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FROM PRIESTS TO PATHFINDERS: THE FATE OF THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN RUSSIA AFTER WWII

Writing about the fate of the humanities in Russia is no easy task from the very start, because the term does not exist in Russian language or in academic reality. Russia has *gumanitarnye nauki*, «human sciences», but this is a calc of the second term in a German distinction between *Naturwissenschaften* vs. *Geisteswissenschaften*, famously articulated by Wilhelm Dilthey. If the first ones are sciences of nature, then the second ones are sciences of spirit, and their methods radically differ. In Russia of the period that I will be dealing with, this distinction seems to have been incorporated into various official classifications and intuitive judgments, even though Russians never shared Dilthey's preoccupation with the *Verstehende* approaches. Thus, the Academy of Sciences of the USSR established in 1927 two sections – one of the physical-mathematical sciences, and one of «human sciences», which included history, philology (modern and classical languages), sociology, economics, etc.¹ With the Soviet insistence that even philosophy was a science, telling us of objective laws of nature and society, this distinction solidified. Hence debates on whether history belongs to the humanities or social sciences is hard to repeat in Russian. For a majority of historians in Russia after WWII it was clear that history was a science, though history-writing, of course, had some elements of art. Therefore, I will be dealing in my exposition not with the humanities per se, mapping the US standard on Russian reality, but rather with *gumanitarnye nauki* - a phenomenon and part of a classification, which were well entrenched in Soviet and then Russian life.

Though my short article will try to map some main trends in the development of these human sciences, it is by no means an exhaustive account of academic achievements. I use some names of scholars solely as examples, and if I missed someone, this happened because of the lack of space and the inescapable finitude of the academic experience of an individual scholar. For detailed overviews of all achievements in post-war human sciences one should look elsewhere.²

1953-1973

I start my periodization with the year of Stalin's death. In the mature Soviet system, exegesis was the main form of intellectual production in the humanities and social sciences. Other forms of acceptable mainstream intellectual production were scholastics and empirical research, the latter being clad in a thin veneer of ideologically-acceptable quotations and platitudes. Exegesis of sacred texts was a

· The author would like to thank Bill Rosenberg, Mikhail Sokolov and David Woodruff for help in preparing this article. All remaining shortcomings, however, are the author's only.

¹ In 1930 these sections were renamed into the mathematical and natural sciences, and the *obshchestvennyye nauki*, «social sciences». In 1935, three sections were established by the new Statute of the Academy – 1) social sciences, 2) mathematical and natural sciences, and 3) technical sciences. The logic is clear, however. See the well-documented site of the current section of «historico-philological sciences» of the Russian Academy of Sciences for more statute details (<http://hist-phil.ru/structure/history/>, last checked on July 6, 2012.)

² E.g. for new approaches in Russian historiography in the 1990s one can look at Mikhail Krom, «Studying Russia's Past from an Anthropological Perspective: Some Trends of the Last Decade,» *European Review of History – Revue européenne d'Histoire* 11, no. 1 (2004), 69-77; for developments in social theory – at Alexander Dmitriev, «Contemporary Russian Social Theory,» in Gerard Delanty, ed., *Handbook of Contemporary European Social Theory* (London: Routledge, 2005), etc.

starting point of any endeavor, however. Whether one had to add some lines on the opinions of the classics of Marxism-Leninism and the recent Communist party congresses on the matter under study in the very beginning of one's exposition, or went for a full-blown theoretical treatise on some aspect of the Marxist dogma, one had to initially overview and extract the essential meanings of the sacred texts. One could then support these meanings and conclusions by empirical evidence, if one needed to, but one had to first start with figuring out what Marx and his apostles had said.³

Such an exegesis provided fertile grounds for high scholasticism, the best example here being the works of philosopher Evald Ilyenkov and his numerous followers all over the Soviet Union and the GDR, with his influence being registered even in the principles of the compilation of the *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*. In his most influential book, *The Dialectical Logic* (1974), Ilyenkov claimed that the logic of development of any worldly phenomena is best understood if one started with Cartesian dualism and Spinoza's pantheism, then turned to Kant's solution to their problems and the statement on the aporias of reason, and then followed Fichte-Schelling-Hegel as a straight way to a Marxist version of this aesthetically beautiful juggling of binary opposites, in which human mind inescapably finds itself. His earlier book (1960), on the ascent from the abstract to the concrete in *Das Kapital*, gave rise to numerous epigones, seeking to map Hegelian dialectics onto Marx's three volume set, e.g. by taking categories of *The Phenomenology of Mind* (1807), as they appeared one by one in the exposition of Hegel's treatise, and finding their equivalents in the consecutive categories of the unfolding discourse of *Das Kapital*, vols. 1-3. This, as one would expect at the time, could allegedly prove that Marx had put Hegel's dialectics on its feet, as he had famously claimed: Marx had used the same conceptual *grille*, framework, it is just that he had analyzed economics, rather than life of the spirit.⁴

However, most of the Marxist writing was not as high-flying and exquisite as Ilyenkov's philosophical thought, and intended instead to give concise and precise dogmatic answers to concrete questions: what is X? Y? Z? This literature is voluminous and awaits its own discourse analysis, which has never been done because of the lack of interest in its intricacies after the collapse of the Soviet Union.⁵ Suffice it to say here that the starting premise would be some quotation or set of quotations from Marx and perhaps Hegel, later developed by Lenin, which would set up the initial ground for consideration of a sought aspect of quasi-religiously defined truth. It would perhaps be enough to give but two characteristic examples. The first is a study of human needs, conceived according to the Marxist doctrine.⁶ Of course, it completely ignored the conception of false needs, developed by Herbert Marcuse in *One-Dimensional Man* (1964) and then recast by Agnes Heller and her colleagues into a conception of the «dictatorship over needs». One would hardly expect the contrary. Rather, basing itself on a set of sacred quotations from Marx and Lenin, the book gave clear-cut definitions of what needs are, and mapped all possible answers on the interrelations of this understudied category with other categories of Soviet Marxism. Another typical example is a book that contributed to a discussion of the difference between the fundamental (*osnovnoe*) and originary (*ishkhodnoe*) production relations of socialism, involving numberless authors reflecting on this distinction, central to the dogmatic debates of the era.⁷

³ As a corollary, critics of Marxist doctrine were called «apologists of capitalism», while their texts were dissected to find the tenets of an underlying opposing creed.

⁴ Both books are available in English - Evald Ilyenkov, *Dialectical Logic: Essays on Its History and Theory*, trans. H. Campbell Creighton (Moscow: Progress, 1977); Evald Ilyenkov, *The Dialectics of the Abstract and the Concrete in Marx's Capital*, trans. Sergei Syrovatkin (Moscow: Progress, 1982).

⁵ This is a pity, one should add – because a study of this very curious discursive formation would give many Foucault and Barthes aficionados numerous comparative insights.

⁶ Valery Radaev, *Potrebnosti kak ekonomicheskaiia kategoriia sotsializma* [Needs as an Economic Category of Socialism] (Moscow: Mysl', 1970).

