

## CHAPTER ONE



# On Methodology and General Concepts

■ Russian history and life are full of paradoxes. Most of them are, unfortunately, rather sad. Basic questions are: Why has the Russian nation—endowed by nature with huge amounts of natural, human, and intellectual resources; having developed a great literary and scientific heritage; and having made significant, sometimes crucial contributions to many aspects of the larger world civilization—proven unable to arrange the conditions of its own existence in accordance with the great potential that it possesses? What fundamental deficiency made possible this great anomaly?

Like many of my compatriots, I have spent the major part of my deliberative life contending with a feeling of deep troubles as adverse states of affairs have prevailed in my homeland. Individuals react to these feelings in different ways. I made perhaps not the best but the most suitable personal choice and began many years of analysis and reflection about the reasons for and consequences of the tragic destiny of my country and the historical course it had taken at different junctures, each determining its direction until it approached the next juncture.

To a certain degree, I faced the necessity of writing the story of a pathology that has prevailed in my own country. That task is difficult and painful in many respects, especially in its moral character, because one is compelled to describe the disease of an organism that is native to oneself by the circumstances of one's birth, regardless of one's disagreements with its way of life. Moreover, it was not simple to ignore the unavoidable

reproaches of “antipatriotism,” “vilification,” and “Russophobia.” If I coped with all these difficulties, it was only because I understood clearly the dirty tricks that historical idealization and mystification have played in Russian history—who gained political and other advantages from those myths, and who suffered the calamities endured by the people and the country.

On the other hand, rather than concentrating on current political events, I had to plunge into the deeper levels of national thought, morality, and psychology in terms of continuities and discontinuities in attitudes and standards of public consciousness and public behavior. To resolve these problems in an immense historical panorama, I had to restrict myself to concentrating on key historical periods and selective aspects of those times. Certain methodological issues have had to be resolved.

### THE POINT OF DEPARTURE

As a point of departure, I rejected one-dimensional, monistic conceptions and interpretations of history. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, that “devil of one-dimensionalism” had manifested itself first in forms of economic determinism and the Marxist conception of class struggle as an ultimate universal explanation of human history.<sup>1</sup> Another variant of monism—the political one—focused on the state and the people and groups in power as responsible for all the catastrophes and all the gains of human societies. The third variant of monism—the scientific-technocratic one focusing on technological modernization—has created sweet illusions; but the collapse of these illusions brought painful disappointment to many developing and developed countries. One more version of monism, potentially aggressive and even less adequate than the rest, gained ground and unfortunately still maintains its ground in nationalistic conceptions stressing ethnic factors, the “voice of blood,” and nationalistic identity as a key motive power of civilizations.<sup>2</sup>

I presupposed that a multidimensional conception of society would be a better cognitive construction for the purposes of analysis in both historical and contemporary research. This conception allows one to describe any society by means of several groups of relatively interdependent factors viewed as variables—economic, technological, moral, political, psychological, and aesthetic. By joining appropriate consider-

ations of these factors, we can assess a society's condition at any period of time. As major independent variables, I consider the economic, moral, psychological, and aesthetic to be the most fundamental. Others, like the political variables, I consider to be derived from the most fundamental.

I realized that such a framework, like any other formulation, inevitably simplifies the true situation to some degree, particularly because these factors are never completely independent or precisely measurable. However, they do have a certain degree of autonomy, and interaction among them is not constant either in the direction of influence or in the way they are bound together. In some societies or at some times, an economy actually affects all the other spheres of life. In other cases, an economy is in turn derivative, perhaps from moral factors. For example, an expansion of Islam in the Arab world during the later centuries of the first millennium A.D. provoked modifications in all other aspects of life, including the economy. In some societies and eras, we see an intensive development of one or two factors while others remain in the shadows. For example, the unique blossoming of cultural and political life in ancient Greece took place in the context of rather ordinary patterns of economic and technological conditions. The effort to pick out some single dominant feature of social development, which is presumed to be valid for all countries and times, is, as a rule, artificial and arbitrary.

