Presently, the question as to the nature of Russian philosophy and what the discipline should be concerned with is a very relevant one, and is often a topic of discussion—whether on an informal or academic level. The state of ideological crisis that contemporary Russia finds itself in recalls the pre-revolutionary era at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, when age-old cultural supports were destroyed, and when the worldview paradigm was rejected on the whole. Now, just as one hundred years ago, attempts to understand Russian history are underway, new paths for Russia’s development are being sought, and the reasons behind Russia’s situation, as well as ways to overcome the country’s problems, are being considered. So long as a generally accepted solution has yet to be found, Russia remains in a state of instability and indefinability, which, although clearly having many negative consequences, also makes free philosophical thinking possible. It is well known that, to a large degree, this kind of freedom has a negative side—as “freedom from” and not “freedom for”—and at times manifests itself as anarchy and arbitrary in nature. This freedom, however, is a necessary prerequisite for philosophy to exist. Contemporary Russian thought, in discovering its own groundlessness, has been forced to independently define the vector of its development and now has a good opportunity to become philosophy and to refuse to be subjugated by ideology or authority. The question as to the essence of Russian philosophy has fundamental significance,
and finding an answer to it is the main driving force behind some important intellectual work being conducted today.

The objective of this article is an exposition of the principal features of this intellectual work. In November of 2007, as part of the annual conference “Philosophy in St. Petersburg” held under the aegis of the St. Petersburg philosophical community and the Faculties of Philosophy and Political Theory at St. Petersburg State University, the tenth Historians’ Symposium of Russian Philosophy took place. This year’s symposium examined Russia’s philosophical heritage and perspectives on the ideological-cultural developments of post-soviet Russia. The positions offered at the symposium regarding the essence of Russian philosophy reflected, in the best possible way, the current state of Russian thought, enabling some conclusions to be drawn.

The discourse was initiated by the general theme of the conference, which called for a clarification of the intellectual’s mission in contemporary society, and which highlighted the Russian distinction between the “intelligentsia” and the “educated class.” Already at the plenary session the need to define this distinction was emphasized anew, both historically and within the context of contemporary philosophical problems, which cannot be adequately understood if the non-identity, and even contradictory nature, of the concepts “intelligentsia” and “intellectuals”—unique indicators of opposing positions in Russian philosophy and culture—are ignored. The Russian intelligentsia owes its unique status to Vekhi (1909), the ideas of which acted as the focus of a lengthy polemic that, for Russia, highlighted a key characteristic in how the role of the “thinking proletariat” was understood, as well as the problem of philosophy as a whole. This polemic was not resolved, perhaps due to external reasons, but perhaps also due to the fact that this kind of polemic does not have a solution. And indeed, here we are, one hundred years later,
and the same polemic has broken out again with new force, defining the work presented at the conference “Philosophy in St Petersburg.”

What is it that comprises the particularity of, and defines the essence of, the Russian intelligentsia—a phenomenon for which it is impossible to find a Western analogy? Summarizing the views of the Vekhi writers, the Russian intelligentsia appeared as a result of particular socio-cultural developmental perversions, which were, for the most part, propagated by the assumption that Western civilization had developed according to the correct models, consequently threatening Russia’s relationship to its own tradition. The most defining trait of the Russian intelligentsia is its nihilism: that is, its systematic and complete annihilation of the religious and spiritual foundations of Russian culture and of the Russian state. This annihilation, which reached the form of militant atheism and the propagation of anarchism, can be explained by the fact that the concept “vse russkoe,” or “all Russian,” was considered synonymous with economical and cultural backwardness, which in turn implied that this backwardness must be “corrected” in accordance with Western standards—standards that were viewed as a priori and that were not subject to criticism. Vekhi demonstrated the false nature of this position and regarded it as the cause of the paradoxical status of the Russian intelligentsia—of their artificialness and their fate in being historically doomed: On the one hand, through their anti-cultural activity the intelligentsia emphasized their remoteness from the “Russian soil,” insisting instead on remaking present-day reality, demonstrating great self-denial and self-sacrifice in the process—a readiness to die for the welfare of the Russian people; However, on the other hand, their very efforts to redefine the “Russian soil” caused them to lose touch with it altogether, and so they became incapable of any positive creative work. Consequently, all their energy not only
led to the downfall of the state and of culture, but also negatively impacted the life of the Russian people.