⁷ The former was usually taken to be the relations of mutual comradesly help, which one could allegedly find in the socialist production, the latter – socialist property relations, without which socialist production could not start. See Ivan Kuzminov, *Ocherki politicheskoi ekonomii sotsializma* [Sketches of the Political Economy of Socialism] (Moscow: Mysl', 1971), 130.

Overall, authors in the Soviet human sciences could be positioned along an axis that would start from extreme dogmatism and scholasticism, pass through many examples of exegetic exercises, which do not only extract meanings from sacred texts, but also rely on empirical detail to prove that divine writ is right, and end up with authors who almost openly use quotations from Marx and Lenin as a required ideological icing on the cake or as a ritual incantation before a serious empirical or textual study of sources unfolds. In other words, authors who were more concerned with reality than with the sacred texts frequently went into those disciplines and chose those subjects, on which Marx and Lenin hardly pronounced anything, or where mastery of a few extant sources (say, 16 recensions of a manuscript from the period studied) made ritual Marxist incantations seem unnatural and excessive. The fine line between I-prove-Marx-by-empirical-studies and I-write-good-stuff-and-add-ideological-nonsense was a fluctuating delimitation, of course, depending on where and when one spoke, so establishing who leaned where is a delicate issue. For example, much historiography dating back to the Soviet era cannot be purged of the tenets of Soviet Marxism without ruining the very argumentative structure of the text. An exception, which perhaps proves the rule, is Valentin Ianin's seminal historiographical work (1962) on the main rotating magistrate of the medieval Novgorod republic. Forty years on, Ianin, now the doyen of Novgorod studies, has produced a second edition, integrating much of the new data, which had appeared since the first publication, and purging the text of the Marxist vocabulary and its explanatory schemes.⁸

1973-1993

The desacralization of Russian social sciences and the humanities started with the moral debunking of Marxism. Hence the date. Since the appearance of a forceful moral critique of Communism in *The Gulag Archipelago* being an honest Communist and at the same time facing the truth of mass repressions as a crime against humanity was very difficult indeed. Not reading Solzhenitsyn and other dissident writers was one option. Reading and ignoring them was another. Both became impossible when *The Gulag Archipelago* was published officially in the USSR in the late 1980s. First Stalin and then Lenin were assaulted and demolished as sacred heroes, and the myth of the Soviet grand narrative became obvious to the majority.

But the late 1980s were prepared by minute changes in belief practices during the Brezhnev era. Steve Kotkin once wrote on the Soviet workers from the 1930s, using a category from a famous book by Lucien Febvre, that they almost did not have an option of unbelief.⁹ This had changed by the 1960s already. Dissent and dissidence are famous topics in the history of the Soviet civilization, but one should mention three other phenomena that were eroding the monolith. First, not dissent, but doubt, expressed in a phenomenon of hetero-thinking, available to any intelligent Soviet citizen.¹⁰ Second, there was extensive dissemination of bits and pieces of alternative charisma, contained in the books stored in the not-so-well-guarded special access libraries, where a few certified specialists in ideological production could read them after a security clearance. Having published required critiques of this charisma, these certified producers could express a completely opposite set of opinions in their private communications or even within the walls of their closed academic institutions. Third, mocking worked wonders. Books like philosopher Alexander Zinovyev's *The Yawning Heights* seriously subverted the seriousness of the established Soviet canon by ridiculing Soviet faith. As in the *Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco, the intrigue was about laughter that shatters the dogma.

⁸ Valentin Ianin, *Novgorodskie posadniki* (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskoi kultury, 2003).

⁹ Stephen Kotkin, *The Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 225-228.

¹⁰ See the term in the title of the book by Boris Firsov, *Raznomyslie v SSSR, 1940-1960-e gody: istoriia, teoriia i praktiki* [Hetero-thinking in the USSR, 1940-60s: History, Theory and Practices] (St. Petersburg: EUSPb, 2008). If one follows the Russian roots of this term, one sees a contrast to *edinomyслиe* (unanimity). So hetero-thinking is not dissent, but rather hetero-animity, distinct from unanimity.

Priest-like producers in the Soviet human sciences could eschew dealing with these challenges for some time, but they could not do so forever. Dissent, hetero-thinking, access to alternative charisma and mocking prepared the dissolution of the dogma. But when it dissolved, all were surprised by what took the place of the Soviet creed, or – to be more precise – that nothing initially took its place. In Weber's sociology of religion, there are two types of producers of salvation, who function as alternatives to the priests.¹¹ These are the prophets and the magi. The prophets take the current reality of priesthood as fallen and call for a reformulation of creed, based on the true principles. The magi offer magic that gives fast and direct access to salvation without all the rituals of the established church. *Perestroika* saw a brief flourishing of the first, but it ended with the arrival of the second. The «true socialism» of theorists and historians like Boris Kagarlitsky and Roy Medvedev seemed to offer a promise of a prophetic salvation of a faltering faith. But they were swept away together with the institutions of official Communist faith, which they criticized. And the magi were quick to arrive instead: as sociological research showed, only 23% of the population thought of themselves as believers in God in 1991, only 6% visited a church at least once a month, and 8 % practiced a daily prayer, while around a half said that they believed in astrology, telepathy and reincarnation.¹²

The changes in 1987-89 made Nietzsche the symbol of the day: after the Communist master-narrative was gone, accepting a new one straight away seemed impossible. Among intellectuals at least, any grand idea, save for Nietzsche himself, was suspect. Groundlessness of existence seemed to become a new norm. Nietzsche's books, which had initially appeared in Russian in early XXth century translations, before 1989 were mostly available in the special access sections of Soviet libraries. So the real symbol of intellectual change became a publication in 1990 of the black two-volume set of his major works, edited by Karen Svasian, with many of them – translated anew for this critical edition.

Nietzsche seemed to offer an understanding of the reevaluation of all values, which was happening all around. Criticism of Soviet system was mostly not an intellectual exercise («let us reconceptualize good old grandpa Lenin as a bloodthirsty villain»), but rather involved a crumbling of whole strips of experience or forms of everyday life, which suddenly became questionable. For example, criminals who were reselling goods at a margin, having illicitly procured them at state price in the conditions of the economics of deficit, suddenly became heroes of the market economy, who (according to von Hayek) signaled the economy's bottlenecks rather than symbolized avarice and cheating on your neighbor, through securing unfair access to scarce goods. Taking part in a usual, normal, quotidian, boring inconsequential meeting of a local Young Communist League cell, to which almost all high school or university students belonged by default, suddenly became recast as participation in the biggest slaughterhouse in human history.

With such a loss of orientation or groundedness in forms of taken-for-granted everyday experience, the postmodern condition seemed to have imposed itself on Russia. At the very least, this was the fate of many Russian specialists in the human sciences. Zygmunt Bauman became popular with his conception of intellectuals now being interpreters, rather than legislators. French postmodernism came into vogue in the late 1980s, with Baudrillard and the pop version of Lyotard being the most easily palatable literature. Barthes, Foucault and Derrida followed suit, with Derrida himself visiting Moscow in 1990.¹³ Foucault and Derrida were perhaps the most translated and commented upon postmodern authors in the 1990s (Deleuze was massively translated into Russian and understood a bit later).

