviewing took a surprisingly long turn. After some three weeks, Liubomir decided to inquire about his manuscript, but the professor who took it was now out of town. When after another week he returned, he told Liubomir that he did not have the thesis and that he had left it at the Department before he left town. At the Department, strangely, nobody saw the manuscript. Liubomir became worried and informed his committee about the incident. "Nobody reacted as if they were surprised," recalls Liubomir, "They said that two months was enough to recover the lost draft, can you believe it." It was never revealed whether the loss of the manuscript was a true accident or intended trick, but the fact is that Liubomir had to hastily compose another paper from some pieces that he managed to put together within the two months before the defense, and the defense brought him a "C" grade. "The unfairness was just too blatant," says Liubomir, "I am sure it was one hundred percent
intentional”. He decided that the matter was worth the trouble and appealed to the dean. The grade was changed to a “B”. After his graduation, Liubomir tried to apply to an American Studies program at some of the universities in the United States, but had no success, for it is entirely conceivable that the recommendations, given to him by his committee members, might be not of the best kind. Today he works at the Moscow branch of Siemens Corporation.

It is easy to see that the process of “exclusion and selection”, of which Bourdieu likes to speak as an inherent mechanism of the university system, assumed a rather regressive dimension in the Russia of the transition. In many cases, it were not the best students who were encouraged and given the right of way. The best students, on the contrary, typically encountered continuous problems, so that by the time of graduation many of them felt tired of obstacles and indifferent to the academic career. The repulsive forces therefore arose on both sides of the divide. As Saltykov mentions, “creative people have to leave both because they are bored in that environment and because that environment tends to reject them as aliens”. If we should add to this structural predicament the financial humiliation of the Russian academy, which proved to be especially hard on younger scholars, we shall receive the basic set of causes that turned the young intellectual generation away from the academy since the end of the 1980’s. By the end of the 1990’s, this resulted in a certain intellectual vacuum which was felt by critically minded scholars. Sergei Sokolovsky clearly connected the crisis
in the humanities with the issue of discontinuity in reproduction of intellectual resources:

"There seem to be serious generational problems. I believe we have lost the active generation of scholars who quit the academy during the perestroika years. The intellectual resources of those who used to rule the disciplines have expired. Meanwhile, the younger generation has not been able, or has not been given the chance, to stand on its own two feet".\(^{11}\)

This situation explains much about the conservative dogmatism that prevailed in the discussions over the humanities in the 1990's. Masses of well educated people were thrown out to other sectors of the society, mainly business and commerce,\(^{12}\) while the mediocre residue that was left in the academy continued to debate the fate of the humanities. It is no surprise then that the character and direction these debates assumed were defensive rather than progressive. The defensiveness was salient both in publications and in the informal instances of academic behavior which can be illustrated by the following case.


\(^{12}\) This social tendency cannot be considered as an entirely negative phenomenon, even though it apparently constituted a certain tragedy for the humanities as well as a great number of subjective personal tragedies, for the influx of educated social strata into such spheres as business, politics, or commerce which have been apparently lacking intelligent management for a long time should indeed be seen as a positive phenomenon. In the new Russian society where the rationalization of professional recruitment, which Max Weber saw as a major trait of developed modern bureaucracies, is only beginning to take shape, new corporate structures often do not mind hiring persons with the background in the humanities, presuming that they will learn and be able to requalify fast.
In May of 1995, I was present at the conference on "The State of Research and Knowledge in the Humanities", held in the general framework of encompassing debates at the Russian State University for the Humanities (RGGU). The keynote lecture of the day was on power, knowledge, and truth in the humanities, delivered by Georgii Knabe, a senior historian who had been considered a respected scholar in the Soviet time. The lecture was rather weak and unprovocative, and in fact displayed many blank spots and inconsistencies. In the discussion, Olga Vainstein remarked that the name of Michel Foucault was for some reason never brought up in the talk and asked why Foucault's works, being so pertinent to the subject, were altogether dismissed in the lecture. Knabe did not answer the question and the remark all of a sudden made him so angry that he expressly raised his voice and asked Vainstein to "call off her irrelevant attacks". Vainstein shrugged and dropped the question.

Knabe's reaction was a typical one for a scholar belonging to the "old guard". The question about Foucault was very much relevant to the discussion, and it was least of all an "attack", but it was perceived as such, since Knabe probably took it as a personal reproach, concerning his ignorance of Foucault, whom he apparently did not read, but was not able to admit that in front of the audience. The insecurity of conservative professors in the face of new arenas of human inquiry makes them perceive these arenas as a personal threat, which they rarely separate from a global threat to the Russian humanities.
It is typical that such professors are often extremely afraid of new scholarly terms that have emerged in the theoretical debates within the past two decades in Europe and America and have been, in a way, already internationalized. For example, describing the Russian anthropological community in his interview, Alexei Nikishenkov mentions that words like "paradigm" or "episteme" are still seen as awkward and troublesome.\textsuperscript{13} There are a variety of practical examples of such hostility toward new terms and words, some of which may appear to a normal intelligent scholar truly ludicrous. In his latest article, the senior Russian anthropologist V. N. Basilov openly reproaches younger ethnographers for their use of the word \textit{discourse}, suggesting that that jargon term "should be replaced by some normal phrase, like \textit{scholarly conversation} or \textit{exchange of ideas}". As if illustrating Nikishenkov's remark, he further writes that the word \textit{paradigm} does not convey any new meaning, and so it is not needed. Interestingly, here he fails to come up with a "normal" word or phrase that would substitute that old meaning that he sees as unnaturally exposed by the term \textit{paradigm}. Finally, in the same article, he protests against quoting phrases in a foreign language, claiming that it is a "presumptuous practice" of less intelligent scholars or immature students who want to show

\textsuperscript{13} Alexei Elfimov, "The State of the Discipline in Russia," p.781.
off. These instances reflect nothing but the emerging fears of the entrenched sector of the academy, for, in fact, terms *discourse* and *paradigm* have been already put to good use by Russian scholars in many different disciplines within the past decade, and quoting in a foreign language has been always a regular practice and was not censured as such even under the Soviet regime.15

The rise of fears of insecurity among the conservative group of scholars and their hostility toward unimportant details is closely related to the traditional Russian split between the so called *Slavophiles* and *Westernizers*. This split had been a particular feature of Russian intellectual life in the nineteenth century, with its heated debates of whether Russian social institutions should follow the Western way or their own “native” way. With the coming of the socialist regime and political suppression of socially meaningful intellectual debates, the discussion between Slavophiles and Westernizers naturally ended, for the way

15 Professor Olga Vainstein commented in her interview on the issue of “foreign language as a threat”, linking it closely to the general issue of rapid informational change at the end of the 20th century: “Now that the iron curtain between the West and the East has broken and a flood of information has suddenly rushed into our society, scholars have got to face the challenge of navigating the new informational space. Many senior scholars who often do not have an adequate proficiency in foreign languages feel isolated in this situation, since they cannot respond to this challenge which, at the same time, can be more and more often taken up by an increasing number of students who have gone through practical training or graduate studies in the West and who can easily correspond in a foreign language, or have a basic experience with e-mail, computers, etc. Older scholars, unable to catch up with this development, naturally take it as a threat that comes from the West and tend to adopt an oppositional stance toward it.” (To appear in: Alexei
the country was to follow was chosen to be neither Western, nor Slavic, but "communist" and it could no longer be disputed as such. With the demise of the totalitarian political machine in the 1980's, the question of the "path" sprang up again, and this time it essentially separated radically or liberally minded social reformers from the former communist nomenklatura. The logic of separation was unambiguous and much the same within the humanities and social sciences as it was within the political sphere. People who had enjoyed prestige and power in its any form under the Soviet system now resisted the achievements of perestroika and adopted the conservative stance, appealing to native Russian feelings and generally evoking the primordial sentiment. They naturally were identified as Slavophiles. People who saw in such actions an impediment to social progress were ascribed to Westernizers. It is important to notice that in many cases these new "Westernizers" might not necessarily proclaim "Western" values per se, and so the logical line of distinction perhaps was not as subtle as it had been in the discussions of the last century, but the existence of two more or less identifiable directions in the social worldview, closely resembling those of older "Slavophiles" and "Westernizers", was acknowledged as an obvious fact in the Russia of the 1990's. Professor Sergei Cheshko of the Russian Academy of Sciences, responding to my interview question regarding the matter, says:

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Elfimov, "Academics and the Production of Intellectual Discourse of Modernity in Russia.")
“We have both Slavophile and Westernizing trends in the academy, but they are, of course, informal. They are related to the ideological demarcation among scholars as well as among politicians and other people in society, since science essentially reflects what is going on in society. The demarcation started at some point in the late 1980’s. But this divide is certainly not total. Most scholars hold on to a neutral or more or less balanced position”.