During recent decades we can observe an encouraging shift in the minds of people in many countries. Different models of the one-dimensional man—the economic, technocratic, political, nationalistic ones—have begun to concede their positions in favor of more balanced views. More universal, integral characteristics of personality—the ethical, cultural, and psychological—have come to the forefront. The well-known American historian of social thought Frank Manuel described this reversal of social perspective, which has occurred over a century and a half, in the following way: “To promote his idealistic theory of Spirit as the essence of human existence, Hegel had written with the greatest contempt about an ‘alimentary’ history. Currently, when we, in spite of Hegel, recognize the place of arms and stomach in human history, we should be ready to bring into history’s temple the other, more hidden features of the human soul.”<sup>3</sup>

I presume that the current condition of post-Soviet society is determined, to a certain extent, not only by economic but also by moral factors. Moral factors prevail despite a very unstable economic situation.

The moral degradation of society over several decades and the cultivation of a defective system of moral values have evoked cultural conditions in which even the most radical economic and administrative reforms could not achieve positive results unless accompanied by the reconstruction of a normal work morality. The failure of a work morality can create many unexpected negative consequences.

The primary purpose and task of my inquiry is to reach a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of the Russian spirit, to use a romantic cliché; or to describe the history of Russian collective consciousness, to use more “scientific” language. For that purpose, I relied on two main aspects of analysis, socio-ethical and socio-psychological, supposing that the political aspect is mainly derivative from those cultural and psychological features. In my opinion, this approach gives me the possibility of penetrating fundamental aspects of the Russian tragedy that remain hidden to economic or political interpretations of history.

In terms of general theory, I proceeded from the assumption that human history can be represented by two opposite “ethical genotypes” that have had a considerable influence on the character of life and the historical destiny of different nations. To conceptualize these ideal types: all varieties and differences in the concrete historical and cultural forms of human civilizations can be considered as a development and transformation of two opposite traditions—two opposite views of the social world. I identify these views as *system-centeredness* and *person-centeredness*. The fundamental difference is in the polarity of their scales of values.

In a person-centered scale of values, individuals are the primary focus of attention—“a measure for all things,” as the ancient Greek philosopher Protagoras said. All phenomena in both the natural and social worlds, including the internal spiritual world of the individual, are considered in light of respect for the human person.

In a system-centered scale, an individual as such is not given any attention at all or is considered only as a means to achieve certain super-individual purposes. Such a system depends on a more general worldview. In several systems, such as Hinduism, this purpose is placed beyond the human world. In those cases, one could speak about variants of “cosmocentrism.” We face different variants of “sociocentrism.” The main idea is a total dissolution of the human ego to the transcending interests of empire, regal person, cult, custom, ideology, state, or cosmos. The common denominator in all these variants is the justification of some

ultimate authority in the absence of an idea about the fundamental worth of human personality as a self-sufficient value. The meaning of human life is thereby reduced to its contribution in maintenance and development of some general system of order. In such an approach, the individual is always a tool and never an end. The way of thinking corresponding to the person-centered tradition is substantially the opposite. The ethos of this way of thinking is a personal orientation, a recognition of the uniqueness, autonomy, and self-sufficiency of each person. The role of individuals cannot be reduced to their function in social, natural, or any other system of order.<sup>4</sup>

We can see the first bursts of a person-centered way of thinking and life during the times of classical antiquity. I by no means subscribe to an uncritical idealization or romantic view of Hellenic Greece. We need to keep in mind the tragedies and degradation of life in the centuries that followed. But we cannot remain indifferent to the spirit of the Hellenic personality. Through the souls and shadows of one hundred generations, the spirit of the free citizens of those Greek polities sends us a message about the self-consciousness of persons who perceived for the first time in human history the dignity and value of one's own person.

The next impulse to a person-centered way of thinking and way of life came from early Christianity. The trajectory of human destiny would have been completely different if Christian morality had become a practical code of social life. But the real history of the institutions of the Christian Church, and especially the interpretations of them in most cases, proved to be far from the genuine Christian ideals.