¹¹ See a succinct analysis in Pierre Bourdieu, “Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field”, in Craig Calhoun, ed., *Comparative Social Research*, vol. 13 (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press), 1991.

¹² Kimmo Kaariainen, Dmitrii Furman, «Religioznost' v Rossii v 90-e gody» [Religiosity in Russia in the 1990s], in Kaariainen & Furman, eds., *Starye tserkvi, novye veruiushchie* [Old Churches, New Believers] (Moscow: Letnii sad, 2000), 19-22, 43. See also Kaariainen, *Religion in Russia after the Collapse of Communism* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1998), 70, 84-88.

¹³ A book on that visit appeared as *Zhak Derrida v Moskve: dekonstruktsiia puteshestviia* [Jacques Derrida in Moscow: A Deconstruction of a Journey] (Moscow: Ad Marginem, 1993). For a translation of the key essay from this book see Jacques Derrida, «Back from Moscow, in the USSR», in Mark Poster, ed., *Politics, Theory and Contemporary Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 197-235.

Philosophers Valery Podoroga, Mikhail Ryklin and Elena Petrovskaja helped establish the *Ad Marginem* publishing house which became the leader and the symbol of this cottage industry of postmodern translations. Russia seemed to be on the road to a condition, where the common experience was one of groundlessness and a new national identity could be only grounded in this experience of groundlessness and loss.

1993-2013

A. New grand narratives

Groundlessness, however, is a hard experience for the majority of the humankind. Escape from freedom happened fast. 1993 was a turning point for many. The liberal idea, which was championed by Yeltsin and many journalists, who supported the government, seemed to falter, when the president shelled the legitimate but besieged Parliament, imposed a new Constitution, and decreed a search for a new national idea that would legitimate his rule. Half of the population was not ready to take such a turn of the events as acceptable. One of the reasons for that was that 1991-1993 wiped out the savings of the older generation because of the skyrocketing inflation in the wake of price liberalization, and the regime transformed itself from the Brezhnev-style gerontocracy into its radical opposite - what could be called gerontocide. Older people were explicitly rejected by new firms even in the published job ads. Heads of families, who had supported their kids until 1990, suffered a vertiginous change in the power axis within their families: within a space on one year they suddenly found themselves in a condition, where they could not even afford a cab, while their children became the only means of viable social security. Elders who had no money to buy antibiotics were virtually wiped out because of the absence of state-supported feasible medical care. Others were cajoled, forced or cheated out of their apartments, which became the only sizable asset in their lives. The worst interpretations of Nietzsche would hardly ever fathom that such a triumph of the young and strong over the old and weak could be possible in a modern civilized country. Hence, in hindsight, there was no surprise when the fall 1993 elections produced a strong cohort of nationalists and Communists next to the liberals in the Duma.

The question, facing them all was - what was this new Russia? What could be its new identity? A cutout of the former Soviet Union that had appeared as «USSR minus the 14 departing republics» had never had any coherent history, borders or justification of why it exists as is, save for a series of chaotic decisions of its leaders, like Khrushchev giving the Crimea over to Ukraine in 1954, and Yeltsin signing the dissolution of the USSR according to existing interrepublican borders, which were themselves drawn in a haphazard and contingent way some time in the recent past.¹⁴

A new master-narrative was needed. The race to craft a new myth began, and the humanities once again proved handy. There were three main answers the humanities and social sciences could give, to close the void of groundlessness that was wide agape in front of the tired citizenry. First, the myth of Russia as a liberal and liberalizing state. This was not very persuasive after 1993, but government strove hard, and the discourse on individual liberties and civil society flourished, financed by the government and foreign foundations. Second, nationalist discourse soared, with imperial Russia or Russia of the White Guards of the Russian civil war being the principal reference point. Third, different attempts to link Russian national identity and the Orthodox Church were made. True, the new law on religions in the mid-1990s recognized four state-approved confessions – Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism as four prevalent and «historic» religions of Russia, but it was through a rebirth of interest to the Orthodox teaching and practices that a slow expansion of converting the non-believing nation back into faith began. The Holy Russia ideal that the religious-philosophical renaissance of the end of the XIX- beginning of the XX century espoused (and which later moved to Prague and Paris in the 1920s-30s, together with emigrating Russian philosophers and theologians) was used to build multiple narratives on saints and faith as a backbone of Russia nationhood.

So, the internal demand called upon the humanities and social sciences to help with producing new grand narratives. Many local talents went to service this demand. None of these talents are noticeable

¹⁴ For example, Solzhenitsyn for that very reason criticized Yeltsin, who had left too many Russians in what ended up as Northern Kazakhstan.

internationally, because they hardly ever produced texts in English. They are not noticeable even nationally now, because while many of them enjoyed the canonical 15 minutes of fame, they did not stay in the limelight forever, as none of the newly produced competing metanarratives achieved a lasting victory. The arrival of Putin signaled a beginning of a different epoch – with an attempt to enshrine a civil religion, based on the WWII experience and the victory in a fight with the universal evil. Building on this ground, celebrations of Victory day became the only indisputable and understandable state holiday; the martyrs were hailed again; the model heroes like Georgii Zhukov reaffirmed; moral indignation was directed against those who dismantled monuments to Soviet soldiers in, say, Estonia and Georgia; and the whole postwar history of Russia was rewritten as a continuation of the great victory. This was done in a new standard textbook for high schools covering 1945-2006 or 1945-2008, for the second edition, which enjoyed non-surprising government support and a huge print run.¹⁵ In the words of one reviewer: «The grand narrative that the book thus acquires can be summarized as follows. At the beginning, a mighty Soviet Russia, which has just overwhelmed its deadly enemy in the most horrible of wars, is a formidable spectacle. While not an ideal place, it is dynamic and secure in the hands of the wise, if authoritarian and repressive, ruler. It then goes through many trials – through Khrushchev's well-intentioned but inconsistent reforms, Brezhnev's benevolent but unimaginative rule, Gorbachev's chaotic *perestroika*, Yeltsin's multiple failures, to have its might restored under the new strong statesman who is able to derive the necessary lessons from history and combines in his rule both cultivation of a strong state and devotion to civil liberties and democratic virtues».¹⁶

At the same time sound empirical research was hardly needed on Russia's internal knowledge markets at all. Let us consider the reasons, for this is somewhat surprising. For example, it would seem that with the birth of democratic politics, a newly established discipline of political science should flourish. It did, but thanks to foreign funding. The internal market served more close and pragmatic goals, and demanded services of «political technologists», e.g. spin doctors who would help win an election. And did one need sociology, well grounded in sound empirical research, which would be distinct and distant from the well-selling polls of electoral choices or focus group data on consumer preferences? No, thank you! Russia's new capitalism needed knowledge, but of a very pragmatic kind once again. E.g. data for the HR departments of major firms and testing techniques for recruitment agencies were sought, but practical skills needed in those areas were very frequently distant from academic sociology, whose motto is «reflect» rather than «manipulate».