Concerning Russian philosophy, the intelligentsia always felt an inclination to deny any originality or “Russianness” (russkost’), giving preference instead to Western philosophy, yet they had only studied Western thought in a very naive and superficial way. As Nikolai Berdiaev put it, the Russian “intelligentshchina” simply did not reach an understanding of philosophical truth (istina), isolating itself instead within a sectarian search for truth (pravda), understood as service to the people at all costs, even if the people themselves are against it (Berdiaev 24–42). This is why, as Mikhail Gershenzon claimed, the Russian intelligentsia constantly dreamed of a revolution for the sake of the people, but without the people, as the intelligentsia was afraid of them—even more so than of any form of governmental torture (100–101). The idea that there exists a long-suffering Russian people who dream of liberation is nothing more than a slogan, or, more clearly, a fiction created by the morbid imagination of the apostate intelligentsia—of those spiritually undeveloped individuals who pretended to play the role of Russia’s savior and who acted as apologists of justice. The appeal of the Vekhi authors to put an end to this clan mentality, or “clanishness” (kruzhkovshchina), in order to draw attention to the “embryos” of true Russian philosophy, such as the works of Petr Chaadayev, Aleksei Khomiakov, Vladimir Solov’ev, Boris Chicherin, Aleksei Kozlov, Lev Lopatin, Viktor Nesmelov etc., appeared to be a perspective worth developing, and one that offered an opportunity for genuine creative philosophical work. However, as we now know, this perspective was actually an appeal to strengthen, rather than to overcome, “clanishness,” as this term referred to an elite group of philosophers who declared to have the sole right to understand “true” philosophical problems, thereby representing Russian philosophy as a whole. Thus, the trial of the intelligentsia in Vekhi
initiated a polemic that confronted the text on all sides, leading to the condemnation of its authors as the most fervent advocates of the very position they sought to negate.

_Vekhi_, however, stressed only one aspect of the problem. As Iurii Kliuchnikov wrote, the authors of _Vekhi_ portrayed all intellectuals as Bolsheviks, which the intelligentsia was deeply offended by (208-251). Indeed, when speaking about the intelligentsia and opposing them to the “educated class,” _Vekhi_ interpreted the most radical ideas of the Russian intellectuals as common to the Bolsheviks. Thus, by condemning Bolshevism, they were at the same time strengthening it, and it is in this way that _white_ Bolshevism appeared out of _Vekhi_ just as _red_ Bolshevism had from _Iskra_ and _Vpered!_. In analyzing different political groups, Kliuchnikov came to a rather unexpected conclusion: namely, that it was Bolshevism that should be considered the defining trait of the Russian intelligentsia as a whole. He identified Bolshevism as maximalism—a readiness to live and act for the sake of the absolute and to use it as the criterion by which reality is understood; He also identified it as nihilism—a specific way of ungrounded thinking that allows for the possibility to arbitrarily choose any theory as the fulcrum of action, so that a certain aim is achieved sooner rather than later; It is also rigorism—the cruel love of Russia as an ideal, governed by the principle “the end justifies the means”; Finally, it is the ability for self-sacrifice—a voluntary renunciation of personal happiness, which takes the form of a contempt for both philistinism and the petty bourgeois, understood as one’s satisfaction with one’s own positivity and as the cultivation of mediocrity. In this sense of the word, what Russian intellectual was not a Bolshevik? If Kliuchnikov is right, then Bolshevism was hardly an accidental phenomenon in Russia, and its very nature is not simply limited to the ideological and political sphere.
The distinction between the “intelligentsia” and the “educated class” was made in Vekhi with the purpose of intensifying the confrontation between diverse philosophical parties. By promoting ideals such as sobornost’ (unity in the many), vseединство (all-unity), and integral knowledge, the Vekhi writers developed their own form of philosophical extremism, characterized by the well-known formula: “Those who are not with us are against us.” As a result, their striving towards vseединство only intensified the existing fragmentation and the concept of “integral knowledge” (a slogan created in order to offer a notion of completeness, that is, the possibility of determination or limitation in accordance with what was understood [accepted] as completeness) provided the grounds for an attitude of intolerance towards individuals with different opinions. Furthermore, this striving stimulated the process of ideologizing Russian philosophy, turning it into a kind of sectarianism. Thus, the “educated class with the Russian soul, enlightened reason, and strong will,” as Sergei Bulgakov called them, destined to save Russia from the “intelligentsia and татарщина” (45), was no more than a specific project: in other words, something devised but not itself real, which, naturally, could not be considered an alternative for the intelligentsia. It can be argued that in Russia, at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, the educated could not help but be concerned with the “sore subjects” of the contemporary situation, just as they could not be anxious to strive toward “pure” knowledge, as everyone preferred правда over истина. Indeed, people lived and died for the sake of правда, as being satisfied with истина was considered beneath the dignity of a Russian intellectual.