Those transformations evoked a system of order that was still mainly system-centered, with the presumed dominance of an external ultimate authority. Nevertheless, a small light of person-centeredness was never extinguished from the beginning of the Christian era.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes it was hardly noticeable; sometimes it grew a little brighter; but it was never completely extinguished. And paradoxically, it displayed itself in circumstances that, superficially viewed, were absolutely hostile to it. *We should not equate person-centeredness with humanity. The relations between them are more complicated.* We can remember, for example, the inhuman activity of the Inquisition. Its purpose was to subordinate an individual's conscience to the prescriptions of contemporary clerical doctrine or, on an occasion of disobedience, to destroy an individual physically. But the paradox is that inquisitors, who spent much sophisticated energy on cruel tricks in the struggle for a human soul, served to confirm the

importance and uniqueness of the human soul as manifest in individual conscience.

The outstanding twentieth-century Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev specifically identified this peculiarity of religious persecutions in comparison with other forms of tyranny: “The old tyranny associated with the fires of inquisition left more room for human individuality, paid it more attention. Even extreme intolerance can be, nevertheless, a sign of respect to human individuality, to the spiritual life of man. When the church excommunicates and denounces heretics, it recognizes an interminable value of the human soul and pays attention to the uniqueness of individual destiny. . . . It is not so horrible, when a personality is a subject of limitations, oppressions, even torments, as when the very principle of human individuality is denied and impersonal considerations are substituted.”<sup>6</sup>

A new history of the person-centered way of thinking began with the Reformation but took its initial steps by a process of Renaissance assimilation of the ancient moral heritage. This triumph of the new type of consciousness has provided unprecedented progress in many fields of social life. I call this type of mind *energetically individualistic*.

Now let me portray the system-centered types of order. A traditional orientation toward stability of relationships within the system of order is the supreme value. An orientation to a perpetual reproduction of the same human condition yields the denial of individualism, the neglect of the very idea of human personality, and a tendency to identify personal interests with the interests of a social whole—whether that be kin, tribe, community, or a broader system, including the state or a more extended system of order for all humankind. For the member of such a collectivity, a balance in one’s personal life can be achieved only by means of total harmony with the system. The system keeps its stability only through the submission of its members.

Paradoxically, this way of thinking does not guarantee against revolts and other social cataclysms. History is marked by many bloody riots in traditional societies. But all these movements are directed not against the system as such but against particular people and groups inside the system who are presumed to abuse their own privileged positions and have therefore become dangerous to the stability of the system. Such popular uprisings carry the banner of the “just,” “enlightened,” or “benevolent” ruler. When the smoke of battle gradually clears, one can see that the main bastions of the system have remained untouched or have

been made even more secure than before. Individuals come and go, but the system remains. The same pattern prevailed after the revolution of 1917 in Russia. To avoid misinterpretation, I need to emphasize that I use the word *system* here in a sense broader than that of a political system. One of the major tasks of this inquiry is to demonstrate how the substitution of governing officials did not bring any basic change in the character of the system in my country.

There are two main forms of system-centered societies: so-called primitive societies and the societies of an Oriental type, representing two kinds of traditionalism as a way of thinking. They can be conventionally designated as primitive and sophisticated. The European system-centered societies, including that of Russia, belonged to the Oriental or sophisticated form of system-centeredness.

A question arising is how to consider these types in relation to the standard opposition of West and East. The temptation exists to identify the West with person-centeredness and the East with system-centeredness. Generally speaking, there is some rationale for identifying person-centeredness with the western side of the Eurasian landmass and system-centeredness with the eastern side. But the notions of West versus East are too ambiguous. I hope these two types can be investigated to allow for a fuller clarification of their problematics. The opposition is not confined to any one geographical area and need not persist across eras in human civilizations.