Sergei Sokolovsky of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology makes a similar statement:

“Both tendencies are present. Which is prevailing today, I do not know. But since the beginning of perestroika, when the doors opened a little and major publications from the West became accessible, a Westernizing trend spread among scholars. They were able to place local knowledge in a more global context, the result of which was an immediate reevaluation of knowledge. Then the Slavophile trend began to emerge as a reaction to reevaluation, as a reaction to the influx of books and people from the West. This trend involved mostly conservative scholars, those who openly opposed everything but Marxism prior to perestroika. Their orthodox feelings were being hurt. In my mind, their reaction was a purely political rather than scientific affair. All the constructions they were trying to sell as theoretical were in fact ideological.”

Professor Alexei Nikishenkov of Moscow State University makes a more extended comment on the matter:

“There is a tendency, typical for all acculturation processes, which is called, I suppose after Ralph Linton, ‘nativism’. Such is the case here. Very often, it is hard to figure out who is a Slavophile and who is a Westernizer. It is a mess, like any acculturation process. Tables turn every day, and all kinds of inversions take place where you would least expect them. In retrospect, however, one might delineate a certain order in which these trends have flourished for the past ten years. First, there was an intense interest, inflated to a

17 Ibid., p.783.
degree, in all things Western. Books became more or less available, trips abroad became more or less available. Every month there would be a guest scholar from the West giving a talk at the Russian Academy of Sciences, and there was great excitement. Then came a period of indifference, as if people had gotten fed up with that. And recently I have observed the coming of a Slavophile trend and the strengthening of an entrenched group within the academy. Within this group, you would now see many of the same people who had been actively attending the talks of the guest scholars. It goes without saying that there are hardly any academic issues involved in the matter; it is all ideologically charged.¹⁸

The ideological load that penetrated the humanities and social sciences in the form of the Slavophile sentiment has indeed much to do with the general historical/cultural paradigm in the intellectual consciousness which was discussed in the previous chapters, and which proved to be an ideal environment for the Slavophile discourse to grow within. One of the major tropes employed by the Slavophile discourse became that of "revival". While those loosely associated with the Westernizing paradigm were typically looking for "new forms", the followers of the Slavophile path were stressing the importance of "reviving" something that had once existed. The debate over the fate of the humanities, in this regard, is no exception. Progressively minded scholars and students were looking for new forms of educational process, free of dogmas both of the socialist authoritarianism, and of the more general scholarly positivism that largely characterized the first three quarters of the 20th century worldwide. In a word, their desire was for something appropriate for the new historical

moment. The rhetoric of the Slavophile or ideologically conservative wing, on the contrary, stressed not so much the uniqueness or needs of the new moment, as much the necessity of reviving the humanities that Russia once had had. Strangely, even Yuri Afanasiev, the founder of the new Russian State University for the Humanities, who managed to change former reputation from Party official to the image of a radical reformer, proved unable or unwilling to avoid the rhetoric of revival which gained wide currency due to the power of encompassing social infatuation with history and cultural heritage. Not only the title of his recent article does indicate that, but the content of the article itself which represents a typical attempt at idealizing the humanities in old Russia, which, according to Afanasiev, “were formed as a comprehensive family of studies, not as an individual science or branch of knowledge, developing fruitfully and achieving visible results”. Further, giving praise (no matter how well deserved) to a variety of Russian scholars and philosophers from the nineteenth century and the pre-revolutionary Silver Age, Afanasiev concludes, “Naturally, it cannot be said that the development of thought in Russia and the West moved in the same direction”.19

It is certainly not clear why the common direction of scholarly developments in Russia and the West should be denied “naturally”. In fact, with the exception of that particular kind of late Russian aristocratic philosophy,

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19 Iurii Afanas’ev, “Reviving the Humanities in Modern Russia,” p.266.
scholarly developments in the late 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries could be seen as essentially moving in the same direction in all developed countries, and the contacts between Russian and European scholars, as well as the increasing role of exchange of opinion between them, were known to be the case at that time. The notion of the common destiny and common path, however, cannot be said to fit nicely into the new particularistic intellectual framework of history and cultural heritage, so Afanasiev chooses to reaffirm the sentiment that appeals to the Slavophiles, even though he himself and his institutional reforms at the Russian State University for the Humanities can hardly be ascribed to the Slavophile worldview.

Part of the problem is that the Slavophile trend, as Alexei Nikishenkov and Sergei Sokolovsky noted in their interviews, is in its many aspects an ideological matter rather than a theoretical academic standpoint. The case with Afanasiev should be perhaps interpreted from this point of view. Being the rector of one of the major universities of the country at the time when allocations to the educational budget hopelessly decrease with every year unquestionably requires some political insight and ideological maneuvering. It is indeed clear that in the situation when nativist feelings prevail among those who hold much of the political and administrative power, the appealing to such feelings can gain

20 Strictly speaking, it was precisely after the socialist revolution, when the freedom of international contacts and exchange of opinions was suppressed, that the scholarly
much more than the pursuing of some truth of the day. Of course, the cultural paradox is such that the logic of ideological maneuvering gradually becomes the logic of life and the appealing to nativist feelings becomes in effect the truth of the day. There is a curious old Russian saying, still widely used in Russia of today, that subtly expresses the commonsensical basis of the transformational power of practice: “If you are called a pig one hundred times, the one hundred and first time will make you grunt”.

The dissemination and strengthening of the Slavophile attitude, for this reason, appears to be a fairly complex process, maintained by a variety of conscious efforts and ideological practices on the one hand, and propelled on the other by the secondary initiative of those who unreflectively see in the cultural effects of such efforts and practices the real truth of the day. It is typical that many of those who unreflectively recognize the essence of the moment in the Slavophile moods often conceive of that moment as of something romantic, if not heroic, and easily subscribe to the rhetoric of revival in its any form. In the humanities and social sciences this seems to be especially the case, for the Popperian spirit of moral historicism that continues to dominate the subject area
development in Russia went its own “distinctive” way.

Indeed, it is well known that in the time of the general economic turmoil in Russia the Russian State University for the Humanities has been one of the most financially secure institutions. Although the wages of the faculty and staff have only barely met the lowest living standards, they have been steadily kept at the top level compared to other universities of the country. There have been no delays with compensation, and so on.
of disciplinary inquiry comes conducive to a form of naive emotional excitement about the things long forgotten. Sergei Cheshko explicitly commented on the proliferation of romantic revivalist moods in Russian anthropology in the 1990’s:

“The idea of ‘ethnic renaissance’... has been in the air during all these turbulent years. Many anthropologists got romantic about it and started speaking and writing in defense of the rebirth of traditional culture, of ethnic revival, and so on. I was always curious about what it was they wanted to revive. Bast shoes? Samovars? Wagons on the roads? For some reason, this mythic idea of a rebirth as a return to the old is appealing to anthropologists. I do not really understand this. Culture is a continuity, and the only sense we can apply to a ‘rebirth’ is that of producing a new entity. But today this romantic trend is fairly strong in the anthropological community”.