The situation changed, however, in the last decade of the twentieth century, when such qualities as unprincipledness and a thirst for profit came to be in high demand. It is during this period when the real “educated class” appeared: a class of professionals ready to consider their...
knowledge as capital and prepared to “mind their own business,” without concern for political affairs that offered no promise of gain or promotion. Within these conditions, the question as to the nature of the Russian intelligentsia became increasingly volatile. As the Dean of the St. Petersburg State University Department of Philosophy, Iurii Solonin, noted at the Historians’ Symposium of Russian Philosophy, the peculiarity of the critical situation that contemporary Russian philosophy finds itself in lies in the fact that the traditional intelligentsia has been replaced by new intellectuals who are oriented only toward the West, and that no real alternative to this new generation of Westernizers exists. The traditional Russian intelligentsia seems to now have been fully discredited: On the one hand, the failure of the communist agenda is used as proof in demonstrating the philosophical incompetence of the most radical thinkers in the intelligentsia—those individuals who devoted themselves to the revolution and who failed to realize their goals, even in spite of the fact they had entered into alliance with state power; On the other hand, the intelligentsia’s opposition, which consists of Orthodox-oriented thinkers, cannot be considered capable of advancing Russian philosophy, as their position only appeals to the sentiments of an epoch that has already come to an end. The many ideas surrounding religious philosophy are now only of historical interest and cannot provide a basis for the further development of Russian thought. Indeed, there are gaps in the tradition, if not a complete rejection of it. This, in turn, leads to the belief that Russian philosophy does not exist, or even that such a thing is impossible. As Solonin remarked: “Nowadays no one wants to belong to the intelligentsia, but no one is able to become a new intellectual.” In light of the unwillingness of academics to repeat the well-known paths and mistakes of the past, we might consider solving the problem by “extirpating the intelligentsia,” as Kliuchnikov suggested—by trusting in the
belief of the inappropriateness of Western models and turning our eyes toward the creative possibility of Russian philosophy on its own terms.

Naturally, any renunciation of tradition should not be interpreted in a purely negative way. One positive outcome is that only now is it possible to adequately study the tradition as a whole, perhaps learning some lessons from it. Indeed, this is why the statement “we should not deny our philosophical heritage but accept it, even if we do not like it” became the leitmotif of the symposium. In his opening speech, Aleksandr Zamaleev, Chair of the Faculty of the History of Russian Philosophy at St. Petersburg State University, offered an analysis of existing approaches in the study of Russia’s philosophical heritage. He emphasized three main approaches. The first is the state-official approach, which dominated up until the revolution and during the Soviet period, and that presently has received more and more attention as the state and bureaucracy become further consolidated. This approach is defined by its optionality, meaning an orientation toward certain individuals who are endowed with a special status and considered to be the main, and even only, representatives of Russian philosophy. As a result, the range of problems that Russian thinkers attempt to solve is extremely reduced and ideologized. At the moment, for example, in an effort to strengthen the position of existing state power, Ivan Il’in is considered the most “recognized” philosopher because his political views fit with those of the current state. The second approach can be called the intellectual-liberal, or Westernizer-centric, approach, as it involves an interpretation of Russian philosophy according to Western criteria. As mentioned above, this approach was formerly represented by radical thinkers of the intelligentsia who have since left the scene. In contemporary Russia, their role is played by the mass media, which forms public opinion by means of other, more efficient methods. Finally, the third approach is the Russian Orthodox, or national, point of view, which insists on the
originality of national philosophy. This approach is characterized by a specific combination of church and state-official factors, which, at the present moment, appears to be a new “iosiflianstvo”—an ideological substantiation of strong state power and the tendency of this power toward absolutism.