Now let me try to formulate the main difference between these two polar types of social ethics. Where they seem to be diametrically opposed approaches is in efforts to resolve the moral tensions that inevitably develop between personality and different types of social order. The system-centered tradition presumes that the interests of a social whole (some group or society) are indisputably supreme, while person-centeredness proceeds from assumptions that individual considerations and the standing of persons have priority over the interests of social collectivities.

It was natural that the relationships between the two ethical prototypes almost always had a conflicting character. Historically, the system-centered type was the earlier one; later person-centeredness “germinated” from it. Since then, the two have developed in parallel ways. Each system perceives the existence of opposition as a threat and takes the attitude of either absorbing or submitting to the other rather than viewing the two as complements to each other. This is why the wars between

representatives of these two systems have been marked by such great hostility. The emotional bitterness and the ideological manifestations of the struggle have not ceased even during relatively peaceful periods. Trade and cultural contacts have not been seen as mutually profitable cooperation but as efforts to weaken and place increasing pressure on the other.

These modes of relationships have remained as invariants through the course of human history. The forms, tactics, and ideological symbols have changed but never the deep-seated anxiety and hostility. The same situation still prevails in spite of objective conditions that work in the opposite direction toward a worldwide civilization and in spite of the timid but persistent attempts by human beings to move closer to one another in cooperative endeavors.

We cannot broach these huge and multifaceted problematics in their global dynamics. We can only suggest that the crises of the twentieth century have brought us to the threshold of a new type of social ethics. This type has its history as a philosophical construct. But beginning in the 1960s, one could see its symptoms and manifestations in patterns of social behavior.

My guess is that, as a result, this new ethical type has the possibility of taking on the form of a more or less balanced combination of system-centered and person-centered patterns of ethics as an integration of principles applicable to both communal and individualistic patterns of morality. In ideal form, it might be a combination of the better elements of both types and could provide for a harmony of interests for both individuals and society. Such a system needs to recognize individuality as an essential complement to social systems, and social arrangements as essential complements to individual creativity. I presume that this new meaning is to be identified with the development of what might properly be called a democratic civilization.

But any such fruit takes time and effort to mature. The events in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century have become a tragic consequence of impatience for some "great leap forward." Radical ideologists attempted to bypass whole periods of socio-ethical development and to move directly from an archaic traditionalism to some utopian collectivism. Such neglect of continuities in historical processes can only crash. And so it happened. Instead of the ideal of a new kind of humanity, we got the strange hybrid that combined the worst traits of Russian traditional political culture and the groundless ambitions of socialism.

The struggle for democracy yielded a new version of Leviathan, or Ivan the Terrible, rather than the withering away of the State.

The greatest intellectuals of earlier Russia warned of this danger. In politics and philosophy, they were represented by S. Y. Witte and a group of philosophers (e.g., Nikolay Berdyaev) called the *vekhovtsy*, named for the famous volume of their articles titled *Vekhi*, meaning “The Landmarks.” In literature, they were represented by many writers, beginning with F. M. Dostoevski. For instance, D. M. Merezhkovsky, a very popular writer in the early twentieth century, expressed his presentiment about the “reign of the coming Boor.” This fatal feeling became rather common in the last decade before the Revolution. But history moved along the path proclaimed by the radicals. As a result, we got a society organized on the basis of despotism pretending to be the “highest form of social organization.” It actually proved to be no more than a different variant of collective slavery in the form of “mechanical solidarity,” as described by Emile Durkheim, in which an individual is only an object belonging to and serving society.<sup>7</sup>

The socialism that developed from that system-centered foundation relied on an extreme form of ethical relativism, draped in the rigorous ritualism of a revolutionary morality. It was based on the false belief that one social class, one political party, or even, in the end, one group of people inside the revolutionary party could express and achieve the demands of “social progress.” Hence a kind of monopoly over progress was created. The main ideology of this approach was: We know better than anybody else what the Common Good is and you’ll get this Good by any means, whether you want it or not.<sup>8</sup> Ironically, this drive to impose by all possible means a particular vision of historical processes has been camouflaged by deterministic phraseology, manifested on the part of only one “progressive” class of proletarians. The series of tragic events in Russia since the Revolution of 1917 unfolded from this source.