Another example: one would imagine that the war in Chechnya would signal the need for sound ethnology or area studies, in order to understand the clan and community structures of mountainous and terrain populations there. But the whole theory of *teip* (a Chechen land commune, first of neighbors defending the settlement and land possessions, then transforming into a kinship-based commune, after Caucasian wars of the XIX century) that had surfaced in the mid-1990s, was hardly based on fieldwork, but rather on anecdotal data and inferences from the nineteenth century anthropological studies of communities in Chechnya and Dagestan.¹⁷ This proves the point that for the

¹⁵ Alexander Filippov et al., *Istoriia Rossii, 1945-2008. Kniga dlia uchitel'ia* [History of Russia, 1945-2008. A Book for a History Teacher] (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2008).

¹⁶ Vladimir Solonari, «Normalizing Russia, Legitimizing Putin», *Kritika* 10, no. 4 (Fall 2009), 839. The exposition in this book is a straw man that is easy to kick down; hence many commentaries enumerate the undisputable weaknesses of the book (for a good overview, see David Brandenberger's article in the same issue of *Kritika*). However, assaulting civil religion with the critical power of science might miss the point. Together with state festivities, symbols, martyrs and heroes the book is part of an attempt to create a civil pantheon – so criticizing its exposition as if it were faulty science just fortifies its claim that it is science.

¹⁷ See e.g. Ian Chesnov, «Byt' chechentsem. Lichnost' i etnicheskie identifikatsii naroda» [To Be a Chechen. Personality and Ethnic Identifications of a People], and Georgii Derluguian, «Chechenskaia revoliutsiia i chechenskaia istoriia» [The Chechen Revolution and Chechen History], both – in Dmitrii Furman, ed., *Chechnia i Rossiia: obshchestva i gosudarstva* [Chechnya and Russia: Societies and States] (Moscow: Polinform, 1999). For an eventual attempt at a resolutely empirically-grounded ethnography, based on a method of «delegated interviews», see Valerii Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

army it seemed more profitable to kill and subdue rather than to use knowledge and appease. The lesson was clear. Modern governance of free subjects and soft methods of control through knowledge of socialization and mastery of its methods need modern social sciences. Traditional warfare and carpet-like bombing of cities, if they are still working, exclude such needs.¹⁸

B. The end of autarky: empiricism rules the day

Empiricism, by contrast, was in high demand on international knowledge markets. So Russian humanistically-oriented scientists, entering these markets, naturally leaned to producing studies, based on a meticulous consideration of empirical detail. The end of autarky meant not only the openness of the system, it meant the end of priesthood and turning to empirically-based research. Russian human sciences, when they first met their colleagues from Western Europe and North America *en masse* in the end of the 1980s, could feel a certain exhilaration: there was so much to study, and there was so little done according to modern social science methods, because the country had not been accessible for foreign researchers for years.

The mass closures of the Russian studies programs in North America and in the European Union, which happened in the end of the 1990s and early 2000s, were still to come. Titles VI and VIII money from the US state department and similar programs in Western Europe had bred throughout the 1980s a huge regiment of specialists in Russia and the former Soviet Union. For their competitive careers they all dearly needed data, now suddenly available. The 1990s became years of data-mining. Teams of foreign historians, sociologists, political scientists and anthropologists worked with their Russian counterparts to answer questions on what was around them. Historians rushed into the newly opened archives, keen on producing new books, based on sound historical sources, while the most astute and intelligent just bought photocopied archives wholesale – e.g. importing massive bulks of the documents of the Cold War era to put them into US university libraries and repositories.

This gold rush for data came to an end, as we know, when the data amassed proved to be largely useless. What I might call the EEE (emanations of the evil empire) knowledge came to be largely ignored by strategy planners and key policy makers with the rise of global significance of China and the conflicts that followed Sep. 11, 2001. However, by the time the gold rush for data dwindled, it had already served well to integrate many Russians into the world knowledge-producing markets. Through their counterparts in joint research projects, they found entry points into a new system of academic and professional life.

Reflecting on the situation of the 1990s, a colleague of mine once noticed that Russian human sciences suffered from a familiar «resource curse», referring to a famous hypothesis in political science, which states that overabundance of oil and gas stifles democratic development of a country. Applied to Russian human sciences, this would mean that too many people were engaged in data mining for their foreign colleagues, while processing of that data and a production of generalizations and theories were done by our foreign colleagues abroad, i.e. not developing Russian humanities and social sciences at all. By implication, this would mean that, if it were to develop, Russian knowledge production would have to undergo familiar transformations in the history of developing economies – first transferring from raw material production to import substitution, and then to export-oriented production.

¹⁸ This, one might argue, has been changing since the mid-2000s, when state money from oil revenues started flowing into the few state universities, chosen to concentrate resources in a bid to make them become competitive internationally. Thus, the Ministry of Education established 8 new «federal» universities, frequently created by merging higher education schools in a regional hub, e.g. Krasnoyarsk, Rostov, Ekaterinburg or Archangelsk, then rebranded 27 universities as «national research universities», implying that they might become similar to MIT with time, and gave a unique status and privileges to Moscow and St. Petersburg universities. Scholarly dynamics in these universities will define the fate of the humanities and social sciences in state-supported Russian education. A wish to have internationally competitive human sciences should make them attentive to demands of sound empirical research, one would expect.

With time, import substitution proved easier than export orientation. If one knows modern methods in social sciences and the humanities, it is not that difficult to write a book on Stalinist atrocities in Russian and in Russia, instead of just sending photocopies of requested documents to the US. The same applies to a study of social processes. If one masters SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) and other types of relevant software, one can do generalizations of main social trends in Russia, without leaving the home turf. Analyzing some tenets of Russian culture can be done inside Russia as well, if one follows in the footsteps of people like Stephen Greenblatt and Lynn Hunt, emulating their methods. And one can read 10 textbooks on modern economics and compile a textbook of one's own on the basis of the things read.

But exporting knowledge is another issue. The first relevant distinction here is the one between exporting books or exporting oneself. The main surprise for the exports of the humanities in post-Soviet era can be summed as follows: Russians did not offer to the world their versions of Wittgensteins, Malinowskis, Hayeks, Polanyis and Freuds. Following the precedent set up by the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire and given what some would take as an overproduction of intellectuals in Russia, one could expect an outflow of talent from Russia to the world, similar to the Austro-Hungarian case.¹⁹ But so far in the humanities and social sciences it did not happen.