Similarly, Alexei Nikishenkov remarks that the romanticism about the traditional objects of study has sprung in the air, and “too many ethnographers have decided that their heyday has come, and they can finally apply their theories to practice”. He further makes a good observation, adding that that “has been, in essence, just another bluff, although some scholars must have been sincere in their belief”.

In a word, as I have noticed above, intentions and levels of comprehending the situation, that composed the overall Slavophile attitude, were different. Thus, if departmental curricula at Moscow State University have been kept traditional and ideologically conservative because of the politically

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23 Ibid., p.778.
conservative nature of the institution, which has always played the role comparable to that of Harvard in the American society, at other, less politically important, universities the Slavophile turn in curricula has been taking place often because of the sincere romantic belief in the importance of reviving old traditions. For example, at the Department of Sociology of the recently established Moscow University for Business and Management, a substantial part of the readings assigned to the students strangely returns to the long abandoned tradition of Russian formalist sociology of the end of the 19th - the beginning of the 20th centuries. Moreover, the Department invests much time, effort, and money in publishing a large two-volume textbook of readings in sociology, the entire first volume of which is devoted to the Russian sociology of the 19th century and contains hundreds of pages of outdated scholastic debates, more philosophical than sociological in character, and having no significant relevance to the changed society of nowadays. The fact should indeed seem puzzling, especially if one considers that at such institution as Moscow University for

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24 The volume contains essays by many mediocre and uninformative 19th-century Russian sociologists and social philosophers, such as B. Kistiakovskii, V. Ivanovskii, K.Takhtarev, V. Khvostov, N. Korkunov, V. Chernov, and others, who mainly discuss not sociological questions per se, but rather those typical to the 19th-century philosophical thought ideas of Comte, Spencer, and Marx. These are questions of necessity and freedom of will, the individual and the crowd, class struggle and social progress, and so on. These issues, of course, may be considered as still relevant and important, but it is hard to imagine how the readings, confined to the rather dull and positivistic 19th-century view of the matter, could provoke any active interest in a student who has to live in the reality described as the postmodern age.
Business and Management the educational priorities are hardly centered over scrutinizing some philosophical scholasticism of the earlier ages, but rather over preparing students to effectively cope with the social complexities of the contemporary moment. Indeed, the description of the sociology program in the general announcement catalog of the University clearly indicates that “the Department trains sociologists in the area of business and management, according to the accepted standards of sociological education worldwide... The program and offered courses have been developed in consultation with the teaching experience at the leading universities of Russia, USA, Canada, and Europe. The course of study is based on the latest scholarly publications in Russian and foreign languages”.

Publications may be certainly the latest, but the information conveyed in them is too often the oldest. It is interesting to note that the advertising puts an unambiguous emphasis on the criterion of being in line with the Western developments (“worldwide standards”, “experience of leading universities of the USA, Canada, and Europe”, “publications in foreign languages”). It is thus technically understood and acknowledged that the interest in contemporary scholarly developments worldwide to a large extent constitutes the spirit of the younger generation and, therefore, the marketable matter at the present moment. But in practice that stands beyond that technical understanding, oddly enough,

the idea of humanities and social sciences continues to be dominated by the Slavophile-oriented romantic "nativism" and the general philosophy of "revival".

It is not difficult to make a connection between the revivalist trend in the academy and the fever of architectural restoration discussed earlier. Both phenomena hide essentially the same interplay between the concrete political or ideological interest of the power and the abstract humanistic romanticism of the intelligentsia. The impact of the humanities and social sciences, in this regard, may not be as immediate as that of spectacular urban restoration campaigns, especially considering the financial crisis in the academy and the steady decline of interest in the humanities among the youth, but its pervasiveness is nevertheless felt. Almost every educational program on public television today is not just permeated, but in fact heavily loaded with the idea of revival and "return to the roots". Naturally, many of such programs are created by (or, at least, with the assistance of) the same scholars in the humanities, the majority of whom consciously or unconsciously subscribe to the concept of cultural

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26 The admissions statistics at the most prestigious institutions in the humanities, such as Moscow State University, for example, indicates that the average rate of competition in the late 1980's (10-14 applicants competing for 1 position) gradually fell during the 1990's to 2-3 students for 1 position. In many of the social sciences, with the notable exception of economics, the situation was nearly identical. For instance, the number of persons applying (again, for 1 position) to the Department of Sociology at Moscow State University from 1990 to 1995 was as follows: 14 (1990), 5 (1991), 3 (1992), 3 (1993), 3.7
restoration. During the course of the year 1996, for example, the ORT network (Russian Public Television) was showing a series of weekend programs, created by research scholars of the State Historical Museum. One of the typical episodes from the series (shown on June 29, 1996) was, for instance, entitled "In Search of the Lost Unity" and devoted to the discussion of the old Russian peasant household. A long tedious display of old wooden peasant utensils and instruments was accompanied by a nostalgic story about the spirit of creation, the ultimate message of which was that the peasant of old days had possessed the unity of the soul. It was implied that such unity was lost in the contemporary society, which must have resulted in many misfortunes of nowadays. In the narrative of the episode, one could unmistakably detect a clear reaffirmation of the principal traditional value - that of the old rural household as a building cell and source of stability of the society. This is a typical example of how the intellectual production of the humanities merges with the ideological agenda of the Slavophile political game.

It can be safely stated that the Slavophile politics of cultural revival in fact has become the dominant ideology in the Russian humanities and social sciences at the moment. What is remarkable is that it is extremely rarely acknowledged as such. Most scholars, especially those sympathetic with the Slavophile trend,
assert that the academic discourse and their own practices are politically neutral and essentially unideological. Some of them even emphasize the need to find a proper ideology for the "new" humanities. Philosophy professor Eduard Mirskii, for example, says that since the beginning of perestroika the major task of the humanities was to rid themselves of the communist ideology and "depoliticize" academic scholarship. Now, reasons Mirskii, when the task has been accomplished, there has emerged an ideological vacuum in the humanities which has to be filled with a proper alternative.27

Such views, if they are sincere, are indeed naive. The concept that the humanities were nicely "depoliticized" and cleared of the ideology upon someone's decision, and thus became somewhat of a clean blank territory that could be appropriately filled with the desired ideological content, is nothing but merely imperceptive. Communist ideology, in the first place, was never successfully swept out from the academic terrain, as I mentioned earlier. It was discredited and broken apart as a powerful unity, but it survived and adapted to the new situation, having transformed itself into various oppositional currents. Secondly, according to the Russian proverb "the sacred spot can never be vacant", as soon as the communist ideology started to retire to rear positions, other ideological forces began taking over the terrain of the humanities and establishing their hegemony. It was evident already in the early 1990's that the

ideology of "Russian revival" was violently pushing not only the weakened communist doctrine, but also the new progressive intellectual forces which might be loosely identified as the Westernizers, and which cherished an idea of open internationalized and modernized society. The strengthening of the Slavophile ideology, which also displayed its conservative aspect rather early, subsequently attracted many of the former adherents of the communist doctrine, who thus joined the Slavophile bloc in the academia under different guises and contributed to its well-being. The process of "clearing the humanities of the ideology" which, according to professor Mirskii, was a success that ended in a miraculous "depoliticization", was therefore only a process of imposing another powerful ideology over the weakened one.