Now we need to consider briefly the socio-psychological aspect of our analysis. It offers an opportunity to consider the mechanics of how stable, multigenerational communities of relationships evolve and how they relate to other communities of relationships.<sup>9</sup> The participants in these groups perceive themselves as “we,” as opposed to “they.” In terms of this approach, the whole of human history looks like a chain of continuities implying patterns of isolation and collisions between different “we’s” and “they’s.”

The persons, styles, direct motives, and forms of conflict change on the stage of history, but deeper sources of conflict and mutual suspicions strive either to screen off or to oppress those who do not belong to the group with whom we identify. These features of ethnicity do not offer a universal explanation for all historical intergroup conflicts, but they do serve as a good base for analysis in many cases.<sup>10</sup>

As is well known, the nineteenth century became an era for constructing an approach to economic relationships in which the human personality was to be identified with classes associated either with producers who usurped material resources and were viewed as exploiting others or with those who have been exploited themselves. Human personality was considered mainly within that important but limited dimension, almost ignoring the spiritual aspect of life. In the framework of our multidimensional consideration, which is opposed to a one-dimensional approach, we shall emphasize three aspects of socio-psychological theory: (1) national stereotypes of political behavior, reproducing, in their stability and continuity, dead generations' attitudes and reactions in new conditions and situations, (2) the psychology of social crises, and (3) the psychological basis for the maintenance of stability in periods following crises.

Certainly, not only the past but also the future exercises an influence on us, especially in the current epoch, when the future practically breaks into our present life and insistently demands being taken into account in the decisions being made. Nevertheless, we rely largely on the past in approaching the dawn of the future. The current scale and speed of change only emphasizes the tragic feeling of anxiety that modern human beings experience because we find ourselves in the zone of two simultaneous forces—past and future.

This approach to the cultural characteristics manifest in a way of life is not fatalistic. The past is multilayered and ambivalent in its meaning; we perceive a foreground, an intermediate vista, and a background. In any culture elements of tradition and innovation, continuities and discontinuities are intertwined. Such a view gives us opportunities to clarify for ourselves factors that enter into our ancient history, recent history, and current events in light of alternative probable scenarios for the future. We are not enslaved by our past. However, if we are to create our today and tomorrow sensibly, we need to conceive clearly which roads our ancestors followed at particular points in history and why they may have stumbled and fallen in their efforts to shape their future.

Where are we coming from and where are we going? Or are we lost in the course of history, wandering around in circles? Every nation has its own unique historical experience. The differences in historical experiences create some of the differences among nations. Sometimes these differences are deep; sometimes they are superficial. But once more, the socio-psychological opposition of “us” and “them” reveals universal aspects of all human history from prehistoric times until today and, I fear, into the tomorrow of civilizations.

One last methodological remark: I presume that political aspects, like competition between socialist and liberal political ideologies and their intransigent struggle in the political arena, are to be considered as a derivative from cultural aspects viewed through socio-ethical and socio-psychological perspectives. Even revolutionary changes in political regimes are not necessarily accompanied by radical changes at the more fundamental levels of life manifest in the fields of social ethics and psychology. A chronology of political changes does not usually coincide with a chronology of changes in national character. We will try to examine the interplay of these groups of factors belonging to different levels of analysis in the process of our historical journey. This is one of the differences between my inquiry and standard political and historical-political studies. Comparisons require attention to constants that accompany variants.