Institutionally, one can cite examples of Alexander Etkind who became a professor at Cambridge in Slavic studies, and Andrei Zorin, who took a similar position at Oxford. Both, however, are primarily teaching knowledge of Russian literature and culture, rather than general subjects like philosophy or history. Before them, Sergei Averintsev could teach philosophy and patristics in Vienna, but also, as a chair of Slavic studies, which he held for ten years until his death in 2004. Also before them, but emigrating from the Soviet Union in their young age, scholars like Yuri Slezkine and Svetlana Boym could make their illustrious careers in the US, ending up respectively as chairs of Russian history at UC Berkeley and a Slavic chair at Harvard. Perhaps the only exceptions to the rule are Alexander Piatogorsky and Alexander Kazhdan, who respectively taught Buddhist philosophy at SOAS in London and Byzantine studies at Dumbarton Oaks, after they had emigrated in the mid-1970s. But while Kazhdan published a lot upon arrival to the US, and authored 20% of the standard *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, and thus seemingly matched his predecessors in the discipline, contributions of Piatogorsky to philosophy are hardly on the par with Wittgenstein – at least, we still have to wait till life will tell us otherwise.

One explanation of this paradox might be the fact that many humanities-oriented scholars in the USSR were mostly producing knowledge that was interesting in the West for EEE reasons only. Hence even middlebrow or mediocre constructions were enticing and fascinating because of the huge intentionality of an alien civilization that stood behind them. Once the Iron Curtain was gone, and the EEE interest subsided, it turned out that these writings could not be of interest solely on the basis of their disciplinary merit. Take the example of sociology. Talcott Parsons visited the USSR 4 times, Merton, Gouldner and C. Wright Mills also came, and American Sociological Association had a special committee on establishing relations with the Soviet sociologists. One can find a dozen mentions and reports in *American Sociological Review* and *American Journal of Sociology* of visits of Soviet sociologists and exchanges with them; such mentions or reports disappear after 1991. When the closed universe of Soviet social sciences opened to the world, it proved to be largely empty, by this world's standards.

The second reason for the absence of more people like Kazhdan, who decisively contributed to the world development of his field, is because, one might argue, there were no cultural mediators who introduced Russian humanities and their authors to the demanding Western audience. Lynn Garafola has shown in her study of Serge Diaghilev's entrepreneurialism in promoting *Les ballets russes* in Paris in the early 1900s that it would have never succeeded, had it not been for Gabriel Astruc.²⁰ This

¹⁹ See e.g. a beautiful argument on Malinowski and early Wittgenstein as two opposing reactions to an influx of patriarchal and nationalist peasants into a cosmopolitan and bourgeois world of Viennese culture. Wittgenstein of a later period, as the argument goes, changed his orientation and went to study «the people» and their everyday language usage also (Ernest Gellner, *Language and Solitude: Wittgenstein, Malinowski and the Habsburg Dilemma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)).

²⁰ Lynn Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets russes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

impresario, who had largely introduced Diaghilev to the Paris scene, had also initially mediated his contacts with it. Such mediators matter, indeed. In the life of Piatigorsky it was Sir Isaiah Berlin who got him a job at SOAS, while Yuri Lotman (to be discussed below) was immensely helped by the Ardis publishing house, which specialized in publishing Soviet dissent literature in the 1970s and 80s. Lotman was also helped by his links to Roman Jakobson, who taught structural linguistics at Harvard. By contrast, such mediators were largely gone in the 1990s, since the need in and the fashion for Russian studies subsided. So, the relative absence of giants to be exported to the world of knowledge in the US and the EU right now might be partially explained by the absence of mediators willing or powerful enough to promote and sell them.

If one did not export oneself, what books or articles could one export? There were two main strategies, converging on the same stance in the end – i.e. studying Russia or the broader region, where it is situated, as an example of global processes. First, this was a strategy of universalization, when a study of a strictly Russian subject was used to arrive at conclusions about a generic phenomenon – e.g., when a study of the symbols of the 1917 Russian revolution is extended to be comparable to other revolutions or makes inroads into a general theory of symbols in politics.²¹ In other words, a Russianist abandons his or her parochialism and makes a claim of universal significance. Second, there was a strategy of abandoning one's past in area studies and opting to become a specialist on Russia instead, with a broader comparative focus.

Russia inherited the Soviet imperial legacy in the form of the institutes of the Academy of Sciences, dealing with area studies – Institute for the Study of USA and Canada, Institute of Latin America, Institute of Europe, Institute of Oriental Studies, etc. Their researchers found themselves in a situation, when their primary field of expertise stopped selling, both nationally and internationally. The Russian government in the 1990s was not interested in the studies of Nepal, Poland, or Brazil (it was concerned with other more pressing matters) or even in the study of the United States (it simply had no funds). And internationally, who needed knowledge produced by a Russian Polonist or a Russian Americanist, when everything coming from Russia smacked of bad quality? Thus, Polonists could go to study Ukraine-Russia relations instead (the case of Alexei Miller, for example), and Americanists could turn to studying the religious situation in contemporary Russia, departing from one's previous studies of US evangelical churches (the case of Dmitrii Furman, for example). This comparative aspect could be sold on the international market, given that some knowledge of that kind was still in demand. But both strategies were not ambitious enough, if we judge by the results achieved.

The two star export models that excited imagination in the Russian humanities in the 1990s and 2000s were exemplified by Mikhail Bakhtin and Yuri Lotman. Lotman was the best in terms of the strategy of universalization, already described: he analyzed Russian texts, looking for structural elements that could be found in other cultures, and thus allowed Russia to be seen with different eyes, which established his success in the Slavic departments all across the US. (One should note that emigration of his disciples and colleagues from the Moscow-Tartu school of structural semiotics also augmented the popularity of Lotman in the departments that hired these emigres). But Bakhtin was a giant of a different standing: he made Europe see itself with different eyes. This was no mean feat, and Bakhtin's successes can be explained variously.

One interpretation could stress the fact that he partook in the pre-revolutionary Russian world of profound learning. Martin Jay once said of Leo Lowenthal, a member of the Frankfurt School, that for him Tertullian and other early Christian classics in Latin were members of his household, with whom he conversed at ease. The same can be said of Bakhtin – he and Lowenthal shared in the same Graeco-Roman background of universal European intellectualism of the turn of the centuries. Another interpretation, however, would suggest that the roots of Bakhtin's popularity are Soviet, rather than Russian or pan-European. Thus, for example, people praising the phenomenal success of his book on Rabelais and carnival culture usually overlook the Stalinist background of Bakhtin's achievements: in Aesopean language the book describes an experience of the highly educated individual, whose refined colleagues were killed or swept away by rural masses moving to and flooding Soviet cities in the

²¹ Boris Kolonitskii, «Antibourgeois Propaganda and the Anti-'Burzhui' Consciousness in 1917,» *Russian Review* 53, no. 2 (April 1994), 183-196; Orlando Figes and Boris Kolonitskii, *Interpreting the Russian Revolution: The Language and Symbols of 1917* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

1930s. Attention to the lowly and disjointed body, the overturning of an existing axis of power, non-normative lexics - all of these were features of Soviet deadly carnivals that Bakhtin and his friends had to live through, if they were to survive.²² Of course, many would argue that making Europe see itself with different eyes was not only a result of the book on Rabelais. Bakhtin's essays on the dialogical principle, as opposed to dialectics, and analysis of Dostoevsky make him qualify as a very original philosopher who contributed a *tour-de-force* to the ongoing European dialogue on methods in the humanities.