It is appropriate to note another fact here - namely, that the concept of "depoliticization" of the humanities itself assumed wide currency among the Slavophile and generally conservative oriented academics. It came, strictly speaking, as an extension of the rhetoric of scientific objectivity that had been long practiced under the socialist regime and left visible traces in the tradition of contemporary Russian scholarship. Olga Vainstein provided an interesting comment on this issue:

"The humanities people here certainly have a leaning towards political conservatism, although it is traditionally camouflaged by we-are-beyond-the-politics posture. This posture is in many ways a product of the Soviet political system, and has been developed over the long decades of our history. That is to say, many Russian intellectuals still have that reflex of steadfastly resisting any kind of
politicalized forms of knowledge. I know that Western scholars have often found this striking, but, well, that's the reality we live in. I do not think it is going to change soon. It seems unlikely that Russian intellectuals will ever be able to develop that left-wing complex of Western humanities (you know, I mean all those things, related to the PC debates, critique of the right government, and the like). Stories about political correctness that sneak into the Russian press, and specifically into the newspaper Segodnia ["Today"], which most of our intellectuals seem to read these days, are perceived here with much irony. They appear under titles, like "I don't want to be a noblewoman, but want to be a black lesbian" (clearly, what is meant is, to get a job in the US, the best strategic device is to belong to several minorities simultaneously). So, as I say, we have a somewhat different view of things here, which is an outcome of our history.\textsuperscript{28}

The guise of ideological neutrality, thus, appears to be a safer mode of self-presentation among the majority of Russian scholars who still often believe that taking an ideological or political side would undermine their scientific authority and simultaneously expose them to the critique of the other side. The influence of this anti-ideological paradigm in the humanities is so persistent that, curiously enough, even some scholars who recognize its false side are not always able or willing to expel it from their thinking. Anthropologist Sergei Cheshko of Russian Academy of Sciences, for example, answering my interview question, readily admitted that "the slogan of a 'pure science not involved in politics', frequently heard in past years, is obviously nothing but a naive and unfeasible

\textsuperscript{28} To appear in: Alexei Elifimov, "Academics and the Production of Intellectual Discourse of Modernity in Russia."
ideal”. Minutes later, however, when I asked him to identify his own ideological standing, he came up with this statement, somewhat different in character:

“Just how could science be conservative or liberal? It may be science or non-science. A considerable number of anthropologists today start working for the governmental sphere and pursue political issues rather than scientific ones. Some of them tend to the liberal side of the divide, some to the conservative, but what they do is not science... Regarding the relationship between science and the political regime, a certain distance must be kept there”.

The resistance to the subject of ideological identification is a widespread phenomenon not only among the Slavophile or conservative intellectuals, but indeed very frequently even among the Westernizers or liberals or radicals. Professor Cheshko, as a matter of fact, can hardly be said to be a Slavophile or conservative in any sense. His academic views are rather those of a critical-minded scholar, interested in modern disciplinary developments and new objects of study. His recent book, “The Dissolution of the Soviet Union”, was in some ways even radical in its argument, and was sharply criticized by conservative Russian ethnographers. The more so, the awkwardness of the subject of ideological positioning in the academy and the tradition of dismissing the ideological nature of scholarship in the humanities appear to be a striking feature of the contemporary academic life in Russia. It is no surprise that such

books as *Writing Culture*, in which the issue of ideological and political situatedness of scholarly work was specifically posed, met with a largely negative reaction among Russian academics and were quickly ascribed to the sins of "unscientific" postmodernism.

Another thoughtful perspective on the issue of ideological "neutrality" in the contemporary Russian humanities was given by Alexei Nikishenkov of Moscow State University who also acknowledged that conservative tendencies masked as "scholarly neutrality" were prevailing in Russia of the 1990's, but noted that the latter were in many ways a specific result of general disappointment with the liberal promises of perestroika and the outcome of many years of extreme social and personal confusion and frustration, brought about by political and cultural instability of the 1980-90's:

"You know what the intelligentsia is all about. A revolutionary yesterday is a conservative today and will probably become a religious fanatic tomorrow. Intellectuals are evolving in very strange ways... Everyone was a liberal during the early perestroika years. But then all that gradually changed, maybe because of the constant drop in salaries, maybe because of psychological tiredness, maybe because of disenchantment in something. Or perhaps for all these reasons... I am not sure which tendency really dominates, left or right. I would rather say neither. Perhaps it is really some kind of unsettled center. What I mean by 'unsettled' is that that centrism

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is not a self-consciously adopted stance. It is by and large an accidental attitude caused by a state of deep perplexity and frustration. What lies at the core of this, in my opinion, is an illness of language. These days people experience an utter lack in ability to verbalize their moods. They do not know how to speak; they do not know what name their moods have. The fact that many people tend to express an extreme political judgment does not mean they are firmly convinced of what they say. Quite the contrary, in most cases it is just an easier way of expressing emotional states".33

Further, in response to my specific question about the negative reaction to publications, such as Writing Culture, and the dismissal of issues raised in them, he added:

"The question of whether the anthropological community is liberal or conservative is not as relevant here as it might be in the West. Western anthropology, ever since it was born, has been socially charged with an air of Rousseau’s morality, meaning that two things have been always present in the game: a certain affection for the native and a certain observance of the ethical code in respect to one’s own society. This has never been the case here. First of all, anthropology has never played an important role in society or, for that matter, in the academy. It has never risen to the same level of academic enterprise, as in the West. What we used to have here was simple: the native was just an object, and the relationship with the establishment of one’s own society was absolutely unquestioned”.

In fact, what Nikishenkov says about anthropology is essentially true for other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, regardless of the level of their weight in the society. The object of study is just an object of study and it has nothing to do with the relationship between the researcher and his social environment. In turn, the relationship between the researcher and his social

environment is rarely questioned as such, for it is assumed that it brings no influence to bear on the study of that abstract object which is presumed to be securely separated from the inquirer. Furthermore, the questioning of this relationship is often merely thought to impede the objectivity of research. It has to be said that, certainly, there are an increasing number of Russian scholars who break with this sort of understanding of things and try to promote ideals of reflective scholarship in the humanities and social sciences, but at this point they are far from being a majority or even an influential group in any sense. The overall paradigm of understanding and practicing social research in the 1990’s by and large rests on the premises and habits described above.

On the positive side, in the course of the 1990’s, several attempts have been made to establish new institutional structures in the humanities, such as interdisciplinary research centers at universities, which have been supposed to free academic scholarship from the unchanging rigid constraints, imposed on professors and students by the dogmas of disciplinary bureaucratism. Some of such attempts have paralleled, and most have simply followed the example of the interdisciplinary developments in the Western humanities in the 1980’s and the beginning of the 1990’s. Due to the lack of proper financial organization in the Russian academy, not many of these interdisciplinary ventures have managed to survive, but nevertheless some have been successful. The Center for Historical Anthropology, established at the Russian State University for the
Humanities, in fact proved to be an effective interdepartmental structure that stimulated research both on the part of professors and that of graduate students.

Perhaps the most notable of these developments, however, has been the institutionalization of the new discipline in the humanities, so called *culturology* ["kul'turologia"], which has loosely approximated the model of Cultural Studies in the United States. Initially, culturology was conceived precisely as a discipline that should liberate research in the humanities and social sciences from the narrow disciplinary constraints, allowing for a unified holistic approach to the study of social phenomena. At the time when culturology was on the eve of its disciplinary institutionalization, and perhaps for some time after it, there was a due excitement around it and many scholars were in expectation of some novelty in research trends. However, very soon it became obvious that the intellectual production coming out of the culturological field was clearly falling short of expectations. The promised, or at any rate expected, disciplinary synthesis was not happening in culturological works, the social sciences as such were absent from their field of vision and the discussion was primarily centered on philosophical issues of various kinds. Having hardly impressed scholars both of traditional and untraditional orientations, culturology did not find its way into the schools of humanities and social sciences at most Russian universities, and
was implemented largely in so called “pedagogical institutes”, as well as in the schools of natural sciences where it was read as a foundation course.