We turn now from methodological details to our main purpose, the effort to scrutinize the Russian cultural genotype in terms of political dynamics and stasis, in continuities and discontinuities, and in similarities and variations among different social groupings. We shall also try to mark the main historical stages, bypasses, and crossroads of its evolutionary path. All of that is important not only for history’s sake but also as a key to understanding our recent past and present times. At this point, we should follow Tocqueville’s advice: “To those who study it as an isolated phenomenon the French Revolution can but seem a dark and sinister enigma; only when we view it in the light of the events preceding it can we grasp its true significance. And, similarly, without a clear idea of the old regime, its laws, its vices, its prejudices, its shortcomings, and its greatness, it is impossible to comprehend the history of the sixty years following its fall. Yet even this is not enough; we need also to understand and bear in mind the peculiarities of the French temperament.”<sup>11</sup>

**THE CONCEPTION OF RUSSIAN HISTORY**

Analysis of the Russian cultural prototype in its dynamics, stability, differentiation, and partial transformations is the main subject of this study. First, I will disappoint those who expect to learn some unknown sensational facts or disclosures about the terrible mysteries of Russian history and the Russian court from this book. I do use several new sources and a number of rare, little known sources, but revealing new “facts” is not the major emphasis in this research. This is not a historical study in the purist meaning of the word. That which is a primary purpose of inquiry for the “pure” historian is only a point of departure for me.

This is why I use many of the classic texts and why in the analysis of a rather considerable period of Russian history, I mostly confine myself to *A Course in Russian History* offered at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth by an outstanding Russian historian, V. O. Kliuchevsky. Oddly, *A Course of Russian History* is extremely valuable and at the same time its meaning is not well understood for subsequent patterns of development.<sup>12</sup>

In this work I attempt to conceptualize some key events in Russian history from the seventeenth century to the present. Our purpose is to understand and explain in terms of certain theoretical logic some of the tragic paradoxes of Russia’s past, in order to reach an understanding of our present time and gain some standpoints for prognosis. The philosophy of history is concerned not only with the past but also with the relationship of the past to the future. In other words, we can say with some degree of simplification that our purpose is to reconsider the “enigma of the Russian soul,” while rejecting any romanticizing, so that we can comprehend its essence and consider it in light of our recent past and present situations.

The magnitude and character of this purpose forces us to make our analysis as brief as possible. That is why we concentrate first mainly on questions that are most significant for this aspect of analysis. Second, as we approach the present time, we shall scrutinize each passing period in more and more detail. Third, I deliberately omit here any substantial review of and challenge to most works on Russian history and politics. I am familiar with the most important studies in these fields and rate some very highly; I understand that omitting them from discussion opens opportunity for easy criticism by academic purists and “Brahmins.” But, I hope, this is a lesser evil and an appropriate price for the opportunity

to present my general concept briefly and consistently. Otherwise, if we neglect these self-constraints, there is a danger that readers will lose the main points and drown in an ocean of facts about certain historical epochs.

However, partially for personal reasons, I cannot skip mention of two talented authors who established two approaches to the course of Russian history. When I began this work more than twenty-five years ago, I had before my eyes a manuscript by Alexander Yanov, later published in the United States.<sup>13</sup> He undertook a considerable and impressive effort to build a universal theory of Russian political life. He covered a period of three and a half centuries—from Ivan III (1462–1505) to Paul I (1796–1801). His construction of the historical cycles of three repeating elements has substantial similarities with the famous conceptions of Arnold Toynbee, despite his disagreement with some interpretations offered by Toynbee. Yanov argued against the treatment of Russia as a variant of the “Asian” cultural/historical type: “Similarly to Asian despotism, the Russian autocracy also reproduced itself again and again after each new ‘Time of Troubles.’ But different than the Asian type, the Russian reproduction always introduced *some new level of complexity*.”<sup>14</sup> Another difference between Russian and Asian despotism, in Yanov’s opinion, was the existence of an opposition counterculture that persisted and manifested periodic challenges. He also recognized that the direct expression of oppositional ideas was always an intellectual matter. That is why the major theme of his book is a collision between two crucial forces in Russian culture—autocracy and intellect.

To my mind, Yanov’s work as a whole has considerable value despite the fact that particular, debatable arguments exist. I certainly disagree with some of his basic conceptualizations and proceed with a somewhat different conceptual approach to historical analysis. I shall express my doubts and, to some degree, disagreements with Yanov in the process of considering particular periods in Russian history.