It is clear that none of the approaches offered above can be considered adequate methodologies for studying the history of Russian philosophy. According to Zamaleev, the task of modern philosophy is to find ways of interpreting the Russian philosophical heritage that are synthetic, as this does not require selecting a particular philosophical system or position, but instead highlights the interrelation and appropriateness of these systems and positions over the course of the development of Russian thought. This synthetic method should neither lead to syncretism nor to objectivism, since neither syncretism, as a mechanical combination of different positions, or objectivism, as a pretension to their complete and thorough study, is relevant to the subject at hand. The extent to which historico-philosophical research possesses an objective character is determined by the subjective interest of the researcher, and an understanding of philosophical problems is possible only if there remains some misunderstanding. Indeed, what we call objective is that which has managed to retain its subjectivity, and so our understanding is always incomplete. This incompleteness averts the danger of dogmatism and its transmutation into ideology, while guaranteeing the possibility of a deeper understanding and the development of new interpretations.

Those who took part in the symposium came from all over Russia and presented different points of view. They did not, however, come to an agreement about the essence of Russian philosophy, nor did they decide how the discipline may develop. Ultimately, there were two main standpoints. Some speakers insisted on the originality of Russian philosophy and
suggested that philosophical thinking should be grounded in Orthodoxy. Others stressed the universality of the philosophical paradigm, and therefore any notion of separating Russian philosophy off from the worldwide philosophical process was considered absurd. Indeed, it is worthwhile to highlight the arguments of both groups.

The advocates of original-Russian philosophy, who comprised the majority at the symposium, gave the well-known arguments of the Slavophiles, but tried to apply them to the contemporary situation. Insisting that the particularity of Russian philosophy lies in its spiritual roots, which essentially find ground in Orthodoxy, they emphasized the following characteristics of Russian thought.

To begin with, it is conceiving truth ontologically. Taken this way, truth (истина) becomes an element of being rather than of thinking. Such a view is rooted in the fact that in the Russian Orthodox tradition the concept of salvation is not understood “legally,” as in the West, where man is able to justify himself based on his kind deeds. On the contrary, the Orthodox variant implies “обозшеніе” (becoming similar to God) and requires man to follow Christ: that is, to live life the way he did and accept his doctrine practically, as reality, rather than approach it theoretically.

The second trait of Russian philosophy is the desire to gain integral knowledge, which takes the form of a synthesis of faith, reason, and the will, and which is opposed to the Western ideal of knowledge as a concord of faith and reason. This is the reason that Russian philosophy, unlike Western philosophy, has never become a separate, autonomous region of knowledge, but instead retains its opaque character: that is, its institutional and thematic vagueness, which has guarded Russian philosophers against dull professionalism and academic narrow-mindedness. Accordingly, Russian philosophy does not separate itself from life, but rather, finds its very
ground in it, thus never trying to change life according to its theoretical conclusions. The contradictory tendency that appeared in Russian thought at the end of the eighteenth century, leading to the acceptance of the ideals of rationalism and atheism and encouraging an active attitude toward reality, was, in the opinion of the presenters, accidental in Russia and cannot be considered a denial of the Russian native tradition.