Given these two existing strategies of the Russian humanities and social sciences, poised to export knowledge worldwide (universalization and displacement of the area studies subject matter), and the two star models – Lotman and Bakhtin – what can Russia offer among books of global relevance? There are five main areas of Russian topical contributions to the global world of the humanities, I would contend. First, there is the study of horrors and atrocities of Russian history – the best selling export item, as some would suggest. The 50 or so books of the ROSSPEN publishing house, which runs a series exclusively dedicated to Stalinism, splits into almost equal halves, the first being contributions of Western authors, translated into Russian, and the second containing import-substituting productions by Russians themselves.²³ The best among the Russian contributors to the series, like Oleg Khlevniuk, have established themselves as brand names in the study of Stalinism long ago. To give an example outside of this series, but equally appealing to a wide audience, is Sergei Iarov's masterful treatise on morals during the Leningrad siege of 1941-44. This book contains a very difficult thesis to accept: those who suffered most during the 900-day long heroic siege turn out to be the weakest – e.g. children and the elders, who could not resist the cruelty of people most proximate to them. And the most internationally cited Russian sociologist Vadim Volkov published a bestseller, in which he articulated a Charles Tilly-inspired analysis of «violent entrepreneurship» as a generic phenomenon that describes comportment of any organization waging violence – from the mafia to the state, based on his interviews with the Russian mafiosi and other enforcers of the 1990s. All such books are in demand because they contribute to generalist knowledge on how mundane human morality can be changed in a matter of months, dismantled or radically overturned in the extreme situations of life, marginal to the main stream of human history.²⁴

Second, there is a wealth of studies on the imperial past of Russia, and how it compares with the new imperial histories across the globe. The journal *Ab Imperio* has been a successful operation for more than a dozen years now, publishing in both English and Russian, with articles by Russian authors once again contributing to the obvious import-substitution drive, with their best pieces as well as recent manifestos of the journal being very readily translatable into English.²⁵ Imperial experiences matter

²² According to this interpretation, the irony of history is that the left-leaning authors in the West have taken these carnivalesque elements as pointing to liberation.

²³ On this publishing house, see Andrej Meduševskij, “Was war der Stalinismus? Die Stalinismus-Edition des Verlags ROSSPEN,” *Osteuropa* 64, Heft 4 (April 2012), 53-61.

²⁴ Oleg Khlevniuk, *Master of the House: Stalin and His Inner Circle* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009); Sergei Iarov, *Blokadnaia etika: predstavleniia o morali v Leningrade v 1941-42 gg.* [Siege Ethics: Moral Perceptions in Leningrad in 1941-42] (St. Petersburg: Nestor-Istoriia, 2011); Vadim Volkov, *Violent Entrepreneurs: The Use of Force in the Making of Russian Capitalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002).

²⁵ For *Ab Imperio* edited books see e.g. Ilya Gerasimov, Jan Kusber, and Alexander Semyonov, eds., *Empire Speaks Out: Languages of Rationalization and Self-Description in the Russian Empire* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009) and Ilya Gerasimov et al., eds., *Novaia imperskaia istoriia postsovetskogo prostranstva* [New Imperial History of the Post-Soviet Space] (Kazan': Ab Imperio, 2004). For another overview of the field, see Alexei Miller, “Between Local and Inter-Imperial: Russian Imperial History in Search of Scope and Paradigm,” *Kritika* 5, no. 1 (Winter 2004), 7-26. One should also note attention to experiences of colonization (e.g. Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011)) and an interpretation of the contemporary condition of Russian humanities as post-colonial (Alexei Penzin, «Zateriannyi mir' ili o dekolonizatsii rossiiskikh obshchestvennykh nauk» [‘The Lost World’ or on Decolonization of Russian Social Sciences], *Ab Imperio* no. 3, 2008, 341-348).

worldwide, of course. And empire sells well in the US. Younger historians of Russian origin, who took jobs of assistant professors in the US in the 2000s – Ekaterina Pravilova at Princeton, Mikhail Dolbilov at University of Maryland, College Park, and Elena Campbell at University of Washington, Seattle, were all hired to teach imperial Russian history.

Third, there is the legacy of Russian revolutions. These might be studies of the intensely experimental intellectual or literary scene of the years following 1917 (e.g. of Bogdanov, Platonov, Gastev, Voloshinov, etc.) but done at the new level of empirical detail and methodological sophistication, not witnessed in the studies of these figures done before the late 1980s, when Russia opened itself to modern methodology in the humanities and social sciences. Or it could be an analysis of the peculiarities of the revolution of 1987-1991. I will cite just two examples - a book that tries to recast a general theory of the revolution on the basis of the melancholic experience, filled with lamentation, which followed 1991, and an interesting, though not wholly consistent attempt to find in the «thick journal» debates of the late 80s – early 90s a breakthrough to a novel political theory, which should eventually matter worldwide, similar to the way exchanges in *The Federalist* provided one of the foundations of the nascent American political theory.²⁶

Fourth, Russian humanities with their keen interest in the patristics and Byzantium, in part fueled by the current search for a Russian national identity, may provide interesting insights internationally, when they are based on the exacting empirical or textual study of the sources. New church schools are burgeoning with scholarship on these issues, but most of their production, pursuing religious or political purposes, are not adequate to the demands of international knowledge markets. One of the few exceptions is an Oxford PhD thesis of Hilarion - the hierarch, second in status in the Russian Orthodox Church nowadays.²⁷ If his book does not establish the new standards of excellence, at the least it sets up the direction where to go. Perhaps it will take some time before Russian church life produces another Khomiakov, who in the XIX c. had introduced the unpalatable word *sobornost'* into major European languages, but the movement is already there. To give just two examples of good secular articles on patrological issues, based on a close study of textual evidence, I can point to Vladimir Baranov, with a new interpretation of iconoclastic debates in Byzantium, and the work of Boris Maslov on St. Gregory of Nazianze.²⁸

Fifth, Russia is a battlefield for a politics of memory nowadays. Following the multiple ripostes to the new standard 2008 textbook that I have mentioned above (legitimizing Putin's rule as an end of a stormy developments after WWII), Russia risks becoming a country with an essentially contested history. Thus it can say something globally important about the composition and decomposition of history. Fights with historians of the neighboring countries over the meaning of year 1939 or year 1941 are another controversy that may shed light on the general dynamics of the politics of historical memory, if it is properly grounded in empirical or textual detail.²⁹

C. Exporting methods

²⁶ Artemy Magun, *La revolution negative: deconstruction du sujet politique* (Paris: Harmattan, 2009), with an English translation to appear in Continuum Books. Timour Atnashev, *Transformation of the Political Speech under Perestroika. Free Agency, Responsibility and Historical Necessity in the Emerging Intellectual Debates (1985—1991)*, (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, EUI Florence, 2010).