Despite the specific nature of its institutionalization, culturology succeeded in drawing surprisingly solid support from the government and various non-academic agencies. During the 1990's, publications in culturology were proliferating with a substantial degree of success (at least, in terms of the number of copies published, if not copies sold), although, as Sergei Sokolovsky remarked, “books in which the word culturology appears in the title or subtitle are normally those you would not want to read”. It is true that, in practice, culturology very soon abandoned the ideal of new forms and strategies of inquiry and found a more or less comfortable canonical genre of its own, so that most of the works published in culturology around the mid-1990's looked already essentially the same. In 1996, Sergei Sokolovsky described the state of culturology in Russia in the following way:

“I would not really translate the practice of culturology into what has been known in the West as ‘cultural studies’. In this country, culturology is some kind of cheap philosophy of culture. It is very indistinct, but at the same time terribly systematized and

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34 Pedagogical institutes ["Pedagogicheskii institut"] were a widespread kind of educational institution in the Soviet Union, and they were intended basically for preparing high school teachers, unlike universities which implied higher standards of education and therefore were meant to provide intellectual forces for advanced levels of the academy. During the 1990's, almost all pedagogical institutes in Russia were renamed “pedagogical universities” for prestige purposes, but the sense of a pedagogical university being secondary to a traditional academic university by and large remained.

structured. It is one of those echoes of the Hegelian tradition. Recently we have had an odd reaction to Marxism: a rejection of everything related to the issue of class but a complete digestion of the systems approach. It is, if you wish, 'total functionalism'. All is intended for something; everything determines everything. All we have to do is analyze some parts of the system and reconstruct what is missing. Culturology is an adapted version of Parsons, seasoned with various philosophical exercises that often start with an analysis of the notions of morality, elevated to a global scope, and going back as far as the time of anthropogenesis".36

The major reason why culturology became successful in the technical institutional sense and increasingly unpopular in the scholarly or intellectual sense was directly related to the specific category of people who gradually took over the discipline. In most cases, these were the former nomenclature academics - that is, mediocre scholars with no appropriate academic background, but with strong bureaucratic connections both inside and outside the academy. Alexei Nikishenkov, who had happened to teach at one of the culturology departments in the beginning of the 1990's and got a more intimate knowledge of the inside structure of culturology as a discipline, later reflected:

"Culturology was conceived and created by a group of philosophers who were lagging behind all the time and who, I suppose, dreamed about a disciplinary sovereignty of their own. Now, since almost anything could be instituted during perestroika, from universities to academies, they set up a discipline and registered it through all the corridors of academic power. They got tenure-track positions, a science council of their own, and so on. It was only long after this discipline was institutionalized from above that people started questioning its status. I did not like the whole thing because, from the very beginning, the process displayed its

negative side. Culturology was settling down with great success into the places made vacant by sweeping out Marxist philosophy, scientific communism, the history of the Communist Party, and other such disciplines. The armies of people who used to be related to these disciplines were suddenly renamed 'culturologists'. They were, in fact, forced to requalify to fit some tracks previously unknown to them. So there was much window dressing involved in the appearance of culturology on the academic stage".37

Failures of culturology that started to follow after its institutionalization turned the attention of many thinking scholars away from it, which resulted in a tangible withdrawal of intellectual resources from the newly opened field that lacked such resources, as a matter of fact, from the very beginning. The same professor Nikishenkov, who in the end of the 1980's had been enthusiastic about bringing interdisciplinary perspectives, opened by culturology, in ethnographic research, some five years later stated with regret:

"I would not like to identify ethnography with culturology. Nor would I like to see ethnography going in the direction of culturology... I had once thought ethnography must go in the direction of cultural studies. I thought it was culture that was primarily deserving of the ethnographer's attention, for Soviet ethnography had long been superfluously centered around ethnos. This preoccupation constricted the intellectual development of the discipline, and so I held on to the idea that ethnography should take cultural studies as its model. But when we got culturology officially established as a formal discipline in the late 1980's, supposedly to cover the cultural studies domain, I began changing my mind".38

38 Ibid., p.776.
One of the primary and most commonly heard criticisms, directed toward the field of culturology, was that the disciplinary practices of the latter became enclosed within a kind of superfluous holistic genre which made the object of study (that is, "culture") a vague philosophical territory, removed from any concrete reality of social life. Anthropology professor Viktor Karlov, interviewed in the fall of 1995, for example, clearly expressed this disappointment, saying that it was no wonder why culturology was "mainly introduced today at schools for education retraining, or just read as a foundation course". "I saw their curriculum," remarked Karlov, "and must say there are a few interesting things. What they definitely lack is a good knowledge of facts and history. Their courses are very abstract and too general, more like philosophical speculations. To make something interesting out of culturology, one would have to rely on actual facts."³⁹ Sergei Cheshko of the Russian Academy of Sciences, similarly, pointed out that culturology had no specific disciplinary vision of its own, despite its claims, and could at best provide a researcher with some insights of general methodological character. He further added:

"It is mostly philosophers who are fond of cultural studies here and who are trying to present culturology as some sort of superdiscipline. Maybe it is, I do not know. As for me, I would rather regard cultural studies not as a discipline but as an approach or strategy that may be employed by any discipline in order to

study various phenomena of culture, in the broadest sense of the term. You know that there are many notions of what culture is and that culture is studied by a variety of disciplines, including anthropology, history, sociology, and others. So it seems to me that an attempt to establish culturology as just another discipline is quite meaningless”.

Opinions of this sort are generally shared today by many scholars in the humanities. Yet, it should be noted that culturology, as a general educational program delivered in the form of foundation courses to college students, perhaps represents a positive development on the social scale. Scholars in the humanities, especially leading ones, naturally have high demands and tend to focus their attention on the issues of advanced research, often disregarding the issues of general education. At the same time, as Mikhail Epstein, noted Russian literary critic and one of the promoters of culturology (now living and teaching in the United States) points out, “culturology long remained a blank spot on the map of the Russian humanities. What was termed the ‘theory of culture’ in the Soviet Union was taught to future librarians and club workers: the theory of political management of cultural affairs and the administrative organization of its institutions”.40 The replacement of that utilitarian administrative approach to the subject of culture in the general education with a more interesting program offered by culturology can be perhaps seen as a long needed step forward.

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Epstein himself certainly represents one of the few interdisciplinary thinking Russian scholars who remain romantic about culturology and conceive of it as an unrealized potential in the Russian humanities. He extends culturology to a number of such Russian/Soviet thinkers as Mikhail Bakhtin, Yuri Lotman, Aleksei Losev and Sergei Averintsev who in their different ways started, in Geertzian expression, to “blur genres” of scholarship in the humanities. In other words, the foundations for culturology to exist, in Epstein’s opinion, were laid in Russia and even earlier in the Soviet Union, but were not developed because of the reactionary nature of the encompassing cultural attitude. “The fact that culturology could not exert a tangible influence on the development of ‘Soviet culture’,” writes Epstein, “reflected the latter’s arrogance and one-dimensionality. Official culture resisted intimate scrutiny or comparison with other cultures, claiming for itself a kind of superhistorical and supercultural status. It failed to develop the need or capacity for self-reflection, and it is precisely this that constitutes culturology”.

Although Epstein’s diagnosis in regard to “Soviet culture” is certainly correct, his views about what constitutes culturology remain idealistic, for culturology has already happened as a discipline and it has been constituted according to different practices and ideas.

Perhaps the only idea that was envisaged by Epstein as vital for culturology, and that was actually full-heartedly adopted by culturology but

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strangely led to its growing unpopularity, was again the notorious universalist or holistic framework. Culturology, unlike cultural studies in the West, argued Epstein, is an “indivisible discipline that cannot be reduced to a number of special studies”. Its object of study is ultimately “culture as the integral system of various cultures”. “This integral area,” reasoned Epstein, “requires specialization in its initial stages, but at the present point in time, we must have specialists in the universal”.

42 The intuition about the needs of the present moment perhaps failed Epstein and what he proclaimed as a “must-have” was in fact already had in abundance - namely, specialists in the universal without knowledge of the particular, who made culturology so unpopular among many professors and students in the humanities during the 1990’s. Indeed, how could such specialists provide a “reflective comparison with other cultures” - a constituent basis for a true culturology, in Epstein’s view - if other cultures were not even known, leave alone their own culture which was known not much better? What was truly needed for such purpose was a critical ethnographic eye that could register and expose images from actual lives of “others” and “us”, and thus provide effective grounds for cultural juxtaposition and comparison. Culturologists, the infamous “specialists in the universal”, on the contrary, learned only to speak of “culture” as an abstract unified whole that did not refer to any culture in particular. Most of the comparisons that culturologists would typically draw were those between

national literary and philosophical traditions of the 19th century, with rare excursions to the realm of social sciences of the beginning of the 20th century.