The third feature of Russian philosophy, as expressed by the advocates of original-Russian philosophy, is its specific aestheticism, which is the result of the attempt to follow the New Testament’s commandment to love thy neighbor. In Russia, this commandment is also understood as the demand to love the world, because it too is God’s creation. In the West, however, more attention is paid to the Old Testament idea of man’s dominion over nature, which resulted in the cultivation of a utilitarian attitude towards the environment and, consequently, to a preoccupation with the technical aspects of life and pragmatism. As for Russian thought, its overarching aestheticism explains both its recognized literature-centrism, as well as its evolution toward cosmism.

The fourth trait is a specific attitude toward the notion of personhood in Russian philosophy. Nothing is more alien to Russian thinkers and more incompatible with their philosophical views than the concepts of individualism and egoism, which are so widespread in the West. From the very beginning, Russian thought oriented itself on a different understanding of man and value of human existence, stressing the principle of sobornost’ as the fullest expression of man’s essence. Naturally, as an alternative to individualism, sobornost’ cannot be the same as collectivism; It opposes both individualism and collectivism because they both equally abolish the notion of personhood. If the person is claimed to have autonomous value, then it is deprived of the foundations of its existence and, as such, upon being separated from
other personalities it is reduced to nothing. In the same way, the person, upon finding itself among a collective that resembles a mechanical union of individuals, becomes empty, insofar as here the unity of the collective is achieved by means of external, accessory factors. *Sobornost’*, as conveyed in Russian philosophy, allows for the possibility of achieving unity in the genuine, spiritual foundation of human existence. In this case, personhood, while disappearing in “we” and losing its “I,” becomes a perfect whole, thus valuable in the absolute (eternal) sense rather than in the relative (earthly) one.

Finally, they point out that Russian philosophy is notable for its search for *ecclesiasticism*. This triune completeness that resides in Russian philosophy sets it apart from Western thought—a “Trinity-deficient” philosophy. If the West’s range of interests could be described as being mostly determined by Kant’s paradigm, which is, in effect, a working form of incompleteness with its tendency toward antinomies and the rationalization of faith, then Russian philosophy, on the contrary, in resting upon the Church, has developed triune thinking. This triune model allows for reliable and consistent conclusions, which provide a set of affirmative statements that dialectically grasp the essence of being in its formal inexpressibility. One of the most fundamental problems of Russian philosophy is Russia itself, and this is not accidental. Petr Chaadaev was the first to introduce Russia as a problem of metaphysics, and this has since become a necessary element of every philosophical system, playing a role in the determination of the originality and continuity of these systems. In a sense, one could say that Russia *is* Russian philosophy, as no other national philosophy is so concentrated on itself: that is, on trying to understand its own presence. Even in possessing completeness, it is never complete, as only the essentials are clarified, leaving the details to be worked out. This is why advocates of this position have said that Russian philosophy should not be included among world philosophy, as a
constituent of it, but rather, that the whole of world philosophy should be included in Russian philosophy. In this situation, Western rationalism, for example, could help provide insight into some of the particulars of Russian thought, to systematize and to clarify their specific nature.

Those proclaiming an essentially Russian philosophy believed that the way forward should be determined by the need to realize the peculiarity of their domestic thought and the need to preserve the religious character of Russian philosophy. Opposing views were conveyed by some participants at the symposium who considered the religious character and the other specific traits of Russian philosophy mentioned above to be shortcomings, preventing the further development of the discipline. The arguments of those who criticized the “Orthodoxification” (opravoslavlivanie) of philosophy resembled the arguments of the Westernizers. This criticism involved the following points.