My approach is also different from the conceptual approach of Richard Pipes, in spite of similarities in the interpretation of many particular questions.<sup>15</sup> His core concept is based on the idea of a “patrimonial-despotic regime,” potentially totalitarian. From the early beginning of the Russian state, its patrimonial-despotic character is identified in his study as the basic difference between Russian and Western patterns of relationships concerning power and society. I doubt that we have sufficient reasons to consider the early patrimonial Russian *knyazhestva* (prin-

cipalities) as a kind of totalitarian regime. Second, I try to avoid the usage of the word *West* as an ultimate answer, an ultimate elucidation, without particular contextual explanations. In my opinion, the concept of the West as the penultimate elucidation of the course of human development is an unjustified simplification. I do appreciate Pipes's research for many of its qualities. My concept, however, is based not on the state and the political realm but on historical-cultural invariants, which I consider to represent a deeper level of historical processes. I proceed with the following conceptual scheme.

The dominance of the system-centered ethic among the main branches of the Russian peoples has been indisputable through most of its historical existence. The opposition of "society" and "personality" did not initially emerge as a practical problem. The reason was not a harmony between these two levels of social life, nor a lack of contradictions between the individual and the social whole, but a completely dominant, a priori conception in favor of the social whole. The system-centered prototype in the sphere of social ethics, the respective traits of national character in the sphere of social psychology had completely determined the social, including the political, *modus operandi* and style of relationships. It blocked the development of any alternative tendencies with a high degree of reliability and consistency. The "system" had a well-developed instinct for self-preservation and reacted sensitively to potentially dangerous trends.

The sources of this extreme "vigilance" are ambivalent. On the one hand, the reserve of the system's endurance allowed it to remain stable even after the heavy blows of historical fate that were triggered by external threats and internal cataclysms. On the other hand, any historical chances that might have allowed Russia to alleviate the pressure of despotic rule had been paralyzed and were doomed from the very beginning to be destroyed as soon as they came into opposition with the national stereotypes of political behavior and the moral foundations of social relationships. As a result, the Russian people found themselves in the firm grip of misfortune and humiliation requiring an extreme sacrifice to save themselves from further misfortunes and humiliations.

Small movements of countercultural tendencies have slowly gnawed away the system-centered foundations. The historical winds of change began to reach the Middle-Russian plain as well. It brought the seeds of another form of life. New sprouts have grown from those seeds. At the same time, the "guardians of purity" became more and more neglectful in plucking out those weeds.

Moreover, fruit that was very tempting from a pragmatic standpoint grew from some of these sprouts. Temptations evolved to save some of these innovations under strict state and “ideological” control. The most common form of this control relied on the barriers of sociocultural estrangement. Sometimes these barriers had very exact borders. For example, the borders of the so-called *Nemetskaya sloboda*—a sort of ghetto or strangers’ settlement—were usually in an isolated part of town. Foreigners were not allowed to settle outside these areas. Sometimes it was only a psychological border created by distinctions between “pure Russians” and “apostates” who picked up the foreign subtleties. The key problem was not the forms of isolating of people at home from the danger of foreign influence but that such barriers laid the foundation of a split between the different parts of the nation. The split grew to the size of an abyss between the Russian intelligentsia and the rest of the Russian people in the nineteenth century. This abyss, which proved to be unbridgeable, persisted as one of the most important reasons for the tragic evolution of Russian history.

The beginning of this process was slow and proved rather insignificant. This “greening” of an alternative, person-centered type of relationship looked weak, not presenting a threat by its possible competition with the dense and overpowering jungle of system-centeredness. All it could do was survive by establishing minimally stable roots in the traditionally system-centered soil of the country. But from one generation to another, the changes accumulated, until one could speak about the emergence in Russia of a new ethical and psychological type: person-centeredness. The great abyss took a long time to emerge.