If one should take as an example a seminal text Kul'turologiia ["Culturology"], written by Pavel Gurevich, academician with many distinctions, and published by Znanie ["Knowledge"], one of the biggest Russian (and formerly Soviet) scholarly publishing houses, one will be indeed surprised at the virtual absence of anything related to the second half of the 20th century. With the exception of three works by Claude Lévi-Strauss, Daniel Bell, and Peter Berger that appeared in the early 1960's, the entire text is based on the comparison of literary and philosophical thought of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. The issue of modern culture, for instance, is discussed through the comparison of Daniel Bell's work with the views of the 19th-century German philosopher Windelband. The issue of nationalism, strangely enough, is presented through the comparison of views of Nikolai Berdiaev, Russian Silver Age philosopher, and those of Erich Fromm. Other typical names, scattered throughout the book and called upon to exemplify problems of culture, include various Russian philosophers of the 19th century, such as Soloviev or Chaadaev, Western thinkers of the same century, like Spengler, Toynbee, Cassirer, Taine, and others.

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43 P. S. Gurevich, Kul'turologiia (Moscow: Znanie, 1996).
The whole understanding of "culture" therefore typically rests in the genre of culturology on the so called great literary canons of the Victorian age. Very often, even these great literary canons are poorly understood and largely misrepresented in culturological works. Any more or less intelligent reader, for instance, should be puzzled to learn from the opening passages of Gurevich's text that culture is a phenomenon that nobody has even ever inquired into:

"What is culture? This question should have since long time ago troubled the humankind, which considers itself a cultured humankind. Strangely enough, in the world literature nobody posed this question or, as a matter of fact, tried to answer it".  

It should not be surprising after all, considering such statements, that, as Sokolovsky noted, "books in which the word culturology appears in the title or subtitle are normally those you would not want to read". It may be also noticed that even some scholars who write in the general genre of culturology, but on a more knowledgeable or sophisticated level, prefer to avoid the word "culturology" and replace it with alternative terms. Philosophy professor Leonid Yonin, for example, who published a typical textbook in culturology in 1996, preferred to entitle the book "The Sociology of Culture".  Although the book is a much deeper and more serious study than the above mentioned work by Gurevich, it manifests the same preoccupation with the philosophical traditions

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44 P. S. Gurevich, Kul'turologiia, p.21.
45 L. G. Yonin, Sotsiologia kul'tury (Moscow: Logos, 1996).
of the past century and delivers very little information on the problems of contemporary culture.

Thus, even in the genre of culturology, which is (or, at any rate, was) thought of as liberating from the disciplinary constraints of the traditional Russian humanities, one can observe clear traces of the influence of the same encompassing historical/cultural paradigm that has so powerfully shaped the framing of the contemporary intellectual discourse in Russia. Culture as an object of the humanities is, again and again, predominantly associated with the intellectual achievement of the past epochs, not with an actual variety of forms of social life in the contemporary world. At the same time that the issue of cultural diversity is becoming increasingly salient in the landscape of Russian politics and social order, it still attracts surprisingly little intellectual attention, which keeps wandering in the enchanted lands of the past.

The fact that even younger scholars who would like to keep in touch with the latest developments in the Western humanities often fall into this common Russian cultural trap of the past is also in many ways explained by the dire shortage of translations and publications of contemporary works that have come to constitute a must-know subject in the West. Access to original publications, which could be read by scholars proficient in a foreign language, remains, too, very limited. Western editions, which even in the Soviet times were received in a few libraries and were a subject to restricted use, turned out to be too expensive
for libraries to handle when they were cut short of financial support as a result of the privatization program in the early 1990's. In fact, most academic libraries stopped ordering not just foreign editions, but many important domestic publications as well, and started to sell off their collections in order to support their staff.\footnote{See, for example: M. M. Samokhina, “Gumanitarizatsia obrazovania: vzgliad iz biblioteki,” Chelovek, no.4 (1996).} Interlibrary loans ceased functioning as such and were eventually closed in many libraries during the 1990's because of the same insufficient financial support and unreliability of the postal services. In 1995 and 1996 when I was conducting my research in Moscow, the library of Moscow State University was not accepting interlibrary loan requests, and was open only for some five hours a day during the weekdays.

The acquaintance with the developments in the Western humanities, thus, was mostly occurring through some random books, brought from abroad by scholars who had a chance to attend a conference in the West or make a trip to another country for other academic or non-academic reasons. Professor Sokolovsky recalled:

“Last time, when I was fortunate to attend a conference in Seattle, I brought back with me two sacks of books, and they were so heavy that I had to pay an overweight charge. But what can you do? You cannot order these books from Russia. Even if you could, the chances they would reach you are still remote, for everything valuable somehow tends to get lost in our mail without traces”.
Olga Vainstein, similarly, pointed out that the lack of translated works, as well as untranslated originals, makes the teaching in the humanities a task both difficult and unproductive because the professor, under the circumstance, basically takes on the role of an interpreter and students have to take his or her word as they have no access to any sources of information themselves. "I read a course on contemporary theoretical directions in the humanities," says Vainstein, "and I base it on the book Redrawing the Boundaries, edited by Stephen Greenblatt. I know that many other books of the kind exist, but I just happen to have this one. One could say that there is a simple enlightening mission in what I do, for indeed I merely popularize some Western ideas and deliver them to the students in an understandable form, trying to provide as much context as I can”.

Alexei Nikishenkov who has been reading for a decade a course on the history of anthropology in the West says, "Contemporary works in anthropology are not translated, nor are available in the original to the students, so the professor has to play the role of a storyteller. This role does not appeal to me personally because it evokes, again, some old canonical practice of teaching that makes a student a passive listener. But, I think, we are fortunate to have a few translations of the older works by Boas, Lévi-Strauss, Evans-Pritchard and Victor Turner, otherwise I would have had no readings to assign in my class”.

During the late 1980’s and the 1990’s, there have been random attempts to translate some of the works by major European philosophers, but the result has
been somewhat discouraging, as Olga Vainstein observed, because “most of what was translated were not major works but minor articles and essays”. She further commented:

“It is wonderful that Gnosis publishers recently gave us, for example, a collection of Lacan’s essays. However, I do not understand why none of the major essays was included in the book. Same with Jacques Derrida. Several minor articles have been translated, while works, such as Of Grammatology or Writing and Difference, remain unavailable. As for the recent collection of Bataille’s essays, it even provoked a sharp review which demonstrated that the editor-translator was not even familiar with some of the major Bataille’s writings. This situation results in a strange fact that all these names, Foucault, Lacan, Derrida, and others, in the absence of actual works translated, turn into a kind of unreflexive academic slang which becomes increasingly fashionable among the students”.