Concerning the well-known question whether there exists “Russian philosophy” or “philosophy in Russia,” most speakers agreed with the first answer. However, the treatment of Russian philosophy as a tradition that opposes Western philosophy and insists on its own originality is, in their opinion, a demonstration of Russian philosophy being insufficiently developed rather than having superiority over Western thought. Russian questions, such as “Who are we?,” “What is to be done?,” or “Who is to blame?” have a marginal status and cannot be considered real philosophical questions. As to the notion of the “Russian idea,” one of the most cherished statements of Russian thinkers, it is more ideological than philosophical. The point is that Russian philosophers, who had to live in a country where there was no philosophy as an institution and who were forbidden to openly express their thoughts due to their having to conform to ideological parameters, had nothing to do but develop a number of specific lines of inquiry that never really touched upon anything of universal significance. Yet, they could not be
indifferent to what was going on around them, and for their concentration on the “sore subjects” of the contemporary period, which reached as far as the scorning of academic “dull” knowledge aimed at objectivity, they found justification in the events of the time. However, presently, when speaking about Russian philosophy, one should not pass the desirable off for the real or “make a virtue out of a vice.” It would be much more useful to accept, in agreement with such thinkers as Aleksandr Vvedenskii, Gustav Shpet, and Boris Iakovenko, that Russian philosophy is still a project rather than a fact or a tradition of original thinking. In this respect, the fate of Vladimir Solov'ev’s teaching is demonstrative and instructive. He is known to have considered his system as dealing with problems of universal importance, rather than as the beginning of original-Russian philosophy. Nowadays, however, it is his “philosophy of vseedinstvo” that has become one of the most effective concepts of an ideology that attempts to prove the unique status of Russian thought, as well as its superiority over all other philosophical directions.

As a result of the fact that Russian philosophers have preferred to solve practical problems rather than to reflect upon theoretical questions, a strong tendency to deny culture as a system of objective values has appeared within the Russian mentality. Leonid Andreev’s statement that “it is shameful being a decent man” expressed the common sentiment of the Russian intelligentsia, as it stressed the group’s anti-philistine nature (quoted Stepun 164). This “ethos of ‘unculturedness’ (nekul'turie)” even became a specific paradigm of philosophizing, as it not only reveals a shallow “nihilism,” but also points to some new and positive prospects regarding the development of Russian thought. Indeed, the situation in which Russia found itself at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the twentieth century was characterized by an important confrontation between the high culture of the educated minority and the “rudeness” of the “ignorant” people (narod). This confrontation was tragic, primarily for culture, as it
threatened to lead to an open collision in which “everything beautiful and elevated” would perish. The cause of culture’s downfall lay in the gap between the intelligentsia and the people, and this gap increased as attempts were made to eliminate it: attempts that sought the help of culture—that is, to make the masses cultured and to inculcate in them education and a taste for civilized life. When it became clear that it was impossible to overcome the gap from culture by means of culture due to the “swarm basis” of the people and their being independent, stable, and in no need of outer stimuli or conventionalities, the intelligentsia turned their attention to the “chaotic.” This “chaotic” proved only to be negative for culture, however, and in reality it is culture itself that caused such negativity. The “chaotic” itself, in fact, is rather well-ordered and positive and, moreover, it is often a main motivating factor behind creative work in general. In order to save culture, thus, it seemed necessary to reject it and surrender oneself to the chaos of the life of the people, discovering in it paths for further cultural growth. Culture, as a system of objective values, is in principle complete and, therefore, is deprived of any possibility for development. It is also dangerous for the life of the people as it establishes static dictates over dynamics.

It is worth mentioning that, while opposing culture, the Russian intelligentsia did not confine its criticism to only one aspect: for example, to criticizing only the Orthodox-bureaucratic culture of autocracy. The ethos of “unculturedness” implied the negation of culture as a whole, considering it to be a result of the victory of the prose of life over the poetry of life. Thus, Anatolii Lunacharskii, warning the younger generation against “comarrogance” (komchvanssto), stressed that one should not “become overgrown with culture,” as it would then be impossible to retain the “communist enthusiasm” that had fueled the Russian revolution (261). The poet Aleksandr Blok continued the conversation on the “public benefit of art” and proved its
relevance and even necessity in the question of what is higher—boots or Shakespeare? (110).