²⁷ Hilarion Alfeyev, *St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²⁸ Vladimir Baranov, «The Theological Background of Iconoclastic Church Programs,» *Studia Patristica*, vol. XL, F. Young et al., eds. (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 165-175; Boris Maslov, «*Oikeiosis pros theon*: Gregory of Nazianzus' Concept of Divinization and the Heteronomous Subject of Eastern Christian Penance,» *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum/Journal of Ancient Christianity* (forthcoming).

²⁹ For diversity of approaches, please see e.g. the Cambridge group headed by Alexander Etkind - <http://www.memoryatwar.org/> (last checked on July 6, 2012), and Alexei Miller and Maria Lipman, eds., *Istoricheskaiia politika v 21 veke* [Politics of History in the XXI Century] (Moscow: NLO, 2012).

Apart from scholarly exports of topical interest, Russia now produces also some contributions, which offer knowledge of general methods of inquiry in the humanities and social sciences. An obvious item of interest for historians is, for example, the Francois Hartog-prefaced book of a Russian specialist on absolutist France, who has now turned to writing on problems in historiography in general.³⁰ However, the majority of writings that could be of methodological interest worldwide tend to embody and exemplify methods, applying them to Russian source material, instead of writing about them as a direct object of consideration. Thus such books and articles offer an opportunity of reflection for non-Russian-language humanities and social sciences on how familiar methods fare in an unfamiliar terrain.

To give but a few examples. The author of the present article has reflected a vogue for French theory in the Russian humanities, using Foucaultian approaches to write a genealogy of the Soviet self.³¹ In general, French theory was interesting to Russians in the 2000s, not only because of a Nietzschean groundlessness, but because Barthes and Derrida offered a new way to redescribe literary genres and practices (an object very important for a country that prides itself on the fact that literature has taken the place usually reserved for political philosophy), while Foucault and Bourdieu offered a new way to deal with an analysis of everyday practices in general. This, of course, is also very important in a country where for so many years of the Soviet rule (and many would claim – during the post-Soviet years as well) informal institutions have prevailed over the formal ones. Therefore it was not a big surprise when a Russian rendition of an introduction to the study of everyday practices proved to be very successful nationally.³² Still, it might be of interest to international audience only in terms on what sides of Heidegger, Wittgenstein, of Mauss-Bourdieu-Boltanski/Thevenot and Deleuze-Foucault and Deleuze-Latour sets of research methods play themselves out in Russia, in comparison with US, European or Asian applications. The ultimate sign of a recognition of the prevalence of attention to everyday life and its practices was produced when the main new humanities journal, *NLO* (a Russian acronym for *New Literary Review*) proclaimed an «anthropological turn» as the main current in literary studies nowadays and dedicated its very thick jubilee (100th) issue to this turn only.³³

In history as a discipline, micro-history and historical anthropology have fared very well since the mid-1990s also, with Carlo Ginzburg and Giovanni Levi translated into Russian, and their Russian followers publishing in both international journals, and - more extensively – in Russian ones.³⁴ History of concepts has arrived to Russia as well, both in its Skinner-Pocock and Koselleck guises, and can be now exported back, offering applications to the Russian cases or to such novel topics as international friendship, serving as comparisons to the standard treatments in this area of studies.³⁵ Many Russian

³⁰ Nikolay Koposov, *De l'imagination historique* (Paris: EHESS, 2009).

³¹ Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

³² Vadim Volkov and Oleg Kharkhordin, *Teoriia praktik* [A Theory of Practices] (St. Petersburg: EUSP, 2008).

³³ Irina Prokhorova, «Novaia antropologija kul'tury. Vstuplenie na pravakh manifesta» [A New Anthropology of Culture. Introduction with the Rights of a Manifesto], *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, no. 100 (2009, no. 6), 9-16, esp. page 13.

³⁴ For an overview of the adventures of these approaches in Russia, see Krom, «Studying Russia's Past.» The main books of Mikhail Boitsov, who is part of the European micro-history network, and of Mikhail Krom, who was most vocal in spreading historico-anthropological methods in Russia, are not translated into English or French yet. For examples of their scholarly production, please see Krom, «Les réformes russes du XVI^e siècle: un mythe historiographique?» *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 64, no. 3 (mai – juin 2009), 561 – 578, and Boitsov, «How One Archbishop of Trier Perambulated his Lands,» in Björn Weiler and Simon MacLean, *Representations of Power in Medieval Germany 800-1500* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 319-348.

³⁵ See e.g., Oleg Kharkhordin, «What is the State? The Russian Concept of *Gosudarstvo* in the European Context», *History and Theory* 40, no. 2 (May 2001), 206-240, and Evgeny Roshchin, «The Concept of Friendship: From Princes to States», *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no.4 (December 2006), 599-624.

historians of ideas have recently realized that they might have been doing a history of concepts all along, and a new cottage industry for the production of *Begriffsgeschichte* has appeared in Moscow, with three research centers competing to become a new institutional focus for this emerging community.

Looking for a specific tradition, which can be seen as a distinct contribution of Russia to research methodology in humanities and the social sciences, I would suggest homiletics, in contrast to hermeneutics. Both disciplines were taught in Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox seminaries – but if hermeneutics was the art of interpreting the Bible, then homiletics was the art of homily, the art of writing and delivering a sermon. Hermeneutics as a technique, of course, was long ago secularized to become the basis for a set of *Verstehende* approaches in human sciences, while homiletics has not enjoyed a similar fate so far. But if one secularized the technique of homiletics, and made it a conscious tool in the hands of a scholar of the humanities and social sciences, then the complementary character of the two techniques would be obvious. For example, if hermeneutical approaches in the social sciences treat acts as texts, then homiletic approaches treat texts as acts. For a student of Wittgenstein and John L. Austin such a statement on homiletic techniques would not come as a surprise: the whole emphasis on the performativity of the utterances was developed because of the specific acts that texts can embody or put into effect. I would just add that the Russian tradition of homiletic writing perfected the art to a certain extent, allowing one to compose the texts in such a way so that a reader or a listener would know with one's body or one's heart, rather than with one's mind, what the text was trying to convey. Homiletically-arranged texts are not about transferring information through the constative meaning of the utterances; they are about conveying the knowledge of a phenomenon by making the reader or a listener live through the experience in question as a result of the performative force of the text's utterances and thus have a direct, personal, somatic or emotional knowledge of a phenomenon.