The absence of important books and translations, and the highly irregular character of access to, and therefore familiarity with, the developments in the Western discourse in the humanities have produced a harmful effect on the intercultural circulation of ideas; in turn, this has become, in fact, a channel of many academic misunderstandings. As Bourdieu argues in his Homo Academicus, the international circulation of academic ideas is always characterized to one or another extent by the specific pattern, “where texts are transmitted without the context of their production and use, and count on receiving a so-called ‘internal’ reading which universalizes and eternalizes them while derealizing them by
constantly relating them to the sole context of their reception". In the academic environment of Russian humanities of the 1990's, this pattern of judging foreign texts on purely internal domestic criteria, without any regard to the context of their production, has been enhanced and thus has led to the proliferation of a hostile and essentially uncritical attitude toward the contemporary Western scholarship. The growing instances of misrepresentation of the latter have distinctively marked discourses in virtually all disciplines in the Russian humanities and social sciences. In the discourse of anthropology, for example, it has become a standard practice to ascribe most of contemporary theoretical innovations in the Western disciplinary tradition to the negative influence of "postmodernist methodology", although none of the authors who criticized what they understood as "postmodernism" could provide a remotely consistent account of the subject or even name proper works or authors, related to it. For instance, Professor S. A. Shandybin in his long Russian essay, entitled "Postmodern Anthropology and the Realm of Applicability of Its Cultural Model", typically brings up for discussion a mixture of very different, and indeed having little to do with postmodern anthropology, Western authors, such as philosophers Zygmunt Bauman and Richard Rorty, French sociologist Pierre

Bourdieu, and anthropologists Stephen Gudeman, Jocelyn Linnekin, and Allan Hanson.48

Another prominent Russian anthropologist, Yuri Semenov, who censures contemporary anthropology in the West as permeated with postmodernism, cannot name but a single work to support his criticism, which unfortunately happens to be the book that has already become a standard target for all kinds of academic allegations - that is, *Writing Culture*. “The proliferation of postmodernist concepts in the Western anthropology,” says Semenov, “is the manifestation of the crisis it is undergoing. The essence of the postmodernist approach consists in denying the objectivity of facts and objective truth and, therefore, science as such... All these concepts found their expression in the most salient form in the collection of essays, characteristically entitled *Writing Culture*.49 Professor V. R. Rokitianskii in his article “What to Expect From Postmodern Ethnography?” similarly bases all his criticism of the idea of postmodernism on the discussion of the same volume *Writing Culture*, torn out of the context, largely misunderstood, and judged against the reality of Russian cultural problems.50

50 V. R. Rokitianskii, “Chego zhdat’ ot postmodernistskoi etnografii?”, pp.73-93.
New areas of research, thus, find their way into the humanities and social sciences in Russia with extreme difficulties. Undoubtedly, there are separate scholars who are actively interested in developing the standards of scholarship according to the needs and cultural issues of contemporary moment, but their example can be considered rather as an exception. The general paradigm of social and cultural studies, as well as the institutional infrastructure of the academy in Russia, remains dominated by the inflexibility, inertia, and traditionalism which impede the development in research trends. The situation is very often perfectly understood by younger scholars who keenly feel both the discursive and bureaucratic limitations, imposed on the dimensions of practiced scholarly research. Aleksandr Saltykov, a graduate of Moscow State University, was very clear on the subject in his interview:

"If clever people come to the Ministry of Education (which is highly unlikely), loosen up our terribly centralized educational system, and remove that bureaucratic excrescence from all our academic institutions, so that creative people, rather than all these old nannies, could be welcome there, then we can expect a certain change in the intellectual discourse. But as long as it goes the way it goes, nothing will change. I mean, there will be no discourse as such. What discourse? Scholars from neighbor universities in this country never talk to each other, nor even about each other, except in disparaging terms. Discussion, you know, is an event that is not specifically particular to our academic climate. So, academic community here can hardly make what you call critical intelligentsia. It is not even a "community" for that matter, it is just a conglomerate of separate individuals who do not want to deal with each other. I really wish this could be different. I hope it will in due course, when the entrenched group of academics finally retire and a younger generation of scholars come to set their own rules. But, you see, the problem is, younger people somehow tend
to leave the academy and who leaves I know is not particularly excited about returning. So, I guess, there is not much hope to put on the younger generation either...”.

Some of the more insightful professors in the humanities could actually second Saltykov’s opinion. Alexei Nikishenkov, for example, in a similar way connected the stagnant state of the humanities to the general paradigm of uncritical scholarship, by and large maintained in the Russian academy. “This paradigm,” said Nikishenkov, “does not let young scholars grow. They like to undertake ventures into new and unusual terrains and the first results of their attempts are not always perfect - that’s why they need encouragement and support from us, professors. What they get instead is usually censure and disapproval, which induce frustrated feelings and often make them lose their interest in the matter”. Nikishenkov continued:

“I remember, when a former graduate student of mine, Lena Miskova, proposed a field study of a Siberian people from the theoretical standpoint of Western interpretive anthropology, her dissertation project aroused strong skepticism among the faculty, and the chair of the department even told her that it was not worth going to the field for that kind of research. Fortunately, she was not discouraged enough and still decided to pursue the project. But many people do get discouraged. Another graduate student in our department, who studied the impact of feminist movement in anthropology, was advised to change her dissertation topic to something more traditional and acceptable, which she eventually did. Or take as an example still another former graduate of ours, Siberian ethnographer Golovnev who has recently published a study of the peoples of the North, in which he has employed a defamiliarization strategy, borrowed from the recent Western anthropological works. He has been immediately censured by our ethnographic authorities as “postmodernist”, although I detect nothing particularly postmodern in his work - he just tried to
employ a proper technique to understand and represent another culture”.

Professor Sokolovsky, in the same vein, recalled, “They branded me as a postmodernist every time I made a positive comment about contemporary Western anthropology, even though I thought I often wrote pretty standard things that were commonsensical in nature. One of my previous essays, in which I compared ethnographic practices at home and abroad, had been rejected for nearly five years by the editorial board at the Academy of Sciences, before they finally published it”.51

In a word, one of the major traits that characterize the academic community in the humanities in Russia is the unwillingness to acknowledge the emergence of new cultural realities and to legalize new intellectual interests, stemming from that reality and spreading among a growing number of scholars. This trait constricts the intellectual potential of the humanities and, as Nikishenkov noted, makes them closed to the issue of reproduction of cultural values which, thus, appears to the larger community of academics as an insoluble predicament or a threat of some coming crisis. Nikishenkov elaborates:

“The issue of reproduction of cultural values is now discussed everywhere, to the point that it has become commonplace. If you ask me what the humanities do in regard to the issue, I will answer, “Nothing”. The humanities are not ready to handle the issue. They

can only talk about it in the same manner that millenarian prophets talk about the end of the world. This might be of some healthy apocalyptic importance; I am not denying that. But it is silly to think that the priest could actually cause the rain; at best he might guess when the rain was about to start. Cultural values are constantly reproduced, and new cultural values constantly come into existence. The humanities would really do their best if they attempted to track this process and verbalize what is going on, instead of plunging into eschatology. New values and new meanings are already out there, but we are still not ready to perceive them, being stuck to the old language. I think this is the most important task academics should attend to at the present moment”.

The view that the humanities should follow the development of cultural reality, adapting their language to new conditions, however, remains largely unpopular among the majority of academics who are accustomed to seeing in the humanities a kind of exact analytical science which transcends cultural reality and exists independently of it. The underlying assumption that the sort of cultural reality that does not fit into the analytical framework of the humanities simply does not exist is, in fact, still widespread in the academic thinking; whereas the idea that the object of study can or should change the analytical framework of the discipline itself is often seen unacceptable. The choice of the object of study, under the circumstance, remains in many instances heavily influenced by dogmas of disciplinarity, and the objects that are considered as inappropriate for the humanities to analyze are typically filtered out and rejected as “not scientifically relevant”. Professor Sokolovsky, reflecting on the issue as it stood in Russian anthropology, observed:
“Ethnic space is literally conceived as physical or geographical; we have all these manifold ethnic maps of peoples distribution. Because scholars are accustomed to thinking of ethnic space in this way, we believe that to get immersed in ethnography, one simply has to move physically over a certain distance. ‘Now I am going to take a plane, land in Chechnya, and there I am in the field!’ In other words, one cannot walk to a Moscow bazaar market and find oneself in the field. One cannot describe the ‘New Russians’ as an ethnographic group. One cannot go study the businessmen. No, one should fly across the country to get to the Yukaghirs’.