This anti-cultural pathos also appeared in the Proletkul't movement, which tried to overcome the antagonism between culture and life in order to change the status of the old culture which, being subjected to destructive criticism, should be able to be born anew. Thus, for example, the negation of Aleksandr Pushkin’s poetry can be taken as an act of cultural vandalism (evidence of the degradation of artistic flair, or the lack of it) or as an attempt to indulge the crowd, and so forth. However, this very denial can also be understood as a kind of catharsis surrounding the poetic word of Pushkin, as only by means of rejecting the “objectively correct” cultural interpretation is it possible for it to return to life again. As a result of the Proletkul’t’s vandalism, the statue of the poet was destroyed but, at the same time, the force of Pushkin’s poetry was revived.

The theoretical backwardness of Russian philosophy caused, on the one hand, its dependence on philosophical trends in the West and, on the other hand, its tendency toward being ideologized. This is why a strange mixture (at first glance) of Orthodoxy, science, Messianism, and dilettantism appeared—that which is typically called “Russian philosophy.” Just as nineteenth century Russian literature, trying to hide its youth, but with youthful maximalism, began to solve global problems, thus presenting itself as a literature with world significance, nascent Russian philosophy tried to skip over the West instead of learn from it, so as to conceal its own inferiority under a mask of contempt for Western philosophy. The phenomenon of Russian Marxism is one of the most compelling illustrations of this point. It is well known that Russian Marxism was initially a creative interpretation of classical Marxism, initiating a variety of philosophical discussions. However, as Russian Marxism developed, it evolved into an ideology and, with the change of the political regime, it became “the only true
teaching,” excluding alternative views and philosophical freedom. During the Soviet period, official Marxism played the same role as had been played by the Russian Orthodox Church before the revolution, characterized by the same insularity and narcissism, as well as the same dogmatism and formalism. While the appearance of Russian religious philosophy in the nineteenth century appealed to Orthodoxy and criticized the existing system of beliefs, in the twentieth century, from the depths of a Marxism adapted to mass comprehension emerged an unofficial Marxism—one that restricted the reduction of philosophy to a worldview, thus undermining the foundations of ideological autarchy.

The conclusions of the modern “Westernizers,” for the most part, consisted in the following. Firstly, it is necessary to accept philosophy as theoretical knowledge and view Russian thought as scientific and objective, so as not to be restrained by specific Russian questions that have never been and never will be problems of universal importance. Secondly, we must refuse the habitual pose of teachers of philosophy and agree that we are still pupils. We should not be ashamed of this and should show due respect and attention to Western philosophical thought. Indeed, they argued that only in this case can Russian philosophy rid itself of one of its most negative aspects: namely, its apery, which nowadays is represented by Russian Heideggerism or postmodernism. Finally, we should retain philosophical freedom and not be afraid that it might lead to utter anarchy, as only in the presence of freedom can new and original conceptions be expected to appear, although we should not consider their originality to be an end in itself.

In conclusion, what can be said about the essence of contemporary Russian philosophy, taking into consideration the positions presented above? First of all, it is obvious that the assumption that Russian philosophy does not exist is mistaken. The fact that at the present
moment there is no fixed or determined set of philosophical problems proves the actuality of philosophical thought rather than its absence. Philosophy is known to be possible only in an open sphere, requiring both its own determination and at the same time the overcoming of this determination. What should be stressed once more is the *tone* of the symposium: defending their own positions, the speakers tolerated other views and did not claim them reprehensible. Thus, there were different voices heard at the symposium, but this did not produce an impression of “rogovaia muzyka”—of one individual attempting to drown out his opponents. It is clear that such philosophical pluralism might have only existed because no single position could secure complete agreement for its theoretical conclusions, rather than because an understanding was reached that opposing views are a *sine qua non* for philosophical thought to exist. And if this is in fact the case, then the task of Russian philosophy is to support a notion of philosophical pluralism and to exclude any claims of any one position having the “last word,” thus making possible the permanent development of Russian thought in the future. While this objective is being realized, one can claim that Russian philosophy really does exist, as its essence does not lie in holding one or another position, but in providing favorable conditions for the development of multiple positions. Indeed, setting up such conditions is the very task that Russian philosophers are engaged in today.
Notes

1 The term “comarrogance” is a product of revolutionary rhetoric, derived from the phrase “communist arrogance.”
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