Both Dostoevsky and Lenin, though radically different in their Christian and Bolshevik aspirations, are similar in this respect. They arrange some of their best speeches in an obvious homiletic way, as if relying on the voluminous textbooks on this set of church skills. They shamelessly integrate these techniques into their articles or books as well. They want their interlocutors to live through the experience in question, rather than talk to about it. They want to convey not the what, but the how. One knows what is love and friendship, for example, not through what Dostoevsky has to say about on the issue, or through his definitions, but rather as a result of experiencing love and friendship while reading his novels. And one could come to know what was and is communism not through listening to the content of the catechistic definitions of Lenin and Stalin, but rather through the communion their listeners had or contemporary readers may have with the author or with other receivers of the message around them. Very frequently these performative effects may explain the power of the texts that seem to have been chaotically written by not the most sophisticated of thinkers. Distilling these techniques from the Russian tradition of homiletically-arranged texts would help us understand Wittgenstein's and Austin's performativity better.³⁶

Apart from all this hectic activity of importing modern methods and exporting them back, having applied them to a study of Russia, or having distilled a Russian take on the methodology of the human sciences, stands the towering and overpowering figure of Vladimir Bibikhin (1938-2004). If one looks at what he did to Russian language, he is effectively the Russian equivalent of Heidegger, and even more. Bibikhin translated Aristotle, Gregory Palamas, Nicolas of Cusa, Sartre and Hannah Arendt, to name but a few. His main work among translations – Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* – is a masterpiece that, instead of just conveying the constative meaning of the German text of the original in its Russian equivalent, tries to set a reader amidst a flourishing of language, amidst the game of roots of the Russian words, parallel to the game that the German words of Heidegger play between themselves. Of course, Russian language has its own *Holzwege* – the German word for forest trails that Heidegger had put into the title of one of his famous collections of essays – and thus it leads a reader, in the way the German text leads a German one, but in a direction, which might be completely different.

³⁶ For a detailed argument, please see Oleg Kharkhordin, «Sekuliarizovannaia gomiletika: demonstratsiia metoda» [Secularized Homiletics: A Demonstration of a Method], *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* [New Literary Review, Moscow], no. 87 (2007, no. 5), 61-81.

Bibikhin follows these trails of language in his own writings as well. Not surprisingly, Bibikhin ends up with statements that are as untranslatable from Russian into other languages, as late Heidegger is frequently untranslatable, producing immense difficulties for those interpreters, who are looking for a fixed constative meaning. Like Heidegger, Bibikhin gives the reader a lived experience of following where the trails of language lead him or her, and they may – as trails in a forest – lead in multiple directions. For example, in his diagnosis of Russia's role in the drama of Renaissance self-constitution (*samoustroenie*) of humankind he seems to say that Russia intentionally subverts this self-constitution, precisely because the rest of Europe follows it or imposes it. Thus, he writes that in Russia *chelovek, ustroivshii sebia na zemle, sebia ne ustroit, ustroit ne sebia, ustroit vsegda drugogo*.³⁷ This might mean: a Russian, who has set up his or her life on earth, will never however structure this life in a finished way; instead he or she looks to the outside, helping others to structure their lives. Russia in this interpretation is a project to eschew Renaissance self-fashioning, at least within its own confines. But given multiple meanings that the verb *ustroit'* might have, Bibikhin's phrase may also mean: self-constituting Russians will never be content with themselves, only outsiders can be content with them. Hence Russia's self-critical drive. Both trails of interpretation can be followed and a reader is in the midst of a vertiginous experience – where do I go from here? In this short article it is impossible to parade or evaluate substantial thoughts of Bibikhin on the world (in the sense of Russian *mir*, German *Welt*), property, personhood or thingness – a commentary on any of this would require a book-length treatise. But these will surely come in some near future, because the existing translations of Bibikhin into English exist as if to show the deficiency of their texture, in the comparison with the grandeur of the original.³⁸

Conclusion

Summing up the experience of Russian humanities and the social sciences in the last 50-60 years or so is thus easy: an exegesis of a few sacred texts was replaced by pathfinding or tracking in the wealth of data that the world bestows upon us. I am intentionally taking this metaphor from the novels of James Fenimore Cooper, because it is both succinct and felicitous in describing what we do. Looking at the heaps, sheaves, piles – or now, more often, numerous files – of empirical or textual detail and finding one's way through this maze has become a fate of modern social sciences and the humanities. We track the trails of facts and texts, whether we do it for import substitution or export orientation.

First, a few words on tracking the facts. Bruno Latour has described this tracking as a fate of natural sciences. There procedure involves a visualization of a trace of some X through an inscription device, and then analyzing juxtaposed multiple traces, registered by different devices, that together allegedly pin down this strange animal X, which might turn out to be a new element of objective reality.³⁹ Our visualization devices, in the humanities and social sciences, are not as tangible as the bubble chambers or chromatographs of natural scientists. But the narratives we produce help us build patterns and make sense of diverse empirical data.

Second, if we use texts rather than empirical observations as key constituents of a terrain where we are trying to find our way or detect some sense of direction, we very frequently end up in the situation of Heidegger or Bibikhin, where textual detail leads in the direction we did not see before we immersed ourselves in it. And then we say that texts fashion us, rather than we fashion them, as if constructing

³⁷ I take the phrase from Vladimir Bibikhin, «Rossiia i mir» [Russia and the World], in Aleksei Kar-Murza, ed., *Paralleli: Rossiia-Vostok-Zapad* [Parallels: Russia-East-West], vol. 1 (Moscow: Institut filosofii AN SSSR, 1991), 7. In a later edition the author changed the wording slightly – e.g. see the chapter «Our Place in the World» in Bibikhin, *Drugoe nachalo* [The Other Beginning] (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 2003), 267.

³⁸ Please see e.g. Bibikhin, «One's Own, Proper. What is Property in Its Essence?» in Peter Koslowski, ed., *The Social Market Economy. Theory and Ethics of the Economic Order* (Berlin: Springer, 1998).

³⁹ Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

them according to some premeditated plan. For a person following the *Holzwege* of language, being attentive to traces, tracks and trails is of utmost importance.

Let me add some final remarks on Cooper's metaphor. Nutty Bumppo, the Pathfinder, appears for the first time in the eponymous novel, having been sent to meet his friends, when they are almost losing track in a forest. The Pathfinder says that he received his name from the fact that he was never known to miss one end of a trail, when there was an enemy, or a friend in need of him, at the other. He adds that the troops do not know a difference between a trail and a path, «though one is a matter for the eye, while the other one is little more like scent».⁴⁰ This scent is what we frequently need to get us through the debris of a text or a maze of empirical detail, to help friends make ends meet.

Mark Twain, of course, made famous caustic remarks about boastful, wordy and unrealistic appearances of Cooper's characters, and the Pathfinder in particular. For example, he ridicules a scene presenting «women in the edge of a wood near a plain at night in a fog, on purpose to give Bumppo a chance to show off the delicate art of the forest before the reader.»⁴¹ Twain even laughs at the skills of Cooper as a former naval officer, though Cooper might have picked up his metaphor of pathfinding in sea-faring. But perhaps we should not be following in Twain's footsteps, no matter how much we like his humor? Particularly when we are lost in the sea of data in the humanities – in Russia, as in the rest of the world - and we need to find a way leading ashore and aground, a pathfinder may be our rescuing friend.

⁴⁰ J. Fenimore Cooper, *The Pathfinder, or the Inland Sea* (Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1840), 11. Perhaps the place of its publication explains why novels from the Leatherstocking series of Cooper were translated into Russian in the 1840s; they were immensely popular even during the Soviet days.

⁴¹ Mark Twain, «Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offences,» in Twain, *How to Tell a Story, and Other Essays* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1898), 99.