Apparently, the first decades of the nineteenth century were the period when person-centeredness in Russia became a rather significant part of the social landscape. We can see some signs and even temporary explosions of this tendency during the two preceding centuries. But the principal difference in the nineteenth century was that for the first time, person-centeredness announced itself as a definite force that could not easily be destroyed. Such an attempt to destroy was made during the reign of Nicholas I; but the person-centered approach possessed a certain social base among the gentry and educated persons who developed a strong self-consciousness feeling of self-responsibility for the conditions of life in Russian society. Thus, a “new species of people,” as Denis Diderot said, emerged in Russia at that time. And the whole nineteenth century passed under the signs of accommodation to the cultivation and propagation of this species.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the person-centered genotype had become fully legitimate in Russian society. Belonging to this genotype, certainly not by name but by essence, even proved to be the core criterion for a major subdivision within the Russian intelligentsia—a group almost unprecedented for its role and significance in the social life of the country.<sup>16</sup> The influence of person-centeredness grew to such a degree that the very basis of the system-centered pattern of order was placed under serious threat. The base on which the pyramid of Russian system-centeredness had stood for centuries began to quake, and the person-centered mentality began to spread into broader and broader circles of Russian society. If Russia had had a couple of decades more for undisturbed development, nothing could have prevented the country from an irreversible move toward a person-centered way of life.

But alas, the abyss between the different parts of society had not yet been bridged well enough. Russian system-centeredness demonstrated once more its incredible capacity to survive. Energized by this threat, it managed to perform a desperately radical maneuver. By a complete outward transformation, it obscured the situation, destroyed once more its historical person-centered alternative, and saved the predominant position of system-centeredness in society. This transformation was achieved at a very high price. Many traditional symbols and attributes, including the interests of a privileged stratum of society, were sacrificed.

If we return to the image of the pyramid, we can see that it was turned on one side, and the dark mud of deep national system-centeredness simultaneously swamped both the old autocratic system-centered regime and most representative features of the alternative person-centered counterculture, because unfortunately they had mostly been concentrated within only one segment of society. Many changes occurred at the surface of events, certainly, but it was the same pyramid. The same pattern of social order remained practically intact.

The so-called October Revolution misled many observers and participants in those events, even the most attentive and perspicacious of them, with only a few exceptions (e.g., Berdyaev). When the smoke of revolutionary battles dispersed, it became apparent that system-centeredness had prevailed with only modest changes in its ideological and political slogans. Defeating its person-centered opposition, system-centeredness continued to enjoy its predominant historical position. Moreover, it managed to do it more skillfully, with a firmer grasp over the spreading territory of the former Russian Empire, and in the name

of liberation. *So the antireformist line, camouflaged behind radically different masks, won.*

In the process of further analysis, I shall try to demonstrate this point in detail. For now we can restrict ourselves to one rather dramatic example. Vasilii V. Shulgin was one of the most conservative, even reactionary political actors under the Tsar's regime. He was a convinced monarchist, a strong opponent of any social modernization, who consistently supported traditionalism. Through his long political life he was devoted, before the Revolution, to struggles against the liberal "bourgeois" parties. After the Revolution, he struggled against the Soviet regime. He paid for that with two decades of imprisonment. At the end of the 1950s, he was released and lived quietly in city of Vladimir some 190 kilometers from Moscow. He retained his absolutely clear intellectual and analytical capacities, as is reflected in his latest books. But his political "ideology" has changed dramatically. He found that the extreme conservative ideals of his youth had been inherited by the current rulers of Russia using the name of the Soviet Union; and he blessed them.<sup>17</sup>

All of these questions are a subject of more than academic interest. The traditional Russian cultural genotype completely dominated the country at least until the last decade of the twentieth century. In 1990s, for the first time in more than one hundred years, real hope of overcoming system-centeredness has again emerged. After the completion of our retrospective analyses, I shall apply the same approach to the current situation in Russia and consider the possible future course of Russian civilization. But we turn now to centuries past.