The object of study that threatens to alter the analytical framework of a discipline is frequently understood simply as a potential danger. Yuri Semenov, renowned anthropologist at the Russian Academy of Sciences, openly declares in his last article, published in 1998 in the major Russian anthropological journal *Etnograficheskoе obozrenie*, that the proliferation of “alternative” objects of study in the research area of contemporary anthropology makes the discipline essentially “unscientific”. “Western social anthropologists,” writes Semenov, “have started to deal with all kinds of different exotic groups of population, including homosexuals and lesbians. This trend, which could be called Western social neo-anthropology, is becoming increasingly dominant. The noted degradation that marks many Western anthropological periodicals today has to do with this, too. ...It is precisely Western social neo-anthropology (not necessarily its postmodern version) that has become an object of adoration among many our countrymen

who think of themselves as scholars or scientists, but who in reality are far from any authentic science, especially ethnology".53

The fear that the new objects of study could disturb an authoritative authentic canon of science is a common phenomenon in the Russian academy of the 1990’s. Attempts to rethink academic practices are still rare and not powerful enough to bring influence to bear on larger strata of the academic profession in the humanities, especially at the time when the general interest in the humanities as such has been declining on the social scale. Some scholars, nevertheless, believe that the situation shows signs of improvement and hold to an optimistic view. Olga Vainstein of the Russian State University for the Humanities said in conclusion of her interview:

“I have no doubt that after a while all things will fall into their places. Despite a variety of negative things that could be said about the present state of our humanities, there are signs that indicate a positive tendency as well. New interdisciplinary areas of knowledge find their way to our universities - and this is natural, for it is felt by many that traditional disciplines, like history, philology, or anthropology, are tired of their own subject. Cross-disciplinary cooperation and exchange of knowledge is now seen by an increasing number of scholars as perhaps the most interesting potential the humanities can take advantage of... And so, speaking about the task of academics, I think it is the one of critically rethinking the new cultural and informational space, in which we have found ourselves in the '90s, and establishing new rules for the humanities, that would allow for an intelligent scholarly dialogue. This would involve many things, like the training of a new generation of teachers in the humanities, not just

students, who could competently navigate the cultural space of modernity, being proficient in languages and computer technologies, as well as the reforming of the old institutional structure of the humanities. Which is, I guess, more than enough to cope with..."
Chapter 6

Conclusion

Russian intellectual culture, as I have tried to argue in the preceding chapters, has been always obsessed with the subject of the past. The particularities of social development in the late Soviet Union and post-perestroika Russia have pushed this obsession to the limits that could be called without much of an exaggeration extreme. The necessity of reference to the past as a zone of cultural ideals and primary cultural identification assumed utmost importance in the intellectual thinking and, indeed, as I attempted to show, became a distinctive paradigm of cultural consciousness, which gradually spread its influence over a wide range of social spheres, from education and the academic discourse in the humanities and social sciences to politics, city planning, and business advertising. It is my deep conviction that it is impossible to render a correct view of the intellectual atmosphere in Russia in the last quarter of the current century without specifically focusing on this paradigm and on what, in broader terms, I chose to call the cultural predicament of modernity.

The contribution of the present work, as I see it, is precisely in putting forward the noted cultural paradigm as a major grounding issue, and in taking it as a conceptual framework for the discussion of contemporary Russian intellectual culture. There are indeed very few works in which this important
issue has been raised or reflected upon in one or another form. Some of the more insightful scholars, such as Viacheslav Ivanov or Boris Kagarlitsky, for example, touch on the issue in passing in the essays that have been frequently quoted in the preceding chapters, but the majority of authors dealing with the subject of post-perestroika Russia tend to dismiss the issue altogether. If many Western authors usually simply pass by the issue, not attaching a special conceptual importance to it, most Russian authors typically do not notice its presence for reasons of a different character. That is to say, the noted paradigm of cultural consciousness escapes from their view by and large because many intellectuals continue to be dominated by it. It is a sad feature of Russian intellectual life, but, as a rule, those few reflexively thinking scholars who have a deeper understanding of cultural environment around them do not write books.

"We do not necessarily proclaim loudly the most important thing we have to say," said once Walter Benjamin. This kind of principle is precisely what many of the better Russian intellectuals hold on to. For a researcher who undertakes an inquiry into particularities of intellectual discourse in such cultural milieu, this situation poses a problem both methodological and interpretive in character, because the most important things that people have to say often remain unsaid or omitted in the mainstream discourse. This is why, as I stated in the introduction of the present work, the ethnographic involvement in
the everyday appears to be a more effective method for analyzing such essentially "unethnographic" subject as intellectual discourse.

The view that I elaborate in the course of my thesis, therefore, is in many ways based on the interpretation of a variety of "important things" that are not pronounced loudly, but nevertheless shared, so to speak, on a sub-discursive level among many intellectuals. I believe, furthermore, that my conclusions would be shared by many interesting people I had a chance to work with in Russia. Some of the ideas that I pursue are actually a part of everyday knowledge among these scholars and intellectuals, but the problem is that that everyday knowledge is rarely explicated or conceptualized in academic works.

Still, a larger number of academics in Russia would probably object to my view of the development and predicaments of intellectual discourse in the late Soviet Union and contemporary Russian society. This is inevitable because the ideals of the intelligentsia remain by and large marked by the fear of the process of social modernization, and by the aesthetics of cultural conservation, which have been analyzed in the course of this work. Every month in Russia of nowadays brings new examples that support the main statements, made in the preceding chapters. For example, at the very moment when these lines are written, a group of Russian academics are preparing to submit a law to the State Duma (Russian legislative government body) on the notorious language cleansing that has been a dream of many and the rules of use of pure Russian,
that should supposedly purify the language and clean it of the litter of modern jargon, bringing it back to the classic nineteenth-century norms. As the English newspaper The Times comments, "Taking a stand against the Americanisation of the language of Tolstoy, Chekhov and Turgenev, the proposed law will limit the use of the unnecessary foreign words which arrived in Russia with the first "Beeg Mac i fraiz" and have increasingly infected the language ever since".1 "At the Marina Tsvetayeva museum this week," the article continues, "a photograph of the poet looked sadly down on the assembled Russian literature lovers whose society had brought them together to discuss the desperate state of their language". It is needless to repeat at this point that the state of the language is seen as desperate by these intellectuals precisely because the language has made a progress and has become too modern to their taste – the taste which is determined by the encompassing cultural paradigm of the past, history, and moral heritage.

Another current article, by the Reuters analyst Alastair Macdonald, comments on the Russian President Boris Yeltsin’s public address on November 7, 1998 (the anniversary of the October Revolution of 1917, which used to be a major state holiday during the era of socialism). Summarizing the mood of the speech, in which Yeltsin proudly emphasized his role in putting an end to the

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1 Anna Blundy, "Russia Battles To Purge Language of Foreign Invaders," The Times, (November 7, 1998).
period of communist history in Russia, the analyst remarks, "The sight of the
tired-looking 67-year-old president, speaking on Saturday from the Black Sea
resort of Sochi where he has spent more than a week convalescing from
exhaustion, gave the impression that the Yeltsin era may be all but over too.
Claiming credit for putting paid to authoritarian communism and installing
democracy in Russia, the ailing president sounded to many like a man more
concerned with history, and his place in it, than with the problems of the
present".2

The apt concluding phrase of the journalist, once again, summarized not
just the personal ambitions of Boris Yeltsin, but rather the symbolic universe of
contemporary Russian intellectual culture in one of its typical manifestations.
The culture that is not concerned with the problems of the present and strangely
continues to address the future in the subjunctive future-in-the-past tense,
indeed, seems to be destined to count the passage of time in some circular
motion. As long as modernity as a self-contained integral moment remains alien
to the intellectual spirit of the society and the cultural discourse remains largely
immersed in the idea of restoring and improving the past, I can predict no visible
way or direction along which an actual change in the discussed social spheres,
such as education, science, and civil politics, might come. However, a growing

2 Alastair Macdonald, "Yeltsin ‘Revolution’ May Be Over," Analysis (Reuters,
Moscow, November 8, 1998).
number of intellectuals, no matter how few, who are tired of the old discourses, emerge these days in various institutions and try to search for ways of establishing new organizational practices and ideals, appropriate to the needs of the contemporary moment. The search is rarely a success, due to the plentitude of surviving bureaucratic and, once again, cultural obstacles. But, as some of the more optimistic scholars say, “It is important that people not stop looking for new perspectives and trying out unexpected points of view. You never know where the exciting results might come from”.

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